

Research
Paper

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Mobilizing 'Team Ukraine' for a successful recovery

How the state, communities and citizens can rebuild the country together

Incorporating the 2025 Chatham House survey of Ukrainian CSOs

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Summary

- Although war is ongoing, and no end is in sight, planning for the post-war recovery in Ukraine is under way. If carried out to its full potential, the rebuilding of Ukraine may prove to be one of the most significant European economic projects of this century. But the whole of 'Team Ukraine' – government, citizens, civil society, communities and Ukraine's external supporters – will be needed for the country to achieve the prosperous and just future it deserves.
- A fully inclusive, citizen-led recovery process is essential for Ukraine to power its economic and social development. Communities should have a meaningful say in their own future. Mobilizing citizens and civil society as part of the process would allow these stakeholders to make decisions and co-deliver recovery projects together with officials at different levels of government, and with external partners, improving the quality and targeting of the overall effort.
- This research paper analyses the emerging recovery framework and assesses progress towards the level of community inclusion necessary. Alongside other relevant research, it draws on the findings from the latest edition of Chatham House's survey of civil society organizations (CSOs), conducted online in early 2025. The responses to the survey show that nearly 70 per cent of such organizations are already involved in recovery. Their involvement primarily consists of providing support to internally displaced people and other vulnerable citizens, offering education and research services, and engaging in post-war recovery planning with local authorities.
- Our survey makes clear that Ukrainian civil society is keen to push for structural reforms and the modernization of institutions. Over 60 per cent of national CSOs see institutional reform as an immediate priority. Connected to this is a strong focus on fighting the persistent corruption that threatens to undermine those reforms: 64 per cent of CSOs nationwide and 70 per cent of regional CSOs believe a successful anti-corruption effort could strengthen Ukraine's resilience. However, we also note a positive trend in perceptions of the risks related to embezzlement of funds, with 66 per cent of respondents citing this as a significant risk in 2025, compared to 88 per cent in 2022.
- CSOs identify multiple issues where they can make a difference. Notably, these include the reintegration of veterans into civilian life, strengthening national unity around the strategy of victory, and assisting children and young people in overcoming the trauma and challenges of war. Regional CSOs identify support for rebuilding infrastructure, alongside responding to the country's looming mental health crisis, as the areas where they could best collaborate. Despite the protracted and brutal nature of the war, levels of civic engagement, individual donations and enthusiasm for volunteering all remain high.

- Although CSOs and communities are willing and able to participate, obstacles to truly effective collaboration between state and civil society remain. Only 39 per cent of CSOs consider themselves to be 'included' or 'very well included' in the recovery process to date. Meanwhile, compared to 2024, the quality of engagement of civil society and communities in recovery shows only marginal improvement at the regional level and even a slight decline at the national level. No more than 18 per cent of CSOs rate participation in government-led formats as efficient. By contrast, 29 per cent of CSOs regard their participation in the development of recovery projects for external funders as the most effective format for cooperation. Western donors are also the main sources of funding for the work carried out by communities, citizens and CSOs.
- Mutual aid and citizen solidarity are also of huge importance: more than 30 per cent of CSOs report receiving donations directly from Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine's most active citizens are confident that they can contribute to societal resilience, social cohesion and innovative solutions. They want to be constructive partners at the national and community level.
- In light of the above trends and challenges, this paper makes a series of recommendations designed to make the recovery more effective and put citizens and communities at the heart of that process. These recommendations are for all members of 'Team Ukraine' – including the Ukrainian government, external donors and CSOs themselves. Among the most significant recommendations are:
 - Making civil society and community engagement in the delivery and planning of recovery projects a mandatory part of the process.
 - Strengthening in-country cooperation by setting up a cross-sectoral recovery coordination and facilitation unit. This unit would bring together government, external donors, the private sector and civil society for the purposes of sharing knowledge and data, strategic communication and capacity-building.
 - Increasing direct allocations of donor funding to qualified Ukrainian CSOs, and engaging communities in the co-planning of humanitarian assistance and civic monitoring of corruption.
 - Engaging with the burgeoning domestic charitable sector in co-implementation and co-finance of recovery to make use of local knowledge and lived experience.
 - Finally, reforming national regulations to allow provision of social services by non-state actors. This would enable co-delivery of services by CSOs and raise standards by creating a competitive market.

Introduction

Ukraine's capacity to defend itself against Russian full-scale aggression and preserve its own independence is critical for the security of Europe as a whole. Recovery efforts both to maintain the stability of Ukraine's home front and support the country's continuing ability to resist Russia are an essential part of this picture. Although the war is ongoing, and no end is in sight, rapid reconstruction and planning for the post-war recovery in Ukraine are under way. Recovery will necessarily be a complex and wide-ranging process. But, if carried out to its full potential, the rebuilding of Ukraine may prove to be one of the most significant European economic projects of this century. It is essential that the opportunity for a fully inclusive recovery is not missed.

This research paper makes the case that a fully inclusive, citizen-led recovery is the route to achieving a prosperous and secure future for Ukraine. The paper presents the findings from Chatham House's latest annual survey of Ukrainian civil society organizations (CSOs), which provides a unique insight into both the role of CSOs and their views on the recovery.¹ The paper then draws on this survey data, alongside other relevant public opinion surveys and research, to lead a discussion on how Ukraine can effectively rebuild as the war continues, and how it can prepare the right framework for a fully fledged recovery starting from the day when peace finally arrives. The discussion focuses on one of the key dimensions of that recovery process – the engagement of citizens and communities.

The paper assesses the quality of partnership between the state, citizens and communities at present and suggests improvements to the recovery framework currently emerging. It argues that constructive co-creation and co-delivery of projects by non-state actors is one of the keys to sustaining Ukraine's resilience and ensuring a just recovery.

Today, 65 per cent of Ukrainians express trust in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This percentage has nearly doubled since February 2022.

Ukraine's long-standing political culture is characterized by non-hierarchical links between citizens and by a tradition of delivering results despite, rather than because of, the actions of central authorities. Ukraine's Soviet and post-independence history engendered high levels of mistrust in central government among the population. But the present successful defence of Ukraine has increased trust in national leadership compared to pre-war years: today, 65 per cent of Ukrainians express trust in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This percentage has nearly doubled since February 2022.² However, the rally-around-the-flag effect is likely to be

¹ For the purpose of this research, civil society organizations included non-profit organizations, charitable foundations, think-tanks and citizen associations that are registered as legal entities. See the survey methodology and a full list of responses in the Annex.

² Hrushetskyi, A. (2025), 'Динаміка довіри Президенту В. Зеленському в 2019-2025 роках' [Dynamics of trust in President V. Zelenskyy in 2019-2025], Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, press release, 16 June 2025, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1537&page=1>.

a factor in such high support. Trust in the central government may well erode in peacetime, for example if internal instability swells. To an extent, the phenomenon can already be observed, as the level of public trust in the Cabinet of Ministers has declined significantly since 2022. Only 20 per cent of Ukrainians now express trust in the cabinet.³

In contrast, trust in volunteers remains high.⁴ Ukrainians know that Russia is failing to destroy their country thanks to a whole-of-society resistance. Business and individual donations, volunteering, civil defence and local self-governance are all being mobilized to defeat Russia. Citizen volunteer groups have higher trust ratings, while CSOs are trusted nearly as much as Zelenskyy.⁵

One of the main lessons from our research is that a system that meaningfully integrates Ukraine's vibrant civil society, volunteer movements and communities into a state-led recovery stands the best chance of converting this emerging institutional trust into a functional recovery framework, and of ensuring the country's future political stability.

Box 1. The scale of the recovery

It is estimated that the war has already caused \$176 billion worth of direct damage to Ukraine's cities, energy grid and social services infrastructure.⁶ The average daily damage from war in terms of material stock is estimated at around \$170 million.⁷ Most of the damage has been concentrated in the housing sector, as well as in the transport, energy, commercial and industrial sectors. By early 2025, the total value of damage to social sectors alone was estimated by the World Bank at \$77.1 billion.⁸ 'Building back better' in a way that goes beyond merely reconstructing what was destroyed – much of which consisted of outdated, Soviet-era infrastructure – to create sustainable, green, resilient and digital modern facilities could cost \$524 billion over 10 years.⁹

The human and environmental costs of the war are equally devastating. They include huge displacements of people (both within Ukraine and across its borders), increased poverty, war-related mental health problems and physical injuries, and disruption and breakdowns in family relationships.

³ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2025), 'Динаміка Довіри Соціальним Інституціям у 2021-2024 Роках' [Dynamics of Trust in Social Institutions 2021-2024], 9 January 2025, <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1467&page=1>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Razumkov Center (2025), 'Оцінка ситуації в країні, довіра до соціальних інститутів, політиків, посадовців та громадських діячів, ставлення до виборів під час війни, віра в перемогу (лютий–березень 2025р)' [Assessment of situation, trust to social institutions, politicians, civic leaders, attitude to elections, confidence in victory February-March 2025], 24 March 2025, <https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/otsinka-sytuatsii-v-kraini-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-institutiv-politykiv-posadovtsiv-ta-gromadskykh-diiachiv-stavlennia-do-vyboriv-pid-chas-viiny-vira-v-peremogu-liutyiberezen-2025r>.

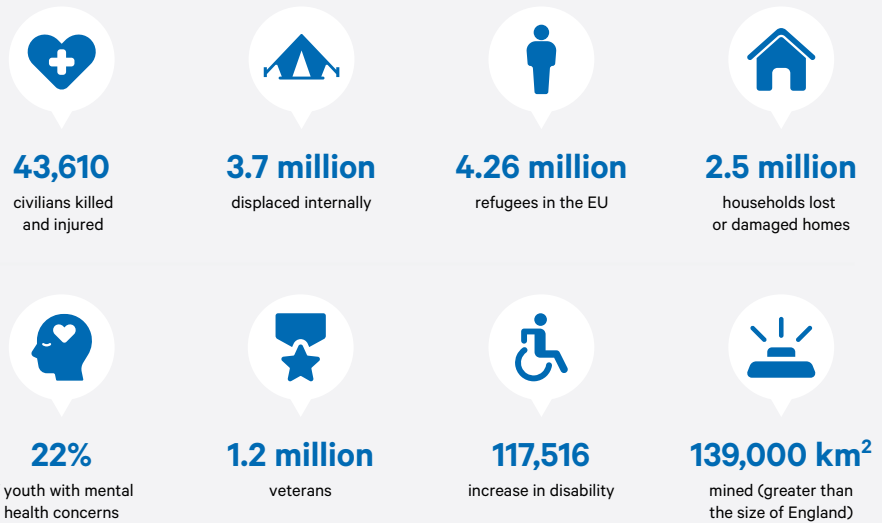
⁶ World Bank (2025), 'Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment Released', press release, 25 February 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/02/25/updated-ukraine-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-assessment-released>.

⁷ Calculation based on the damage as of December 2024.

⁸ World Bank (2025), 'Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment Released'.

⁹ Ibid.

Figure 1. The scale of war damage



Sources: Multiple sources.¹⁰

Four dimensions of recovery

Recovery will encompass four critical dimensions:

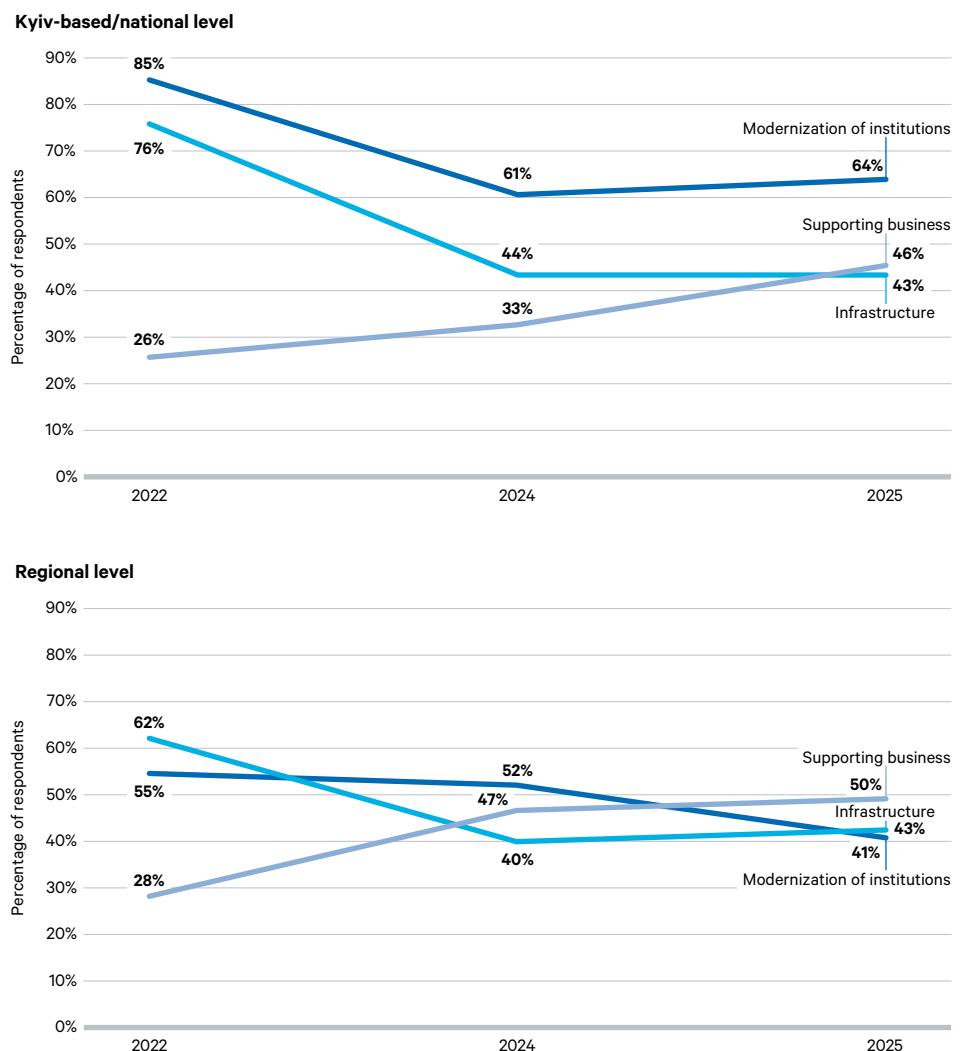
- **Rebuilding of vital national infrastructure:** housing, transport, logistics, energy, schools and hospitals.
- **Modernizing institutions at the national and local level:** through reforms to attract investment and enable EU membership, revive the economy, improve resilience and protect democratic governance.
- **Restoring individual well-being:** with a focus on health (mental and physical), prosperity, personal lives and education.

¹⁰ Statista Research Department (2025), 'Number of civilian casualties in Ukraine during Russia's invasion verified by OHCHR from February 24, 2022 to May 31, 2025', June 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1293492/ukraine-war-casualties>; USA for UNHCR (undated), 'Ukraine Emergency', <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine> (accessed 26 Jun. 2025); Eurostat (2025), 'Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine – monthly statistics', 3 June 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Temporary_protection_for_persons_fleeing_Ukraine_-_monthly_statistics (accessed 26 Jun. 2025); World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Union and United Nations (2025), *Ukraine Fourth rapid damage and needs assessment (RDNA4)*, February 2025, pp. 16 and 79, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099022025114040022/pdf/P180174-ca39eccd-ea67-4bd8-b537-ff73a675a0a8.pdf>; Zolkina, M. and Fras, M. (2024), *Understanding Ukrainian young people's current concerns, needs and hopes: Looking ahead to a future rebuilding of Ukraine*, British Council, p. 13, <https://doi.org/10.57884/HPR0-3618>; Armiya Inform (2025), 'В Україні понад 1,2 млн ветеранів: громадянське суспільство допомагає державі в їх адаптації та працевлаштуванні – Оксана Коляда' [There are more than 1.2 million veterans in Ukraine: civil society helps the state in their adaptation and employment – Oksana Kolyada], 19 February 2025, <https://armyinform.com.ua/2025/02/19/v-ukrayini-ponad-12-mln-veteraniv-gromadyanske-suspilstvo-dopomagaye-derzhavi-v-yih-adaptaciyi-ta-praczevlashtuvanni-oksana-kolyada>; UN News (2025), 'It is an elephant': Ukraine's unexploded mine problem', 5 June 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164121>.

- **Healing communities and promoting collective recovery:** through social cohesion, justice, compensation for war damages (including for victims of conflict-based sexual violence), rebuilding of public spaces, reintegration of veterans and internally displaced persons (IDPs), youth engagement, and support for the elderly.

All four tracks require the simultaneous attention of key stakeholders, including all levels of government, private sector organizations, domestic and external donors, ordinary citizens and civil society.

Figure 2. CSOs view the modernization of the country's institutions as essential to a just recovery (Question: Please select three priorities for recovery that should begin even while the war is ongoing?)



This year's Chatham House survey responses reconfirm a sharp focus among Ukrainian civil society on the need for modernization of institutions. As seen from Figure 2 above, respondents consistently highlight institutional reform as a top priority for immediate rebuilding. Sixty-four per cent of national-level CSOs and over 40 per cent of their regional-level counterparts selected institutional

modernization as a priority (see also Annex, Q6). CSOs understand that societal resilience and the success of the future recovery hinge on the quality of the country's governance. In particular, respondents connect the strengthening of the rule of law to bolstering societal resilience in wartime (see Annex, Q17). The survey overall highlights the progressive agenda of the CSO sector, which for more than a decade has actively promoted and contributed to various reforms, particularly following the 2013 Revolution of Dignity.

What are the main risks to a successful recovery?

Insecurity as the new norm

US president Donald Trump's public commitment to end the war – and to do so fast – reignited the confidence of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, in achieving his objectives. During talks in Istanbul in May 2025, Russia reiterated its maximalist territorial demands and desire to impose restrictions on Ukraine's sovereignty. There is no genuine peace process in sight. In fact, in the first half of 2025, Russia has launched an offensive, aiming to occupy the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in their entirety at a minimum. Russia's air force, meanwhile, has doubled down on attacks against Ukrainian civilians,¹¹ with April 2025 being the deadliest month in the war since September 2024.¹²

Fifty per cent of respondents to the 2025 Chatham House survey fear that a ceasefire may increase internal instability.

Ukrainians are clear-headed and pessimistic about the prospects for a durable peace settlement. Across all regions of Ukraine, 87 per cent of citizens believe that current territorial gains (Russia occupies around 18 per cent of Ukrainian territory) will not satisfy Russia's imperial appetites. According to polling by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 66 per cent of respondents see Russia as an existential threat to Ukraine – as an aggressor that wants to destroy Ukrainian identity and statehood.¹³ This heightened sense of insecurity has huge implications for Kyiv's acceptance of territorial concessions without any credible security arrangements designed jointly with its European allies. Even if the conflict were frozen along the current front lines, Russia would pose a continued threat to Ukraine, and to Europe more widely, for the foreseeable future. Constant security risks are likely to be a key feature of the recovery process as a result. Without meaningful collective security guarantees, Ukraine will remain in the permanent shadow of the Russian threat.

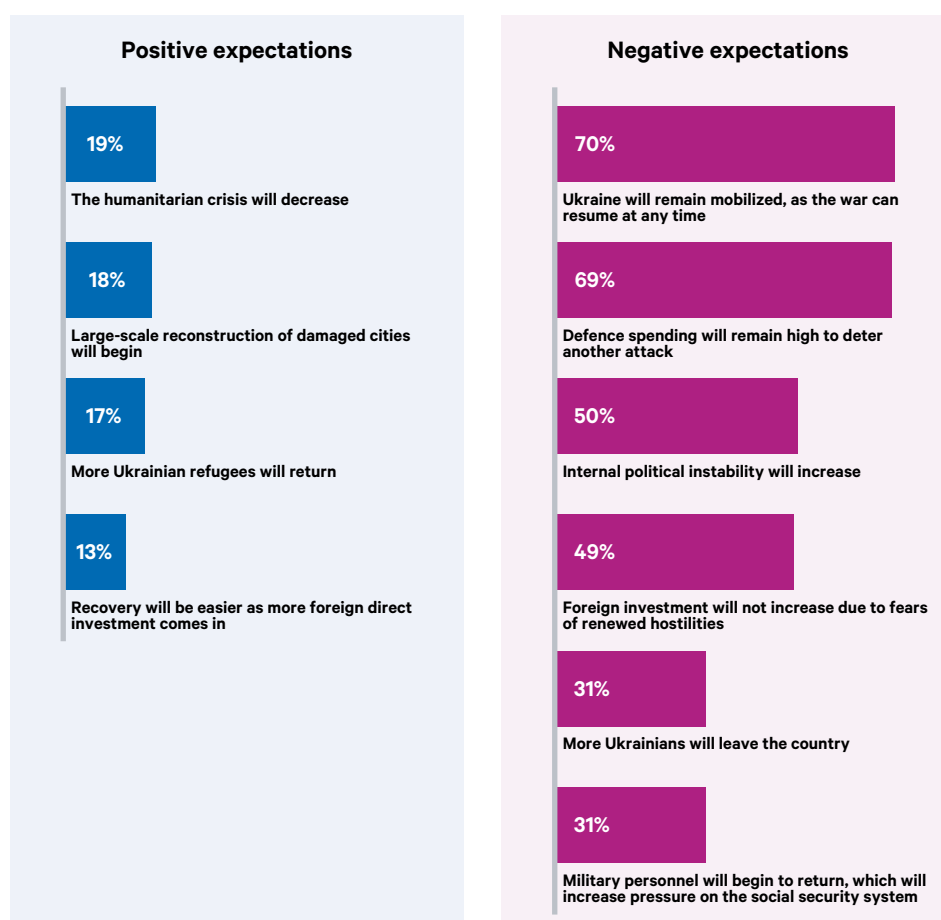
¹¹ New Europe Center (2025), 'Putin's "willingness for peace"', 29 May 2025, <https://neweurope.org.ua/en/analytiks/gotovnist-do-myru-vid-putina>.

¹² United Nations Human Rights Officer of the High Commissioner (2025), 'April the deadliest month for Ukraine's civilians since September', 8 May 2025, <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/April-the-Deadliest-Month-for-Ukraine%E2%80%99s-Civilians-Since-September>.

¹³ Kyiv International Institute for Sociology (2025), 'Яку Мету Росія Зараз Ставить Перед Собою у Війні Проти України' [What are Russia's current goals in the war against Ukraine?], 11 March 2025, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1505&page=1>.

Chatham House survey respondents fear another Russian invasion in the future. Accordingly, 70 per cent anticipate that, in the event of a ceasefire, Ukraine would need to maintain a high level of mobilization (see Figure 3, below, and Annex, Q18). These needs could compete with the requirements for funding and staffing the recovery. (Ukraine currently allocates 40 per cent of its budget to defence and maintains a 900,000-strong military.)

Figure 3. The continuation or resumption of military activity is seen as the biggest threat to the success of Ukraine's recovery (Question: What are the implications of a ceasefire on recovery (without a final peaceful settlement) for the internal situation in Ukraine?)



Risks of internal instability

Nations under threat require a strong community of citizens who share values and principles for organizing their public affairs. Ukrainians highly value justice and freedom. Opinion polling shows that the demand for justice, identified as key to stability by 40 per cent of the population, comes right after the desire for peace.¹⁴ Ukrainians also understand that unity was a rare commodity before

¹⁴ Egorova, A. (2024), 'Зберігати стійкість українцям найбільше допомагають віра в ЗСУ, родина, робота, віра та волонтерство, – дослідження Info Sapiens' [Faith in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, family, work, faith and volunteering help Ukrainians to maintain resilience the most, according to a study by Info Sapiens], Detector Media, 15 May 2024, <https://cs.detector.media/community/texts/186113/2024-05-15-zberigaty-stiykist-ukraintsyam-naybilshe-dopomagayut-vira-v-zsu-rodyna-robota-vira-ta-volonterstvo-doslidzhennya-info-sapiens>.

the war, and want to avoid similar problems in the future. History offers dark examples of loss of statehood due to divisions exploited by external enemies.¹⁵ A combination of distant and recent historical experience is creating concerns about how to bring society together and ensure that polarization does not rip apart the country's social fabric.

Social tensions due to a variety of factors – different experiences of war, rising poverty, economic hardship, and populist politics fuelled by Russian information warfare – may seriously weaken post-war Ukraine. Fifty per cent of respondents to the 2025 Chatham House survey fear that a ceasefire may increase internal instability (see Figure 3 and Annex, Q18). The Kremlin will do everything possible to create chaos and undermine the capacity of Ukrainian leaders to govern democratically.¹⁶ As part of the current push for an end to the war, Putin wants to force Ukraine into a premature, unprepared election to jeopardize the legitimacy of its leadership and create fractures.

Displacement and population loss

Ukraine faces an acute crisis of human resources. The demographic situation is alarming: Ukraine has lost nearly 10 million people in the past 30 years. The number of people needed to replenish the labour force is estimated at 4.5 million.¹⁷

One of the preconditions for future economic growth is to ensure that Ukraine can attract its displaced nationals back to the country and engage its vast diaspora worldwide. This will be difficult. A third of Chatham House survey respondents believe that, once travel restrictions for men are lifted, the number of additional Ukrainians wanting to leave the country will outnumber those seeking to return (see Figure 3 and Annex, Q18). Current estimates show a decline in the intention to return compared to the first year of war; fewer than half of Ukrainian refugees now declare such plans.¹⁸

If it is to achieve the economic growth necessary for a durable recovery, Ukraine must prioritize investing in its people at home and create strong incentives for those who want to return.¹⁹

Declining health and well-being among citizens

Veterans are one of the social groups that survey respondents associate with both resilience and societal cohesion. Nationwide, more than 60 per cent of the survey respondents see the successful integration of former soldiers into civilian life as key to strengthening resilience (see Annex, Q17). An even higher 89 per cent identify this as the most critical social issue related to recovery (see Annex, Q7).

¹⁵ Division in the last proto-state of Cossack Ukraine, the elite's lack of unity during the first republic of 1917–21, and more recently conflicts between Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko after the Orange Revolution all either led to loss of statehood or weakening of democratic consolidation and reform.

¹⁶ Parker, W. (2025), 'Fractures From Within: The Dangers of 'Peace for Ukraine'', RUSI Newsbrief, 23 May 2025, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/rusi-newsbrief/fractures-within-dangers-peace-ukraine>.

¹⁷ TVP World (2025), 'Ukraine Needs Additional 4.5 mln Workers for Post-War Recovery, Deputy PM Says', Kyiv Post, 9 February 2025, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/46828>.

¹⁸ Mykhailyshyna, D. et al. (2025), *Ukrainian refugees after three years abroad: how many and who will return?*, policy paper, Centre for Economic Strategy, <https://ces.org.ua/en/refugees-fourth-wave>.

¹⁹ Tokariuk, O. (2025), *Ukraine's fight for its people: Strategies for refugee and diaspora engagement*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784136413>.

Rebuilding lives for IDPs is also extremely important. Many lack employment, live in temporary housing and, if not supported, risk coming back to occupied territories where they will continue to face great danger. War has caused the general level of poverty to rise to a staggering 35.5 per cent.²⁰ IDPs are disproportionately more highly impacted by the economic deprivation resulting from the conflict.

A protracted war will damage the mental health of civilians and combatants alike. Research indicates that mental health has a greater impact on overall life satisfaction than either income or physical health.²¹ Our survey indicates that Ukrainians understand the need to provide an effective response: 39 per cent of CSOs nationwide said that mental health should be a priority for the recovery, with even more expressing the same preference at the local level (see Annex, Q6).

Due to both the prolonged war and growing awareness about this issue, the number of people reporting mental health concerns is rising. Estimates suggest that as much as 40–50 per cent of the population may need mental health support of various intensity,²² with IDPs, the elderly and young people the groups most in need of support. A 2024 national mental health survey showed 44 per cent of respondents reporting unsatisfactory mental health, compared to just 13 per cent in the 2023 survey.²³ Many people report exhaustion, a state of tension and fear as negatively impacting them. Interestingly, people believe that all Ukrainians need mental health support, which suggests that stigma around the issue is decreasing.²⁴

All conflicts are, of course, different, but studies into combat stress elsewhere offer insights into what to expect in post-war Ukraine. Research from the UK indicates that, after 42 days of active combat, one-third of soldiers may have a mental breakdown and one-third will not recover.

The psychological effects of war take effect over a long period, and not all problems will hit communities immediately after mass demobilization.²⁵ Initially, the number of veterans seeking help for mental health problems may be relatively small. The UK-based charity Combat Stress points out that veterans will typically seek help anywhere between two and 14 years after demobilization.²⁶ But as veterans rebuild their lives and major life events happen, Ukraine may see a substantial increase in demand for mental health treatment and support. The country must be ready to provide the necessary resources at that moment.

²⁰ World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Union and United Nations (2025), *Ukraine Fourth rapid damage and needs assessment (RDNA4)*, p. 67.

²¹ Layard, R. and de Neve, J.-E. (2023), *Wellbeing: Science and Policy*, p. 130, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009298957>.

²² CIVITTA and Barrier Free (undated), 'Потреби населення у послугах сфери психічного здоров'я та кращі практики надання послуг у розвинених країнах' [Needs of the population in mental health services and best practices of service provision in developed countries], https://mva.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/uploaded-files/_потреб_та_світовий_досвід.pdf.

²³ How Are You? (2025), 'Результати соціологічного дослідження «Психічне здоров'я та ставлення українців до психологічної допомоги під час війни» [Results of public opinion polling Mental Health and Attitude of Ukrainians to Mental health support during the war], 31 January 2025, <https://howareu.com/news/ukraintsi-vidchuvaiut-stres-i-tryvohu-ale-obyraiut-konstruktivni-kopinhovi-strategii-reahuvannia-na-tsi-stany>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Author's interview with Dr Walter Bussuttil, King's College London, 21 May 2025.

²⁶ Hoorn, L. A. et al. (2013), 'Iraq and Afghanistan veteran presentations to Combat Stress, since 2003', *Occupational Medicine*, 63(3), pp. 238–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqt017>.

Finally, the young generation of Ukrainians is struggling to cope with the war. Fear, instability, worsening economic opportunities and lack of access to housing are among the consequences most affecting young people. Online education is a necessity – particularly in front-line cities – but this also creates a significant educational gap with previous generations and could lead to a loss of social and communication skills.

Despite this, young Ukrainians appear to have a positive overall outlook on the future, with 60 per cent expressing feelings of hope according to a British Council report.²⁷ Fifty-one per cent of Chatham House survey participants in 2025 believe that helping the wartime generation of young people to access quality education is key to the success of the recovery (see Annex, Q7). One in every four teenagers is considering emigration, mainly driven by a desire for self-realization, better education and curiosity about the world. Interestingly, security threats are at the bottom of their emigration motives.²⁸

Meanwhile, one-third of existing Ukrainian refugees were under 18 when they fled with their parents.²⁹ They will require a special approach to incentivize their return, having built lives elsewhere – this task could be a focus for the newly created Ministry of National Unity.³⁰

Lack of finance

The enormous deficit in human resources is compounded by a shortage of finance. War is expensive. The Ukrainian military is spending an average of \$142 million per day.³¹ The state spends nearly all of its fiscal revenues on defence, while social services and rebuilding costs are mainly covered by external funding – to the tune of around \$40 billion annually.³² The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the EU's Ukraine Facility, the G7's Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) scheme (which draws on immobilized Russian assets), and a group of states forming the Ukraine Donors Platform (UDP) are the main sources of such funding.³³

For this reason, the funding supply available for recovery is much lower than that allocated to immediate needs. In 2025, Ukraine's immediate needs were calculated at \$17.3 billion, including a funding gap of almost \$10 billion.³⁴ To date, according to approximate calculations, Ukraine has been able to meet only \$13.2 billion of its recovery needs, representing a mere 7.5 per cent of the cost of direct war-related damage.³⁵

²⁷ Zolkina and Fras (2024), *Understanding Ukrainian young people's current concerns, needs and hopes*.

²⁸ Shymansky, V. et al. (2025), *Індекс майбутнього: професійні очікування та розвиток підлітків в Україні [Index of the Future]*, Olena Zelenska Foundation, <https://zelenskafoundation.org/uk/future-index>.

²⁹ Statistics Netherlands (2025), '4.7 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe', 9 June 2025, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2025/19/4-7-million-refugees-from-ukraine-across-europe>.

³⁰ Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine (undated), 'Головне' [Homepage], <https://unity.gov.ua>.

³¹ Zanuda, A. (2025) 'Чи витримає економіка України ще рік війни' [Can Ukraine's Economy Endure Another Year of War?], BBC News Ukraine, 30 January 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cj48y778z4wo>.

³² Ministry of Finance of Ukraine (2025), 'Development partners provided Ukraine with over \$41 billion in budget support in 2024', 2 January 2025, https://mof.gov.ua/en/news/development_partners_that_provided_ukraine_with_over_41_billion_in_budget_support_in_2024_and_the_allocation_of_these_funds-4974.

³³ Ukraine Donor Platform (undated), 'Members', <https://ukrainedorplatform.com/membership/members>.

³⁴ Ukraine Recovery Priorities, 2025. Presentation by the Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories at the Wilton Park Conference, Reform priorities for an inclusive economic recovery in Ukraine, 10–12 March 2025.

³⁵ World Bank et al. (2024), *Ukraine third rapid damage and needs assessment (RDNA3): February 2022 – December 2023*, February 2024, p. 128, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099021324115085807/pdf/P1801741bea12c012189ca16d95d8c2556a.pdf>.

This gap may become wider. In 2026, Ukraine may face a funding gap of up to \$23 billion if international assistance falls short; the prospect has already prompted the government to call for long-term financing for Ukraine to be met through the confiscation of \$300 billion in frozen Russian central bank assets.³⁶

To date, according to approximate calculations, Ukraine has been able to meet only \$13.2 billion of its recovery needs, representing a mere 7.5 per cent of the cost of direct war-related damage.

In 2025, the Ukrainian government adopted a new public investment management (PIM) policy to deliver reconstruction. Ministries and regional authorities are preparing a set of reconstruction projects that will be placed in a single project pipeline, hosted on the Digital Reconstruction Ecosystem for Accountable Management (DREAM) platform. By mid-May 2025, this pipeline included projects totalling UAH 1.6 trillion (\$38.3 billion), of which only 9 per cent are backed by specific funding pledges.³⁷ In the area of social recovery (referring to projects related to education and social protection, for example), the funding gap is \$1.8 billion.³⁸

At the community level, the most pressing recovery needs are currently financed by local budgets (68 per cent), international grants (51 per cent) and charitable organizations (32 per cent). Allocations from the central budget account for 49 per cent of recovery funding.³⁹ The European Investment Bank is a rare international financial institution (IFI) that funds local actors to swiftly rebuild essential infrastructure, such as water systems and energy-efficient facilities. It has allocated over €2 billion of finance to various Ukrainian towns and cities since 2022.⁴⁰

Civil society actors are acutely aware of the lack of finance for recovery. Forty-three per cent of Chatham House survey respondents nationwide pinpoint this as one of the major risks for recovery (see Annex, Q8). Other research indicates that 42 per cent of CSOs assess their financial situation as unsatisfactory.⁴¹ The sector is facing a looming funding crisis due to the effective dismantling of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has been one of the largest sources of funding for development-focused CSOs. The shockwave caused by these cuts will be felt strongly in 2025, as around \$2.9 billion of that development

³⁶ Vinokurov, Y. (2025), 'Євросоюз допоможе? Звідки Україна візьме трильйон гривень на війну' [Will the European Union help? Where will Ukraine get a trillion hryvnias for the war], *Ekonomichna Pravda*, 30 May 2025, <https://epravda.com.ua/finances/yevrosoyuz-dopomozhe-zvidki-ukrajina-vizme-trilyon-griven-na-viynu-807336>.

³⁷ Government of Ukraine (undated), 'Metrics', DREAM Analytics, Database, [https://bi.dream.gov.ua/?select=_Language/\[UK\]/#/](https://bi.dream.gov.ua/?select=_Language/[UK]/#/) (accessed 16 May 2025).

³⁸ Ukraine Recovery Priorities, 2025. Presentation by the Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories at the Wilton Park Conference, Reform priorities for an inclusive economic recovery in Ukraine, 10–12 March 2025.

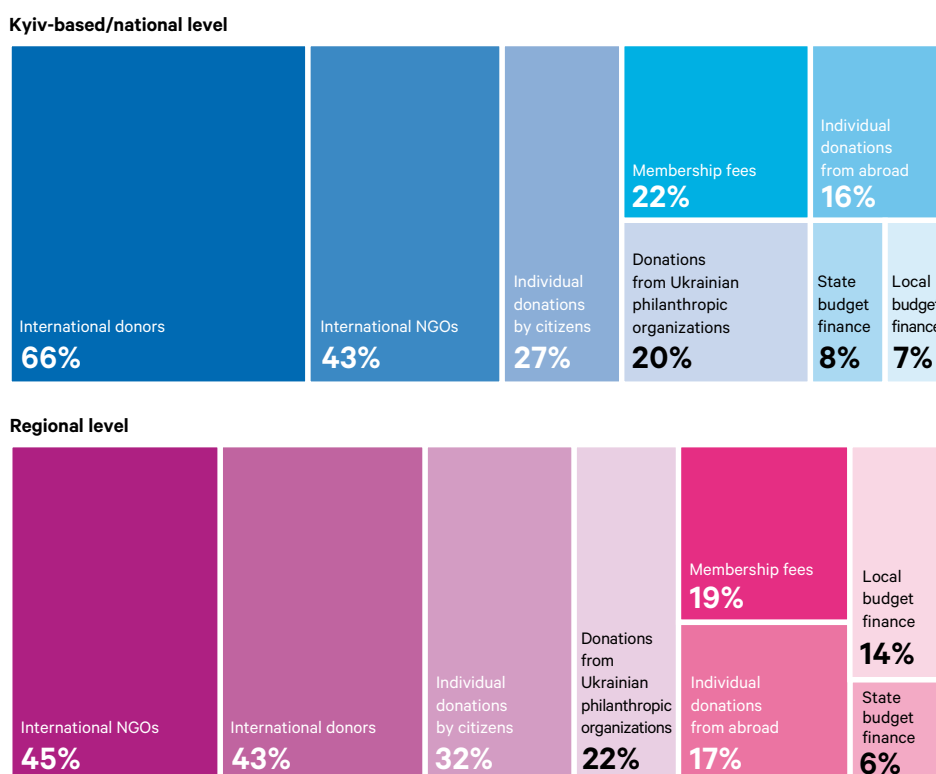
³⁹ Ukrinform (2024), 'Основне джерело фінансування проектів відновлення у громадах – місцеві бюджети' [Local budgets are the main source of recovery funding in communities], *Ukrinform*, 26 June 2024, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-vidbudova/3878227-osnovne-dzerelo-finansuvanna-proektiv-vidnovlennu-gromadah-miscevi-budzeti.html>.

⁴⁰ European Investment Bank (undated), 'The EIB stands with Ukraine', <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/topics/eib-solidarity-ukraine?sortColumn=StartDate&sortDir=desc&pageNumber=0&itemPerPage=3&pageable=true&la=EN&deLa=EN&tags=ukraine-solidarity&orTags=true>.

⁴¹ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], report, 3 December 2024, https://zagoriy.foundation/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/02_12_2_doslidzhennya_sektoru_blagodijnosti.pdf.

assistance is no longer available. This means that many CSOs and UN agencies that work in local communities will struggle to deliver humanitarian, development and reform programmes in Ukraine,⁴² as it is unlikely that other funders will be able to step in to replace that amount of funding.

Figure 4. Ukrainian non-profit organizations remain dependent on external sources for funding (Question: How does your CSO currently finance recovery projects?)



The financial fragility of the sector is driven to a large extent by over-reliance on foreign aid. CSOs responding to the Chatham House survey indicated that international donors and international NGOs (INGOs) were the main sources of funding for their recovery work (see Figure 4, above, and Annex, Q5). For Kyiv-based/national-level groups, 66 per cent identified international donors as their main funders. The survey shows that organizations working on housing and school repairs, those documenting war crimes and those dealing with the environmental consequences of war are the most dependent on external finance. Regionally focused groups receive slightly more contributions from domestic funders, for instance in the form of direct donations by citizens and local philanthropical groups or individuals.

⁴² ACAPS (2025), 'Ukraine: Implications of the US foreign aid cuts on humanitarian, development, and government-led programmes', 31 March 2025, https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20250331_ACAPS_Thematic_report_Ukraine_Implications_of_US_foreign_aid_cuts.pdf#:~:text=Between%202022%20and%202024%2C%20the%20US%20had%2Cfunding%20to%20Ukraine%20in%202025%20%28OIG%2012/02/2025%29.

How can Ukraine ensure an inclusive, citizen-led recovery?

A recovery process that channels the energy from society, including from CSOs, to viable local self-government would be transformational. It would enable the Ukrainian state to create a resilient welfare system based on genuine collaborative governance, instead of thinking about citizens only as consumers, workers or recipients of social services.

An inclusive recovery is one in which key groups impacted by policies and funding decisions are consulted and engaged in delivering recovery outputs. Such a process would allow citizens to make decisions together with different levels of government to generate positive change and contribute to policy implementation. Communities would have a say in charting their own future and have the resources to put their plans into practice. The goal should be to create a process that is trusted, fair (across groups and regions), transparent, and co-managed by citizens and communities. In Ukraine, 'inclusion' is often viewed solely as a matter of accessibility for people with disabilities or as a consultation process with civil society. To have a tangible benefit, the concept needs to be applied much more deeply to every phase of the recovery: from planning to selection, delivery, monitoring and coordination.

The responses to our 2025 survey demonstrate that CSOs are ready and willing to contribute to much-needed social cohesion and resilience, conduct independent civic monitoring, and ensure that the recovery considers the needs of vulnerable groups (see Annex, Q15). Other studies also confirm the agility and powerful contribution of civil society in responding to the circumstances of war.⁴³

Citizens are the country's main source of resilience and mutual aid

Persevering in a crisis can be paradoxically empowering, and various disaster studies point to increases in civic-mindedness under such circumstances.⁴⁴ In Ukraine, civil society serves as an important vehicle for generating new resources and ideas, and for delivering immediate relief. Civil society remains active in contributing to recovery, with 69 per cent of Chatham House survey respondents reporting recovery-related activity in 2025 (see Annex, Q2). A slight decrease is visible at the regional level, with the rate of self-reported activity declining from 76 per cent in 2024 to 62 per cent in 2025.⁴⁵ Anecdotally, this downward movement is attributed to burnout, migration and disillusionment with current forms of engagement.

The crisis of war and the influx of humanitarian assistance initially led to significant growth in the civil society sector (see Box 2, below). The number of newly registered

⁴³ Other studies confirm the agility of civil society in responding to war circumstances: see Volintiru, C. and Kravets, V. (2025), *Local Stakeholders and Ukraine's resilience*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, April 2025, [https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Volintiru & Kravets - Ukraine stakeholders - report.pdf](https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Volintiru%20Kravets%20Ukraine%20stakeholders%20report.pdf).

⁴⁴ The classic text for disaster studies is James, W. (1906), 'On some mental effects of the earthquake'.

⁴⁵ Full set of data for 2024 can be found here: Lutsevych, O. (2024), 'Ukraine's wartime recovery and the role of civil society: Chatham House survey of Ukrainian CSOs – 2024 update', London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/2024-06-05-ukraine-wartime-recovery-role-civil-society-lutsevych.pdf>.

charities reached to 6,367 in 2022, an eightfold increase on 2021.⁴⁶ Not all these new organizations will survive or remain active, but many will be critically important for Ukraine's resilience and reform.

One of the strongest aspects of Ukraine's social capital is the culture of mutual aid that has developed during the war. Fifty-nine per cent of regional CSOs surveyed by Chatham House in 2025 reported providing basic humanitarian aid and various social services (see Annex, Q4). This aid is usually aimed at helping the most vulnerable groups: IDPs, the elderly, children and those living near the front lines (see Annex, Q3). It is estimated that around 13 per cent of the population receives support from charities, and nearly 70 per cent of beneficiaries are either elderly people in rural areas or the unemployed.⁴⁷ Findings from the recent UN Development Programme (UNDP)-supported RESCORE study confirm that the level of mutual trust in Ukraine is high, with 83 per cent of people stating that they can rely on their community or neighbours for support.⁴⁸

Box 2. The emergence of new charitable groups since 2022

Groups such as Dnipro's Rise of Ukraine emerged in reaction to the invasion of 2022.⁴⁹ All four of the group's funders came from the business sector. Rise of Ukraine started out by producing bulletproof vests for soldiers, but within two to three months it saw the torrent of IDPs from war-affected regions and transitioned to running humanitarian missions for the displaced, eventually providing 1,000 assistance kits (containing clothing, food, hygiene products and so on) a day.

Over time, however, it became clear that humanitarian aid alone was not enough. Many people had bigger needs, such as finding work, managing problems with childcare and so on. As the Ukrainian army became better equipped by the state, the charity stopped its military aid and refocused its efforts on IDPs, veterans and children, as well as on supporting shelters and hospitals. Yana Paladieva, one of Rise of Ukraine's founders, says that this is a fast-paced and volatile environment. In response, the charity's approach is to study and adapt its interventions where they are most needed.

Kharkiv's Okhtyrka group began as a local street culture club that was regenerating a factory for use as a skate park. After the outbreak of war, the club's members quickly shifted to delivering humanitarian assistance. Large numbers of people had fled the area, with many vulnerable and elderly people left behind. Club members distribute humanitarian aid from a central hub directly to elderly women by bicycle.

The value of citizen activity such as this in a crisis is priceless. As the above examples demonstrate, civic networks can adapt and mobilize more quickly than official state institutions in response to the urgency of the moment.

⁴⁶ Ednannia (2023), 'Громадянське суспільство України в умовах війни-2022' [Ukraine's Civil Society in the Context of War-2022], <https://ednannia.ua/news/nashi-novini/12447-gromadyanske-suspilstvo-ukrajini-v-umovakh-vijni-2022-zvit-za-rezultatami-doslidzhennya>.

⁴⁷ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], p. 110.

⁴⁸ Biloskurskiy, O. and Zurabashvili, T. (2024), *Social Cohesion in Ukraine: Key trends based on reSCORE 2024 – with comparative insights from reSCORE 2023 and score 2021*, United States Agency for International Development, The Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (Seed), United Nations Development Programme, 9 December 2024, <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/social-cohesion-ukraine-key-trends-based-rescore-2024>.

⁴⁹ Rise of Ukraine (undated), 'Charity Fund "Rise of Ukraine"', <https://riseofukraine.com>.

At the structural level, city administrations are also helping community groups in times of need. For example, Kyiv City Council transferred funds to 10 formerly Russian-occupied communities to support restoration after their liberation in 2022. Thanks to mutual assistance and cooperation, Ukrainian municipalities have transferred over €10 million to former occupied communities.⁵⁰ The national platform Cohesive Communities was launched by UNDP to bolster horizontal cooperation, solidarity and unity in wartime.

Despite the economic hardships, Ukraine's domestic giving has remained consistently high during the three years of full-scale war. Chatham House survey data indicate that around half of CSOs receive money from either the Ukrainian philanthropic sector or individual donations (see Figure 4). Wider polling shows that 85 per cent of Ukrainians reported giving money to charity during 2024, with many donating on a monthly basis.⁵¹

As might be expected, support for the armed forces dominates the list of causes supported. In 2022–23, Ukrainians and foreigners donated almost UAH 34 billion (approximately \$1 billion) to the accounts of the National Bank of Ukraine and the country's three largest charitable funds – UNITED 24, Come Back Alive and the Serhiy Prytula Charity.⁵² Individual philanthropists, meanwhile, tend to focus on social recovery. For example, Victor Pinchuk – estimated to be the second richest person in Ukraine – has pledged to open 25 mental health centres for veterans and their families, serving over 100,000 people.⁵³

But what matters is not just charity. Engagement in the provision of aid to fellow citizens is a powerful factor for well-being. Community networks and social ties generated by organizations raise the average satisfaction in the community and benefit both members and volunteers.⁵⁴ Members of CSOs interviewed for this paper mentioned how assistance by peers – often coming from people who themselves have suffered displacement or are veterans – is more powerful and effective than official handouts. The relatable experience of war and forced migration brings empathy into the picture, something that state social services often lack. IDPs who resettle in the west of Ukraine can help the host communities design the best support programmes and educate local government officials (see Box 3).

⁵⁰ Association of Ukrainian Cities (2023), *Best Practices of Municipalities in Wartime*, International Republican Institute, <https://auc.org.ua/novyna/best-practices-municipalities-wartime-0>.

⁵¹ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *2025 Комплексне Дослідження сфери благодійності [Complex Research of Charitable Sector]*, https://zagoriy.foundation/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/02_12_2_doslidzhennya_sektoru_blagodijnosti.pdf.

⁵² Opendatabot (2025), '28% more donations were collected by the three largest funds in 2024', 24 February 2025, <https://opendatabot.ua/en/analytics/donates-in-war-2024>.

⁵³ *Ukrainska Pravda* (2025), 'У Дніпрі відкрили перший центр ментального здоров'я всеукраїнської мережі ПОВЕРНЕННЯ' [The first mental health centre of the all-Ukrainian RETURN network was opened in Dnipro], 16 May 2025, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/u-dnipri-vidkrili-pershiy-centr-mentalnogo-zdorov-ya-vseukrajinskoji-merezhi-povernennya-308101>.

⁵⁴ Layard and de Neve (2023), *Wellbeing: Science and Policy*, p. 130.

Box 3. How IDP activists are providing insight into the needs of the displaced

At the start of the war, the NGO Right to Protect (which, with over 700 employees, is one of the largest social and human rights groups in Ukraine)⁵⁵ worked hard with host cities to deliver an effective humanitarian response for millions of people fleeing from the east.

Olena Grekova, an IDP herself from Luhansk, has moved five times since 2014. When she arrived in Lviv in 2022, she found it difficult to establish cooperation with the oblast authorities, as there was mistrust. Over time, the authorities noticed that Right to Protect could anticipate problems owing to its in-depth knowledge of its beneficiaries from after the first Russian invasion in 2014. The organization had learned from that experience that people fleeing from the east would be vulnerable and mentally traumatized and would have no documents. Olena became an active member of the coordination council for civilian population support. It includes CSOs and the Department of Social Services to best guide and support people in crisis.

Affordable housing is one of the key problems for IDPs restarting life in a new community. Olena worked in the Lviv oblast to convince communities to invest their local budgets into the state-run Homeowner Programme. The programme was set up by the national government as part of the Fund for Social Investment and provides veterans and their families living in rural areas with mortgages of up to UAH 300,000 at an interest rate of 3 per cent for 20 years. To attract qualified talent (teachers, doctors and so on) to move into smaller communities, Olena convinced one city in Lviv oblast to allocate part of the local budget for these subsidized mortgages, arguing that this investment would eventually return to the community. In this way, communities could channel their resources into the existing mechanism to attract human capital.

Seventy-one per cent of IDPs are unemployed⁵⁶ and live on a subsistence wage, often in temporary housing provided by local authorities. Communities are not offering much support in finding jobs for them. Many are unaware of the National Centre of Employment programme that provides a six-month salary if a person is engaged in 'socially beneficial' activities (a definition that includes, among other things, assisting those with special educational needs, the elderly and the vulnerable). Olena promoted this idea in several communities, enabling displaced people to access some form of income by providing mutual aid and helping communities to address the shortage of key workers for assisted living.

Similarly, many heads of local communities knew little about the international register of destroyed or damaged property.⁵⁷ The register accumulates information for the purpose of supporting reparations to victims. Some authorities had discouraged people from registering losses, under the impression that no compensation would be available. Olena worked to provide greater information about the register to local authorities and to victims.

These are just a few examples of how groups like Right to Protect are helping to build capacity among local communities for self-governance, and contributing to a just recovery for the victims of war.

⁵⁵ Right to Protection (undated), 'Right to Protection Charitable Fund', <https://r2p.org.ua/en>.

⁵⁶ Right to Protection Charitable Foundation (2024), 'Employment of IDPs: Needs and Opportunities', 30 January 2024, <https://r2p.org.ua/en/page/employment-of-idps-needs-and-opportunities>.

⁵⁷ Register of Damage for Ukraine (RD4U) and Council of Europe (undated), 'About the Register', <https://rd4u.coe.int/en/about-the-register>.

Weak capacity at local government level is an ongoing risk to the success of recovery: 39 per cent of CSOs surveyed by Chatham House nationwide cited the lack of capacity as a risk. Although the level of concern has decreased slightly compared to our first survey in 2022, local government capacity still remains the third highest non-security risk for respondents at the regional level (see Annex, Q8).

That lack of official capacity makes the contribution of CSOs especially significant in small communities, where resources are severely depleted due to the war. This is evident in the social sector, where there is an acute shortage of social workers. Due to an increase in the size and number of vulnerable groups in need of assistance, Ukraine needs five or six times more social workers than it currently has to meet demand.⁵⁸

How are CSOs and community groups currently involved?

CSOs are in dialogue with government on policy development

National and local governments are already beginning to recognize the vibrancy and commitment of Ukraine's civil society. At the national level, there is dialogue with think-tanks and associations on developing new policies and strategic documents. For example, a major push for transparency in the construction industry by anti-corruption CSOs led to the adoption of legislation that requires the disclosure of all estimated costs of construction materials via the procurement platform Prozorro. This transparency will apply to fortification, reconstruction and infrastructure projects, and reduces opportunities for embezzlement and price manipulation by making the costs and process open to monitoring and increasing the risks of exposure for anyone seeking to abuse the system.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Ukrainian ministers are engaging independent think-tanks, academia and large CSOs to contribute to policy development. Since the war began, Ukrainian civil society has contributed a number of initiatives, including:

- The EU cluster 1 roadmaps;
- A new employment strategy (ongoing);
- A new veteran policy;
- A mental health concept;
- A demographic strategy; and
- The Ukraine Plan for the EU facility.

⁵⁸ Porkhun, T. (2023), 'в Україні потрібно в п'ять-шість разів більше, ніж є зараз, – Уляна Токарева, заступниця міністра соціалістики' [Ukraine needs five to six times more social workers than it has now, says Ulyana Tokareva, Deputy Minister of Social Policy], *Sotsial'na Sprava*, 16 July 2023, <https://socsprava.com.ua/soczpraczivnykiv-v-ukrayini-potribno-v-pyat-shist-raziv-bilshe-nizh-ye-zaraz-ulyana-tokaryeva-zastupnyczya-ministra-soczpolityky>.

⁵⁹ ANTAC News (2024), 'Parliament adopted the law on opening cost estimates in construction procurement', Anti-Corruption Action Centre, 19 September 2024, <https://antac.org.ua/en/news/parliament-adopted-the-law-on-opening-cost-estimates-in-construction-procurement>.

Many of these documents follow a whole-of-society approach. For example, the new mental health model makes mental health a cross-cutting policy and encourages a community-based approach. It recognizes the impact of cultural, environmental and social factors, and aims to address them at the community level.⁶⁰ Ukraine may well become the first country in Europe to adopt a whole-of-society approach to mental health as a result.

Similarly, several veterans' rights CSOs were engaged in developing the government's new veterans policy. Those organizations report good-quality cooperation with the Ministry of Veterans. The limiting issue is that these documents often remain no more than declarations, unsupported by funding allocations or state capacity for delivery. Indeed, Ukraine has adopted 333 national strategic documents including 102 strategies and 98 plans, with over 600 goals – more than half of them labelled as 'strategic'.⁶¹ However, fewer than 6 per cent of these documents specify any concrete financial commitments from the state budget, leaving over 94 per cent of interventions without defined sources of funding.⁶²

Despite these tentative efforts at engagement, scepticism remains about how effective the new strategies will be, and often people and organizations are unaware of centrally planned interventions. For example, a recent business survey revealed that 85 per cent of companies were unaware of the state compensation scheme for adapting businesses to the needs of people with disabilities.⁶³

CSOs surveyed by Chatham House reflect these misgivings over the quality of this engagement at the national level. Only 16 per cent of national-level CSOs surveyed consider their participation in various working groups to be efficient (see Annex, Q10). For example, the process around devising the rule-of-law roadmap for EU integration lacked proper deliberation with independent experts. As a result, the document fails to address a fundamental problem with the current justice system – its deep politicization. CSOs working to strengthen the rule of law point to other examples, including major shortcomings in the reform of the State Bureau of Investigations, a failure to appoint new judges to the Supreme Court, and the absence of a transparent, competitive process for the selection of the Prosecutor General.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ How Are U? (undated), *Система у сфері психічного здоров'я та психосоціальної підтримки в Україні: цільова модель 2.0* [Mental health and psychosocial support system of Ukraine: target model 2.0], 'How are U?' All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme, <https://howareu.com/static-objects/howareu/media/Posibnuki/2024-06-06 ЦМВР 2.0.pdf>.

⁶¹ Author's interview with decentralization expert, online, 17 April 2025.

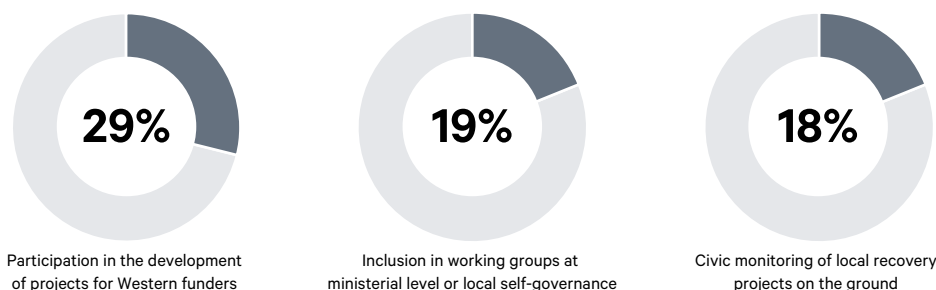
⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ SUP (2025), 'Чи готові українські бізнеси створювати інклюзивне робоче середовище – дослідження OIX [Are Ukrainian businesses ready to create an inclusive work environment – OIX study]', 24 January 2025, <https://sup.org.ua/blog/doslidzhennia-olx>.

⁶⁴ Anti-Corruption Action Centre and DEJURE Foundation (2025), '529 priorities instead of reforms: how the rule of law roadmap replaced real change', *European Pravda*, 9 June 2025, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/articles/2025/06/9/7213339>.

Figure 5. Civil society is largely dissatisfied with the level of involvement in recovery (Question: How would you rate the efficiency of existing formats for involving civil society in recovery? [top three responses])

All survey respondents



The role of parliament as a place of deliberative democracy has weakened during the war. Only 9 per cent of national-level CSOs consider their engagement in and contribution to the legislative process to be efficient (see Annex, Q10).

CSOs are helping communities to design plans for rebuilding

At the local level, CSOs have already been involved in both planning and delivery of recovery-related projects. In response to our survey, 46 per cent of national-level CSOs and 33 per cent of regional groups reported cooperation with local governments in drafting either recovery and development plans or comprehensive recovery programmes in 2025 (see Annex, Q3). Indeed, other sources indicate that more than half of the communities that adopted such plans engaged with civil society and citizens in the process.⁶⁵ In parallel, approximately 200 communities (out of 1,469) are working on comprehensive recovery programmes.⁶⁶ Where donor-funded projects are involved at the local level, they often make efforts to introduce genuine engagement, poll citizens and publish recovery plans online.⁶⁷

Overall, however, the 2025 Chatham House survey indicates that CSO engagement in planning on the local level appears to have declined over the past year. The share of regional-level respondents reporting involvement fell from 47 per cent of the

⁶⁵ Ednannia (2023), 'Тромадянське суспільство бере участь у 24 із 27 сферах реалізації проєктів відновлення. Що ще показало дослідження ініціатив?' [Civil society is involved in 24 out of 27 areas of reconstruction projects. What else did the study of initiatives show?], July 2023, <https://ednannia.ua/news/nashi-novini/12521-gromadyanske-suspilstvo-bere-uchast-u-24-iz-27-sferakh-realizatsiji-proektiv-vidnovlennya-shcho-shche-pokazalo-doslidzhennya-initsiativ>.

⁶⁶ Press Service of the Staff of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2025), 'Громади обмінялися успішним досвідом розвитку та ініціюють створення платформи для обміну кращих практик – Комітет з питань організації державної влади провів тренінговий семінар на тему: "Відновлення та розвиток громад: успішні практики та обмін досвідом"' [Municipalities exchanged successful development experience and initiated the creation of a platform for the exchange of best practices – the Committee on the Organization of Public Power held a training seminar on the topic: "Recovery and development of communities: successful practices and exchange of experience"], press release, 19 February 2025, https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/news_kom/258801.html.

⁶⁷ Rehional'ne vidnovlennya (2025), '193 проєкти на 5 586 млн грн: результати роботи над стратегіями розвитку п'ятих громад' [193 projects worth UAH 5,586 million: results of work on development strategies of five communities], 24 February 2025, <https://vidbudovagromad.in.ua/news/193-proyekti-na-5-586-mln-grn-rezultati-roboti-nad-strategiyami-rozvitku-pyato-h-gromad>.

total in 2024 to just 33 per cent in 2025. This fall could be attributed to wartime centralization, reduced funding, a lack of clarity around the precise recovery process, and an absence of viable mechanisms for local participatory democracy.

In 2025, the national government introduced legislation intended to strengthen local democracy. The new bill provides a mandate for community authorities to update their governing statutes, improve responsiveness to petitions, strengthen public reporting, and engage citizens in both local budgetary planning and delivery processes.⁶⁸ It is hoped that this bill will encourage greater citizen participation in local democracy and recovery initiatives.

Currently, the preparation of official planning documents creates a lot of work and discussion but generates little tangible output. This is largely due to fragmented legislation, regulatory contradictions and competition between different planning instruments. Local communities are further confused due to the vague definition of what constitutes a 'recovery territory'. Central authorities define such territories as places where there is a 15 per cent decrease in population, high unemployment, a decrease in tax income and a 10 per cent rise in IDP arrivals. However, this definition covers nearly all of Ukraine and therefore fails to identify priority areas for reconstruction.⁶⁹

Regional CSOs state that, presently, the most effective way of engaging with local government is through the development of projects for Western donors – who are the main external source of funding at the community level for rebuilding projects. Given the lack of human resources available (see above), CSOs often take responsibility for generating projects and for attracting external resources from bilateral donors and IFIs.

In smaller communities, CSO support is especially relevant. For example, Rise of Ukraine helped the Tokmak community to secure funding from the World Bank for a water well that supplies drinking water to three villages. Elsewhere, CSOs are assisting in preparations for more complicated projects for loans under the European Investment Bank.

Right after the liberation of Bucha, when the city's council was incapacitated, a non-profit project office run by the Institute of Sustainable Development of Communities (ISDC) attracted around \$1.5 million in external funding for reconstruction.⁷⁰ This helped to fill the void during the crisis, until governance was restored. As the municipality restored its operations and established its own project office, the ISDC refocused its work on citizen participatory practices, innovation and the promotion of digital solutions for communities.

⁶⁸ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2025), 'Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо народовладдя на рівні місцевого самоврядування' [On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding Democracy at the Local Government Level], Document 3703-IX, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3703-IX#Text>.

⁶⁹ Cabinet Ministers of Ukraine (2023), 'Про затвердження порядків з питань відновлення та розвитку регіонів і територіальних громад' [On Approval of Procedures for the Restoration and Development of Regions and Territorial Communities], Document 731-2023-p, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/731-2023-%D0%BF#Text>.

⁷⁰ Author's interview with Mykhailyna Skoryk, founder, Institute of Sustainable Development of Communities, online, 23 May 2025.

CSOs are providing community-based support

One flourishing area of social recovery is the growth of community hubs, many of which are involved in vibrant urban planning processes. Often an extension of a local library or cultural centre, such hubs bring people together to discuss the future, host cultural events and organize volunteer efforts to aid the army. Specialized hubs for veterans are also emerging. These spaces are especially valuable, as a national survey on mental health suggested that 65 per cent of Ukrainians reported feeling lonely.⁷¹

Often supported by Kyiv-based CSOs or more experienced regional groups, the revitalization of these spaces incorporates the principles of accessibility and diversity. CEDOS, an independent think-tank and urban bureau, works on social and spatial development. As part of its New European Bauhaus programme, it engages with 20 small communities ('small' being defined as those with 100,000 or fewer inhabitants) to set up Centres of Community Rebuilding. Other groups, like Rozkvit and ReStart Ukraine, work to facilitate community planning, introduce new technologies for urban rebuilding and empower people at the grassroots level. Kharkiv-based Urban Reform⁷² produced a vision for rebuilding Okhtyrka, a small town located 30 km from the Russian border. The organization consulted with 100 of the town's citizens to learn about the community and improve the partnership between citizens and local government. The primary value of this and other platforms like it lies in facilitating dialogue and demonstrating the benefits of engagement.⁷³

CSOs are actively monitoring recovery-related activities

Finally, civil society is organizing to monitor anti-corruption efforts related to recovery work and ensure that construction is both compliant with 'build better' principles and corruption-free. Eighteen per cent of our survey respondents nationwide view this activity as an effective method of engagement in recovery (see Annex, Q10). One of the most visible coalitions is Big Recovery Portal, a network of 35 regional and Kyiv-based watchdogs. Their new monitoring of rebuilding in the Kyiv region revealed that one-third of the monitored projects had various corruption risks, and that the application of energy efficiency and accessibility requirements was often formalistic. Seventy-eight per cent of tenders for the reconstruction appeared to be non-competitive.⁷⁴ This real-time verification of project integrity is very important for course-correcting and improving the system.

⁷¹ How Are You? (2025), 'Результати соціологічного дослідження «Психічне здоров'я та ставлення українців до психологічної допомоги під час війни» [Results of public opinion polling Mental Health and Attitude of Ukrainians to Mental health support during the war], 31 January 2025, <https://howareu.com/news/ukraintsi-vidchuvaiut-stres-i-tryvohu-ale-obyraiut-konstruktyvni-kopinhovi-strategii-reahuvannia-na-tsi-stany>.

⁷² Urban Reform (undated), 'About us', <https://urbanreform.org.ua/aboutus>.

⁷³ Kuzurbov, D. (2024), "Місто притягує до себе людей". Як живе та розвивається Охтирка на Сумщині під час війни' ["The city attracts people": How Okhtyrka in Sumy region lives and develops during the war], *Ukrainska Pravda*, 30 January 2024, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2024/01/30/259066>.

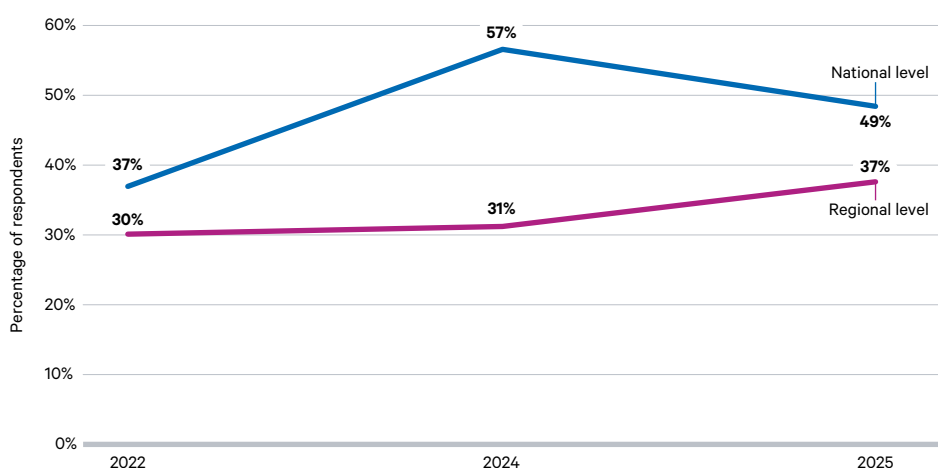
⁷⁴ Antykorupcijnyj shtab (2025), 'Хто так як відбудовує Київщину: аналіз тендерів' [Who is rebuilding the Kyiv region: analysis of tenders], 25 April 2025, <https://shtab.net/news/view/xto-tak-yak-vidbudovue-kijivshhinu-analiz-tenderiv>.

What are the barriers to increasing CSO and citizen engagement?

Weak cooperation between civil society and the state

Despite all this activity, Chatham House's 2025 survey suggests a stagnation in the level of civil society engagement with the state recovery process (see Figure 6, below, and Annex, Q9).⁷⁵ CSOs report that there has been little progress in designing a system that could deliver a truly inclusive recovery. Table 1 illustrates the current points of entry for civic participation at the various stages of the recovery process. It makes clear that the existing framework still has numerous gaps, despite offering some opportunities for contribution to planning and monitoring.

Figure 6. Satisfaction levels among CSOs have changed little since 2022 (Question: How would you rate the inclusion of civil society in planning recovery to date? [Choose one; figure shows only 'included' and 'very well included'])



⁷⁵ Other studies confirm no positive change in general levels of cooperation of non-profits with national and local governments in the last two years. Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], p. 42.

Table 1. Framework of existing and required engagement for inclusive recovery

STAGE 1: Planning/vision	STAGE 2: Selection of projects	STAGE 3: Delivery	STAGE 4: Monitoring/ anti-corruption oversight	STAGE 5: Coordination
Tools of civic and community engagement				
- Working groups within ministries and at the local level - Needs assessments for key beneficiaries - Public consultations and input on policies - Participation in developing community recovery plans	- Monitor selection of projects on DREAM - Local community websites	- Assist in securing donor funding - Participate in local project offices - Deliver social services - Train local government - Run community centres	- Independent civic monitoring - Anti-corruption monitoring of tenders via Dozorro, Prozorro - Review on DREAM - Quality control for compliance: accessibility and green agenda	- Donor to state: Ukraine Donor Platform (UDP) and Business Advisory Council - Humanitarian assistance: UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Inter-agency coordination: Coordination Council for Mental Health, Ukraine National Mine Action Centre
State-led recovery stages				
- Ukraine Plan under the EU Facility - Community recovery plans - Comprehensive programmes of regional recovery - Regional development strategies - National programmes and strategies [more than 300]	- National level: Strategic Investment Council forms single project pipeline on DREAM - IFIs: EBRD, EIB, World Bank, etc. - Local budgets - International development assistance - UNITED24 (state fundraising platform)	- Agency for Reconstruction and Infrastructure Development - National and regional authorities - Prozorro digital procurement - Social services providers registered with the Ministry of Social Policy - Fund for Regional Development	- Accounting Chamber - National Anti-Corruption Agency (NABU) - State Bureau of Investigations - National Police	- Donor to state: Ukraine Donor Platform (UDP) - Business Advisory Council at UDP - Annual international Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) - Humanitarian coordination: UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Inter-agency coordination: Coordination Council for Mental Health, Ukraine National Mine Action Centre
Recommended action to strengthen engagement				
- Make citizen participation in planning recovery mandatory - Promote and reward best practice - Improve needs assessments - Run citizen assemblies on recovery - Streamline planning documents and define key strategies for recovery - Apply the European Code of Conduct on Partnership for investments in all non-critical infrastructure during the war	- Clarify selection criteria for projects - Restore participatory budgeting to select projects funded by local budgets - Implement public investment management reform at the local level - Include representatives of sub-national bodies at the Strategic Investment Council	- Develop public-private partnerships beyond infrastructure - Create market for CSOs to deliver social services - Improve regulation for social services - Reform Fund for Regional Development	- Increase visibility of recovery aid flows at all levels - Gradually open access to state register of damages - Empower citizens to collect environmental data (water, air quality, etc.) - Strengthen civic oversight at all levels - Establish a funding pool for civic monitoring of investment projects financed by IFIs for compliance with inclusion, green agenda, accessibility and anti-corruption	- National Recovery Coordination and Facilitation Unit (multi-stakeholder) - Civil Society Council at UDP - Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission for Regional Development - Reinforce sectoral coordination for veterans, IDPs, return of refugees, education/reskilling

Source: Compiled by author.

National-level CSOs are slightly more positive about the quality of their engagement in planning recovery than their regional-level counterparts. Among national-level respondents, 49 per cent stated that they are 'included' or 'very well included'. In the regions, this proportion was just 37 per cent.

Other studies confirm weak operational links between the state and civil society in general. According to the Zagoriy Foundation, only 18 per cent of non-profit organizations report regular engagement with local government and just 4 per cent with the national authorities.⁷⁶ CSOs in larger cities (or oblast centres) appear to have experienced better cooperation, but this represents a minority of the country's communities. Indeed, more than 1,000 communities representing small towns and villages lack recovery offices, active civil society or partner cities abroad.

Government- or personality-driven engagement

Our survey respondents complained that the process is often formalistic and that civil society recommendations are frequently ignored (see Annex, Q11). There is a tendency for authorities to engage only with groups perceived as 'loyal' – especially in smaller communities. At the national level, there are even instances of pressure being applied and discreditation campaigns conducted against regulators and investigative journalists.⁷⁷

Indeed, manipulation of engagement by the state is seen as the highest risk for civil society's own participation; this could damage the CSO sector's own reputation. A quarter of Chatham House survey respondents identified the risk of authorities manipulating cooperation processes by either co-opting participants or including only 'pocket' CSOs (see Annex, Q16). Respondents fear that groups affiliated with the government would have priority and that co-optation would take the place of genuine engagement.

Good cooperation is often personality-driven and not really a feature of the system. A case in point is arguably the State Agency for Restoration and Infrastructure Development, where inclusive governance seems to have weakened since a leadership change in July 2024. Only 10 per cent of Chatham House survey respondents nationwide in 2025 view cooperation with the agency as efficient (see Annex, Q10). Even under the previous leadership of Mustafa Nayyem, a former investigative journalist and activist, the figure reached only 14 per cent. The agency's public council website still lists materials for 2021, for example, and has no list of its members publicly available. Overall, the main reason CSOs cite for the lack of improvement in engagement is the continued lack of political will at the top level of the Ukrainian government (see Annex, Q11).

At the local level, citizens and CSOs are impeded by vague national regulations covering their engagement in the recovery process. National regulations recommend, but do not mandate, CSO inclusion in the consultative/advisory

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 39. For more on barriers to cooperation, see *ibid.*, pp. 130–31.

⁷⁷ RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service (2024), 'Ukrainian Media Outlet Says It's Being Pressured By Zelenskiy's Office', 9 October 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukrainian-media-outlet-ukrayinska-pravda-allegation-pressure-zelenskiy-office/33152656.html>.

council.⁷⁸ The council could therefore be staffed by loyal groups, local executive bodies or state- and community-owned companies. The implications for the effectiveness of such arrangements are mixed: much appears to depend on personalities and leadership approaches at the local level. One survey respondent summed the situation up as follows:

There is a lack of a comprehensive consultative mechanism and inclusion of civil society suggestions. This leads to decisions that poorly meet local community needs. This is especially evident in the delivery of social recovery, the reintegration of IDPs, support for vulnerable groups, and the reform of economic policy to meet the needs of citizens.

New public investment management system

Given the urgent need to sustain critical services and keep the economy afloat, it is natural that the Ukrainian government and donors focus on rebuilding infrastructure. This dimension of recovery is developing quite well, but both civic oversight and detailed social impact assessments remain limited. The new Public Investment Management (PIM) concept of the government establishes a single pipeline for recovery projects and integrates this pipeline into the DREAM system.⁷⁹ The pipeline currently lists over 700 projects, about 50 per cent of which have been submitted by regional administrations while the other 50 per cent have been submitted by central ministries and state agencies. Communities were not included in the first call for proposals.

At the local level, citizens and CSOs are impeded by vague national regulations covering their engagement in the recovery process.

Projects are selected by an intergovernmental commission, the Strategic Investment Council, based in Kyiv. The criteria for the selection of projects formally include support for basic and other social needs of groups affected by war (such as veterans, IDPs and children). However, it remains unclear whether regional authorities are consulting key stakeholders or assessing local needs when deciding on projects.

The European Code of Conduct on Partnership, which is the EU practice for stakeholder consultations for infrastructure finance, is not compulsory or even recommended for Ukraine at the moment. There is an understandable time pressure during the war and fear that lengthy consultations may jeopardize efforts to rapidly rebuild the country. But this omission may seriously damage trust in state-financed recovery projects.

⁷⁸ Cabinet Ministers of Ukraine (2022), 'Про затвердження Порядку розроблення, проведення громадського обговорення, погодження програм комплексного відновлення області, території територіальної громади (її частини) та внесення змін до них' [On Approval of the Procedure for Development, Public Discussion, Approval of Programs for the Comprehensive Restoration of the Region, the Territory of the Territorial Community (Its Part) and Amendments to Them], Document 1159-2022-p, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1159-2022-%D0%BF#Text>.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine (undated), Цифрова екосистема для підзвітності управління відновленням (DREAM) [Digital Ecosystem for Accountable Recovery Management (DREAM)], <https://dream.gov.ua>.

The DREAM system, although considered important for transparency, is consistently rated as a poor instrument of engagement: only 11 per cent of CSOs in our 2025 survey agreed that it is an efficient tool, while an additional 39 per cent did not have a definite answer (see Annex, Q10). Citizens and CSOs can assess reconstruction projects in some detail via DREAM. The Kyiv region provides a case study, as some reconstruction already took place there in 2022. All reconstruction projects financed by the national budget were visible on DREAM, but civic monitoring still revealed many issues with delivery, such as non-competitive tenders, unclear criteria for the selection of projects, and a lack of strategic alignment of projects with the regional documentation.

Poor coordination between different levels of government

Another missing piece of the inclusive recovery picture is robust multi-level governance. At present, for example, national authorities approach local administrations for policy implementation, rather than regarding them as partners in development or as generators of ideas.

There is some degree of mistrust as to how well the community-based principle will be implemented as a result of this kind of approach. The financial deficit leads Kyiv to select only a small portion of recovery projects from the pipeline, which increases its influence over the process. Some community leaders and mayors have questioned the objectivity of the DREAM process and express concern that funding allocations could be driven by political considerations, rather than prioritized according to need.⁸⁰

The central allocation of funding is often disconnected from regional and community planning. This, plus the sheer volume of local planning documents and national strategies, makes it difficult to discern a coherent vision of Ukraine's future. Ukraine has more than 30 different national strategic framework documents, compared to just 10 in Poland.⁸¹

Furthermore, communities currently lack direct access to the public investment pool, to which claims can only be submitted by ministries or regional authorities. About 50 per cent of the projects on DREAM are submitted by regional administrations, with the other half submitted by the ministries and state agencies. The Fund for Regional Development, created in 2015, remains in limbo. It has approximately \$24 million earmarked for community projects in 2025, but allocations have not yet begun and procedures for allocating funds remain unclear.⁸²

⁸⁰ Author's interview with the Association of Ukrainian Cities, online, 28 April 2025.

⁸¹ U-LEAD (2023), *EU Pre-accession Processes in the fields of Decentralisation, Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments: The case of Poland*, <https://u-lead.org.ua/storage/admin/files/ff95fec685c116a81f4b6bcb3a3f8880.pdf>.

⁸² Decentralizaciya (2024), 'Державний бюджет на 2025 рік ухвалений: які ресурси матиме місцеве самоврядування' [The state budget for 2025 has been approved: what resources will local governments have?], 19 November 2024, <https://decentralization.ua/news/18930>.

More importantly, the flow of resources downwards to communities is impeded by their low absorption capacity. By the first quarter of 2025, the Ministry of Development had used only 1 per cent of the planned annual budget for reconstruction, owing to procedural delays and the slow pace of project implementation.⁸³

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Different regions are impacted by war in different ways, and this requires a specific policy to strengthen cohesion and the representation of each region. Seventy per cent of all damaged civilian infrastructure is located in the front-line regions. The voices of these affected communities must be better incorporated into the selection process if this damage is to be repaired and the communities improved. But this aspect is missing from the recovery process as it stands: for example, the Strategic Investment Council features no sub-regional government representation.

There are also gaps at the national level. For instance, there is no in-country coordination platform for recovery that brings together representatives of civil society, the private sector and sub-national authorities. The National Recovery Council proposed at the 2022 Ukraine Recovery Conference is still not functioning. There is no other overarching facility or vehicle that enables key stakeholders to coordinate, develop cooperation, share knowledge and discuss bottlenecks. This kind of forum is especially relevant for urgent social issues, where state and non-state actors should reinforce each other and seek common solutions to deliver on newly adopted strategies.

Civil society's own weaknesses

Civil society is aware of risks related to its own engagement in recovery. The sector has a variety of groups, many of which are not truly independent. Some seem to pursue the political, partisan or commercial agendas of their local sponsors. In fact, due to weak institutions in Ukraine, some groups overstep the line between party politics and civil society engagement. From the early days of his presidency, Zelenskyy's administration was wary of the sector, as his teams perceived CSOs as being in opposition to his victory in 2019 and in support of former president Petro Poroshenko. There was pressure from various groups not to concede any key positions to Russia on Donbas or Crimea, and criticism about the lack of feedback and communication.⁸⁴ Since the 2022 full-scale invasion, Zelenskyy has only met the leading CSOs working on foreign policy and advocacy abroad once, in October

⁸³ Big Recovery Portal (2025), 'The recovery spending watchdog (May 2025)', [https://brp.org.ua/en/analytics/kontrol-vitrat-na-vidnovlennya-ukrayini-\(traven-2025\)](https://brp.org.ua/en/analytics/kontrol-vitrat-na-vidnovlennya-ukrayini-(traven-2025)).

⁸⁴ Vikhrov, M. (2019), 'Влада без зворотного зв'язку' [Power without feedback], *Tyzhny*, 26 October 2019, <https://tyzhden.ua/vlada-bez-zvrotnogo-zv-iazku>.

2024.⁸⁵ This legacy, combined with a lack of special high-level cooperation, has likely contributed to the perception among most CSOs that there is a lack of political will at the most senior level to engage (see Annex, Q11).

The CSOs surveyed by Chatham House in 2025 also highlight potential problems associated with manipulative engagement, insufficient knowledge among non-profit organizations, a lack of coordination, and the potential sidelining of groups that criticize the government or seek to expose significant corruption risks. Sixty-eight per cent of our respondents cited such problems, with a quarter fearing that local authorities would create and control their own CSOs, crowding out independent groups (see Annex, Q16). Respondents also referred to burn-out, bureaucratic hurdles for getting projects off the ground and personal security risks associated with working near the front lines, among other major risks (see Annex, Q16).

The burgeoning sector of CSOs serving veterans provides an example of the risks of an ad hoc approach. One of the leading veterans' rights groups believes that CSOs should educate themselves more about the needs of this specific cohort. Understandably, people have been keen to help others out of goodwill, but tend to act without studying the specific needs of their communities. As a result, many are undertaking 'copy-and-paste' activities, such as setting up veterans' hubs or IDP councils in each locality, but many lack clear data on which specific target groups these activities might serve.

Across the broader sector, CSOs also differ in the extent to which they are connected to citizens. Some have a deep and representative reach, high-quality governance structures and widespread membership. But some operate more as consultancies, with weak penetration in the community. The vast majority of CSOs work with fewer than 20 volunteers when implementing their projects.⁸⁶

Poor professional skills could further weaken the prospects for genuine partnership. Forty-seven per cent of CSOs surveyed by Chatham House in 2025 reported a lack of opportunity to gain the new skills needed for recovery (see Annex, Q20). Thirty-two per cent nationwide reported having received training from other CSOs, making the sector the main *provider* of training as well as its main recipient. Despite the apparent lack of opportunity, the demand for learning and growth exists (see Annex, Q19). CSOs are especially keen to gain skills and knowledge in the following areas: how to develop proposals for EU institutional funding (47 per cent nationwide); how to use artificial intelligence (AI) platforms to support missions (47 per cent); how to prepare projects for the DREAM platform (41 per cent); modern fundraising methods (41 per cent); social entrepreneurship (40 per cent); and methodologies for preparing local recovery plans (39 per cent).

⁸⁵ Perun, V. (2024), 'Зеленський зустрівся з представниками громадянського суспільства і обговорив із ними план перемоги' [Zelensky met with civil society representatives and discussed a victory plan with them], LB.ua, 23 October 2024, https://lb.ua/society/2024/10/23/641349_zelenskiy_zustrivsyia_z.html.

⁸⁶ Zagoriy Foundation (2025), Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], p. 105.

Alienation and disillusionment within the sector present additional risks to an inclusive recovery. If national and local governments fail to construct an effective system for inclusion, some CSOs and their leaders could potentially position themselves in opposition to the state and its authorities, which would be hugely detrimental to Ukraine’s long-term recovery, resilience, political reform and stability.

Donors’ bypassing of local CSOs

One of the main donor-driven deficiencies is the weak localization of foreign aid in Ukraine. Many donors are allocating funding via international NGOs or UN agencies. Foreign funding is the second largest source of finance for community recovery projects, and the primary source for CSO interventions. The original Grand Bargain Framework includes a commitment to allocate around 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local organizations. Despite a slight increase in 2024, however, less than 1 per cent of the nearly \$10 billion of humanitarian funding monitored by the UN has gone directly to Ukrainian CSOs.⁸⁷ Most of the assistance is instead provided to the population in the form of cash and vouchers via intermediary INGOs – a practice which Ukrainian CSOs see as ‘giving people fish rather than a fishing rod’.

Many local actors have developed significant capacity, demonstrated integrity and shown commitment to comply with international standards, but international agencies continue to dominate provision.

Many local actors have developed significant capacity, demonstrated integrity and shown commitment to comply with international standards, but international agencies continue to dominate provision. This tendency to bypass local and national CSOs could be attributed to excessive compliance requirements for access to external funding – particularly the demand for audits, due diligence and reporting. Local groups struggle to build operational capacity for complex compliance procedures, when circumstances force them to focus on getting aid to as many people in need as possible, as fast as possible. Few international funders provide institutional support for fulfilling these administrative functions – either through direct assistance or training.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of funders, extra time and effort are required to find viable local partners and build relationships. Direct provision can be a simpler option. The EU is notable for recognizing the importance of local partnerships at the policy level.⁸⁸ It operates a pilot scheme through which the EU can financially support

⁸⁷ Center for Disaster Philanthropy, EAST SOS and Refugees International (2024), *Annual Ukraine Localization Survey 2024*, Report, Refugees International, 19 December 2024, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/annual-ukraine-localization-survey-2024>.

⁸⁸ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), European Commission (2023), *Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings: DG ECHO Guidance Note*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <https://doi.org/10.2795/653711>.

local and national NGOs as directly as possible by promoting their participation in country-level mechanisms. But this practice currently seems an exception rather than a rule among external donors, especially those in the humanitarian field.

Another weakness is a lack of coordination, especially on recovery. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinates humanitarian 'clusters' on crisis response. Within the humanitarian sector, 90 per cent of CSOs reported cooperation with other local organizations, indicating good coordination in crisis response. However, the recovery sector lacks a permanent cluster system or vehicle for coordination. Overall, CSOs interact with a small number of groups. Sixty-two per cent of those surveyed by the Zagoriy Foundation say they lack platforms for cooperation.⁸⁹

What is more important to note is that the humanitarian and recovery communities co-exist in parallel, rather than working together. A viable 'community of practice' will be vital for social change to take place at scale. Regional voices want and need to be heard in Kyiv. For this reason, Rise of Ukraine plans to open an office in the capital to facilitate better access to policymakers and closer connections to other groups advocating at the national level.

Initiatives like this are worth exploring, but they reflect the fact that other avenues for collaboration are not delivering. The main Ukraine Donor Platform (UDP), for example, remains an exclusively intergovernmental body, although the UDP convenes small meetings with representatives of civil society alongside six-monthly steering committee meetings. The civil society sector lacks permanent formal cooperation, in contrast with the business sector. The business council at the UDP was created last year to allow for private sector contributions to recovery. Proposals for a similar civil society council have not been taken forward, despite 35 per cent of Chatham House survey respondents nationwide supporting the idea (see Annex, Q12).

What can be done to improve CSO engagement?

More meaningful consultation at national level

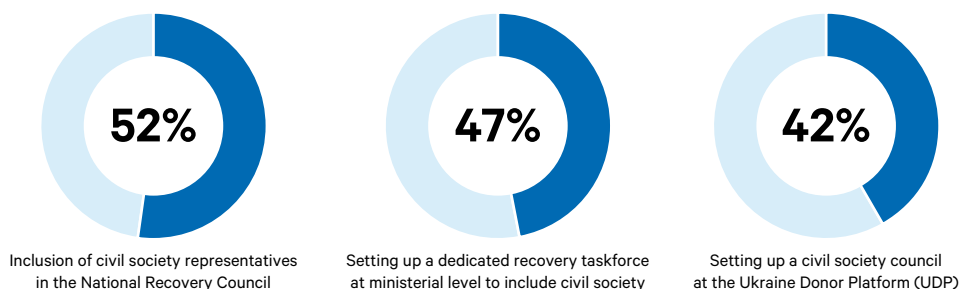
The sector itself identifies several ways to enhance its contribution to the recovery. CSOs increasingly express the need for a national recovery coordination body. Our 2025 survey shows increasing support for such an institution: 52 per cent of national-level CSOs and 58 per cent of regional CSOs back the idea of CSO inclusion in the National Recovery Council (see Figure 7, below, and Annex, Q12), compared with 31 per cent and 47 per cent respectively in 2024. Specialized working groups within the relevant ministries could complement this overarching coordination body.

CSOs are also seeking to deepen consultations with citizens and other CSOs in the design of recovery. A more inclusive public forum (online and offline) to seek solutions to pressing social problems would be popular. Any such forum must include CSOs, government, the private sector and academia.

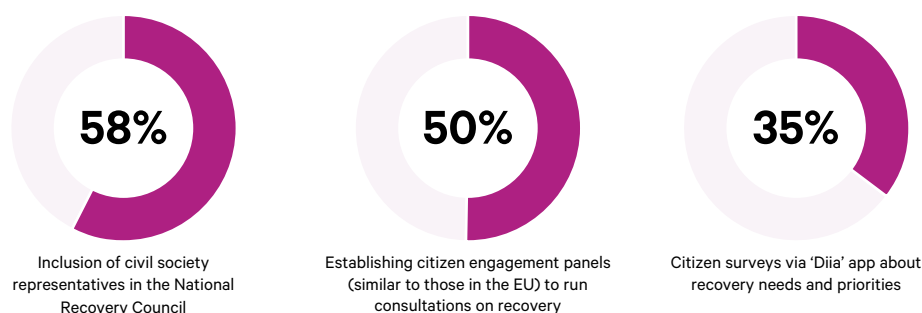
⁸⁹ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], p. 39.

Figure 7. CSOs want to be constructive partners to national government and engage citizens in consultations about the process (Question: Which three models of effective engagement of civil society in recovery would you propose at present (under martial law) at national level?)

Kyiv-based/national level



Regional level



Encouraging CSOs to provide support functions to recovery projects

Civil society wants to expand cooperation with local government in supporting community livelihoods and participating in the delivery of recovery projects. Local self-government bodies, especially those in smaller localities, see CSOs as allies and resource generators. Commitment among CSOs to contribute to recovery planning at all levels of government remains high.

The wider roll-out of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP) would be complementary to the current recovery planning, especially as public investment reform will start at the local level. Support for the ECCP has not increased in the survey: only around a quarter of CSOs support its application. But the sector is largely unaware of the ECCP, which was developed only in 2014.⁹⁰

Through the ECCP, the European Commission mandates that stakeholder consultation for public investment should include the most vulnerable, marginalized communities, alongside business and public authorities. This provision forms part of all EU cohesion policy instruments that allocate EU budget to the EU member

⁹⁰ European Commission (2014), 'Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds', <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c82928d8-ab54-11e3-86f9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

states. A wartime condition contained within it currently eases the demand on Ukraine regarding the ECCP; the EU's Ukraine Facility documents only mention this instrument briefly. But civil society and all levels of government in Ukraine could use wartime to familiarize themselves and other recovery actors with this new EU practice ahead of accession talks.

CSOs are also willing to join or run project offices that assist local authorities in tasks like drafting funding proposals, attracting donors and managing reconstruction. Survey respondents see this as one of the most efficient ways to cooperate with local government (see Annex, Q10). With limited sources of funding available for recovery, CSOs can play an indispensable role in assisting communities, especially smaller ones, in attracting financial support from both larger and smaller donors.

Using CSOs for co-delivery of social services

Regional CSOs are also eager to participate in social service delivery. Ukraine decentralized its system in 2017 and devolved the provision of social services to the community level. But, to take the example of mental health, Ukraine lacks both medical and service delivery capacity at that level. Our survey shows that 40 per cent of CSOs currently work in providing mental health support (see Annex, Q3). In most cases, these groups are involved in non-clinical forms of support, although some groups do employ therapists to assist in crisis situations. CSOs could potentially contribute to resocialization, and community activities could be effective in helping people to overcome stress and isolation – for example, by connecting individuals to social peer groups, facilitating volunteering, cultural and sporting activities, or offering education and learning.

Despite civil society being willing and able to take on these roles, non-state suppliers rarely get access to government contracts. Only 14 per cent of Chatham House survey respondents at the regional level receive recovery funding from local budgets, with funding from external donors much more prevalent (see Figure 4, above, and Annex, Q5). But with risks to the continued availability of external aid in Ukraine – notably from recent budget cuts at USAID and the possibility of other development assistance being withdrawn if UN aid agencies fail to secure donations – the development of a domestic ecosystem for social services is key for the long-term financial viability of many CSOs. Among larger charities, Caritas⁹¹ advocates that, especially given high levels of internal migration and displacement, state funding allocations should follow individual citizens rather than being earmarked for social institutions broadly. In other words, money should be more effectively channelled directly to those in need.

Social service reform could lead to a more cost-efficient and needs-based system. One possible change would be to exempt CSOs from value-added tax (VAT) for social service procurement, as is the case for state providers. Redirecting national subsidies for communities that have a shortage of local resources to support specific vulnerable groups could cover current service delivery gaps.

⁹¹ Caritas Ukraine (undated), 'Caritas Ukraine', Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/caritasukraine>.

Directing a larger portion of external funding to Ukrainian CSOs and community groups

External donors have the potential to help expand inclusion in the recovery framework. This effort would be in line with the EU's own work to engage citizens in early-stage policy planning.⁹² The financing of local-level projects that support community hubs, urban planning and development of recovery strategies is an example of how this idea is already being put into practice.

Figure 8. CSOs want greater access to external funding, but approve of the strict conditions often attached (Question: How could external funders facilitate civil society engagement? [Choose three])

Kyiv-based/national level



Regional level



More can be done by external donors to harness the vibrancy and capacity of Ukrainian civil society. Forty-nine per cent of CSOs surveyed by Chatham House in 2025 suggest that greater inclusion could be achieved by providing direct funding to CSOs for implementing recovery priorities, while 39 per cent call for joint planning of humanitarian support and recovery (see Figure 8 above for regional views, and Annex, Q14 for all survey respondents). This principle of co-design of programmes is key to strengthening the effectiveness of, and increasing local ownership of and support for, the recovery process. Donors need to adapt faster to changing conditions on the ground. Most currently allocate the majority of their funding to front-line

⁹² EU (2023), 'Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836', <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H2836>.

communities, while groups working in the centre and west of Ukraine struggle to access the funding needed to support growing numbers of vulnerable citizens, including IDPs, children, veterans and others.⁹³

The process of localization could be reinforced if Ukrainian CSOs were viewed as capable partners by donors and government officials at all levels. Inclusion would help grow the funding base that comes from Ukrainian citizens, businesses, and local and national budgets. Our survey shows that CSOs deliver all kinds of recovery assistance: at the regional level, 35 per cent are involved in the provision of social, educational or healthcare services, followed by 24 per cent providing basic humanitarian assistance to the population in crisis and emergency situations. Almost a quarter of our regional-level respondents report that their recovery projects are related to systemic change and reforms (see Annex, Q4). This focus means that the development agenda is being sustained, even in wartime, and those groups are fully aware of the need to improve state–citizen relations.

Forty-six per cent of our survey respondents suggest that IFIs could set up civil society facilities as part of their assistance programmes (see Annex, Q14). The most logical way to implement that idea could be a dedicated funding pool for civic monitoring of IFI-financed investment projects for compliance with requirements on inclusion, environmental standards, accessibility, and anti-corruption protections. CSOs could also play an important broader function as 'watchdogs' for all levels of government.

Funders also need to explore ways to empower groups affected by war economically as part of their programmes. Citizens should be encouraged to create networks for mutual aid and projects that generate local financial resources. Such initiatives could be amplified by networks of organizations such as the National Network of Local Philanthropy Development.⁹⁴ These charities could co-fund start-ups for specific target groups alongside external donors. There is real potential in such blended-finance initiatives, as research suggests that citizens are more inclined to donate to local charities than to national organizations.⁹⁵

The creation of regulations aimed at enabling social enterprises and setting up new funding pools mixing grants and subsidized loans may help to create a new powerful sector of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This sector could then play a role in providing employment opportunities for demobilized veterans and other vulnerable citizens. Several success stories can already be highlighted. For example, a company set up by IDPs near Dnipro runs an animal shelter and a tourism centre, produces cheese and offers a programme for displaced children.⁹⁶ Demand for this model is widespread in the sector, with 46 per cent of regional-level respondents to our survey keen to learn more about social enterprise (see Annex, Q19).

⁹³ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector], p. 94.

⁹⁴ National Network of Local Philanthropy Development (undated), Homepage, <https://www.philanthropy.com.ua/en>.

⁹⁵ Zagoriy Foundation (2024), *Дослідження сфери благодійності* [Research on the charitable sector].

⁹⁶ Green Grove (undated), 'Реабілітаційний центр "Зелений Гай"' [Public organization "Green Grove"]', <https://www.zelenyygay.com>.

What else is needed to support the citizen-led recovery?

Given the threats outlined above, other powerful changes will be necessary to give Ukraine's recovery the best chance of success: namely, EU integration and related domestic reforms; and increased provision of private capital, both from domestic and external sources. Merely 'bouncing back' to the pre-war status quo will not be sufficient. Instead, Ukraine needs to jump to a higher level – and in a short space of time.

In macroeconomic terms, Ukraine needs to double its pre-war GDP to around \$400 billion in order to sustain credible military deterrence and to cope with the growing demands for social security for its war-affected population.⁹⁷ This may seem like an insurmountable task, and it will not happen in the short term. But neighbouring Poland provides an example of what is necessary and possible: its GDP stands at around \$800 billion today, having been as low as \$219 billion prior to EU accession in 2004.⁹⁸

EU integration and institutional reforms

Ukraine's hoped-for accession to the EU would necessarily push forward structural reform and the modernization of state institutions. Entry into the EU common market, integration into Europe-wide supply chains and the potential for onshoring manufacturing can all catalyse the economic growth necessary for a successful recovery from war. Ukraine has many attractive sectors for external investment. Green energy, defence, agriculture, rare earth minerals and IT could all contribute to the EU's goals of strategic autonomy and innovation. Unlocking this investment requires not just security, but equally robust and fast reforms to strengthen the rule of law and property rights.

The current government has set a target of joining the EU by 2030. What typically takes a decade, Ukraine wants to achieve in five years. Already today, Ukraine is more prepared in terms of control over corruption than the most recent cohort of new EU members was in 2007.⁹⁹ In May 2025, the government approved the necessary roadmaps for the first 'cluster' of negotiations on fundamentals to prepare for formal accession talks with Brussels. These documents include the list of reforms intended to strengthen the rule of law, public administration and democratic governance.¹⁰⁰ The EU has learned from the 2007 enlargement, when Bulgaria and Romania joined without fully completing their rule-of-law reforms.

⁹⁷ Kyiv Security Forum (2024), 'Ukraine must double its GDP to operate at full swing, – Head of the Center for Economic Recovery', 11 November 2024, <https://ksf.openukraine.org/en/categories/news/ukraina-maie-podvoity-vvp-shchob-povnotsinno-funktsionuvaty-kerivnyk-tsentru-ekonomichnoho-vidnovlennia>.

⁹⁸ World Bank (2025), 'GDP (current US\$) – Poland', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=PL> (accessed 28 Jun. 2025).

⁹⁹ Popova, M. (2024), 'Is Ukraine Too Corrupt to Join the EU?', *Journal of Democracy*, December 2024, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exclusive/is-ukraine-too-corrupt-to-join-the-eu>.

¹⁰⁰ Office of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration via Facebook (2025), 'Дорожні карти у сферах верховенства права, реформи державного управління та функціонування демократичних інституцій – затверджено Україною' [Roadmaps in the areas of the rule of law, public administration reform and the functioning of democratic institutions have been approved by Ukraine], 15 May 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/100064760316130/posts/1125850812916919/?mibextid=wwXlfr&rdid=55rp0N3XUKCelkhZ>.

For Ukraine, the governance and rule-of-law 'cluster' will open first and close last to ensure that the country is in full compliance with EU requirements at the moment of accession.

Conditions tied to foreign funding are often a powerful driver of reform. Current financial assistance from the IMF and the EU's Ukraine Facility requires progress on anti-corruption efforts, integrity of governance and deregulation. Our survey suggests that this focus is justified: respondents consistently rank the risk of reconstruction funds being embezzled as the number one non-military threat to recovery. However, one positive may be that perceptions of corruption in the reconstruction sector have declined in recent years: 66 per cent of survey respondents cited embezzlement of funds as a major risk in 2025 (see Annex, Q8), compared to 87 per cent in 2022.

Perceptions of corruption in the reconstruction sector have declined in recent years: 66 per cent of survey respondents cited embezzlement of funds as a major risk in 2025, compared to 87 per cent in 2022.

Even in wartime, significant achievements have been made in strengthening the rule of law. Mainly, these measures have consisted of revising appointment processes for judges, enhancing open and competitive court procedures, and strengthening the independence of the national anti-corruption prosecution body. The Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office was given the opportunity to increase its manpower. It is important that these efforts are implemented, and that they not just remain at the level of legislative changes. Progress has also been made with reforming the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine (to counter economic offences) and the Accounting Chamber (the country's key financial control body).

But these gains will take time to consolidate. Ukraine still ranks 105th in Transparency International's most recent Corruption Perceptions Index. (To compare, Bulgaria and Romania are 76th and 65th, respectively.)¹⁰¹

Domestic and external private capital

Ukraine has demonstrated that it has an economy that can survive a disastrous war, preserving macroeconomic stability. In 2023, real GDP grew by 5.3 per cent.¹⁰² Thanks to new emerging insurance instruments, Kyiv succeeded in attracting \$2.2 billion of genuine foreign direct investment (FDI).¹⁰³ But survival is not enough for recovery. Unlocking the enabling conditions for foreign and domestic

¹⁰¹ Transparency International (2025), '2024 Corruption Perceptions Index – Explore Ukraine's Results', 11 February 2025, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024>.

¹⁰² World Bank (2025), 'GDP growth (annual %) – Ukraine', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=UA> (accessed 28 Jun. 2025).

¹⁰³ Data from Dragon Capital, with genuine FDI excluding reinvested earnings and round-tripping.

investors would be a game-changer. Ukraine needs powerful new technology, higher productivity and a new economic structure. Moving up the value chain (for example, relying less on commodities and raw materials) into the production of more technological products is key.

Even before the war, Ukraine's investment climate was plagued by negative perceptions due to corruption, weak protection of property rights, predatory law enforcement, and the capture of the economy by vested interest groups that undermined competition.¹⁰⁴ At the peak of post-Revolution of Dignity reforms in 2021, Ukraine recorded a score of 56.2 in the Index of Economic Freedom, compared to 69.7 for Poland.¹⁰⁵ In the best pre-war years, Ukraine was attracting around \$3 billion of 'genuine' FDI per year.¹⁰⁶

This could change, but only if deep market reforms take root. The International Finance Corporation has estimated that the private sector could finance one-third of total recovery needs, provided reforms are implemented. It is estimated that a positive reform scenario could see the generation of an additional \$60 billion in capital inflows.¹⁰⁷ Reform multiplier effects are most substantial in energy, extractive industries, electricity generation and transport.

Policy recommendations

In line with current thinking about anti-corruption risks associated with Ukraine's recovery,¹⁰⁸ all those involved in the recovery process should seek to ensure that it is community-based and genuinely inclusive at all of its various stages. The following recommendations are intended to support that effort:

For all involved in the recovery

- Given the high level of insecurity in Ukraine, **prioritize resilience** as a key feature of institutions, cities, organizations, critical infrastructure and individual characters. Such resilience would mean strong mutual aid networks, effective institutions, rapid response that involves multiple stakeholders, decentralized energy and robust supply chains, and a focus on individual resilience and well-being. View empowering civil society and local self-governance as one of the pillars of Ukraine's resilience.
- **Enhance connections among those working on recovery.** Use change-makers from civil society and/or government who can strengthen networks by building sectoral communities of practice to support recovery. These communities are

¹⁰⁴ Lough, J. (2021), *Ukraine's system of crony capitalism: The challenge of dismantling 'systema'*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/07/ukraines-system-crony-capitalism>.

¹⁰⁵ The higher the score, the freer a country's system is for economic activity. Heritage Foundation (2025), 'Index of Economic Freedom – All country scores 2025', <https://www.heritage.org/index/pages/all-country-scores>.

¹⁰⁶ Data from Dragon Capital, with genuine FDI excluding reinvested earnings and round-tripping.

¹⁰⁷ World Bank (2023), *Private Sector Opportunities for a Green and Resilient Reconstruction in Ukraine: Synthesis Report*, Volume 1, 24 October 2023, p. 26, footnote 51, <https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2023/private-sector-opportunities-for-a-green-and-resilient-reconstruction-in-ukraine>.

¹⁰⁸ Jackson, D. and Lough, J. (2022), 'Accountability in Reconstruction: International Experience and the case of Ukraine', Lugano Ukraine Recovery Conference pre-read, Ukraine Forum, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/EUACI_Lugano_Paper_1%20July_0.pdf.

well placed to generate new knowledge, especially for solving acute social problems emerging from the war. Ensure that these communities of practice are connected vertically across various levels: from the community to regional government, central government and international partners. These connections will allow the system to better deliver on the many pre-existing strategic plans that are yet to move forward.

- **Generate new sources of funding** from the confiscation of Russian state and private frozen assets. These funds could cover urgent funding gaps for the Ukrainian war effort and be used to assist victims of the war in Ukraine. A tranche could be channelled to compensate victims who file claims under the international register of damages¹⁰⁹ or through the e-recovery platform. There is a strong legal and moral case for such action, which could sustain Ukraine's defences in view of the scarcity of financial resources.¹¹⁰
- **Consider applying a 'restorative cities' framework.** Such a framework would combine seven features to help support mental health and well-being in urban settings: development of green spaces; provision of water resources; reduction in exposure to unpleasant sensory factors (noise, smell); development of neighbourly infrastructure; access to sports; provision of play spaces; and inclusive access for all.¹¹¹ Consider establishing a coalition of restorative cities that pledge to implement this approach in recovery, and connect them to similar cities abroad for the purpose of sharing knowledge.
- **Increase bottom-up deliberative consultations and harness collective knowledge by applying digital AI tools.** Given the high level of digitalization of Ukrainian governance and of the economy, government and CSOs could apply innovative AI tools (Pol.is, Assembly Assistant, Analogia) to broaden and deepen participation in recovery. CSOs express high interest in learning how AI can help improve their recovery efforts; application of these new tools could bring engagement to a new level.¹¹²

For the Ukrainian government

- **Enact genuine rule-of-law reforms,** in line with Ukraine's EU accession aspirations and Ukrainians' demands for justice. Ukrainian civil society and citizens want to see bold, ambitious changes that will tangibly improve the quality of justice and restore confidence that the law applies equally. Protections for private property rights should be strengthened.
- **Formalize citizen and civil society engagement** by making it mandatory in certain contexts. Ensure communities implement new changes to the law on local democracy. Meaningful civic consultations, needs assessments of target

¹⁰⁹ Register of Damage for Ukraine (RD4U) and Council of Europe (undated), 'Register of Damage for Ukraine Homepage', <https://rd4u.coe.int/en>.

¹¹⁰ Zelikow, P. (2025), 'A Fresh Look at the Russian Assets: A Proposal for International Resolution of Sanctioned Accounts', 9 January 2025, <https://www.hoover.org/research/fresh-look-russian-assets-proposal-international-resolution-sanctioned-accounts>.

¹¹¹ Roe, J. and McCay, L. (2021), *Restorative Cities: urban design for mental health and wellbeing*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350112919>.

¹¹² McKinney, S. and Chwalisz, C. (2025), 'Five dimensions of scaling democratic deliberation: With and beyond AI', DemocracyNext, 16 June 2025, <https://www.demnext.org/projects/five-dimensions-of-scaling-democratic-deliberation-with-and-beyond-ai>.

groups, and civil society participation in budget planning and allocations will all improve the quality of inclusion. Establish a clear procedure for forming working groups in ministries to open the system up for consultations and data collection. Expand the circle of participants by including groups working outside of Kyiv. In view of Ukraine's EU accession aspirations, apply the EU approach for citizen participation at the early stages of the policymaking process.¹¹³

- **Strengthen stakeholder consultations as part of the new Public Investment Management** reform at the national, regional and community levels. A community-based recovery will depend on the success of public investment reform at the local level. Ensure that the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP) is followed when designing these investment projects. Invest in increasing awareness about this code among government officials, civil society and the media. Make the ECCP's application a requirement for all non-critical infrastructure in wartime, before expanding its use post-war.
- **Improve transparency and accountability of recovery projects** by gradually opening access to the register of damages. Focus particular attention on tendering procedures for reconstruction contracts. Ensure effective state financial control by reforming the state forensics bureau and the state audit service.
- **Do more to decentralize the recovery process**, for example by restoring the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission for Regional Development, which has remained inactive since 2016. In 2024, the EU recommended that the commission be reactivated to strengthen the systematic involvement of regional and local stakeholders – including associations of local self-government – in the design, implementation and monitoring of regional policy. Consider including at least one representative of sub-national bodies in the Strategic Investment Council that selects recovery projects. This seat could be allocated on a rotating basis to the representatives of highly war-impacted regions or could include a representative from the Association of Ukrainian Cities or the Association of Communities.¹¹⁴
- **Establish a cross-sectoral recovery coordination and facilitation unit** to bring together key stakeholders (government, Western donors, the private sector and civil society) for the purposes of sharing knowledge and data, strategic communication and capacity-building. This unit will increase the spread of information across Ukraine and broaden the uptake of various state-funded programmes among target groups, especially in small communities. It could map key activities related to social recovery (using the DREAM maps infrastructure). It could also collate information about various local recovery hubs, including

¹¹³ European Commission (2023), 'Commission recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 of 12 December 2023 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes', 20 December 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H2836#:~:text=>.

¹¹⁴ Vseukrayinska asociaciya hromad (undated), 'Головна' [Homepage], <https://communities.org.ua>.

state resilience centres,¹¹⁵ veterans' spaces,¹¹⁶ community clubs and centres, and regional agencies for recovery, among other relevant contacts. The unit could connect and pool global expertise both for the benefit of Ukraine and wider social change. The lessons learned may then yield innovative and effective solutions for Ukraine that can be replicated in other countries and regions.

- **Improve and streamline recovery planning.** Identify core strategic plans and programmes for recovery, ideally no more than 10–15 documents. Publicize and clearly communicate this vision to inform communities and citizens. Connect this effort to effective and clear project prioritization, and align this coherent national vision with a fiscal plan to strengthen efficiency, avoid duplication and ensure equity in the post-war recovery. Promote the practice of needs-based assessment and data collection when developing all planning documents. CSOs are a great source of information, given their connections to various target groups in the community. Invest in a comprehensive study on the impact of war on mental health, education, environment and demography.
- **Increase public awareness about the vision for Ukraine's recovery and current efforts to rebuild.** The Ministry for Development of Territories must better communicate to the local level about existing compensation mechanisms, and about veteran- and IDP-support programmes. Local governments should strengthen digital access for citizens seeking help. (For example, the 'e-Okhtyrka' local portal is designed to allow citizens in Okhtyrka to register housing damages and claim compensation and other forms of help quickly.) Similarly, raise awareness among victims of conflict-related sexual violence about the new programme of compensation available to them.¹¹⁷
- **Create a platform that guides civil society across different phases of recovery,** enabling CSOs to see where they can most effectively contribute to the process, and what tools they have to engage in planning, delivery or monitoring. (If a CSO is providing social services, for example, the platform would provide clear guidance on how to compete for national or local state funding.) Empower civic anti-corruption monitoring by encouraging CSOs to share their findings with anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies. This could overcome the perception in the sector that there is a lack of political will to engage with civil society, while also building capacity and knowledge for the recovery.
- **Reform regulations for the provision of social services by non-state actors.** Provide VAT exemptions for CSOs and private providers of social services similar to those given to state providers. The Ministry of Social Policy should work with civil society to catalogue and promote unified standards for social services. Encourage local self-government to audit the state and non-state services available in their communities. Ukraine's high level of digitalization

¹¹⁵ Decentralizaciya (2025), 'Центри життєстійкості – це можливість для релокованих громад підтримати своїх жителів' [Resilience centres are an opportunity for relocated communities to support their residents], 12 February 2025, <https://decentralization.ua/news/19241>.

¹¹⁶ International Renaissance Foundation (2023), *Ветеранські простори України* [Ukraine's Veteran Hubs], https://www.irf.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/prostir_a4_www.pdf.

¹¹⁷ People's Deputy of Ukraine 'Проект Закону про статус осіб, постраждалих від сексуального насильства, пов'язаного зі збройною агресією Російської Федерації проти України, та невідкладні проміжні репарації' [Draft Law on the Status of Victims of Sexual Violence Related to the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and Urgent Intermediate Reparations], <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/42862>.

of governance¹¹⁸ makes the task of designing an agile, demand-driven system that enables citizens to select the best available social services accredited by the state achievable. Such a system would also be closer to the intended recipients and could benefit from peer-to-peer support – especially that provided by CSOs established by veterans, IDPs or others with lived experience.

- **Experiment with national- and local-level citizens' assemblies** in areas where the security situation permits. Both national and local government could convene such forums mixing citizens with experts to deliberate on critical social issues. These issues could include, among others, the best reskilling models for recovery; the return and reintegration of Ukrainians from abroad; education reforms; social housing provision; and solutions to the demographic crisis. (Resources describing the methodology are available via DemocracyNext.)¹¹⁹ A 'future councils' model could be piloted, with a view to establishing permanent regional bodies tasked with identifying important questions on, and potential solutions to, communities' future needs.

For Ukrainian CSOs

- **Improve perceptions of the sector's integrity.** To mitigate the risks of co-optation and corruption in the sector identified by our survey participants, strengthen self-regulation, the quality of non-profit governance, and the accountability of organizations to members and key constituencies. Civil society must be proactive in inviting representatives of the Ukrainian government and Western donors to discuss these risks and propose solutions. Together, they should determine if a new regulatory body (akin to the Charity Commission in the UK) could appropriately be established, or whether this function could instead be performed by Ukraine's Ministry of Justice. These discussions should also cover how best to institute a vetting process for CSOs involved in bidding for recovery funding – possibly along similar lines to the State Register of Social Services Providers. Set a clear delineation between groups responsible for monitoring public spending and those to which recovery work is subcontracted.
- **Draw on examples from elsewhere to promote citizen engagement.** Given the risks to foreign funding yet high levels of civic energy among Ukrainians, new methods of civic engagement may add value. The EU offers a variety of models, such as citizens' panels and assemblies (see above), to bring people together to discuss policy proposals related to the recovery. Advocate for the wider adoption of the ECCP, which describes and mandates how local authorities and government should engage stakeholders in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of cohesion programmes.
- **Engage with young people.** The vibrancy of civil society and grassroots action instils hope in Ukraine's future among young people. Collaborate with schools to promote volunteer opportunities within the community. Scale up the provision of places for youth socializing, and encourage young people to get involved

¹¹⁸ Barkhush, A. (2024), 'Ukraine Ranks 5th Globally in Digital Public Services Development', UNITED24 Media, 20 September 2024, <https://united24media.com/latest-news/ukraine-ranks-5th-globally-in-digital-public-services-development-2472>.

¹¹⁹ DemocracyNext (undated), 'Assembling an Assembly Guide', <https://www.demnext.org>.

in community hubs and local resilience centres. Identify the most effective programmes to compensate for wartime gaps in schooling, and expand the provision of such programmes.

For external donors

- **Ensure that civil society has a powerful role in safeguarding the integrity of Ukraine's recovery.** Expand the reach of projects similar to the Big Recovery Portal to cover all localities of recovery. Dedicate funding to civic monitoring, anti-corruption efforts, reform oversight, investigative journalism, and digital solutions aimed at increasing transparency both at the national and local levels. The EU and other funders must prioritize covering the gap created by the withdrawal of USAID in the critical area of civic monitoring of corruption. To reinforce monitoring and accountability, Ukraine's partners should invest in projects that promote collective action, focusing on community-led oversight of public procurement, private sector involvement in recovery work, and the quality and sustainability of project delivery.
- **Look beyond large cities and oblast centres.** There are 1,000 communities all across Ukraine representing small towns and rural centres. This is where addressing capacity gaps and supporting civic engagement are often the most challenging. Encourage the development of regional CSOs to mentor newly emerging citizens' initiatives or volunteer networks about how they can grow and influence Ukraine's reconstruction.
- **Allocate more funds directly to qualified CSOs and engage them in the co-planning of humanitarian assistance.** Ensure that development needs are addressed in parallel with humanitarian relief. Strengthen the links between humanitarian, development and peace-building actions. Establish a coalition to design a Ukrainian localization strategy that looks beyond the immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to include the long-term recovery agenda.
- **Capitalize on the growth of the domestic charitable sector.** Assist community-based groups to grow and connect to other funders, building on the inclination of citizens to donate to local causes. Explore how to create blended finance for projects mixing funds from donors, the private sector, philanthropic foundations and citizens.
- **Establish a Social Impact Investment Fund** to prototype solutions to acute social problems. This fund could include a mix of grants and subsidized loans. Announce competitions for organizations to offer solutions to the most critical social problems. Host social 'hackathons', and finance the winning projects. Carefully monitor the impact and suggest scalable solutions.
- **Support local champions who promote and practise inclusive recovery,** to help local self-government implement ideas at the local level. These champions can catalyse links across different sectors and enable recovery. Many voluntary groups currently fundraising for the war effort could become powerful community leaders due to their legitimacy and high levels of trust among the public.

- **Invest in training and mentorship**, especially for CSOs working with critically important and vulnerable groups. Scale up training for CSOs and all levels of government to promote a wide range of engagement and consultation mechanisms: citizen assemblies; town hall meetings; the ECCP; and needs-based assessments. Assist CSOs willing to provide social services in developing clear standards, costing, monitoring and marketing of their social services. Train and support civic monitors to conduct independent oversight of reconstruction tenders.
- **Strengthen civil society representation in the UDP** by establishing a Civil Society Council, similar to the existing Business Council. The two secretariats in Kyiv and Brussels should seek to engage both Ukrainian and diaspora organizations from countries with large Ukrainian communities in the recovery process.

Conclusion

Ukraine needs an inclusive, trust-based and collaborative framework to deliver recovery at scale. A new trust-based arrangement would decrease the cost of transactions, contribute to burden-sharing, scale up practices of mutual aid that have emerged during war, and ultimately ensure that the recovery serves as many people as possible, to a higher standard than a top-down process would. But a genuine revision of the social contract is necessary to make this inclusive recovery happen.

Three years into the war, the government of Ukraine is establishing key elements of a new recovery framework which involves planning, selection, delivery, monitoring and coordination of recovery projects. To date, these projects have mainly consisted of rebuilding critical physical and social infrastructure. The framework must recognize that human and community recovery is also of the utmost importance.

A strong partnership between the state, business, civil society and donors is crucial if Ukraine is to mitigate the negative consequences of war on the most vulnerable, help millions of refugees and IDPs to reintegrate after displacement, and cope with the economic and mental health difficulties resulting from the brutality of conflict. Social cohesion and unity can be harnessed to positive effect if all actors work together as 'Team Ukraine'.

Ukrainian civil society is starting to find its place in this new framework, primarily through assisting with planning, attracting donor funding and, most importantly, providing relief and assistance to those affected by the war. The sector wants a bigger role at all stages of delivery to strengthen social cohesion and the integrity of the process. But the current level of inclusion remains unsatisfactory. The barriers to greater CSO involvement are mainly related to chaotic planning, a lack of political will to genuinely engage with civil society, a lack of information about the recovery instruments, and weak capacity in local government. Donor policies already provide resources that groups can use to work in the community, but in practice the level of localization of delivery is low.

Despite strong cross-sectoral links between CSOs, significant gaps remain in terms of multi-level governance and coordination. For a positive change towards collaborative recovery to happen, Ukraine needs to connect myriad local actions into a powerful system with influence at the national level.¹²⁰ Horizontal connections should be strengthened by the links between all levels of government and civil society networks. Each sector and each governance level must play its role. Only through partnership will the result be greater than the sum of its parts.

¹²⁰ Wheatley, M. and Frieze, D. (2006), 'Using emergence to take social innovations to scale', Margaret J. Wheatley, <https://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html>.

Annex: The 2025 Chatham House survey of Ukrainian CSOs

Methodology

To conduct the latest iteration of its survey of CSOs, Chatham House partnered with 11 Ukrainian organizations and coalitions. These were: the International Renaissance Foundation; ISAR Ednannia; the Alliance of Ukrainian CSOs; the National Network for Development of Local Democracy; RISE Ukraine; the EU–Ukraine Civil Society Platform; the Network of Recourse Centres for Local Democracy; the Ukrainian Climate Network; the Ukrainian Women’s Congress; the League of the Strong; and the Women Leaders Coalition for Ukraine’s Future.

The March 2025 survey, conducted via SurveyMonkey in Ukrainian and made up of 21 structured questions and one ‘open’ question, was circulated to 7,000 registered CSOs. Of these, 1,112 responded, with 675 providing complete answers – a response rate of 16 per cent. (This is a lower response rate compared to 2022 and 2024.) We have analysed only complete responses for this research paper.

The geographical distribution of CSOs that completed the survey was quite diverse, consisting of Kyiv-based groups operating exclusively or mainly at the national level (20 per cent), regional-level groups (51 per cent), and groups working at both the national and regional levels (30 per cent). For each of the structured questions, respondents were asked to pick from a range of responses, with a specific instruction (choose one answer; choose three answers; choose all relevant answers) depending on the question. For several questions, there was also a blank text field to be filled out in the participant’s own words for ‘other’ responses.

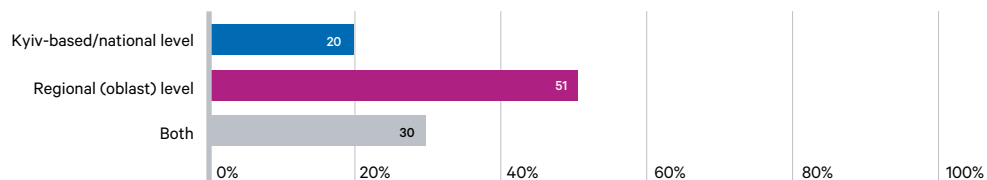
Most of the questions were repeated from the 2022 and 2024 surveys. This year, we added new questions related to the expectations around a possible ceasefire and its implications for recovery. We also took a deeper dive into the question of foreign aid, given the restructuring of USAID and the possible risks that this presents for future development assistance to Ukraine. Specific questions were added on this topic, asking how funders can support the transition of the Ukrainian humanitarian sector to focus more on development work, and how best to increase direct support to local CSOs and improve the sustainability of aid.

Chatham House’s team travelled to Kyiv to host a public discussion of the preliminary survey findings on 1 April 2025. This event, organized by the GIZ ‘Strengthening Communities in South and East Ukraine Through Localized Action (EMPOWER)’ programme, gathered a range of regional community leaders who provided humanitarian assistance, rapid recovery support and aided local self-governance in areas dealing with the direct consequences of the 2022 Russian invasion.

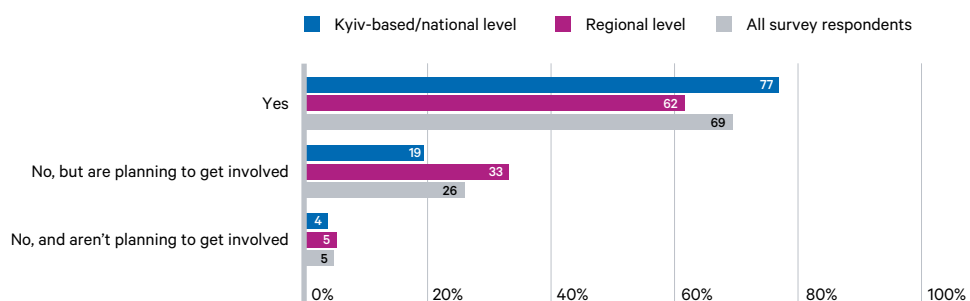
The full list of structured responses to the survey is provided below.

Full list of structured questions and results

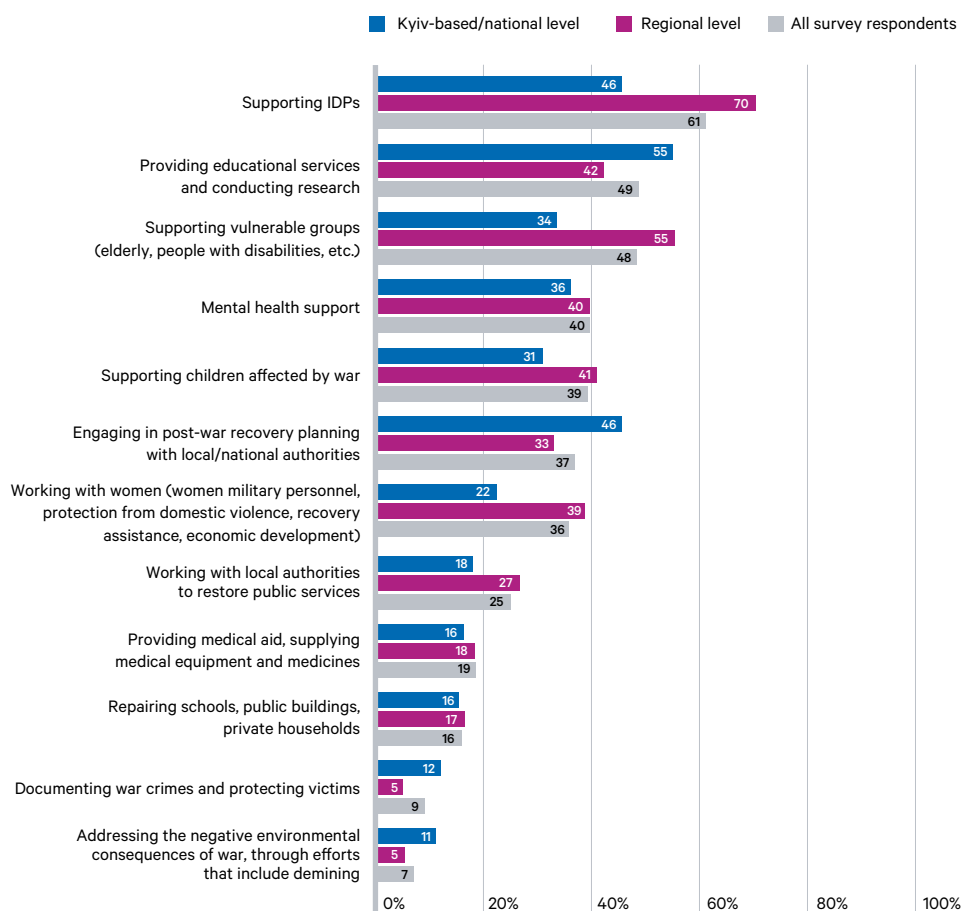
Question 1. Where does your organization primarily work? [choose one]



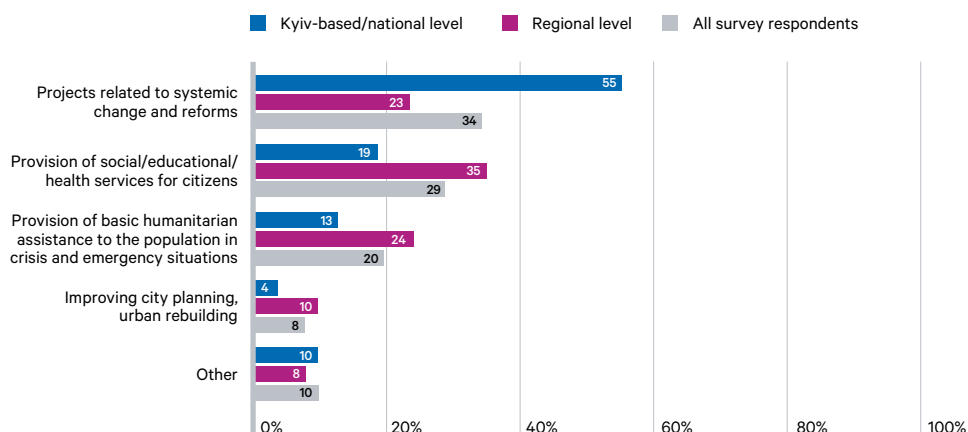
Question 2. Are you already involved in recovery efforts to repair the damage caused by the Russian invasion? [choose one]



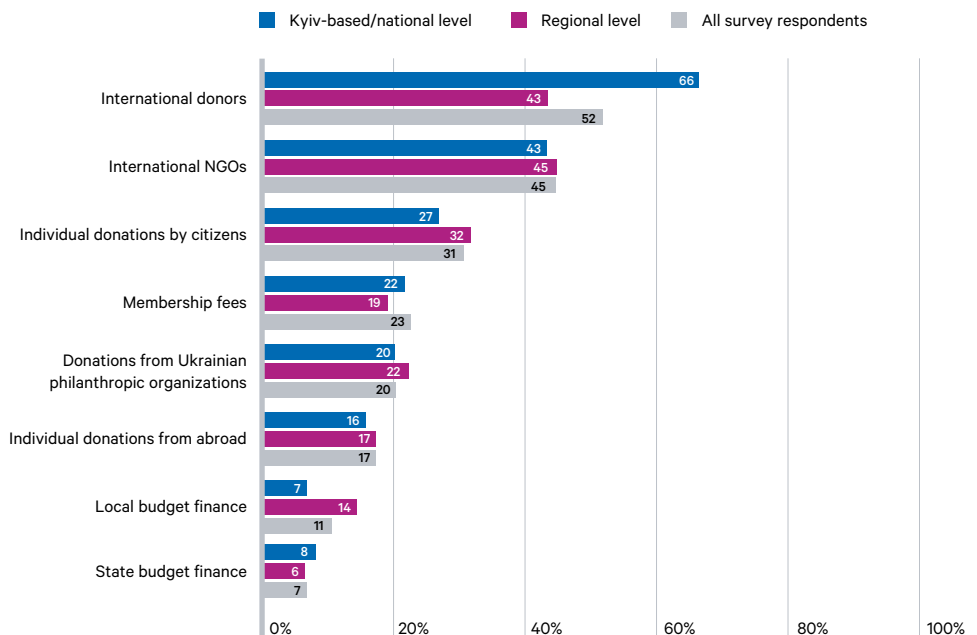
Question 3. If YES, what kind of activities have you been conducting since 24 February 2022? [multiple choice]



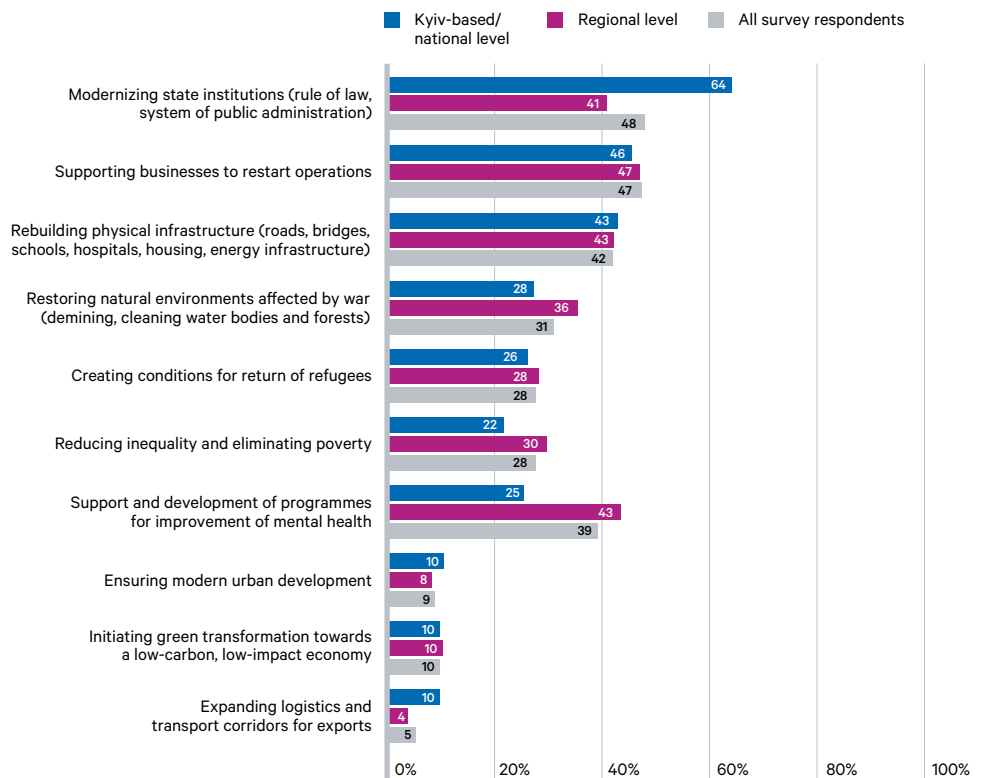
Question 4. How would you describe your activities related to recovery? [choose one]



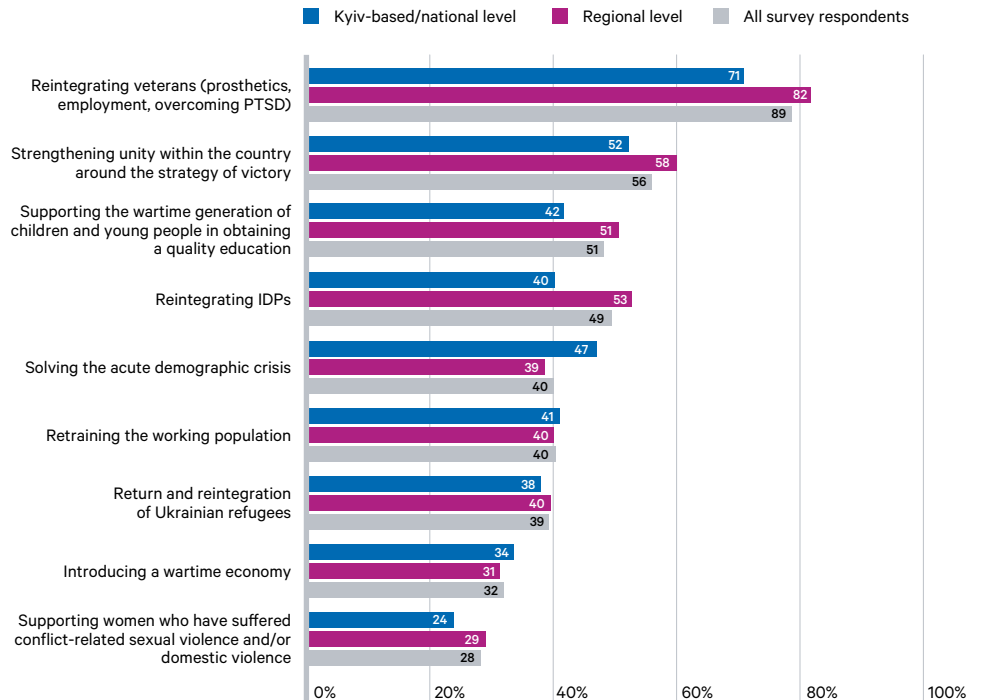
Question 5. How does your CSO currently finance recovery projects?
[multiple choice]



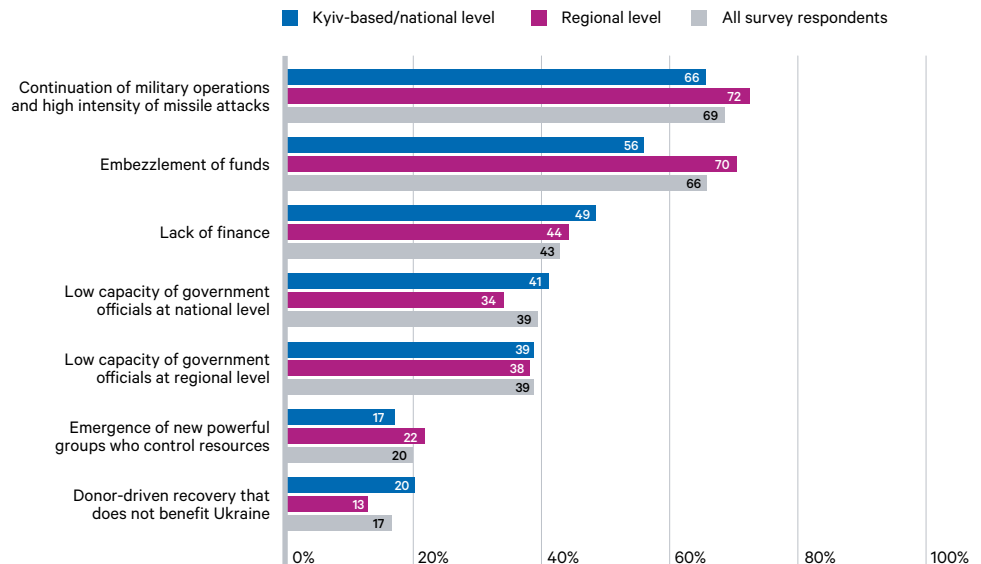
Question 6. Please select three priorities for recovery that should begin even while the war is ongoing? [choose three]



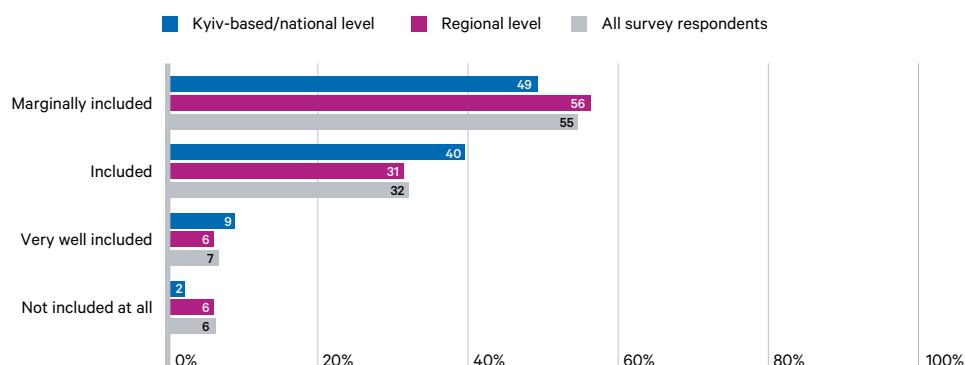
Question 7. What are the most pressing social challenges that should be addressed by the combined efforts of the government, business and civil society? [multiple choice]



Question 8. What are the three top risks for rebuilding Ukraine? [choose three]

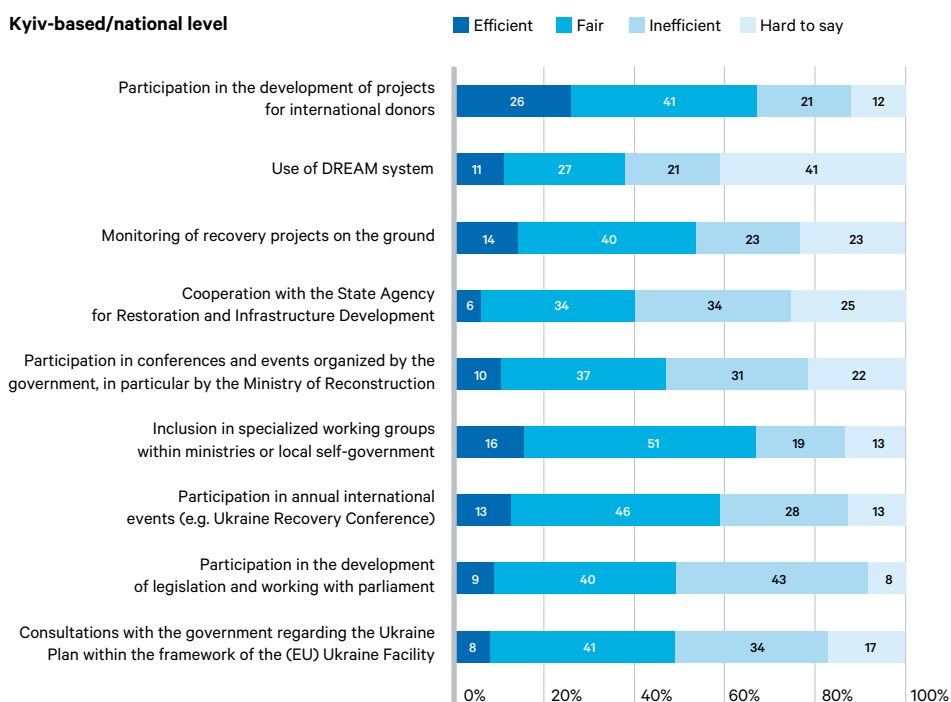


Question 9. How would you rate the inclusion of civil society in planning reconstruction to date? [choose one]



Question 10. How would you rate the efficiency of existing formats for involving civil society in recovery? [rate each format]

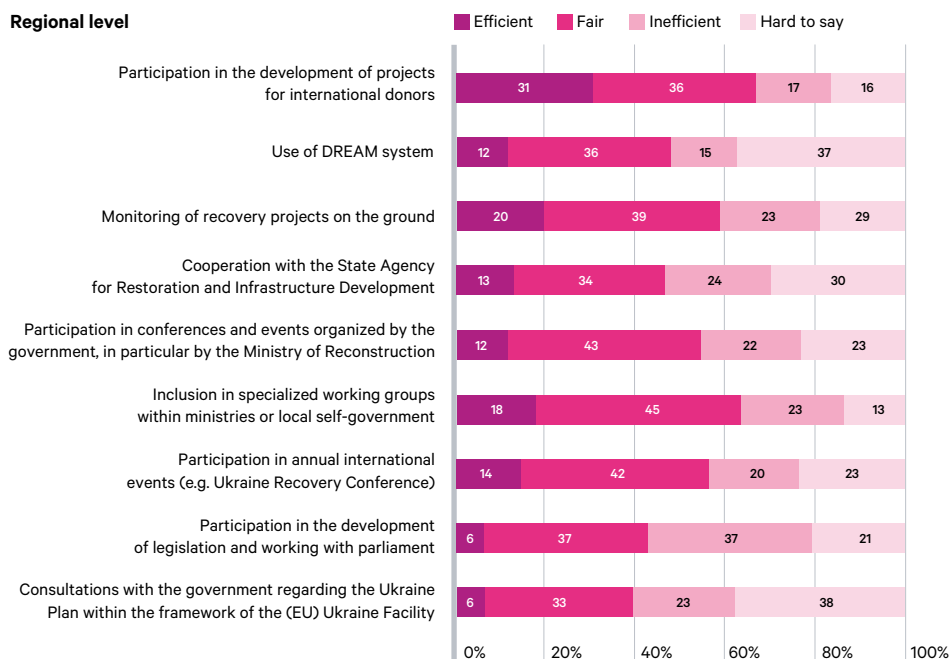
Kyiv-based/national level



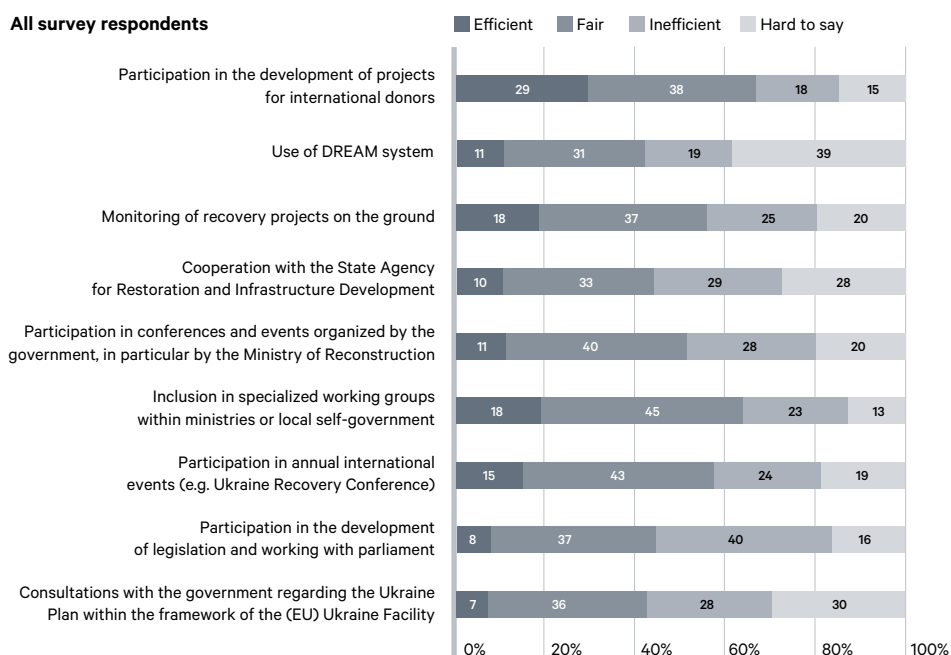
Mobilizing 'Team Ukraine' for a successful recovery

How the state, communities and citizens can rebuild the country together

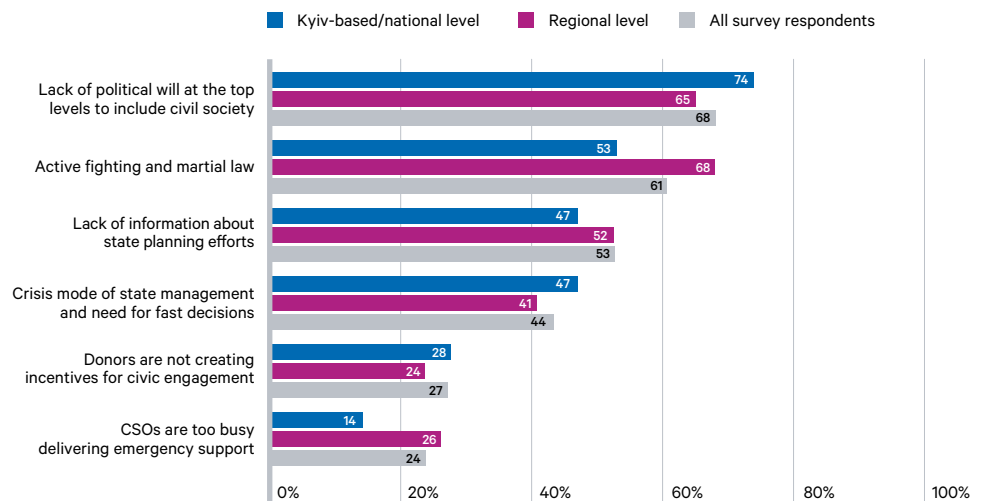
Regional level



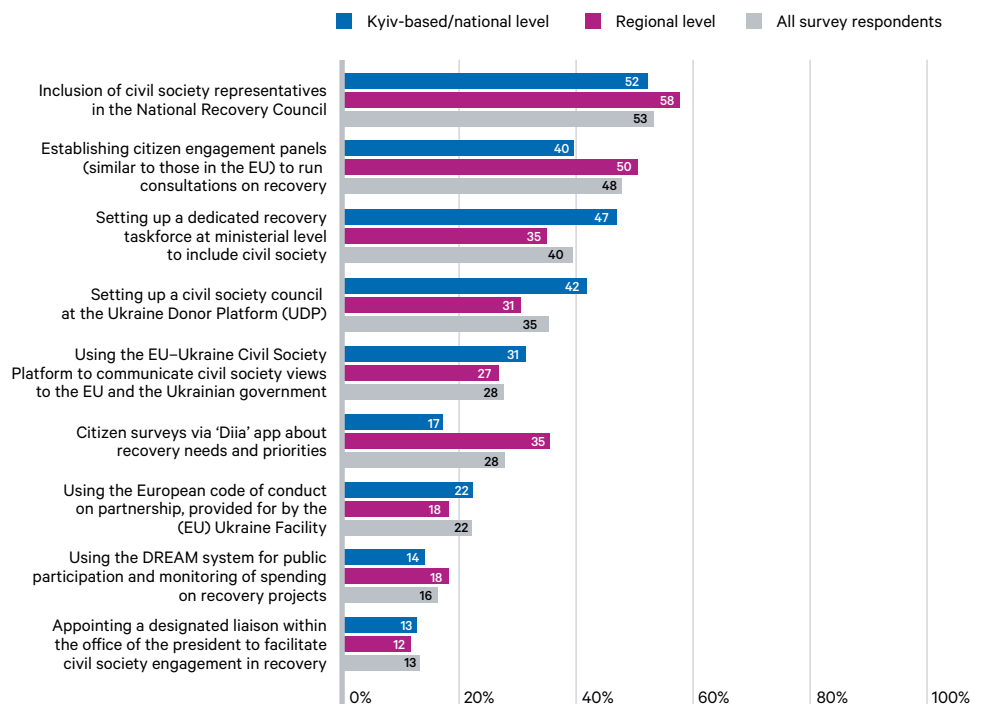
All survey respondents



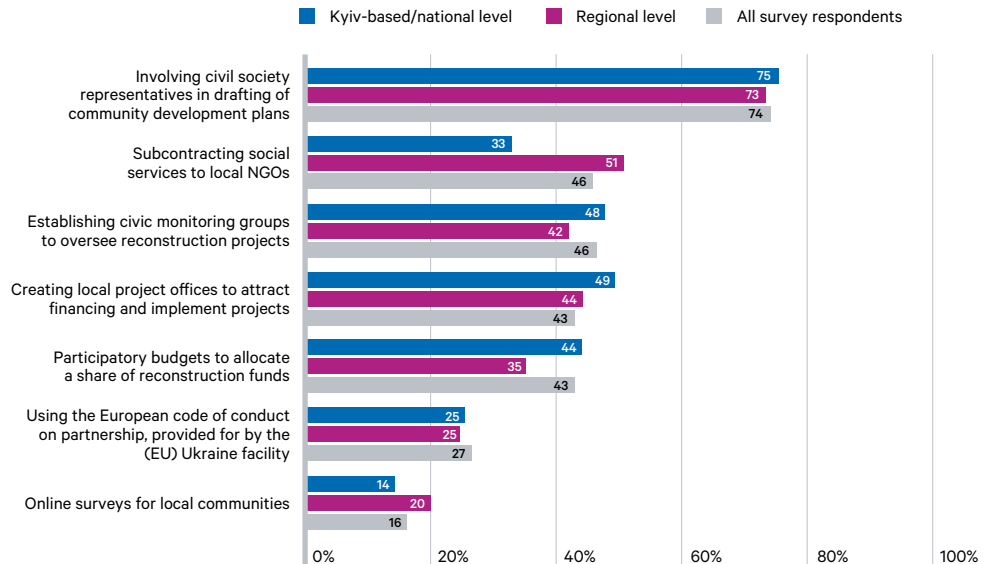
Question 11. What are the three main obstacles to stronger engagement of civil society in reconstruction at present? [choose three]



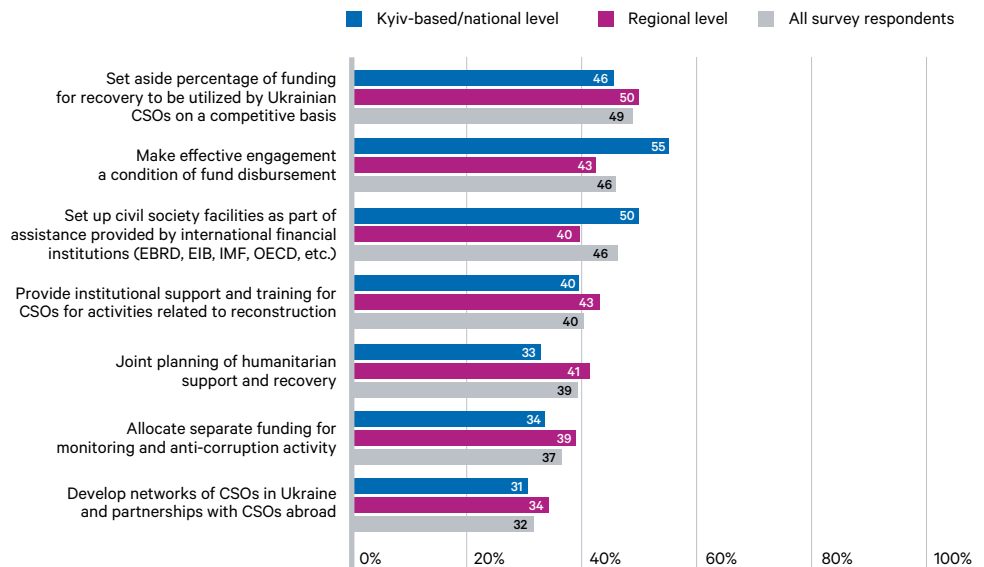
Question 12. What three models of effective engagement of civil society in recovery would you propose at present (under martial law) at national level? [choose three]



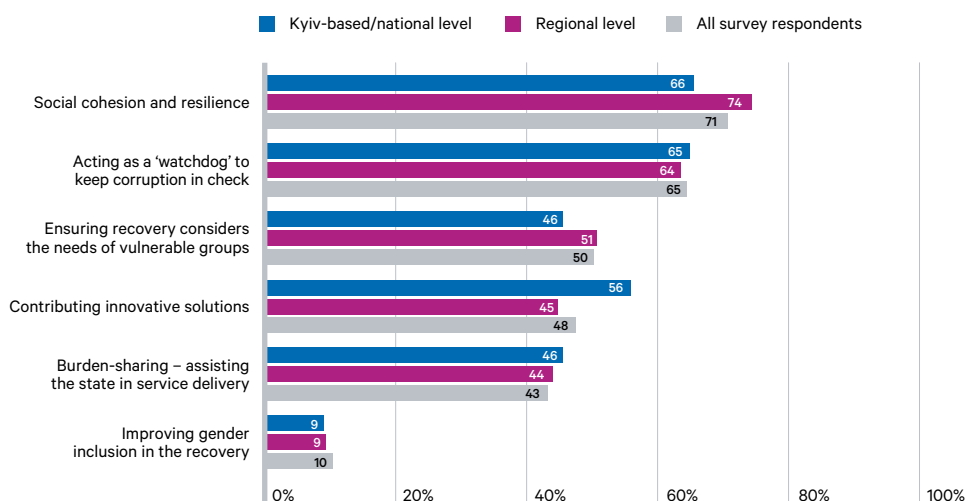
Question 13. What three models of effective engagement of civil society in recovery would you propose at present (under martial law) at regional level? [choose three]



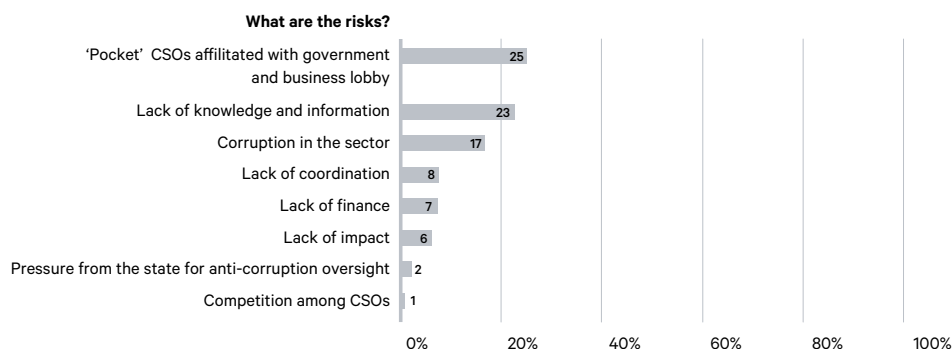
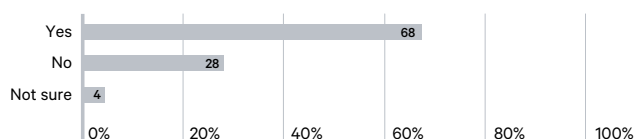
Question 14. How could external funders facilitate civil society engagement? [choose three]



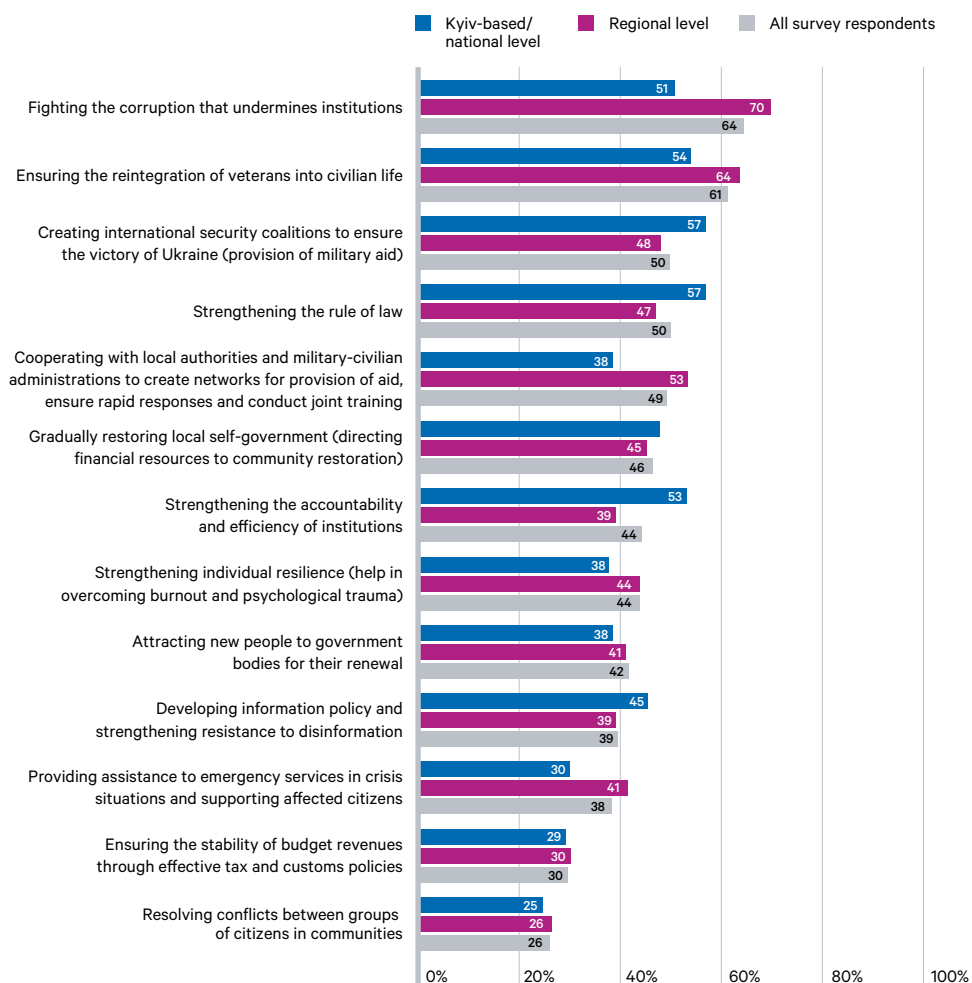
Question 15. What is the main value added of civil society engagement in Ukraine's recovery? [choose three]



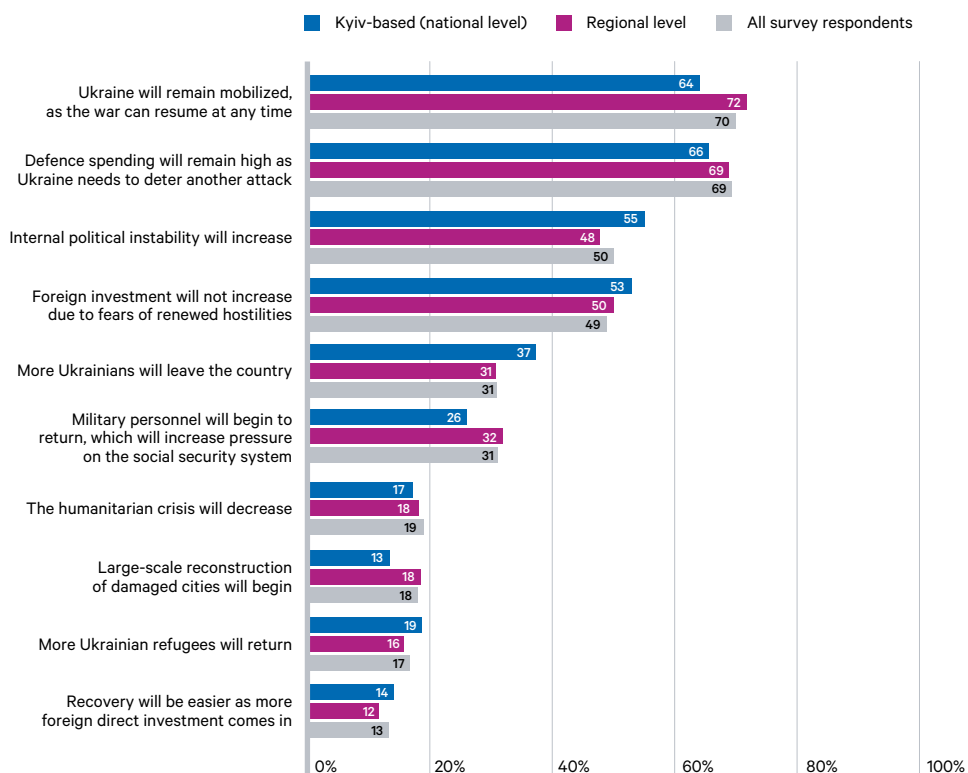
Question 16. Do you see certain risks and challenges related to CSOs' engagement in reconstruction processes?



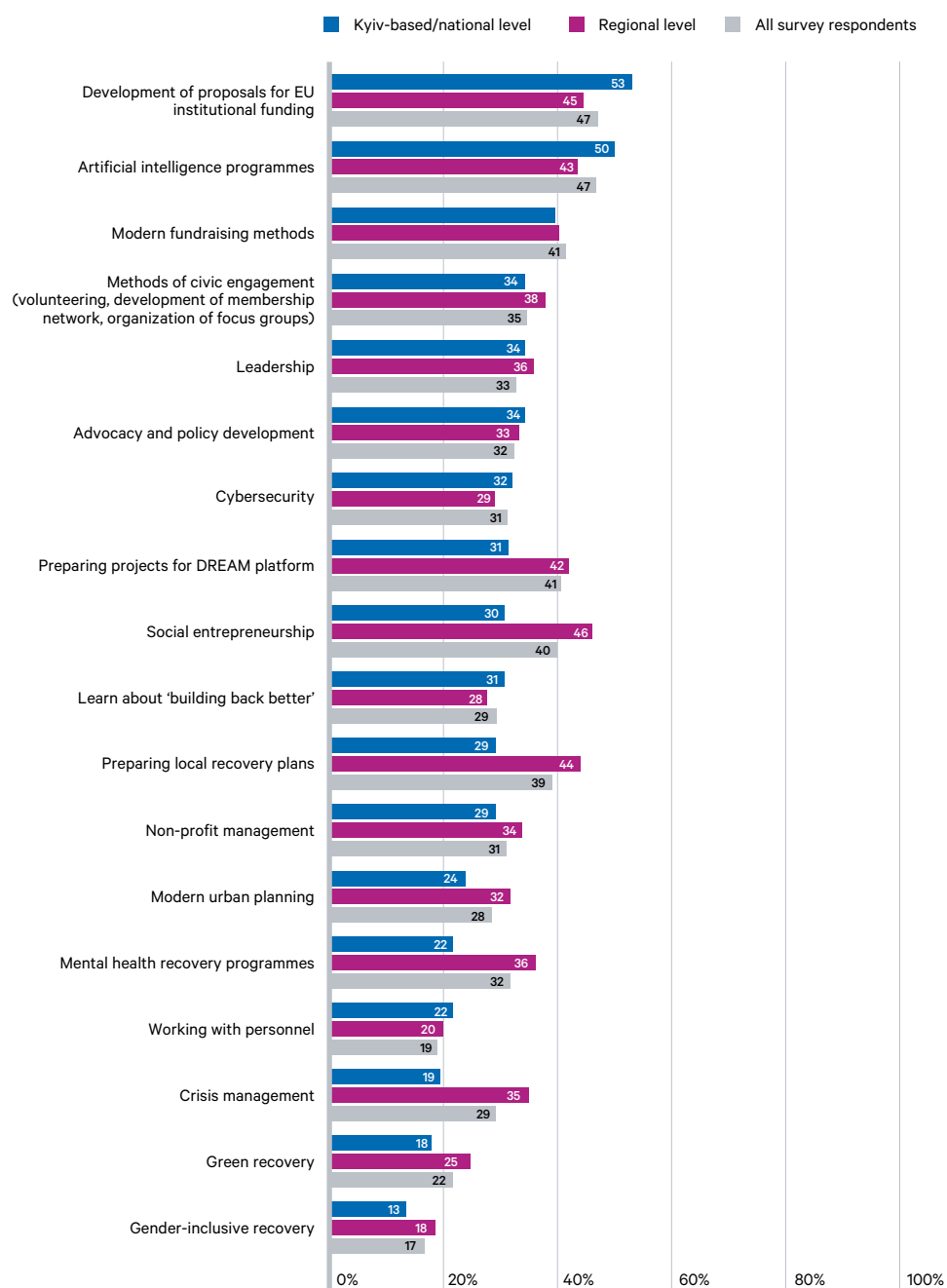
Question 17. Which elements of societal resilience should be prioritized during wartime? [multiple choice]



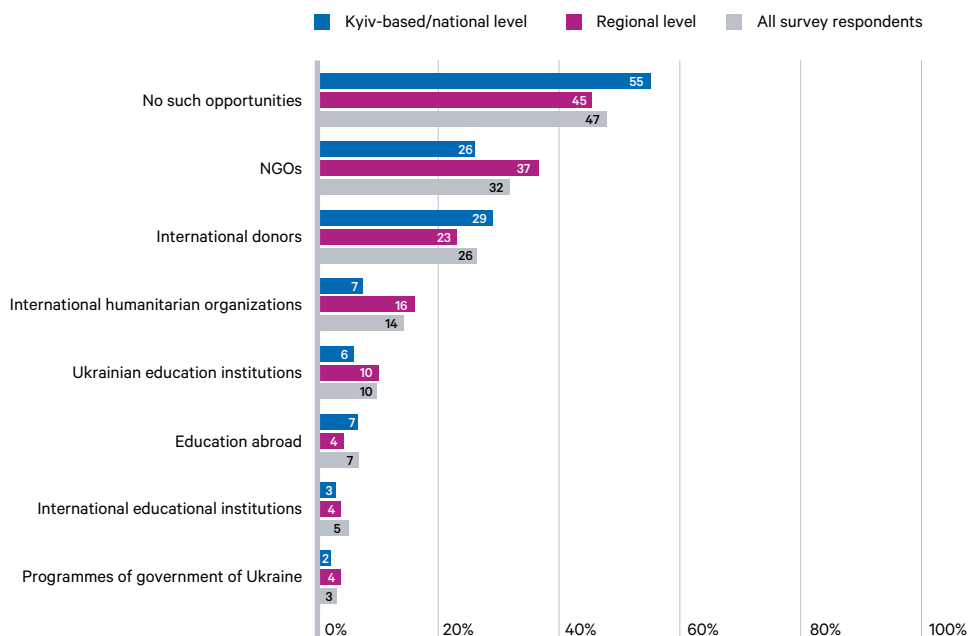
Question 18. What are the implications of a ceasefire on recovery (without a final peaceful settlement) for the internal situation in Ukraine?
[multiple choice]



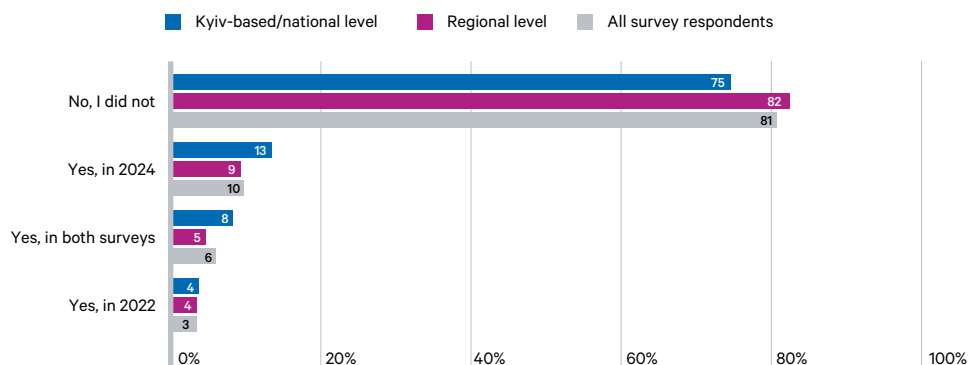
Question 19. What kind of training and skills (either personal or organizational) do you require for implementing recovery projects?



Question 20. Have you or members of your organization had the opportunity to upskill to manage recovery projects? If NO, please select the appropriate option. If YES, please indicate who offered this training [choose one]



Question 21. Did you participate in one or both of the previous Chatham House CSO surveys (in late 2022 or early 2024)?



About the author

Orysia Lutsevych OBE is head of the Ukraine Forum at Chatham House. She is also deputy director of the institute's Russia and Eurasia Programme.

Orysia's research focuses on social change, the role of civil society in democratic transition in Eastern Europe, and Ukraine's domestic and foreign policy. In 2022, Orysia launched an annual recovery survey of Ukrainian civil society. She also led the development of a barometer of resilience to foreign encroachment in 2024. She is the author of several Chatham House research publications, including *Giving civil society a stake in Ukraine's Recovery* (2023) and *Resilient Ukraine: Safeguarding Society from Russian Aggression* (with Mathieu Boulègue, 2020). Her media work includes contributions for the BBC, CNN, the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times* and *The Times*.

Prior to joining Chatham House as the institute's first Robert Bosch academy fellow, Orysia led the start-up of Europe House Georgia and was executive director of the Open Ukraine Foundation. She has master's degrees in international relations from Lviv State University, and in public administration from the University of Missouri.

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Any remaining errors are the sole responsibility of the author.



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Cover image: Volunteers from the Ukrainian NGO The Seven Storey Mountain gather to rebuild Pryzler's Inn Yard as part of 'Building Ukraine Together' volunteer camp.

Photo credit: Copyright © NGO Youth Centre The Seven Storey Mountain

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