

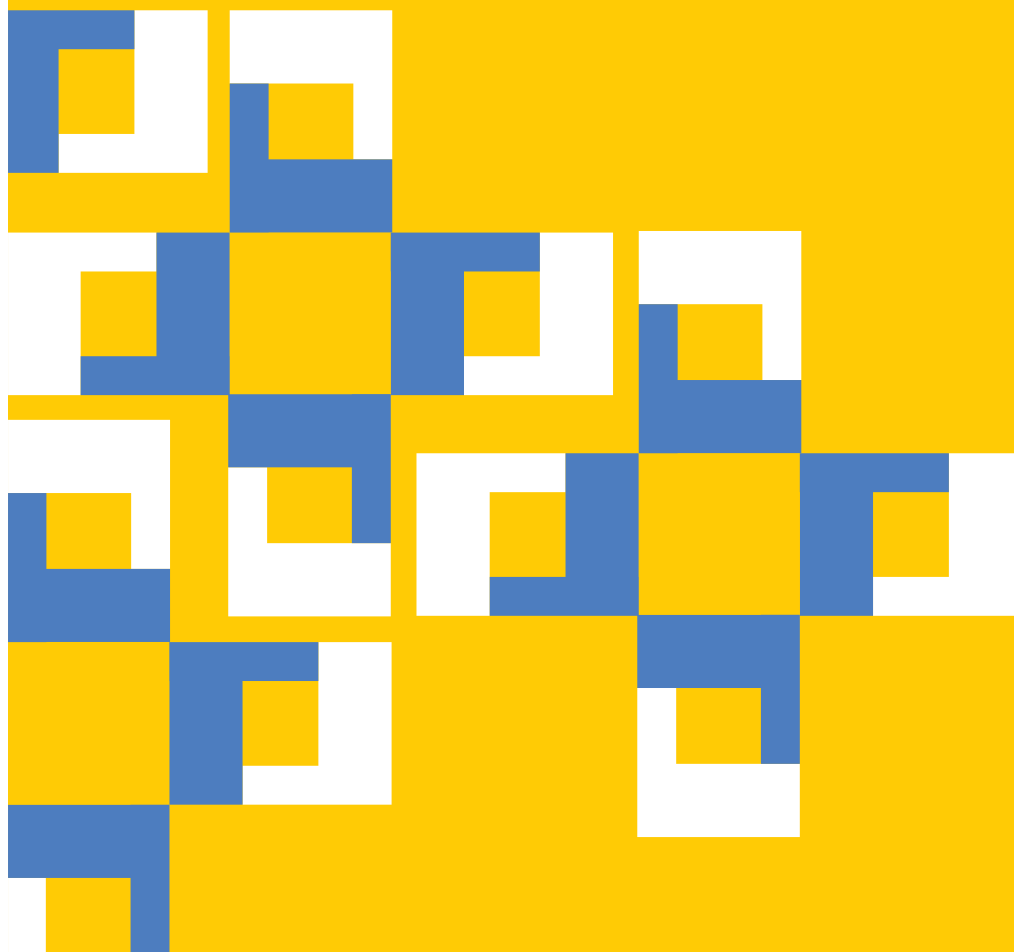
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JANUARY–MARCH 2024

RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR

Periodic report based
on monitoring materials from
selected regions of Ukraine

2024



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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” project.

The report is based on data on events in 11 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, Kharkiv, 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.

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SUMMARY

The situation at the front line

In January – March 2024, heavy fighting was reported in Donetsk oblast. Following the occupation of Mariinka in late December 2023, the Russians focused on capturing the town of Avdiivka. In November 2023, the invaders actually cut the main transport artery for personnel rotation and the movement of reserves to the city, therefore secondary rural roads were used to continue the defence of the town. After months of heavy fighting, the Russian army captured the town in early 2024. On 17 February, Ukrainian units had to pull back, but held their lines 6–7 kilometres west of the town.

Notwithstanding the occupation, Ukraine highly appreciates the Avdiivka defence operation. First, it has deterred the enemy and prevented it from launching an offensive in other sectors of the front. Second, it was possible to organise the pullback from the town so that to prevent large groups of defenders from being surrounded or captured. Third, throughout the entire operation near Avdiivka, Russian forces [have suffered](#) significant losses.

The aggressor has attacked towards the town of Chasiv Yar. Despite a lack of significant progress, experts did not exclude the possibility of intensification of offensive operations in that area, because the capture of Chasiv Yar might endanger the large cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

Luhansk oblast has remained almost completely occupied. The Ukrainian militaries continuously repelled enemy attacks towards Lyman where the Russians, using aerial bombardment, attempted to break through Ukrainian lines.

The Russian occupiers have continued to fiercely attack the southern part of the front in Zaporizhzhia oblast near Robotyne and Verbove. *“Combat actions are characterised by the extensive use of drones of all types in combination with artillery and mortar fire. In these conditions, unmanned attack systems are gradually becoming the main strike weapon of ground units in combined arms battles,”* Oleksandr Syrskyi, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, [underscored](#).

The security situation in the frontline areas has remained extremely difficult. Ongoing attacks by the Russians have resulted in serious destruction of Ukraine’s infrastructure and deaths of civilians. On 22 March, the Russians [hit](#) Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP), the largest in Ukraine, with eight missiles. The facility generated over 1.5 GW of electricity which is equivalent to two nuclear reactors of Rivne NPP. For the time being, two generation units of Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Station, HPP-1 and HPP-2, are out of operation. More than 7,500 square metres of the water area of the Dnipro are polluted with oil products.

Shelling of Kharkiv and Kharkiv oblast has significantly intensified since January. On 9 February, powerful strikes dealt by the enemy destroyed an oil refinery in Kharkiv which has resulted in a massive fire engulfing 56 residential buildings. Civilian casualties, including three children killed, were reported. Ukrainian services had to [mitigate](#) the consequences of a release of more than 3,000 tons of hazardous substances.

As of 28 March 2024, some 100,000 enemy troops have been concentrated near Kupiansk and Lyman for more than ten months, [according to](#) Kharkiv Oblast Military Administration. Some 40,000 of them participated in combat actions, while the rest were engaged in logistics and support. The militaries of the Armed Forces of Ukraine deterred daily attacks near Kupiansk. Since March, the enemy has intensified the use of guided aerial bombs which have a much greater destructive power than artillery shells and which, according to the locals, are filled with unspecified chemicals, making it difficult to breathe. On 21 March, massive attacks on Kharkiv oblast’s energy facilities [were recorded](#). TPP-5 was destroyed. Due to a critical damage, most consumers in the oblast were left without electricity, heat, and water.

Hence, the security component is a key factor determining all other aspects of resilience and cohesion, the efficiency of authorities, and humanitarian situation in the frontline areas.

Temporarily occupied areas

In the first quarter of 2024, the rapid political integration of territories and populations into Russia-wide system, in particular through the sham election of the President of Russia, has continued in the temporarily occupied areas of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts. The occupiers resorted to repression to force the locals to participate in the sham election which threatened the security and freedom of the populations of the occupied areas. These systemic actions of the occupiers pose profound challenges to further the policy of reintegration and to restore stability in the oblasts following their deoccupation.

Most revenues of the occupied territories consist of transfers from the state budget of the Russian Federation. In 2024, a total of more than RUB430 billion is to be allocated from the budget of the Russian Federation for these needs. Despite this, budgetary deficits in the so-called new Federation entities have not been reduced.

The plans of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration to prepare Masters of Public Administration for the “newly created entities” were nothing but Russia’s efforts to strengthen administrative control of the temporarily occupied areas.

Access to mobile communications and the Internet was unavailable or limited in most frontline population centres and areas of Luhansk oblast. Even when resumed, the Internet access was often spotty. The occupying authorities installed only a few payphones, not enough for the locals to communicate.

People in many areas lost access to centralised water supply due to unrepaired or destroyed water pipes and had to survive without the necessary resources. The election pledges to restore heating have not been carried out. The lack of centralised heating forced people to resort to alternative heating means, such as stoves and heaters.

The occupying authorities toughened filtration measures and restrictions on access to border crossing points which has posed additional border crossing difficulties to locals of the non-government controlled areas, especially those without Russian passports.

The so-called incorporation of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts into the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation on 26 February 2024 indicates that Ukrainians who live there may be called up for military service in the Russian army.

In an attempt to establish control of parishes and dioceses, the Russian occupiers actively interfered with matters of religion and freedom of belief as part of their strategy to maintain control of the region.

Frontline and deoccupied areas

The disrupted power generation has posed a serious challenge for Kharkiv oblast, especially in the winter period, because power shortage paralysed local businesses, hitting the oblast economy. The population and authorities made respective preparations through purchasing generators and looking for alternative heating methods. The situation however remained critical and required concerted decisions and funding at all levels, by public, oblast and local authorities, as well as the involvement of international partners.

The growing demand for demining in the deoccupied areas remained a serious challenge for oblast-level authorities, as mine clearance requires significant material and technical resources, and relevant experts.

The general approval of suspicion notices served on some persons for collaboration with the aggressor confirmed the public support for the actions of authorities and the importance of punishment for treason.

In Zaporizhzhia oblast, the issue of local concern in respect of property valuation has gained traction. Due to Earth remote sensing, a large amount of data on damaged property in Melitopol has been already collected and entered into the State Register of Damaged and Destroyed Property. The development of initiatives of that kind may help effectively assess and compensate for property lost.

The construction of defence fortifications has seriously challenged the resilience capacity of frontline areas. Specifically, contractors in Zaporizhzhia oblast have reportedly refused, in large numbers, to perform works due to the following reasons: a) unfinalised standard designs of defence fortifications with no georeferencing and no mapping of data on a particular area which imposes additional expenses on a contractor, b) loss of expensive special vehicles and equipment as a result of ongoing shelling; insurance and compen-

sation mechanisms are deficient, if any, c) understated cost estimate of excavation, installation, and welding, d) overstated cost of concrete building blocks which eats up 60–70% of a total cost estimate of the project and, accordingly, profitability.

According to the monitoring data on Kherson oblast, the absence of full-fledged local self-government, removal of members of local councils from the execution of their mandates, and limited application of procedures for participatory democracy and citizen engagement in decision-making adversely affected the interests in local development.

Along with that, open and transparent public decision-making by local self-government bodies have started to revive in Mykolaiv oblast. However, since not all decisions can be made at the local self-government level under martial law, effective action by public administration authorities is often needed.

Various public discussions, especially on renaming population centres and streets, triggered emotional tensions, public criticism, and conflict escalation. This implied the increased capacity of local self-government bodies to work with diversity of opinions and viewpoints and the improved effectiveness of public consultations.

The successful implementation of projects and public initiatives to a large extent depends on international cooperation so far.

Although new public initiatives have been launched in response to the challenges of war and social problems, they are mostly weak in institutional terms. Furthermore, some political initiatives simply imitate civil society projects which could further aggravate the uncertainty and conflicts and distort the essence of socially significant issues.

The discontent has grown among Ukrainians over high salaries of officials, insufficient efforts to solve housing problems of internally displaced persons, and often inefficient use of budget funds.

Relatively rear areas controlled by the Ukrainian government

Heavy civilian casualties from Russia's ongoing attacks on critical infrastructure and industrial facilities have been reported in Odesa oblast.

A missile attack on 22 March [has severely damaged](#) Burshtyn Thermal Power Plant, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. At least UAH 4 billion is needed for the recovery of Burshtyn TPP which provided electricity to 3 million consumers.

In December 2023, the [government imposed restrictions](#) on free entry, stay, and movement of people in the area along the state border. In accordance with the Resolution "On the Border Regime", stay permits are issued by a "relevant body of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine tasked to maintain the integrity of the state border in the designated area of responsibility". It is a local border detachment that performs the relevant functions, but it is difficult to get in advance information about it on the SBGSU website.

In general, public authorities and local self-government bodies acted according to the procedure already developed during the full-scale invasion: they performed administration tasks, provided humanitarian and other aid to internally displaced persons, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, vulnerable populations and organisations, held official celebrations of commemorative events, etc. Meanwhile, the focus has gradually shifted to the needs of ex-combatants. Special attention was paid to commemorative dates and war heroes. In many communities, memorial plaques were unveiled, alleys of glory were laid, etc.

The resumption of exports through the ports of Greater Odesa evidences the economic stability and ability to recover even in wartime conditions. Grain exports under the Grain from Ukraine programme, funded by donors, serve as a confirmation of the importance of Odesa oblast and Ukraine in the international trade and maintenance of global food security.

However, the absence of an adequate response of Ukrainian authorities to protests of Polish farmers who had blocked trucks at the border with Ukraine was a matter of great concern.

Some decisions of local authorities on road repairs and reconstruction of public gardens had the potential of generating conflict. This was primarily due to the low involvement of the population in decision-making.

From time to time, families of the military, notably those of war prisoners, reminded, including through rallies, the authorities and the public, about the importance of concerted efforts for the liberation of prisoners, etc.

The 29 February decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church to establish a canonical structure in Ukraine that would unite Romanian-speaking Orthodox congregations raised additional tensions among believers in Chernivtsi oblast. Negotiations on the possibility of changing religious affiliation of communities were held on the grassroots level with priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate who hold services in the Romanian language.

Social pessimism and tensions kept on growing, along with cases of evasion of military service. Communication between authorities, recruitment and social support centres, and the population was still in its infancy. In these conditions, any informational provocations caused social turmoil and local conflicts.

Processes of civic self-organisation of internally displaced persons have been evolving in all Ukrainian oblasts. The provision with housing and assistance in employment remained a priority. Civil society organisations and international donors, along with authorities, played a large role in those processes.

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

Society has continued to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine despite a gradual decrease in financial contributions due to a lower earnings potential and the expectations that this task should be taken on by the government.

I. TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED AREAS

1. Changes in the system of governance

On 26 February, the Russian President Vladimir Putin [signed](#) the decree “On Military-Administrative Divisions of the Russian Federation”, according to which the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts of Ukraine would be incorporated into the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation. Crimea and Sevastopol, illegally annexed in 2014, were “included” in the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation earlier.

1.1. Decisions of occupying authorities

>> THE SHAM ELECTION OF THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

The so-called election of the President of Russia was a key political event in the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. It was the third massive propaganda campaign by the occupiers in the past eighteen months, with the aim of absorbing the temporarily occupied areas, creating collaborationist structures, engaging in collaborationism and coercing the populations of the temporarily occupied areas to show public loyalty through massive bribery of social groups, pressure, filtration measures, and neutralisation of those capable of offering resistance. Specifically, pseudo-referenda on the so-called inclusion of the occupied areas into the Russian Federation [were held](#) in September 2022; the so-called elections to “local parliaments” and “municipalities” [took place](#) in Ukraine’s occupied areas in September 2023. Furthermore, a mention should be made of the months-long campaign ahead of the sham election of the President of Russia.

Unlike in most regions of Russia, the so-called election of the Russian President in the temporarily occupied areas lasted for almost a month and consisted of the following three phases:

- 25 February to 9 March, early voting was held at polling stations in frontline population centres,
- 10 March to 14 March, early voting was held in all occupied areas,
- 15 March to 17 March, the so-called main voting took place.

The occupying authorities attempted to involve as many people as possible in the so-called election. Therefore, they allowed not only those whose Russian citizenship is confirmed by a national passport, but also all people living in the occupied areas to participate in the so-called voting. Holders of the so-called DPR passports and even citizens of Ukraine could vote in the sham election in Donetsk oblast, provided they had been registered in the “territory” of the DPR prior to 30 September 2022.

Special mobile voting groups have been set up to organise open-air voting in various districts of population centres. According to the occupying authorities of Donetsk oblast, a total of 1,252 mobile voting groups were [created](#), especially given the fact that there had been only 708 stationary polling stations in the occupied areas of the oblast. Mobile voting was [arranged](#) even in newly occupied Avdiivka (no information on the number of voters was made public although, according to propagandists, there were some 1,000 locals in the town following its capture).

[According to](#) the Center for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, the “Russians put pressure on locals of the occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast and force them to participate in the so-called election of the President of the Russian Federation through organising “home voting”. Representatives of “election commissions”, accompanied by the militaries armed with automatic weapons, conduct door-to-door canvassing in the occupied cities and towns of Zaporizhzhia oblast”. The occupiers first held

“home voting” in the villages of the oblast, and went door-to-door in the cities and towns on 15 and 16 March. Specifically, workers of Zaporizhzhia NPP were officially notified that members of the so-called election commissions would come to their homes.

Luhansk Oblast Military Administration (hereinafter referred to as OMA) said that ahead of the voting, heads of the so-called public institutions of the breakaway Republic **received** plans for turnout of their employees for the so-called election of the President of the Russian Federation. Moreover, all family members of “public sector employees” (i. e., those who work in various “public institutions”) had to appear at polling stations. *“Those who have the right to vote should cast votes, while the rest should take photos and join a flash mob by posting photos on social networking sites,”* OMA representatives claimed.

The number of law enforcement officers was increased during the election to **discourage** everyone from resisting. 2,500 troopers of the Russian Guard, directly subordinated to the President of Russia and to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, were sent to the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast alone.

In the occupied areas of Ukraine, as well as throughout Russia, the function of the so-called observers was taken on by representatives of the CIS countries, third world countries dependent on Russia, and marginalised Western politicians.

According to **data** of the Russian Central Election Commission, some 2.6 million people of the occupied areas of Ukraine took part in the early sham election. The largest number of votes was recorded in Russia-occupied areas of Donetsk oblast – 1,171,849, followed by 326,379 in the non-government controlled areas of Luhansk oblast, 280,566 in the non-government controlled areas of Kherson oblast, and 242,046 in the non-government controlled areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast.

The occupiers’ coercion, threats, ballot rigging, and control of the information space indicate a systematic violation of the fundamental principles of democratic process and human rights, and pose a serious threat to security and freedom of populations of the non-government controlled areas.

These systemic actions by the occupiers will seriously complicate the processes of de-occupation and further reintegration of the populations following the liberation of Russia-occupied areas.

>> ZAPORIZHZHIA NPP

Blackmail by the Russian invaders has continued at Ukraine’s Russia-occupied Zaporizhzhia NPP. In early January, IAEA inspectors **were denied** access to some main halls of reactors. “This is the first time that IAEA experts have not been granted access to a reactor hall of a unit that was in cold shutdown,” IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said in a statement. In February, a new threat **has emerged** at the plant, as nuclear fuel used in the reactors would expire soon and there would be no staff to reload it as needed.

On 7 March, the IAEA Board of Governors **approved**, by majority vote, the Resolution drafted by Ukraine on the immediate return of Zaporizhzhia NPP to the full control of the competent Ukrainian authorities.

>> BUDGET

According to the budget of the non-government controlled areas, most of their revenues **come** from the budget of the Russian Federation. In 2024, Russia plans to allocate a total of more than RUB430 billion to the temporarily occupied areas (over EUR4.34 billion at the exchange rate of the Central Bank of Russia as of 1 January 2024), of which the largest amount will go to the budget of the occupied part of Donetsk oblast – RUB137.4 billion (EUR1.38 billion), Luhansk oblast – RUB92.5 billion (EUR932 million), Zaporizhzhia oblast – RUB60.1 billion (a bit below EUR606 million), and Kherson oblast – RUB33.2 billion (approximately EUR335 million). At the same time, the budgets of the newly created entities of the Russian Federation still have a deficit.

>> CONSTRUCTION

The Russian occupiers killed people and destroyed their homes first. The occupying authorities of Donetsk oblast have currently focused on the construction of housing which will be given primarily to those who actively collaborate with them, or will be sold under the so-called preferential mortgage programme. 178 land plots, mainly in Donetsk and Mariupol, **have been allocated** for construction. Housing can be purchased at 2% per annum, though the locals cannot even make use of preferential mortgages because of high prices and lack of work. According to propaganda media, two pilot houses are already being built in Mariupol and more

than 200 loans [have been issued](#) for the purchase of apartments. The first one-room apartment with an area of 52 square metres [was sold](#) on mortgage at RUB5 million (approximately EUR53,000) for a term of 60 months.

>> PROPERTY

The Russia-installed authorities in the occupied areas of Donetsk oblast have started to carry out land inventory. The cadastral works plan for 2025 provides for resolving the issues of their funding and collection of primary documentation, while a specialised company will conduct complex cadastral works in several occupied communities in 2025. The occupying authorities are particularly interested in land parcels in Donetsk, Makiivka, Mariupol, and in settlements along the Azov Sea coast. Hence, the main purpose is to find the most commercially attractive land plots in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk oblast and transfer them to new owners. Along with that, the authorities do not explain why these areas were chosen as priorities.

In view of the latest statements by the occupying authorities, they plan to prioritise the use of the tourist potential of the Azov region in the near term. The drawing up of updated master plans for all resort villages in the southern part of Donetsk oblast [has been completed](#). Plans to build a giant children's recreation centre on the shore of the Azov Sea [have been announced](#).

[According to](#) Luhansk OMA, by January 2028, the rights to own or use property complexes of coal enterprises in the public domain of so-called LPR could be transferred to Russian companies without bidding.

The first lease agreement for coal mines and equipment, in particular the property of Bilorichenska mine, a mining and beneficiation factory, and Krasnodon Freight and Transportation Department, was signed in January. *"This is a sufficiently developed mine complex that does not require large investments – unlike many other mines occupied in 2014. The choice is clear, especially given that there was no need to spend money on the purchase,"* Luhansk OMA said.

>> TRAINING OF PERSONNEL FOR THE NON-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREAS

As reported by Telegram channels of the occupying authorities, the Russian Presidential Academy plans to prepare Masters of Public Administration for the "newly created entities". Would-be public administrators will be prepared within the Domestic Politics and Political Technologies Master's programme to be launched in 2024. This is the first Master's programme in Russia for preparing relevant specialists. The main goal is *"to prepare personnel for pursuing domestic politics at all levels of government and to ensure political stability in the newly created entities"*. The first admission will be capped at 50 students. It is announced that in the course of their study, students will master special political management technologies, including diagnostics of socio-political situation, political psychoanalysis and forecasting, technologies of territorial management.

1.2. Access to public information

In the frontline population centres and areas of Russia-occupied Luhansk oblast, access to mobile communications and the Internet remained limited, people tried to "catch" the Internet signal in places with unpredictable coverage. According to Luhansk OMA, the mobile Internet in the so-called LPR [was turned on](#) during the election campaign, almost a year after its cut. *"However, the Internet and mobile communications will not be available in Sievierodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne, population centres in Svatove and Kreminna raions, in Troitske and surrounding areas. As before, people try to catch the Internet signal in particular places where the availability of coverage is unpredictable,"* representatives of Luhansk OMA pointed out.

2. Humanitarian situation

The population of Luhansk oblast, occupied in 2022, [has failed to get centralised heating as promised prior to the election](#). In October 2023, the occupying authorities tested modular boiler houses brought from Russia in the non-government controlled population centres of the oblast, Rubizhne, Lysychansk, and Sievierodonetsk. However, boiler houses were never connected to the general heating system due to its damage. As a result,

the locals warmed themselves with stoves and heaters in the winter, as reported by Artem Lysohor, Head of Luhansk Oblast Military Administration. A similar situation was reported in respect of power supply.

The occupying authorities attempted to use the capture of Avdiivka, Donetsk oblast, for propaganda purposes. Specifically, they convinced the locals of the return to normal life in the destroyed city through reports on the [re-establishment of mobile communications](#), provision of the locals with [food and fuel](#), opening of UAH/RUB exchange shops, and [acceptance of documents for Russian passports](#).

Even the restoration of 19 houses that had minor damage [was announced](#). Meanwhile, new leaders tried to avoid any mention of the number of population that remained in the city. According to Ukrainian officials, there were no more than 800 civilians in the town ahead of its complete occupation. The occupying authorities failed to make public any figures, having only reported that 130 evacuated locals [filed](#) social benefits applications.

2.1. Filtration measures of occupying authorities / prisoners of war

It was very difficult for populations of the non-government controlled areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast to cross the border without Russian passports, especially when entering Russia-occupied Crimea where toughened filtration measures were in place. The Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Military and Civil Administration, Ivan Fedorov, noted that the Russian occupiers expanded filtration measures for holders of Ukrainian passports and reduced the number of border crossing points in the non-government controlled areas. *“Ukrainians with Ukrainian passports who want to return to the temporarily occupied area to visit their family and friends or to sort out property-related problems can fly to the Russian Federation only through Sheremetyevo airport [in Moscow],”* he underscored. The occupiers applied the same toughened filtration measures to Ukrainian passport holders willing to go to illegally annexed Crimea – only Dzhankoi, Armiansk, and Perekop border crossing points operated. As pointed out by Ivan Fedorov, only one in ten people could go through filtration measures by the occupying authorities.

2.2. Actions of occupying authorities regarding recruitment into armed formations

The so-called [incorporation](#) of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts into the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation on 26 February has marked an important step of the occupying authorities. Many observers view that step as the completion of formal preparations for mobilisation of people living in the temporarily occupied areas. Men living in the non-government controlled areas have been required to be put on military records since mid-2023. Representatives of the occupying authorities [have started](#) serving military summons on conscripts since October 2023 so as to clarify military registration details. The Southern Military District’s enlargement has marked the completion of formal procedures for preparing and carrying out mobilisation activities. [In the opinion of](#) Serhii Danilov, a political analyst, mobilisation of men in the non-government controlled areas is most likely to take place in the spring of 2024.

3. Work on identity

The Russia-installed authorities of the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast [have arranged](#) propaganda events to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attack staged in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in Russia’s Moscow region on 22 March 2024.

3.1. Changes in education standards

Education in the temporarily occupied areas has not yet been fully integrated into the system of education of the Russian Federation. A moratorium on the mandatory Unified State Exam of school graduates of those areas has been extended until 2026. Lawmakers do not rule out that it will be extended again and that graduates will receive certificates based on their current scores. School graduates of the temporarily occupied areas can however take the Exam by choice. Most of them try to take advantage of various benefits for admission to higher educational institutions provided by Russia's law for prospective students of the occupied areas.

According to Luhansk OMA, the occupiers **have introduced** posts of advisers to deputy principals in schools and colleges of Russia-occupied Luhansk oblast, other temporarily occupied areas, and regions of the Russian Federation bordering Ukraine. These persons will be responsible for spreading propaganda among children and teenagers. Hence, a unified system of “educational work” is being created. Special attention is paid to the non-government controlled areas, for which budget expenses for “patriotic education” in school curricula have significantly increased, from RUB6.47 billion in 2023 to RUB39.7 billion in 2024.

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

The occupying authorities **ordered** to establish propaganda centres in the form of “museums of special military operation” in every school and municipal institutions of Luhansk oblast. *“Exhibitions demonstrating Russian equipment will be brought there and booths showing local traitors will be mounted to strengthen the myth of local support of the occupation for boys and girls,”* representatives of Luhansk OMA emphasised. A similar exhibition has also opened in Svatove Museum of Local History.

The Russia-installed authorities of Sievierodonetsk, Luhansk oblast, occupied in June 2022, decided to abandon the city's symbols and approved the new “Regulations on the official symbols (coat of arms and flag)”.



Coat of arms of Sievierodonetsk
from 1998 (on the left)

Coat of arms of occupied
Sievierodonetsk
from 2024 (on the right)



The flag of the city, adopted in 1999, reproduced the blue-yellow flag of Ukraine bearing the symbol of statehood. This trident also featured a peregrine falcon in the centre, as the city was built in the 20th century on the site of the 17th-century Zaporizhzhia Cossack settlement called Sokolynyi Yurt. The coat of arms was in the form of a shield, framed with ears of wheat wrapped in a ribbon, the inscription “Sievierodonetsk”, and the date of the city's foundation, 1938 (**the first pillars marked the site of a chemical plant and a settlement in 1933**). Above, in the centre of the shield, there was an image of a golden falcon, and below, there was a flask symbolising chemical production and an image of an impulse symbolising instrumentation engineering. Prior to Russia's armed attack, Sievierodonetsk-based Azot was Ukraine's largest chemical manufacturer. The occupiers removed all the symbols, that had linked the coat of arms and the flag to the Ukrainian history of the city. The coat of arms now depicts a falcon, an industrial pipe, and a crown.

3.3 Freedom of religion

On 27 December 2023, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church [decided](#) to set up Skadovsk Diocese, with the cathedral centre in the city of Skadovsk, in the Russia-controlled part of Kherson oblast. The Synod said the decision was made in response to the appeal of clerics of Kherson Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and residents of the St. Nicholas Convent who complained of being deprived of communication with Metropolitan Ioan (Siopko) of Kherson Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine staying in the government-controlled part of Ukraine. Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexei of Dzhankoi, was appointed as Interim Administrator of the occupied parishes.

In January, the former Mayor of Henichesk, Oleksandr Pinaev, [wrote](#) a public denunciation of Metropolitan Filaret (Zyrev) of Nova Kakhovka and Henichesk, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Oleksandr Pinaev accused Filaret of boycotting the events arranged by the Russian occupiers and “stealing” religious holidays from “Russian Orthodox people”. Pinaev called on the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to take Nova Kakhovka and Henichesk Dioceses of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine under “their omophorion”. He also wrote that the Metropolitan does not have a Russian passport and is a *Zhdun* (i. e., the one who is waiting for the land to be freed from the occupiers).

4. Changes in the social structure

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

[According to](#) Luhansk OMA, in late 2022 and throughout 2023, forced medical examinations were arranged in the breakaway LPR to justify the deportation and “rehabilitation” of children and teenagers in the northern regions of the Russian Federation. Russian medical workers found pathologies in almost 70% of examined children in Russia-occupied Luhansk oblast. Examinations were carried out only by medical workers brought from Russia to prevent the locals from interfering with the procedure.

II. FRONTLINE AND DEOCCUPIED AREAS

1. Changes in the system of governance

Within the first three months of 2024, a number of important decisions have been made in respect of Zaporizhzhia oblast. On 2 February, the President of Ukraine appointed Ivan Fedorov as Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Military and Civil Administration, whereas Yuri Malashko voluntarily resigned, as reported in the press. Prior to the appointment, Fedorov [held the office](#) of Melitopol Mayor. In 2022, he was taken prisoner by the Russian militaries for refusing to collaborate with the occupiers. After 6-day captivity, he was exchanged for nine captured Russian conscripts.

On 21 March, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [transferred the powers of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Council to Zaporizhzhia OMA for the period of martial law](#), including those in respect of property, land, and personnel issues.

Olena Zhuk remained the Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Council. The Council's Secretariat was tasked with drafting orders and instructions, while the OMA Head was responsible for making relevant decisions. The Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Military and Civil Administration also emphasised personnel changes in the Oblast Council's staff, including downsizing, having added that specific steps will be mapped out following the inventory.

In general, the Verkhovna Rada's decision was received positively. It has sparked neither condemnation on social media nor sharp discussions among the public and broad strata of the population of the oblast. It should also be noted that an identical draft decision was submitted to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the tenure and on the initiative of the former Head of Zaporizhzhia Oblast State Administration, Yuri Malashko. Yet it was blocked by MPs representing other Ukraine's oblasts who considered the precedent as potentially dangerous for the future operation of other oblast councils.

There has been one local council left in Kherson oblast, Kherson Oblast Council. It [gathered](#) for the last plenary session on 22 September 2023. From November 2023 through January 2024, the Council worked in meetings of standing committees and attempted to meet for a plenary session scheduled to be held in a mixed format on 16 February. However, the [session did not take place](#) due to the lack of a quorum. The main reason was the protests of some members against the participation in the session of other members suspected by the public of having ties with the occupiers, in particular one member of Volodymyr Saldo Bloc. The latter was appointed as Head of the occupying administration of Kherson oblast in April 2022, whereas the Bloc was banned in 2022.

Some members of the Oblast Council called on the parliament to dissolve Kherson Oblast Council. Earlier, these were appeals on social networking sites, but this time the Council members began to block sessions.

From January through March, in some communities, more and more members of local councils have been resigning. Among other reasons were the fact that they were excluded from the participation in debates and decision-making, their activities were not covered in official information sources, they were not invited to events with the participation of authorities, and their status makes it difficult to leave the country during hostilities. Specifically, from February through March, five members of Kherson City Council [have resigned](#). A total of 11 out of 54 members of Kherson City Council have already resigned. Similar processes were reported in other communities of Kherson oblast.

Due to the almost complete occupation of the oblast, Luhansk OMA, 4 raion state military administrations and 26 military administrations of territorial communities operated outside Luhansk oblast. The scope of activities of military administrations in the Russia-occupied areas has been minimised, as local authori-

ties in the government-controlled areas deal with the problems of internally displaced persons. The question therefore arose about the expediency of preserving the authorities established earlier in the areas occupied in 2022–2023 and the effectiveness of using the country's budget funds. On 11 January, the Human Rights Group of Luhansk Region sent a relevant appeal to the President of Ukraine regarding the operation of Luhansk Oblast Military Administration and military administrations of the occupied population centres.

The absence of explanations of the sources of wealth of officials which often has nothing in common with their salaries, and the lack of response to these discrepancies on the part of the government causes unrest among the population.

1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

>> CONSTRUCTION OF DEFENCE FORTIFICATIONS

The construction of fortifications, including dragon's teeth, anti-tank ditches, bunkers and dugouts, [has continued](#) in Kharkiv oblast. Kharkiv OMA, together with the militaries, planned to build fortifications along the entire border with the Russian Federation. It took up to two months to build one fortification facility. At first, a perimeter defence was established around Kharkiv, and later around other population centres as deoccupation progressed. Up to 30 businesses, 500 employees, more than 200 vehicles, and 47 groups of bomb disposal experts worked to that end.

On 1 March, the construction of the second defence line, including platoon's strong points made of reinforced concrete structures – [was launched](#) in the oblast. The fortifications are 30 percent ready. They are supposed to protect against artillery shelling and shrapnel from guided aerial bomb strikes. The construction sites were chosen by the militaries.

Conversely, the construction of defence fortifications in Zaporizhzhia oblast has posed a significant challenge. The contractors refused, in large numbers, to perform works due to the following reasons:

- unfinalised standard designs of defence fortifications with no georeferencing and no mapping of data on a particular area which imposed additional expenses on the contractor,
- loss of expensive special vehicles and equipment as a result of ongoing shelling (insurance and compensation mechanisms are deficient, if any),
- understated cost estimate of excavation, installation, and welding,
- overstated cost of concrete building blocks which eats up 60–70% of a total cost estimate of the project and, accordingly, profitability,
- full responsibility of the contractors for organisational issues (OMA representatives do not go to a construction site as the customers).

>> INVESTIGATION OF WAR CRIMES

The [exposure](#) of traitors and collaborationists has become important to ensure justice and to consolidate society in the fight against the aggressor in Kharkiv oblast, partly occupied in 2022 and being a combat zone so far. Specifically, the news about a notice of suspicion served on a person who leaked information on power grid facilities to the enemy was welcomed by the public, making them understand the inevitability of punishment.

As of March, more than 21,000 war crimes [were investigated](#) in Kharkiv oblast, of which almost 15,000 were associated with attacks on civilian facilities, primarily residential buildings. The rest were murders, unlawful imprisonment, torture, etc.

[According to](#) the Prosecutor's Office of Kharkiv oblast, more than 6,300 criminal proceedings, including 2,900 violations of the laws and customs of war, have been initiated in Kupiansk raion since 24 February 2022.

The prosecution of those who committed crimes against the foundations of national security was especially important. Notices of suspicion of collaborationism were served on 181 persons, cases against 120 persons were taken to court. The search for missing persons has remained important and extremely urgent. At the time of writing of the report, the whereabouts of 1,489 persons, including 56 civilians and 5 children, were unknown.

>> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The oblast-level and local authorities of Kharkiv oblast have been actively engaged in recovery and development issues. The recently established [Regional Office of International Cooperation](#) actively operates to coordinate the interactions of international foundations, communities, civil society institutions, and charities with organisations, institutions, and representatives of local self-governments of different countries.

In 2024, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [plans](#) to provide communities of Kharkiv oblast with emergency repair kits and construction materials, to repair, through a contractor, 530 homes, and to provide another 300 with construction materials. Also, modular frame houses are planned to be installed for those whose homes were destroyed as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. Caritas Ukraine ICF intends to provide financial aid and contractor's support services for the repairs of 500 houses in the oblast.

>> INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

Various cities of Ukraine helped Kharkiv oblast severely affected by Russia's aggression. For example, peers from Odesa and Poltava oblasts promptly [provided](#) containment booms to prevent the spread of oil slicks along five rivers of Kharkiv oblast after an oil spill as a result of a massive attack by the enemy in February.

The lands of Ukraine supported Kharkiv oblast even after a massive attack on power facilities. Ivano-Frankivsk, Kirovohrad, and Sumy OMA's supplied generators to provide the oblast with electricity.

>> eRECOVERY PROGRAMME

Since the launch of the eRecovery programme, 16,611 applicants in Kharkiv oblast [have received](#) UAH 1.46 billion (approximately EUR4.5 million at the exchange rate on 1 January 2024) in compensation for damaged and destroyed property. Over UAH 102 million was to be paid to another 1,018 local applicants. Residents of Izium, Kharkiv, and Chuhuiv raions submitted the largest number of applications.

In January, Mykolaiv oblast [was ranked](#) among the top five Ukrainian oblasts that received the largest amounts of compensation paid for damaged and destroyed property under the eRecovery programme, the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine reported. As of March, residents of the oblast received 353 certificates estimated at a total of UAH 461 million.

Zaporizhzhia locals have received over UAH 17 million in compensation for the repairs of housing damaged and destroyed as a result of Russian shelling since the launch of the eRecovery programme. Within the two years of the full-scale war, 13,501 civilian facilities were partly or completely destroyed in Zaporizhzhia oblast. Specifically, 12 multi-apartment buildings were destroyed in Zaporizhzhia, of which 9 were being reconstructed at the time of writing of the report.

>> POST-WAR RECOVERY PLANS

In the second half of 2023, the total number of territorial communities involved in [strategic planning](#) increased from 1,283 to 1,314, as reported by the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine. *“Development strategies serve as the foundation for regional recovery. They are key planning documents and the main guide for community development in the coming years. The fact that the majority of communities have developed or already approved their strategies speaks to their resilience and capacity for recovery,”* the Deputy Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine, Oleksandra Azarkhina, stressed. Mykolaiv oblast is among the leaders in terms of the number of approved community development strategies, 73%.

Despite the ongoing shelling, Kharkiv authorities [planned](#) the city's development. On 22 February 22, Kharkiv Cooperation and Development Forum was held. Representatives of the city authorities reported the results of the city's reconstruction and plans for the further development of various spheres of public life. It should be noted that international partners were actively involved in the development of Kharkiv's infrastructure and purchase of subway rolling stock. Funds have been allocated to purchase electric buses that have no analogues in Ukraine. A long-term master plan for the development of Kharkiv is being developed together with the Norman Foster Foundation and with the financial support of the German government.

It became known in late January that the experiment on remote inspection of damaged and destroyed property in Russia-occupied Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia oblast, [would be continued](#). A pilot project was launched

in November 2023. Within three months, 279 property units of Melitopol community have been entered into the State Register of Damaged and Destroyed Property. Inspection commissions also studied photographs of damaged and destroyed property submitted by Ukrainians via Diia. The number of property units in the State Register of Damaged and Destroyed Property exceeds 281,000. These approaches [are being studied](#) by scientists of Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University who cooperate with Sievierodonetsk City Military Administration on finding ways to restore the territory of Sievierodonetsk community, Luhansk oblast.

On 9 January, Sievierodonetsk City Military Administration, Luhansk oblast, [signed](#) a Memorandum of Cooperation with a Dutch company, UGENIA B. V. The parties plan to restore the territory of Sievierodonetsk community in the energy sector which has suffered and is suffering the terrible consequences of military aggression of the Russian Federation, the statement said.

The USAID's Decentralization Offering Better Results and Efficiency (DOBRE) Activity [provided assistance](#) in drafting a comprehensive recovery programme until 2027 in Kherson oblast. Since September 2023, DOBRE has been implemented in Novoraisk, Stanislav, Kochubeivka, Vysokopillia, Muzykivka, Novovorontsovka, and Velyka Oleksandrivka communities. Since February 2024, its activities have expanded to other communities of the oblast, in particular Tyahynka, Beryslav, etc.

DOBRE seeks to restore communities in the post-war period, strengthen the available infrastructure facilities, preserve the environment, develop industry, create jobs, etc. It provides technical expert support and guidance in the development of programmes for the comprehensive restoration of territories. DOBRE's mandatory component is the engagement of citizens in discussions, creation of advisory bodies, etc. As part of mapping out restoration and development plans for particular communities, online surveys, public consultations with representatives of various social groups, and on-site discussions were held where possible, e. g., in Vysokopillia settlement community.

Similar activities [were carried out](#) in 2023–2024 by the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, that is VNG International, in Kherson and Beryslav city communities and Vysokopillia settlement community of the oblast.

Zaporizhzhia Recovery Forum, which brought together representatives of authorities, business community, the public and international partners, [was held](#) on 27 February. The Green Book for Zaporizhzhia Recovery: a Roadmap for the Sustainable Development of the City, developed by 18 experts from various fields, [was presented](#) at the event. The key challenges and priority measures for the development of Zaporizhzhia were analysed in line with the European Green Deal. The document is addressed to representatives of executive authorities and local self-government bodies, international organisations and foundations, civil society organisations, and all relevant stakeholders interested in the post-war recovery of Zaporizhzhia oblast and Ukraine.

During a [discussion](#) carried out by the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion on 14 March, a model of the recovery council as a regional tool for resilience and social cohesion was presented. 92 representatives of the public, authorities, academic circles, and territorial communities took part in the online discussion.

>> DEMINING

Demining operations were underway in Kharkiv oblast. [According to](#) the Main Department of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in Kharkiv oblast, 4,436 hectares of territory and 3,083 kilometres of power lines have been explored, and 88,484 explosive objects have been detected and neutralised since the outbreak of hostilities. Bomb disposal experts carried out demining operations in 17 communities of the oblast.

It should be noted that Kharkiv oblast's engineering school extensively contributed to resisting the enemy and worked on innovations that would allow to technologically strengthen the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and to make demining efforts more effective. At the time of writing of the report, seven demining machines [operated](#) in the oblast. Their number had to be gradually increased. The United Nations World Food Programme purchased three machines for preparing soil for demining, developed in Kharkiv. The first machine was tested and handed over to mine clearing units of the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), while another two demining vehicles were in production. That was a positive example of cooperation between the government, business community, and international partners, as well as manufacture of Ukraine-made competitive products. The main advantage of the new, Ukraine-made demining machine over foreign analogues is its simple design,

the possibility of prompt repairs in the event of a landmine blast, and the price. The price of a Ukrainian demining vehicle made in Kharkiv is at least three times lower than that of foreign counterparts.

Another certified innovation by a Kharkiv-based company [has been represented](#) by a foot protection system against anti-personnel land mines.

>> EVACUATION

The mandatory evacuation of the population was underway in the Ukrainian government-controlled areas of Donetsk oblast. Along with that, due to a certain stabilisation of the front line and a decrease in the number of attacks on remote areas, the number of residents has even reportedly increased in some communities. According to official estimates, more than 500,000 people lived in the oblast at the time of writing of the report. In Kramatorsk, the oblast's largest community, there were approximately 95,000 locals, or almost half of its pre-war population.

Quite many people also remained in frontline communities. According to estimates of the oblast leadership, [there were](#) some 64,000 residents of frontline communities, and those were mostly evacuated. Within the reporting period, people were orderly evacuated to Zhytomyr oblast. Starting 23 March, Rivne oblast [has been engaged](#) in the reception and accommodation of people displaced from Donetsk oblast. Furthermore, Volyn oblast [announced](#) its readiness to accept IDPs. A special evacuation train was supposed to depart once every eight days from Pokrovsk station. A total of five evacuation flights were scheduled for March and April. Local administrations arranged transportation of those willing to leave the oblast. In Rivne oblast, IDPs from Donetsk oblast are expected to benefit from the government and humanitarian aid from international organisations, and will be accommodated in temporary accommodation centres. It should be noted that such evacuation was in little demand among the population of the oblast, as only socially vulnerable groups and elderly people who lived in the war zone mostly agreed to leave. Specifically, only 58 people [left for](#) Rivne oblast by the first evacuation train.

In early 2024, some 90,000 people lived in border population centres of Kharkiv oblast, of whom 17,000 had no electricity, and 34,000 had no gas. Restoration works were impeded by the security situation and high mine danger.

The evacuation of people from Kupiansk raion, where active military operations were taking place, was underway. On 16 January, the mandatory evacuation of Kindrashivka and Kurylivka communities [began](#). The evacuees were provided with housing and support from international humanitarian organisations. In March, the mandatory evacuation of residents of 57 population centres of Veliky Burluk, Vilkhuvatka, Kindrashivka, and Kurylivka communities, where 1,082 children lived, [was announced](#). Since the beginning of the year, 1,500 people, including 140 children, have been evacuated from Kupiansk raion. Throughout the entire period of evacuation from Kupiansk raion, more than 28,000 people, including 869 children, were evacuated to safer places. The evacuation hotline was continuously operating in the oblast.

The possibility of mandatory evacuation of the border population centres of Kharkiv and Bohodukhiv raions, whose residents also suffered severely from ongoing shelling and the use of guided aerial bombs by the Russian occupiers, was considered.

Despite the reported Russia's offensive on Kharkiv, evacuation from the city did not take place.

Every day, 60–70 people [continued to leave Zaporizhzhia](#) for Lviv or Khmelnytskyi by Ukrzaliznytsia free evacuation trains. Those were residents of both the oblast capital and the frontline communities relocated by evacuation teams of the National Police. Over 180,000 people have been evacuated from Zaporizhzhia by rail over two years of the full-scale invasion.

>> HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Kharkiv [suffered](#) the greatest destruction among the six large cities of Ukraine as a result of Russia's armed aggression. Approximately 4,500 residential buildings, more than a half of educational and healthcare facilities were damaged, and some 150,000 Kharkiv locals were left homeless. [According to](#) Kharkiv OMA, 2.7 million people lived in the oblast prior to the full-scale invasion, of whom almost 2 million were Kharkiv locals. To date, 2.4 million people live in the oblast, including 524,000 IDPs who relocated from the border and frontline population centres to safer Kharkiv.

In Zaporizhzhia, the oblast-level authorities cooperated with local and international humanitarian organisations to ensure coordination and effective delivery of assistance. Zaporizhzhia Oblast Administration,

together with volunteer organisations and businesses, ensured the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid, including food, medical supplies, clothing, etc.

The humanitarian headquarters, coordinated by Kharkiv OMA, operated in Kharkiv oblast, where communities could submit applications regarding the need for food and hygiene products. Moreover, international organisations, charities, and volunteers directly cooperated with the leaders of all territorial communities through providing humanitarian aid to socially vulnerable groups. Some foundations worked directly with the populations of the war-affected areas. Also, a support fund for victims of enemy shelling [was set up](#) in Kharkiv to contribute to solving problems of the population.

>> **OVERCOMING THE CONSEQUENCES OF ATTACKS ON THE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE**

On 22 March, emergency blackouts [have been imposed](#) in Donetsk oblast following Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Restrictions were lifted within a few days. However, the oblast remained critically dependent on electricity supply from other oblasts of the country. Earlier this year, powerful Kurakhovo TPP was taken out of generation [due to Russia's attacks](#). Only one large TPP that continuously generated electricity was in operation in the oblast at the time of writing of the report. All other large power generating facilities are located in the non-government controlled areas.

>> **SHELTERS**

In the autumn of 2023, a combined modular shelter was installed in the centre of Zaporizhzhia. 23 structures of that kind were supposed to be installed until the end of 2023. However, the only installed shelter was not yet operational as of early February 2024. There was criticism that a chain of coffee houses was hidden behind those shelters, installed and maintained by businessmen close to the city authorities.

1.2. Access to public information / information security

The CHESNO movement [monitored](#) the openness of city and oblast councils in oblast centres of Ukraine in 2023. Among eleven evaluation criteria were the availability of announcements of sessions and committee meetings, publication of agendas, draft decisions, minutes, video recordings of meetings, etc. CHESNO found that Zaporizhzhia City Council was the only one among city councils in oblast centres that proved to be the least open in 2023. The indicator has not improved over the past two years. The Council does not publish decisions on convening sessions and setting agendas, draft decisions, minutes, nor does it provide video recordings of meetings. The similar situation is in Zaporizhzhia Oblast Council.

The CHESNO movement did not monitor the openness of Kherson City Council, because its plenary sessions and meetings of standing committees have not been held since 24 February 2022.

Along with that, Mykolaiv City and Oblast Councils were [among those that took the lead](#) in the openness ranking, having enhanced awareness of the local populations of their activities.

In Kherson oblast, the experimental publication of two influential newspapers, *Novyi Den* and *Hryvnia*, was partly resumed with the assistance of donors. In March 2024, *Hryvnia* reported on the publication of 40 issues with a circulation of around 500,000, since November 2022. The biweekly newspaper is distributed free of charge in de-occupied communities of Kherson and Beryslav raions. It is printed in Zaporizhzhia; the editorial staff work from different cities of Ukraine and Europe, while some staff members work from Kherson on a permanent basis. The resumption of publication was made possible due to some international donors and the support of the Association of Independent Regional Publishers of Ukraine.

2. Work on identity

On 1 January 2024, the domain for Luhansk, [luhansk.ua](#), [was launched](#), with the name of the oblast centre transliterated from Ukrainian. Prior to that, there was the Russified domain, [lugansk.ua](#), and its abbreviated version, [lg.ua](#).

On the Day of the State Coat of Arms of Ukraine, a memorial sign of the Ukrainian trident [was unveiled](#) in Khortytsia National Reserve in Zaporizhzhia. It is made of pre-war steel of Azovstal Iron and Steel Works which served as a shelter for Mariupol locals throughout the three-month siege of the city by the Russians in 2022 and which was destroyed by bombing.

More and more Kharkiv locals started to use the Ukrainian language.

2.1. Changes in education standards

In connection with the full-scale invasion, the educational process in Mykolaiv oblast has largely [switched](#) to the online format. According to the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, 44% of schools of the oblast were damaged. As of January 2024, 17% of schools operated in a traditional format, notably, in Voznesensk and Pervomaisk raions of the oblast, 27% – in a mixed format, and 56% – in an online format.

As of January, more than 14,000 students and 300 teachers had relocated from the area of active military operations since the outbreak of the full-scale war in 2022 but continued to teach and to be taught in the online format.

The issue of school shelters in Mykolaiv remained relevant and important, since only a third of city schools [were equipped](#) with shelters as of February 2024. Shelter construction works continued; funding was provided from the city budget and by international organisations and charities, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the French Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Save the Children International, SavED CF, and UNICEF. It is planned to return all schools and kindergartens to the standard learning format in 2025.

1,497 educational institutions, with some 380,000 students, operated in Kharkiv oblast. According to Kharkiv OMA, more than 1,000 shelters need to be built or repaired to return students to face-to-face learning. Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, 225 elementary educational institutions of the oblast were damaged and 12 destroyed, out of 709, and 295 secondary educational institutions were damaged and 36 destroyed, out of 698. 20 technical and vocational educational institutions were damaged and 2 destroyed, out of 24, as a result of Russian aggression. 33 vocational educational institutions were damaged and 1 destroyed, out of 43. Almost all higher educational institutions were damaged, 22 out of 23. A total of some 40 educational institutions of Kharkiv oblast [were repaired](#) in 2023 with the support of international donors. In January, the first anti-radiation school shelter [was put into operation](#) in Kharkiv.

The plans of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to make the Ukrainian Engineering and Pedagogical Academy and H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University part of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, and Kharkiv National Automobile and Road University part of another higher educational institution sparked public outcry in the oblast. The educational community of Kharkiv strongly responded to the news and did not support the Ministry of Education's proposal. Rectors [were supported](#) by the leadership of Kharkiv City Council and Kharkiv OMA.

The initiative of the city authorities to build two underground schools until 1 September, prior to the beginning of the new academic year, [caused](#) a discussion in the city. According to the Head of Zaporizhzhia OMA, Ivan Fedorov, there was almost no mixed or face-to-face learning in the city due to a persistent threat of Russian attacks, and that was the reason that prompted locals with children to leave the city. *“One of the solutions we found was the construction of underground schools,”* the Head of Zaporizhzhia OMA said. Ivan Fedorov expressed hope that at least two underground schools would be built in different districts of the city until the beginning of the new academic year. He underscored the need for education safe and high-quality education, as a decrease in the knowledge level of students has been recorded over the period of online learning. Furthermore, the oblast will focus on setting up shelters in schools to resume education in a mixed format. There is no unanimity among Zaporizhzhia locals over online / offline learning of school children due to the following two threats: the difficult security situation and educational losses on the one hand, and the lack of socialisation and communication on the other. It is possible to solve this problem through a mixed format of education.

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

Activists of de-occupied communities of Kharkiv oblast took important initiatives to preserve in people's memory the facts of Russia's occupation and terrorism. Specifically, Izium authorities decided to [create](#) a museum of occupation. The collection of exhibits has been ongoing since the deoccupation of the city and already has about 200 items.

The renaming of cities and towns was underway. On 21 March, the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Organisation of State Power [backed up](#) the renaming of a number population centres in Kharkiv oblast whose names contain symbols of Russian imperial policy or do not meet the standards of the state language.

On 29 March, Kharkiv City Council [announced](#) a public discussion of 18 place names to be replaced. The renaming of several metro stations is scheduled for April.

Mykolaiv locals [were dissatisfied](#) with the work of the place-name commission and demanded that Mykolaiv City Council dissolve the commission and set up a new one consisting of patriotic public activists. *"The desire to preserve the name of Dekabrystiv Street is surprising. The decision is supported by the fact that the Decembrists were victims of repression by the tsarist authorities. According to that logic, Lenin's name also had to be returned to Central Avenue, as the latter, too, was subjected to tsarist repression,"* the statement said. Eventually, the City Council members decided to hear the commission members to see the logic behind each side's opinion.

The State Language Protection Commissioner, Taras Kremin, [slammed](#) the pace of renaming in Mykolaiv oblast. He said that although it was Ukraine's south that once suffered the most from Russification, its Russian place names were replaced at a very slow pace.

3. Joint action

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

>> LOCAL INITIATIVES

On 29 February, Mykolaiv City Council [supported](#) a UAH 500 million increase in the funding for "Supporting the defence and mobilisation readiness of the city of Mykolaiv for 2021–2024" military assistance programme. In the words of Mykolaiv Mayor Oleksandr Sienkevych, it will be possible to make, where appropriate, changes in the programme and to channel additional funds from the city budget, as well as funds saved due to cooperation with international organisations that deliver various equipment.

Since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion, UAH 597 million has been allocated from the budget of Mykolaiv to the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and another UAH 80 million has been spent for military equipment. Also, UAH 400 million was allocated from the city budget in 2023 for the militaries, of which UAH 200 million was spent to purchase housing for military personnel serving in units of Mykolaiv garrison.

>> CREATION OF ADVISORY BODIES AND HOLDING OF JOINT CONSULTATIONS

Kherson OMA [approved](#) an annual public consultation plan. Although some of its sections are more like those of a plan of consultations of oblast-level authorities for the public, not a plan of public consultations, it is viewed as a positive step towards developing dialogue and cooperation of authorities with communities.

On 22 March, Kherson Oblast Trilateral Socio-Economic Council [resumed](#) its activities. The Council is a standing advisory and coordinating body with a focus on social dialogue in the oblast. It consists of representatives of trade unions, employers, and oblast-level authorities.

Such steps of oblast-level authorities as the creation of advisory bodies and the launch of the process of public consultations indicate the restoration of mandatory measures in the field of public consultations and citizen engagement in decision-making. Following the deoccupation of the right-bank part and the oblast centre, Kherson OMA is moving from responding to emergency challenges to routine organisational process. Although there are so far no results of meetings of the newly created advisory bodies and the promotion of dialogue so far, it is an important step forward.

An advisory council of volunteers and a shared chat of heads of volunteer organisations and representatives of local authorities were created and worked in Kharkiv oblast, which made it possible to effectively solve the urgent issues.

>> INITIATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations, with the assistance of various donors, dealt with the development of engagement procedures in frontline communities of Kherson oblast. From September 2023 through March 2024, meetings of the public participation platform [were held](#) in Beryslav community by Dobrochyn Center NGO, with the support of the British Embassy and in partnership with other civil society organisations. Those regular meetings featured the engagement of community leaders, all key officials, and locals in the discussion. Each meeting was dedicated to a particular topic.

A number of youth organisations have resumed their activities. Specifically, the events were held by MoloDizhka youth space.

[According to](#) experts of the Ukrainian Peacekeeping School who studied resilience of newly emerged civil society structures on the example of Kherson oblast, new public initiatives proved to be highly responsive to the challenges of war and social problems through extensively involving new people in volunteer activities and successfully solving particular problems. However, new structures faced institutional weakness and a lack of knowledge of civil society traditions on the part of many new activists. This was partly due to the fact that some initiatives, according to the experts of the Ukrainian Peacekeeping School, are aimed at potential participation in political struggle. The political landscape of the oblast has drastically changed: old groups that influenced socio-political processes were either destroyed, or relocated, or lost their influence. In that political vacuum, new leaders have emerged who are engaged in charity, coordinate volunteer and humanitarian initiatives, and may take a lead in political processes in the future.

In addition to traditional grant-giving organisations, new organisations of political figures have also appeared. Specifically, the Fund of Maryna Poroshenko, wife of the fifth President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, [provided](#) a grant to local activists to establish Kherson-based Ukrainian Cultural Center.

>> MASS RALLIES

Within the reporting period, the civil society sector and all those concerned have stepped up their activities. Mass rallies were held in support of the draft law that sets up clear enlistment term during the period of martial law. In some Ukrainian cities, notably in [Zaporizhzhia](#), the protesters demanded that the right to demobilisation be legally enshrined for those militaries who have served 18 months.

From January through March 2024, protests were held to draw the authorities' attention to the problem of prisoners of war, with demands to step up efforts to exchange prisoners of war. On 3 February, a rally in support of the captured defenders of Mariupol [was carried out](#) in Zaporizhzhia. "Don't be silent! Captivity kills" demonstration brought together about 200 people. On 17 February, a car race of the same name was held in the city.

4. Changes in the social structure

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

The majority of the population of Kharkiv oblast had full access to health care services. That access was complicated in border areas under continuous shelling. There was a tendency towards the systematic destruction of health care infrastructure facilities both in border communities (an air bomb [attack](#) on Velykyi Burluk hospital, an [attack](#) on Zolochiv hospital) and in the oblast centre (an [attack](#) on a private health care centre in Kharkiv).

Since January 2024, the first mobile pharmacy in Ukraine [has been operating](#) in Kharkiv oblast. With its help, more than 80 population centres where the occupiers destroyed stationary pharmacies could receive the necessary medications. The opening of the mobile pharmacy was announced in advance by family physicians and local authorities.

Since the beginning of the heating period, no emergency outages of heat have been reported in Kharkiv oblast. However, 17,000 consumers in the oblast [were left](#) without electricity, and 34,000 without gas because of ongoing shelling. The restoration works were impossible due to the proximity of those areas to the border with the Russian Federation and continuous enemy attacks. It has to be mentioned that the majority of consumers who were left without gas lived in Vovchansk area. Vovchansk, the only population centre in Ukraine that had received gas directly from the Russian Federation, was left without gas following the onset of hostilities due to the shutoff of gas deliveries.

In March, the first transit shelter for people with disabilities and people with mobility limitations, evacuated from frontline areas, was opened in Zaporizhzhia. The evacuees [can live](#) there until they find a permanent residence.

According to the monitoring data on Kherson oblast, the “underground public life”, i. e. the arrangement of public spaces in shelters, continued from January through March. The same trend was also reported in rural areas. In January–February, three rural hubs, in Chornobaivka, Nadezhdivka, and Lymanka, [were set into operation](#). The hubs are designed to help families with children, including through providing comprehensive psychosocial support. The work of the hubs was organised by Successful Woman NGO, with the support of UNICEF.

4.2. Needs of displaced persons. Response

Internally displaced persons who [live](#) in rented homes in Mykolaiv will receive financial aid, the Head of the IDP Council at Mykolaiv OMA reported. The initiative is implemented in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council. The amount of financial aid varies from UAH 6,000 to UAH 10,000 depending on the type of rented housing. Displaced persons should be officially employed or registered at the city’s employment centre to receive aid. The programme provides for support to 250 families.

54 places of temporary residence of IDPs [have been identified](#) in Kharkiv oblast. 529,000 people were registered as of March. Most of them were residents of Kharkiv oblast, including 338 large families, some 133,000 pensioners, 25,500 people with disabilities, and over 97,000 children.

4.3. Needs of volunteers of Territorial Defence Forces. Response. Mobilisation. Military reservation

Law enforcement authorities of Mykolaiv oblast [initiated](#) 87 criminal proceedings on evasion of mobilisation. At the time of writing of the report, five cases of forgery and use of documents for travelling abroad against 14 people were taken to court.

Also, law enforcement agencies of the oblast established 2,523 criminal violations of the laws and customs of war.

III. RELATIVELY REAR AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

1. Changes in the system of governance

In the first three months of 2024, activities of local authorities of Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpattia, Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Odesa oblasts have been focused on arranging life-sustaining activities of territorial communities, helping the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and solving urgent problems of IDPs.

In mid-January, a transit regime [was imposed](#) in the border line of Chernivtsi oblast. Pursuant to changes in the legislation, from December 2023 onwards, permits from the local border guard unit will be required to stay in the border line area. The relevant changes apply to all other border areas.

In accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On the Procedure for Solving Certain Issues of the Administrative and Territorial Arrangement of Ukraine” that came into force in January 2024, the notion of the “urban-type settlement” was abolished as a Soviet one. Eight urban-type settlements of Chernivtsi oblast automatically [became](#) settlements. Meanwhile, the village of Krasnoilsk, with the population exceeding 10,000, may claim to be a town. However, it will lose additional subsidies in the event of a change in the status. At the time of writing of the report, none of the population centres filed an application with the oblast administration for obtaining the status of a town.

Strategic planning in territorial communities is a key phase of the process of ensuring their development, sustainability, and efficiency. As of 1 January 2024, 46 out of 62 communities of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast [approved](#) strategies, 74% of the total number. The oblast was ranked third preceded by Poltava (80%) and Vinnytsia (95%) oblasts. Communities that have not mapped out their development strategies risk losing opportunities for financial support and implementation of infrastructure projects.

1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

Since late March, energy infrastructure facilities have again become the aggressor’s target. Several substations supplying power to the target oblasts were damaged as a result of enemy attacks. This led to stabilisation outages. However, critical infrastructure facilities were supplied with electricity, while water and heat supply to the population was maintained.

>> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In Chernivtsi oblast, the beginning of 2024 was marked with enhanced cooperation with Romania. Specifically, Chernivtsi OMA cooperated with the Romanian counterpart to build up the rail connection between the two countries through European infrastructure projects, notably the Three Seas Initiative.

In early January, Romania stepped up works on the construction of [Moldova Highway](#) to become a new transport corridor from Bucharest to the Ukrainian border. The estimated completion time is the fourth quarter of 2024.

In Zakarpattia oblast, works [were underway](#) within the framework of the intergovernmental agreement on the construction of a 261-metre-long bridge across the Tisza River between Ukraine’s Bila Tserkva and Ro-

mania's Sighetu Marmației and, accordingly, the creation of a new border crossing point. At a meeting with partners at the Romanian Consulate in Solotvyno in March 2024, the details and construction timeframe for Ukraine were agreed upon; the construction in Romania has already been underway for several months.

The arrangement and opening of the first border crossing point in Transcarpathia, Lubnia, Ukraine, – Wołosate, Poland, was also a matter of concern, debated for over 20 years, because the crossing point is to be located in the territories of the two mountain national parks on both sides of the border, Bieszczady National Park in Poland and Uzhanskyi National Park in Ukraine's Zakarpattia oblast. The section of the Ukrainian-Polish border in Zakarpattia oblast is 30-kilometres long, but there is no border crossing point between the countries. An agreement setting the stage for the construction of a pedestrian crossing point, prospects for the development of tourism on both sides of the border, and development of the macro-region is expected to be signed in the autumn.

The Italian government allocated EUR500,000 to repair the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, which was [damaged](#) by a Russian missile in the summer of 2023. Italy announced aid to Odesa back in October 2023 and determined its amount of funds as early as December. A EUR500,000 tranche [was transferred](#) to UNESCO in March 2024. A group of experts and the Head of the UNESCO Office in Ukraine, Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi, were expected to arrive in Odesa in the near term.

>> AID FOR THE ARMY

Ivano-Frankivsk oblast has continued to provide financial support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In 2024, UAH 725 million is to be channelled for [defence](#) and other needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the oblast.

In February, Odesa City Council [decided](#) to increase funding for the city target programme, Safe City of Odesa, by UAH 131.7 million. The money was to be transferred to military units in accordance with their applications, the Mayor said.

Almost a hundred Bukovyna locals [were engaged](#) in the construction of defence fortifications in the east of Ukraine. Most of them were members of Nedoboivtsi community, Chernivtsi oblast. They were paid for this, while some workers from construction companies, critically important for the oblast, would be exempt from mobilisation. The construction was funded from the reserve fund of the state budget. Also, the possibility of allocating funds from oblast and community budgets of communities and regions was considered.

>> INCOME DECLARATION

Experts of the nationwide public campaign, Attestation of the Local Council Members, [monitored](#) declarations of members of councils of oblast centres for 2021 and 2022, excluding Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Ivano-Frankivsk City Council was the only one where 100% of members published declarations for both years

>> OPERATION OF PORTS

In February 2024, 8 million tons of cargo were exported via the Ukrainian sea corridor from Odesa ports, hitting a record high during the full-scale invasion, the Minister for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, Oleksandr Kubrakov, [reported](#). According to him, more than 90% of all exports of agricultural products went through the ports of Greater Odesa and the Danube ports. Gradually, the indicators approached the pre-war levels. The operation of the maritime corridor for civilian vessels was secured by the Ukrainian defence forces.

>> BORDER BLOCKADE

Since November 2023, the situation on the Ukrainian-Polish border [has become tougher](#) due to a blockade by Polish freight carriers at Krakovets–Korczowa, Yahodyn–Dorohusk, and Rava Ruska–Hrebenne border crossing points. UkrAutoprom Association said the reason for protests was excessive competition due to the liberalisation of international transportation between Ukraine and the EU. The protests grew in intensity as Polish drivers were joined by Polish farmers.

Despite the accords reached on 16 January between Polish carriers and the Polish government, which led to a suspension of the protests, Polish farmers announced a nationwide strike on 9 February 9, expected

to last until at least 10 March. On 20 February, the farmers planned to block all checkpoints alongside the border with Ukraine. Responding to these threats on 22 February, the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said the border crossings with Ukraine and adjacent sections of highways and railways will be added to a list of critical infrastructure to ensure that all military and humanitarian aid can reach Ukraine without any delays.

Along with that, Romanian farmers blocked the Romanian-Ukrainian border for about a week, with breaks, in early January. The blockade [began](#) on 13 January at Siret and Vicovu de Sus [checkpoints](#). Romanian authorities [took swift action](#) to identify and punish provocateurs and troublemakers who destabilised the situation. On 20 January, Porubne – Siret crossing point was completely unblocked. The movement of grain trucks to the Romanian port of Constanta has resumed.

2. Work on identity

2.1. Language politics

Since the beginning of the year, 95 complaints of violations of language law [have been registered](#) in Odesa oblast, of which 71 were filed by Odesa locals. The largest number of complaints, 36, concerned advertising and signboards, followed by the services sector, notably the language of service provision and product information. The sector of Internet resources was ranked third. It should be noted that Odesa oblast was ranked second by the number of citizens' appeals to the State Language Protection Commissioner, which indicates the growth in legal awareness of society and attention of Odesa locals to the city's language environment.

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

On 20 March, the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Organisation of State Power, Local Self-Government, Regional Development and Urban Planning decided to rename 104 villages and settlements and 5 cities, based on the community proposals. The decision was also based on the recommendations by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and the National Commission on State Language Standards. The final approval of changes in place names should be at the level of the Verkhovna Rada.

Place names were renamed [in pursuance](#) of the Law of Ukraine "On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine and Decolonisation of Toponymy" to remove Russian imperial symbols and to harmonise place names of population centres with norms and standards of the Ukrainian language.

In Odesa oblast, three options for the name of the city of Yuzhne were suggested, following several months of debate and [public voting](#), Port-Anental, Adzhalyk or Pivdene. As Yuzhne City Council failed to select among the options, the issue would have to be resolved by MPs. Yuzhne locals were quite irritated by the city's renaming, considering it as extravagant and wasteful, especially in connection with the current challenges and the war in the country.

The Verkhovna Rada Committee approved the renaming of Yuzhne as Port Anental, and Chervonohrad, Lviv oblast, as Sheptytskyi in honour of Metropolitan Andrii Sheptytskyi. The first name of the city was Krystynopol as of late 17th century. Here, the city's founder, Feliks Kazimierz Pototcki, is buried. The city was renamed as Chervonohrad after it became part of the Soviet Union in 1951.

In many communities of Ukraine, alleys of glory were opened and memorial plaques in honour of fallen compatriots were unveiled. The initiatives are aimed at commemorating the heroes and reminding of the importance of national memory.

2.3. Freedom of religion

At its meeting on 29 February 2024, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church chaired by Patriarch Daniel, **decided** to establish its canonical structure in Ukraine, called the Romanian Orthodox Church of Ukraine. There are about a hundred Romanian-speaking Orthodox congregations in the country as part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the territory of Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, and Odesa oblasts.

Following the decision of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine **held** a meeting of the Holy Synod. It was explained in detail in a message why the Romanian Patriarchate had no right to claim any congregation in Ukraine. According to the canonical order and the definition of the Tomos on Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, only the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has canonical jurisdiction over the entire internationally recognised territory of Ukraine. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine emphasised that it is a “*loving Mother Church*” for all the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine, regardless of their ethnicity. The Holy Synod also reminded that it had set up the Romanian Orthodox Vicariate for Romanian-speaking congregations in 2019.

A week later, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has more than a hundred Romanian-speaking Orthodox congregations in Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, and Odesa oblasts and considers Ukraine as its canonical territory, made a statement expressing “*surprise and concern*” over the Romanian Orthodox Church’s decision. It was also emphasised that the decision on establishing the Romanian structure in Ukraine would be contrary to the canonical order of church life, based on a territorial rather than national principle.

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

Since the onset of the full-scale invasion till early December 2023, 7,820 Ukrainian businesses **have changed** their headquarters, including 840 relocated under the government programme. 27% of the total number of companies relocated from Kyiv, 11% from Dnipropetrovsk oblast, by 8% each from Donetsk and Odesa oblasts, and 6% from Kharkiv oblast. A significant part of them **relocated** to Ukraine’s western oblasts which has fostered an increase in employment opportunities for IDPs and local specialists.

In the second half of 2023, an outflow of relocated businesses was reported. Their number **decreased** by a third in Chernivtsi oblast. Many companies from that and other oblasts came back and found themselves closer to frontline areas, creating additional challenges on the one hand and providing a boost for local economies on the other.

>> CREATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL PARK

On 22 March, the Mayor of Kalush, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, **announced** the launch of negotiations on creating an industrial park, Kalush Production, at the initiative of Khimzavod Kalush Ltd. The park will cover an area of about 24 hectares and include the production of chemicals, woodworking, furniture production, metalworking, production of fittings, construction and packaging materials, as well as industrial and household waste recycling. It was planned to create more than two thousand new jobs and raise USD62 million in investment. Investors have already started buying land plots and cooperating with the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine through the Investment Nanny programme. The designation of managers and attraction of businesses will mark the next step.

>> CREATION OF THE VOLUNTEER COUNCIL

In early February, Chernivtsi OMA **has invited** Bukovyna volunteers to join the renewed Council of Volunteers tasked to coordinate efforts of authorities and volunteers on implementing policies in the field of

defence, medical aid, rehabilitation and social protection of defenders and their family members, and support for vulnerable groups.

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

>> REHABILITATION OF WOUNDED VETERANS AND CIVILIANS

In Chernivtsi oblast, more and more attention was focused on the issue of rehabilitation of all those who suffered from military actions of the Russian Federation. Those included both individual and municipal initiatives. Chernivtsi Oblast Hospital of War Veterans [has provided](#), on an ongoing basis, rehabilitation services to adults and children in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Among the plans was to expand the patient capacity and to build a 50-bed rehabilitation centre. Those plans were based on the potential of a four-party agreement, Memorandum of Partnership and Cooperation, between Chernivtsi Oblast Council, “Victor Pinchuk Foundation – Social Initiative” Charitable Organisation, Chernivtsi Oblast Hospital of War Veterans, and Chernivtsi Oblast Military Administration.

A Bukovyna businessman, Borislav Onyshchuk, rented part of the premises of Brusnytsia recreation centre and [provided](#) rehabilitation services, including recovery from injuries. The militaries were rehabilitated at the facility. The activities were funded by a micro-grant under the Own Business grant programme, a component of the government’s eRobota project.

The first oblast rehabilitation centre for military personnel, admitting up to 70 patients per day, [was built](#) in Mukachevo, Zakarpattia oblast. A relevant city programme was developed for the centre’s construction, funded from the city budget. The centre will provide a full package of health care services to the militaries who suffer various types of injuries, musculoskeletal and nervous system disorders, and somatic dysfunctions.

The first in Ukraine habilitation centre for wounded veterans and civilians [was opened](#) in Lviv, an initiative of the Alliance for Public Health in cooperation with the National Rehabilitation Center UNBROKEN Ukraine. Habilitation refers to a process aimed at gaining certain new skills to live a full life after injury, treatment and rehabilitation, and adaptation to life in new conditions after injury. The stay in the centre is free of charge and may last up to three weeks.

>> MASS RALLIES

On 14 January, relatives of the militaries defending Ukraine since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion once again came to a rally in Odesa demanding a demobilisation on legal grounds after 18 months of military service. Several dozen people, primarily women, held a protest on Derybasivska Street nearby the City Garden.

On 25 February, more than 60 people [gathered](#) for a rally in support of prisoners of war and missing in action Ukrainians on the Central Square of Chernivtsi. There is no information about some of them for almost two years. The majority of rally participants are relatives and friends of the militaries. Similar rallies took place in other cities, notably in [Odesa](#).

4. Changes in the social structure

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

A mobile social service [was organised](#) in two cities of Chernivtsi oblast, Hlyboka and Vyzhnytsia, under the UNDP pilot project. In Hlyboka community, mobile social service workers take care of lonely elderly people and people with disabilities.

A city shelter for victims of domestic and gender-based violence [was opened](#) in Chernivtsi with the assistance of the UN Population Fund. The shelter provides victims with safe and free housing for up to three months and a full package of services to overcome the after-effects of what they experienced.

4.2. Needs of displaced persons. Response

In late January 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [adopted](#) the [Resolution](#) “On Certain Issues of Social Support for Internally Displaced Persons and Other Vulnerable Groups” governing that from 1 March onwards, only IDPs without job opportunities would be entitled to financial support. The changes in payment were explained by the need to optimise budget spending and encourage people to seek employment.

In February, before the Resolution came into effect, more than 25,000 IDPs in Chernivtsi oblast [received](#) financial support worth over UAH 82 million. In March, housing support estimated at some UAH 18 million was provided to more than 7,000 IDPs.

>> HOUSING FOR IDPs

On 6 February, Ivano-Frankivsk City Council approved an [agreement](#) with the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) on the funding for the “New construction of residential buildings with built-in non-residential premises for IDPs in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk” project. EUR9.5 million is to be channelled for the construction of a multi-apartment building for 706 people. UAH 25 million will be provided from the community budget to co-fund the project. The city undertook to bring all of the utilities to the building and to arrange the simplest shelter. The building will be on the balance sheet of Ivano-Frankivsk.

“Improving living conditions of internally displaced persons in eastern Ukraine” [is scheduled](#) to be launched in Lviv oblast. On 16 February, representatives of Lviv OMA signed memoranda of cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, and Luhansk OMA. As part of the project, three residential complexes in Kamianka-Buzka and Drohobych communities are to be built in Lviv oblast, along with the renovation of housing in Saryi Sambir on the basis of a half-finished hospital. These measures will help provide housing for some 1,500 IDPs.

On 16 February, Chernivtsi OMA [signed](#) four-party memoranda with the International Organization for Migration on the construction of five multi-apartment buildings for IDPs in Chernivtsi and Khotyn. Two buildings for 260 apartments will be built in Chernivtsi to accommodate almost 800 IDPs. Three 8-apartment houses will be built in Khotyn and a 24-apartment building will be reconstructed which will provide housing for 100 IDPs.

[According to](#) the Social Policy Department of Chernivtsi Oblast Council, there were no places for accommodating IDPs in Chernivtsi as of March. However, there were 74 places of temporary residence in the oblast for more than 4,000 IDPs, including over 1,000 available accommodations. Those were both shared accommodations and renovated buildings with separate rooms.

There were three [modular towns](#) in the oblast. 235 IDPs lived in modular towns in Chernivtsi and Vyzhnytsia communities. Another modular town, in Banyliv community, was not inhabited due to the lack of electricity, and the issue was going to be addressed, according to the First Deputy Head of Chernivtsi OMA. Another 45 houses were to be built in the village of Chornohuzy under an agreement with the Ukrainian Red Cross. Everyone had a kitchen and a bathroom in the already built modular houses. IDPs may live free of charge in these houses for two years.

You can find temporary housing on the [interactive map](#) (identity authentication login). You can also find housing on the [Prykhystok](#) website.

>> EMPLOYMENT OF IDPs

In 2023, 790 IDPs were provided with jobs by referral of Lviv Oblast Employment Centre. Most IDPs found jobs in commerce (23.6%), processing industry (21.4%), and transport (10.7%).

A total of 133 job seekers from among IDPs have received vocational training by the employment service's referral. In 2023, another 110 IDPs who relocated to Lviv oblast from areas, where active military operations were taking place or from temporarily occupied areas, were sent to training courses. Some of them will

be trained in nursing, social work, psychology, preschool teaching, entrepreneurship, trade and exchange activities, software engineering, while others will learn skills qualifying them for a particular profession, primarily as woodworking machine operators, motor vehicle drivers, and tractor drivers.

Since March, IDP women and girls temporarily living in Chernivtsi [can](#) take free SMM or sewing courses, receive legal counselling and psychological support. This was possible thanks to the “Three Support Points for IDP Women’s Recovery” project implemented by Pobratym Center.

>> **SUPPORT AND ADAPTATION OF IDPs**

On 24–25 January, Ivano-Frankivsk [hosted](#) a Forum of IDP Councils, which brought together 50 representatives of civil society and local authorities from the following seven western oblasts of Ukraine: Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia, Ternopil, Volyn, Rivne. The event was organised by Rokada Charitable Foundation. The forum participants defined joint algorithms for support, adaptation, and integration of IDPs, and discussed ways to improve interactions between the authorities, international humanitarian and civil society organisations.

The IDP City Council [has been set up](#) in Odesa. It consists of 21 members, including 10 representatives of IDPs, 4 representatives of civil society organisations that work to defend the rights of IDPs, and 7 representatives of Odesa City Council’s executive bodies. The Council is an advisory body with the aim of promoting the exercise of civil and political rights of IDP, making IDPs engaged in the drafting and control of regulatory acts, and providing assistance in the protection of the rights and interests of IDPs in issues of social protection, housing and employment, health care services, psychosocial and legal support, etc.

In March, Your Support CF [has announced](#) the opening of an integration hub in Lviv to facilitate the adaptation and integration of IDPs into oblast communities.

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

Lviv community [have decided](#) to pay UAH 50,000 from the city budget to community members who have registered for military service and signed contracts with military units of amphibious assault troops and the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The payments apply to both the first and second contracts which will encourage conscripts and experienced military personnel to serve in these units.

Lviv has become the first city to [launch](#) a recruitment campaign for the Da Vinci Wolves Battalion. The Battalion received premises for temporary use free of charge; the repairs were funded by benefactors. Anyone interested to join the Battalion can apply via social networking sites, call the hotline, or come to the recruitment office for an interview.

“Indeed, we have selection, we don’t recruit everyone, only the best. If this is you, come and try yourself. Everyone should understand that every contribution is very important. The Battalion seeks clerks, lawyers, drivers, infantrymen, and artilleryists. That means there are jobs, and candidates will be able to find positions that match their skills. The main thing is to have the desire and motivation to defend the homeland,” said Serhii Filimonov, Deputy Chief of Intelligence of the Da Vinci Wolves Battalion.

105 critically important businesses [have been identified](#) in Chernivtsi oblast, almost half of them operating in the public utilities sector. Those companies exempted half of employees from military service, with their largest number in Chernivtsi. The status of a critically important business is granted for a term of one year. Then the documents should be resubmitted. Companies can exempt their employees from military service for half a year.

At a session on 21 February, Odesa City Council [adopted](#) a decision to request the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to grant the mobilised military personnel the right to demobilisation after 36 months of military service during martial law.

The border status of Chernivtsi oblast determines one of the key mobilisation challenges, the permanently large number of evaders and attempted evasion of mobilisation. The channels and methods are traditio-

nal, through illegal border crossings (with the help of [border guards](#), [Shliakh system](#), [clerics \(of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate\)](#), [use of grain trucks](#), etc.).

Financial enrichment is a primary motivation for plotting various schemes of illegal border crossing by men of mobilisation age. In the first quarter of 2024, the media reported on the involvement of [medical workers](#) and [officials](#) in these schemes.

To ensure reliable protection of the state border and to prevent illegal border crossings by Ukrainians of mobilisation age, additional temporary restrictions associated with tightened border controls [have been imposed](#) in 17 communities of the oblast.

The large number of killed soldiers mobilised from the oblast has posed a major mobilisation challenge. Daily reports on casualties, including from among former officials, appeared in the local press. Specifically, the former Head of a raion administration in Bukovyna, Ruslan Senchuk, was killed in February. In Ivano-Frankivsk territorial community alone, more than 400 reservists and conscripts [have been reported killed](#) and another 97 missing since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine.

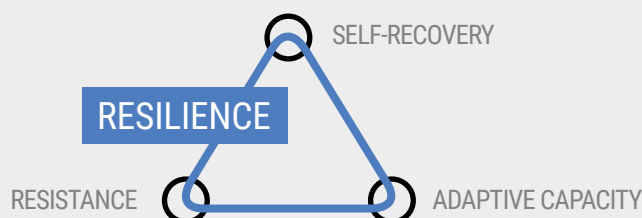
A notorious [incident](#) in Kosmach village, Kosiv raion, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, has sparked a strong public response and coverage by the central media in February. A group of locals blocked the central road of the mountain village, stopped a car in which two women were travelling, one with a child, and beat a woman after false accusations of being in league with the draft officers. She was admitted to hospital with concussion afterwards. Her 6-year daughter [had](#) hematomas and bruises. The oblast police opened a criminal case on charges of malicious hooliganism. The leader of Kosmach community said he knew nothing about the intention of the locals to block the road. According to him, social media spread news that many draft officers were heading to Kosmach by cars. The Deputy Director at the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law, Ihor Rozkladai, [said](#) the incident could have been fuelled by Russian disinformation. In his opinion, one of the methods of information warfare, waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, is to target the audience through posting false and fake information in local chats in social media.

On 25 March, dozens of women [blocked](#) for several hours the Kyiv-Chop highway in Karpaty and Rakhishyn villages of Mukachevo raion, Zakarpattia oblast, in a protest against mobilisation.

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, Kherson, and Kharkiv 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 11 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. 10 covers the period from January through March 2024.



ABOUT UKRAINIAN CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL RESEARCH

The Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research is a non-governmental, non-partisan think tank.

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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. 10. January – March 2024

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