

Social Cohesion: Directions for Policy Development in **Luhansk Oblast**





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This policy development document presents key areas for action to shape a social cohesion policy for Luhansk oblast. The proposals are based on a study of the state of affairs in Luhansk oblast, analysis of state policy documents, consultations and preliminary groundwork with representatives of authorities and other sectors, including the media, non-governmental organizations, and the business community regarding, in particular, the potential of interregional cooperation to jointly address challenges faced by eastern Ukraine. These proposals can be further used in the development of an inclusive action plan for formulating a social cohesion policy for Luhansk oblast.

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The National Platform Dialogue on Peace and Secure Reintegration was launched in February 2018. This is a platform for discussing issues related to settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the secure reintegration of the region. Activities of the National Platform are focused on strengthening resilience and reaching consensus in Ukraine on conflict resolution and prevention. The way to do this is to increase citizen participation in the peacebuilding process, submit proposals to authorities on the development of relevant policies, in particular on secure reintegration and national unity, and ensure public awareness of these processes. Since 2019, the initiative has been implemented in partnership with the Committee on Human Rights, Deoccupation and Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol, National Minorities and Interethnic Relations of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the 9th convocation.



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Introduction

Strengthening social cohesion is an important component of shaping state policies of sustainable peacebuilding, socio-economic development, national unity and social resilience.

Social cohesion is an essential dimension of consolidation of any society, and assessment of its state is becoming increasingly important for shaping social cohesion policy. However, there is no unified understanding of the concept of social cohesion. Researchers around the world argue about the relationship between different constructs such as social capital, social cohesion, belonging and identity; the relationship between state institutions and social cohesion; the extent of social cohesion (state-community), and so on. Yet despite or because of these theoretical debates and the absence of a common concept of the nature and boundaries of social cohesion, the concept is evolving to find its place in policies and practices of countries or associations of countries (e.g., in the European Union¹).

In general, the European Union defines cohesion in different dimensions: economic, social and spatial. The minimization of disparities in the development of different regions enhances economic and social cohesion in the European Union. One definition of social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization.²

According to the common approach currently integrated into many documents in this area, “social cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations.”³

According to the Council of Europe, “A core concern is the extent to which people feel connected to society and give their loyalty and commitment to a set of values and social goals that are widely shared.”⁴

¹ A new strategy for Social Cohesion. European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS). Revised strategy for Social Cohesion approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 31 March 2004. – # 2 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/RevisedStrategy_en.pdf

² New Strategy and Council of Europe Action Plan for Social Cohesion approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 7 July 2010. – p. 8 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/2010Strategy_ActionPlan_SocialCohesion.pdf

³ Chan J., To H.-P. Chan E. Reconsidering Social Cohesion: Developing a Definition and Analytical Framework for Empirical Research. – P. 290 in: Social Indicators Research, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Jan., 2006) [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27522534>

⁴ Towards an Active, Fair and Socially Cohesive Europe. Report of high-level task force on social cohesion (TFSC (2007) 31E). – Strasbourg, 28 January 2008. – # 9. – P. 7 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://rm.coe.int/report-towards-an-active-fair-and-socially-cohesive-europe-janv-2008-t/1680939181>

The World Bank emphasizes the importance of institutions needed to strengthen social cohesion that in turn helps countries manage the transition from one social order to another.⁵

In general, shaping social cohesion implies the creation of common values at different social levels; monitoring of relevant processes; reduction of inequalities and disparities in wealth and earnings, and involvement in joint activities and solutions to problems and challenges at community, oblast and national levels.

Social cohesion at the community level may include a number of policies and measures depending on the needs and context of community problems, and the situation, challenges and conflicts in different social groups. The process of shaping social cohesion has a number of tools and related practices. Specifically, settlement of socio-economic and humanitarian issues, as well as good governance, are potential areas and tools that can help create a “sense of collective identity and mutual support”, including the shaping of local identities and creation of social ties in communities, safe spaces, promotion of inclusive local cultural heritage and cultural diversity.⁶

In the framework of Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding in Donbas with the National Platform project, implemented with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the project team analyzed many applicable approaches and developed its own understanding to help determine areas of social cohesion policy for Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. Residents and governance systems in these oblasts have faced the implications of the same conflict, and therefore, approaches to managing these changes should not differ. It is however recommended to plan specific activities separately for each community.

If social cohesion means the quality of coexistence of people who identify themselves with different social groups, a policy objective is to improve the quality of this coexistence and interaction so as to prevent the emergence of conflict. Hence, we will pay attention to building trust between people and their interactions for achieving common goals.

We share a fairly common opinion that assessment of the level of social cohesion should be based on the fundamental social (community) values underpinning identity; approaches to mechanisms of sharing social responsibility; rules of interaction between authorities and citizens, and assessment of the achieved level of well-being of the population.

At the previous stage of the project, we conducted consultations with residents of Luhansk oblast representing different environments. Thirty people, including representatives of authorities, civil society, the business community and the media, exchanged views on the level of trust of citizens in authorities, and relationships between different social groups at community and oblast levels. Relevant materials and latest data assessing major changes in the

⁵ Ritzen J., Woolcock M. Social cohesion, Public Policy, and Economic Growth: Implications for Countries in Transition. Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (Europe). Paris, 2000. – 30 P [Electronic resource]. Access mode: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/914451468781802758/820140748_200404140033848/additional/28741.pdf

⁶ City Resilience Framework. April 2014. Updated December 2015. The Rockefeller Foundation. Arup. P. 11 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Resilience-Framework-2015.pdf>

conflict-affected oblast, which are important for implementing social cohesion initiatives, are available in a publication produced by the project team.⁷

This policy document focuses on social cohesion, how to strengthen it, and mechanisms and tools that would facilitate this process. We review public policy documents related to shaping social cohesion policy for Luhansk oblast. We supplement this information with the following important elements for understanding social cohesion in Luhansk oblast: 1) identity, 2) the information space and information reintegration, 3) the level of trust (vertical and horizontal cohesion), 4) priorities for the development of interregional and intermunicipal cooperation. Based on these elements, we offer ideas that can serve as a basis for shaping an integral policy of social cohesion and specific plans for communities and Luhansk oblast in general.

⁷ Challenges and Potential for Social Cohesion in Luhansk Oblast. Field Report Based on the Results of Oblast Consultations. UCIPR, 2021. 28 pages [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <http://ucipr.org.ua/ua/publikatsii/vydannia/vikliki-i-potentsial-sotsialnoji-zgurtovanosti-v-luganskij-oblasti-2021>



I. Approaches to shaping social cohesion policy in public documents

Shaping social cohesion policy is a relatively new task for Ukraine. However, the need for it has already been expressed in a number of documents.

Areas of state social cohesion policy are defined in some of Ukraine's strategic development documents, in particular **State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027**⁸, **the Strategy of Deoccupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol**,⁹ **the State Target Program for Recovery and Peacebuilding in the Eastern Regions of Ukraine**,¹⁰ **the Strategy for Economic Development of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts until 2030**,¹¹ **the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine until 2030**,¹² etc.

Specifically, the State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027¹³ emphasizes the security challenges faced by Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, which have “radically changed and still have a strong impact on the socio-economic and political situation in the country, oblasts and territorial communities.”¹⁴ The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the temporary occupation of part of its territory affect the formation of major trends and oblast development problems. Prior to the occupation, as of 2013, 13.7% of gross domestic product was generated in the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Yet to date, Luhansk oblast has the highest rate of water and heating supply network in poor maintenance condition (almost 60%), a number of serious and cross-cutting environmental,

⁸ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 695 of 5 August 2020 “On the State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027”. [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/695-2020-%D0%BF#Text>

⁹ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 117/2021 of 24 March 2021 “On the Strategy of Deoccupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1172021-37533>

¹⁰ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1071 of 13 December 2017 “On the State Target Program for Recovery and Peacebuilding in the Eastern Regions of Ukraine” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1071-2017-%D0%BF#n10>

¹¹ Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1078-p of 18 August 2021 “On the Strategy of Economic Development of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts until 2030. The Operational Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy of Economic Development of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast until 2030” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/722/2019#Text>

¹² Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 722/2019 of 30 September 2019 “On Sustainable Development Goals until 2030” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/722/2019#Text>

¹³ State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027. Ibid

¹⁴ State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027. Ibid

social, demographic and transport problems, and major security challenges. In 2018, Luhansk oblast had the lowest GDP per capita in Ukraine (UAH 16,301).¹⁵

The oblast also suffers from the influence of the non-government controlled areas. According to socio-economic development assessments, Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are characterized by security problems that affect both human security and economic processes, threaten the inflow of investment, and impede access to bank loans due to mortgage valuation problems. Furthermore, the culture of small entrepreneurship is under-developed,¹⁶ while industrial, infrastructure, social, and environmental problems persist along with negative demographic trends resulting in declining living standards, poverty, and extremely negative social trends. According to an analysis carried out by the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster, between 2013 and 2015 the percentage of the population living below the minimum subsistence level increased from 20% in 2013 to 74% in 2015 in Luhansk oblast, while the average for Ukraine increased from 22% to 58%. Within those figures, the cluster noted that the highest proportion of the poor were found in households with children in Luhansk oblast, where in 2015 89% of such households lived below the minimum subsistence level compared to 20% in 2013.¹⁷

Analysis of citizen applications to authorities shows that most problems currently faced by citizens concern social security, financial assistance, subsidies, benefits, roof repairs, centralized cold water supply, compensation of damages for housing destroyed during the Anti-Terrorist Operation, etc.¹⁸

Social cohesion, joint interaction regardless of differences and joint responsibility are among the incentives for economic growth and improved quality of life. According to the strategy, a strategic goal of state regional policy until 2027 is to “create a state that is coherent in the social, humanitarian, economic, environmental, security and spatial dimensions” and conduct activities to “restore and develop the territories, restructure the economies of the oblasts affected by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.”

One of the strategic goals of the **Strategy of Development of Luhansk Oblast for 2021–2027** is to “shape a system of values based on nationwide unity and social cohesion”.¹⁹

¹⁵ State Regional Development Strategy for 2021–2027. Ibid

¹⁶ Analysis of economic development problems of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Diagnostic report. Project: UA2002 – The economic transformation of Donbas, Centre for Economic Strategy, February 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://ces.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UA2002-Diagnostic-report-on-the-current-state-of-Donbas-February-2021.pdf>

¹⁷ Visit to Ukraine Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights. UN GA. A/HRC/40/57/Add.1, 2018. Human Rights Council [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/448/74/PDF/G1844874.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁸ Analysis of work with citizen applications to oblast state administrations in Q1 2020. P. 1-2 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: http://loga.gov.ua/content/analiz_pidsumkiv_roboti_iz_zvernenniyami_gromadyan_v_oblderzhadministraciyi_0

¹⁹ Strategy of Development of Luhansk Oblast for 2021–2027 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: http://loga.gov.ua/sites/default/files/collections/strategiya_lugansk_2027_last.pdf

Other strategic goals can also affect the level of social cohesion in Luhansk oblast, in particular:

- effective human-centered management;
- safe territory, security, national identity and an integral information space;
- restoration of critical and social infrastructure.

The Strategy of Economic Development of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts until 2030 adopted in 2021 is the most important state document of recent times. It was developed by experts of the National Platform Dialogue on Peace and Secure Reintegration and the Center for Innovations Development (<https://cid.center/>). For the first time it sets enhancement of the level of social cohesion as a development goal.

The strategy defines the objective of reducing the level of conflict and involving the entire population, to the greatest extent possible and social and gender groups in particular, in active community life. This can be achieved through mechanisms of citizen participation in decision-making, elimination of gender and social inequalities, and socialization of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

To overcome cohesion challenges and inequalities, a number of relevant areas are proposed, including:

- development of interregional sectoral and industrial cooperation;
- some areas for human capital development in the oblasts (education, labor market development);
- counteraction to Russian propaganda and mis/disinformation by creating new narratives and providing objective information through all available communication channels.

Apart from the socio-economic objectives, the share of media projects aimed at social cohesion and alleviation of social tensions should be increased.

In the text of the strategy, social, infrastructure and governance objectives are linked to the shaping of social cohesion policy in communities and in the oblast at horizontal and vertical levels. At the same time, this linkage is poorly represented in policy outcomes and implications that should enhance public trust in social and state institutions, increase the number of initiatives and projects on local development, interregional and intermunicipal cooperation, and mobilize resources in communities.

The strategic objectives include:

- development of democratic instruments in the system of governance based on the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality;
- creation of an effective system of interregional partnership;
- creation of safe conditions for living and moving around the oblast guided by a gender-based approach;

- intensification of awareness-raising campaigns and counteraction to Russian propaganda;
- assistance in shaping an active civil society taking into account a gender-based approach.

These objectives are to be implemented through:

- support and development of public organizations;
- creation of dialogue platforms;
- intensification of business life and cooperation;
- activities for youth; revitalization of activities of this social group;
- promotion of decentralization;
- nationwide awareness-raising campaigns on unity;
- humanitarian needs and problems (demining).

In general, the following should become cross-cutting elements of implementing the strategy areas:

- communication with various social groups;
- use of mechanisms to involve citizens in decision-making;
- development of local democracy forms (examination of community statutes to include elements of public participation, communication formats of interaction between civil society organizations and military and civil administrations), which will facilitate community activities in Luhansk oblast and increase citizen involvement.

Implementation of these objectives could increase community activity at a variety of levels, enhance trust in institutions and authorities, and promote inclusion and cooperation if the following are in place: high-quality communications; development of consultative and advisory mechanisms of interaction between institutions and citizens concerning local development, and promotion of cross-sectoral cooperation (citizens, civil society organizations, business community, authorities). The relevant objectives will also be achieved in parallel with the inclusion of Luhansk oblast into the country's socio-economic processes in general, development of interregional and intermunicipal cooperation, and exchange of best practices of governance with other oblasts (raions of Ukraine).

In general, risks associated with a policy of shaping social cohesion and strengthening social resilience are of the following nature:

- communications: the need for not only awareness, but also sustainable feedback from citizens and different social groups;
- administration and resources: the need to compensate for the absence of state policy for Luhansk oblast, strengthen coordination and mobilize resources for project

implementation, provide opportunities to monitor their effectiveness and impact, and evaluate strategy activities;

- security: monitoring the security situation and infrastructure development to prevent its deterioration; political turbulence and adverse impact in the information space from the Russian Federation.

The above risks and their degree of seriousness may be linked to challenges in implementing socio-economic and humanitarian development policies at national and local levels, and insufficient attention to the needs of different social groups. Failure to take into account the risks associated with social cohesion in the context of implementing a policy of recovery and economic development of the oblast may have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of efforts and resource mobilization.

Active communication, cooperation, removal of barriers, public participation tools, renewal of people-to-people contacts in different oblasts, and settlement of sensitive issues of citizens affected by the conflict are effective tools for policy formulation and implementation. However, a national policy for the oblast that would help eliminate socio-economic inequalities is vital.



II. Assessment of the potential for development of social cohesion in Luhansk oblast

1. Identity: from conservation of oblast identity to formation of a new oblast identity

Social cohesion policy should be based on the identity factor. Each person has a set of identities, each of which may evolve. Therefore, the main identities that may provoke conflicts in the oblast or in communities should be identified. The danger of ignoring lines of conflict is that distrust in the 'different' will increase and may result in any or several forms of social explosion.

To date, there is a corridor for shaping political identity in Luhansk oblast.

As shown in our field report for Luhansk oblast and confirmed by the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE) for eastern Ukraine:²⁰

- about half of active voters prefer a political option that clearly identifies the specifics of the oblast and focuses on restoring the status quo in relation to the Russian Federation, and developing economic and political ties with Russia;
- distrust in the political leadership of Ukraine and central authorities is much higher than Ukraine's average;
- opposition to nationwide (civic) and oblast identities persists;
- there is prejudice against Ukrainian citizens living in Ukraine's western oblasts.

Structural features of the identity of residents of Luhansk oblast are identified through SCORE 2021.²¹

²⁰ Data are used that were obtained in Wave 4 of the SCORE Eastern Ukraine survey conducted by the Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) and funded by USAID's Democratic Governance East Program, UNDP, and EU. See: SCORE Methodology for Eastern Ukraine [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/methodology>

²¹ SCORE 2021. Sense of belonging and identity [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/2021/1/map?row=tn-3-0>

Table 1. Identity recognition indicators. Luhansk oblast. 2021

1	Identity	Indicator for Luhansk oblast			Indicator for Ukraine		
		Ukrainian	Russian	Citizen of Ukraine	Ukrainian	Russian	Citizen of Ukraine
		5.6	1.1	4.4	7.5	0.5	3.7
2	Sense of belonging to the country	7.9			7.7		

Source: SCORE 202

“**Ukrainian identity**” received 7.5 points on average in Ukraine, whereas in Luhansk oblast this indicator is slightly lower, at 5.6 points.

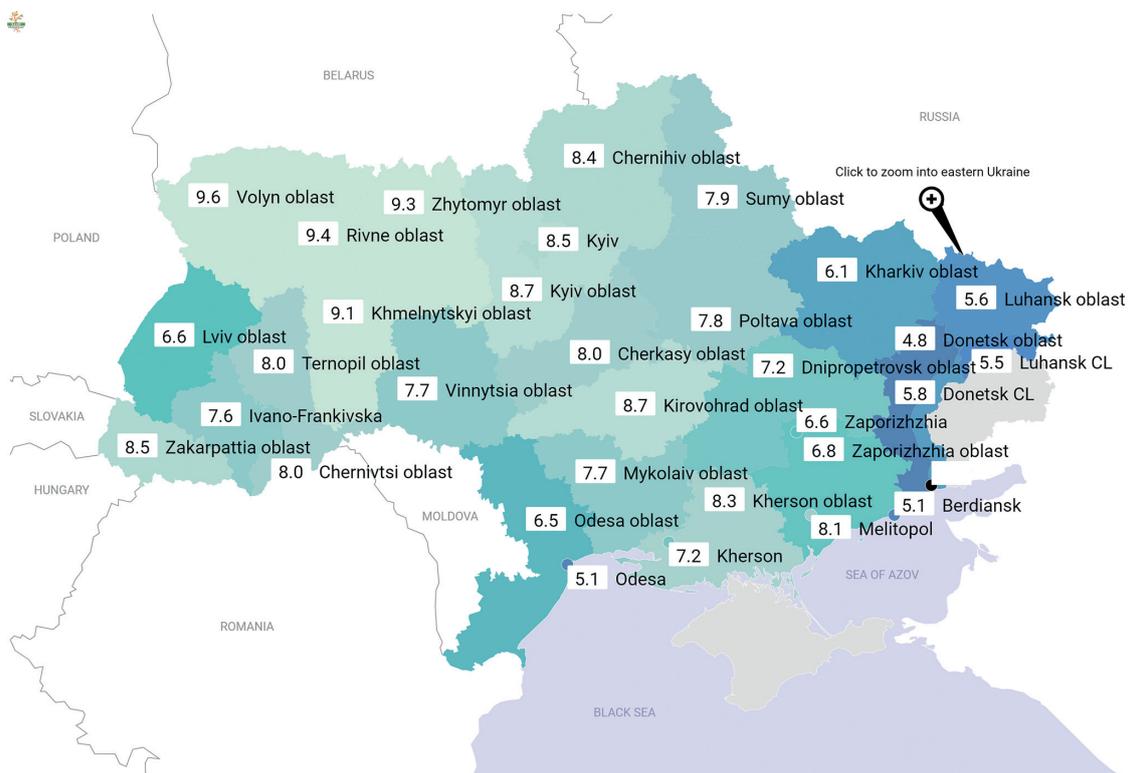
“**Citizen of Ukraine**” received 4.4 points from residents of Luhansk oblast. On average in Ukraine this indicator is 3.7 points. Data analysis shows that although residents of the oblast avoid the definition of identity as “Ukrainian”, “Russian identity” received only 1.1 points.

The “**sense of belonging to the country**” indicator in the oblast is almost the same as on average in Ukraine, 7.9 vs 7.5²² respectively, whereas in Donetsk oblast, this indicator is somewhat lower, 7.0 vs 7.7 respectively.

According to election and polling results, residents of Luhansk oblast **prefer to develop economic, political and cultural ties with the Russian Federation**, which illustrates the dominance of pro-Russian discourse in the oblast and represents understandable nostalgia for the pre-war situation. Specifically, **the “for cooperation with Russia” indicator** is 5.4 on average in Ukraine, whereas the same indicator is much higher for Luhansk oblast, 7.6 out of 10. This figure is comparable with Donetsk oblast, where it received 7.4 points.²³ Importantly, the closer the line of contact, the higher the indicator.

²² A statistically significant difference in SCORE is 0.5 points.

²³ Support for cooperation with Russia. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/2021/1/map?row=tn-219-187>

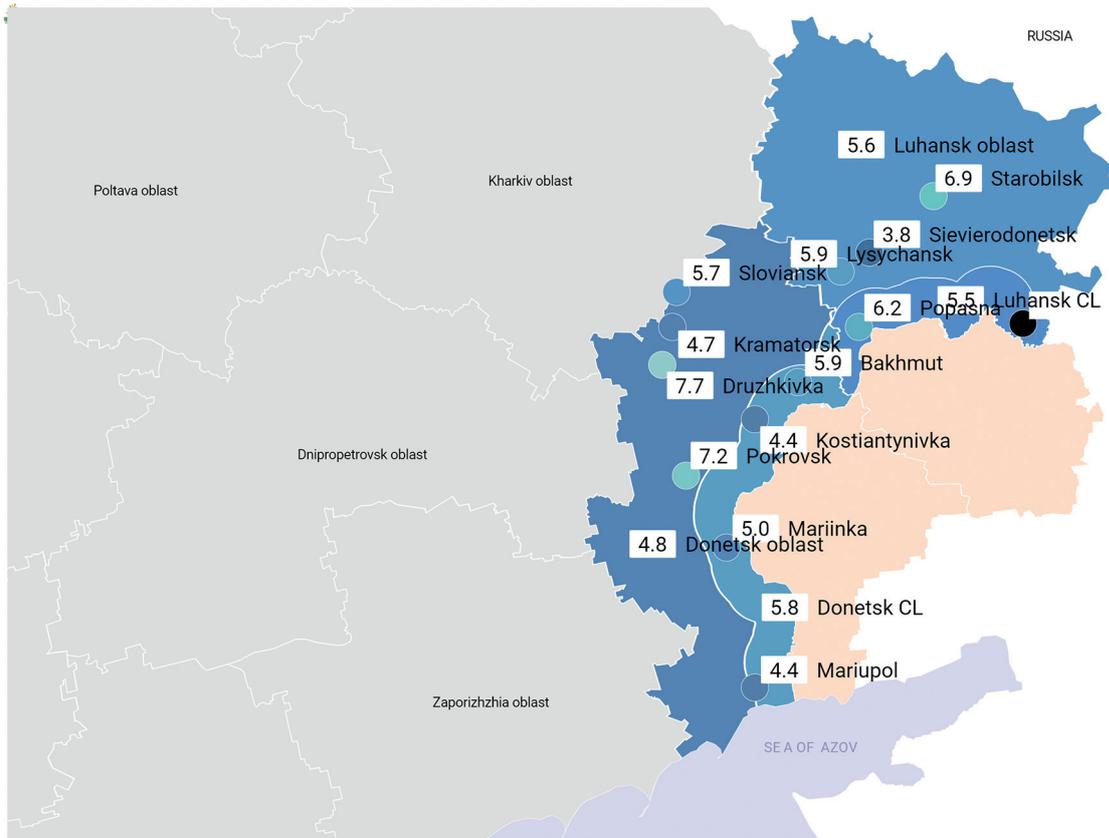
Figure 1. The identity recognition indicator. 2021²⁴

Source: SCORE 2021

It is important to emphasize that the identity indicator for Luhansk oblast also has some intra-regional differences compared to the same indicator on average in Ukraine (see Figure 2. Intra-regional differences in the identity indicator). Ukraine's average is 5.6; in the north-eastern areas of Luhansk oblast, e.g. in Starobilsk where the rural population dominates, it is higher, at 6.9, while in Lysychansk (3.8) it is much lower. These data need to be further analyzed, probably by qualitative research methods.

It should be noted that the objective of shaping an integrated political identity of the Ukrainian nation is, in our opinion, a nationwide challenge and requires well thought-out and consistent work at a variety of levels. This contemporary political identity should be based on the recognition of different identities as a resource for the development of each person and the nation subject to the promotion of human rights by the government.

24 Identity: Ukrainians. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/2021/1/map?row=tn-3-0>

Figure 2. Intra-regional differences in the identity indicator

Source: SCORE 2021. Identity: Ukrainians.

To date, the oblast needs to:

- ease tensions between political identities – conditionally pro-Russian, ‘Eurasian’ and pro-European;
- increase investment in easing tensions between internally displaced persons and the oblast’s resident population, and between groups who have different opinions about the causes and implications of the military conflict, to transform relationships between different groups and make them more coherent;
- continue working on ideas and images that can lay the foundations for shaping a new oblast identity and oblast brand;
- recognize openness to change and innovation, willingness to cooperate with representatives of other groups and identities as markers of a new oblast identity;
- create more complementary relationships between nationwide and oblast identities, which would help reduce the importance of the identity factor when shaping social cohesion in the oblast;

- develop cultural industries in the oblast, and support the development of a cluster of creative and cultural industries. This sector could become a driver of socio-cultural transformation in Luhansk oblast.

Identifying the needs of every community and developing a differentiated approach for different cities and areas within Luhansk oblast are required to further develop a social cohesion action plan for the oblast.

2. The information space and information reintegration: coverage of all aspects of secure reintegration at national level

The media play an important role in shaping contemporary oblast identity and constructive interaction between different social groups, restoring trust, building socio-cultural ties, and enhancing the level of social cohesion in the oblast.

The Russian Federation's media outlets currently have a significant influence on dissemination of information and news in Luhansk oblast. Notwithstanding the construction of two TV transmission towers in the oblast, in the villages of Bakhmutivka (in 2017) and Komyshivaha (2021), signal delivery challenges persist.

Innovative methods need to be found at national level to overcome the jamming of Ukrainian radio and TV channels.

According to local media experts, Ukrainian content for the local population influenced by Russian propaganda must be more attractive and competitive, and overcome the deficit of positive news and discourse.

National media need to pay attention to topics and events in the oblast in general and in areas of Luhansk oblast directly affected by the armed conflict in particular. We recommend avoiding prejudice, simplification and unprofessional coverage of events and problems faced by the population of eastern Ukraine.

Information on positive developments and trends in Luhansk oblast should be covered by national and local media.

Local media, highly trusted by the oblast's residents, could play an important role in strengthening relationships between different groups in the oblast and promoting social cohesion policy.

Local media potential can be used to:

- counteract information and psychological special operations aimed at deepening distrust between society and authorities, and between different population groups;

- publicize efforts of central and local authorities to develop the country and overcome challenges associated with the armed conflict;
- publicly condemn actions geared towards artificial polarization and division of society based on cultural and ideological differences;
- publicize successful projects and local actors who contribute to social consolidation, growth of trust, social capital and social cohesion in communities and in the oblast.

It is expedient to involve representatives of local authorities, non-governmental organizations and other sectors in creating programs and developing and implementing counter-propaganda measures.

We recommend developing thematic areas that would contribute to:

- shaping common values and an open civic identity among residents of the oblast;
- developing and promoting a contemporary oblast identity based on diversity recognition;
- jointly searching for ways to create a common information and cultural space in Luhansk oblast.

3. Vertical and horizontal dimensions of cohesion

Trust is seen as a key factor that determines the quality of social capital, readiness for dialogue and solidarity to create social benefits both at community level and at the level of Luhansk oblast. According to the results of this year's consultations with local experts, including representatives of authorities, non-government organizations, business community and media, a number of factors adversely affect the level of social trust in the oblast in two dimensions: vertical social cohesion, which includes the level of trust between society (community) and representatives of authorities (local, oblast, national governments) and horizontal social cohesion, which refers to the level of trust and readiness for communication and cooperation between different social groups.

The level of vertical trust in Luhansk oblast is influenced by:

- specifics of governance through military and civil administrations (MCAs) in raions of the oblast adjacent to the line of contact;
- weak involvement of civil society organizations in consultations;
- decreased interest of some oblast residents in socio-political life as a result of the cancellation of local elections in eight communities in two of the four raions of the oblast (in view of national security risks) and introduction of MCAs in the oblast and in population centers of the two raions;
- underestimation of the importance of projects and tools geared towards increasing citizen involvement in community life and socio-political activity. Participatory budgets

are executed only at community and city levels even though projects developed on the basis of participatory budgets could have a positive impact on the inclusiveness of local policies;

- insufficient communication with residents, especially in remote population centers of the oblast;
- absence of a developed network of independent oblast media; people's sense of threat to personal security in the case of public criticism and critical publications;
- funding for activities of civil society organizations primarily by international donors;
- insufficient skills of local civil society organization representatives to support effective cooperation with local authorities and businesses;
- the predominant influence of individual oblast and city business groups on decision-making of authorities;
- inaction of authorities, in particular, law enforcement agencies, in some cases of harassment of civil activists.

The level of horizontal cohesion is influenced by the following factors:

- a weak sense of a common oblast community. The war artificially divided Luhansk oblast into occupied and government-controlled areas, and resulted in the emergence of the so-called gray zone, i.e. population centers located near the line of contact. A new oblast center has not yet been formed;
- lack of common public space that intensifies and institutionalizes public communication and promotes trust between citizens. There is an urgent need to develop common public spaces;
- absence of well-established and systematic public communication between communities and new raions within the oblast. Experts confirmed the greatest deficit of public communication is at the level of new raions of Luhansk oblast;
- a fragmented socio-cultural space, which is observed both at oblast and city levels. There are significant challenges of communication with the population of remote areas of the oblast;
- extremely unsatisfactory transport accessibility within the oblast and at the interregional level; ticket prices incompatible with earnings of the majority of residents.

4. Trust in authorities: lack of trust

The value of the “trust” indicator in Luhansk oblast can be illustrated by data obtained in Wave 4 of the SCORE Eastern Ukraine survey. Analysis of the data on trust in authorities²⁵ makes it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1) The indicators of trust in central and local authorities in Luhansk oblast are slightly lower (2.0) than Ukraine’s average (2.4), but this difference remains at the level of SCORE statistical error. This concerns the level of trust in central institutions, Luhansk Oblast State Administration and the President of Ukraine (see Table 2).

2) The situation in Luhansk oblast is typical of that of Ukraine, where trust in central institutions is twice lower (2.0) than in local institutions (4.0). Trust in local leadership (heads of towns, villages and settlements) is higher (4.2) than in heads of oblast executive authorities (oblast state administration) (3.0). At the same time, trust in heads of towns and villages is lower than Ukraine’s average.

Table 2. Indicators of the level of trust in institutions. SCORE, Luhansk oblast, 2021

		Indicator for Luhansk oblast			Indicator for Ukraine		
1	Trust	In central institutions ²⁶	In the president ²⁷	In oblast state administration ²⁸	In central institutions	In the president	In oblast state administration
		2.0	2.6	3.0	2.4	3.3	3.5
2	Trust	In central institutions: overall	In local institutions: overall ²⁹		In central institutions: overall	In local institutions: overall	
		2.0	4.0		2.4	4.4	
3	Trust	In oblast state administration ³⁰	In head of the town/village ³¹	In police ³²	In oblast state administration	In head of the town/village	In police
		3.0	4.2	3.3	3.5	5.1	3.0

²⁵ Trust in central institutions of Luhansk oblast. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-143-120>

²⁶ Trust in central institutions. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/2021/1/map?row=tn-143-120>

²⁷ Trust in the President. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-144-121>

²⁸ Trust in oblast state administration in Luhansk oblast. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-151-127>

²⁹ Trust in local institutions in Luhansk oblast. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-150-126>

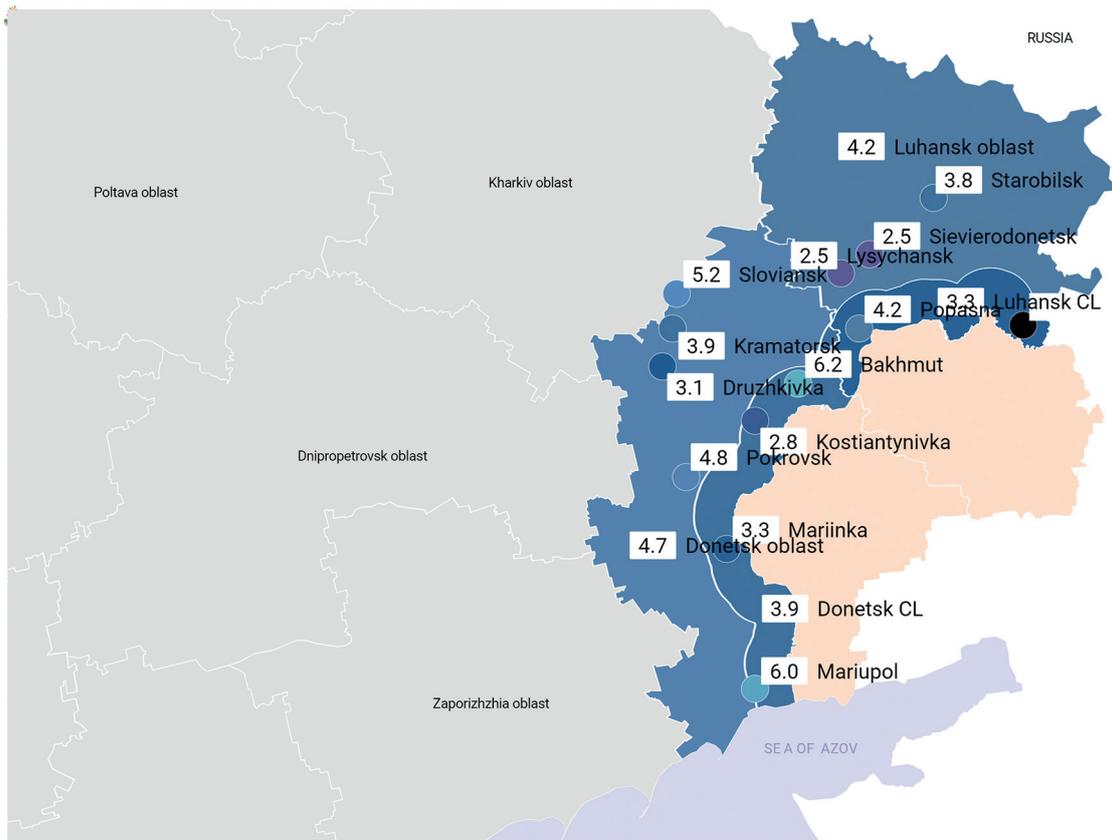
³⁰ Trust in oblast state administration. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-151-127>

³¹ Trust in head of the town/village. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-153-129>

³² Trust in police in Luhansk oblast. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-148-125>

3) There is a noticeable difference in the level of trust in heads of towns, villages and settlements within Luhansk oblast. In contrast to Donetsk oblast, where trust in community leaders in the area bordering the line of contact (3.9) is lower than the average level of trust in heads of towns, villages and settlements in Donetsk oblast (5.1), trust in the leadership of Popasna, Luhansk oblast, near the line of contact is higher (4.2) than that in Starobilsk (3.8), the oblast's administrative center Sievierodonetsk (2.5), or the large city of Lysychansk (2.5). The causes of this phenomenon should be further analyzed by more accurate assessment methods.

Figure 2. Indicator of trust in local institutions. Luhansk oblast. 2021



Source: SCORE 2021. Trust in town or village administration

A summary of the above data makes it possible to say that trust-based relationships often depend on the efforts of particular people authorized to govern a certain population center or community.

The proximity of government-controlled areas of Luhansk oblast to the theater of military operations and the selected governance model in the oblast definitely leave their mark on the level of vertical cohesion. Overcoming inequalities in communication and increasing trust

between authorities and society under the regime of military and civil administrations can be achieved by:

- additional investment in **the system of communication** between authorities and society;
- **making citizens aware** of the activities of military and civil administrations;
- wider use of tools designed to provide **sustainable feedback between authorities and society**;
- introduction of a regime of systematic **public involvement in consultations** on community-related decisions. To this end, it is possible to use such a tool as the oblast plan of support for civil society organizations designated to implement the National Strategy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine for 2021–2026.³³ The involvement of public and business initiatives in the implementation of measures (plan) of the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-free Space in Ukraine until 2030³⁴ could contribute to inclusive policy;
- introduction of joint activities with the participation of local authorities, police and the public to improve community security.

Additional measures should focus on increasing the level of trust of Luhansk oblast residents in central authorities. Specifically, we recommend:

- field meetings of central public authorities (the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine; the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy; the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Human Rights, Deoccupation and Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk, Luhansk Oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol, National Minorities and Interethnic Relations, etc.). If there are quarantine restrictions, telecommunication means can be used. It is important to build the subject of these meetings on feedback from citizens and civil society organizations;
- systematic involvement of oblast representatives (local authorities, business community, civil society organizations) in the design and, importantly, monitoring of implementation of programs on oblast development;
- holding special parliamentary (or committee) hearings on the development of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts;

³³ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 487/2021 of 27 September 2021 “On the National Strategy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine for 2021–2026” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4872021-40193>

³⁴ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 883-p of 4 August 2021 “On Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-free Space in Ukraine until 2030” [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-planu-zahodiv-na-2021-i-2022-roki-z-realizaciyi-nacionalnoyi-s40821>

- coverage of the oblast's development problems and participation of representatives of the oblast in broadcasts on national TV and radio channels;
- inter-party dialogue on realistic security and secure reintegration policies.

3.2. Trust in other groups: the potential for dialogue

Analysis of interviews with experts in Luhansk oblast enables us to identify **topics and issues that polarize public opinion and erode understanding and horizontal cohesion** among different groups:

- disagreements over the model of political settlement of the conflict and the future status of the non-government controlled areas. There are two conflicting positions in the oblast: refusal to reintegrate the temporarily non-government controlled areas ('give and forget') and the wish to return them to Ukrainian control at any cost. This area of concern needs facilitated dialogue, simultaneously taking into account that the **"readiness for dialogue"** indicator in the oblast is not very high (3.9) compared to its slightly higher value in Donetsk oblast (4.5);³⁵
- dissatisfaction of the communities of population centers included into newly formed amalgamated territorial communities (ATCs) and enlarged raions without taking into account historically established communications and a lack of common infrastructure;
- the **"contact with people from eastern Ukraine"** indicator for Luhansk oblast residents is high at 7.3 points, whereas the **"contact with people from western Ukraine"** indicator is four times **lower** (1.8 points) and slightly below the region's average of 2.

To assess the readiness for dialogue of residents of Luhansk oblast, we also used data of Wave 4 of the SCORE Eastern Ukraine survey for 2021 and analyzed the **"social threat from other groups" indicator**.³⁶ This indicator characterizes intergroup relationships and is important, because the absence of a sense of threat is a necessary, though insufficient, condition for promoting dialogue and building trust between representatives of different groups (see Table 3. Social threat from different groups).

³⁵ Readiness for dialogue. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-171-144>

³⁶ Social threat from different groups. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/2021/1/map?row=tn-183-155>

Table 3. Social threat from different groups. Luhansk oblast, 2021

	Ukraine's average indicator	Luhansk oblast's indicator
Social threat from:		
Different groups (overall)	2.8	2.5
Military personnel of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) or the Joint Forces Operation (JFO)	2.4	2.5
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	2.6	1.9
People from eastern Ukraine	2.1	1.4
People from Crimea	2.4	1.9
Pro-Russia oriented people	3.7	2.9
People from western Ukraine	2.1	2.5
Ukrainian nationalists	3.2	3.8
Pro-EU oriented people	2.1	2.5
People living in the non-government controlled areas (NGCA)	3.4	2.5
People who support the separation of non-government controlled areas	3.6	3.0

As seen from the above data, there is potential for dialogue and finding points of mutual understanding and interaction in the oblast, which is important for horizontal cohesion.

1. The “social threat from different groups” indicator in Luhansk oblast generally coincides with Ukraine’s average.

2. The “social threat from people from eastern Ukraine, people from Crimea, people living in non-government controlled areas, internally displaced persons, and pro-Russia oriented people” indicator of residents of Luhansk oblast is lower than Ukraine’s average. It is possible to assume that residents of these oblasts or representatives of these groups are perceived as ‘friends’ through the linguistic dimension and historically more established economic ties.

3. At the same time, a slightly higher level of threat than Ukraine’s average is recorded for pro-EU oriented people (2.5 vs 2.1 on average in Ukraine) and people from western Ukraine (2.5 vs 2.1 on average in Ukraine). It is possible to assume that this sense of social threat from groups with different language and economic preferences is formed as a result of weak ties.

4. Residents of Luhansk oblast are most concerned about people designated as “Ukrainian nationalists”. Ukraine’s average indicator of social threat from representatives of the group of “Ukrainian nationalists” is 3.2, whereas in Luhansk oblast it has a value of 3.8. At the same time, this concern is lower than in Donetsk oblast (4.7 points).

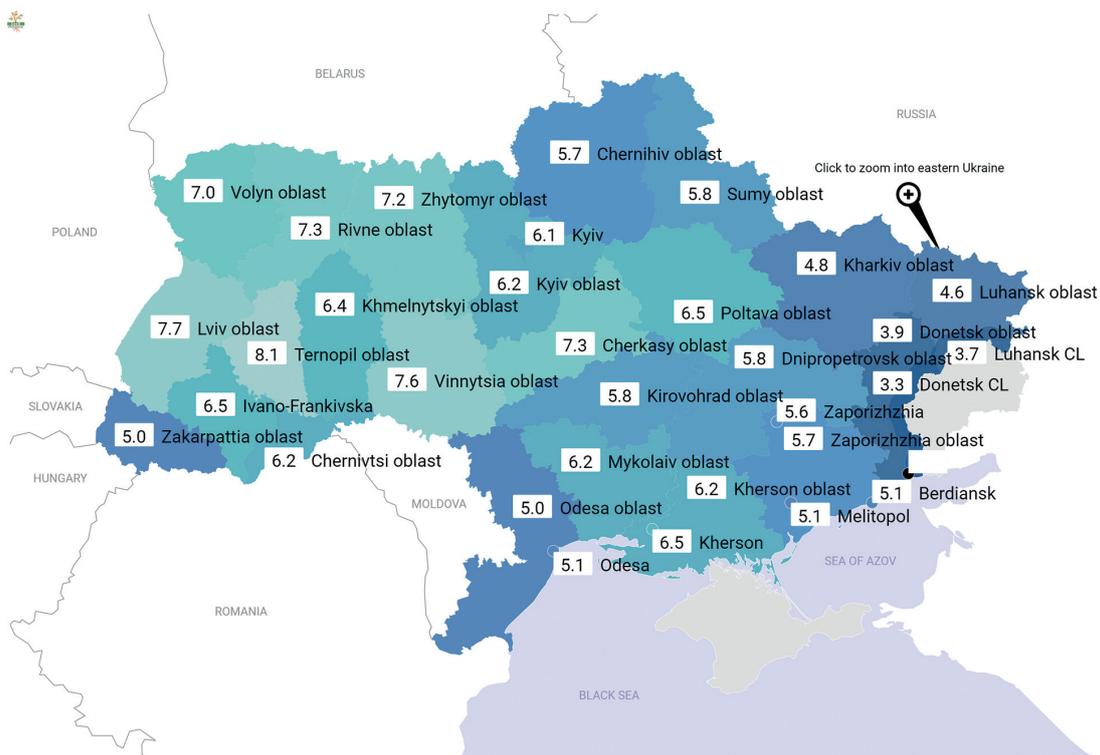
5. Interestingly, residents of Luhansk oblast are more tolerant towards adherents of the idea of separation of the non-government controlled areas from Ukraine. The level of social threat from people who support NGCA separation in Luhansk oblast is 3.0 vs Ukraine’s average of 3.6 (3.5 in Donetsk oblast).

The above data give reason to conclude that despite the significant level of concern of residents of Luhansk oblast about people of other geo-cultural orientation, **the oblast has good potential for developing dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation practices and promoting effective cooperation.**

3.3. Trust in the Ukrainian army in Luhansk oblast

In Luhansk oblast, trust in the Ukrainian army (4.6) is higher than in Donetsk oblast (3.9). However, it is lower than in the neighboring oblasts of Kharkiv (4.8), Dnipropetrovsk (5.8) and Zaporizhzhia (5.7).³⁷ Ukraine’s average indicator of trust in the Ukrainian army is 6 points.

Figure 3. Trust in the Ukrainian army, 2021



Source: SCORE 2021.

³⁷ Trust in Ukrainian Army. SCORE 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/use/2021/1/map?row=tn-154-130>

This indicator must be taken into account in establishing communication with the public and shaping the content of information policy.

Notwithstanding the extensive and important work of the Civil-Military Cooperation Department of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (CIMIC),³⁸ established according to NATO standards in 2014, it is clear that awareness-raising should be further increased to better inform local residents about efforts of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to meet local humanitarian needs, improve mutual understanding, and increase trust in the army.

In this area, it is necessary to:

- consolidate efforts of central, oblast and local authorities with those of representatives of the Civil-Military Cooperation Department of the Armed Force of Ukraine, national and local media, and non-governmental organizations;
- more actively cover the participation of Ukraine's military personnel in solving social and humanitarian problems of all communities, not only those located near the line of contact;
- involve ATO/JFO military personnel who are natives of Luhansk oblast in civic education activities;
- base cooperation on the goals set out in the National Human Rights Strategy, in particular, on measures to protect the civilian population amid the conflict caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the temporary occupation of part of Ukraine's territory;³⁹
- consider the possibility of interaction based on instruments of interregional and intermunicipal cooperation.

³⁸ CIMIC is a bridge between the civilian population and military personnel. Interview with Colonel V. Vlasenko, Chief of the Civil-Military Cooperation Department of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. 6 May 2021 [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/05/06/simiky-cze-mistok-mizh-cyvilnym-naselennyam-i-vijskovymy/>

³⁹ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 119/2021 of 24 March 2021 "On the National Human Rights Strategy of Ukraine" [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1192021-37537>

4. The potential of interregional and intermunicipal cooperation for the development of social cohesion policy

Development of interregional and intermunicipal cooperation remains an underestimated tool of secure reintegration policy.

This instrument is of special importance for Luhansk oblast due to its geographical location, extremely difficult situation regarding transport infrastructure, distribution of population in the oblast, and territorial borders with only two Ukrainian oblasts (Donetsk and Kharkiv).

Interviews with oblast experts provided information on interregional cooperation practices existing in Luhansk oblast. Luhansk oblast has recently signed a number of memoranda with other oblasts of Ukraine to facilitate experience-sharing in economic, scientific, technical, humanitarian and cultural areas. Specifically, memoranda on cultural and tourism cooperation were concluded with Rivne and Lviv oblasts, and an agreement on creating an international logistics center was reached with Kherson oblast.

Planning types of interaction between oblasts and communities of different oblasts is a promising activity area for authorities, as it could strengthen both vertical and horizontal cohesion. Luhansk oblast has significant potential for new interregional cooperation projects to address a wide range of potential challenges.

Interregional and intermunicipal cooperation through the synergy of cooperation, consolidation of resources and creation of common communication and logistics environments could have a positive impact on:

- solving problems of common concern for neighboring oblasts and the eastern macro-region in general;
- preventing fragmentation of local clusters and isolation or separation of relationships in the oblast;
- increasing contacts between residents of Luhansk oblast with other Ukrainian oblasts and creating conditions for shaping a more open oblast identity in Luhansk oblast;
- building new economic ties, enhancing a sense of belonging to Ukraine of residents of Luhansk oblast and their understanding of the integrity of relationships;
- transferring and implementing successful and effective governance and social practices developed in other oblasts.

These points apply to cooperation between territorially close communities and oblasts, as well as between oblasts.

As shown in one of the studies conducted as part of Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding in Donbas with the National Platform project,⁴⁰ **the creation of coordinated mechanisms (ecosystems) of interregional cooperation could** promote cohesion-strengthening. The following could be relevant promising areas:

- environment: ensure the sustainable development of river basins (in particular, the Siverskyi Donets); overcome the effects of natural and man-made disasters (in particular, fires in Luhansk oblasts in 2020), and set up a system to prevent their recurrence;
- communications: capacity-building, joint maintenance and repair of roads; arrangement of up-to-date transport systems; maintenance of relevant networks;
- administrative and financial services: introduce technologies for data collection and processing in administrative processes in various fields (geo-information networks, smart cities); provide financial services; assist in receiving online services; improve digital literacy;
- social security: provide services for people with disabilities, provide access to distance learning; exchange information on the labor market; ensure mobility of workers;
- utilities: ensure stable and high-quality drinking water supply;
- security: undertake joint patrols; cooperate in activity areas of the Civil-Military Cooperation Department of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; plan demining operations and humanitarian cooperation;
- culture and tourism: develop infrastructure of recreational areas; integrate tourism services and cultural industries.

Communities and authorities of the oblast should choose particular areas and priorities for their implementation. The ongoing identification of development challenges and the enhanced efforts of coordination institutions through engaging the business community and non-governmental organizations should create preconditions for action.

⁴⁰ Zhalilo Ya., Snihova O. Realizing the Potential of Interregional and Intermunicipal Cooperation in the Framework of Cohesion Policy. Analytical Report. UCIPR, 2021. 28 p [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <http://ucipr.org.ua/publicatsii/vydannia/realizing-the-potential-of-interregional-and-intermunicipal-cooperation-in-the-framework-of-cohesion-policy-analytical-report>



III. CONCLUSIONS

Luhansk oblast suffers greatly from numerous consequences of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation in eastern Ukraine and the temporary occupation of part of its territory.

Among the main challenges that have a long-term and systemic effect are:

- negative population dynamics;
- poor integration of internally displaced persons;
- inefficient economy coupled with destroyed infrastructure and logistics;
- deterioration of life quality and human development conditions;
- non-compliance of infrastructure with modern human and economic needs;
- security challenges;
- limited public involvement and communication.

Hence, challenges are not only to restore damaged infrastructure, but to build new ties and infrastructure amid the unresolved conflict. Many objectives are being implemented with the support of the government and international providers of assistance, although many challenges remain.

Work should be ongoing to provide an organized political response to these challenges. The content of this response will be adequate and its effects more sustainable if any policy is inclusive at all stages.

The core idea of social cohesion policy is to build the capacity of local communities to prevent and mitigate social conflicts. Manifestations of inequality (e.g., in access to resources or services; earnings); tensions caused by attitudes to certain events; ethnicity; the use of language or other identity, and artificial restrictions on political participation could be viewed as conflicts.

The idea of social cohesion policy is to strengthen trust in society at two levels: the trust of citizens in the state, its institutions and processes on the one hand, and among citizens on the other. It is important in this process to perceive one's own and other people's identity as a resource for development.

It is possible to discuss the strengthening of social cohesion if different actors interact with each other, and if this interaction is recognized to result in shared responsibility and, consequently, trust in policy outcomes and policy makers.

From development to implementation of this policy, its actors should include both authorities and civil society institutions, local businesses, national and local media.

To date, the challenge is to formulate social cohesion policy as an integral priority, since socially coherent communities ultimately achieve a better level of social and economic realization and well-being through practical planning of measures based on the needs and capacities of each community. Such plans should be developed at the level of each community in the near term. This term is defined in the Strategy of Economic Development of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts as February 2022.

The degree of strength of social ties can be measured by trust levels (which can be monitored by public opinion polls) and reciprocity norms, the number and activities of organizations that bridge social divisions (“civil society”) and media support.

It is important that each community member has access to justice to effectively restore violated rights, which is particularly acute for internally displaced persons.

Social cohesion policy will be effective if it becomes a cross-cutting task of each sectoral policy at national, regional (oblast) and local (at the level of communities and some population centers) level, and is consciously developed.

A combination of policies, enhanced living standards, restored infrastructure, improved public services and relevant communication should help build trust in communities at vertical and horizontal levels. Rational use of resources is possible through the synergy of interregional cooperation.



IV. PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL COHESION POLICY IN LUHANSK OBLAST

Preliminary analysis makes it possible to distinguish the following aspects of relationships in Luhansk oblast that play the most important role for building trust:

- the needs of internally displaced persons, who represent the highest proportion in Ukraine of resident population of the oblast (in government-controlled areas) and who have problems accessing resources and services;
- the necessity to restore and build transport and logistics infrastructure to allow adequate movement of people and business development;
- the need to find specific tools to involve residents in inclusive decision-making in frontline communities when there are limited activities of representative authorities and governance by military and civil administrations;
- gradual development of practical measures to implement elements of transitional justice designed to overcome the conflict's implications, build peace, shape horizontal trust and a more influential policy that will be more centered on local needs. These may include joint activities of police and local population on community safety; documentation of crimes and truth-finding mechanisms; reimbursement and restoration of violated rights; facilitation of dialogue and mediation; involvement of stakeholders in creating a nationwide approach to amnesty and lustration as reintegration and peacebuilding tools;
- search for mechanisms to provide a wide range of services (medical ones in particular) for residents of settlements located far from centers providing these services.

An increased level of social cohesion requires communication as a cross-cutting component:

- in-depth regular communication with communities and social groups on local policy priorities to be implemented, information sharing, feedback processing and analysis; public examination of the effectiveness of equalization policy;
- search for formats of interaction between military and civil administrations and communities and civil society organizations, in particular, the establishment and revitalization of advisory structures, i.e. expert councils with the participation of representatives of civil society organizations, women's associations, youth and the business community;

- creation of procedures for responding to local crises, which would imply cooperation of different social groups;
- mainstreaming various aspects of public life in Luhansk oblast in national media, not limited to highlighting success stories but rather identifying systemic needs;
- development of communication formats with various social groups, including representatives of national minorities living in the oblast, ranging from development of action plans to evaluation of outcome performance;
- capacity-building of civil society organizations and their provision with local resources; promotion of charity and social entrepreneurship, including to implement projects that have an impact on cohesion at local level. These measures could be part of an oblast action plan for implementation of the recently approved National Strategy for Civil Society Development in Ukraine for 2021–2026 and the National Human Rights Strategy of Ukraine.
- support and enhanced capacity-building for local media; cooperation with local media in awareness-raising initiatives, fact-checking, informing communities about civil society projects that may improve community well-being and increase social cohesion and trust; development of media and citizen journalism initiatives on cohesion issues;
- initiation and support of various formats of cultural exchange and sports events that contribute to creating a sense of unity and adherence to certain values that consolidate and overcome challenges.

The educational component of strengthening social cohesion may incorporate activities at various levels, including in schools:

- training in critical thinking, counteraction to fake news in the information space;
- training in raising awareness of human rights and civic education;
- diversity management and conflict prevention measures;
- use of participatory budgets with a focus on cohesion and reintegration (creation of a legal framework under the governance of military and civil administrations);
- support for initiatives on interregional cooperation, experience sharing, interregional projects on education, removal of barriers, and decentralization;
- continued implementation of programs of interregional exchange, contacts, and adoption of best practices of other oblasts taking into account the regional specifics of Luhansk oblast;
- support for projects and humanitarian initiatives working with communities on the line of contact;
- measures and projects on digital literacy, use of electronic tools;
- popularization of Luhansk oblast's past and present in different oblasts of Ukraine;

- gender mainstreaming;
- cooperation initiatives with churches, religious organizations and communities on peacebuilding and reconciliation;
- support for project initiatives to learn Ukrainian and English;
- support for non-government organization initiatives and projects, cooperation on local development programs;
- settlement of problems of social and infrastructure provision for communities bordering the line of contact; development of special humanitarian measures to address intraregional inequalities between community opportunities and access of members of different communities to resources and services, taking into account the individual needs of each community.

Financial instruments for increasing social cohesion should include community-based development plans with a focus on:

- the cluster approach and mechanisms for co-financing objectives common to several communities; attention to opportunities for interregional and intermunicipal cooperation projects;
- attraction of international assistance, both for major infrastructure projects and for implementing special humanitarian measures in population centers located in the gray zone and far from service centers of the oblast;
- equalization measures, including support initiatives for the elderly, lifelong learning projects, career guidance for different groups including ATO/JFO military personnel and IDPs.

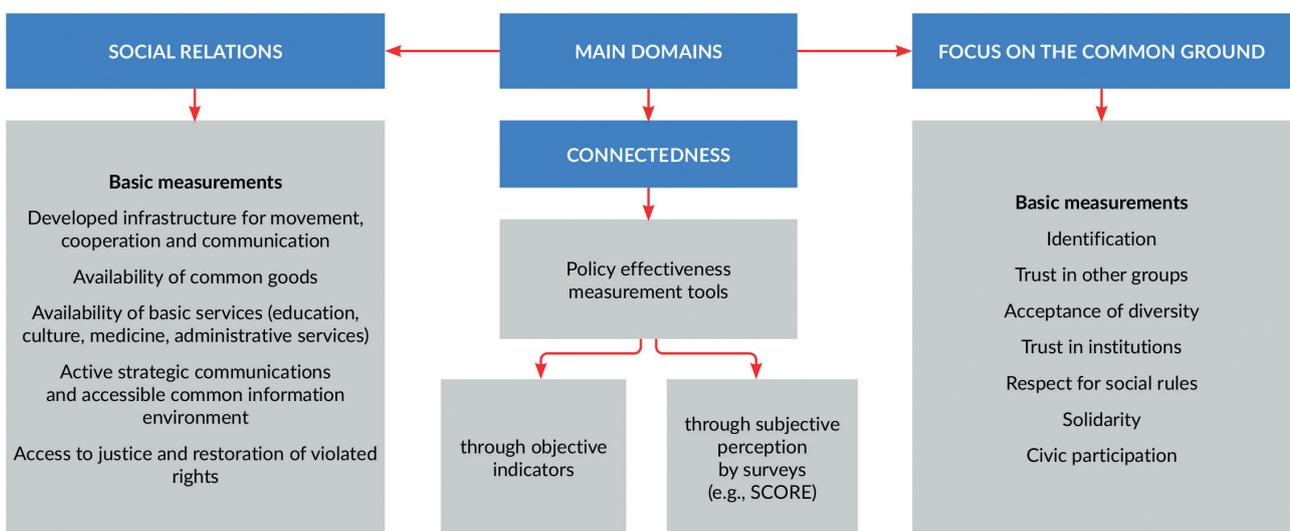
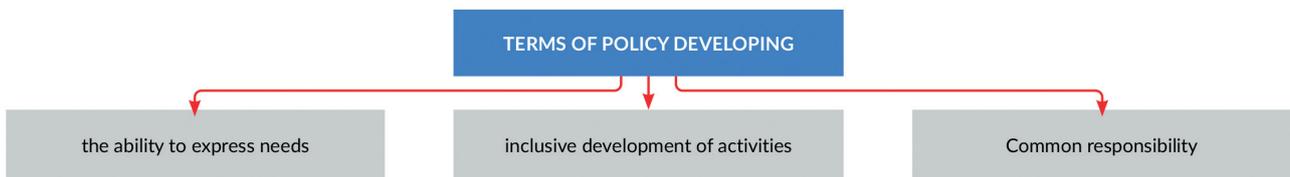
Like any policy, social cohesion policy needs a system of measurement, monitoring of implementation, and evaluation of outcomes. In our opinion, SCORE, which contains a wide range of assessments, can be used as a basis for monitoring well-being and assessing trust of different groups. It could then be tailored to measure significant performance indicators.

MAIN DOMAINS FOR SOCIAL COHESION POLICY IN THE EAST OF UKRAINE

SOCIAL COHESION IS THE QUALITY OF COEXISTENCE OF PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY THEIR BELONGING TO DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS



Policy goal is a level of trust of people from different groups increasing
Such a policy is relevant in societies that recognize the interdependence of groups and build solidarity based on diversity to avoid polarization and conflicts



The infographic "Main domains for social cohesion policy in the East of Ukraine" was produced by the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (UCIPR) with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The study was made possible thanks to the generous support of the American people, provided through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The product content is solely the responsibility of UCIPR and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the US Government. Reproduction and use of any part of this product in any format, including graphic, electronic, copying or use in any other way without the corresponding reference to the original source, shall be prohibited.

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Notes



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Directions for Policy Development in Luhansk Oblast**

Policy development document

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