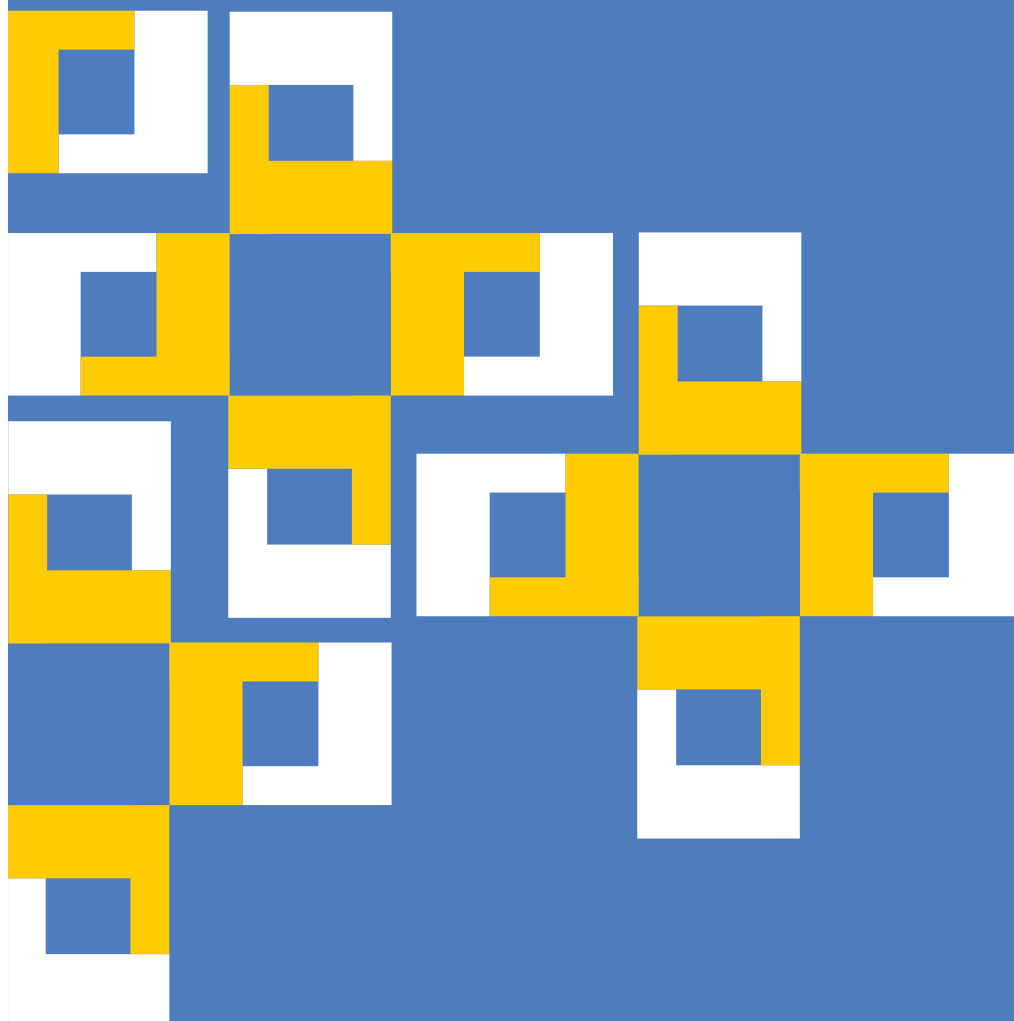


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# RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR

Periodic report based on monitoring materials  
from selected regions of Ukraine



2026

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

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KYIV – 2026

**RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR.** Periodic report based on monitoring materials from selected regions of Ukraine. **ISSUE NO. 16. JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2026** / Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research. Kyiv. April 2026. 33 p.

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

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

The report is based on data on events in 12 oblasts of Ukraine which are important for shaping a policy of national resilience. The project's target oblasts were selected based on analysis of changes in cohesion of local populations due to the outbreak of military operations and include Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zakarpattia, Zaporizhzhia, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernivtsi, and Chernihiv oblasts. For data collection, we distinguish between the temporarily occupied areas, frontline and de-occupied areas, and relatively rear areas.

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

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
ASC	Administrative Services Centre
CMA	City Military Administration
DPR	Donetsk People's Republic
EW	Electronic Warfare
GAB	Guided Aerial Bomb
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IO	Influence Operation
LPR	Luhansk People's Republic
NABU	National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine
NACP	National Agency on Corruption Prevention
NPP	Nuclear Power Plant
OCU	Orthodox Church of Ukraine
OMA	Oblast Military Administration
RF	Russian Federation
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
SAPO	Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office
SESU	State Emergency Service of Ukraine
SMO	Special Military Operation
TOA	Temporarily Occupied Area
TPP	Thermal Power Plant
TRSSC	Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre
UGCC	Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
UN	United Nations Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UOC (MP)	Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate

# SUMMARY

## The situation at the front line

In January–February 2026, the situation at the front was marked by the continued high intensity of hostilities and a further deterioration in security in a number of areas. Although in some sections Russian troops advanced more slowly than in the previous few months, the overall level of threat remained high, grey zones continued to expand, the front line moved closer to large population centres, and Russia systematically carried out devastating strikes against civilian infrastructure across the territory of Ukraine, particularly in the capital.

The situation remained most tense in Donetsk oblast, where active hostilities continued along almost the entire front line. Russian troops were moving through the Kramatorsk–Sloviansk agglomeration towards key defensive lines. Regular strikes were carried out against residential neighbourhoods, transport, commercial and public utility infrastructure, expanding the area of direct danger for the civilian population.

In the southern sector, in Zaporizhzhia oblast, the situation remained unstable. In Kherson oblast, the key challenge was not so much movement of the front line as sustained artillery and drone pressure on right-bank populated areas. Russian troops carried out deliberate strikes against civilians, residential development, energy and water infrastructure facilities, and used remote mining tactics. This maintained a situation of chronic danger even in the absence of significant changes directly along the line of combat contact.

Along Ukraine's north-eastern lines, enemy activity remained high in Kharkiv oblast, primarily on the Southern Slobozhanskyi and Kupiansk axes. Regular assault operations and the high number of combat engagements placed constant pressure on the Ukrainian defence, seeking to exhaust Ukrainian forces and maintain sustained tension in this section of the front.

In Dnipropetrovsk oblast, attacks by drones, missiles and aircraft on residential buildings, transport infrastructure, and industrial enterprises continued. In Odesa oblast, pressure on port, logistics, and energy infrastructure persisted, posing both security and economic risks. In the border areas of Vinnytsia oblast, engineering fortifications were being set up in response to risks associated with the Transnistrian direction.

Overall, this indicates that the zone of direct military threat continued to expand in January and February 2026, despite the relatively slower pace of enemy advances in some sections, while the burden on governance, life-support systems and the civilian resilience of communities increased.

## I. TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED AREAS

Further political, economic, and social integration into the Russian system of governance was observed in the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts. At the same time, repression, the militarisation of society, and the transformation of local identity intensified.

A significant proportion of the cities captured after 2022 have been almost completely destroyed which substantially complicates the prospects for their recovery.

The integration of the occupied areas into the legal and administrative framework of the RF was ongoing. Specifically, preparations have begun for elections to Russia's State Duma, intended to create an appearance of political legitimacy for the occupying administrations.

In parallel, the invaders continued their policy of demographic transformation in the TOAs. Because of the war, repression and economic decline, a significant proportion of the local population has been forced to leave the occupied areas. Instead, military personnel, officials, representatives of the security structures, and civilian specialists arrived from various regions of Russia to replace the local population.

At the same time, a system of social and economic subordination of the population was taking shape in the occupied areas. It included the expropriation of property, coercion into interaction with the occupying administrations, the criminalisation of any manifestations of disloyalty, and the use of repressive mechanisms to control society. Such practices undermined social ties and intensified the atmosphere of fear.

Systemic disruptions to electricity, water, and heat supply remained a characteristic feature of life in the occupied areas. The destruction of infrastructure as a result of hostilities, limited resources for its restoration, and the inefficiency of the occupying administrations led to a greater dependence of the population on humanitarian assistance.

The education system is seen as a distinct instrument of influence. Through the militarisation of the educational process, the persecution of families whose children study under Ukrainian curricula, and the involvement of young people in military-patriotic projects, the occupying authorities sought to foster the loyalty of the new generation to Russian state ideology.

Overall, these processes were shaping the following three key mechanisms of control in the temporarily occupied areas:

- economic subordination of the population,
- systemic repression and an atmosphere of fear,
- long-term transformation of the social and identity structure of society.

In the long term, this policy was aimed at creating a new social and demographic environment in the occupied areas – one that was more loyal to the Russian authorities and less connected to Ukrainian national-civic identity.

## II. FRONTLINE AND DE-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Chernihiv oblasts operated under conditions of constant stress-testing of governance systems. Key decisions in security, evacuation, life-support, education, social support, and the economy increasingly depended on the current military situation, the condition of critical infrastructure, and the availability of resources. In these circumstances, the ability to rapidly respond to new crises became the main criterion of effective governance.

The security factor remained the main determinant of the quality of life, social endurance, and community cohesion. Large-scale attacks against energy, transport, public utility, and social infrastructure had not only a material but also a systemic effect: they restricted access to basic services, disrupted logistics, and complicated education, health care, evacuation, and business activity. This was particularly acute in Donetsk and Kherson oblasts where security pressure directly determined whether areas remained habitable.

The experience of the winter of 2026 showed that, at the governance level, decisive importance lay in preparedness for different scenarios, contingency planning for the provision of energy, fuel, and water, the functioning of social services, adequate communication with the population, and workable evacuation mechanisms.

In some frontline areas, people's physical and emotional exhaustion was growing. Constant shelling, losses, a prolonged state of alert, and uncertainty about the future reduced the planning horizon, fuelled pessimistic scenarios, and eroded trust in institutions.

The highest level of trust remained with those institutions that interacted directly with the population and ensured basic functionality – at the level of communities, public utilities, social assistance, education, and local response. By contrast, scepticism towards higher levels of governance continued to grow, especially where communication, transparency and explanation of the logic behind decisions were lacking.

Key social groups, including veterans and war participants, IDPs, and vulnerable categories, received support, but its delivery remained uneven. Alongside the expansion of assistance programmes in housing, rehabilitation, and employment, problems of access, bureaucratic barriers, and insufficient state communication with service recipients persisted, periodically fuelling social tensions.

The economic sustainability of the areas was shaped by a combination of losses and adaptation mechanisms. The large-scale relocation of businesses from the frontline areas led to significant budget losses, while new economic centres emerged in the areas to which businesses relocated. A key role was played by

decisions that enabled businesses to continue operating, as well as by grants, tax relief, and access to energy sources.

International support remained one of the key resources for preserving the functionality of the areas, but the risk of unevenness and reduced donor engagement was growing.

Politics of memory, decolonisation, and symbolic practices became important elements in supporting identity and resilience, but they also required sensitive communication.

A sense of injustice driven by unequal access to resources, the impunity of corrupt practices, and dissatisfaction with the quality of communication from the authorities remained one of the most serious internal threats to cohesion.

### III. RELATIVELY REAR AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

Strikes on energy facilities, freezing temperatures, blackouts, and accidents had a direct impact on transport, healthcare, education, social services, and the economy even in relatively rear areas. The governance system responded promptly, but often without an established reserve of resilience. This meant that future stability would depend not only on response capacity but also on systemic investment in backup and autonomous solutions.

Small and medium-sized businesses responded to changing conditions, including energy risks, labour shortages, and falling demand, by transforming their operating models or scaling back. At the same time, state and local support programmes, particularly in the energy independence area, were playing an increasingly important role.

A multi-level system for the integration of war veterans was taking shape in the oblasts, ranging from rehabilitation and housing adaptation to employment and veteran entrepreneurship. However, a shortage of specialists, limited infrastructure for inclusion, and the fragmentation of some initiatives constrained the development of a coherent system.

Housing for IDPs remained a key structural challenge. Despite the introduction of new instruments, including vouchers, social housing, and compensation mechanisms, demand for affordable housing substantially exceeded available resources. In some oblasts, this was compounded by high market prices and problems in the operation of temporary accommodation facilities, which increased social vulnerability and intergroup tensions.

Monitoring visits identified systemic problems in temporary accommodation sites for IDPs, including inadequate conditions, violations of rights, and weak oversight. This pointed to a gap between declared decisions and their implementation at the local level.

Volunteering, charitable initiatives, and cross-sectoral cooperation continued to play a key role in supporting communities. In parallel, certain issues, including mobilisation, the use of resources, and issues of social justice, created localised areas of tension and affected levels of trust.

The issue of mobilisation procedures remained sensitive and potentially conflict-prone. Individual incidents involving TRSSCs and law enforcement agencies contributed to a negative tone in public discourse and deepened distrust towards mobilisation procedures.

# I. TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED AREAS

(DONETSK, ZAPORIZHZHIA, AND KHERSON OBLASTS)

## 1. Changes in the system of governance

### 1.1. Decisions of occupying authorities

Within the monitoring period, the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts saw a further deepening of their political, economic and social integration into the Russian system of governance. At the same time, a further intensification of repressive practices, the militarisation of society, and the transformation of local identity were reported.

#### >> PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE RF

The Russia-installed authorities [launched preparations](#) for holding ‘elections’ to Russia’s State Duma in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine. The vote was scheduled for 20 September 2026 and was to take place under a mixed electoral system: half of the deputies were to be elected through party lists and the other half in single-member constituencies.

The occupying administration [planned](#), for the first time, to include the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine in the all-Russian electoral process. To this end, the occupied areas, excluding Crimea, were to be divided into seven single-member constituencies: three in Donetsk oblast, two in Luhansk oblast, and one each in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts.

Specifically, according to the occupying administration, more than 420,000 voters [were allegedly registered](#) in the so-called single-member constituency of Kherson oblast as of 1 January 2026. At the same time, Russia’s ruling party, United Russia, began preparations for the internal party selection of candidates, scheduled for 25–31 May 2026 in the occupied part of Kherson oblast.

The declared representation model demonstrated a substantial disproportionality between the occupied areas and other entities of the RF. For example, Rostov region, whose population is comparable to that of the so-called DPR, was to have seven deputies, whereas the occupied part of Donetsk oblast was to have three.

This was likely linked to the fact that the actual population in the occupied areas was significantly smaller than that declared by the occupying authorities. At the same time, preparations for the elections formed part of a broader policy aimed at consolidating Russian control over the temporarily occupied areas and incorporating them into the Russian political framework.

#### >> ZAPORIZHZHIA NPP

The occupying administration continued taking steps towards the formal integration of Russia-controlled Zaporizhzhia NPP into the legal framework of the RF. On 18 February, Rostekhnadzor, the Russian regulatory body for technological and nuclear safety, [issued](#) an operating licence for Unit 2 of Zaporizhzhia NPP. Earlier, similar licences had been granted for Unit 1 and for the plant’s spent nuclear fuel storage facility. Ukrainian experts stressed that full compliance with technical regulations and operating procedures was impossible without the involvement of Ukraine’s legitimate operator and national regulator. They also warned against possible attempts to return the plant to power generation, which, under conditions of occupation and limited international oversight, would create additional nuclear and radiation safety risks.

The militarisation of the plant site continued. Russian troops used the plant premises to store equipment and station personnel. After video footage from Zaporizhzhia NPP site was made public, Russian forces [moved](#)

equipment from open areas near the reactors into hangars and garages. However, Ukrainian drone surveillance recorded the installation of firing positions on the roofs of reactor buildings, as well as the deployment of electronic warfare antennas, reconnaissance systems, and drone control systems.

In January, part of the power transmission lines [was repaired](#) with the participation of technicians from Ukraine's electrical grid operator under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) mission. According to the Agency's Director General, Rafael Grossi, this was already the fourth temporary ceasefire for repair work.

Overall, the situation surrounding Zaporizhzhia NPP remained one of the key sources of nuclear and technological safety risks in the oblast because of a combination of the site's militarisation, limited international oversight, and attempted integration of the plant into the Russian energy system.

### >> HIKE IN PUBLIC UTILITY TARIFFS

From 1 January 2026, tariffs for housing and public utility services [rose significantly](#) in the so-called DPR. A further increase was scheduled for 1 October 2026. According to official figures, utility tariffs converted into hryvnias were approximately as follows: heating – around UAH 1,082 per gigacalorie, or around UAH 13 per square metre; water supply and wastewater services – around UAH 36; waste collection – around UAH 28 per person; electricity – between UAH 2.52 and 3.83 per kilowatt-hour.

Despite the hike, tariff levels in the occupied areas remained lower than in most oblasts of Ukraine. In parallel with that, the occupying authorities [declared](#) their intention to raise public utility tariffs by around 33% annually in order to align them with tariff levels in other Russian regions.

Systemic problems with the quality of public utility services also remained. Specifically, prolonged disruptions to water supply were recorded across a large part of the occupied areas. In some population centres, a zero wastewater tariff was even introduced for households that in practice had no stable access to water.

### >> PLANS TO REBUILD DESTROYED CITIES

The occupying authorities once again revived claims about the possible reconstruction of destroyed cities in the occupied part of Donetsk oblast. In particular, new master plans for Bakhmut, Kurakhove, and Velyka Novosilka [were scheduled](#) to be developed in 2026. At the same time, representatives of planning organisations stressed that these population centres remained within a danger zone, making any full assessment of their reconstruction prospects impossible. According to them, drafting these master plans did not signal the start of reconstruction but merely laid the groundwork for further decisions at the federal level.

Despite this, the issue of reconstruction was actively used in the information policy of the occupying administration. Specifically, public statements [underscored](#) that the future development of Bakhmut could be based on the restoration of industrial enterprises, including salt extraction, production of well-known sparkling wines, and processing of clay for the ceramics industry.

Mariupol was presented as the main site of large-scale reconstruction, which the Russian authorities were turning into a showcase for their claimed reconstruction success. Nevertheless, the results of this work remained limited. An [analysis](#) of satellite imagery of central Mariupol showed that at least one third of damaged or destroyed buildings had not been restored, while some demolished residential buildings had been replaced by empty plots with no signs of construction. In addition, new residential buildings were often assigned different addresses, effectively depriving the owners of destroyed housing of the possibility to claim flats in the new buildings.

Overall, statements about the large-scale reconstruction of cities in the occupied areas were to a large extent declarative in nature and were used as part of propaganda policy.

### >> STAFFING POLICY

On 5 February, the occupying administration of the left-bank part of Kherson oblast [approved](#) a so-called Human Resources Development Programme until 2030. According to official data, the most acute labour shortages were recorded in agriculture, construction, health care, and education. To address them, the authorities planned to retrain between 12,000 and 18,000 people each year, while also giving priority in

employment to veterans of the so-called SMO and their family members. The Programme also provided for the creation of conditions to encourage citizens of the RF to relocate to the occupied areas.

#### >> **TIGHTENING ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF THE POPULATION**

In early February, reports emerged of increased administrative and psychological pressure on residents of the temporarily occupied part of Zaporizhzhia oblast. According to [activists](#) of the Yellow Ribbon movement, representatives of the occupying administration in Tokmak were threatening local residents with inclusion in a 'register of controlled persons' in response to complaints, public criticism, or refusal to cooperate. Being placed on such a list could result in travel restrictions, dismissal from employment, financial restrictions, reduced access to education and health care, as well as regular summonses to law enforcement agencies controlled by the occupying authorities.

#### >> **RISKS OF THE FORCED REMOVAL OF CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES**

In early February, reports emerged that a mechanism for the forced removal of children from families was to be imposed from 1 March onwards in the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast. According to [activists](#) of the Yellow Ribbon movement, such measures could primarily target families in which adoption or guardianship had been formalised under Ukrainian documents.

The occupying guardianship authorities were to be granted the power to designate such children as children without parental care, remove them from their families, and transfer them either to Russian boarding institutions or for adoption by Russian citizens. Such practices posed a risk of further forced transfers of children and their integration into the Russian social system.

## 2. Humanitarian situation

The humanitarian situation remained particularly severe in occupied Oleshky, Kherson oblast, which lies in close proximity to the front line. According to [local sources](#) and [volunteers](#), the city was effectively cut off: Russian forces restricted the entry and exit of civilian transport, while roads around the populated area were mined, making evacuation impossible. The city faced an acute shortage of food, medications and medical care, most shops and pharmacies were closed, and the delivery of humanitarian supplies was virtually impossible. Locals also reported that emergency services had only limited capacity to respond and hospitalise the sick. Because of the prolonged destruction of infrastructure, the city had already been facing serious problems with electricity, water, and gas supply for several years. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the city's morgue was not functioning and there was little capacity to organise burials, leaving the bodies of those killed unburied for prolonged periods.

In the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast, access to health care services was deteriorating. Yellow Ribbon activists [reportedly said](#) that the occupying administration had reduced spending on the treatment of people with diabetes and had switched some patients from modern foreign medications to cheaper Russian insulin. Residents reported a deterioration in their condition following the change in treatment. Additionally, in Enerhodar, patients were also being placed under the care of family doctors from Russia [without their consent](#) and with no possibility of choosing another specialist. In the context of medical staff shortages, this could further worsen access to quality health care. The situation was particularly difficult for older people and patients with chronic diseases who had been under the care of specific doctors for years.

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

In the temporarily occupied part of Donetsk oblast, cases of forced mobilisation of local residents into the armed formations of the RF were recorded, including persons with disabilities and serious diseases. [According to](#) the National Resistance Center, such mobilised individuals were often used on the first line of assault to identify Ukrainian positions. Reports indicated that residents of the occupied areas were frequently sent to the front without proper medical examinations or military training.

## 3. Work on identity

For the first time, the RF [published](#) official data on the number of Ukrainian citizens who had applied for temporary asylum on its territory. According to these figures, since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion nearly 100,000 people had obtained this status, more than 83,000 of them in 2022 alone, after which the number of applications fell significantly. These figures stand in sharp contrast to earlier [claims](#) by the Russian authorities about the alleged presence of millions of Ukrainian refugees in the RF. Given the restrictions in Russian legislation on the length of stay without formal status, as well as the subsequent practice of acquiring Russian citizenship, it may be assumed that the displacement of residents of the occupied areas was used not only as an instrument of control, but also as a mechanism for their legal and political integration into the Russian framework. In this sense, the process was not limited to documenting population movements – it also served to facilitate their further incorporation into Russia's legal and socio-political system.

On 14 February, Volodymyr Saldo, the Russia-appointed governor of the occupied part of Kherson oblast, [stated](#) that the ethnic composition of the oblast had become 'more diverse' following the onset of the full-scale invasion. According to him, specialists from various regions of Russia had arrived to work in the occupied part of the oblast, along with military personnel, some of whom intended to settle there permanently.

In effect, this was a policy of resettling Russian citizens in the occupied areas. Military personnel, employees of security agencies, officials of the occupying authorities, and civilian specialists, including doctors, teachers, and engineers were arriving in the oblast. In parallel, the forced outflow of the local population continued because of the war, repression, economic decline, and mobilisation pressure.

As a result, a new demographic balance, more loyal to the occupying authorities, was taking shape. Those arriving to work in the occupying structures often received higher salaries, service housing, and other benefits, thus creating a distinct social group that was economically dependent on the Russia-installed authorities.

## 3.1. Changes in education standards

The occupying authorities continued measures to militarise education and control children's learning. In the left-bank areas of Kherson oblast, representatives of the occupying administration, together with the police, [were carrying out raids](#) to identify families whose children were not attending Russian schools. According to the occupying administration of Kakhovka, the checks were being conducted in the so-called 15-kilometre zone from the Dnipro River, where children remained but schools were not operating. During such checks, representatives of the occupying authorities, accompanied by police officers, visited families and pressured parents either to agree to distance learning under Russian curricula or to send their children for face-to-face learning in neighbouring population centres.

On 18 January, the Russian occupiers [took](#) 24 teenagers from the occupied part of Kherson oblast to Volgograd to take part in the Pride of the Nation. Path of Development project. The children, whom propaganda described as children of SMO veterans, were placed in the Avangard defence and sports camp, where they were taught the basics of military specialisations, drone operation, cybersecurity, and first aid in simulated combat

conditions. The Avangard camp, part of a network of Russian military-patriotic education centres under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence of the RF, was used for the initial military training of young people and for fostering loyalty to Russian state ideology. Throughout 2025, at least 59 children from the left-bank parts of Kherson oblast were sent to this camp.

Furthermore, on 30 January, the occupying authorities [announced](#) plans to open two cadet classes of Russia's Investigative Committee in the village of Prymorske, located in what they call Skadovsk 'administrative district'. Representatives of the RF Investigative Committee signed an agreement with the administration of a local school.

Changes in the content of educational curricula were also recorded in the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia oblast. Specifically, there were plans to introduce a course entitled 'Learning through Service'. Yellow Ribbon activists [said](#) that under this initiative, schoolchildren would be required to carry out 'social tasks' assigned by state bodies, non-profit organisations, and businesses. A similar course was already [being introduced](#) in the Russian education system. Experts noted that, in practice, such a model could be used both as a tool of ideological influence and as a means of involving young people in state-led projects under the guise of social activity.

## 3.2 Freedom of religion

According to [most.ks.ua](#), before the outbreak of the full-scale invasion, Kherson oblast was characterised by a high degree of confessional pluralism. 990 religious organisations representing 38 denominations were operating in the oblast as of early 2021.

Following the occupation, this system was almost completely ruined. As of 31 January 2026, only 175 religious organisations were registered under Russian legislation in the occupied areas of the oblast, and the confessional landscape had narrowed to just three strands.

The overwhelming majority of registered communities, around 86%, belonged to structures of the Russian Orthodox Church. Other denominations were represented only by a small number of Protestant communities and one Muslim community registered in 2025.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had effectively disappeared from the legal religious landscape. Their property had been transferred to local administrations or seized by representatives of the ROC, while a significant proportion of the clergy had been forced to leave the occupied areas.

Overall, a monopolised religious system was taking shape in the occupied parts of Kherson oblast, in which the Russian Orthodox Church acted as a key partner of the occupying authorities, while the activities of other denominations were substantially restricted.

## II. FRONTLINE AND DE-OCCUPIED AREAS

(DNIPROPETROVSK, DONETSK, ZAPORIZHZHIA, MYKOLAIV, KHARKIV, KHERSON, AND CHERNIHIV OBLASTS)

### 1. Changes in the system of governance

Personnel changes took place in Dnipropetrovsk oblast. On 8 January 2026, Oleksandr Hanzha, who had previously headed the regional department of the National Police, **was appointed** Head of Dnipropetrovsk OMA. The appointment followed the resignation of the previous head, Serhii Lysak, who became Head of Odesa City Military Administration.

#### 1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

In January–February 2026, governance in the frontline areas was largely shaped by the need to respond to strikes on critical infrastructure. In these conditions, the priorities of the oblast military administrations were ensuring security, maintaining the operation of life-support systems, and managing mobilisation processes. In parallel, restrictive measures were being tightened, with curfew zones extended in certain communities. As a result, governance increasingly involved balancing stronger protection for the population with the preservation of basic social resilience, placing an additional strain on community cohesion under prolonged pressure.

##### >> ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Within the monitoring period, energy infrastructure in the frontline areas remained one of the main targets of systematic attacks. Large-scale missile and drone attacks left hundreds of thousands of consumers without power and caused prolonged outages of up to **10–16** hours a day, while in some communities they resulted in full blackouts. A characteristic feature was repeated strikes on energy facilities, including during repair works, which complicated the stabilisation of essential services and increased the risk of prolonged disruptions to electricity supply.

The situation remained particularly difficult in Kherson, where systematic shelling of heat-generating infrastructure, including Kherson TPP, together with the deterioration of heating networks, estimated at **up to 85%**, and the consequences of the destruction of Kakhovka HPP led to a critical deterioration in the heat supply system. The failure to restart some boiler houses, together with damage to the heating networks, left a significant share of the housing stock without centralised heating. At the same time, the destruction had a cascading effect, causing accidents in residential buildings, further damage to housing because of freezing temperatures, the lack of heating, and difficulties in carrying out repairs due to security risks and resource shortages.

However, in most oblasts, prompt response measures and the use of backup power sources made it possible to restore the functioning of critical infrastructure relatively quickly and gradually build a basic level of infrastructure resilience even under heavy pressure.

Overall, the energy situation was shaped by two parallel processes: the gradual strengthening of infrastructure resilience through generators, **Points of Invincibility** and backup systems and the accumulation of vulnerabilities that increased long-term risks to essential services and social stability.

## >> OPERATION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

The provision of public utility services remained largely under control in relatively remote communities, although their stability was uneven. In a number of communities in Donetsk oblast, centralised [water supply](#) was either absent or provided according to a schedule, while in others it formally remained available around the clock but was regularly disrupted because of damage to the networks or power outages.

Another risk factor was the potential loss of key infrastructure nodes. In Kramatorsk, in particular, dependence on the Siverskyi Donets–Donbas water pipeline remained critical, as its connection point was located close to the zone of hostilities and was at risk of being hit or becoming inaccessible. If this section were damaged, the city, which had a substantial population and served as the temporary administrative centre of the oblast, could face a sharp reduction in water supply and a shift to limited or alternative sources.

In other frontline areas, the problems were more fragmented in form but still systemic in nature. In communities in the south of Dnipropetrovsk oblast, including Nikopol, regular accidents and disruptions to water supply were compounded by power outages, creating a persistent risk to basic living conditions.

Meanwhile in Kharkiv, public utility enterprises faced [staff shortages](#) because of the mobilisation of workers, which complicated infrastructure maintenance and affected the speed of repair works.

## >> EVACUATION

On 10 February, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [adopted](#) a law regulating the procedure for mandatory evacuation of the population from areas of active hostilities, including the possibility of forced evacuation of children. The document [vested](#) military administrations with the authority to decide on evacuation and set out mechanisms for its organisation, including the involvement of the police, rescue services, and guardianship authorities.

In these conditions, evacuation in the frontline areas took place within an established system but remained uneven in terms of intensity and coverage. Dnipropetrovsk oblast became a key hub for receiving people both from the oblast's frontline communities, including those in Nikopol and Synelnykove, and from neighbouring oblasts. In parallel, transit evacuation points operated in Kharkiv oblast, including in the city of Lozova, providing daily reception and onward routing for evacuees.

Evacuation efforts combined both organised and spontaneous processes. They relied on coordination between government agencies, rescue services and volunteer organisations, including the SESU, the police, humanitarian missions, as well as on White Angel and Phoenix [specialised units](#). On the other hand, a significant proportion of the population delayed departure until the security situation had critically deteriorated.

The border village of Budo-Vorobivska, Chernihiv oblast, offers a telling example: following the announcement of mandatory evacuation, [none](#) of the residents agreed to leave, while some who had left earlier returned. Despite regular shelling, the absence of basic services and limited access to health care services, residents explained their refusal by unwillingness to lose their homes, distrust of accommodation conditions, and the conviction that no safer alternative existed.

In a number of communities, evacuation was further complicated by additional risks, including mined routes, strikes on transport routes, and the lack of communication, which slowed the pace of evacuation and increased the danger for both civilians and evacuation teams. In some cases, evacuation took place under critical conditions, including movement [on foot](#) or under the constant threat of attack.

## >> HOUSING RECOVERY

The state compensation programme, [eVidnovlennia](#) (eRecovery), remained the core instrument for responding to damage to the housing stock in the frontline areas. Its implementation reached a significant scale. For example, in [Kramatorsk](#) community, Donetsk oblast, the amount of payments reached almost UAH 800 million, while more than 66,000 applications were submitted and over UAH 4.5 billion was paid out in compensation in [Kharkiv](#) oblast. Similar dynamics could also be seen in [Chernihiv](#) and [Mykolaiv](#) oblasts, as well as in [Zaporizhzhia](#).

Along with that, the effectiveness of the programme was significantly constrained in areas of active hostilities. The difficulty of verifying destruction in communities with no physical access posed the main challenge. In such cases, assessments were carried out remotely, with input from the AFU and the use of

satellite data, although the results could be imprecise and often required additional verification. This delayed the review of applications and placed an additional burden on commissions. The scale of the destruction was especially striking: before 2022, around 14,600 houses had been damaged in Donetsk oblast; after the outbreak of the full-scale invasion, the number exceeded 140,000.

Despite these constraints, the programme played an important stabilising role. It not only provided partial compensation for losses but also supported a basic sense of fairness and the prospect of recovery. Along with that, unequal access to compensation, delays in payments, and procedural complexity created risks of growing tensions and distrust in institutions, especially among residents of the most heavily affected areas.

At the local level, digital tools were also playing a growing role in responding to the consequences of destruction. In Dnipro, an electronic register of damaged housing [was launched](#), enabling reports from affected residents to be recorded centrally, information to be processed promptly, and assistance from the authorities and humanitarian organisations to be coordinated.

### >> **TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY OF FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES**

In Donetsk oblast, both intercity and local transport links were gradually being reduced: bus services to Druzhkivka were suspended, and some routes in the Sloviansk direction were cancelled, including the [Sloviansk–Rai–Oleksandrivka](#) route, while routes from Sloviansk to Mykolaivka were also announced for closure. As a result, access to these areas was becoming increasingly dependent on private transport or irregular services.

Rail connectivity was effectively pushed beyond the borders of Donetsk oblast. After train services to Kramatorsk were [suspended](#) in late 2025, the transport hub was first shifted to Barvinkove and, following the [shelling](#) of a passenger train on 27 January 2026, to Lozova station, located around 100 km from the Kramatorsk agglomeration. Further restrictions introduced on 29 January meant that only a small number of trains continued to operate in this direction, with bus transfers organised on the Lozova–Kramatorsk section. This significantly complicated mobility for the population, increased travel time and costs, and deepened dependence on combined routes.

For security reasons, transport links were also being reduced in other frontline areas, including Zaporizhzhia oblast, where some rail services were [partially cancelled](#) in February.

### >> **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

The opening of a [UNDP office](#) in Mykolaiv signalled the institutionalisation of the international presence at the oblast level: the office functioned as an operational hub for coordinating projects, engaging with local authorities, and implementing recovery programmes directly on the ground. It was established as part of a three-year strategic partnership involving the Government of Denmark. The partnership, with a budget of more than USD 36 million, was aimed at restoring critical infrastructure, developing the economy and strengthening community capacity. In parallel, 11 European Investment Bank-funded projects [were under implementation](#), covering heating, water, health care and social infrastructure.

In Kharkiv, international engagement was focused on supporting the health care sector: foreign medical missions [worked](#) alongside local doctors in key health care facilities, providing both treatment and opportunities for experience sharing.

Infrastructure projects were also advancing in other oblasts, including the construction, with French support, in [Nizhyn](#), Chernihiv oblast, of a modern surgical wing with a shelter.

### >> **CORRUPTION CASES**

Corruption and the misuse of budget funds continued to attract significant attention in the public domain. More was known about the opening of proceedings and investigations, but much less about their completion or the issuance of court decisions. This contributed to a sense of protracted processes, with corruption cases left pending and without clear consequences. The most high-profile cases concerned the recovery and construction sectors.

Against this background, there were also signs of an institutional response. An [assessment](#) of corruption risks in the Kherson Oblast Administration activity was launched as part of the preparation of an

anti-corruption programme for 2026–2028. However, the effectiveness of the above initiatives would largely depend on the ability to ensure not only the identification of risks, but also tangible investigative outcomes.

## 2. Work on identity

### 2.1. Changes in education standards

The education system continued to adapt to wartime risks, with safety, the shelter availability, energy stability, and the physical accessibility of institutions remaining the main limiting factors. In these conditions, management decisions were increasingly focused not only on ensuring continuity of learning, but also on restructuring the education network itself. This was reflected both in the relocation of higher education institutions from frontline areas and in the optimisation of their internal structure. Specifically, a [decision was taken](#) in February to relocate Donbass State Engineering Academy, together with its affiliated colleges, to Zakarpattia oblast, while Kherson State University, now operating in Ivano-Frankivsk, also [merged and reduced](#) faculties in response to declining student numbers and resource constraints.

Universities were also introducing compensatory mechanisms to widen access to education. In Dnipro, in particular, winter admission formats and preparatory programmes [were being implemented](#), making it possible to attract applicants outside the main admissions campaign and partially offset education losses linked to the war.

For school and pre-school education, the development of protective infrastructure remained the decisive factor. In Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, the construction and modernisation of shelters became the main condition for expanding face-to-face or blended learning. The large-scale construction of [underground schools](#) and [underground learning facilities](#) continued in Kharkiv oblast; new shelters [were being opened](#) in lyceums and gymnasiums in Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts; and international partners [were supporting](#) the arrangement of barrier-free shelters in educational institutions in Chernihiv oblast. As a result, access to education increasingly depended on the availability and quality of safety infrastructure, which remained unevenly distributed across communities.

However, even where shelters were available, the education process remained unstable. Educational institutions were forced to switch to distance learning on an ad hoc basis because of freezing temperatures, blackouts, and shelling.

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

In Kherson oblast, work continued throughout February on the creation of new memorial spaces linked to the experience of occupation and the war. In particular, a site was identified in [Novooleksandrivka community](#) as part of the Unified Route through Places of Memory national project: the premises of a former lyceum that had been used as a torture site during the Russian occupation. An information board was installed at the site, documenting the circumstances of the crimes and eyewitness testimony. Such initiatives were aimed at institutionalising the memory of war crimes through a combination of physical sites and digital tools, including QR codes and video testimony. Similar sites were expected to be developed in other communities across the oblast, forming a unified network of places of memory.

Meanwhile, work [began](#) in Kherson and Chornobaivka on the memorialisation of civilians killed in the war. Concepts for memorial spaces were being developed, including visual solutions created with the participation of local artists. Kherson and Chornobaivka were designated as pilot sites for testing approaches to the creation of memorial objects, with a view to scaling them up across other communities in the oblast.

The question of how to preserve military burial sites was becoming more acute in frontline areas. In

Donetsk oblast, a significant share of the work on arranging memorial sections had been suspended because of the deteriorating security situation, while the families of those killed were increasingly initiating reburials [on their own](#). The absence of a clear government policy on the future of such burial sites created additional tension, especially in communities under threat of occupation.

Another strand was the decolonisation of place names. In Donetsk oblast, a [decision was taken](#) to rename districts in temporarily occupied cities, a move that was primarily symbolic in nature and aimed at reinforcing Ukraine's sovereign vision of space even in the absence of actual control.

In [Kharkiv oblast](#), thousands of place names were changed throughout the year, while approaches to clearing public space of imperial symbolism were also being institutionalised. These processes were accompanied by coordination with the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and the development of joint renaming procedures for communities across the oblast.

In Dnipropetrovsk oblast, streets and communities were renamed following public consultations, and the new names were increasingly linked either to the history of Ukrainian lands or to the names of fallen soldiers.

Practices of commemorating memorial dates were also changing. Increased attention was being paid across the oblasts to the anniversary of the full-scale invasion, marked by memorial events, public gatherings, and acts of solidarity. The calendar of remembrance was also gradually being transformed, both through the establishment of new state dates linked to the war and through changes in religious practice, including the transition to the new church calendar. As a result, a new configuration of symbolic space was taking shape, in which memory of the war became a central element of public life.

## 3. Joint action

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

#### >> NEEDS OF WAR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Support for war veterans was increasingly becoming multi-level in nature and was delivered through interaction between the government, communities, and businesses. In February, the oblasts saw an expansion of both institutional programmes and initiatives from the private sector.

In [Zaporizhzhia](#), for example, the EURO5 petrol station network joined the Principles of Veteran-Friendly Business nationwide initiative. This step provided for the employment of veterans, support for their professional adaptation, and the development of a corporate culture oriented towards integrating military personnel into civilian life.

In February, 12 war veterans with disabilities in [Chernihiv oblast](#) received the first housing certificates issued in 2026. In 2025, the OMA allocated UAH 500 million to support defenders. Despite proposals by the City Council to cut funding in 2026, the amount was kept at the previous level. Within the initial two months of the year, military units had already received UAH 100 million, which confirms the priority given to security and veterans' policy in the oblast.

In [Mykolaiv oblast](#), a memorandum was signed between the Protez Foundation and the oblast veterans' war hospital, providing for expanded access to modern prosthetics, the introduction of comprehensive rehabilitation programmes, and the integration of international standards.

Overall, the oblasts showed a tendency towards expanding forms of support for war veterans, ranging from financial assistance to employment, rehabilitation, and social integration. The effectiveness of these measures would to a large extent depend on coordination between government agencies, local communities, and non-governmental organisations.

## >> SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITIES

The economic situation in the frontline areas continued to be shaped by two opposing processes: the loss of business activity because of the war, and the emergence of new mechanisms to support and adapt businesses.

According to the [Main Department of the State Tax Service](#) in Donetsk oblast, more than 10,000 business entities had reregistered outside the oblast as of 1 January 2026. Around 82% of them continued operating in other oblasts, primarily in Kyiv, as well as in Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. The largest share consisted of enterprises in trade (43.1%), construction (9.3%), and manufacturing (9.0%). Despite relocation, some businesses retained a fiscal connection to the oblast: throughout 2025, 752 entrepreneurs paid more than UAH 209 million (approximately EUR 4.14–4.15 million) into the oblast budget. At the same time, the overall losses to budgets at a variety of levels as a result of business reregistration amounted to UAH 7.9 billion (approximately EUR 156 million), around half of which were losses to local budgets.

Against this background, business support instruments were developing across the oblasts, particularly in the area of energy resilience. In [Zaporizhzhia](#) oblast, entrepreneurs could receive financial assistance for installing alternative energy sources, including compensation and concessional loans. Additional [tax relief](#) was also introduced, including a zero rate on land and property for businesses in 2026. Discussions were also under way on how to compensate individual entrepreneurs for the cost of generators, with a view to using such facilities as local Points of Invincibility.

Digital and communication tools for interaction between businesses and the authorities were also developing. The introduction of the [Pulse](#) platform enabled entrepreneurs to promptly submit requests on energy solutions, including cogeneration, while regular meetings between government and business provided a platform for discussing tax changes, access to finance, and adaptation to new regulatory constraints.

In Kharkiv oblast, a Regional Council of Entrepreneurs [was being created](#), while grant programmes, including those supported by international organisations, [were being implemented](#), allowing entrepreneurs to attract up to USD 5,000 for business development or recovery.

In Kryvyi Rih, entrepreneurs [raised](#) more than UAH 135 million (approximately EUR 2.67–2.68 million) in grant funding in 2025, contributing to the creation of new jobs. Meanwhile, Dnipro community continued to show a steady trend towards the [relocation](#) of businesses from war-affected areas. Dnipro was gradually taking on the role of a receiving hub for relocated enterprises, where conditions were being created for the resumption of business activity and the employment of displaced persons.

## >> HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Offices of UN system entities, as well as international charitable foundations and humanitarian missions, continued to operate in frontline areas, supporting local communities through humanitarian assistance, social support, and infrastructure recovery programmes.

These programmes covered both basic humanitarian support and longer-term recovery elements, including cash assistance, housing repairs, support for social institutions, and psychological assistance for people who had experienced shelling or evacuation. An important feature was that these initiatives were implemented, to a significant extent, through cooperation with local communities and civil society organisations, making it possible to adapt assistance to particular local needs.

However, the transparency of humanitarian aid use remained problematic. According to findings by Transparency International Ukraine's Transparent Cities [programme](#), none of the surveyed oblast centres, including Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv, ensured an adequate level of data openness regarding humanitarian aid management in 2024–2025. Experts therefore recommended that local self-government bodies create open information platforms to improve transparency and accountability in this area.

## 4. Changes in the social structure

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

In January–February, support for vulnerable groups focused primarily on basic needs: warmth, care, and access to social services.

According to [Kharkiv City Council](#), people with reduced mobility and those living alone who had been left without heating as a result of shelling were provided with electric heaters. In Chernihiv oblast, older people living alone and persons with disabilities (groups I-II) [received](#) 'warmth packages', targeted primarily at those experiencing difficulties with heating.

The central branch of the territorial centre for social services, providing social adaptation, rehabilitation, and household support services, [was restored](#) in Mykolaiv, with the support of UNHCR.

### 4.2. Needs of displaced persons. Response

From 1 January 2026, the criteria for the continuation of IDP payments in Ukraine [were updated](#): the maximum average monthly income per family member was raised to UAH 10,380, or approximately EUR 206, corresponding to four subsistence minimums for persons unable to work (UAH 2,595, or approximately EUR 51.5). Certain categories, including persons with disabilities (groups I-II), children with disabilities, and orphans, retained entitlement to assistance regardless of income level. The amount of assistance in 2026 remained unchanged: UAH 2,000 for adults and UAH 3,000 for children and persons with disabilities.

The introduction of new procedures for confirming status created practical difficulties for some recipients. In January, many pensioners among IDPs [were temporarily left](#) without payments because they had to complete electronic identification via the Pension Fund portal using Diia.Signature. This situation exposed the vulnerability of the procedures in place for people with reduced mobility and older people, for whom pensions are often the only source of income.

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

Mobilisation remained one of the most sensitive and conflict-prone issues in the information space of frontline areas. On the one hand, [reports](#) on court sentences for violence against representatives of TRSSCs reflected public demand for respect for the law and the inevitability of punishment. On the other hand, the public information space also [highlighted](#) corruption risks and attempts to circumvent mobilisation procedures, including schemes involving fictitious grounds for deferment.

[Procedural inconsistencies](#) and distrust in the mechanisms governing deferments and registration also remained a separate source of tension, reinforcing public demand for transparent rules and fair decision-making.

According to the [National Police of Ukraine](#), Kherson oblast stood out for having the lowest recorded number of incidents involving resistance to representatives of the territorial recruitment and social support centres and law enforcement officers: since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion, only one such incident had been recorded there, compared to 526 across Ukraine as a whole. For comparison, Kharkiv oblast, which had the highest figure, recorded 59 cases.

# III. RELATIVELY REAR AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT

(VINNYTSIA, ZAKARPATTIA, LVIV, ODESA, AND CHERNIVTSI OBLASTS)

## 1. Changes in the system of governance

In January 2026, personnel changes took place at the level of oblast military administrations in relatively rear oblasts. New heads were appointed in Chernivtsi and Vinnytsia oblasts. In Chernivtsi oblast, the newly appointed OMA Head, [Ruslan Osypenko](#), immediately outlined key priorities, including in the areas of security, critical infrastructure, veterans' policy, and interethnic stability, and initiated checks of energy resilience. In Vinnytsia oblast, the appointment of [Nataliia Zabolotna](#), who had been governing the oblast for some time, ensured continuity of governance. Meanwhile, [personnel changes](#) among deputy heads pointed to the formation of a team with a noticeable presence of representatives of the security agencies.

The newly appointed Heads travelled to raions to communicate with locals. However, some tensions were also recorded in the communication sphere. In Chernivtsi oblast, for example, [restricted media access](#) to the event presenting the new Head prompted a negative reaction from journalists. The situation was partially resolved through [holding](#) a press conference.

Court decisions and public accusations concerning possible abuses at the oblast level were another marker of risks in the system of governance, as in the case of Odesa oblast, where a [court](#) ordered the opening of a pre-trial investigation into alleged abuse of office by the OMA Head, Oleh Kiper. Such cases place an additional burden on institutional trust and reinforce demand for transparency and accountability in governance decisions.

### 1.1. Decisions of authorities that affected cohesion

Odesa [mapped out](#) a City Territorial Community Development Strategy until 2027 that took into account both wartime security challenges and the city's post-war needs. The document provided for the development of institutional capacity, support for the economy, veterans, and IDPs, as well as infrastructure modernisation. The expert community, authorities at a variety of levels, businesses, and civil society were involved in its preparation, creating the preconditions for a more inclusive approach to policymaking.

A similar concentration on security and social priorities could also be observed in other oblasts. In [Lviv oblast](#), the key policy directions for 2026 were defined around security, support for military personnel, the development of the social sphere, and infrastructure recovery.

#### >> CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

Large-scale strikes on energy infrastructure facilities, emergency outages, adverse weather conditions, and overloaded public utility networks directly affected daily life, the operation of transport, health care, and educational institutions, and basic services. Even relatively rear oblasts were operating under constant pressure to maintain continuity in essential services.

A combination of two approaches: emergency response to the consequences of attacks and a gradual shift towards more autonomous energy supply models was a common trend across the oblasts. In Lviv oblast, the authorities switched to a maximum resource mobilisation mode: even facilities that had previously been classified as critical infrastructure became subject to outages. The uninterrupted operation of [health care institutions](#) was ensured through backup power, while urban infrastructure [was adapted](#) promptly, with buses partially taking over routes previously served by de-energised trams and trolleybuses in order to preserve transport links.

In Odesa oblast, where the consequences of the strikes were felt most acutely, multi-day blackouts, the [suspension of electric transport](#), and disruptions to heat and water supply became not only an infrastructure problem, but also a social one, prompting [public outcry](#). In response, the city was forced to rapidly reconfigure its transport system: free social bus routes were introduced to replace electric transport, operating with [support from other communities](#) and international partners. Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia oblasts also experienced large-scale power cuts, prolonged electricity outages, boiler house failures, and disruptions to water supply.

The oblasts were increasingly seeking long-term solutions to reduce dependence on centralised systems. In Lviv, the rollout of alternative energy sources [with the support](#) of international partners continued; in Odesa, preparations began for an Energy Resilience Plan focused on cogeneration, generators, and solar energy; and in Chernivtsi oblast, local solutions involving the transition of social institutions to autonomous heating became particularly notable. In [Novoselytsia](#), for example, all social sector facilities moved away from centralised heat supply, making it possible to save between 30% and 60% of costs and reduce heat loss. Such systems were equipped with backup power, which ensured that they continued to operate even during power outages.

## >> PORT AND LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE

In Odesa oblast, strikes on port and logistics infrastructure were systemic in nature and extended beyond the security dimension alone, directly affecting the economic resilience of both the oblast in particular and the country in general. Regular [attacks on ports](#), [civilian vessels](#), and energy facilities caused infrastructure damage, disrupted logistics chains, and increased costs for businesses, which in turn curtailed exports and reduced foreign currency earnings. Despite this, the maritime corridor remained operational, indicating a high degree of system adaptability while also underscoring its continued vulnerability to further attacks.

## >> INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

International cooperation focused on the development of cross-border infrastructure, mobilisation of financial and technical assistance, and experience sharing in the areas of security, health care, and recovery.

In Chernivtsi oblast, this was reflected in its participation in the [establishment](#) of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation and in the implementation of infrastructure projects on the Ukrainian-Romanian border, including the [expansion](#) of Porubne–Siret border crossing point.

In Lviv oblast, cooperation had a more institutional and network-based character, ranging from the [opening](#) of an Honorary Consulate of Romania to the holding of international events and the signing of memoranda on [energy](#), rehabilitation, and civil protection. [Uzhhorod](#) and [some communities](#) were also developing partnerships at the municipal level through twinning and cooperation agreements.

In Odesa oblast, international support was geared primarily towards [strengthening](#) energy resilience, [health care infrastructure](#), restoring [cultural heritage](#), and attracting investment in the [renewable energy](#) sector.

In Vinnytsia oblast, cooperation focused, among other things, on the [health care sector](#) through partnerships with US institutions, making it possible to introduce new treatment practices and strengthen the capacity of the health care system.

## 2. Work on identity

A new project, Odesa ID: Reboot, [was presented](#) in Odesa. It envisaged phased work on shaping the city's Ukrainian civic identity through sociological research, expert engagement, and a series of educational and cultural activities. The work was structured through a combination of research and an open discussion platform involving experts, academics, and representatives of civil society, making it possible to integrate the results into subsequent governance decisions. In parallel, the city authorities were engaging with non-governmental organisations which, alongside their humanitarian work, were becoming increasingly involved in discussions on values, memory, and social cohesion.

### 2.1. Changes in education standards

The education system functioned relatively steadily, but was simultaneously affected by several structural challenges, including energy, demographic, and governance pressures.

In the short term, the key factor was the need to adapt the education process to weather conditions and power outages. In a number of communities in Chernivtsi oblast, schools [switched](#) to distance learning or shortened lesson times because classroom temperatures were too low. Similar decisions were taken in Lviv oblast. Even under these conditions, most educational facilities continued operating in a face-to-face format, using generators and other backup solutions.

At the systemic level, demographic pressure on the education network was increasing. Falling student numbers, including in Zakarpattia oblast, brought the optimisation of schools and more efficient use of resources more sharply [into focus](#). In higher educational institutions, these processes were reflected in discussions about university consolidation, as in the case of the possible merger of Uzhhorod National University and Mukachevo State University. Although such initiatives were justified by the need to consolidate resources, they were accompanied by internal conflict and distrust because of inadequate communication and a lack of procedural transparency. A [conflict](#) over the postponement of the rectoral election at Vinnytsia Pedagogical University also pointed to the vulnerability of institutional governance in the education sector.

In Chernivtsi, a funding shortfall [was recorded](#) in the payment of salaries to teachers and social workers, requiring intervention at the central level. This was because the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted resolutions increasing the official salaries of teachers and social workers after the Chernivtsi community budget for 2026 had already been approved.

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

In Lviv oblast, a National Memory Strategy [was approved](#), and cooperation with socio-cultural associations began, including the [holding](#) of joint events in 2026 to honour prominent Ukrainians and commemorate memorial dates and places abroad. In parallel, Lviv's urban space was being cleared of symbols of the totalitarian regime.

In Chernivtsi oblast, the commemoration of fallen service members remained a priority. Significant community [spending](#) on burials, memorial plaques, monuments, and memorial alleys showed that memory of the war was becoming increasingly embedded in community space and turning into part of local policy.

In Odesa oblast, the monthly Bell of Remembrance ceremony, during which fallen service members are commemorated by name, [was establishing](#) a regular practice of collective remembrance and involving families of the fallen, the community, and representatives of the authorities in that process. New formats for engaging with memory were also emerging, including cultural events that linked historical figures to contemporary interpretations while also serving to support the military. Specifically, a [performance](#) in Odesa marking the birthday of Vasyl Stus demonstrated an attempt to integrate the figure of the poet and prisoner of conscience who died in a Soviet prison into the contemporary cultural context.

## 2.3. Freedom of religion

One of the most high-profile developments was a [court ruling](#) in Chernivtsi oblast securing the property rights of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to use the Holy Spirit Cathedral and ordering its transfer to the OCU. Since February 2025, the Cathedral had been used by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is associated with the Moscow Patriarchate. Parallel court proceedings and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's subsequent preparations for an appeal indicate that such cases remain the subject of protracted legal disputes. The ruling also triggered a mixed reaction in the information space. A [Romanian-language](#) media outlet published an article entitled 'A disputed court decision on the Cathedral of the Descent of the Holy Spirit in Chernivtsi', whose author underscored the Cathedral's importance for the Romanian-speaking community and argued that this was precisely why 'the community has consistently protested against attempts to seize the Cathedral'.

Overall, 38 transfers from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine [were reported](#) in Bukovyna throughout 2025. This exceeded the total number recorded in all previous years of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war combined. Meanwhile, a significant number of religious communities associated with the Moscow Patriarchate remained in a number of oblasts, including [Zakarpattia](#) and [Vinnytsia](#), pointing to the long-term nature of these transformations and the potential for further debate.

## 2.4. National minorities

The issue of national minority rights was used in intergovernmental disputes, thus increasing its political sensitivity.

In February, representatives of the Hungarian government [raised](#) the possibility of suspending electricity and gas supplies to Ukraine. These statements were linked to demands to restore oil transit through Druzhba pipeline and were accompanied by signals that Hungary was prepared to block EU decisions, including sanctions packages against Russia and financial support for Ukraine. Hungary's Foreign Minister, Péter Szijjártó, later [stressed](#) the need for 'particular caution' on electricity supplies, noting that any interruption in electricity exports would primarily affect Zakarpattia oblast, where ethnic Hungarians live.

Initiatives aimed at the socio-economic integration of national minorities were implemented at the local level. In Zakarpattia oblast, [Roma community](#) was engaged in the Together Towards Success project, which provided grant support of up to EUR 1,500 for starting a business, as well as advisory and mentoring support. In Vinnytsia oblast, a programme of vocational training and retraining for members of the Roma community [was in place](#), with funding of up to EUR 300, aimed at subsequent employment or self-employment.

## 3. Joint action

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

#### >> **AID FOR THE AFU**

Support for the AFU remained a key area of interaction between the government, communities, and businesses in most oblasts of Ukraine. At the local level, the systematic mobilisation of resources was becoming an established practice, both through budgetary decisions and through partnerships with businesses and charitable initiatives.

As part of the Lion's Revenge initiative, Lviv City Council regularly [transferred](#) drones, vehicles, and equipment worth tens of millions of hryvnias to the military, while charitable projects such as Birds of Victory [brought together](#) communities and businesses to procure equipment and support the rehabilitation of military personnel.

A similar approach could be observed in Vinnytsia oblast, where aid for the AFU was integrated into budget policy, with substantial funding [channelled](#) to the security and defence [sector](#).

## >> NEEDS OF WAR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Support for veterans and their families was increasingly shifting from isolated measures towards the development of a comprehensive system at the community level. It covered not only basic social guarantees, but also a broader range of areas, including rehabilitation, social adaptation, housing support, and economic integration.

Lviv oblast offered a particularly telling example in this regard, as a more integrated support ecosystem for veterans was gradually taking shape there. The city authorities, in partnership with the non-governmental sector, [were implementing](#) housing adaptation programmes for war veterans with disabilities, investing in the accessibility of urban space, and developing rehabilitation infrastructure, including the UNBROKEN centre. At the same time, reintegration tools were expanding, ranging from art therapy and veteran spaces to programmes supporting [veteran entrepreneurship](#) and [vocational training](#).

Similar approaches could also be seen in other oblasts. In Chernivtsi oblast, for example, the veteran support system was gradually becoming more multi-level, with a particular emphasis on rehabilitation practices. Under the [Mandroterapiia](#) (travel-based therapy) project, veterans, including those with amputations, took part in restorative activities such as climbing Hoverla. A veteran space, Hub 82, [was opened](#) in Chernivtsi as a platform for communication between military personnel, veterans, and community members.

In Vinnytsia oblast, services aimed at the adaptation of war veterans and their families also [continued to be introduced](#) in communities, alongside peer support groups and grant programmes for [starting a business](#).

Odesa oblast became the first to implement specialised training of this kind at the OMA level. During a [three-day forum](#) involving more than 100 community representatives, participants received practical training in social, medical, legal, and psychological support, as well as in strengthening communication between the authorities, civil society, and professional communities.

Overall, the development of veterans' policy remained uneven: alongside the expansion of support programmes, problems persisted with infrastructure accessibility, shortages of support specialists, and the fragmented nature of some initiatives.

## >> SUPPORT FOR THE SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

A transformation of the service market [was recorded](#) in Zakarpattia oblast. Cases of food service establishments closing or shifting to cheaper formats were becoming more frequent, linked to falling purchasing power, rising energy costs, and staff shortages. Alongside this, the oblast retained its investment appeal: energy projects [were implemented](#), and dialogue between the authorities and businesses on economic development [was under way](#). This pointed to a structural shift of the oblast's economy, in which part of the traditional small business sector was losing capacity, while energy investment projects and relocated businesses were creating new points of growth.

In Lviv oblast, the focus was on [increasing](#) the energy independence of enterprises through concessional lending instruments, including interest-free energy loans, and [partial compensation](#) for energy-efficiency costs. Also, additional business support services [were being introduced](#), including tax consultations for participants in grant programmes and for veterans. This made it possible not only to sustain current business activity, but also to create the conditions for scaling up and shifting to more resilient operating models.

Overall, the relatively rear areas showed a dual trend. On the one hand, rising costs, staff shortages, and falling demand were pushing businesses towards simplified models or closure. On the other hand, support instruments were gradually taking shape, aimed at increasing energy independence, improving access to finance, and integrating businesses into new economic niches.

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

Local-level ties between communities remained fairly intensive. Volunteering continued to be an important part of community life, involving both individuals and institutions, including health care facilities, educational, and cultural institutions. Assistance to the front, support for military personnel, their families, and the wounded was provided through regular fundraising, the transfer of essential resources, and charitable initiatives.

Chernivtsi oblast illustrated the breadth of such initiatives: from the collection of [first aid kits](#) and [humanitarian aid](#) to the holding of cultural events in support of the military and the [establishing](#). Importantly, international partners were also involved in this work. This created an extensive support network linking local initiatives with external assistance.

In Lviv oblast, the [emphasis was](#) on events that brought together different social groups: community members, IDPs, war veterans, and representatives of ethnic communities. Cultural and commemorative events, charitable initiatives, and joint activities contributed to the formation of a shared symbolic space and helped strengthen social cohesion.

In Vinnytsia oblast, interaction between communities was also expressed through horizontal solidarity, including [assistance](#) to other Ukraine's oblasts affected by the war. Such initiatives demonstrated that mutual support was extending beyond individual communities and areas.

Overall, it was possible to speak of high levels of trust between different social groups. Meanwhile, this interaction remained largely informal in nature and dependent on the initiative of individual actors, thus creating risks of unevenness and vulnerability in these practices over the longer term.

## 4. Changes in the social structure

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

At the public policy level, new support instruments were being introduced, including a [pilot project](#) on building resilience in communities that envisaged a comprehensive approach to the provision of social services.

The situation in Zakarpattia oblast [showed](#) that demand for social services continued to exceed the capacity of the system, creating a long-term burden on social infrastructure. Despite an increase in the number of places in social care institutions, demand remained high, particularly among older people who had no alternative forms of support. Some of them consciously chose to remain in such institutions even when they had the option of leaving for another country. Their choice was linked to psychological factors, attachment to their surroundings, and unwillingness to lose their social identity.

In Lviv oblast, support for war-affected children was becoming more targeted and systematic. In February, 11 minors in Lviv whose parents had been killed in missile strikes each [received](#) UAH 30,000 in assistance from the city. Programmes providing annual support to children of those killed, missing persons, and persons with disabilities as a result of the war [were also being expanded](#), including with regard to the IDP status. At the same time, decisions were being made to improve accessibility, including through the [introduction](#) of barrier-free infrastructure in cultural institutions.

In Odesa, mobile teams attached to territorial centres for social services [were organised](#) to provide assistance to elderly people living alone, persons with disabilities, and families with children in areas experiencing ongoing power outages. Volunteers delivered essential food items, medications, and water,

making it possible to partially compensate for limited access to basic services among people with reduced mobility.

In Chernivtsi oblast, access to administrative services for [residents of remote areas](#) was being expanded, including through the introduction of mobile service formats. This approach partly reduced territorial barriers for older people and persons with disabilities, while simultaneously highlighting uneven access to basic services depending on place of residence.

In Vinnytsia oblast, inclusive education and social services continued to develop: the number of teaching assistants [increased](#), barrier-free solutions [were introduced](#) in school transport, and programmes providing rehabilitation equipment remained in place.

## 4.2. Needs of displaced persons. Response

Housing continued to rank among the main challenges for IDPs, as the need for safe and affordable housing continued to far exceed the resources available to communities. In Lviv oblast, several instruments were combined in response to this need: [housing vouchers](#) for IDPs, the construction of [social housing](#), the creation of a [temporary](#) accommodation fund, and oblast-level mechanisms for [compensating](#) interest rates on mortgage loans.

In Odesa oblast, efforts were under way to provide housing for IDPs from among combatants or persons with disabilities as a result of the war. One such instrument was housing vouchers: in February, the City Council Committee [rendered](#) 205 positive decisions on their provision. The programme made it possible to receive a voucher of up to UAH 2 million (approximately EUR 39,500) for the purchase of housing, investment in construction, or obtaining a mortgage. This partly expanded opportunities to move from temporary accommodation to more sustainable housing solutions. However, access to the programme remained limited to specific categories of recipients and subject to established eligibility criteria.

Monitoring of temporary accommodation facilities for IDPs in Zakarpattia oblast pointed to an overburdened support system for displaced persons. [Following](#) 51 visits in 2025, 229 recommendations were issued, a significant share of which remained unimplemented or only partly implemented as of early 2026. Inspections of conditions in shelters revealed numerous problems: some existed only on paper; others were cold, frequently lacked water or electricity, were overcrowded and inaccessible to persons with disabilities. On top of this, it was often unclear who was responsible for what.

Similar problems were also recorded in Chernivtsi oblast, pointing to the systemic nature of these challenges. Specifically, during a monitoring visit to a temporary accommodation facility in Kitsman, it [was established](#) that IDPs had been unlawfully charged for accommodation despite their guaranteed right to free housing, while inadequate conditions were also recorded, including the absence of heating, low temperatures, and interruptions to electricity supply. Additional violations were identified in the use of the premises, alongside fire safety problems and cases of unrelated persons residing there. This suggested that the problem lay not only in a shortage of places, but also in the quality of conditions and the effectiveness of oversight.

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

Mobilisation has remained one of the most sensitive issues, combining systemic problems in the activity of TRSSCs, individual incidents, and social tensions.

In Zakarpattia oblast, corruption and governance scandals surrounding the methods of TRSSCs triggered a strong public response. Attention was drawn to a [declaration](#) of a former head of department of one of Mukachevo TRSSCs, which listed substantial assets and attracted the NABU's attention. Security Service of Ukraine and the National Police [conducted searches](#) targeting oblast TRSSC's leadership, during which large amounts of cash [were seized](#). Separate criminal proceedings [were launched](#) on unlawful deprivation of liberty

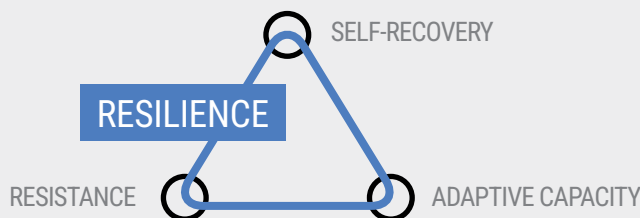
of citizens and other abuses. Also, cases of bribery of district TRSSCs [were reported](#). Overall, this created a persistently negative background around the institutional level of mobilisation.

No significant changes were observed in actual practices: cases of evasion of mobilisation persisted, as did isolated incidents during checks and detentions. In Chernivtsi and Odesa oblasts, such episodes largely shaped public perceptions of mobilisation measures. These in particular included conflicts during detentions, resistance on the part of citizens, and high-profile cases of alleged human rights violations, including unlawful detention and the extortion of bribes. Particular attention was drawn to the [investigation into the death](#) of a man after he had been taken to a TRSSC in Odesa. Although such incidents appear in the media less often, they continue to fuel public distrust of how mobilisation is carried out in practice.

# DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

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

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



We measure resilience in the following three dimensions:

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

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

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

### >> **FOCUS:**

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

### >> **DATA COLLECTION:**

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

**DATA SOURCES:** publications in the media, decisions of authorities, draft decisions of authorities, data of surveys and public opinion polls, data of social networking sites, reports of non-governmental organisations, and any other publicised information. The data are collected by coordinators of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion in 11 oblasts, based on data sources, their own understanding of the state of affairs and involvement in local cohesion processes.

## >> PROBLEMS

In the temporarily occupied areas:

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

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

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

## >> THE PUBLISHING FREQUENCY OF THE REPORT

The initial monitoring report covers the first four months of the large-scale invasion (from February through June), starting on 24 February 2022; the monitoring reports Nos. 2–9 have a two-month timeframe, while those beginning with Report No. 10 have a three-month timeframe; beginning with Report No. 15, the timeframe returns to two months.



## ABOUT UKRAINIAN CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL RESEARCH

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# RESILIENCE AND COHESION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE WAR

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