



Key considerations for decentralization and relating reforms in Eastern Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (Government Controlled Areas)

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Introduction

Over the recent years a number of long-awaited, key reforms have been implemented in Ukraine more or less successfully, including reforms of decentralization, provision of healthcare and social services, pension, digitalization, land etc. The government-controlled areas (GCA) of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, having endured the consequences of an active conflict since 2014, have been facing serious challenges that undermine the reform process and could result in a situation when these regions fall behind the rest of the country. That being said, the implementation of reforms in the conflict-affected regions requires a specific attention, coordinated efforts at all levels and a robust response from the Government of Ukraine and its international partners.

Among the main conflict-related challenges and issues are the following:

- Persistent risks for civilians, as well as a degraded security situation and escalation of the armed conflict due to uncertainties of the Minsk negotiations;
- 3.4 million people in Donbas (1.7 million in GCA, including 340,000 IDPs) require humanitarian assistance and protection¹; among them every third person is elderly. \$168 million of funding required in 2021 to respond to humanitarian needs only.
- The Donetsk and Luhansk regions in GCA register officially the largest population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), 513,639 and 283,931 accordingly (as of 08 June 2021), which involves additional responsibilities and special programmes and policies for local authorities.
- A 450 km long Line of Contact (LoC) between areas controlled and non-controlled by the Ukrainian Government in Donbas (GCA and NGCA), which cuts hundreds of thousands of people

¹ 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview


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from former oblast centers where they used to get qualified services and jobs, and, on the other hand, cuts NGCA residents from essential services, pension and welfare benefits in GCA, putting serious obstacles to realization of fundamental right to freedom of movement and other human rights of civilians.

- Over 200,000 people living in frontline communities in GCA continue to suffer from limited access to essential services and local markets due to insecurity, protracted absence of public transport network, lack of employment opportunities and other cumulative effects of the conflict².
- Heavy contamination of lands with landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) with around 2 million civilians exposed to this threat and high number of the related casualties. Inability to explore agricultural lands for many people which puts at risk their wellbeing.
- Regular attacks and shelling targeting civilian infrastructure in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts causing damage to hospitals, schools, as well as critical water infrastructure, putting at risk the water supply to hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the LoC.

1. Decentralization reform and a special format of governance in contact-line communities

The Government of Ukraine has been implementing its decentralization reform since 2014. The Law ‘On Voluntary Amalgamation of Territorial Communities’³ entered into force in March 2015, and as of the beginning of June 2020, only 44,5 % of the territorial communities amalgamated voluntarily. The Donetsk and Luhansk regions were respectively at 10th and 13th places in the national rating of establishment of competent ATCs (excluding NGCA), with low level decentralization in education and social policy in particular⁴. On the eve of the local elections scheduled for 25 October 2020, the Government of Ukraine by its decrees No 710-p and No 717-p of 12 June 2020 approved territories of the agglomerated territorial communities (ATCs) and their administrative centers (with 31 ATCs in NGCA)⁵. On 17 July 2020 the Parliament adopted a decision No 3650 on re-designing sub-regional units in Ukraine - raions (136 instead of 490)⁶.

At the same time, During the 2020 local elections, 18 communities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, mainly located near the Line of Contact (LoC), were deprived of the right to elect their representatives to the local self-government bodies, based on a decision of the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine⁷ namely citing security reasons. On 26 May 2021, President V.Zelensky

² https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ukraine_humanitarian_snapshot_20210517-eng.pdf

³ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/157-19#Text>

⁴ [Monitoring of the decentralization process](#)

⁵ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-viznachennya-administrativnih-centriv-ta-zatverdzhennya-teritorij-teritorialnih-gromad-doneckovi-oblasti-710-120620>;

<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-viznachennya-administrativnih-centriv-ta-zatverdzhennya-teritorij-teritorialnih-gromad-luganskovi-oblasti-717-120620>

⁶ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/807-20#Text>

⁷ <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-elections/3079650-cvk-poasnila-comu-nemozливо-provesti-vibori-uzdovz-linii-zitknenna.html>

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established a new Military and Civil Administration (MCA) in Slovyansk where the local elections took place in 2020, but a political crisis prevented the normal functioning of the city council⁸. Such decisions triggered different reactions among politicians, civil society and in the expert community, with some analysts expressing concerns on the violation of people's right to elect local self-government authorities and the absence of explicit criteria for denying elections and establishing MCAs with risks of politically motivated decisions, while others recognized the necessity to keep this format of governance in the areas near the LoC until the end of the conflict⁹.

Regarding specifics of the decentralization reform in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, under the Law of Ukraine 'On Military and Civil Administrations' there have been established CMAs, replacing the local self-government for an indefinite period of time. According to Article 3 of this law, military and civil administrations are formed, if necessary, by the decision of the President of Ukraine. The heads of MCAs in settlements (including Amalgamated Territorial Communities or ATCs) are appointed and dismissed by the head of the relevant regional MCA with the approval of the Commander of the Joint Forces (Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Law). And the heads of the oblast CMAs are appointed by the President of Ukraine. They shall be Ukrainian Defense Force's servicemen or law enforcement officials.

A number of civil society representatives from the Vilnius Task Force reported a challenged cooperation between MCA officials and civil society and limitations when it comes to monitoring their performance. Concerns regarding MCAs relate to their capacity and effectiveness and, accordingly, current and future humanitarian and socio-economic needs, as well as sustainable development of the area are largely dependent on personal and professional qualities of the head of a MCA who concentrates all powers in his or her hands, which increases the risk of top-down governance; the absence of important and accessible democratic and participatory mechanisms in the formation and operation of MCAs (a system of checks and balances which is present when both legislative and executive powers are in place, mechanisms for effective interaction with civil society, public councils under the CMAs and other instruments of non-governmental oversight).

Unresolved pre-planning during the establishment of new MCAs and appointment of their heads resulted in flaws in governance, disruptions in the provision of administrative, social and medical services, budgetary challenges such as arrears of wages for public servants, and overall confusion and frustration among the local population.

Recommendations

The President's administration and the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) should:

⁸ <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2102021-38985>

⁹ [Vostok SOS Report on decentralization in Donbas](#)



1.1. Consider reforming MCA structures in favor of incorporating democratic and participatory principles of governance and social accountability, and strengthen the participation of local communities in the decision-making process:

- 1.1.1. Selection and nomination of candidates for leadership positions in the MCAs;
- 1.1.2. Subsequent public monitoring of their activities;
- 1.1.3. Regular consultations with local residents.

1.2. Amend the Law on MCAs in close consultations with the region's civil society in favor of:

- 1.2.1. Establishing mechanisms of public reporting by the head of the MCA and public audit of the MCAs' activities;
- 1.2.2. Citizens' participation through an accessible and efficient feedback mechanism;
- 1.2.3. Improving communication between the MCAs and the local populations by introducing an institution of headmen (*starostas*) and envisaging headmen districts;
- 1.2.4. Possibility to nominate civilians for the position of the head of a MCA.

The Ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories and the Ministry for Development of Territorial Communities in cooperation with regional state administrations should:

- 1.3. Consider occupational training and capacity building of MCAs' heads and key employees, in the spheres of sustainable development, economic growth and investments in particular;
 - 1.3.1. Identify learning opportunities with local, national or international humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations;
- 1.4. Analyze disruptions in governance and public services' provision processes that took place in January-June 2021 in the mentioned above 18 communities and draw conclusions to prevent them in the future through relevant legislative changes in particular.

1. Line of Contact and freedom of movement

Over years, restrictions on freedom of movement and the transfer of goods imposed by the Government of Ukraine at entry-exit checkpoints (EECPs) along the LoC have required civilians to expose themselves to safety and security risks, long queues, and other physical challenges during the crossings in order to access social entitlements, including pensions, state administrative services, hospitals, markets or banking services etc. Prior to the implementation of COVID-19 prevention measures in mid-March 2020, more than 1.1 million civilian crossings were registered each month – half of them by elderly people and over 90 per cent by the NGCA residents. The closure of EECPs due to quarantine restrictions resulted in additional hardships, including separation of families, limited access to essential services and near impossibility to return home (55 000 individual crossings in March 2021 compared with 600 000 in March 2020



and 1,2 million in March 2019, according to UN OCHA). Such a situation negatively affects civilians who live on both sides of the LoC.

Since March 2020, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 the Ukrainian authorities have suspended on an intermittent basis the passage of persons and vehicles from/to NGCA through EECPs along the LoC. However, it should be pointed out that since November 2020 such restrictions have no longer been imposed and as of 8 July 2021 all EECPs in GCA are open to civilians. The de-facto authorities have been blocking crossings at EECPs in Shchastia and Zolote in Luhansk region (opened in November 2020), as well as in Mayorske, Maryinka and Hnutove in Donetsk region. At the same time, the EECP in Novotroyitske in Donetsk region is open for civilians only every Monday and Friday due to the restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities. Only one EECP in Stanytsya Luhanska (Luhansk region) has been fully operational.

That is why, people residing in the NGCA were forced to violate Article 204-2 of the Administrative Offences Code of Ukraine and cross checkpoints on the Ukrainian border (mainly with the Russian Federation) to enter the GCA. As a result, administrative fines have been imposed on them. In order to remedy this situation on 26 June 2021 the Parliament adopted a draft law No 5478 aimed at amending the Law of Ukraine on quarantine measures No 530¹⁰. It provided for exemption of the citizens of Ukraine, violating the procedure of entering and leaving the NGCA through the checkpoints on the State border, from the administrative responsibility for the period of quarantine or blocking of the EECPs, on humanitarian grounds. Considering the temporary nature of the Law No 530, there is a need to amend Article 204-2 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Ukraine in order to allow people residing in the NGCA to enter the GCA without unnecessary impediments (see a draft law No 5405 registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on April 20, 2021)¹¹.

Recommendations

The Ministry for Reintegration of Temporary Occupied Territories with the regional state administrations and the Verkhovna Rada should:

- 2.1. Ensure proper functioning and accessibility of all EECPs and service centers near them;
- 2.2. Eliminate the existing system of electronic permits to cross the LoC or, if it is maintained, the permits should be valid with no time limit. Access to these permits should be unimpeded and technically simple;
- 2.3. In the context of self-isolation with the 'DiyVdoma' app in GCA (if imposed again) it is essential to introduce alternative solutions in GCA for civilians without smartphones, data connection, or in case of technical issues with the mobile application;
- 2.4. Amend Article 204-2 of the Administrative Offences Code of Ukraine to release people residing in the NGCA from administrative liability, if they enter the GCA through checkpoints on

¹⁰ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/530-20#Text>

¹¹ http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=71733

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the state border on humanitarian grounds for the period of limited functioning or blocking of the EECs.

2. Right to pension and social protection for NGCA residents and IDPs

Social protection and the payment of pension are fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine and international human rights instruments. According to the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU), as of August 2014, there were 1,278,000 pensioners registered in NGCA.¹² As of September 1, 2020, pension was assigned to 637,500 IDP-pensioners.¹³ No provision at the level of Ukrainian laws provides for a particular requirement for civilians registered and/or residing in NGCA to register as IDPs in order to be eligible for the pension program. For example, the Law on Pensions¹⁴ itself contains an exhaustive list of grounds for granting and payment of pensions and does not refer to such a requirement as being registered as an IDP. However, access to pensions specifically for IDPs is regulated through by-laws promulgated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. As a result, pensioners registered in NGCA of Donetsk and Luhansk regions without an official IDP status have not been able to receive their pensions. In addition, if the payment of pension is suspended, it can be restored only through court proceedings, which is time and resource-consuming and puts people under additional financial burden. Overall, such an approach denies basic human rights, jeopardizes social cohesion and undermines prospects for reintegration.

As of June 2021, there is no adequate and accessible mechanism for NGCA residents to receive their pensions. The only way to exercise the right to pension for them is to register as IDPs in GCA and obtain an IDP certificate. Even as registered IDPs, they can face restrictions and obstacles to get their pensions. According to Article 47 of Law on pensions No 1058¹⁵, pension is paid every month at the place of factual residence, mentioned in the request for the assignment of a pension. However, the PFU considers an IDP certificate as the only relevant evidence of the factual place of residence for IDPs. At the same time, according to the Article 4 of the Law of Ukraine “On ensuring rights and freedoms of IDPs”¹⁶, an IDP certificate confirms solely the fact of displacement, not the place of residence, which is in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The place of residence could be confirmed by other documents – for instance, a certificate from local authorities, a tenant agreement, etc. An IDP certificate should not create additional obstacles for Ukrainian nationals towards their access to pension under the Ukrainian legal framework.

¹² https://www.unhcr.org/ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2020/03/Briefing-Note-on-Pensions_2020.pdf

¹³ According to the information received during hearings of the Committee on Social Policy on October 13, 2020.

¹⁴ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1058-15#Text>

¹⁵ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1058-15#Text>

¹⁶ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1706-18#Text>



Recommendations

The Verkhovna Rada and Government of Ukraine should:

- 3.3. Adopt a law that would enable NGCA residents to receive pensions without the need to register as IDPs (for instance, draft law No 2083-d);
- 3.2. Disregard IDP registration requirements as a condition for pension eligibility;
- 3.3. Establish a procedure of paying accumulated pension arrears with allocation of necessary funding (amendments to the Law 'On State Budget');
- 3.4. Elaborate and adopt amendments to the Law No 1058 and the relevant by-laws on alternative means of verification for the non-mobile pensioners residing in NGCA. It may be the first step towards allowing these persons to receive their pensions through e-banking services and/or online notary services, authorizing other persons to collect their pensions and/or other feasible related alternatives;
- 3.5. Dedicate required resources to achieve a comprehensive social protection programme, adapted to the needs of people in their diversity.

3. Healthcare Reform

In 2015, the Government of Ukraine initiated a comprehensive overhaul of the country's health care system to optimize it, improve the health outcomes of the population and eliminate corruption risks. The idea was to modernize the obsolete service delivery system, increase its efficiency and improve access to health care of better quality. The overarching strategy consisted of focusing first on financial reforming of the healthcare system to catalyze transformation in service delivery and to use digital solutions as accelerators. The implementation of the medical reform in conflict-affected areas of Donbas has been especially difficult, considering challenges were further exacerbated by the process of decentralization.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, vulnerabilities in conflict-affected areas have considerably increased. Ongoing quarantine restrictions make access to healthcare even more complicated for the population. When available, public transportation and road infrastructure are in poor conditions and pharmacies are not available in some locations. Almost 21% of the people say their income has decreased during the quarantine period and they are obliged to economize on healthcare. However, the decentralization and redistribution of budgetary funds among the territories is currently underway and many localities are left without funding for medical services and prospects of the future provision of primary health care. Considering 38 % of the local population¹⁴ are elderly people with very low income, their access to the minimum medical treatment has been at risk. According to statistics, more than 65 % of the elderly are suffering from NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases), the majority of them have chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, etc. Moreover, 79% of



people mention the medicines are too expensive for them and 21% complain about the long distance to the drug-stores. According to the UN, an average monthly income in Donbas region is less than UAH 4000, while the total amount spent by people on medical care is UAH 2085 (over 50% of the revenue).

Among the main problems in the conflict-affected areas in Donbas is a lack of awareness of the population about state guarantees in the field of healthcare and the Health Care Reform in general, as well as about the mechanisms of their rights' protection. This is particularly true of the rural population near the LoC. People report not understanding the role of family doctors and their obligations. In some localities patients have communicated with their family doctor once they signed the declaration (a contract) without any follow-up, although their health condition requires constant medical supervision. Many patients do not know about the list of guaranteed services and free medicines. The situation of the patients with hearing and speaking difficulties is especially painful. So, communication between the medical institution and the patient has been a real issue. According to numerous reports of health professionals, a large number of people seek medical help, only in complex cases or in the late stages of illness, especially cancer and STIs.

The process of decentralisation revealed inconsistencies in mitigating risks and policy gaps associated with the transition: closure of medical facilities and lack of sustainable funding, adding to already existing problems such as medical facilities located at long distance with poor road conditions, security risks, etc. The issue is especially acute for rural areas and isolated locations along the LoC (ambulances unable to access certain locations, and in some cases prevented by military men).

Near the LoC, especially in rural areas, pharmacies may not be functional and people need to travel to purchase essential medicine. People report facing limited access to the Government 'Affordable Medicines' Program. According to Medicos del Mundo, only 47% of licensed drug stores participate in this program and only in a few locations.

Donetsk and Luhansk regions lack medical personnel (from 40% to 20% depending on the settlement). About 60% of primary care physicians are persons of pre-retirement and retirement age. Some localities are not covered by family doctor services at all. It has been difficult to implement telemedicine services and provide equal access to quality medical services and receive specialized consultations from specialists due to people's inability to access online appointments as a result of poor internet connection, non-availability of electronic devices, and a low knowledge among medical staff on how to work when it comes to technological equipment.

Recommendations



The Ministry of Health, in coordination with the oblast state administrations, local self-government authorities and military and civil administrations, should:

- 4.1. Fix an adjustment coefficient for rural primary health care facilities located near the LoC in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts;
- 4.2. Refrain from reducing primary health care facilities in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts in conflict situations;
- 4.3. Enforce the implementation of the Cabinet of Ministers' Decree No 468 by allocating additional funds to provide allowances to health facilities' staff located near the LoC in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts;
- 4.4. Create a government and local programs to stimulate employment and incentivize specialists among medical staff, graduates in particular, to work in rural areas in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (provision of housing etc.);

4. Integration of Internally Displaced Populations

It was for the first time in October 2020 that IDPs could vote during the local elections in Ukraine. Among other positive examples of the national policy relating to IDPs are the implementation of a mechanism of compensation for destroyed property, housing programs, facilitation of access to certain services including online. A National Human Rights Strategy for 2021-2023 was approved by the President of Ukraine on 23 March 2021¹⁷ with a specific chapter dedicated to IDPs, despite a lack of envisaged durable solutions for IDPs. On 23 June 2021 the Government approved an updated Action Plan.

The Strategy for integration of IDPs and implementation of long-term solutions as regards internal displacement for the period till 2020, approved by the Government of Ukraine in 2017, has not been in force already, but the development and adoption of a recent one is still pending as of 8 July 2021. Such a delay has a negative impact on planning and implementation of regional integration policies (no region adopted a specific program for the integration of IDPs).

IDPs often complain about not being involved in the receiving community's life and being treated by the local authorities as outsiders¹⁸. Only 20% of participatory democracy tools are fully accessible to IDPs, 40% may have impediments to their implementation, and 40% are unavailable¹⁹. Mechanisms of local democracy, such as citizens' requests and access to meetings of collegial bodies are available without restrictions, as this is determined by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine at the national level. However, when it comes to the local level, in many

¹⁷ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/119/2021#Text>

¹⁸ The HDP Nexus and civic engagement in local decision-making in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. People in Need Ukraine; Hanna Medvedeva; 2021, EN.

¹⁹ [Analysis of local democracy instruments available for internally displaced persons](#), Hrupa vplyvu, 2020, UA.



cases IDPs, women and sexual minorities in particular, face barriers to participation in policy-making because of their place of registration (they may be registered in other communities, for instance in NGCA).

Recommendations

Ukraine's national, regional, and local authorities should:

- 5.1. Press for the creation of advisory bodies with the full inclusion and participation of IDPs, women and sexual minorities among them under their offices both in Donetsk and Luhansk regions and beyond;
- 5.2. Promote, in policy and in practice, that IDPs are contributors, residents of and belong to the community;

The Verkhovna Rada should:

- 5.2. Adopt a new version of the Law of Ukraine "On Local Self-Government in Ukraine" in favor of participatory mechanisms and representation of IDPs, women and sexual minorities among them;

The Government of Ukraine should:

- 5.3. Approve the new Strategy (2021—2023) on the integration of IDPs within the shortest period of time and ensure its action plan is developed and approved;
- 5.4. Allocate relevant funding in the State Budget for integration activities.

5. Digitalizing governance

Digital transformation of Ukraine is among the top priorities of the Ukrainian Government and is reflected in the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021-2027²⁰. The document highlights the necessity to enhance digital literacy of the population and aims at accumulation of the public services provision on the governmental web portal Diya. The digitalization of governance has brought certain opportunities for IDPs: they can now obtain IPD certificates and apply for a subsidized mortgage online; other forthcoming innovations include online registration of financial assistance for accommodation, remote identification, submission of an application for temporary social housing and applying for monetary compensation for destroyed housing²¹. Residents of non-government controlled territories (NGCA) were enabled to use

²⁰ [On approval of the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021-2027](#). Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2020, UA.

²¹ [Snaver Seitkhaliev: Digitalisation of all public services for IDPs is an important factor for their integration into communities](#). The Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine. 2021, EN.

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e-Malyatko (e-baby) online service to register their children's birth. At the same time, residents living in remote areas and around the LoC continue to face challenges accessing the internet in the lack of modern infrastructure.

Against the background of a comprehensive digitalization in the governance, the poor quality of internet coverage and connection in the rural and remote areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions remains insufficiently addressed. This issue jeopardizes the population's access to public services and possibilities to use local democracy tools. Moreover, this situation may contribute to the existing gap in development between rural, remote, and close to the LoC territories and the rest of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Meanwhile, the draft Strategy of economic development of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions only briefly outlines the need to expand coverage of these territories with broadband Internet. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine implemented a programme for providing state subventions for communities in need of Internet access – however, the campaign was not widely promoted, sufficiently inclusive and had time limitations (by June 2021).

Recommendations

The Government of Ukraine should:

- 6.1. Ensure internet coverage in remote and located near the LoC areas as a pathway for good governance in Donetsk and Luhansk regions and in line with the Strategy of Economic Development;
- 6.2. Extend the system of insurance of military-political risks proposed by the concept of the strategy to digital infrastructure facilities in order to improve the business climate in the region;
- 6.3. Prolong and extend the state programme for internet subventions for local communities and make the criteria for participating in the application process adapted to the needs of the communities.

1. Cross-cutting recommendations:

The Government of Ukraine and Verkhovna Rada should:

- 7.1. Take into consideration the specifics and challenges of the conflict-affected areas, while implementing the key reforms and provide them with additional support (funding, training etc.);
Improve the national legislation on humanitarian aid, the Law 'On Humanitarian aid', the Tax
- 7.2. Code and relevant by-laws in particular in close consultation with local, national, and international humanitarian actors;



- 7.3. Ensure the operational environment of the humanitarian community is fully enabled to better ensure the protection and assistance of populations affected by the conflict;
- 7.4. Prioritize coordination with Ukraine's local and international humanitarian aid and development partners in line with the Humanitarian-Development and Peace Nexus strategic direction for Eastern Ukraine;

Donetsk and Luhansk oblast administrations, local self-governments and civil and military administrations should:

- 7.5. Conduct as soon as possible assessment of the needs of the local populations in social and other services and organize provision of such services to the people in the most efficient and comfortable way (considering distances, state of roads, availability of the transport, security situation etc.);
- 7.6. Promote and strengthen cooperation between local non-governmental services providers and local self-governments and civil military administrations;
- 7.7. Make the process of regional strategizing, budgeting, and planning of social services and infrastructure inclusive and participatory of citizens and communities including IDPs, women, sexual minorities, people with special needs, and people in their diversity;
- 7.8. Create and foster space for communication and dialogue on issues of public interest such as social protection, environment, investment and growth, water infrastructure, etc. among civil society and high-level government representatives;

Ukraine's international humanitarian and development partners should:

- 7.9. Contribute to the strengthening of local civil society and non-governmental organisations and service providers in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts;
- 7.10. Promote long-term planning and coordination at all layers of governance and particularly through a bottom-up, community-centered approach;
- 7.11. Secure multi-year, flexible funding of humanitarian and development needs in line with the humanitarian-development and peace nexus for eastern Ukraine.