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# **RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR**

Periodic report based  
on monitoring materials from  
selected regions of Ukraine

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**RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR.** Periodic report based on monitoring materials from selected regions of Ukraine. **ISSUE No. 9. OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023** / Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research. Kyiv. May 2024. 35 p.

This report was drafted by the team of the Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Research (UCIPR) as part of the activities of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion (National Platform). This civic initiative was launched in February 2018 (formerly known as the National Platform “Dialogue on Peace and Secure Reintegration”).

The National Platform’s activities are geared towards strengthening the national resilience of Ukraine. This could be done through establishing dialogue practices in society, providing the authorities with proposals for developing relevant policies, particularly those on resilience and social cohesion, as well as ensuring public awareness of these processes. The initiative has been implemented with the financial support of the European Union as part of “Sustaining the Resilience of Ukraine towards the Emerging Risks and Consequences of the War”.

The report is based on data on events in 10 oblasts of Ukraine which are important for shaping a policy of national resilience. The project target oblasts were selected based on analysis of changes in cohesion of local populations due to the outbreak of military operations and include Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Lviv, and Zakarpattia oblasts. For data collection, we distinguish between the temporarily occupied areas, frontline and deoccupied areas, and relatively rear areas.

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The product content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

The text of the report is available for download on the websites of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion <http://national-platform.org/> and UCIPR [www.ucipr.org.ua](http://www.ucipr.org.ua).

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# SUMMARY

## The situation at the front line

In October–December 2023, active military operations continued along the entire front line in Donetsk oblast, particularly near Mariinka, Chasiv Yar, Avdiivka, and Vuhledar. Following the [capture of Mariinka](#) by Russian troops in late December, the occupiers [reported](#) that they had entered a larger operational space, while the occupying administration of the breakaway DPR [issued](#) a postal vignette in a [promise](#) to establish an award on the occasion of the so-called liberation of the city. However, in reality, that population centre completely disappeared from the information agenda of the occupying authorities. The reason is clear: the city, populated by some 10,000 people before the full-scale war, has actually ceased to exist.



Source: censor.net

Ruined Mariinka. 2023. Photo by Kostiantyn Liberov and Viada Liberova.

After that, Russian troops started to actively advance and attempted to capture Avdiivka. The enemy primarily increased pressure on the flanks to surround the Ukrainian militaries who defended the city. The Russians attacked the city on an ongoing basis using not only artillery, but also aerial bombs. For this reason, the city's

civilian infrastructure suffered heavy destruction, and rescue teams had to remove the debris under ongoing fire. Furthermore, the Russians continuously kept attacking cities and towns away from the front line.

In Luhansk oblast, Russian troops most often targeted Novoselivske, Nevske, Novoliubivka, and Bilohorivka. The intensity of hostilities was very high. During the day of 30 December, the occupying forces launched 14 airstrikes on populated areas of Luhansk oblast and positions of Ukrainian servicemen. Residents of frontline population centres gradually agreed to evacuate. At the same time, the Russian army expanded its presence in Luhansk oblast. Specifically, the 25th reserve army of the Russian Federation deployed near Kreminna and [increased](#) its personnel up to 17,000 soldiers.

In Zaporizhzhia oblast, Ukraine's defence forces [continued](#) to carry out an offensive in Melitopol sector and had success near Kopan and Novoprokopivka. However, the Russians mercilessly shelled the territory of the oblast. On 3 November, they launched an airstrike on servicemen of the 128th Separate Mountain Assault Brigade of Zakarpattia who lined up to celebrate the Day of Missile Forces and Artillery in the frontline village of Zarichne. More than 20 soldiers were reported killed and more than 60 wounded, including local civilians. This tragedy triggered a public outcry over the inadmissibility of "lining up" and Soviet legacy in general in a time of the full-scale invasion.

Kherson and the liberated right-bank communities of Kherson oblast also came under continuous fire from all types of weapons, ranging from ballistic missiles and guided aerial bombs to mortar attacks and drone strikes of various types. According to a survey on the security situation in the city carried out by the Community Foundation of Kherson, Zakhyst, only 8% of Kherson residents said [in October](#) that they had not injured as a result of enemy's attacks. That percentage was even lower in [December](#), 6%.

[The Kinburn Spit](#) was the only area in Mykolaiv oblast that remained occupied by Russian troops in late 2023. The occupiers used positions for missile and artillery strikes on Ukrainian troops in Ochakiv, south of Mykolaiv oblast, and in other areas of the Black Sea coast.

[According to](#) the Tribunal for Putin (T4P) initiative, late in December 2023, at least 61 people were killed and at least 300 injured in Odesa oblast as a result of missile strikes, drone attacks, and detonation of explosive ordnance.

## Temporarily occupied areas

In October–December 2023, Russia's occupation policy in the temporarily occupied areas (TOAs) included the use of terror, intimidation, bribery of social groups, building-up of Russian state structures in the non-government controlled areas, forcible assimilation of locals, and ideological propaganda.

Since September 2023, the two-tier occupying authorities have started operating in the TOAs of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts. The first tier was represented by occupying oblast councils ("parliaments of new entities of the Russian Federation"): "people's councils" in the TOAs of Donetsk oblast; "legislative assemblies" in the TOAs of Zaporizhzhia oblast; "people's councils" in the TOAs of Luhansk oblast; and oblast councils in the TOAs of Kherson oblast. The second tier was represented by occupying local councils: "urban districts" (city level) and "municipal raions" (raion level).

Mock election campaigns for these "authorities" took place simultaneously with Russia-wide elections, which, according to the Kremlin, made them part of the internal political processes, whereas the sham elections for the so-called façade occupying councils were supposed to legitimise the power of the invaders in the domestic political discourse. Another goal of the sham elections was to replace the so-called local elite with a Russian one and to make occupying administrations part of the Russian legal and political landscape. At the same time, the pseudo-elections [were geared](#) towards involving the locals of the non-government controlled areas into collaborationism, deepening the social gap between populations of the deoccupied and occupied parts of Ukraine, and making preparations for the so-called election of the President of the Russian Federation in the TOAs.

The process of creating the so-called judicial system in the TOAs entered its final stage in late 2023. The Chairman of Russia's Supreme Court, Vyacheslav Lebedev, notified the Council of Judges of the Russian Federation that 436 federal judges had started working in the so-called new regions.



The Russian occupiers kept control of important high-tech facilities, including Zaporizhzhia NPP, which posed a threat of man-made and other disasters. Nuclear terror from the enemy intensified within a year: the Russians kidnapped the Director General and the Deputy Director General of Zaporizhzhia NPP, threatened the Chief Engineer, disconnected the plant from the Ukrainian power grid, shelled the plant's territory, destroyed the Kakhovka dam that supplied water for the cooling pond, mined the reactors, launched hazardous withdrawal of steam from Unit 4 for technological purposes instead of receiving it from external sources.

A lack of local personnel for propaganda activities in favour of the Russian occupiers was reported in the TOAs of Luhansk oblast. In response to the problem, the Russian Federation established the so-called raion newspapers, whose editorial offices were managed by Russia-installed editors, and distributed them free of charge among locals. They attempted to employ locals to work for those newspapers, promising higher wages and training opportunities in an effort to strengthen influence on and control of the information space through the involvement of local collaborators.

The Russia-installed authorities extensively put ideological and propaganda pressure through reinstating communist symbols, providing "military and patriotic education" in schools, setting up paramilitary youth organisations, and carrying out massive propaganda of the "Russian World".

## Frontline and deoccupied areas

Resolving security issues, maintaining a 24/7 operation of life-support systems, and ensuring a sustainable heating season were among the priorities of authorities of the frontline areas in the second half of 2023.

Due to the establishment of military administrations in cities and raions, city and raion councils suspended their activities. In actual fact, political life was put on hold, while community members were deprived of the opportunity to influence local politics and the content of authorities' decisions.

The restoration of housing damaged or destroyed by the Russian army remained important for deoccupied and frontline communities. On 10 May 2023, the eRecovery programme [was launched](#) in Ukraine under which owners of damaged housing were entitled to compensation worth of up to UAH200,000 for repairs. These funds could be used for purchasing construction materials and paying for construction works. Since December, owners of damaged housing have started receiving for major repairs a maximum of UAH350,000 for an apartment and UAH500,000 for a private house. Since 1 January 2024, Ukrainians who repaired damaged housing at their own expense should [have started](#) receiving compensation for damaged housing.

As part of Plich-o-Plich large-scale community reconstruction initiative, 15 oblasts of Ukraine helped rebuild population centres of Kherson oblast destroyed as a result of hostilities and occupation by the Russian army. Some 700 houses were renovated as of late 2023.

Most of the deoccupied areas needed to be demined. Cases of detection of explosive remnants of war or civilian casualties because of their detonation were reported every day. About a third of Ukraine's territory (approximately 174,000 square kilometres out of more than 603,000 square kilometres of Ukraine's total area), of which around 8% were water bodies, including the waters of the Azov and Black Seas, [was potentially contaminated](#) with explosive ordnance. The government announced its intention to return 80% of those territories to economic exploitation within a decade. However, Ukraine needs significantly more sappers and equipment to step up mine clearance efforts and to ensure safety.

Civil society and international organisations took on many important tasks faced by the authorities through organising the system of humanitarian aid provision and extensively solving problems of local concern with the help of new methods and forms of work. The creation of community hubs, practised in many oblasts right after Russia's large-scale invasion in February 2022, has been launched in Kherson oblast since November, which enhanced social cohesion and resilience in communities.

Many locals were evacuated from frontline population centres, which resulted in a significant decrease in the population of some cities, towns, and villages. For the most part, the elderly and economically inactive population in need of social protection and guardianship did not relocate.

The insufficient representation of official sources and professional media among popular information sources could have had an adverse impact on shaping public opinion due to the spread of biased information, misinformation, and manipulation of public opinion.

Within the reporting period, a new trend in public activity was recorded – mass rallies in support of draft laws that provide for setting up clear term of military service during the period of martial law. A campaign to stop spending funds of local budgets for landscaping and to redirect them for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine became widespread in the oblasts. Public actions to draw attention of authorities to the problem of prisoners of war and to intensify efforts towards exchanging prisoners of war was another area of public activity. Similar activities were also reported in the relatively rear areas.

## Relatively rear areas controlled by the Ukrainian government

The allocation of funds for the needs of the military (an increase in the number of reports on the transfer of individual income tax was recorded following extensive public discussions) and social interactions in the context of integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into host communities were the focus of attention for local self-government bodies. However, the said social interactions mainly took place as part of the implementation of various social projects funded by international organisations.

A lack of labour and financial resources affected the level of economic activity. Local authorities acted as statisticians, repeating national-level decisions, and exercising little independence in terms of strategic vision and systematic approach.

Chernivtsi Oblast Military Administration paid attention to the strengthening of cross-border cooperation, in particular the opening of new and updating of available checkpoints on the Ukrainian-Romanian border in accordance with the standards and challenges of time. The latter, in our opinion, is the most successful activity vector.

The number of IDPs in those territories decreased. However, a large share was represented by socially vulnerable people who needed to improve their living and household conditions. A systematic analysis of prospects for the integration of IDPs was not in place.

Cases of corruption, social injustice, and economic inefficiency posed threats to resilience and cohesion. They ignited social tensions and shaped protest potential.

Various international organisations continued their activities. Preference was given to targeted assistance to particular institutions, foundations, social groups, etc.

A negative image of mobilisation, shaped through media outlets and social networking sites emphasising violations of legislation by employees of territorial recruitment and social support centres during mobilisation, posed a serious challenge to the defence capability of the country in a time of war.

According to media reports, the number of conscripts dodging military service increased. There were more options for evading the draft, including attempted illegal border crossings, using Ukraine's Shliakh system for going abroad, declaring persons unfit for military service on health grounds, etc.



# I. TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED AREAS

[As of the late fall](#) of 2023, the population centres of Ukraine's five oblasts, notably those in Luhansk (98% of the territory), Zaporizhzhia (73%), Kherson (72%), Donetsk (57%), and Kharkiv (2%) oblasts, were temporarily occupied by Russia, along with the completely occupied Crimean Peninsula, a total of 109,000 square kilometres of Ukraine's entire territory.

## 1. Changes in the system of governance

### 1.1. Decisions of occupying authorities

In October–December 2023, the so-called regional authorities were extensively established in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast and integrated into Russia-wide system as authorities of the so-called entity of the Russian Federation. On 10 September 2023, the sham elections for regional and local authorities were held in the occupied territories. [According to the results](#) of the so-called elections, 74 deputies from United Russia, 6 deputies from each CPRF and LDPR, and 4 deputies from New People party were elected to the people's council of the breakaway DPR. The situation was similar in all municipal entities: the party in power won about 80–90% of mandates.

At the first meeting of the People's Council of the DPR, Artem Zhoga, a former Russian militant who headed the list of United Russia, [was elected](#) chairman. On 23 September, the People's Council of the DPR [elected](#) the DPR's Head. As it had been expected, Denis Pushilin, who headed the occupying authorities since September 2018 after the assassination of the then leader, Alexandr Zakharchenko, was elected Head of the DPR.

Moreover, the occupiers launched the process of extensive dissolution of the so-called local authorities in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast, including various ministries, commissions, services, and inspectorates. In accordance with the relevant ordinances, this was done for the purpose of integrating the regional governance system into power structures of the Russian Federation.

In Kherson oblast, the so-called elected local authorities started to be established and operate. Those were the so-called Regional Duma and councils of deputies of 14 municipal entities – all administrative and territorial units into which the temporarily occupied areas (hereinafter referred to as the TOAs) of Kherson oblast were divided by the occupiers. On 20 September, the first "meeting" of Kherson Regional Duma was held. 36 deputies were "elected" to it, including representatives of the four parliamentary parties of the Russian Federation, United Russia (28 deputies), CPRF (4 deputies), LDPR (3 deputies), and Just Russia – For the Truth (1 deputy). In September, the first "meetings" of the so-called councils of deputies of all municipal entities of the TOAs of Kherson oblast were also held.

The deployment of a network of Russian occupying administrations required competent and qualified personnel. Since the Russians failed to gain the support of the majority of Ukrainians who had experience in the public and local governance sectors, they had to employ specialists from the Russian Federation. [According to](#) the National Resistance Center of Ukraine, most collaborators who volunteered to work in the occupying administrations did not have the appropriate education or held the lowest positions in those sectors. In this respect, Russian curators of the collaborators from temporarily occupied Donetsk oblast organised training for them in Russia's Krasnoyarsk Krai, in particular at the Institute of State and Municipal Administration under the Krasnoyarsk Krai government.

According to the monitoring data on Kherson oblast, the occupiers resorted to mock justice instead of extrajudicial forms of repression in late 2023. Reports that the so-called courts started to consider court cases of Ukrainian citizens, who were formerly abducted and tortured by the occupiers, became more common.

Such a change in the forms of repression was linked to the completion of the process of integrating the TOAs into the Russian state and political system, in particular, the establishment of the so-called judicial system. Specifically, in late 2023, the Chairman of Russia's Supreme Court, Vyacheslav Lebedev, [notified](#) the Council of Judges of the Russian Federation that 436 federal judges had started working in the so-called new regions, i. e. in the TOAs of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, and Donetsk oblasts.

### >> PREPARATIONS FOR THE SHAM ELECTION OF THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

The occupiers also [planned](#) to involve the TOAs of eastern and southern Ukraine in holding the so-called election of the President of the Russian Federation in March 2024. The Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation announced the unanimous decision of 11 December. According to that decision, the so-called election was to be held in the TOAs of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts whose annexation Russia proclaimed in September 2022 and imposed martial law there. The statement said the decision had been made following consultations with the Ministry of Defence, the Federal Security Service, and the occupying authorities of those oblasts. Furthermore, the so-called election of the President of the Russian Federation was supposed to be held in Russia-annexed Crimea.

Russia's Central Election Commission [published](#) the "details" of conducting "election" during martial law. Specifically, it allowed voting without a passport, accrediting journalists "in accordance with a special procedure", and moving ballots and other documents "to a safe place" in case of a threat.

Local Russian election committees were allowed to shorten voting time and not to publish information about election committee members and polling stations. Journalists were banned from filming people at polling stations without their consent. The Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation justified such measures "with the need to ensure the safety of all voting participants". Some provisions directly contradict the Federal Law "On Elections of the President of the Russian Federation".

### >> FORCED PASSPORTING

The occupiers continued forced passporting of Ukrainians in the TOAs. The invaders [claimed](#) that more than 2 million Ukrainians had already received Russian passports.

According to a representative of the Commissioner for the Rights of Citizens Affected by the Armed Aggression against Ukraine, Olha Altunina, the Office of the Ombudsman received dozens of reports on forced passporting in the TOAs. Such reports are necessary because they will serve as legal evidence that a person was forced to obtain a Russian passport. At the same time, she [emphasised](#) that obtaining a passport of the Russian Federation was in no case a reason for losing Ukrainian citizenship. This position of Ukraine is primarily based on the provisions of Article 4 of the European Convention on Nationality.

Such actions in the TOAs demonstrated that Russia violates human rights and humanitarian law by carrying out forced passporting which is a form of collective punishment, discrimination, and persecution based on nationality. Russia also violates the human right to freedom of movement, education, health care, social protection, etc.

[According to](#) Civic Network OPORA, the obvious reasons for forced passporting are the collection of personal data to strengthen control of the occupying authorities which makes it possible to terrorise the population more effectively and to decrease ties of Ukraine with its citizens. In terms of losses inflicted on the occupiers by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the AFU), the registration and official acceptance of Russian citizenship facilitates the possibility of mobilising people and forcing them to participate in the war.

People who remained in the TOAs and refused Russian passports faced problems of processing other documents, receiving social benefits and [health care services](#). Also, the absence of a Russian passport made it difficult to leave the occupied areas.

The Russian occupiers used various methods and intimidation to encourage the population of the non-government controlled areas to obtain Russian passports. According to the National Resistance Center, they [threatened](#) parents to hand over data on their children to the so-called local guardianship authorities if they refuse to obtain Russian documents.

Among the [new methods](#) of forced passporting and control of the local populations was mandatory verification of Internet users based on passport details. "In other words, all users must have passports of the Russian Federation in order to continue receiving services," the National Resistance Center explained.

The enemy planned to complete the passporting procedure in the TOAs until 1 January 2024. *“The enemy has set a goal of completing the passporting procedure until 1 January. Needless to say, this does not mean that 100% of our citizens who remained under the occupation will take this ausweis. Though today, you cannot take a single step without hindrance (in the occupied territories) if you do not have a Russian passport,”* the Mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, [said](#).

As reported earlier, the entry to temporarily occupied Enerhodar, a satellite city of Zaporizhzhia NPP, is banned for those who do not have a Russian passport. Moreover, the enemy conducted door-to-door visits to compile a register of people who do not have Russian documents so that they could afterwards be deported as foreigners.

The Russian occupiers refused to provide health care services to TOAs residents who do not have a Russian passport. There were reports that the Russian terrorists planned to [treat](#) Ukrainians who do not have medical insurance as foreigners in hospitals in the TOAs.

In the TOAs of Zaporizhzhia oblast, the Russians forced employers to notify the “migration departments” of all employees who were not citizens of the Russian Federation. In case of refusal, they threatened with fines of up to RUB800,000 and imposed a higher tax for such employees, the Mayor of Melitopol, Ivan Fedorov, [reported](#).

## >> PROPERTY, BUSINESSES

Within the reporting period, no significant economic boom was recorded in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast. Most businesses in the areas occupied in 2014–2022 came under Russia’s control and supplied their products to Russian regions. The situation in the areas occupied in 2023 was much worse, because businesses located there were severely damaged during hostilities. They were not systematically rebuilt. First, significant investment was needed which could only come from Russia’s budget and businesses which had already been not in the best condition. Second, Russian companies were not interested in new competitors in the domestic market. Moreover, the occupied areas experienced a critical shortage of personnel as a result of hostilities, migration, and forced mobilisation. Even the demonstrative restoration of Mariupol was carried out primarily by builders brought from other Russian regions.

Given the situation, all the reports by the occupying authorities on the launch of some businesses were strictly for propaganda purposes. Specifically, in December 2023, the occupying authorities [announced](#) the resumption of operation of Ilyich Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol. However, it was not about the steel production. According to propaganda media, several auxiliary workshops for slag processing and manufacture of various metal structures resumed operation to “recover main production at the enterprise”. Conversely, the locals said that Ilyich Iron and Steel Works did not resume its operation and that all workers were called in as [auxiliary workers to remove the debris](#). The enterprise suffered severe damage and could resume its core activities only following complete reconstruction.

## >> ZAPORIZHZHIA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

At temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (NPP), the Russian invaders [continued](#) their policy of pressure and blackmail. Since 4 March 2022, the plant and the satellite city of Enerhodar [have been](#) under the occupation of Russian troops. Russia refused to create a demilitarised zone around the plant, as proposed by the UN. The plant has been repeatedly shelled.

On 1 October, Ukraine’s state-owned Energoatom reported that the Russian occupiers detained the General Director of Zaporizhzhia NPP, Ihor Murashov. He was released on 3 October following the intervention of IAEA Director General. After that, Petro Kotin, CEO of JSC “NNEGC “Energoatom”, assumed the responsibilities of Director General of Zaporizhzhia NPP.

On 5 October, Russia’s President [Vladimir Putin ordered](#) to transfer facilities for the use of nuclear power of Zaporizhzhia NPP to federal ownership. The Operating Organisation of Zaporizhzhia NPP was established to manage the plant with the aim of “ensuring the safety of nuclear power facilities of Zaporizhzhia NPP”. *“The Operating Organisation of Zaporizhzhia NPP will operate and decommission facilities of Zaporizhzhia NPP on its own or with the involvement of other enterprises and organisations,”* Putin’s [decree](#) reads.

[JSC “NNEGC “Energoatom”](#) called this decision [“null and void”](#). *“Ukraine and the entire civilised world know that Zaporizhzhia NPP will continue to operate in Ukraine, in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, in the Ukrainian energy system, under Energoatom,”* Energoatom said in a statement.

On 2 December, Zaporizhzhia NPP [suffered](#) the eighth complete off-site power outage due to the disconnection of the power supply lines, Zaporizhzhia Thermal Power Plant – Ferosplavna and Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant – Dniprovsk, the day before.

*“The most recent external power outage is yet another reminder about the precarious nuclear safety and security situation at the plant, which can be affected by events far away from the site itself,”* IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi [claimed](#).

## >> DEPORTATION / FORCED DISPLACEMENT

The population of the TOAs of Zaporizhzhia oblast has not been evacuated since December 2022. The only exit from the occupied territories to the Ukrainian government-controlled areas, through Vasylivka, was closed, and the Russian army did not open evacuation routes until the end of 2023. The occupying authorities moved some people from the shelling zone to Crimea or further from the line of shelling.

## 1.2. Access to public information

The non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast remained completely cut off from Ukraine’s information space. However, the occupying authorities made every effort to promote Russian narratives and propaganda: all federal media were represented in those areas to the maximum extent possible. In occupied population centres, where they were not completely destroyed, the Russians first of all started broadcasting Russian TV and radio channels, and created local media in large cities which only facilitated the spread of narratives.

With the support of the federal government of the Russian Federation, a media conglomerate, New Regions, [was expected](#) to be set up in the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia oblast. Sergei Kiriienko, First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration who has been under sanctions from the European Union since 2020, the USA since 2021, and Japan since 2022, was appointed as a curator of this media. Kiriienko is responsible for relations with the so-called DPR and LPR and will spearhead efforts to consolidate control via the information space.

[According to](#) the National Resistance Center, the Russian occupiers did not have enough propagandists to work in raion centres of TOAs of Luhansk oblast. *“The enemy has created a number of the so-called raion newspapers and delivers this waste paper free of charge to the local population. However, the so-called editorial offices are staffed with outsiders supervised by Russia,”* the Center said in a statement. The Russians attempted to change the situation and find local collaborators. They opened vacancies for “editors-in-chief” and promised to “pay increased salaries and train applicants from scratch”.

## 2. Humanitarian situation

The occupiers allocated two zones in the TOAs of Kherson oblast. The first one consists of a 15-kilometer strip along the left bank of the Dnipro River, with the population centres stretching from the settlement of Verkhni Rohachyk to the city of Hola Prystan, including the cities of Nova Kakhovka and Oleshky. The second zone includes all other occupied areas.

The 15-kilometer zone was considered as a zone of hostilities with severe restrictions on movement. In early 2023, an evacuation was carried out there. It was those areas that were most seriously affected by flooding following the destruction of Kakhovka dam by the occupiers. Problems of electricity supply, access to drinking water, gas, communications, and other services were constantly reported there.

The so-called LPR [reported](#) 95% readiness for the winter season. However, the indicator did not include Sievierodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne, and Kreminna where the Russians did almost nothing to restore heating for a year and a half. As before, in 2022, two weeks before the beginning of the heating season, they reported difficulties of timely connection of the said population centres to the heating system.

## 2.1. Filtration measures of occupying authorities / prisoners of war

In the TOAs of Zaporizhzhia oblast, the Russian authorities toughened filtration measures. Specifically, local residents were urged to report on pro-Ukrainian-minded people through a special chatbot, the Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Military Administration (hereinafter referred to as OMA), Yuri Malashko, [claimed](#).

## 2.2. Actions of occupying authorities regarding recruitment into armed formations

Russia continued covert mobilisation in the TOAs of southern Ukraine, calling it a “voluntary initiative”, the National Resistance Center [reported](#). Right after the occupiers completed the creation of “military recruitment offices” in the TOAs of Kherson oblast and Zaporizhzhia, military summons were served on men of conscription age who received Russian passports. They were offered to conclude a contract with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation right in the military recruitment offices, and the reservists were immediately mobilised. Such practice was most common in villages.

Russia found a new way to [replenish](#) its ranks after losses in the battles for Avdiivka, Donetsk oblast. Miners from Luhansk oblast were mobilised for the war. To this end, military summons were served on employees of businesses and companies in Rovenky, Khrustalne, and Sorokyne, the Atesh partisan movement reported. “The Russian Federation occupied most of the areas of Luhansk oblast, destroyed most of the mines, and now started mobilising miners,” the message said.

[According to](#) Atesh, the Russian invaders also started mobilising full-time students in Luhansk oblast. The occupiers forced mobilised students to take academic leave. “We know for sure about such cases in the so-called Alchevsk-based Donbas State Technical University. The situation is not better in other occupied territories of Ukraine,” the message read. Atesh members stressed that mobilisation of Ukrainians into the Russian army is a war crime.

## 3. Work on identity

### 3.1. Changes in education standards

[According to](#) the Ukrainian Parliament Human Rights Commissioner, Dmytro Lubinets, the Russian Federation used education in the TOAs as a tool to spread its propaganda. In general, the occupying authorities were destroying education in the TOAs according to the “Crimean scenario” (i. e., they repeated actions taken by the Russian Federation in Crimea back in 2014), including:

- transition to the Russian education standards,
- replacement of educational materials with Russian ones,
- retraining and replacement of teachers with those loyal to the new authorities or relocated from the territory of the Russian Federation,
- removal of Ukrainian studies subjects, in particular the history of Ukraine and the Ukrainian literature,
- placement of restrictions on learning the Ukrainian language,
- militarisation of the educational process, inculcation of such children and youth military and patriotic movements as cadet schools, Young Army movement (founded in Russia at the initiative of the Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu), Big Change (Bolshaia Peremena) (contest with various militarised activities), etc.

According to a [research](#) by Amnesty International, those living under Russian occupation risked brutal reprisals for seeking to continue Ukrainian education, with some parents choosing to hide their children. *“In Russia-occupied territories, intimidation and coercion are a daily reality for families, children, and teaching staff,”* Anna Wright, a researcher for Amnesty International, [said](#). Parents in the TOAs stopped their children’s education under to the Ukrainian curriculum for the sake of their safety. Locals said that men in Russian military uniforms came to their homes and forced them to send their children to school, threatening to “take them to an orphanage in Russia”.

Such approach to education poses a serious problem, because it implies manipulating the minds of children and young people being a form of psychological influence and propaganda. The use of specially created school textbooks which rewrite historical events in accordance with political interests of the occupiers is geared towards convincing children of the correctness of the occupation regime and actions of occupying authorities.

In the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast, educational institutions actively switched to the Russian education standards and integrated into the Russian system of education. Specifically, despite the significant destruction of Mariupol, the occupying authorities said about 8,000 students [studied](#) in two “higher educational institutions” of the city.

## 3.2. Politics of memory: place names, museum work, holidays and their celebration

In October 2023, in the temporarily occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia oblast, the Russian occupiers installed, “under Putin’s direct order”, the City of Military Glory stele to commemorate the “80th anniversary of the liberation of the city from the fascist invaders in the Great Patriotic War”. The coat of arms of Russia crowns the construction. The stele is part of the propaganda campaign of the Russian Federation which manipulates historical facts and creates a fictional image of modern times. In his address, the Chairman of the Russian Military History Society, Vladimir Medinsky, [wrote](#) that the *“memory of that terrible war is superimposed on the events of today where our country once again faced the need to counter a fascist threat”*, making a division into “us” and “them”, rotating and shifting the layers of reality from the standpoint of the best propaganda models.



## II. FRONTLINE AND DEOCCUPIED AREAS

### 1. Changes in the system of governance

The fourth quarter of 2023 was symbolically important for Kherson oblast. A year ago, the right-bank areas of Kherson oblast were deoccupied. Within the first year of deoccupation, the authorities and society faced extremely serious challenges: the need to quickly restore the destroyed governance structures, to organise the work of authorities, the law enforcement system and courts; to launch and ensure the normal operation of life-support systems and critical infrastructure, to reopen utility companies, health care facilities, shopping facilities and banking institutions, to resume the operation of mobile communications and the Internet; to organise a sustainable system of providing humanitarian aid and social services.

Although Russia's daily devastating attacks on the right-bank communities of Kherson oblast complicated the implementation of those tasks, most of them were accomplished, primarily thanks to the efforts of various groups of the population, including authorities, rescuers and policemen, utility workers, doctors, volunteers, and representatives of international programmes.

There was only one representative authority in Kherson oblast, Kherson Oblast Council. The activities of all other local councils were suspended. Heads of respective military administrations received the councils' powers. Despite the suspension of activities of local councils in the oblast, council members legally retained their status and powers in the work with voters, in representation of their interests, etc. Yet in fact, they did not apply those powers in practice.

It can be stated that military administrations had no vision of how to engage a huge number of legitimate representatives of territorial communities of the oblast in solving problems of local concern. As a result, all the powers were concentrated in the hands of heads of military administrations who did not even need to involve incumbent council members in joint activities through collegial bodies that kept operating.

After a normalisation of the situation, such suspension may adversely affect the quality, independence, and capacity of local self-government.

Sociological surveys [recorded](#) a high and stable level of mistrust in the actions of the military administration among the population of Kherson. According to the results of a survey carried out by the Community Foundation of Kherson, Zakhyst, in December the number of Kherson residents who did not trust Kherson oblast and city military administrations increased. 46% of Kherson locals did not trust Kherson OMA in July against 53% in December. In July, 51% of those surveyed did not trust Kherson City Military Administration (hereinafter referred to as CMA). In December, that percentage grew to 57%. In July, personal ratings of administration heads were so low that sociologists refused to monitor changes in that indicator in December.

Within the reporting period, the leadership of oblast authorities was reshuffled in the deoccupied areas of Donetsk oblast. On 5 September 2023, the President of Ukraine [dismissed](#) Pavlo Kyrylenko who had been working as OMA Head since 5 July 2019. The next day, Kyrylenko chaired the Antimonopoly Committee of Ukraine. Also, his two deputies, [Maksym Sandyha](#) and [Denys Kliushnykov](#) were appointed to the Antimonopoly Committee.

A pause in the appointment of OMA Head lasted for almost four months. However, on 27 December 2023, Vadym Filashkin [was appointed](#) to that post.

In general, the system of military administrations created within the reporting period proved its capacity to operate and perform its functions even under the conditions of turbulence and given the absence of the head.

At the same time, city and district councils suspended their activities because of the establishment of military administrations in the cities and raions of the oblast. In actual fact, political life was put on hold, while community members were deprived of the opportunity to influence administrative decisions of authorities. Moreover, public councils under the oblast and city military administrations practically did not work: the meetings were either not held at all, or did not end with decisions, or those decisions were ignored by the authorities.

Almost the entire territory of Luhansk oblast was occupied at the time of writing of the report. The OMA operated outside of the oblast, with its office located in the neighbouring oblast centre, Dnipro. 26 military administrations of territorial communities also worked outside of the oblast. Governance was done through the presidential vertical of power. Public participation mechanisms were practically absent.

## 1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

### >> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

According to the Head of Mykolaiv OMA, Vitalii Kim, Mykolaiv oblast [received](#) EUR105.5 million in financial aid from international partners in 2023. Most of the funds, EUR75.5 million, were channelled within the framework of cooperation with the Kingdom of Denmark for the restoration of infrastructure in Mykolaiv and in the oblast. Specifically, since November 2023, the Office for Recovery and Development of Mykolaiv Oblast and the Office for Recovery and Development of Mykolaiv City Community have been operating in Mykolaiv with the support of the Danish government. Another EUR30 million came to Mykolaiv oblast from other partners, including the UN, UNDP, and others.

Water in Mykolaiv's taps [disappeared](#) back on 12 April 2022. A Russian strike destroyed the water pipelines leading to the city from Kherson oblast, leaving Mykolaiv residents without water at all for a month. Only industrial water supply was resumed. Mykolaiv residents have been living under such conditions for almost two years. Wells remain the only option to get drinking water. At the time of writing of the report, Egis, a company headquartered in France, dealt with the issue of restoring the drinking water supply infrastructure in the city. The company offered three options of alternative water intake.

### >> INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

One of the reconstruction programmes implemented in Kherson oblast was entitled Plich-o-Plich. The population centres of the oblast were reconstructed with the efforts of 15 oblasts of Ukraine according to the "community to community" or "region to region" principle. The initiative was funded from the oblast and local budgets. As part of the programme, some 700 houses destroyed by Russia's shelling were renovated in the right-bank communities of Kherson oblast. The programme is expected [to be launched](#) in other Ukrainian oblasts.

### >> e-RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Donetsk oblast takes a lead in terms of the number of objects entered into the State Register of property damaged and destroyed as a result of hostilities, terrorist acts, sabotage caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. It is about more than 54,000 objects. Most of them are in the communities of Kramatorsk and Bakhmut. Donetsk oblast is also among the top five Ukraine's oblasts in terms of the amount of compensation payments under the eRecovery programme. As of early November 2023, residents of the oblast [were paid](#) around UAH160 million in compensation.

In December, 209 Zaporizhzhia residents [received](#) monetary compensation for repairs of damaged housing under the eRecovery programme worth a total of approximately UAH8.7 million. 411 residents of Zaporizhzhia oblast [were paid](#) over UAH22 million in compensation under the programme.

According to the Head of Mykolaiv OMA, Vitalii Kim, residents of Mykolaiv oblast whose property was damaged as a result of Russian aggression [were paid](#) UAH140 million under the eRecovery programme. 1,909 out of 5,042 applicants received compensation. Furthermore, UAH167 million was paid to those who lost their homes for the purchase of new housing. 137 out of 618 applicants received compensation of that kind.

**>> POST-WAR RECOVERY PLANS**

Donetsk oblast actively developed post-war recovery plans. Specifically, Kramatorsk [presented eight reconstruction projects](#) at a forum on Ukraine's reconstruction, ReBuild Ukraine, including those on the reconstruction of houses and schools destroyed during shelling of the city, and the construction of a new residential micro-district.

The Office for Recovery and Development of Mykolaiv City Community [was opened](#) in Mykolaiv. This became possible thanks to the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the financial support of the EU, the governments of Denmark and Sweden. Here, experts will develop reconstruction initiatives, raise funding, and implement projects together with divisions of the City Council. The Recovery Office will enable a comprehensive approach to the development and post-war recovery of Mykolaiv.

**>> OVERCOMING THE CONSEQUENCES OF KAKHOVKA DAM DESTRUCTION**

The destruction of Kakhovka dam by the occupiers and flooding of the entire lower reaches of the Dni-pro River dramatically worsened the humanitarian, economic, and social situation in Kherson oblast. Despite the enormous efforts, the disaster consequences [have not been overcome](#) yet. 3,252 houses were damaged, including 121 multi-apartment buildings, with apartments on the first floor affected. In late October, 2,475 houses were inspected, and 2,256 damage certificates were drawn up. The completion of the works was hindered by daily shelling from the left bank. Access to some populated areas was restricted.

**>> DEMINING**

According to [estimates](#) of Kherson OMA, the 2023 sowing and harvesting indicators in Kherson oblast were just 2% of the level of 2021 as of 9 October 2023. One of the reasons, except for military operations, is contamination with explosive ordnance. 425,600 out of 517,600 hectares of agricultural land in the deoccupied areas remained potentially contaminated with explosive ordnance. Only 92,000 hectares of agricultural land were surveyed and demined as of October.

500 mine action operators were officially [involved](#) in demining operations as of mid-October. Those were representatives of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, the National Police, the State Special Transport Service, and international organisations. That number was, however, insufficient. Therefore, a black demining market has already been created in the oblast. Farmers are forced to use services of uncertified mine action operators. As a result, mine action reports drawn up by uncertified firms are recognised as invalid, whereas farmers are not [entitled to compensation](#) for mine clearance.

30% of the territory of Mykolaiv oblast was [mined](#) as of December 2023, a total of 754,000 hectares of land. According to the 2023 results, some 112,000 hectares of agricultural land were surveyed of which almost 15,000 hectares were demined. Moreover, 130 groups of pyrotechnics, or 590 people, worked in the oblast.

**>> EVACUATION**

Since the outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion, 1,354,000 residents of Donetsk oblast had to evacuate. In 2023, there were 525,000 [permanent residents](#) in the Ukrainian government-controlled areas of the oblast. At the same time, the routes of population movement depended on the security component and the distance of the community from the front line. According to estimates of the oblast authorities, some 66,000 residents returned to Kramatorsk, and some 39,000 to Sloviansk.

In turn, the population of cities located closer to the front line continued evacuating. [According to](#) Avdiivka military administration, more than 1,200 residents remained in the city as of [December 2023](#). It has to be reminded that prior to the onset of the full-scale invasion, over 30,000 people lived in the city. Besides, since early December, no child [has remained](#) there, as all of them were taken out with their parents as part of mandatory evacuation.

[According to](#) the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, over 97,000 people, including 12,500 children and more than 4,500 people with disabilities, have relocated from Donetsk oblast to safe places as part of mandatory evacuation since August 2022. The mandatory evacuation from Donetsk oblast was carried out by a special train to Zhytomyr oblast once every eight days on even num-

bers. The evacuation was free of charge. Those willing to be evacuated had to contact the local authorities or submit an application by calling the hotline for pre-registration.

### >> HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The humanitarian situation was quite difficult in the frontline communities of Donetsk oblast. Members of those communities were often fully or partially dependent on humanitarian aid usually provided by military units, with all the safety measures in place. Moreover, those communities lacked inpatient and emergency care, and almost all utilities. Specifically, within the reporting period, the locals of Avdiivka, Chasiv Yar, and a couple of small frontline population centres lived under the similar conditions.

A very difficult humanitarian situation was recorded in the city of Avdiivka. Most locals were forced to hide in the basements of apartment buildings and public facilities because of ongoing shelling. The only doctor [continued working](#) in the city who, if necessary, could stabilise a person to be afterwards evacuated to Myrnohrad in an armoured vehicle. There were neither law enforcement officers nor rescue teams in Avdiivka. The investigative group arrived in the city on schedule and recorded crimes committed by the Russian militaries.

### >> HUMANITARIAN HUBS / ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES CENTRES

According to the monitoring data on Luhansk oblast, 36 humanitarian hubs [operated](#) in the oblast in late 2023; each hub was equipped with generators, fuel and lubricants, Starlinks, power banks, heaters, blankets, and drinking water. Also, all humanitarian hubs were provided with medical personnel. All of them were managed by Luhansk Oblast Military Administration. The population of Luhansk oblast could receive help in any hub, regardless of the community to which people belong. Humanitarian aid in the form of foods and hygiene kits, legal and psychological counselling, and health care services, was available in each hub by appointment.

### >> ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE HEATING SEASON

In the last quarter of 2023 and at the beginning of the winter period, authorities of Kherson oblast faced numerous serious challenges.

It was necessary to resume the operation of heat-generating companies. When it comes to those residents of the oblast who heat their homes individually, it was necessary to find wood and coal. Some districts of the oblast centre experienced difficulties with the provision of heating. Problems emerged also due to the fact that many people left the city. There were accidents and heating breakdowns in empty apartments.

[According to the Head of Kherson OMA](#), charitable organisations, in particular the International Organization for Migration, SaveUA, Samaritan Organisation of Ukraine, Ranok Vidrodzhennia (Recovery Morning), and others reassured that they could provide 10,000 families with wood and coal.

The military administration started the heating season amid ongoing shelling, and organised uninterrupted supply of water, electricity, gas, and heating. Local authorities demonstrated efficiency in organising and successfully passing the heating season which was the most important political event of that period.

### >> SHELTERS

At a special session of Zaporizhzhia City Council on 5 October 2023, it was [decided](#) to install combined modular shelters in the city. Such shelters were supposed to protect the locals against shrapnel wounds and blast waves during Russian shelling. At the same time, part of the area would be used for trade. According to the plan, up to 25 people (not including bench seats) can stay in structures of that kind during air raids.

The construction of a modular underground shelter designed for 100 people [was underway](#) in the centre of Zaporizhzhia. The shelter will be equipped with water, electricity, sewage, and a ventilation system. The project, funded by private investors, costs a total of around UAH10 million. This project can serve as an example of a responsible approach of business community to solving important social issues and ensuring the safety and comfort of residents.

In Zaporizhzhia oblast, 44% of shelters were neither ready for use nor available to people, Suspilne Zaporizhzhia [reported](#). There was a total of 1,785 protective structures in the Ukrainian-government controlled areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast.

In the summer of 2023, on the initiative Want to Learn NGO and Zaporizhzhia Investigation Center, a special chatbot was created for public monitoring of shelters.

## 1.2. Access to public information / information security

In Kherson oblast, there were official websites of Kherson OMA and Kherson CMA, Telegram channels of their Heads, Oleksandr Prokudin (10,600 subscribers) and Roman Mrochka (7,400 subscribers), as well as Telegram channels of Kherson OMA (22,00 subscribers) and Kherson CMA (9,900 subscribers) which daily received 10–20 messages.

Zaporizhzhia Oblast State Administration started holding weekly briefings, and journalists got the opportunity to ask questions directly to Yuri Malashko. Conversely, officials of Zaporizhzhia City Council [continued](#) mentioning martial law and unlawfully denying journalists access to information.

Most respondents of seven focus groups held in August 2023 in Zaporizhzhia oblast within the framework of activities of [Zaporizhzhia Restoration Council](#) in partnership with the National Platform's coordinator in the oblast placed an emphasis on the problem of closedness of local authorities. The focus group participants were certain that local authorities were in no mood to communicate and cooperate with the public and emphasised the importance of transparency, accountability, and public awareness of the decisions made. They also expressed their willingness to participate in a discussion on the decisions made.

Telegram channels and micromedia had the main focus and influence on the audience. Among the most popular were Vazelin which harshly criticised local authorities, projects of young investigative journalists, such as Zaporizhzhia Investigation Center. Almost all communities of Zaporizhzhia and raion humanitarian hubs, including those that operated outside of the oblast, actively shared news via their Telegram channels.

In the last months of 2023, the publication of decisions of councils and their executive bodies on official websites was a positive development in the life of Mykolaiv and other communities of the oblast. This was rather an exception since the outbreak of the full-scale war until October 2023.

Residents of the deoccupied areas and frontline population centres of Donetsk oblast reportedly had difficulties with access to any news. Despite the efforts of operators to restore the mobile network and launch television broadcasting, a large part of members of those communities could not use the mobile Internet or watch television due to a lack of stable power supply. Donetsk Oblast State Administration attempted to partially resolve the problem through releasing a newsletter distributed free of charge in the frontline and deoccupied areas. Yet, this did not completely solve the problem of access to information.

## 2. Work on identity

### 2.1. Changes in education standards

36 educational institutions of Zaporizhzhia oblast operated in the mixed learning format and another 20 could switch to it since 2024. Repair works were underway in school shelters, Zaporizhzhia OMA [reported](#). Basements and underground schools were built in the frontline cities to bring students back from online to face-to-face learning.

Notwithstanding that the educational process in Mykolaiv [provided for](#) an online learning format, the city worked actively on the reconstruction of damaged schools and an increase in shelters in them, including through raising extra budgetary funds.

275 general secondary educational institutions of Donetsk oblast continued operating, but only in an online learning format. To somehow compensate for the too long online learning period (2 years during the COVID-19 pandemic plus another 2 years of a full-scale war), education workers of the oblast's tried to create a network of counselling centres operating face-to-face on the basis of educational hubs outside the oblast and on the basis of Points of Invincibility and schools equipped with bomb shelters in the oblast.

Higher and vocational educational institutions of the oblast continued operating, having relocated to other Ukrainian oblasts and actively applying an online learning format. As a matter of fact, that system has not undergone significant changes for long. However, the effective operation of the above educational institutions strongly depended on the persistence of their management. Specifically, Mariupol State University, [Kramatorsk Higher Vocational Trade and Culinary School](#), Bakhmut College of Arts, and many other educational institutions not only resumed operation outside the oblast, but were also actively developing. Conversely, Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University, relocated in 2014, was losing its teaching potential.

## 2.2. Politics of memory: place names, museum work, holidays and their celebration

Artem Lysohor, Head of Luhansk Oblast Military Administration, emphasised the importance of rejecting the Soviet-era names and terminology, such as [Donbas](#), pointing out that modern Ukraine includes Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, equal among other oblasts of the country. The statement promoted the idea of national sovereignty and separation from Russian narratives.

There were more than 200 urban place names (names of streets, alleys, etc.) in Zaporizhzhia associated with Russia as of the start of the full-scale war. Since the spring of 2022, the local authorities have been making active efforts for renaming streets. In early October, the city's Pushkin Square bus stop [was renamed](#) as Vernadskyi Maidan stop by the decision of the City Council.

On the Day of Defenders and Defendresses of Ukraine, 1 October, the [Alley of Heroes](#) was opened in the centre of Zaporizhzhia. It has prisms with the names and photos of Zaporizhzhia locals killed at the front. The initiative marks an important step in preserving history and honouring the memory of those who gave their lives for a free Ukraine.

## 3. Joint action

### 3.1. Cooperation at the community–authorities level. Trust in decisions of authorities. Response to the needs, business and civic initiatives

Since the very start of the full-scale invasion, Zaporizhzhia locals have started to set up numerous civic initiatives, associations, and volunteer groups. Most volunteer organisations continue operating. Specifically, Caritas Zaporizhzhia Charitable Foundation collects necessary things for those forced to leave their homes or left without a roof over their heads. 100 Percent Life Network. Zaporizhzhia Charitable Organisation, with the assistance of [People in Need Ukraine](#) non-profit organisation, the Czech Republic, and financial support of the Humanitarian Fund for Ukraine, continued to provide those affected with assistance and support.

Volunteers of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society helped people affected by the destruction of residential buildings, set up invincibility tents, and provided psychological care on the spot. Volunteers of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society Rapid Response Unit, in cooperation with local authorities, evacuated people from the shelled areas.

Since the second half of 2023, Kherson OMA has been focused on engaging the public and coordinating its efforts with those of the business community, other social groups, and representatives of civil society. In September and December, its composition was reshuffled and new advisory bodies were established under Kherson Oblast State Administration ([the Regional Council of Entrepreneurs](#), [the Council of Churches and Religious Organisations](#), [the Council of Volunteers](#), [the Council of Veterans and Families of the Deceased](#) to deal with the reinstatement of Ukraine's national and civic identity [the Council of Internally Displaced Persons](#),



etc.), a plan for public consultations [was approved](#), and the public council's activities were resumed. Some of those advisory bodies operated on paper only, though the most important are steps made to restore public participation institutions at the oblast level.

According to the monitoring data on Donetsk oblast, there were almost no civil society organisations carrying out anti-corruption activities, monitoring the activities of authorities and civil society development. Only humanitarian aid organisations actively operated in the oblast. At the same time, most military administrations took a dim view of their communication with the population in an effort to underscore that they provided all the humanitarian aid exclusively on their own, not in cooperation with donor and international organisations.

Civil society organisations demanded that they be engaged in the process of planning the recovery of the oblast. A coalition of civil society organisations was [founded](#) to advocate for those changes with the aim of lobbying for the adoption of legislative amendments that would enable more active engagement of civil society institutions in the recovery.

#### >> LOCAL INITIATIVES

The drafting of the City Development Strategy until 2027, which had lasted for almost ten months, [was finalised](#) in Mykolaiv. The finished document will be discussed and amended where appropriate. The city faces the challenge of creating a safe environment for living and doing business, and the need to restore critical and social infrastructure.

#### >> MASS RALLIES

A new phenomenon, mass rallies in support of draft laws that provide for setting up clear enlistment term during the period of martial law, gained momentum. In some Ukrainian cities, rally participants [demanded](#) that the right to demobilisation of military personnel who have served 18 months during martial law be enshrined.

The campaign to stop spending funds of local budgets for landscaping and to redirect them for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine became widespread in the Ukrainian oblasts.

Public actions to draw attention of authorities to the problem of prisoners of war and to intensify efforts towards exchanging prisoners of war was another area of public activity. Specifically, on 17 December, more than 100 Zaporizhzhia locals [went](#) to a rally in support of prisoners of war. Those were relatives, friends, parents of the servicemen of the 501st Separate Battalion of Marines and the 3029th Military Unit of the National Guard of Ukraine. The protesters carried posters reading: "We will not let the world forget them", "My soul and heart are still in captivity", "Captivity kills", "Bring the heroes back home".

## 3.2. Cooperation at the level of society. Initiatives. Trust between groups

A new form of civil society's activity in Kherson oblast, which proved their effectiveness, was the creation of a network of hubs where Kherson locals could attend various events, including concerts and exhibitions, and receive various services ranging from a psychologist and lawyer to a beauty counsellor.

The first hubs appeared in the oblast in mid-2023, and a network of hubs has started to intensively expand in the local communities since the second half of the year. On 11 November 2023, Svoje Education and Training Center was solemnly [opened](#) in Kherson, followed by several others. They are placed in safe air-raid and bomb shelters. Since early January, similar hubs were supposed to be opened in some rural communities. Given the popularity of hubs, it is possible to say that this is the real network aiming to increase social cohesion and resilience.

In Zaporizhzhia oblast, cooperation between various groups was initiated and coordinated primarily at the grassroots horizontal level – coalitions of civil society organisations (UNDP-supported Network of the Community Security and Social Cohesion Working Groups, Zaporizhzhia Reconstruction Council) – and was characterised by trust between groups (horizontal). Conversely, the level of trust and interaction between those groups on the one hand and local authorities on the other (vertical) remained low. Hence, the lack of balance

between horizontal and vertical cohesion in Zaporizhzhia oblast affected the general situation of social stability in the oblast.

## 4. Changes in the social structure

### 4.1 Challenges related to the situation of women and children, people with disabilities

In 2023, Zaporizhzhia-based special boarding school, Orientyr, [opened](#) a new multimedia classroom, a recreation room, and a room for social and routine guidance for partly sighted and blind students after a major renovation. The premises with an area with approximately 170 square meters are located underground, but look like ordinary classrooms. They have restrooms, showers, a nurse's station, and batteries providing a 48-hour power backup.

230 children with various visual impairments study at Orientyr boarding school. Although online learning is impossible because of the peculiarities of their health, the availability of a shelter enables them to have four days of live communication with teachers every week.

### 4.2. Needs of volunteers of Territorial Defence Forces. Response. Mobilisation. Military reservation

According to the Head of the Oblast Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre, Colonel Oleksandr Marushchak, the mobilisation plan for Zaporizhzhia oblast was 40%-implemented. Also, difficulties were reported with visits to houses and apartments (there were cases of ignoring requests of municipal guards to enter houses / apartments, insults to them, and proposals to go to the front).

Problems primarily occurred because people feared that they would be sent to the front without adequate training and support. The lack of proper communication of authorities, conscripts, and their family members widened the gap in social ties between those who "fight" / "do not fight", "relocated" / "remained", and the like, which adversely affects the level of social cohesion and, consequently, social resilience in Zaporizhzhia oblast.

A significant number of critical, defence and strategic businesses of Donetsk oblast faced problems of the poor public system of military reservation. Even with the possibility of reserving their employees, companies and institutions were forced to go through a long-lasting procedure. At the same time, it is impossible to step up this process or to know what stage of review it has reached. Unlike central authorities, Donetsk OMA (which is the subject of submission for the reservation of employees) not only encouraged local employers to submit a list of their employees for reservation, but also ensured the review of documents and their submission to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as soon as possible.

Uptown residents of Mykolaiv [complained](#) about the problem with public transport. Mayor Oleksandr Sienkevych noted that the problem did exist, though not because of the lack of transport, as Mykolaiv received new vehicles from partners on a regular basis and put them into operation, but because the male population did not want to work as drivers, fearing mobilisation into the army.

# III. RELATIVELY REAR AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

## 1. Changes in the system of governance

### 1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

Within the reporting period, certain changes in the openness of authorities and transparent decision-making were reported in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. Local TV channels resumed broadcasts of open meetings of standing deputy commissions of local councils, as well as live broadcasts of sessions of oblast and city councils.

#### >> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

A capsule [was laid](#) in Lviv for the construction of social housing for families of wounded Ukrainians, with the participation of the Ambassador of the European Union to Ukraine, Katarina Maternova. The European Commission allocated EUR19.5 million in grant funds for the construction. The contractor must have the first building completed by May 2024.

The blocking of the Ukrainian-Polish border raised the issue of freight transportation across the Ukrainian-Romanian border, including through Chernivtsi oblast. A 2-kilometre section of T-26-01 road, Chernivtsi – Vashkivtsi – Putya – Ruska Checkpoint, with an access road to Shepit BCP and a 3-kilometre section of the road in Izvoarele Sucevei, Suceava County, Romania, were rehabilitated in 2023 as part of the “Improvement of the transport infrastructure in the cross-border area Suceava – Chernivtsi (Izvoarele Sucevei – Shepit)” [project](#). The construction of Shepit – Izvoarele Sucevei border crossing point could mark the next phase after the roads repair. That border crossing point operated until 2010, but was closed after Romania’s accession to the European Union due to non-compliance with European standards. As of today, both states are interested in giving a second life to the checkpoint.

#### >> AID FOR THE ARMY

According to the monitoring data on Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, the processes of consolidation of authorities in respect of assistance to the AFU continued in the oblast-level system of governance due to public pressure and position of central authorities. At that phase, the main task was the purchase of drones for military units stationed in Prykarpattia.

In November, the Transparency and Accountability Working Group, tasked to [monitor](#) public procurements, started operating under Ivano-Frankivsk OMA. Within two months of the Group’s operation in the oblast, 12 tender procurements for the arrangement of administrative buildings, repair of cultural buildings, and purchase of office equipment were [cancelled](#), and UAH43 million were redirected for the AFU needs.

At its 39th meeting on 15 December, Ivano-Frankivsk City Council [approved](#) the budget for 2024. The general budget fund was UAH3.6 billion. UAH527,100,000 or 15% of community expenses was earmarked for the support of the AFU in the community budget for 2024, according to the City Council. The amount was not final and might change depending on the needs and requests of the militaries. UAH300 million was supposed to be channelled to defence needs, including military procurements (drones, vehicles), subsidies, and others,

while UAH216 million was targeted for social assistance for defenders. Specifically, UAH100 million was earmarked for ammunition payments: militaries from among community members fighting on the frontlines were entitled to UAH50,000 each, while others would receive UAH20,000 each.

Lviv Oblast Council [made](#) a decision on financial support for the AFU and on a reduction in non-priority expenditure of the oblast budget. In accordance with the decision, 75% of the free balance of budget funds for 2023, 20% of the difference between the revenue budget and protected expenditure in 2024, 50% of the budget surplus in 2024, and 50% of proceeds from the sale of municipal property would go to military formations.

In late December 2023, the government of Ukraine allocated an additional UAH12.4 million to Chernivtsi oblast for the purchase of housing for six militaries and their families. In 2023, UAH65.4 million was transferred from the state budget to the oblast to provide 31 ex-combatants with housing (purchase of housing in any population centre of Ukraine, except for those located in the TOAs and near the demarcation line).

According to the monitoring data on Chernivtsi oblast, 8 militaries and 5 military families [received](#) UAH190,000 in one-time targeted assistance under the oblast programme for social support for ATO/JFO participants, male and female defenders, and their family members.

Every resident of Odesa to join the AFU ranks [would be entitled to receive](#) a one-time financial aid worth up to UAH20,000 from the city budget. UAH20 million are to be earmarked from the budget for these needs in 2024. Funds will be provided under the city target programme for the provision of social services and other types of assistance to vulnerable groups of population of Odesa for 2024–2026. The programme is scheduled to be launched in 2024, that means that the already mobilised locals of Odesa will not receive the said financial aid.

## 2. Work on identity

### 2.1. Changes in education standards

In early October, a decision [was made](#) to create, in two schools in Chernivtsi, grades for online students who study abroad due to the full-scale invasion of Russia. They will be taught the Ukrainian language, literature, and history. Also, students will get scores at schools abroad to be counted for the rest of the subjects. The initiative is targeted at reducing children's educational burden. There was a total of some 4,500 students of that kind in the oblast.

### 2.2. Politics of memory: place names, museum work, holidays and their celebration

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the renaming of streets in Chernivtsi oblast continued. The information [was made public](#) that in 2022–2023, 80% of streets in the oblast, to which the Law of Ukraine “On the Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols” applied, were renamed, with the majority, 928, in Chernivtsi raion.

In early October, on the Day of the Defenders and Defendresses of Ukraine and the Day of the Creation of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a memorial hideout in honour of the fallen UIA Heroes [was opened](#) in Horby farmstead of Ust-Putyla territorial community. The hiding place where messengers met was reproduced. The memorial place was arranged by Chernivtsi Oblast Society of Political Prisoners and Repressed within the framework of “Kryivka – a Symbol of Struggle” initiative.

## 2.3. Freedom of religion

At a press conference in December, the Mayor of Chernivtsi, Roman Klichuk, [claimed](#) that Bukovyna churches used by religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (hereinafter referred to as the UOC MP) in Chernivtsi could not be privatised. Litigations between 22 religious communities of the UOC MP against Chernivtsi City Council over its decision to terminate a land lease agreement were underway. The issue of privatisation of the church and property of the religious community of Sokyriany by a priest of the UOC MP (in the fall, the church converted to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the OCU)) remained pending and undetermined.

In 2023, 9 communities of Bukovyna [converted](#) from the UOC MP to the OCU, including those of Pohorilivka, Rynhach, Chornyi Potik, Prylypche, Rososhany, Ivaniivtsi, Kaplivka, Sokyriany, and Berezhanaka.

A priest of the UOC MP in Chernivtsi oblast who denied Russia's armed aggression [was found](#) guilty of collaborationism. He was banned from holding posts in religious organisations and conducting public speaking-related activities for a term of 12 years.

There were 928 officially registered religious organisations in Bukovyna, including 392 of the UOC MP, 153 of the OCU, 293 of the Protestant Church, 29 of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, 24 of the Roman Catholic Church, 12 of the Jewish Church, as well as 26 other religious organisations.

## 2.4. National minorities

On 8 December, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [approved](#) the draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Taking into Account the Expert Opinion of the Council of Europe and Its Bodies on the Rights of National Minorities (Communities) in Certain Areas". The draft Law was among the recommendations of the European Commission to launch negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

Pursuant to the Law, privately-owned institutions of higher education will have the right to freely choose the language of study if it is an official language of the European Union, while ensuring that persons studying at such institutions study the state language as a separate academic discipline.

In the words of the Head of the Department for Nationalities and Religions under Zakarpattia OMA, Oleksandr Liakh, *"The majority of public associations, private individuals, and politicians of the Hungarian minority [welcomed](#) the draft Law. First and foremost, the positive aspects are due to the education issue. Hungarians believe that education in their mother tongue is a key to preserving their national community. Without a native language in education, the Hungarian minority will have to assimilate. In parallel with the need to know the state language as a factor that will help them integrate into society, Hungarians need the opportunity to get education in the native language for preserving their national minority. This law offers such opportunity."*

On 12 December, representatives of the Hungarian community of Zakarpattia [called on](#) Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán and EU leaders to support negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU at the summit on 14–15 December. The signatories pointed out that Ukraine has shown progress over the past year in implementing the European Commission's recommendations on the rights of national minorities. The matter concerned the new draft Law on national minorities which "significantly reflects the interests of national minorities" and has the support of the Hungarian community.

A similar statement [was made](#) by representatives of the Slovak communities of Zakarpattia.

## 3. Joint action

### 3.1. Cooperation at the community–authorities level. Trust in decisions of authorities. Response to the needs, business and civic initiatives

#### >> RELOCATION OF BUSINESSES

Relocated IT companies felt quite comfortable in Prykarpattia. According to Ukraine's largest IT community, DUO, Ivano-Frankivsk [was named](#) the most comfortable place for IT specialists to work. Three percent of IT specialists lived in the city.

Following the onset of the full-scale invasion, 68 businesses, evacuated from the areas where active hostilities were ongoing, operated in the city, the Director of the Department for Socio-Economic Development and Strategic Planning of Chernivtsi City Council, Serhii Bostan, [said](#). Those were businesses from Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Kyiv oblasts. However, about half of them have already returned to their previous locations. At the time of writing of the report, there were 38 relocated businesses in the city of which 10 paid taxes to the city budget, and another 12 paid taxes for employed workers.

#### >> LOCAL INITIATIVES

Lviv City Council [approved](#) a comprehensive programme to support war veterans, their family members, and relatives of fallen defenders and. UAH480 million is expected to be spent in 2024 for the programme implementation. About 80% of the programme measures are already in place and are there to be used by defenders and war veterans. The programme will last until 2026. It covers financial and legal support, health care, social support, leisure, and employment.

### 3.2. Cooperation at the level of society. Initiatives. Trust between groups

#### >> AID FOR THE ARMY

In Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, financial and logistical aid to the AFU reached a qualitatively new level. There were new initiatives implemented in various demographic and professional communities, actions dedicated to celebrating religious holidays (Christmas carols and nativity scenes) and commemorating fallen soldiers. A fundraising campaign was public and widely covered in the media. Charity auctions became especially relevant, as apart from the moral aspect, they brought benefactors valuable trophies to confirm their contribution. A charity auction within the framework of the business forum held in Ivano-Frankivsk on 6 November [was](#) among the most financially successful events. The auction raised UAH2,165,000 for the AFU. Volunteers of #SaveUkraineNow (SUN) Coordination Center intended to spend all raised funds for the purchase of grenade launchers for Prykarpattia military units on the frontlines. SUN was created in the first days of the full-scale invasion by public organisations and businesses, together with the militaries to ensure comprehensive support for defence forces of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast on the frontlines. During that period, SUN raised over USD2.8 million.

According to the monitoring data on Chernivtsi oblast, the media space was flooded with news about joint and individual initiatives aimed at helping the militaries (at the level of communities and individuals, including children), [charity fairs](#), etc. For example, 22-year-old Ivan Haidei from Lomachyntsi, Chernivtsi oblast, [manufactured](#) turbo stoves for the militaries. Those were portable, fast heat-up stoves. Ivan is a person with a disability who systematically helps the AFU.



## >> REINTEGRATION OF VETERANS INTO CIVILIAN LIFE

In October, a veterans' policy office [was established](#) in Chernivtsi oblast. The office was supposed to provide social services to war veterans, demobilised militaries, and their families. The office was meant to initially operate under the oblast social support office of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and then to be subordinated to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

In December, members of Chernivtsi Oblast Council [supported](#) the initiative to set up a centre for social and psychological assistance to Ukrainian defenders, Veteran Hub. According to the OMA Head Ruslan Zaparaniuk, the oblast-level municipal institution was supposed to provide necessary services of psychological support, counselling on issues of medical treatment, social protection, as well as legal aid services, in particular in the areas of land and housing. Among other things, Veteran Hub was meant to facilitate the adaptation of defenders to civilian life and provide all the necessary support to their families and families of fallen soldiers.

A similar initiative was [implemented](#) in Odesa where the front office of Veteran Hub's service centre was opened.

In October, 19 war veterans and 11 wives of war veterans from Lviv [received](#) business vouchers from Lviv City Council. That was financial aid worth up to UAH300,000 for the development of their own businesses. The winners were participants promoting the following business initiatives: a volunteer vehicle workshop, an atelier, a photography studio, a coffee shop, a pizzeria, a beauty salon, a pet shop, a pig farm, a veterinary clinic, health care services, etc. Among the winners was a war veteran Nazar Oleksiuk who, after returning to civilian life, started his own business – he opened a pet shop, Crazy Pugs.

Participants in a meeting of the Culture, Youth, Sports and External Relations Commission of Lviv City Council unanimously [supported](#) the programme for the development of sports and adaptive sports for military personnel and war veterans for 2024–2026. It was about mass sports, sports of higher achievements, game sports for people with disabilities, as well as sports included in the programme of international sports competitions, Games of the Unconquered.

On 19 December, Ivano-Frankivsk Vocational and Technical Education Center of Ukraine's State Employment Service [launched](#) business training courses for 16 ex-combatants in case of unemployment. This is one of the eight centres of that kind in Ukraine. Vocational training courses were funded by the Mandatory State Social Insurance Fund of Ukraine.

Since early December, Oleh Kravets Sports and Rehabilitation Center has been operating in Uzhhorod in the test mode. The Center is named after a participant in the Games of the Unconquered (call sign "Kara") killed at the front in 2023. The first 30 people with disabilities from Zakarpattia have already completed their rehabilitation there. The project, launched back in 2016, was co-funded from the city and oblast budgets, as well as by the State Fund for Regional Development in the amount of UAH11.5 million. In addition, international donors gave USD600,000 for arranging premises.

## >> MASS RALLIES

Since the beginning of September, rallies were reported to take place in a number of cities with the demand to spend budget funds for aiding the army. On 4 November, dozens of locals of Ivano-Frankivsk [gathered](#) in front of the administration building for a peaceful rally under the motto "Paving stone is not worth life". The demonstrators demanded that the city and oblast authorities increase funding for aiding the AFU.

On 12 November, a rally [was held](#) in Chernivtsi under the walls of the City Hall with the participation of 40–50 representatives of families of servicemen who demanded that clear demobilisation term be set for the militaries.

## 4. Changes in the social structure

### 4.1. Challenges related to the situation of women and children, people with disabilities

13 orphans and children of preschool age, 5 to 16 years old, deprived of parental care [were evacuated](#) to Lviv oblast from Zaporizhzhia oblast in December due to military operations. They were placed in institutions for children of Lviv oblast. There were 298 internally displaced children in 17 institutions of Lviv oblast as of the end of 2023.

Since the beginning of the year, 120 with disabilities [have been employed](#) in Chernivtsi oblast (more than 500 applied, including 32 ex-combatants).

Moreover, people with disabilities had the opportunity to start their own businesses, taking advantage of micro-grants (up to UAH250,000) for opening or expanding their businesses as provided under the Own Business grant programme, a component of the government's [eRobota](#) project.

An inclusive café manufactory, a social project aimed at adapting, socialising, and preparing youths with mental disorders for further employment, [was opened](#) in Chernivtsi for St. Nicholas Day. It would teach the professions of cook, waiter, and barista. Also, another meeting of the Bukovyna without Borders cluster [was conducted](#) there which brought together representatives of authorities, international charitable organisations, and local public organisations to resolve the issues of accessibility of transport, social, and health care services for people with disabilities, to provide psychological support to families raising children with disabilities, and to ensure architectural accessibility of institutions and organisations.

Within the framework of the Inclusive Humanitarian Response in Chernivtsi Oblast project, funded by the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan), the fourth inclusive ward [was opened](#) in Kitzman Multi-disciplinary Intensive Care Hospital in Bukovyna. The ward is equipped with everything necessary for a comfortable stay of patients in wheelchairs or with mobility limitations.

In Zakarpattia oblast, 15 accommodation centres for displaced persons [were arranged](#) with the support of the oblast office of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society. Comfortable and safe conditions were created in shelters for families with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities who fled from dangerous areas of the country. The Red Cross made all the necessary preparations in the shelters of Zakarpattia under ShelterPlus project implemented with the support of the Austrian Red Cross in partnership with Neighbour in Need and Austrian Development Cooperation.

### 4.2. Needs of displaced persons. Response

According to official data, [there were](#) 233,000 internally displaced persons (hereinafter referred to as IDPs) in Lviv oblast, 30,000 down from their number at the onset of the full-scale invasion. Of that number, there were 106,000 IDPs in Lviv as of December 2023. 70% of IDPs were of working age, 30% were elderly.

In communities with the largest number of IDPs, an initiative was implemented to create advisory bodies (councils) for discussing proposals and ideas, as well as holding events jointly with authorities. The council consists of representatives of local authorities, business community, IDP NGOs, and religious organisations. For communities, such councils are an additional tool to raise grant funds with the help of their member organisations.

In 2023, the following projects were supported in Lviv oblast: the arrangement of youth and cultural spaces, restoration of sports facilities, creation of psychological assistance centres and shelters, and transfer of housing for IDPs and employees of relocated businesses.

As of 1 December 2023, 137,000 displaced persons [were registered](#) in Odesa oblast, with the majority of them living in Odesa, almost 60,000.

According to Ivano-Frankivsk OMA, [there were](#) 124,110 IDPs in the oblast as of November 2023. In October, the results of a [survey](#) entitled "Social and Political Attitudes of Members of Ivano-Frankivsk Community" by Civic Network OPORA were made public. According to the survey results, 41% of respondents were neutral to-

wards IDPs in the community, 33% rather friendly, and 8% very friendly. 9% of Ivano-Frankivsk community members were somewhat unfriendly towards those displaced, 2% very unfriendly, and another 2% did not know anything about IDPs in the community. Youths aged 18–29 were the friendliest towards IDPs. 65% of Ivano-Frankivsk community members personally knew or communicated with some IDPs. Most of them were people 40 to 49 years old.

In 2023, volunteers of Caritas ICF [provided](#) 3,110 displaced persons in Prykarpattia with humanitarian or legal aid. Yulia Chornii, Coordinator of Protection of Internally Displaced Persons project, Caritas Ivano-Frankivsk, said that the project operated in the four communities of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. It was geared towards providing targeted assistance and resolving particular problems of IDPs based on individual approach. Some received food kits, whereas others were provided with legal advice or attended business courses.

During a forum on 8 December, the Association of Ukrainian Cities [said](#) that Polianytsia community was the best in terms of arranging shelters for IDPs. Since February 2022, 4,739 residents of Prykarpattia hosted 4,320 IDPs (for reference, Bukovel Ski Resort is located on the community's territory).

### >> HOUSING FOR IDPs

Within the framework of Shelter social [project](#), owners of residential premises who temporarily accommodated IDPs received UAH450 in compensation from the state for each accommodated displaced person. There were 2,326 such owners in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast who provided accommodation to 6,854 IDPs. Since the beginning of the year, the oblast has been paid compensation estimated at over UAH90 million.

At the same time, a lack of living space was reported in the city. "The community has no facilities that are not being used. IDPs complain that the rent is high and that the benefit they receive from the state budget does not cover real expenses," Ivano-Frankivsk Deputy Mayor Vitalii Fedoriv said in an [interview](#). At the same time, approximately 600 forced migrants lived in shelters and hostels of the city.

In Drohobych, Lviv oblast, a 12-apartment modular frame house [was put into operation](#) for internally displaced people. This was the first housing of that kind in the oblast worth around UAH17 million allocated from all budgets. Another UAH1 million was raised from benefactors and patrons. The construction of three more such houses in Drohobych community is planned for the spring.

IDPs from Bucha, Mariupol, Horlivka, Starobilsk, and other population centres [continued to live](#) in Chernivtsi-based modular town. Shelters and asylums in the oblast housed IDPs. At the same time, the issue of compensation for damaged or destroyed housing and the possibility of getting adequate accommodation remained relevant for those who lost housing due to Russia's aggression.

Housing remained the main problem of IDPs in Odesa oblast as well. Most people did not want to live in dormitories. For that reason, international donors were asked to provide funds for the rental of private houses instead of channelling them for the repair of places of mass accommodation.

### >> EMPLOYMENT OF IDPs

Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast Employment Centre continued to consider employers' applications for the [reimbursement](#) of labour costs for employment of IDPs. Since the very start of that programme, 518 employers of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast have received a positive decision on reimbursement worth a total of over UAH10.4 million for employing 879 IDPs. Of that number, 218 employers applied for the reimbursement for employment of 365 displaced persons in 2023.

In Lviv oblast, 415 employers who employed 1,046 IDPs in a time of war [received the reimbursement](#) for labour costs in January–November 2023. The reimbursement was paid within two months in the amount of the minimum wage.

According to data Chernivtsi Oblast Employment Service made public in October 2023, 821 IDPs [have used](#) its services since the beginning of 2023; 237 displaced persons have been employed, with the largest number in Chernivtsi raion (179 IDPs). IDPs found jobs in the following areas: municipal enterprises, education, health care, production, transport, trade, and public administration.

Since the onset of the full-scale war, difficulties with employment of IDPs in Lviv oblast [arose](#) primarily due to the uncertainty about their future place of stay, expectations of high wages, and shift work schedules (12-hour shifts), which were not always suitable for internally displaced women with children, the Center for the Study and Monitoring of Quality and Mobility of the Workforce reported.

### 4.3. Needs of volunteers of Territorial Defence Forces. Response. Mobilisation

[According to](#) Andrii Demchenko, an aide to the Chief of the State Border Service of Ukraine, some 30 men attempted to illegally leave Ukraine on a daily basis. 7,000 illegal border crossers were detained within ten months of 2023, and some 16,500 since the imposition of martial law. Over 7,000 men tried to leave the country with forged documents. These numbers are much lower compared to the early days of a full-scale invasion. At that time, 80 to 90 men were daily apprehended in attempted border crossings.

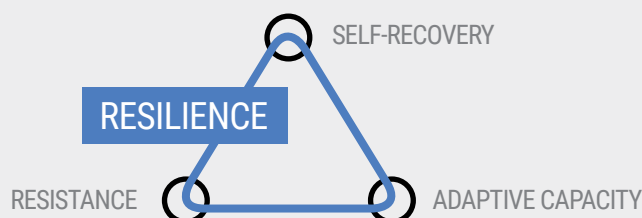
NGL.media journalists [identified](#) hundreds of public organisations and charitable foundations involved in the escape of draft-age men from the country [through Shliakh system](#). Journalists also found out the identity of 2,248 men who had left the country with permits granted by Lviv OMA and did not come back. According to various estimates, the “service” costed USD3,000 to USD5,000 per person in the black market. Hence, it is about tens of millions of dollars.

Within the reporting period, a negative image of mobilisation, shaped through media outlets and social networking sites emphasising violations of legislation by employees of territorial recruitment and social support centres during mobilisation, posed a serious challenge and adversely affected the country’s defence capability.

# DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

## Conceptual framework of the approach of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion

**RESILIENCE** means a social practice at the national, oblast, and local levels that offers opportunities to overcome challenges and adapt to transformations.



We measure resilience in the following three dimensions:

- **adaptive capacity** of social systems and institutions to crises and sudden environmental changes,
- **self-recovery** that means mobilisation of citizens, institutions to jointly solve various humanitarian, social, and security tasks,
- **resistance** means stabilisation of models of cooperation between the government, business community, and civil society which contributes to increasing the level of cross-sectoral trust in the course of transformation.

**SOCIAL COHESION** means the state of relationships in society between social groups (horizontal cohesion) and between society and the authorities (vertical cohesion). It is measured by the levels of trust and norms of reciprocity (development of positive social capital); the strength of civil society; and conflict management institutions being in place (e.g., responsible democracy, independent judiciary, etc.).

**RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION ARE BASED** on common approaches, shared values, and versatile models of cooperation.

### >> FOCUS

- on actors, changes in the governance, assessment of vulnerability, adaptive capacity, and transformation as opposed to return to the previous state.

### >> DATA COLLECTION:

- temporarily occupied and frontline areas – Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts
- Ukrainian government-controlled areas where military operations are not taking place – Odesa, Mykolaiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Zakarpattia, and Chernivtsi oblasts.

**DATA SOURCES:** publications in the media, decisions of authorities, draft decisions of authorities, data of surveys and public opinion polls, data of social networking sites, reports of non-governmental organisations, and any other publicised information. The data are collected by coordinators of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion in 10 oblasts, based on data sources, their own understanding of the state of affairs and involvement in local cohesion processes.

**>> PROBLEMS**

In the temporarily occupied areas:

- Dynamics of occupation. The advance of Russian troops, the situation in occupied population centres; opinion of the population of the oblast / community / political forces regarding Russia's occupation and military actions.
- Changes in the system of governance. Decisions and information of the occupying authorities; cases of collaborationism; seizure of property; expropriation of products by the occupying administrations.
- Humanitarian situation. Filtration measures of the occupying authorities; forced deportation and its routes; hostage taking; recruitment into armed formations; nature of evacuation; destruction; access to health care services.
- Work on identity. The operation of educational facilities; relocation of school children, students, and teachers; forced Russification; Russian state education standards; politics of memory: place names, museum work, holidays and their celebration; activities of religious organisations.
- Changes in the social structure. Challenges related to the situation of women, children, and people with disabilities.

In the Ukrainian government-controlled areas where military operations are not taking place:

- Dynamics of military operations. Shelling and attacks / weapons used against the civilian population; destruction.
- Changes in the system of governance. The organisation of activities of authorities and access of citizens to decision-making at the local level; access to public information; coordination of actions of volunteers and authorities, as well as actions between authorities at a variety of levels, authorities and the militaries, volunteers and the militaries, etc.
- Humanitarian situation. The accessibility of drinking water, food, communication, electricity; access to health care services; provision with humanitarian aid at the oblast level.
- Changes in the social environment. The attitudes in communities to changes in symbols, calendars (holidays, memorial days); renaming of streets and other public places; operation of educational facilities, relocation of school children, students, and teachers; civil society and business community, labour market.
- The situation of internally displaced persons. The availability of housing and employment; integration into the host community; networking.

**>> THE PUBLISHING FREQUENCY OF THE REPORT**

The initial monitoring report covers the first four months of the large-scale invasion (from February through June), starting on 24 February 2022; and each of the follow-up reports has a two-month timeframe. Issue No. 9 covers the period from October through December 2023.





## ABOUT UKRAINIAN CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL RESEARCH

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## RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR

Periodic report based on monitoring materials from selected regions of Ukraine  
Issue No. 9. October – December 2023

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