

# Brussels Ukraine Review

CALENDAR OF  
THE MAIN EVENTS OF

**600** DAYS  
FULL-SCALE  
OF WAR

OLEKSANDRA MATVIICHUK  
IS A CHAMPION FOR HUMAN  
RIGHTS IN UKRAINE. INTERVIEW

EUROPEAN  
ADVOCACY FORUM

KYIV INVESTMENT FORUM  
IN BRUSSELS 2023

OCTOBER 2023



**P | Promote  
Ukraine**

Brussels Ukraine Review

## Brussels Ukraïna Review

### Огляд Україна Брюссель

Edition – October 2023  
Journal is published in Ukrainian  
and English

#### Online:

[www.promoteukraine.org](http://www.promoteukraine.org)

#### Publisher:

NGO "Promote Ukraine"

[www.promoteukraine.org](http://www.promoteukraine.org)

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ISSN 2593-8215

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Journal "Brussels Ukraïna Review" is distributed free of charge among researchers, experts, opinion leaders, government officials and politicians of Ukraine and the European Union.

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# EDITOR'S FOREWORD

On 16 October 2023, when this magazine leaves the printing press, it will coincide with the symbolic date of 600 days since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people.

The war against Ukraine rages on. Ukraine faces the tragic loss of its future: Ukrainian women and children are fleeing, and the gene pool diminishes. Both the Ukrainian military and civilians are injured and killed in the conflict.

In early October of this year, Russia attacked the village of Hroza in Kharkiv oblast, resulting in the deaths of over 50 civilians, including small children. This is but one of the countless crimes against the Ukrainian people that occur daily in this unprovoked aggression.

Simultaneously, the international community is increasingly relegating the urgency of assisting Ukraine. Our struggle is becoming inconvenient in the context of the comfortable life in European nations.

Ukraine stands as a bastion for Europe, a shield against the Russian onslaught. We urgently require the EU's support. And it's not merely assistance in our struggle; we seek justice in the truest human sense. The world's indifference to Russia's crimes, the hesitation to label WAGNER as a terrorist organisation, inadequate scrutiny of Russia's ties with Iran, HAMAS, and other criminal groups and authoritarian regimes, attempts to appease the adversary, and a naive faith in negotiations lead to the amplification of international conflicts.

In this vein, last year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate and the head of the Center for Civil Liberties, Oleksandra Matviichuk, mentioned in an interview with Unlock Ukraine that every victim must find redress, and every perpetrator must face justice. The accountability of Russia's top leadership and the responsibility of its citizens must be undeniable. There can be no expiration to such accountability.

A dedicated team of volunteers from Promote Ukraine work tirelessly to keep the Ukrainian cause at the forefront of the EU's agenda. One way we achieve this is through our European Advocacy Forum, uniting civil society activists from across Europe in the heart of European democracy for the second consecutive year. We are wholeheartedly committed to incorporating the Ukrainian issue into the political programmes of candidates for next year's European elections.

Join our cause, stay updated with Promote Ukraine news, and stand with Ukraine!

*Marta Barandiy, Doctor  
of Law, Saarland University  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Founder and President of  
Promote Ukraine*



 [twitter.com/MartaBarandiy](https://twitter.com/MartaBarandiy)

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# OLEKSANDRA MATVIICHUK: A CHAMPION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN UKRAINE



In an interview with the founder of Promote Ukraine Marta Barandiy, Oleksandra Matviichuk, a prominent Ukrainian figure, shed light on various pressing topics of our time. With her unwavering commitment to human rights, Matviichuk has been at the forefront of Ukraine's struggle since 2007, culminating in her prestigious Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her work during Russia's war in Ukraine from 2014 onwards.

Oleksandra championed human rights during the Euromaidan, and in 2014, she had initiated and led the Euromaidan SOS.

Euromaidan SOS was a civil initiative that consisted in the fact that several thousand people were trained to provide legal and other forms of assistance to persecuted protestors.

## EXPANDING CIVIL ACTIVISM IN UKRAINE

Oleksandra highlighted the evolution of civil activism in Ukraine, drawing a distinction between the pre-2014 and post-2014 periods. She emphasised the significant expansion of civil society and a growing sense of responsibility among individuals. People began to realise the importance of taking respon-

*The Ukrainian language has been suppressed for many centuries, as it is a cornerstone of Ukrainian self-identification.*

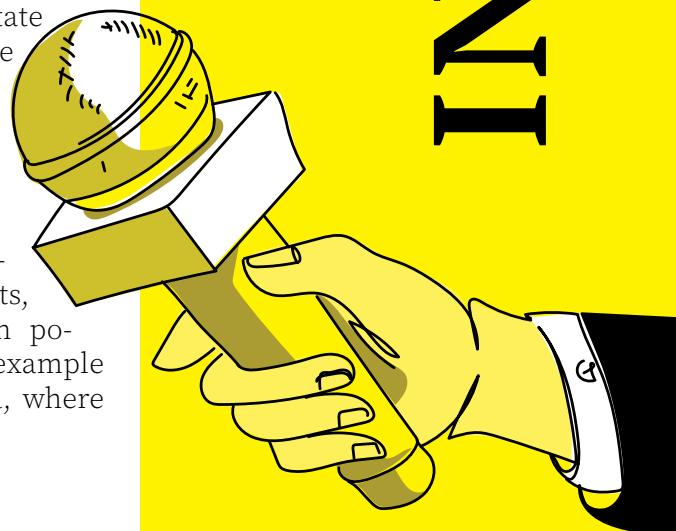
sibility rather than relegating it to local or national politicians. They recognised their power to make positive changes in their communities and societies, marking a positive trend.

## THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

The Ukrainian language has been suppressed for many centuries, as it is a cornerstone of Ukrainian self-identification. Discussing the current state of the Russian language in Ukraine, it's crucial to note several points.

Firstly, one crucial aspect to consider is how the language issue has been exploited as an artificial reason for conflicts, primarily by pro-Russian political forces. A prime example is the invasion of Crimea, where

# INTERVIEW





the official pretext was the “defence” of the Russian-speaking population. In this scenario, language has been used as a tool to manipulate public sentiment and escalate tensions.

Secondly, it is very natural for the state to develop and promote its language. The central question is how to cultivate the state language while ensuring the rights of national minorities. Ukraine has managed this balance effectively.

Back in 2014, in reality, there weren't any significant issues surrounding the Russian language in Ukraine at the level of everyday communication between people. However, nowadays, using Russian in public places might incite misunderstandings or even aggression. This reaction is primarily rooted in the pain caused by the war. And it is the Russian language that is clearly and directly associated with the aggressor responsible for this suffering.

## EU SUPPORT

Oleksandra emphasised that EU support amplifies the voice of Ukraine's civil society. The Revolution of Dignity played a pivotal role in this process, holding symbolic significance for Ukraine. It outlined the vector of development and renewed commitment to the European integration process. For Ukraine, having an association agreement and candidate status represents significant progress. It indicates a good intermediate result and a journey towards a brighter future, thus celebrating these milestones, especially during wartime, is essential.



## IMPUNITY AS A CATALYST FOR CONFLICT

Tracing the origins of the ongoing war, Matviichuk attributed the turmoil to decades of impunity that Russia enjoyed. The issue started post-WWII, as the totalitarian Soviet regime was never held accountable. This culture of impunity emboldened Russian troops to commit similar crimes in regions like Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Libya, and now Ukraine. It's a shared historical responsibility to break this cycle of impunity. Russia deliberately inflicts great pain on civilians in order to break the resistance and to occupy the country. So, we should be very clear when we document the violation of Geneva convention – we document not just violations of international treaties, we document human suffering.

## DEFEAT OF RUSSIA

In her closing remarks, Oleksandra conveyed a clear message: Ukraine must prevail, and Russia must face defeat. The aim is to achieve sustainable peace. According to Putin, it is a war against the “collective West”, putting all Western European countries, all democracies at high risk. Only a resounding defeat of Russia can halt this war. Alternatives, like regime change, won't suffice

because it's not merely Putin's battle. This war stems from the imperialist mindset ingrained in many Russians. Matviichuk believes that a decisive defeat is the only way for Russia to grasp the repercussions of its imperialistic tendencies and set the stage for meaningful reform.

Oleksandra Matviichuk's steadfast dedication to human rights in Ukraine serves as an inspiration to activists around the world. Her insights illuminate the multifaceted challenges Ukraine faces, from linguistic disputes to the quest for lasting peace. As Ukraine strives to address these intricate complex issues, Matviichuk's bravery and dedication shine as a symbol of hope for a brighter future anchored in justice and respect for human rights.

**//**  
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# UNLOCK UKRAINE

WATCH OUR NEW EPISODE WITH  
OLEKSANDRA MATVIICHUK



Oleksandra Matviichuk

Marta Barandiy

# ECHOES OF THE NEW WAR: MIDDLE EAST AS THE WORLD'S FRACTURE POINT

October marked the beginning of a new major war in the Middle East. On the morning of 7 October, HAMAS fired more than 4,400 rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip, after which hundreds of fighters of this terrorist group on pickup trucks and motorcycles broke through the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel.

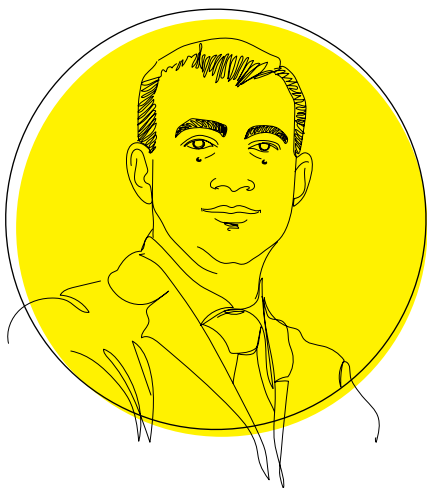
HAMAS's tactics included selecting targets, inflicting damage, capturing or killing as many people as possible, and retreating

rapidly. Such an operation could be aimed at provoking Israel into a large-scale reaction, possibly even with the occupation of Gaza. At the time of writing, there are known to be more than 900 deaths and 2,000 injuries on the Israeli side.

The IDF launched a military operation under Article 40-Alef, which allows the Israeli army to act at its own discretion, reporting only to the country's political leadership (the last time this article was used was in 1973). As of the third day, Israel mobilised more than 300,000 reservists and regained control over all the cities on the border with the Gaza Strip.

The moment chosen for the attack deserves special attention: it is the anniversary of the "Doomsday" war, Vladimir Putin's birthday, Shabbat (and disconnected communication in Israel), a speakerless Congress, and blocked military aid to Ukraine from the USA.

Israeli intelligence predicted this development, but a natural



**VOLODYMYR MARTSYNOVSKYI IS AN EXPERT IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, BOASTING OVER 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN SENIOR ROLES AT BOTH COMMUNICATION AGENCIES AND CORPORATIONS. A CONSULTANT IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT. IN EARLIER YEARS – AN EDITOR AT LEADING BUSINESS MEDIA.**

# WORLD WARS



Palestine”, Abdel Hafiz Nofal, in an interview with Russian TASS, directly stated that he is coordinating his actions with Moscow; by a “strange coincidence” it came out on the day of the HAMAS attack on Israel.

question arises as to how such an audacious breakthrough could have occurred from Gaza, which is under blockade and has limited resources. The way this operation was carried out leaves no doubt about the long and careful planning, intelligence measures, high level of training of Militants, and logistical and financial support of powerful partners of HAMAS, among which Iran is mentioned first of all.

According to senior members of HAMAS and Hezbollah cited by The Wall Street Journal, Iranian security officials helped plan the surprise attack on Israel and were the ones who gave the “green light” for the attack. This information was also confirmed to the WSJ by a high-ranking official in the EU. In addition, according to the Center of National Resistance (a project of the SSO of Ukraine), the fighters of the “Wagner” PMC also participated in the preparation of Hamas before the attack on Israel. In particular, among the allies of HAMAS, only the Russians had the experience of using drones with reset mechanisms.

Meanwhile, while the entire civilised world is expressing support for Israel, HAMAS is mobilising its partners. Regular meetings of HAMAS leaders with the highest leadership of Russia have already become commonplace. The ambassador from the unrecognised “State of

On the same day, Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon also shelled Israel. It is important here that HAMAS and Hezbollah are not in direct contact with each other, primarily because of religious differences. HAMAS is a Sunni organisation, while Hezbollah is a Shia organisation. The Palestinian Authority (the so-called “State of Palestine”) generally stands apart from them.

In some “strange ways,” all these organisations, which have different geographical, cultural and religious backgrounds, and different geopolitical sponsors, demonstrated great coordination on the day of the biggest terrorist attack on the state of Israel.

What are the geopolitical and global communication implications of the war in Israel?

First, the planned dialogue between Israel and Saudi Arabia (against the thawing of relations and informal talks between these countries, which still do not have diplomatic relations), will probably be put on hold. The ground operation in the Gaza Strip has already resulted in a significant



***According to senior members of HAMAS and Hezbollah cited by The Wall Street Journal, Iranian security officials helped plan the surprise attack on Israel and were the ones who gave the «green light» for the attack.***



number of Arab casualties, which naturally increases anti-Israeli sentiment in the Arab world. And the longer the war lasts, the smaller the chances of settling Israel's long-standing disputes with the Arab monarchies.

Second, the escalation in the Middle East may well disrupt US plans to shift production from China and create new trade routes between India and Europe bypassing China. The implementation of the new, intercontinental transport system, which will connect India with Europe, is possible only if relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia are normalised. Now this global project, which was intended to strengthen the role of the United States in the global economy while simultaneously weakening China, is on the verge of collapse. And all because of the attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip, which actually has a territory of 360 square kilometres, which is less than the area of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv.

Third, given the activation of Iranian and Russian proxies around the world, the newly coined "Axis of Evil" (Tehran-Moscow-Damascus) is now attempting to plunge the world into chaos, creating a strain for the

*The strategy of the Russian Federation in the region is focused on the escalation of conflicts against US allies. It uses allies as a tool to achieve this goal. In general, the attack on Israel is only part of a larger game.*

collective West spanning from Ukraine to Africa and the Middle East. The EU, the US, and other allies will be forced to decide how to allocate already depleting resources and the attention of a public concerned about rising household costs. Allies of Ukraine now face a choice: either to protect their geopolitical interests in the Middle East and Ukraine or to focus on domestic problems. Be that as it may, the decisions made by Washington and Brussels will have far-reaching consequences for the future world order. The strategy of the Russian Federation in the region is focused on the escalation of conflicts against US allies. It uses allies as a tool to achieve this goal. In general, the attack on Israel is only part of a larger game.

Fourth, as stated by the Main Directorate of Intelligence of Ukraine, Russia handed over foreign weapons captured in Ukraine to Hamas militants. The Russian Federation intends to use this information for allegedly "revealing publications" and so-called "investigations" in the world media in order to accuse Ukraine of smuggling weapons received from Western allies.

Fifth, Russia will use this topic as much as possible to distract the collective West and the world from Ukraine. The topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war will disappear from the agenda of the world's leading media for at least two weeks and will probably return in late October. This significantly complicates lobbying on issues of increasing aid to Ukraine.

Under these conditions, the weight of diplomatic efforts acting in the interests of Ukraine is growing extremely.

[www.promoteukraine.org](http://www.promoteukraine.org)



# Promote Ukraine

**Brussels-based media, civil society  
and advocacy organisation, winner  
of the European Citizen's Prize 2022**



# WHY THE MILITARY THINK LITTLE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND TALK ABOUT IT EVEN LESS

**W**e are driving from Slovyansk to Bakhmut. A powerful camouflaged pickup rushes towards us. The driver, Sashko, smacks his lips curiously:

“When I grow up, I will buy one for myself!”

“When you grow up?! You are 35 years old,” I am sincerely surprised.

“I wanted to say that when the war ends,” Sashko laughs, “after the victory, when I return if I survive...”

In this somewhat funny caveat, a paradigm of thinking typical of many military personnel is hidden: not to plan anything serious in advance, to understand that there are thou-

sands of “buts” for all dreams and plans for the future and life can end at any moment. When a brother-in-arm dies, the first thing that usually comes to mind is his last voiced plans: go fishing, see children, make repairs in apartment. Ordinary everyday things can be simply inaccessible, so conversations about the future among the military, indeed, sometimes resemble children’s ones, which begin with the words “when I grow up...” The life of many fewer civilians during war is also full of uncertainties, but if they do not live in a near-front zone, they still have many times fewer “buts” than an average soldier at the front.

In movies and books about war, the heroes must definitely say what made them take up arms. In real combat conditions, such pathetic



**DMYTRO KRAPYVENKO –  
SERVICEMAN. WELL-KNOWN  
UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST,  
VOLUNTEER, PUBLICIST.**

# UKRAINIAN WAR AND PEACE

conversations are extremely rare because it seems that everything is obvious: we protect our land. “What can I say, if we do not fight, then they will come to our home, to everyone’s home and do what happened in Irpin and Bucha. We are fighting not for a strange man, we are fighting for ourselves, each for our family, no one else will do it for us,” says Heorhiy, the commander of the anti-tank platoon, who was a contract serviceman until 2014, then remained in the army all the time and participated in the ATO-JFO. “I just want to return home, to my native Sevastopol,” says aerial scout Oleh who left occupied Crimea and worked as a designer in Kyiv until 2022. “When the full-scale war began, I realised that I would not be able to stay in the rear or go abroad, my conscience simply would not allow me, especially since I have a medical education,” says combat medic Anastasia. These simple answers reflect the opinions of the majority of those who are currently defending the Motherland.

Patriotic slogans, words of gratitude to the Defence Forces, faith in our victory are often seen on social networks and heard in live conversations in the rear. This is quite natural for the country waging the war of liberation, but it sometimes causes frustration among the soldiers. It’s not PTSD or despair. Those who are called unbreakable, knights, titans, are actually living people. And yes, many of them are tired of war. First of all, physically but morally too. This is because the terms of service for the mobilised have not been established. “Un-



## *War teaches to tame one’s fear and to believe in one’s strength.*

til the end of martial law” sounds pretty gloomy given that the war will be protracted and no one is seriously talking about its quick end today. Ihor Lutsenko, a politician and civil society activist in the past, and now a serviceman, shared a post on his Facebook that conveys the mood typical of a significant part of the front-line soldiers: “The state is obliged to give these people [mobilised] certainty in terms of their service and provide a fourth way out of the army except for the coffin, prison and disability. And it’s not a matter of rest, it’s a matter of establishing basic justice and preventing the catastrophe we’re heading to. Get ready for mobilisation and help the army because everyone has to go through it.” These words are not “betrayal” or frustration at the goals of war, they are a request for justice. When one part of society has been directly participating in military operations for a year and a half, while the other continues to live a rather comfortable life, the voices of “illegal mobilisation” and “economic front” held by those who work and pay taxes sound increasingly brazen. Of course, it is not about maximalism

or equalisation but rather about transparent rules of the game when a conscript has a clearly defined term of service. Such a scheme operated during the anti-terrorist operation when one was conscripted for a year. But today we have a different nature of war, and it is difficult for the command to dare to take a step when thousands of experienced fighters will be released to the reserve. They are to be replaced by newly mobilised people without combat experience. Such a turn of events can be extremely dangerous.

Often, fighters, after coming to peaceful cities, express dissatisfaction with how the rear lives. “In Kyiv and in Lviv, which I visited during my vacation, I don’t feel the war is ongoing in the country at all,” says Stepan who worked in a managerial position in one of the ministries until 24 February 2022 and has been serving as a sniper in a special forces brigade for the past year and a half, “I understand that peaceful life must be different, I am glad that restaurants and barbershops work. But look at how many perfectly fit men are roaming the streets. It is easily seen with the unaided eye that they are not in the army and are not going there. And it’s frankly annoying. Just like annoying questions about ‘when will it all be over’ or talking about the election. What kind of elections can be during the war?!”

War teaches to tame one’s fear and to believe in one’s strength. This can be called a survivor’s achievement. Therefore, in the army, many people have a desire to do after the war what they were previously afraid of: open

their own business, change their field of employment, complete a thesis, solve problems in their personal life. Sometimes such conversations arise between the military, but they are of the “when I grow up” nature. “Let’s be honest, this war will never end for us. There is a saying: you can come from war, but you can’t come back,” says National Guard member Oleksiy who never served in the army until 2022. “Even when the fighting abates, it will be necessary to maintain combat capability, to search for war criminals, to help those affected by the war. I decided for myself: I will sign a contract and stay in the army. It’s also more comfortable psychologically, there won’t be people next to me who avoid service or talk such nonsense as “not everything is so clear-cut”, ready to put up with the Russians.” Similar opinions are expressed by those who were seriously wounded at the front but remain in the security forces – in those positions where it is possible to serve due to their health. Ihor was a sapper at the front but partially lost his hearing after concussion: “Having gone through military medical commission, I went to the Territorial Center for Recruitment and Social Support, through which I had been drafted, and asked if I would be of use to them, they welcomed me, now I serve there in a ‘paperwork’ posi-

tion. It is important for me to stay in the ranks, to wear a military uniform, I want to be useful for the common cause that we all do. And somehow I don’t want to return to civilian life.”

There has been an opinion in Ukrainian society since 2014 that “boys and girls will return from the front and fix life in the country.” The military themselves are extremely ironic about such naive hopes. In fact, life at the front is disconnected from all relevant public discussions: people in the trenches do not talk about the probability of presidential elections, Nagorno-Karabakh, the sexist statements by Oleksiy Arestovych, or Andriy Kurkov’s dialogues with Masha Gessen. In war, everything revolves around two pillars: the fulfillment of the combat mission and the preservation of the lives of personnel. The rest of the time (and there is very little of it) is for ordinary chores and recovery. To integrate into peaceful life, veterans will need time to understand the mechanisms of civilian life which they have fallen out of. And the longer the war lasts, the more time to realise this will be needed.



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# Ukraine **NOW**

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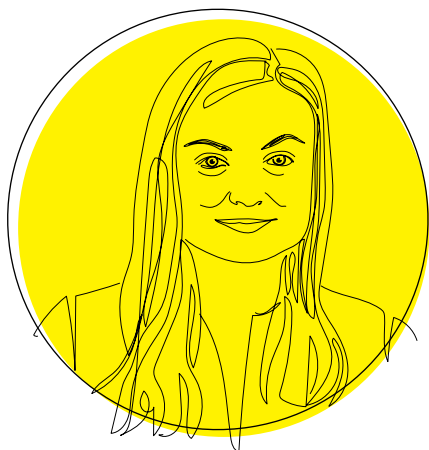
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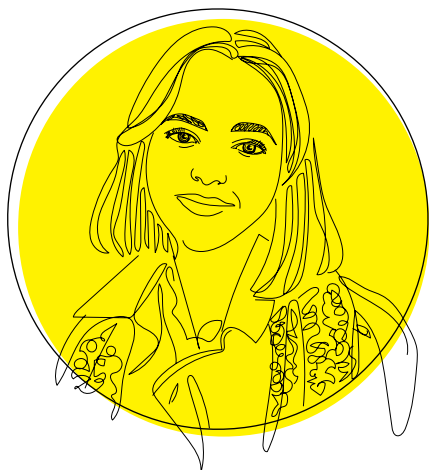
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# EUROPEAN ADVOCACY FORUM: UNITING UKRAINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ABROAD



**TEXT WRITTEN BY  
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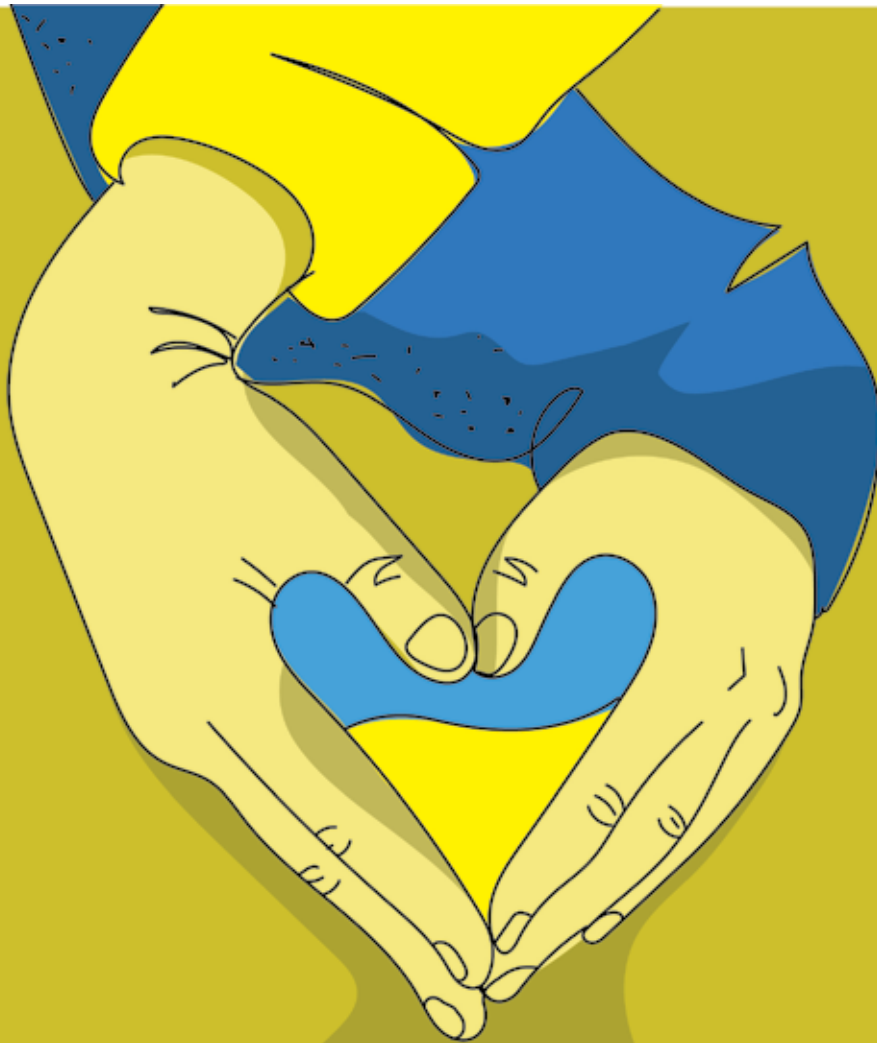


**EDITED BY LIZA  
BEZVERSHENKO**

**O**n 1 December 2022, Brussels-based NGO Promote Ukraine, under the patronage of the then President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Christa Schweng, and with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung organised the European Advocacy Forum – Ukraine Leads. The Forum brought together Ukrainian civil society organisations from 14 EU countries to discuss challenges and best practices of advocacy and actions in support of Ukraine.

The project benefited Ukrainian society at large, and more specifically, the Ukrainian Civil Society in Brussels and within Europe. The Forum provided the temporarily displaced Ukrainian Civil Society and Ukrainian CSOs based in Europe with a platform for networking and advocacy in Brussels while connecting them to the European policy and decision-makers, donors, expert communities and like-minded European peer organisations.

DIASPORA  
FOR UKRAINE



**//**  
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During the Forum, participants identified and discussed common challenges and solutions, as well as best practices they face in their advocacy work. Russian propaganda, human resources and finances, and lack of networking and coordination among civil society were among some of the challenges that were identified and presented to the participants. Volunteer burn-out and lack of full-time employment opportunities within Ukrainian civil society in the EU was an especially poignant topic.

Furthermore, participants also shared the best practices of their organisations and Ukrai-

nian civil society in a broader sense. The delivery of weapons to Ukraine is an example of how joint advocacy efforts by the Ukrainian government and civil society are making a real difference in this war. During the strategic session, participants also presented best practices of cooperation with the national governments and local authorities, as well as examples of creative fundraising.

The participants of the Forum also discussed possible joint solutions to the identified challenges. Thus, it was proposed to create a Telegram chan-

nel on the major Russian narratives and involve influencers in the destruction of Russian myths and propaganda. A representative of an Italian NGO spoke about the importance of repeating the message “no peace without weapons” in different EU countries. In addition, it was proposed to organise an annual forum to help coordinate the efforts of Ukrainian civil society organisations. Regarding the problem with



human resources, the proposed ideas included the professionalisation of HR practices, as well as signature of volunteer contracts to Professionalise relations with the organisation.

The first day of the Forum was followed by meetings between participants and the representatives of European institutions to establish cooperative relations and discover the opportunities European institutions provide to facilitate the work of civil society. Thus, the Ukrainian CSOs were introduced to the Support Group for Ukraine in the European Commission, Ukraine Division and East StratCom Task in the European External Action Service.

According to the results of the survey conducted during the forum, it was found that respondents are interested in further discussions on the organisation of the annual European Advocacy Forum in Brussels under the patronage of European institutions. Furthermore, the participants were also interested in regular meetings besides the Annual Forum to share best practices and challenges and to agree on common actions. During the survey, participants also had the opportunity to describe their experience at the Forum in one word. Thus, respondents considered Ukraine Leads: European Advocacy Forum as “interesting”, “knowledge-

able”, “exchange of experience”, “networking”, “forward-looking,” etc.

Anna Pattermann, the founder of Unlimited Democracy - Verein zur Förderung der Demokratisierung (Austria), described her experience in Ukraine Leads: European Advocacy Forum in the following way: “Hours have we talked about our main challenges and best practices in order to become united, stronger and more effective! ... So much insights and knowledge exchange!”.

“This forum in Brussels is a good opportunity for us to gain experience and inspiration from the results of Ukrainian Civil Society in European countries to continue our work in Prague at the highest possible level” - leaders of the initiative Hlas Ukrajinu in the Czech Republic Yaroslava Burko and Anastasia Signayevska.

Alina Zubkovych, director of Nordic Ukraine Forum (Sweden), stresses that: “Promote Ukraine, Brussels has done incredible work in bringing together organisations that advocate for Ukraine. Lots of meetings, conversations, ideas and experiences”.

According to the above feedback from the forum participants, we can conclude that European Advocacy Forum – Ukraine Leads was a step towards strengthening networking and further cooperation between the organisations to enhance advocacy of Ukrainian interests within Europe.



*Thus, respondents considered  
Ukraine Leads: European  
Advocacy Forum as “interesting”,  
“knowledgeable”, “exchange of  
experience”, “networking”,  
“forward-looking” etc.*

As a next step, Promote Ukraine presented some ideas for a digital platform that would unite all Ukrainian and foreign organisations working on the victory of Ukraine from abroad in one place. The digital platform is meant to gather information on the presence of Ukrainian CSOs, their contact details, and their description of activities which will help fellow CSOs, NGOs, think tanks, and private and institutional actors to have easier access to a verified Ukraine Leads network. As a result, Promote Ukraine hopes it will facilitate the continuation of sharing best practices, coordination and advancing work of Ukrainian civil society in defending Ukrainian interests in the EU. The launch of such a platform is planned for November 2023.

Looking ahead, the second edition of the European Advocacy Forum, scheduled for 9 November 2023, will center on the upcoming European elections. The event will kick off with an opening ceremony, followed by four panels. The first one will address the current state of democracy and its challenges, emphasising the role of civil society organisations and EU accession/enlargement. Panel two will evaluate the security landscape, its impact on EU-Ukraine relations, and collaborative approaches to tackle security challenges. The next session will explore economic opportunities and challenges in EU-Ukraine relations, including trade

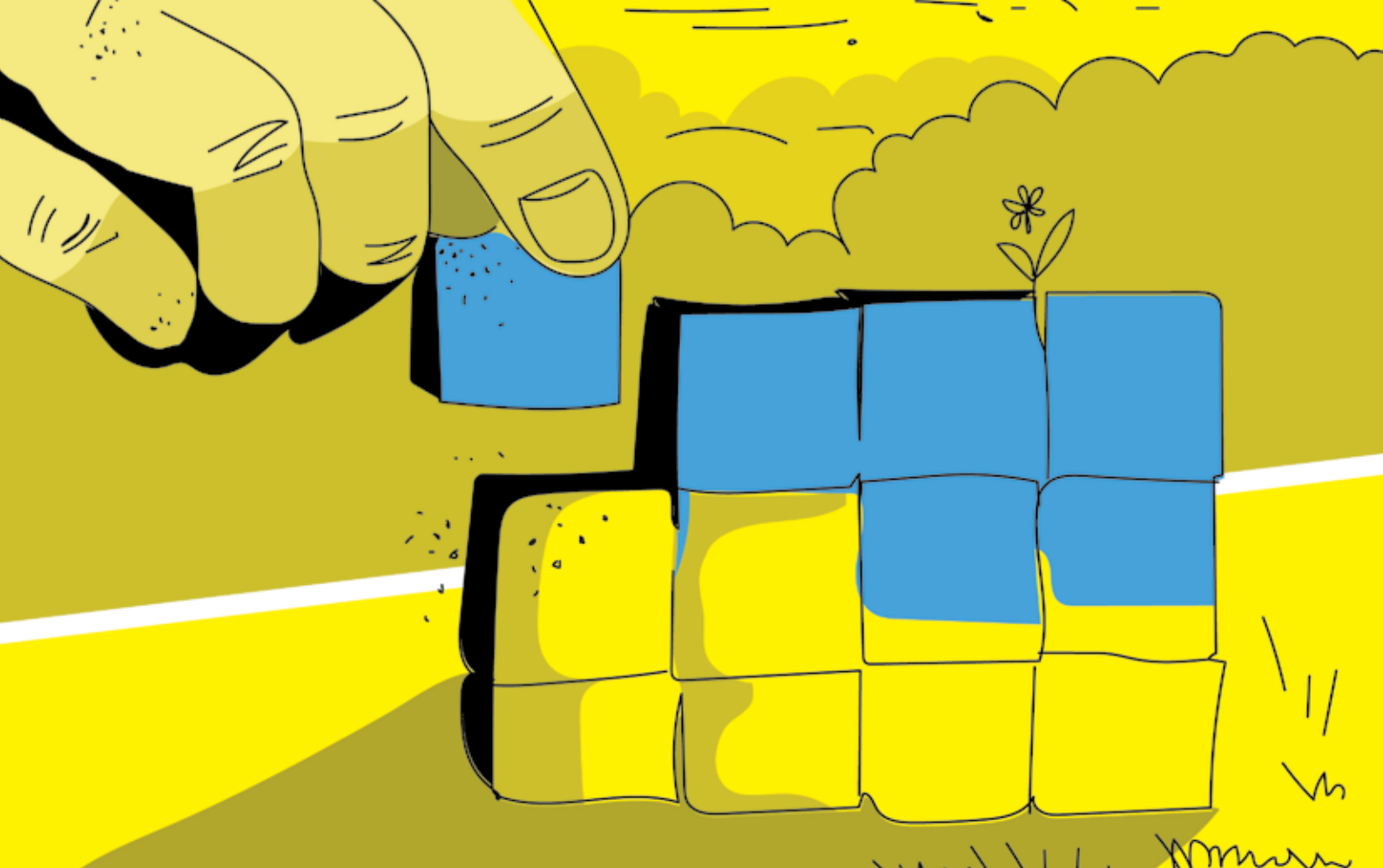


*This forum will continue to play a role in strengthening ties, fostering dialogue, and ultimately advancing the interests of Ukrainian civil society both in Europe and on the international stage.*

and investment cooperation and economic integration. The last discussion will focus on the establishment of an international tribunal to address Russia's war crimes, discussing human rights violations and the pursuit of accountability.

This forum will continue to play a role in strengthening ties, fostering dialogue, and ultimately advancing the interests of Ukrainian civil society both in Europe and on the international stage.





# DIASPORA FOR UKRAINE: RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT



**HANNA SLOBODYANYUK-MONTAVON, IWEK E.V.**

**E**ven though the Russo-Ukrainian war that started on 20 February 2014 by annexation of Crimea and escalated on 24 February 2022 by full-scale invasion, is still ongoing, Ukraine is already on the road to recovery, and it's here that the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany can play an instrumental role. This group of individuals, united by their shared heritage and culture, can significantly contribute to rebuilding their



**DANYLO POLILUEV-SCHMIDT, CULTURAL COLUMNIST FOR THE PROJECT "UKRAINE IN DEUTSCHLAND," DECISION BOARD MEMBER OF THE NGO IWEK E.V., ACTIVIST, PODCAST CREATOR "ALIARMIA? ZMOVA? ZNEVIRA?" AND BLOGGER BERLIN, GERMANY**



homeland, foster greater cooperation between Germany and Ukraine, and generate a lasting impact on the sustainable development of Ukraine.

An effective strategy of diaspora engagement should be grounded on three pillars:

1. Networking, Cooperation, and Activism,
2. Available Financial Support Instruments, and
3. Sensibilisation.

Networking, cooperation, and activism are essential for creating a framework for sustain-

able development. A network of Ukrainian Diaspora Organizations in Germany can serve as the foundation for creating a strong cooperative relationship between German and Ukrainian businesses, scientific-business-civil society clusters. This network, fortified with active participation and commitment, can enable the implementation of projects aiming at reconstructing Ukraine and improving bilateral cooperation between Germany and Ukraine.

Engagement between these organisations and German governmental institutions is also critical for successful cooperation. The institutions could include entities like the German Agency for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ), responsible for implementing Germany's developmental policies.

On OECD Final Expert Conference "The role of return in Ukraine's post-war recovery and reconstruction" that was held in Brussels on June 13-14, 2023, it was stated several times by various government representatives that Ukrainian recovery needs a booster for its economic development. Sustainability cannot be secured without economic

growth and opportunities for the population.

Thus, financial support instruments are vital for ensuring the realisation of projects aimed at rebuilding Ukraine. These instruments can include funds for long-term SDG projects of Ukrainian diaspora organisations with local partners in Ukraine, research grants for Ukrainian universities, and funding for innovative German-Ukrainian start-ups, amongst others. Financial support could also cover the estab-



*An effective strategy of diaspora engagement should be grounded on three pillars:*

- 1. Networking, Cooperation, and Activism,*
- 2. Available Financial Support Instruments, and*
- 3. Sensibilization.*

lishment of scientific-business-civil society clusters, aiming to foster collaborative research and innovation in various sectors like sustainable urban development, climate change adaptation, and natural resources management.

Besides, creating German-Ukrainian business incubator and accelerator programs can play a pivotal role in nurturing new businesses. Leveraging the existing Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, programs like the Diaspora Tandem Mentorship Program can establish valuable mentorship connections between experienced professionals and emerging entrepreneurs.

A significant portion of the funds should be allocated to infrastructure development, which has been severely affected due to the war. The creation of co-

working spaces, reconstruction of communication lines, and other infrastructural facilities can facilitate post-war development in Ukraine. Infrastructure is more than just roads and pipes or premises, it is about creating safe, comfortable, healthy environments both in cities and villages.

Sensibilisation is vital to foster understanding and collaboration between Ukrainians and Germans. Cultural workshops, language courses, and cultural exchange programs can promote mutual respect and empathy. It's important to recognize cultural differences and find ways to bridge these differences for better cooperation. Sensitivity training for employees or partners can be instrumental in fostering a more inclusive and harmonious working environment.

Creating intercultural committees within organisations can further promote dialogue and address cultural integration. In the aftermath of the war, it's critical to ensure Ukrainians feel valued, respected, and included in their workplaces, and these measures can significantly contribute to achieving that.

The German government has already launched



*In the aftermath of the war, it's critical to ensure Ukrainians feel valued, respected, and included in their workplaces, and these measures can significantly contribute to achieving that.*

a platform on recovery of Ukraine “Plattform Wiederaufbau Ukraine” in April 2023. To ensure the above-mentioned plans succeed, it is essential to facilitate collaboration between Ukrainian diaspora, German institutions, private companies and Ukrainian civil society on this platform. The platform could host an array of functionalities, like a Ukrainian-German expert pool, a comprehensive organization database, and an “Idea Bank” for collecting innovative ideas.

In conclusion, the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany has a crucial role to play in rebuilding Ukraine. By leveraging their unique position, diaspora organisations can make significant contributions to sustainable development in Ukraine and enhance bilateral relations between Germany and Ukraine. It’s hoped that the suggestions made in this text, from networking and cooperation to financial support mechanisms, can be incorporated into the overall strategy for engaging the Ukrainian diaspora in Ger-

many in the reconstruction of Ukraine.

If you want to learn more about our research “Report on evaluation of input of Ukrainian diaspora organisations in Germany for reconstruction and development of Ukraine”, dated May 2023 (financed by GIZ and BMZ), please refer to authors of this paper via social networks (LinkedIn or Twitter)



*In conclusion, the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany has a crucial role to play in rebuilding Ukraine. By leveraging their unique position, diaspora organisations can make significant contributions to sustainable development in Ukraine and enhance bilateral relations between Germany and Ukraine.*

# INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN BELGIUM: HOW IS IT GOING?

# 600

days...

It's been almost 600 long days since that morning when millions of Ukrainians heard the first explosions nearby and their lives changed forever. 597 days since thousands of them realised that staying at home is not an option anymore and decided to move to the safety of another city. And approximately 592 days since the EU activated the temporary protection status and more than 4 million Ukrainians crossed the EU border only to become refugees...

In Ukraine, people don't like the term "refugee." Because officially Ukrainians don't get refugee status in the EU, but rather receive temporary protection. Meaning that they are entitled to all the rights equal to an EU citizen: work, education, healthcare, etc. That is until 4 March 2025 (already extended twice for a year each time).

However, the 1951 Refugee Convention officially defines a refugee as: "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." And this is exactly what every Ukrainian is going through right now. Being shelled and killed in their homes because they were brave enough

FOR  
SPORANE  
AINE



**LYUBOV KARPACHOVA**  
**HEAD OF REFUGEES**  
**DEPARTMENT AT "PROMOTE**  
**UKRAINE"**





## *In Ukraine, people don't like the term "refugee".*

to proclaim independence and freedom from oppression some 30 years ago, and even a lot earlier if you read historical books and know the details.

It is simply easier to accept the term "temporarily protected" rather than acknowledging that you are seeking refuge in another country and asking for help. But what many Ukrainians who had to flee the country don't realise, is that accepting the new reality helps you to adjust quickly in a new country. It helps you them stop looking back, get out of that limbo of not being able to get back to their lives in Ukraine and not be ready to start a new life in the EU, and start finding your new dreams and goals.

This is what three of the active Promote Ukraine volunteers did in Belgium. They found safety in the new country, took time to mentally recover and adjust and now they fully embrace the opportunities that Belgium offers, trying their best to integrate and help not only Ukrainians in need, but also become full members of the Belgian society.

### **What is your name?**

Iryna

### **Where are you from?**

Kyiv, Ukraine



### **When did you come to Belgium?**

14th of March 2022

### **Why Belgium?**

I found a website where people from all over the world were offering a place for Ukrainians to stay. This is where I found a Belgian family who helped me to buy a ticket and get to Belgium. Back from my university years I could already speak some French, so it was a good fit. Knowing the language, I was able to go through the registration procedures by myself without bothering others.

### **Do you think your integration is going well?**

I wasn't able to work at the beginning, but I already wanted to help. I started taking French classes and decided to offer my services as a volunteer, including helping Promote Ukraine with the translation during different integration events for Ukrainians under temporary protection.

It wasn't easy to find a job at the beginning, but thanks to my volunteering efforts, I encountered an announcement from Promote Ukraine that advertised a job opportunity with one of their partners "Bibliothèque Sans Frontière." They had a project to support Ukraine. And, probably thanks to my certain level of French, I got that job. It was a temporary part-time job which allowed me to also

pass the integration course and continue learning languages. I also found my current job thanks to my volunteering services. When I was translating at one of the events, a colleague from the BON Integration agency remembered me and offered me a job as an integration consultant.

Now, not only I can continue helping Ukrainians, but I can also help local communities. I am a full member of Belgian society now: making an impact, working, paying taxes, and developing further by improving my knowledge of local languages to be able to speak with people who saved my life.

### **What are you thankful to Belgium for?**

I thank Belgian people every single day, my colleagues, my host family and everyone I meet: for their kind hearts, for their understanding, for willingness to help and do even more than we need sometimes. I am grateful for the peaceful sky above my head, for my serenity, for help any time I asked for it, and even for the opportunities to have Ukrainian cultural and integrational centers like Prostir by Promote Ukraine in the center of Brussels.

### **What is your name?**



Irena Trofymova

### **Where are you from?**

Kharkiv, Ukraine

**I thank Belgian people every single day, my colleagues, my host family and everyone I meet: for their kind hearts, for their understanding, for willingness to help and do even more than we need sometimes.**

## **When did you come to Belgium?**

December 2022

## **Why Belgium?**

My mother and my grandmother already came to Belgium after the beginning of the full-scale invasion, and they were able to help me to find accommodation. That's why I came here. I was very lucky with the host lady from Belgium, who offered me temporary accommodation. She was very sensitive of my mental health at that time: she offered me her warmth, support and treated me kindly. I still remember how sometimes she bought me small croissants in the morning and put them next to me when I couldn't get up due to my severe depression.

It started in Ukraine. I lost almost everything at that time: money and financial stability, my job, the prospects for my future and my career. I lost several friends and learnt about the deaths of other people I used to know. My relationships were tested, too – my boyfriend at that time was also going through his personal difficulties. It was a bit too late that I realised that my body just couldn't handle it anymore.

I had to get out of the country and find a safe place. Belgium became that safe place for me.

## **Do you think your integration is going well?**

With the help of volunteers, shortly after my arrival even

without an ID card yet, I found a Ukrainian psychiatrist, who was part of the Belgian organisation Solentra and was offering professional psychological help to newly arrived Ukrainians. He prescribed the much-needed medicines which helped me to slowly get better and start looking around for the opportunities to be around people and do something useful for others.

I also got in touch with Promote Ukraine volunteers and expressed my willingness to teach yoga, something that always brought me joy. Now, I am an active volunteer at Prostir by Promote Ukraine, our beautiful and quiet space for everyone who wants to find peace and support. I'm teaching yoga several days a week and plan on organising yoga retreats to help other people to recover.

## **What are you thankful to Belgium for?**

I'm thankful for all the help the country offered to Ukrainians to feel safe and peaceful here. They really put a lot of resources into that. And what is important, Belgians try to put themselves in our shoes and understand our situation. They don't put pressure on us and allow us first of all to adjust and feel comfortable before starting any kind of integration activities. This is very important.

On the other hand, if someone from Ukraine really lost everything, Belgium



*I'm thankful for all the help the country offered to Ukrainians to feel safe and peaceful here. They really put a lot of resources into that.*

offers opportunities to integrate and start a new life. Different free of charge events to find a job, to learn languages, individual support and counseling. Even a free public transport subscription is something I am extremely grateful for, because it allowed me the flexibility of moving around and be able to find places closer to nature in the moments when I needed to find peace and be alone to recharge.



**What is your name?**

Kateryna Polyakova

**Where are you from?**

Kharkiv, Ukraine

**When did you come to Belgium?**

I arrived on the 15th of March 2022, a few weeks after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia to Ukraine and heavy shelling of my hometown Kharkiv.

**Why Belgium?**

This is actually an interesting story. After a week of trying to find a safe place in Ukraine or abroad I finally decided to

move to Morocco where a client willing to support me and my family offered a job opportunity. I had a connecting flight via Charleroi. And to my surprise when I arrived, not only I found out that I need a visa to Morocco, but I have also learnt that they are not offering any kind of support to fleeing from war Ukrainians in place. I couldn't get a visa on entry and had to be deported back to the country of departure. This is how I came to Belgium. I have had no regrets ever since.

The very first night a kind Belgian volunteer offered me a place to stay with his family, because I had literally nowhere to go in the middle of the night. Later, they also helped me to find my way around getting a temporary protection status. In the Heysel registration center I was offered by the employees an accommodation in Brussels with 2 other Ukrainian ladies.

I had nowhere to go and no friends to support me. Today, I have it all in Belgium.



*I had nowhere to go and  
no friends to support me.  
Today, I have it all in Belgium.*





**Do you think your integration is going well?**

I still don't have a job. It is difficult to find one without knowing local languages even though I speak English. Hence, I am actively learning French and volunteering a lot. This is also my way of integrating with the local community. Being an active volunteer of Promote Ukraine means also not only to have connections with Ukrainians and helping them in difficult situations, but it is also an opportunity to take part in a lot of different projects connected to the EU overall and Belgium specifically. I found a lot of friends, both Ukrainian nationals and Belgian residents of various nationalities through this organisation. I am able to dedicate my spare time to helping other people. I feel safe here. Just like home... before the war.

**What are you thankful to Belgium for?**

I am very grateful to Belgium as a country and every individual who opened their hearts and their houses to us. They were helping a lot, especially the first year of the war. They were and many still are doing everything they can to support us. Very caring, welcoming and kind-

*I am very grateful to Belgium as a country and every individual who opened their hearts and their houses to us. They were helping a lot, especially the first year of the war. They were and many still are doing everything they can to support us. Very caring, welcoming and kindhearted people.*

hearted people.

There are 4 million other stories: painfully similar yet different. Being a refugee is not only a status. It is a lifestyle that requires your constant mobilisation, complete concentration and loads of energy. But unlike many other refugees who left their countries forever and after a period of adjustment realised that they have no return, and they must start their lives anew, Ukrainians still believe that this is all temporary. Temporary protection, temporary home, temporary life.

Perhaps they are right. And shortly we will all be able to get back to our normal lives. But after 600 "temporary" days, what is normal: old days before the war in Ukraine or new way of life in a new country?

# CALENDAR OF THE MAIN EVENTS OF

# 600 DAYS FULL-SCALE OF WAR

## February `22

**On 24 February 2022**, Putin announced the start of a military operation in eastern Ukraine.

Russian troops entered Ukraine through the Luhansk region, near the city of Kharkiv, as well as from the territory of Belarus. For the full-scale invasion, 350 Russian warplanes took off. Missile attacks on Ukrainian cities began.

At **07:00**, President Zelensky announced the imposition of martial law in Ukraine. The airspace over Ukraine was completely closed to civil traffic.

The vast majority of world leaders in various countries condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Only 10 countries supported the Russian Federation.

## March `22

The Armed Forces of Ukraine stopped the enemy offensive in Volyn, Chornobyl, and Chernihiv directions. The Kherson region became completely occupied.

The International Court of Justice in The Hague issued an interim order in favour of Ukraine in a lawsuit against Russia, ruling that the Russian Federation must immediately stop its military operations. Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe.

At the end of March, Russian troops moved away from Kyiv and left the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated Bucha.

## April `22

Ukrainian troops liberated the entire territory of the Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions. The enemy went on the offensive along the entire front line in the direction of Donetsk and Tavria.

Russian troops continued shelling Ukrainian cities with missiles.

**On 26 April**, a meeting of heads of defence departments and chiefs of staff of more than 40 countries was held at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany to coordinate the provision of security assistance to Ukraine. An anti-Russian coalition was created.

## May `22

**On 9 May**, U.S. President Joe Biden signed a lend-lease act for Ukraine.

**On 15 May**, Ukrainian troops reached the border with Russia in the Kharkiv region.

**On 31 May**, the European Union agreed on an embargo on Russian oil to reduce its imports by the end of 2022 by 90%.

# 2022

## June `22

The Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated more than 20 settlements in the Kherson region.

Ukrainian forces sank the "Vasiliy Bekh" Russian tugboat that was transporting weapons, struck oil and gas drilling rigs captured in 2014, launched a missile attack on the occupied Snake Island.

**On June 23**, the European Council granted Ukraine candidate status for EU membership.

At the summit in Madrid **on 29 June**, NATO assessed Russia as the greatest threat.

## July `22

The Armed Forces of Ukraine withdrew from Lysychansk; the Ukrainian flag was hoisted on Snake Island.

**On 22 July**, Ukraine, Turkey and the UN signed an agreement on the safe grain export through the Black Sea. On 23 July, Russia violated the agreement and attacked the port of Odesa with missiles.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine disabled all three bridges leading to occupied Kherson across the Dnipro River, making it impossible for Russian military equipment to enter the right bank.

## August `22

The Armed Forces of Ukraine continued to hold back the occupying forces, repelling their attempts to advance deep into the country.

**On 5 August**, the occupiers shelled the Zaporizhzhia NPP, threatening its normal operation.

Explosions rang out at airfields in various districts of Crimea where Russian military aircraft were based. The Armed Forces of Ukraine destroy ammunition depots on the peninsula.

Russian troops continue hitting Ukrainian cities with missiles.

## September `22

The Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated Balakliya and Kupyansk. The occupiers and collaborators left Izium and Vovchansk.

**On 21 September**, a large prisoner swap took place; 215 Ukrainian soldiers, including Azovstal defenders, were freed from Russian captivity in exchange for Viktor Medvedchuk.

**On 21 September**, Putin announced in his address partial mobilisation in Russia and support for pro-Russian referendums in the occupied regions of Ukraine.

## October `22

The Ukrainian military completely mopped up Lyman town in the Donetsk region from the occupiers.

**On 8 October**, an explosion rocked the bridge across the Kerch Strait between Crimea and Kuban. As a result, a motor road collapsed and railway tanks caught fire.

Kyiv, Lviv, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Dnipro, and Mykolayiv came under massive Russian attacks. Subsequent attacks, launched **on 10-22 October**, targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure and led to widespread rolling blackouts across the country.

## November `22

**On 11 November**, the Armed Forces of Ukraine entered Kherson city which had been abandoned by the Russians.

Russia launched a series of massive missile strikes on the civilian infrastructure of Ukrainian cities. Poland and Moldova were also affected by Russian missile attacks.

**On 23 November**, the European Parliament recognised Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and a state that uses the means of terrorism.

## December `22

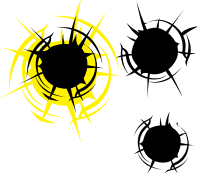
By the middle of the month, the Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated up to 78,000 sq km of Ukraine's territory occupied by Russia since 24 February. As of December, Russia's losses exceeded 100,000 soldiers killed.

## January `23

- The main battles were fought for Soledar in Donetsk region near Bakhmut.

- **On 19 January**, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute the top leadership of the Russian Federation and Belarus over the armed aggression against Ukraine.

- On New Year's Eve, Russia launched missile attacks on Ukraine to disrupt the electricity supply.



# 2023

## February `23

- Bakhmut remained the hottest spot on the entire front line. The first *Leopard 2* tanks provided by Poland arrived in Ukraine.

- Losses of Russian troops increased significantly in February due to their poor preparation for the offensive.

## March `23

- By mid-March, the number of Russian attacks decreased.

- **On March 20**, the Institute for the Study of War noted that the large-scale spring offensive of the Russian army was nearing its climax, and Ukraine had good opportunities to launch a counteroffensive.

## April `23

- Bakhmut remained the place of the main battles. The Armed Forces of Ukraine held defensive positions while preparing for their counter-offensive at the same time. Active fighting also continued in Kupyansk, Lyman, Avdiivka and Maryinka directions.

- Since the end of April, Russia renewed shelling of Ukrainian cities.

## May `23

- Ukraine received *Storm Shadow* long-range missiles. With the arrival of Western air defence systems, Ukraine strengthened its capabilities to repel Russian air attacks.

- **On 5 May**, 32 world countries announced their readiness to arrest Vladimir Putin, and the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for him.

- **On 22 May**, troops of the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion, which serve as part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, entered Belgorod region.

- Since May, Moscow has been subjected to drone attacks.

## June `23

- In Russia's Belgorod region, fighting continued between the Russian armed forces and the Russian Volunteer Corps which focused on Shebekino town.

- On the morning of **6 June**, the Russian occupation army blew up the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in Kherson region, which led to the flooding of settlements located downstream of the Dnipro River.

- **On 23 June**, PMC Wagner fighters captured military facilities in Rostov-on-Don. However, the very next day, Prigozhin's forces retreated in exchange for the closure of the criminal case against Prigozhin through the mediation of Alexander Lukashenko.



## July `23

At the beginning of the month, the Armed Forces of Ukraine gained a tactical advantage in the Bahmut direction and switched from defence to offensive.

Cluster munitions, among other things, were included in the U.S. security assistance for the first time.

## August `23

Since the Russian Federation withdrew from the grain deal and shelled Ukrainian ports, Ukraine declared **on 4 August** the waters of six Russian ports in the Black Sea to be under military threat.

Since the beginning of the counteroffensive, the Ukrainian troops have managed to de-occupy the area of about 241 sq km in the south and east of the country.

**On 23 August**, Wagner Private Military Company (PMC) leader Yevgeny Prigozhin was killed in an Embraer Legacy 600 business jet crash. The incident occurred exactly two months after Prigozhin's failed coup on 23 June when, after a long public conflict with the Russian Ministry of Defence, Prigozhin began a "justice march" towards Moscow.

## September `23

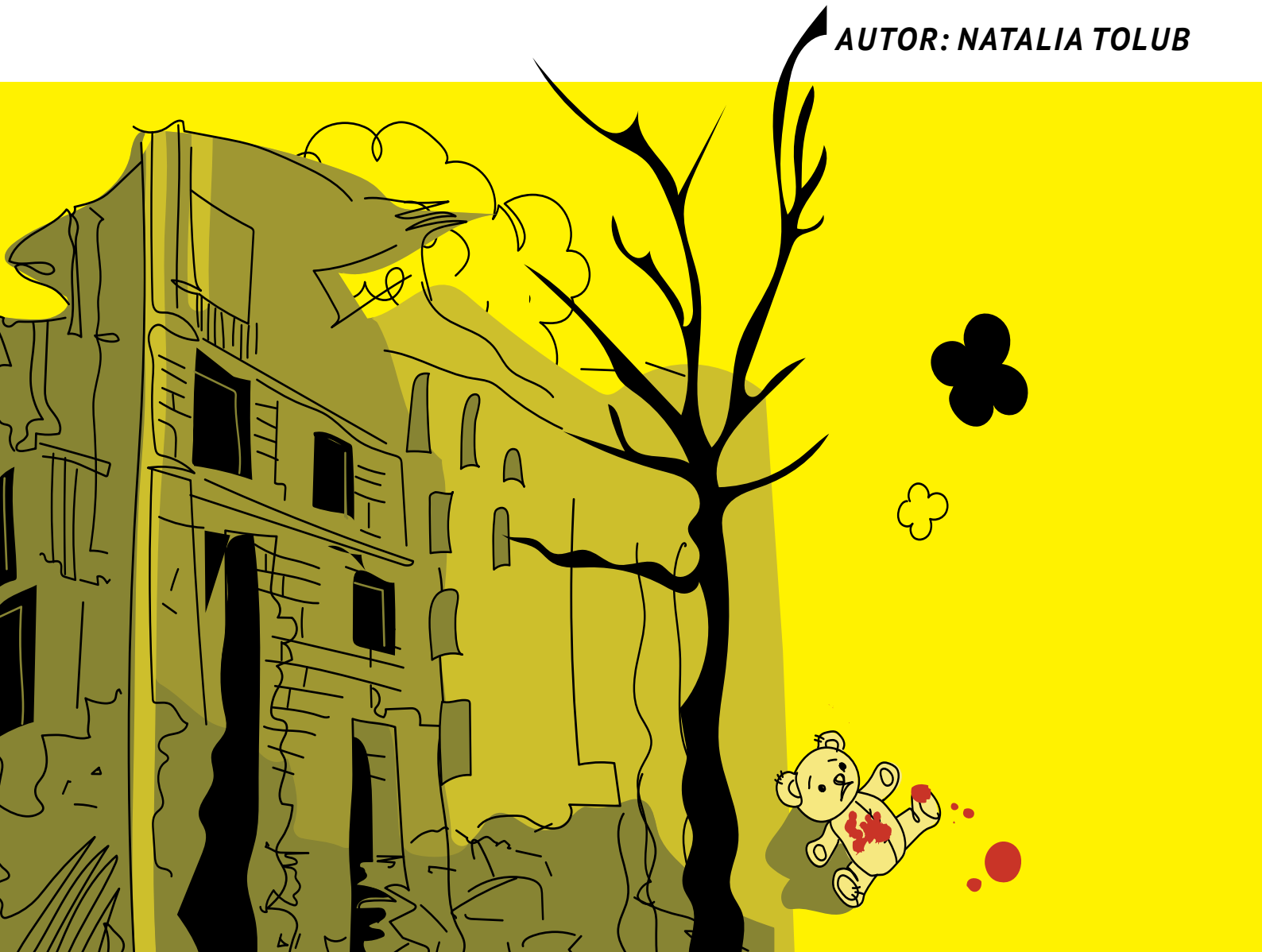
Russia holds pseudo-elections in the temporarily occupied territories. The turnout is minimal, so the Russians make visits to apartments accompanied by machine gunners.

Since the beginning of the unprovoked Russian full-scale armed aggression, Ukraine and international partners have imposed a series of sectoral, personal sanctions against the Russian Federation.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Ukraine has received \$32.14 billion from international partners.

Russia's losses exceeded 267,000 soldiers killed.

**AUTOR: NATALIA TOLUB**



# WITHDRAWAL IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD: HOW AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY WEAKEN EUROPE'S SECURITY (AUSTRIAN AND HUNGARIAN DISEASES OF EUROPE)



**LEONID SHVETS  
WELL-KNOWN  
UKRAINIAN POLITICAL  
COLUMNIST AND  
PUBLICIST, HEADLINER  
OF THE MOST FAMOUS  
UKRAINIAN ECONOMIC  
AND POLITICAL MEDIA  
OUTLETS. REGULARLY  
TAKES PART IN TV AND  
RADIO PROGRAMS,  
TALK SHOWS AS  
POLITICAL EXPERT.**

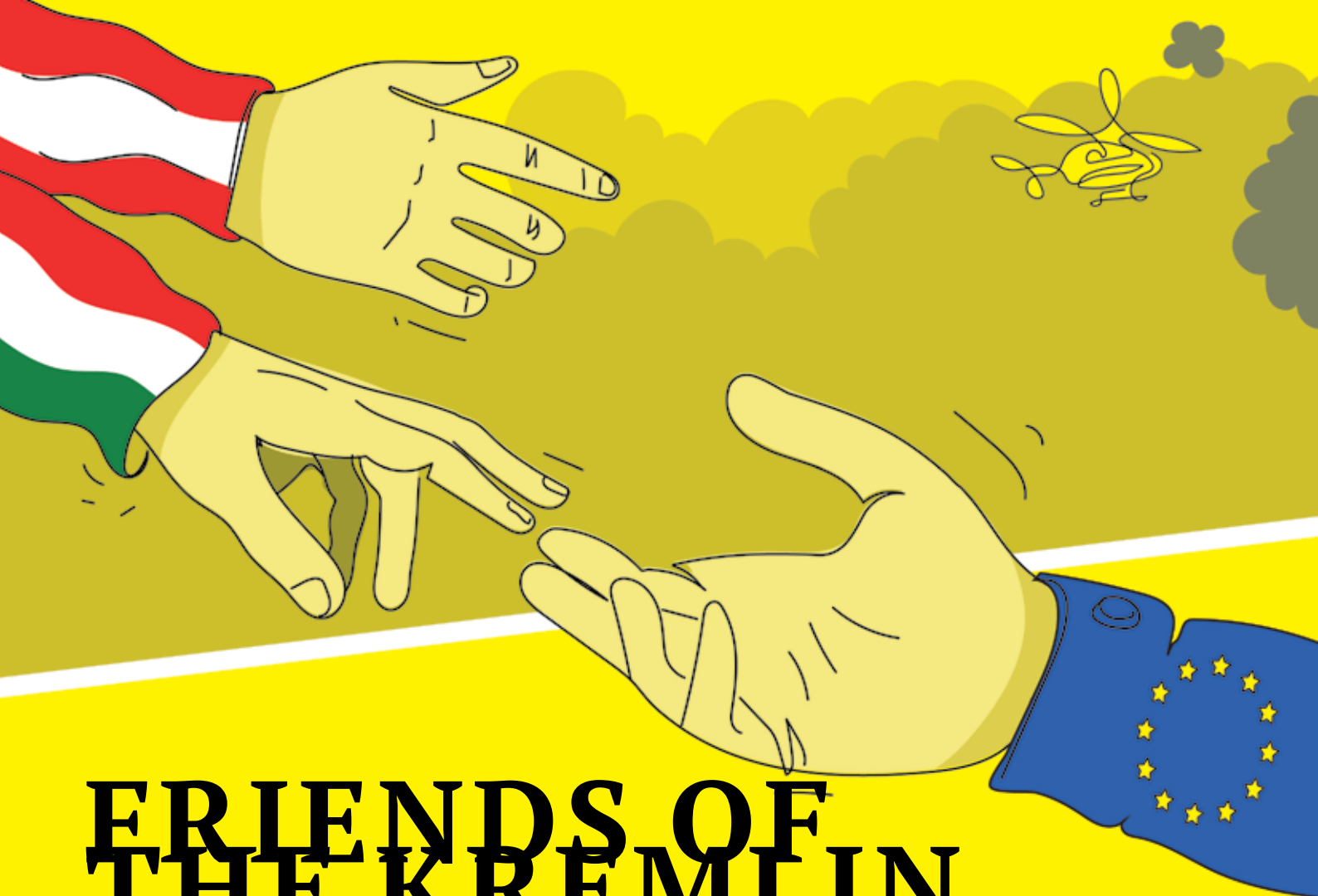
**I**n the conditions of the Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine, the European Union remains vulnerable due to the efforts of Austria and Hungary to take an exclusive position.

Even before the war, Austria and Hungary built "special" relations with Russia, considering it their competitive advantage. Each case had its peculiarities.

In Austria's case, the roots lead to the country's neutral status, enshrined in the Constitution of the country under pressure from the Soviet Union after the occupying Red Army units left Austria in 1955. The country received tangible profit from this status in 1968 when a Soviet gas supply contract was signed, turning Austria into a powerful European hub. It would hardly be a great exaggeration to assume that fifty years later, Germany, having received Nord Stream agreements, was guided by the example of its lucky neighbour. By the way, the Austrian oil and gas concern OMV

(Österreichische Mineralölverwaltung AG) was part of the international consortium behind Nord Stream 2.

The realisation that it is profitable to do business with the Russians somewhat dulled the ethical feelings of the Austrian elite, and many state leaders, after leaving their political offices, moved to high-paid posts in Russian companies with a light heart. So did Wolfgang Schüssel, Chancellor of Austria from 2000 to 2007, who took a seat on the board first of MTS mobile communications company and later moved to Lukoil. Christian Kern, Chancellor from 2016 to 2017, was sheltered by JSC Russian Railways. In addition, he became a contributor to the German-language site of the flagship of Russian propaganda RT/Russia Today. In 2007-2008, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer was one of the co-founders of the



# FRIENDS OF THE KREMLIN

propagandist Dialogue of Civilisations “Research Institute” that was created by Putin’s friend and former president of the Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin. Putin’s invitation to the wedding of Foreign Minister Karina Kneissl in 2018, where she danced with the Russian president, became a symbol of Austrian lack of fastidiousness. It is not surprising that she got a position at Rosneft and also started writing texts for RT/Russia Today after her resignation.

In April 2022, Chancellor Karl Nehammer became the only Western leader to visit Putin in Moscow after the start of

the full-scale war. Though he said later that it was not a conversation between friends, but he believed that he could act in a way that would not even occur to another Western leader. But other leaders do not have such a gas dependence on Russia. Despite the promise to get rid of it, Austria still gets 60% of its blue fuel from there. Although compared to the pre-war 80%, this obviously shows a decline.

No less interesting is the story of Raiffeisen Bank which is still doing business in Russia actively and is a subsidiary bank of the Austrian banking group Raiffeisen Bank International. Raiffeisen Bank is on the list of systemically important Russian banks and ranks second in terms of assets in the RBI group

**No less interesting is the story of Raiffeisen Bank which is still doing business in Russia actively and is a subsidiary bank of the Austrian banking group Raiffeisen Bank International.**

and first in terms of profit. Raiffeisen Bank continues to operate in Russia with increased revenue in 2022 compared to 2021 (+\$665 million or +46%). The Bank management promised to withdraw from the Russian market, but the RBI and its subsidiary banks continue to work there, explaining this by the fact that the Bank now needs special permission from the Kremlin, which it will not grant. According to Bank representatives, shutting down SWIFT is also not an option, since in this case, the Bank's management will suffer – Moscow will either detain or even annihilate them. However, in this case, the question remains – why Austria does not take its workers out of Russia...

Moreover, JSC Raiffeisen Bank Russian subsidiary not only officially recognises the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk “people's republics” but also provides loans to the Russian occupiers in



*According to Bank representatives, shutting down SWIFT is also not an option, since in this case, the Bank's management will suffer – Moscow will either detain or even annihilate them. However, in this case, the question remains – why Austria does not take its workers out of Russia...*

Ukraine on favourable terms. The National Agency on Corruption Prevention put the Austrian banking group Raiffeisen Bank International on the list of international sponsors of war for the continuation of the Bank's work in Russia and the official recognition of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR.” In addition, the Bank plays along with Russian propaganda, calling the war a “special military operation.”

As reported, in 2022 Raiffeisen Bank paid 4.8 times more to the Russian budget than for the entire pre-war year – EUR 559 million (~\$615 million). It should be noted that this is equal to the cost of about 95 Kalibr missiles which the terrorist state regularly launches at peaceful Ukrainian cities. The representatives of the Austrian Bank explain that they “can't withdraw profits from Russia anyway”, so it's not profitable for them to work in Russia but they can't leave it either.

The question remains open, why the European regulator doesn't create favourable conditions for Raiffeisen to leave, so as not to stay.

A separate point is the role of Vienna as the European capital of espionage. Due to the neutral status of Austria, numerous international organisations are located here: IAEA, OPEC, OSCE, UN bodies. This gave Russia formal grounds to deploy a powerful espionage network in the centre of Europe under the guise of official representatives and employees. But this did not become a reason for greater vigilance of the Austrian se-



curity service BVT (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung). On the contrary, the threat of its employees working in Russian interests increased. This happened in the case of a top BVT officer, Egisto Ott. Moreover, suspicions about his work for the Russians arose in the CIA long before his arrest, but Austrian colleagues did not heed the warning. This led to the fact that Western national security agencies stopped sharing their information with Austria, fearing leaks to Russia. In 2021, BVT had to be dissolved and created practically from scratch.

As Oleksandr Shcherba, who worked as the Ambassador of Ukraine in Vienna for six years, says, Austria seeks to use all the possibilities of a safe stay in the West team without investing in its security, and it is for this purpose that it uses its neutral status. It is very beneficial: being under the NATO umbrella, while not being a NATO member. But neutrality ceases to be an argument when Europe is in a threatening state due to Russia's aggressive actions. In the end, both Finland and Sweden were also neutral but were forced to change their status under the pressure of

circumstances. At the same time, unlike Hungary, it is important for Austria to remain part of the European mainstream, Shcherba is sure, and this is the factor that will further erode the old pro-Russian foundation developed in previous years.

The situation is different in Hungary. Right-wing populist Viktor Orbán, who has ruled the country since 1998 with a break in 2002-2010, created a system of relations with Brussels and the outside world in general based precisely on speculation about Hungary's difference from other Europeans.

Much is said, and rightly so, about the inner closeness of the two autocrats, Putin and Orbán. The head of the Fidesz party is neither a democrat nor a liberal. He has radical conservative views and is a rather cynical player in political practice. In this, undoubtedly, the Hungarian prime minister resembles the Russian president to a great extent. And yes, Orbán needs Putin, he needs Putin's Russia, but precisely because they create space for bargain within the framework of domestic European relations and enable the populist to appear in the eyes of a part of the population as a defender of the interests of "ordinary Hungarians" who does not pay attention to the European bureaucracy or the White House.

Typing the phrase "Hungary refuses..." into Google, you will find links to an insane amount of news telling what it refused: "...to discuss financing security assistance to Ukraine in EU", "...



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*The Russian-Ukrainian war united the countries of the European Union like never before while exacerbating at the same time unresolved issues that threaten the integrity of the European community. In the conditions of the full-scale war near EU borders, this strike does not look like just a metaphor.*

to participate in Ukrainian military training in Europe,” “... demand to remove sanctions from three Russian oligarchs,” “...to supply arms to Ukraine,” “...to discuss embargo on Russian oil imports,” “... sanctions against Gazprom,” “...to arrest Putin in its territory,” and so on. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary Péter Szijjártó visited Moscow several times during the war, the last time was this April.

In May, a draft resolution was even submitted to the European Parliament, stating that Hungary, due to numerous violations of EU legislation, is not suitable for the role of the Chair of the Council of the European Union which it is supposed to assume by rotation in the summer of 2024. MEPs ask themselves how Hungary “will be able to honourably fulfil this task, given its non-compliance with EU laws and violation of the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on EU, as well as the principles of sincere cooperation.” Article 2 of the Treaty refers to “the val-

ues of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.” The main parties of the European Parliament became the initiators of the draft resolution regarding Hungary, drawing attention to the systemic problem. In Europe, they understand that the Hungarian disease has gone too far but they cannot do anything.

The Russian-Ukrainian war united the countries of the European Union like never before while exacerbating at the same time unresolved issues that threaten the integrity of the European community. In the conditions of the full-scale war near EU borders, this strike does not look like just a metaphor. Putin has been playing for disorder in Europe. And this is not Putin whom they maintained polite relations with. Now he is the outright enemy capable of anything.



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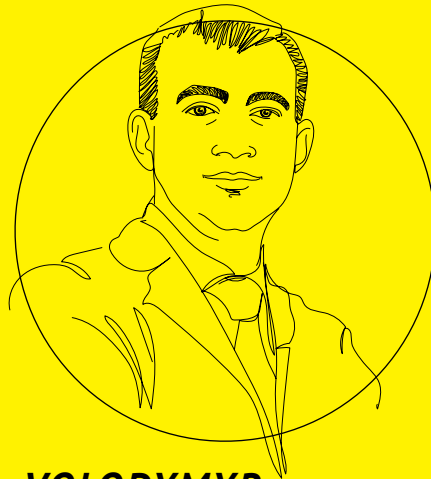
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# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

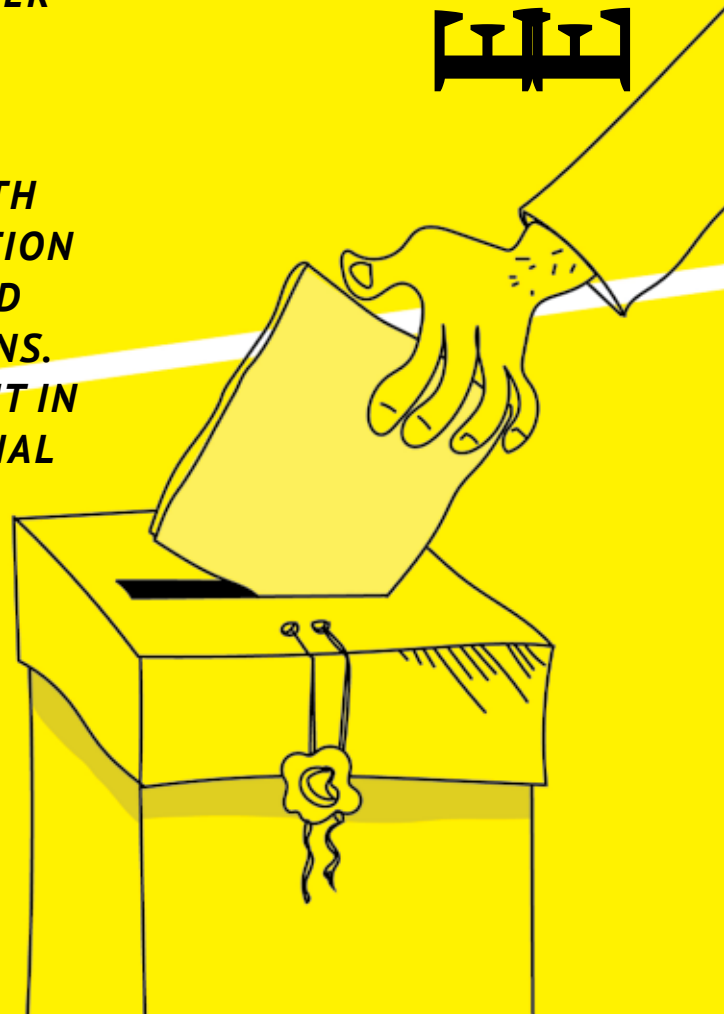
# EUROPEANS



**VOLODYMYR MARTSYNOVSKYI IS AN EXPERT IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, BOASTING OVER 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN SENIOR ROLES AT BOTH COMMUNICATION AGENCIES AND CORPORATIONS. A CONSULTANT IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT. IN EARLIER YEARS – AN EDITOR AT LEADING BUSINESS MEDIA.**

**I**n a few months, from 6 to 9 June 2024, elections to the European Parliament will take place. This event holds immense significance. It will be the largest exercise of electoral rights at the international level, with over 400 million voters of diverse nationalities participating. The newly elected members of the European Parliament will play a pivotal role in determining the future trajectory of the EU, significantly influencing decisions at the European Commission and European Council levels.

Although Ursula von der Leyen's term as President of the European Commission might be extended, Charles Michel will not have the legal latitude to continue as the President of the European Council, given the term limit of two consecutive 2.5-year stints.





## POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS TOPICS

Analysts note that several pan-European topics will likely dominate the pre-election discussions, notably Russia's war against Ukraine, migration, the energy crisis, climate change, fiscal rules, recovery post-COVID-19, and the fallout from the European Parliament corruption scandal.

The intertwined issues of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the aftermath of COVID-19, and the energy crisis are predicted to be at the forefront. Leaders with a proven track record of handling these crises effectively will likely leverage this in their campaigns. However, the framing of the Russian-Ukrainian war is increasingly being blurred with other pressing concerns in the European narrative.

Migration policies, particularly concerning border controls and migration flows from nations like Turkey and Belarus, will be another

focal point. Central debates will revolve around the European Commission's stance on funding barriers at the EU's external borders.

Climate change continues to be a top priority for the European community as the EU strives to achieve ambitious targets for reducing atmospheric emissions. Parties focusing on green economic solutions for the economy and industry are anticipated to garner significant voter support. Over the past four years, the EU's Green Deal initiative has overhauled climate and energy legislation with a goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The successor at the helm of the EU executive will grapple with the task of actualizing this visionary climate strategy and bolstering the EU's position as a global climate leader.

Election debates might also encompass Europe's fiscal future, deeper integration on defence and health, and pressing economic concerns like the recent surge in inflation, which has been on the rise in recent years.

Political parties will pay considerable attention to economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, creating new jobs, sustainable growth and strengthening the EU single market. These issues are already taking precedence over climate change and decarbonisation efforts, which previously dominated the institutional agenda.



*Election debates might also encompass Europe's fiscal future, deeper integration on defence and health, and pressing economic concerns like the recent surge in inflation, which has been on the rise in recent years.*



Furthermore, the European Parliament corruption scandal could significantly sway voter sentiment. Recall that in December 2022, the Belgian Federal Police apprehended former European Parliament Vice-President Eva Kaili. Investigations unearthed organised crime links, corruption, and money laundering in association with illicit lobbying efforts supporting Qatar and Morocco. In a series of raids in Brussels, approximately 600,000 euros in cash was confiscated. Following these revelations, Kaili was ousted from both the PASOK party and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, and the said parties had to justify themselves. Against this background, populist parties can use the scandal to promote Eurosceptics.

#### **THE LEADER REMAINS – THE COURSE CHANGES**

The results of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament are more difficult to predict than ever. Despite corruption investigations, the European People's Party (EPP) has continued to maintain a strong position for more than a quarter of a century, enjoying popularity among conservative voters. Survey insights from Europe Elects suggest that the centre-right European People's Party might shed around 20 seats but will maintain its dominant status. POLITICO's analysis projects a slightly more optimistic outlook, with the EPP anticipated to lose only 12 seats, retaining 165 in total.



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It is pertinent to note here that recent national elections in several EU countries and current polls show growing support for parties that favour tough immigration policies and prioritise industry over climate initiatives.

This is important because Manfred Weber, the leader of the European People's Party, has now started to resort to far-right rhetoric, emphasising a stronger defence, a more competitive economy and possibly stricter border controls to deal with migration. The change in tone by the leader of the EU's biggest political power is intended to backfire among voters increasingly drawn to populist and far-right parties.

Critics argue that Weber's focus on attracting far-right electoral groups risks triggering right-wing sentiment in the EU, which could eventually be the beginning of the end of the EU. Despite Weber's assertion that EPP allies should remain pro-European, pro-rule of law and pro-Ukrainian, these changes are already causing considerable concern within the party.

POLITICO's analysis shows that in this situation, right-wing and Eurosceptic parties are poised to make significant gains in the upcoming European Parliament elections, potentially changing the composition of the European Parliament. If elections were held in the summer of 2023, the European Right Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) would become the third largest group in the European Parliament after the centrist Renew group with 89 seats each. This represents a significant increase of 23 seats in the ECR compared to the 2019 election, with the increase largely due to the rise of far-right Italian party Brothers of Italy, which supports the ECR.

The far-right group Identity and Democracy (ID) is also forecast to make significant gains and take around 77 seats, increasing its presence by 15 seats, largely due to a recent surge in support for Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD). This rightward trend is a reflection of broader patterns seen in national elections across Europe, with voters in countries such as Italy, Finland and Greece increasingly favouring conservative and far-right parties.

The centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) are also forecast to gain an additional two seats, keeping their position as the second largest group with 145 seats. The Renew party, on the other hand, could face a reduction of 12 seats, sharing the third place with the ECR.

Hence, the traditional grand coalition of the EPP, S&D and Renew, spanning both the centre-left and centre-right spectrum, is likely to retain a majority over a potential new right-wing alliance of the EPP, ECR (especially if Renew decides to become part of it). It is worth noting that the EPP has shown its willingness to work with the ECR by forming an alliance to oppose Europe's climate-neutral Green Deal.

Despite the importance of the climate agenda, the Green Party is forecast to lose seats in the European Parliament – they are expected to lose the most in the election, gaining just 48 seats, losing 24 positions. Meanwhile, the left-wing group will gain eight seats, but will remain the smallest group in parliament with 45 seats.

### QUO VADIS?

Recent Eurobarometer studies highlight a surge in awareness and engagement concerning the European elections compared

to 2018. Yet, it is already clear that the election campaigns will focus primarily on the national context. Analysts caution against expecting a crystallised European identity by 2024. Echoing post-World War II sentiments, the age-old question persists: What does it mean to be European? And in the current milieu, can we assertively state that the vestiges of World War II are truly behind us?



*Recent Eurobarometer studies highlight a surge in awareness and engagement concerning the European elections compared to 2018.*

# ECOCIDE IN UKRAINE: ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES CAUSED BY WAR ALREADY WORTH MORE THAN \$47.6B



**NATALIA TOLUB -  
JOURNALIST  
WITH 20 YEARS'  
EXPERIENCE.  
NOMINEE FOR  
JOURNALISM  
AWARDS.**

Russian aggression in the territory of Ukraine has led not only to human casualties, direct destruction and economic losses, but also significantly affected the environment. Significant emissions of pollutants into the air turned out to be catastrophic as the total losses have already reached almost \$4.2 billion. In particular, \$1.8 billion is damage from forest fires, \$1.6 billion – grass fires, and \$752 million – burning oil and oil products.

As a result of hostilities, about 1.2 million tonnes of pollutants have already entered the atmosphere, including 430,000 tonnes of carbon monoxide, 700,000 tonnes of dust, and 40,000 tonnes of non-methane volatile organic compounds, as well as a significant amount of heavy metals and other harmful substances. This is evidenced by the analysis of the Russia Will Pay project by the KSE Institute team.

In turn, according to the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine, in just 11 months of military aggression of the Russian Federation, the damage to Ukraine's environment has already amounted to more than UAH 1 trillion 743 billion or more than \$47.6 billion. These are only approximate calculations as part of the Ukrainian territories remains occupied.

CONSEQUENCES OF  
RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

### **TERRORIST ACT AT KAKHOVKA HPP**

The destruction of the dam of the Russian-controlled Kakhovka HPP caused nearly \$1.5 billion damage to the environment, Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal announced.

The man-made disaster stopped the water supply to 31 field irrigation systems in the Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. In 2021, these systems provided irrigation for 584,000 ha from which Ukraine gathered nearly 4 million tonnes of grain and oil crops worth about \$1.5 billion.

The terrorist act at the Kakhovka HPP left 94% of irrigation systems in Kherson, 74% – in Zaporizhzhia, and 30% – in Dnipropetrovsk regions without a source of water.

As a result of the occupiers' blowing up Kakhovka HPP and the disappearance of the Kakhovka Reservoir, all fish – 11,400 tonnes – died. In addition, the fauna of the reservoir, carried away by the water flow into the floodplains formed below the Kakhovka HPP dam, also died as these biological resources ended up on dry land when the flood wave receded.

“Total damages caused by the death of all biological resources amounted to UAH 10.5 billion,” the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine noted.

The breach of the dam on 6 June caused devastating floods in the Kherson region, both in

government-controlled and occupied territory. This forced thousands of people to flee their homes.

### **DAMAGE CAUSED BY SHELLING**

President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky said that Russia has launched more than 6,500 missiles targeting Ukraine since 24 February 2022. Enemy shells that hit our critical infrastructure and residential buildings every day cause significant fires. This leads to large-scale air pollution with dangerous substances.

During the detonation of missiles and projectiles, a series of chemical compounds are formed – carbon monoxide, brown gas, nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, etc. During the explosion, all substances are completely oxidized, and the products of the chemical reaction are released into the atmosphere.

The State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine explains that pollutants, in particular metal and chemical residues from projectiles, get into soil, and later – into groundwater.



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For example, melange substance found in Russian missiles, when it gets into water, causes a reaction with the release of a large amount of highly toxic nitrogen oxide, that is, this process is extremely harmful to soil and all living things that are in it.

War also contributes to the release of greenhouse gases, particularly methane from a damaged gas pipeline. The emission of one tonne of methane is equivalent to the emission of more than 30 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

A separate topic is mined territories. According to the 1st Demine Ukraine Forum, 174,000 square kilometres of Ukrainian land are currently potentially mined and contaminated by war. After all, mine explosions lead to soil contamination with heavy metals – lead, strontium, titanium, cadmium, nickel. This makes soil dangerous, and in some cases, unsuitable for further agricultural use.

According to experts' estimates, demining Ukrainian land already requires \$37 billion.

### **HAZARDOUS INDUSTRIAL WASTE**

The environmental danger Ukraine faces as a result of the armed conflict is also exacerbated by the country's industrial background. Our country is one of Europe's most industrialised countries which stores six billion tonnes of liquid waste generated in coal mines, chemical plants and other heavy industry sectors.

In total, there are 465 storage facilities in the country which hold more than six billion tonnes of liquid waste. 200 of them are located in the east of Ukraine, where these extremely sensitive objects constantly come under Russian fire.

Europe's largest nuclear power plant is also located in Ukraine, in the city of Zaporizhzhia, and Ukraine's industry creates almost 29% of its gross domestic product. Currently, the ZNPP is occupied by the Russians who have been blackmailing the whole world with a nuclear disaster for many months.

### **EUROPEAN BIODIVERSITY DYING FROM ENEMY EQUIPMENT**

The KSE Institute reports: forest and grass fires caused by military action turn out to be the main source of emissions. According to the Zoï Environment Network and the Regional Eastern European Fire Monitoring Center, their volume amounts to 46,600 ha and more than 471,000 ha, respectively.

In addition, significant damage to the surface layer of soil is currently occurring in large areas of Ukraine as a result of the construction of fortifications, exploding and burning ammunition, military maneuvers, etc. Therefore, 186,000 square kilometers of land, accounting for almost 31% of Ukraine's territory, are at risk of damage and pollution. Of these, more than 20,000 square kilometers are damaged by more than 75%. The territories of the Donetsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia regions suffered the greatest destruction.

The total losses caused by the damage to territories and disturbance of soil as a result of military operations are estimated at \$9.8 billion. This jeopardises



*According to experts' estimates,  
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the use of damaged land and requires reclamation, demining and disposal of munitions.

## DESTRUCTION OF WILDLIFE

“From the first days of the Russian invasion, we have been recording all the damage they are causing to the Ukrainian environment. We can already talk about 257 cases of ecocide. These are the explosions of fuel and lubricant depots, oil product storages with corresponding consequences for the environment. These include airstrikes on enterprises that use dangerous chemicals in production. This is the damage and destruction of treatment facilities, spilling of sewage into our reservoirs, as well as damage to soil surface, forest fires – especially in the nature reserves,” said Ruslan Strilets, Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

He emphasised that, in general, almost three million hectares of forest in Ukraine had been affected by the war since the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion. Thousands of plant species, which are on the Red Data Book of Ukraine and protected by law, suffer damage. Fighting disturbs the wildlife. Animals either die or try to escape from hot spots.

The Russian Federation conducts military operations in protected territories of international and European importance, thereby destroying the habitats of rare and endemic species. This can change the behaviour of birds, including their migration. In general, 20% of all protected areas of Ukraine remain in danger posed by the actions of the occupiers.

“When Russian troops began to use Kryva Kosa in Donetsk region for landing operations in 2015, all bird diversity disappeared there. Although before that, 3,000 pairs of Red Data Book Caspian gulls nested en masse on the coast. It was their largest

*The total losses caused by the damage to territories and disturbance of soil as a result of military operations are estimated at \$9.8 billion.*

colony in Europe,” stressed Ruslan Strilets, Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION HAS NO BORDERS

The Ukrainian ecosystem is of great importance for Europe:

- Ukraine comprises 35% of Europe’s biodiversity
- More than 70,000 biological species live in Ukraine
- Natural vegetation and cultivated natural vegetation (for example, well-kept pastures and hedges) cover 29% of Ukraine’s territory
- Forests cover 16% of Ukraine’s territory
- Almost 63,000 rivers flow through Ukraine
- 11% of the Carpathian Mountains range is located in Ukraine’s territory where a third of all plant species in Europe grow

The war in Ukraine affects not only global food security but entails consequences for all countries. After all, polluted air has no borders. Emissions into the atmospheric air, caused by the military aggression of the Russian Federation in the territory of Ukraine, travel, settle and have an impact on the territories of other states, sometimes at a distance of thousands of kilometres.

# OUR SUPERPOWER: HOW CIVIL SOCIETY BRINGS VICTORY CLOSER



**INNA KRUPNYK –  
FREELANCE JOURNALIST,  
COMMENTATOR AND  
COPYWRITER**



*Ukraine gave a new impetus to the fashion for the consolidation of citizens, the fashion for targeted volunteering.*

**W**e, Ukrainians, thought that we showed our volunteer peak back in 2014, with the beginning of Russian aggression and the annexation of part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea. At that time, the combined efforts of the movements to help the army and displaced persons, often situational and not institutionalised, seemed unprecedented. Until the Russian full-scale invasion happened. And we surpassed ourselves of previous years. The number, quality and level of institutionalisation of charity organisations (COs) have increased. Volunteers learned how to fundraise, formed a strategic vision for the development of their projects, and make serious transformational changes in their initiatives.

All this, directly or indirectly, is a sign of the growth of civic consciousness in Ukrainian society. Ukraine gave a new impetus to the fashion for the consolidation of citizens, the fashion for targeted volunteering. And also – the fashion for self-awareness of one's involvement in Ukrainian-ness – a powerful force that opposes the aggressor. Volunteering is definitely our superpower from now on.

According to the study “Ukrainian Civil Society under the War

CHANGES OF  
UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

– 2022” conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology within the project “Ukraine Civil Society Sectoral Support Activity,” the number of registered charity organisations in Ukraine increased almost eight-fold (6,367 new COs) in 2022. In one way or another, 77% of the surveyed organisations help the Armed Forces of Ukraine, that is, they provide exclusive assistance to the military as the main or one of the areas of activity. 90% of COs work in the area of humanitarian aid, and 70% - informational. Fifty percent of respondents “practice” situational, individual fundraising campaigns for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Despite one of the most traumatic experiences since World War II, the degree of adaptability of our civil society is impressive. We accept challenges and know how to work in extremely difficult conditions. “Eighty percent of organisations did not stop their work in the main areas of activity at all. Thanks to this, the affected people, the Armed Forces of Ukraine and society felt constant support,” says Natalia Kharchenko, executive director of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, presenting the study.

The activity of NGO Promote Ukraine can serve as an example of adaptation to the needs and challenges of the time. Founded as the media, non-governmental and advocacy organisation being a bridge between the EU and Ukraine, it added new areas to its activities since 24 February 2022. We have handed over humanitarian aid to Ukraine worth more than



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€300,000 and supported more than 5,000 Ukrainian refugees in Belgium. And this is in addition to more than 70 rallies, more than 50 closed meetings with leading politicians during the nine months of full-scale war. Our volunteering coordination centre now operates as a full-fledged hub – Promote Ukraine Ukraine Hub. Communication, humanitarian, volunteer. One of the latest Promote Ukraine fundraising campaigns was also for the military - FPV drones for the Centre of Special Operations “A” and drones sent to the front via well-known volunteer Yulia (“Taira”) Payevska at the Invictus Games in Düsseldorf this year.

Then, in 2014, after the victory of Euromaidan and the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine, civil society proved to be more effective than the state. Volunteers became one of the decisive factors of the resistance, managed to replace (and in some cases create non-existent) state mechanisms in supply and security chains, evacuation and medical assistance.

“It is thanks to volunteers that our army has become what it is now. And this is not only about food or bulletproof vests, which were massively delivered on the front lines in 2014-2015. It is primarily about the morale of the army. Volunteers, who became a connecting mechanism between the front and the rear and a real testimony that ‘we do not abandon our people’, supported

the soldiers' understanding of what they were fighting for, while the people saw they were under reliable protection. And this is probably their most important mission. I hope we will never forget this," says Natalka Pozniak-Khomenko, the author of the book "Volunteers: Power of those who care", an employee of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. She collected 28 vivid stories about various volunteer initiatives, 28 stories showing that we are not indifferent and what we are capable of. Despite the widespread claims of Russian propaganda about our failed state and immature society.

Along with the evolution of the volunteer movement which meets the needs from cleaning parks to helping children with cancer, from helping victims of the explosion at the Kakhovka HPP to the highly consolidated campaign "donate for Bayraktar in three days", the state is also evolving. "After 24 February, the situation changed again, but now radically. After the full-scale Russian military invasion, the state and society cannot exist by themselves. Both of them are in mortal danger. Without their cooperation and mutual trust, they will not survive alone. The ruling elite finally stopped serving itself. It works not to maintain its own financial flows, but to solve the issue of the safety of the entire population. In response, the majority of Ukrainians stopped treating the government with skepticism and mistrust," historian Yaroslav Hrytsak reflects on

the power of uniting these two polar worlds in his essay "War and new social contract."

We hope that we will return to permanent volunteering in the areas of culture, sports, tourism, ecology, development of entrepreneurship, strengthening of historical memory after the Victory. Although these are not priority areas of activity for NGOs, many initiatives care about what is sometimes presented in the "out of date" category.

Mentions in the mass media (ten-fold increase compared to the period before 24 February 2023) and the evaluation of the volunteer movement by the authorities speak of the high appreciation of the work of volunteers as a result of the consolidation of civil society. Thus, in his speech on International Volunteer Day, enumerating at least 50 volunteer communities of various directions and degrees of institutionalisation, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky said, "Today, volunteers are the most powerful part of Ukrainian civil society. This is a movement that unites all cities and communities of our country and all social groups. And this is an idea that attracts millions of people from different countries of the world to the Ukrainian struggle for freedom." In particular, UNITED24 state platform "uses" the face of the President for the collection and accumulation of humanitarian aid. Their work



***After the full-scale Russian military invasion, the state and society cannot exist by themselves. Both of them are in mortal danger. Without their cooperation and mutual trust, they will not survive alone.***



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architecture is to raise funds and transfer them to ministries, departments, and organisations that make purchases.

We are waging our own war. The war we did not start. But this is our war. For identity, the future, the content of basic concepts and democracy. We are at the forefront of the world, but not alone. The world stands with us. The support for Ukraine from Western partners is all-time colossal. As well as the gratitude of the Ukrainian people. In his lecture on the Ukrainian resistance, famous historian Timothy Snyder directly says that “Ukrainians defined themselves as a European nation based on individual responsibility and cooperation of individuals – civil society.”

“Ukrainians are fighting for the right to make their own choices, and this is something that is deeply rooted in Ukrainian culture. The resistance of Ukrainians is also important for the future of democracy in the world – it is being tested whether an authoritarian state can destroy a neighbouring democratic country by force. Resistance is very important in this case. Because the consequences of this war, which are already felt all over the world, will have an impact on the future development of the world civilisation of democratic countries.” Not only Professor Snyder of Yale University thinks so, but almost every Ukrainian.

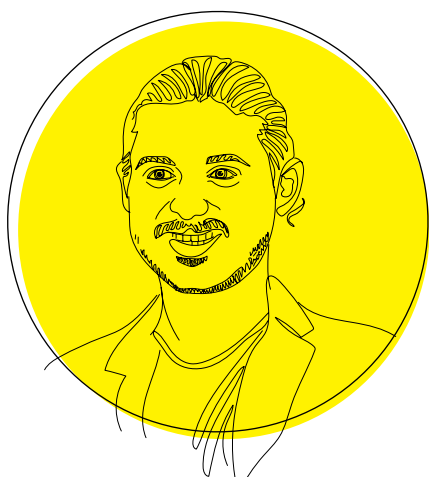
Ukrainians have a very wide choice of what and where to donate or where to invest their strength and resources. And the main thing is that we do not compete, volunteers or COs do not compete. As Taras Chmut, the head of one of the largest foundations, Come Back Alive, said in an interview

with Radio Kultura: “The task of Come Back Alive is not to provide for every service member but to help Ukraine win the war. A year ago, I was asked who I should donate to – large foundations or small fundraising campaigns, I said, “Whoever you want. Everyone need everything.” Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, this foundation has collected more than UAH 7 billion for Ukraine’s victory in the war. Indeed, it should be noted that the work of large foundations is more systematic. In general, according to the data of the study “Ukrainian Civil Society under the War – 2022”, Ukrainians and foreigners transferred more than UAH 33.96 billion (nearly \$1 billion) only to the accounts of the NBU and three largest charity foundations (United24, Come Back Alive, Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation) in 2022.

So, our action is small and at the same time vitally important – to donate, volunteer, bring Victory closer. “Because if Ukraine stops fighting, there is no independent country. If Russia stops fighting, there is no war,” U.S. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said the truest words.



# PINK SPOT CURSE



**DANYLO POLILUEV-SCHMIDT, CULTURAL COLUMNIST FOR THE PROJECT "UKRAINE IN DEUTSCHLAND," DECISION BOARD MEMBER OF THE NGO IWEK E.V., ACTIVIST, PODCAST CREATOR "ALIARMIA? ZMOVA? ZNEVIRA?" AND BLOGGER BERLIN, GERMANY**



# CIVIL RESISTANCE

I remember my first trip abroad as if it happened yesterday. At that time, Ukraine was not part of the visa-free agreement with the EU, so there were enormous lines at the border, and one had to get the visa before a planned trip. There were no biometric passports to have all the important data at hand. One had to submit all the personal data over and over again, making the entire process tedious and time-consuming.

What is also important to mention is that no one could tell which direction Ukraine would move. To the East or to the West? To the EU or to the Eastern Partnership? There was anxious uncertainty in papers and in people's minds, causing an unsettling atmosphere.

There were more questions than answers at that time. Even after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine didn't receive a clear vector of development. From the perspective of a Ukrainian citizen, one thing was certain: "Ukraine is a developing democratic country. This country has a rich history and culture. It lies at the centre of the European continent." And obviously, the strong understanding of existence was in my mind too. I could say without hesitation where I live, which language I speak, and which nationality I have. I took my knowledge with me on a trip abroad.

Unpleasant smiles of the foreign consulate staff, a

Russian-speaking ambassador of the foreign country, and a ton of abusive remarks made me doubt if people really knew Ukraine, if the language and culture of my country were visible enough to others. Yet, the information about Ukrainian existence was unavailable to the majority of Europeans or Americans.

I tried to do a whole field research on the Ukrainian Pink Spot, but the answer is quite simple. If we take the maps or books printed in the West from the Cold War period, we will see a huge pink spot from the east border of the Polish People's Republic to the west border of Japan. There are no special signs or explanations: either the USSR or Russia. More than 30 years ago, the Soviet Union had fallen apart. And many great nations fought their way to independence and democracy. Still, the pink spot stays in the minds of Westerners.

As you might guess, I had received the visa in my bright blue children's passport so that I could pass the border with the legal guardians. It was a whole new world that didn't recognise my existence nor the existence nor the existence of my homeland. Weird, isn't it?



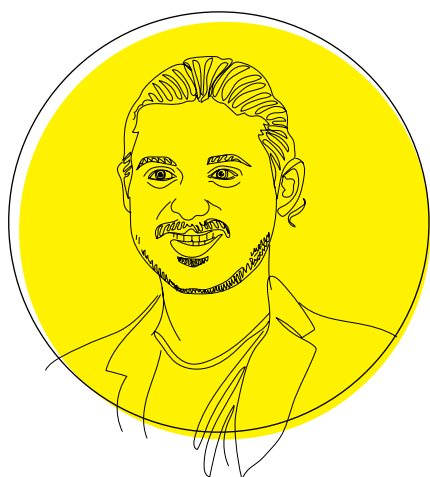
*From the perspective of a Ukrainian citizen, one thing was certain: "Ukraine is a developing democratic country."*

After that first trip, more than a devil's dozen years have passed. I received many new visas, ambassadors started speaking Ukrainian, and the geographical appearance of Ukraine became more familiar to most people. All these cases were out of sight, only numbers without soul. They lacked personal history behind it all.

The curse of the pink spot didn't let Ukraine move forward. The USSR was always marked with a disgusting fading pink on the world's map by Western Bloc countries. It was a huge blot on the globe and was reduced to the simplest descriptions: Russian culture, Russian country, Russians. I had learned it by heart from my long museum walks. As easy as it was, that shaped the minds of the generations from the early 50s and the generations to come.

I found it very disturbing that in order to start learning about Ukraine and its unique identity, some Westerners needed to be shocked by Russian bombs, which caused tens of thousands of casualties within Ukrainian civilians. The Russian-Ukrainian war became the best advertisement campaign in history for Ukrainian culture, making people question the pink spot and realise the existence and importance of this independent nation.

# İ EQUALS RESISTANCE!



**DANYLO POLILUEV-SCHMIDT, CULTURAL COLUMNIST FOR THE PROJECT "UKRAINE IN DEUTSCHLAND," DECISION BOARD MEMBER OF THE NGO IWEK E.V., ACTIVIST, PODCAST CREATOR "ALIARMIA? ZMOVA? ZNEVIRA?" AND BLOGGER BERLIN, GERMANY**

**C**urrent piece of the dedication is an encouragement to read the second volume of "Bücher über die Ukraine": Languages are not just tools. In my experience, they can be learned, used, employed, and even examined, viewed, and analysed – but above all, they are alive. They change and flow through generations and people.



Languages contain many events of our history and our universe. Languages flourish at the source of their creation, their vitality: with the people who speak them and bring them to life. That's why it's hard, actually impossible, to imagine Poland without Polish, Denmark without Danish, or Germany without German. Countries and their languages are closely connected. We can say with reasonable certainty, for example, where Frankfurt an der Oder ends and where Slubice begins. Thanks to language, we can find this invisible border even without geographic or physical clues.

At the beginning of the widespread Russian invasion in Ukraine, many Ukrainian territories fell under the harsh hand of the Russians. The occupiers immediately began the destruction of Ukrainian identity and the Ukrainian language. Numerous statues were destroyed, museums were looted, and Ukrainian books were burned in the squares of the cities, as described in Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451." This was and remains a traumatic experience for Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian language.

But many of my German friends were also impressed by the resilience and fighting spirit of the Ukrainian people. One question that friends repeatedly asked me concerned specific images, photos from the coverage. They all had a similar detail: houses, walls, statues, painted with the letter Ĩ – the I with the colon above it, which exists in Ukrainian, but not in many Slavic languages, especially not in Russian. My friends asked me: What does that mean? Why this strange letter Ĩ?

And the best explanation that came to my mind was a quote from the Ukrainian poem "Candle of the Letter Ĩ" by Ivan Malkovych: "Let it be a trifle, yet you, my child, are chosen to protect the little flame on the Ĩ!"

...

They say our language sounds like the song of a nightingale.

That sounds so good and beautiful.

...

But there may also come times when not even the smallest bird will be able to remember this language.

And so you must not rely only on the nightingales, my child!"

[free translation from the Ukrainian original text]

This poem and these lines from it called out to me, without my searching for them, like an unmistakable memory from my childhood when I was taught this poem as well.

And as Ivan Malkovych warned in his poem – it is accomplished! It is happening! The Ukrainian letter Ĩ became and is becoming a nightmare for the bloody occupiers. It appears in the Ukrainian Crimea, in Donetsk, in Luhansk, in Mariupol... everywhere! People protect their identity with this simple, small but powerful letter Ĩ.

In this case, language proves to be a powerful tool of resistance, the struggle for self-determination, and the decision for freedom. In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, it is forbidden to use any letters or signs that remind of Ukraine or its language. The punishment that threatens this is beyond our imagination. And yet the "Ĩ" with the colon above it is found everywhere. Where nightingales are, and also where they are not.

I encourage you, dear readers, to connect with the written Ukrainian word, to try to absorb the strength and courage through Ukrainian literature.

Allow yourself to get lost in all these strange and beautiful letters, these words, sentences, stories, narratives, and fates.

Open your heart to the Ukrainian language and literature so that the flame of the letter Ĩ never goes out.



# CHANGES OF SOCIETY

Undoubtedly, Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has led to the most significant humanitarian crisis in recent European history. This unprecedented international criminal act of the Kremlin has brought severe consequences for civilians in various aspects, including forced migration, the destruction of critical infrastructure, including homes,





# DIGITAL INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN UKRAINE: LEAVING NONE BEHIND



**ANDREA CASTAGNA IS A BRUSSELS-BASED POLICY SPECIALIST FOCUSING ON THE EU NEIGHBOURHOOD. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN PROJECTS RELATED TO DIGITAL FOR DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, YOUTH POLICIES AND SPORT. HE IS ALSO AN ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEER OF PROMOTE UKRAINE.**



*According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), more than 14,600 Ukrainian civilians have been severely injured, while tens of thousands of brave Ukrainian soldiers have been hurt in battle. The real numbers are obviously much larger.*

hospitals, school and enormous casualties and injuries. While the comprehensive documentation of Russian war crimes and their consequences is still ongoing, one crucial aspect remains evident. In Ukraine, the number of people with one or more disabilities has significantly increased because of the war.

In Ukraine before the start of the war, over 2.7 million persons with disabilities were registered. But partial data shows that this figure has dramatically enlarged. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), more than 14,600 Ukrainian civilians have been severely injured, while tens of thousands of brave Ukrainian soldiers have been hurt in battle. The real numbers are obviously much larger.

Because of the Russian aggression, many Ukrainians will need to live the rest of their lives with one or more disabilities. For instance, thousands of Ukrainian soldiers might have combat-related permanent



*With hundreds of thousands of individuals affected by disabilities, it has become evident that this segment of the population will play an integral role in shaping the Ukrainian economy for not just one, but potentially two generations. The implications of this reality demand substantial attention from a multitude of stakeholders and actors invested in the development of Ukraine.*

injuries such as amputations, traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries as well as hearing and vision impairments. Similar to soldiers, civilians may also experience similar disabilities to soldiers, including injuries from shelling, explosions, and gunfire. The situation concerning people with disabilities in Ukraine represents an unparalleled challenge within a modern society and a relatively advanced European economy.

With hundreds of thousands of individuals affected by disabilities, it has become evident that this segment of the population will play an integral role in shaping the Ukrainian economy for not just one, but potentially two generations. The implications of this reality demand substantial attention from a multitude of stakeholders and actors invested in the development of Ukraine.

Collaborative efforts are essential to address the multifaceted needs of people with

disabilities, ranging from accessible infrastructure and inclusive education to employment opportunities. In this context, digitalisation and the digital economy offers a crucial avenue for people with disabilities in Ukraine. Granting them independence through digital accessibility and education beyond reliance on welfare will be crucial for the future of Ukraine. And it is imperative that post-war Ukraine stands poised to cultivate an inclusive, forward-thinking digital economy, marked by diversity, shared prosperity, and the resounding principle of equal opportunity for all.

Achieving digital inclusion and accessibility for all will be a formidable endeavour, necessitating robust collaboration among Ukrainian government entities, international organisations, and civil society. But three preconditions are essential to achieve a real digital inclusion in Ukraine and the Ukrainian government should focus on these complementary actions.

- Digital Education: Ukraine must increase and enhance its investments in digital education and skills development, placing

<sup>1</sup> [www.edf-feph.org/one-year-of-war-persons-with-disabilities-in-ukraine/](http://www.edf-feph.org/one-year-of-war-persons-with-disabilities-in-ukraine/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.directrelief.org/2023/05/ukraines-war-wounded-gravely-injured-but-unbroken/](http://www.directrelief.org/2023/05/ukraines-war-wounded-gravely-injured-but-unbroken/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/07/ukraine-war-rehabilitation-centre-wounded-veterans](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/07/ukraine-war-rehabilitation-centre-wounded-veterans)

a very strong emphasis on vocational and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for veterans and individuals with disabilities impacted by the conflict. This will significantly enhance their employability, facilitate economic inclusion, and contribute to overall economic development.

- **Web Accessibility:** Ukraine should further develop digital accessibility in every aspect of the society, including e-government, education, and public services. For instance, Ukrainian state authorities can enhance web accessibility for all state and private websites, integrating features to ensure their usability by individuals with visual and hearing impairments.

- **Cooperation with the Tech Sector:** the Ukrainian government should establish a business environment conducive to increased investment in the digital tech sector, with a specific focus on fos-

tering the establishment of digital-tech companies that promote educational opportunities and employment for individuals with disabilities. For example, fiscal benefits and additional tax advantages could be implemented to incentivise companies that sponsor a specified number of digital skills initiatives targeting disabled veterans and injured civilians.

However, it is important for other stakeholders to also contribute, as the issue of digital inclusion will continue to be pivotal for Ukraine's overall future and its



*Cooperation with the Tech Sector: the Ukrainian government should establish a business environment conducive to increased investment in the digital tech sector, with a specific focus on fostering the establishment of digital-tech companies that promote educational opportunities and employment for individuals with disabilities.*

sustained recovery over the long term. These actions are supplementary and hold equal significance to the government's role in ensuring that no individuals are excluded or left behind.

- Civil Society Organisations (CSO): In the present day, data concerning the extent of war-related disabilities and their impact on individuals remains notably restricted. This limitation is partly due to the Ukrainian government's pressing and very legitimate concerns related to national defence and survival. Nevertheless, CSO can assume a pivotal role in addressing this data gap by undertaking the collection of information on disabilities caused by conflict in the country

and make it accessible to a larger public both in and out of Ukraine. In doing so, CSOs can also engage in the essential task of identifying the distinct needs for social inclusion among disabled individuals in Ukraine and advocate for them in larger fora at the European and international level in order to raise awareness on these issues.

- International Organisations and Donors: International organisations and donors have a crucial responsibility to provide more and larger grants aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities in Ukraine. Additionally, they should actively foster awareness regarding the pressing issue of economic integration for this demographic, for instance in terms of digital accessibility and inclusion.

- Private Sector: private companies can play an important part in ensuring that people with disabilities and wounded veterans are socially included in Ukraine. For instance, small and medium companies (SMEs) can



*International Organisations and Donors: International organisations and donors have a crucial responsibility to provide more and larger grants aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities in Ukraine.*

take part in advocacy campaigns related to inclusion and ensure that their premises and websites are accessible for people with visual or hearing impairments. On the other hand, larger companies have the resources to assume a more substantial role by providing substantial financial backing for digital educational initiatives targeting individuals with war-related disabilities, while also extending employment opportunities to them.

In conclusion, it is important that every stakeholder plays its part to ensure that Ukraine remains a country where no one is left behind. Only through this approach Ukraine can secure a long-term recovery that equally benefits all its citizens.



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This publication was originally drafted by the Institute of Innovative Governance within the implementation of the UNDP project “Promotion of Human Security in Ukraine through responding to the Multidimensional Crisis Caused by the War” with the financial support of the Government of Japan.



# KYIV INVESTMENT FORUM 2023: EUROPEAN CITIES FOR THE RESILIENT FUTURE OF UKRAINE'S CAPITAL



The annual Kyiv Investment Forum (KIF) returns for its 8th edition on 16 November 2023 at The City Hall of Brussels. This paramount gathering aims to rally international support for the sustainable revival and reconstruction of Greater Kyiv.

Established as a keystone platform for international collaborations, the Kyiv Investment Forum (KIF) has consistently championed Kyiv's vision for growth and resilience. Throughout its storied journey, KIF has marked several milestones, each amplifying its influence and reach. A pivotal moment was in 2022 when, under the leadership of Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko and with support from

CHANGES OF SOCIETY  
UKRAINE

Brussels Mayor Philippe Close, the forum transcended geographical confines to be hosted in Brussels for the first time. This historic move culminated in a joint declaration signed by 15 European cities, pledging to unite in the reconstruction and restoration of areas in the Kyiv region affected by external aggression. The declaration not only signified solidarity but also set the stage for multilateral investment projects and targeted assistance.

This year's KIF is poised to address one of the most pivotal moments in Kyiv's history. Its central theme is "Sustainable Revival of Greater Kyiv." Through this lens, the forum aspires to define and activate a multifaceted vision that encapsulates recovery, resilience, and innovative development for our city.

The 2023 edition of KIF sets out to galvanise global collaboration in propelling the growth of Kyiv's investment ecosystem. By attracting investors from all corners of the world, our goal is to fuel the modernisation and rejuvenation of Greater Kyiv's infrastructure. At the heart of this year's agenda is the intention to foster meaningful collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, KIF will champion the virtues of the social impact economy. This approach seeks to marry economic pursuits with the overarching welfare of the public. Such a focus not only addresses the immediate restoration imperatives of Ukraine but also sketches out a sustainable and inclusive economic trajectory, edging us closer to our aspirations within the EU.

Kyiv Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko commented on the upcoming forum, stating, "In the face of challenges, our city has shown unparalleled tenacity. At this year's KIF, we gather to not only celebrate this spirit but to channel

it into tangible solutions, innovations, and partnerships that will ensure a brighter, sustainable future for all Kyivites."

Echoing the sentiment, Brussels Mayor Philippe Close added, "Brussels stands with Kyiv, not just as a host city for the forum but as a steadfast partner and friend. This year's KIF underscores the incredible potential when European cities come together, share insights, and co-create solutions. Kyiv's resilience inspires us, and through our collective efforts, we aim to pave a pathway to recovery, growth, and enduring prosperity."

For more details, visit <https://investinkyiv.info/>

About Kyiv Investment Forum (KIF):

Founded in 2015, the Kyiv Investment Forum (KIF) has emerged as an esteemed annual gathering dedicated to fostering

international collaborations, amplifying investment opportunities, and driving the sustainable growth of Kyiv. Over the years, KIF has been instrumental in uniting global investors, innovators, and policymakers, aligning them with the vision of a resilient and prosperous future for the city. Through dynamic dialogues and strategic partnerships, KIF continues to play a transformative role in shaping Kyiv's economic and social trajectory.

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