

The background of the cover is a photograph of a Ukrainian military vehicle, possibly an armored personnel carrier, moving through a field. Several soldiers in camouflage uniforms are visible on the vehicle. A Ukrainian flag (blue and yellow) is flying from a pole on the right side of the vehicle. The scene is set in a rural, open field under a clear sky.

# *Reintegration of veterans of ATO/JFO on a community level in Ukraine*

Analysis of a situation as of November 2019  
(on the example of the communities of Ivano-Frankivsk,  
Kharkiv and Chuhuiv)

Reintegration of veterans of ATO / JFO on a community level in Ukraine. Analysis of a situation as of November 2019 (on the example of the communities of Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, and Chuhuiv): report / Daria Bielinska, Aliona Gorova, Roman Koval, Aliona Kopina, Yuriy Mykytyn, Svitlana Petrova; editors: Roman Koval, Julia Sedyk, Maryna Svensson. – Kyiv, 2019. – 24 pages.

The report is a result of work of experts and partners of the project "Local Self-Government and the Rule of Law in Ukraine" implemented by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) in 2014 – 2020 and funded by Sweden, on a study on the state of reintegration of veterans of Anti-Terrorist Operation / Joint Forces Operation on the example of 3 target communities. The study was conducted by Ukrainian public organization "Institute for Peace & Common Ground" (IPCG) during July – November 2019 in cooperation with the local self-government bodies in three cities of Ukraine: Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, and Chuhuiv.

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# *Abbreviations and interpretation of terms*

ATC – Amalgamated Territorial Community

ATO – Anti-Terrorist Operation

CBRS – Community Based (Re)integration and Security

CMU – Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

CSO – Civil society organization

CSSFCY – Center of social services for families, children, and youth

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (of veterans)

DSPP – Department of social protection of population

FBA – Swedish government agency Folke Bernadotte Academy

IDDRS – Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards developed by the United Nations

IDP – Internally displaced person

IPCG – Ukrainian public organization “Institute for Peace & Common Ground”

JFO – Joint Forces Operation

LSG – Local Self-Government

NGO – Non-government organization

SPAS – Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society

TOT – Temporary Occupied Territories

VRU – Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine

In order to better understand the information presented in the report, the authors offer the following interpretations of the terms used:

**Veteran** is a term that, in the context of the report, means a war veteran or a person who has participated in the defense of the Homeland or in hostilities on the territory of other states (and has the appropriate status).

**Demobilization** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN, 'Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards', United Nations, 2014, <[https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic\\_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html](https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html)>.

**Combatant** is a person who: - is a member of a national or irregular army; or

- takes an active part in military activities and hostile actions; or
- involved in the recruitment and training of military personnel; or
- holds a position in the army or in a military organization with the right to command or make decisions; or
- arrived in the host country with a weapon or in a military uniform, or as part of a military structure; or
- arrived in the host country as an ordinary civilian, but then decides or demonstrates his intention to acquire any of the above attributes.

**Reinsertion** is a form of transitional assistance to help meet the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families, which may include transitional safety allowances, food, clothing, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools.<sup>2</sup>

**(Psycho-social) Re-adaptation** is a form of transitional care to meet the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families, which may include counseling and community meetings.

**Reintegration** is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and receive sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, which takes place primarily in communities at the local level. It is part of the overall development of the country and national responsibility, which often requires long-term external support.

**Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, light and heavy weapons of combatants and (often) civilians. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible weapons management programs.

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<sup>2</sup> UN, 'Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards', United Nations, 2014, <[https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic\\_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html](https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html)>.

# Introduction

In 2016, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, in partnership with the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (SPAS), for the first time supported a study of the needs of veterans and recipient communities in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) project in Ukraine that was conducted by the experts of the Ukrainian public organization "Institute for Peace & Common Ground" (IPCG).

At that time, there was almost no institutional infrastructure and legal framework to meet the needs of veterans. Based on the results of the study, IPCG experts together with partners prepared recommendations for the Government of Ukraine, which were based on international practices of DDR programs. Many changes have taken place since then. There is a profile program, a concept for rehabilitation and re-adaptation, there is a new Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine (since September 2019 – the united Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporary Occupied Territories, and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine), and a single state register of veterans is going to be created soon. It seems that the prerequisites for the successful reintegration of veterans already exist; however, on the ground veterans and other relevant groups complain about the government's lack of attention to veterans' needs and feel that the state is indifferent to them. At the regional level, there are constant tensions between these groups and local authorities. Social workers are forced to work under constant pressure from veterans who do not understand why they cannot receive certain benefits guaranteed by the state for which they fought.

Therefore, a new study was conducted in 2019 to understand why the issue of meeting the needs of veterans is still quite conflictogenic, to identify the dynamics of conflicts in target communities, the existing needs for reintegration of former combatants and to develop recommendations for reintegration programs to better meet needs of veterans during the reintegration process. This time the study was implemented within the framework of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) project "Local Self-Government and the Rule of Law in Ukraine" financially supported by Sweden (2014-2020) and performed by experts and partners of IPCG. The main direction of the work was to study the problems of reintegration of veterans into the community, taking into account the principles of the rule of law and identifying possible solutions through dialogues conducted in communities. The work on this project included the following components:

- analysis of conflict potential in the area of veteran reintegration;
- two-day presentations on DDR and dialogue tools to develop an approach to the reintegration of ATO / JFO veterans and community-based security to familiarize future dialogue participants with the approach and international experience of reintegration programs. Also, the seminar on DDR was conducted for public authorities at the national level (Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine Committee on Organization of State Power, Self-Government, Regional Development, and Urban Construction, VRU Committee on Social Policy and Protection of the Rights of the Veterans, Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, etc.);
- conducting dialogues to develop the goals, objectives and direction of regional reintegration programs with the involvement of all stakeholders (veterans, community, local governments and local authorities);
- development of a local program for reintegration of veterans in the form of a document.



Based on the analysis of the potential for conflict in communities (conflict potential), the results of dialogues and developed reintegration programs, IPCG experts prepared a study on the reintegration of ATO / JFO veterans and updated the recommendations for the development of DDR programs for Ukraine.

**The scope of this study included:**

1. The structure of the veteran network in the target communities: the number and categories of veterans, their families;
2. Programs on social protection / rehabilitation and re-adaptation / reintegration of veterans operating in 2019 in target communities (including state programs);
3. Conflict potential of target communities in issues related to reintegration of veterans.

Several methods were combined to gather information: analysis of legislation and specialized reports, informal interviews with stakeholders (representatives of local authorities, representatives of veterans' organizations, public activists and other public organizations that are in one way or another related to veterans, their families, IDPs – total 45 people).

The study was conducted on the basis of 3 communities: the cities of Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, and Chuhuiv.

The target audience of this study was representatives of public authorities, the relevant Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine, local governments, NGOs working with veterans, their families, and other groups affected by the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine.

# 1. Overview of Ukrainian legislation and programs of reintegration of veterans

Over the past two years, many new laws and regulations have been enacted to create conditions for the return and adaptation of veterans to peaceful life. Thus, on October 12, 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a resolution on amendments to the “State Targeted Program for Medical, Physical Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Victims of the Revolution of Dignity, participants of the anti-terrorist operation and persons involved in national security measures and defense, repulse and deterrence of armed aggression of the Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, ensuring their implementation, for the period until 2023” №1021 of December 5, 2018; in addition, the draft law №2045-1 on amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine on granting status and social guarantees to individuals from among the participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation passed the first reading. There is a profile program, a concept for rehabilitation and re-adaptation, there is a new Ministry of Veterans’ Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine.

In Ukraine, the support for veterans is given in the form of benefits and services<sup>3</sup> provided by 22 central executive bodies, which are governed by more than 150 regulations. In this report we will not consider all these acts in detail, there is a good analysis conducted by the Legal Hundred<sup>4</sup>, and their analytical reports on the main provisions of the legislation in the field of protection of veterans’ affairs<sup>5</sup> which are available for detailed reading.

First of all, we should refer to the “State Targeted Program for Medical, Physical Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Re-adaptation of Victims of the Revolution of Dignity, Participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation and Persons Who Participated in Measures to Ensure National Security and Defense, Repulse and Restrain Armed Aggression of Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, ensuring their implementation for the period until 2023.” The declared goal and objectives of the program meet the requirements for reintegration programs, namely: the goal is “to create and ensure full functioning of a holistic system of rehabilitation and re-adaptation of participants, to ensure a clear transparent mechanism for administering their needs for full re-adaptation of participants to civilian life, creation of conditions for active involvement of executive bodies and local self-government bodies, public associations, and international organizations in this process”<sup>6</sup>. This program contains a wide range of activities and a well-thought-out concept of rehabilitation and re-adaptation, identified problems and ways to solve existing problems to meet the needs of veterans. The Concept provides for the “development (2018-2019) and implementation (2020-2022) of measures to rehabilitate participants on the principle of stimulating opportunities.”<sup>7</sup> However, a very important element as reintegration is left out of focus.

Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization before a longer reintegration process. Reinsertion, as noted above, is a form of transitional assistance to meet the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families, which may include transitional safety allowances, food, clothing, shelter, medical services,

<sup>3</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Law of Ukraine ‘Про статус ветеранів війни, гарантії їх соціального захисту’ [On the Status of Veterans, the Guarantees of Their Social Protection] №3551-XII, October 22, 1993 (“Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1993, №45, Article 425), Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1993, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/en/3551-12#n3>>.

<sup>4</sup> “Legal Hundred” was founded in a summer of 2014 as a group of caring volunteer lawyers on Facebook who provided assistance to wounded participants in the Russian-Ukrainian war in military hospitals. In April 2018, the Project Office for the establishment of the Ministry of Veterans’ Affairs was organized on the basis of the Legal Hundred, which within 6 months developed a draft structure of the Ministry, draft regulations to create and launch work and formed a vision of an updated system of social support for veterans. All the work was handed over to the Prime Minister of Ukraine and used to create a new Ministry. Currently, the Legal Hundred and the Ministry of Veterans are actively cooperating in adjacent areas. For more information see Legal Hundred website, <<https://legal100.org.ua/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Legal Hundred, ‘Біла книга: аналіз системи державної підтримки ветеранів та їх сімей в Україні’ [White book: analysis of the system of state support for veterans and their families in Ukraine], Legal Hundred, 2018, <<https://legal100.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Bila-Knyga.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Resolution ‘Про затвердження Державної цільової програми з медичної, фізичної реабілітації та психосоціальної реабілітації постраждалих учасників Революції Гідності, учасників антитерористичної операції та осіб, які брали участь у здійсненні заходів із забезпечення національної безпеки і оборони, відсічі і стримування збройної агресії Російської Федерації в Донецькій та Луганській областях, забезпеченні їх здійснення, на період до 2023 року’ [On the Approval of State Targeted Program for Medical, Physical Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Re-adaptation of Victims of the Revolution of Dignity, Participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation and Persons Who Participated in Measures to Ensure National Security and Defense, Repulse and Restrain Armed Aggression of Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, ensuring their implementation for the period until 2023] №1021, December 5, 2018 in the edition of October 12, 2019, №877, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2018, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1021-2018-%D0%BF?lang=en>>.

<sup>7</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Decree ‘Концепція Державної цільової програми з фізичної, медичної, психологічної реабілітації і соціальної та професійної реабілітації учасників антитерористичної операції та осіб, які брали участь у здійсненні заходів із забезпечення національної безпеки і оборони, відсічі і стримування збройної агресії Російської Федерації в Донецькій та Луганській областях, забезпеченні їх здійснення, на період до 2022 року’ [The Concept of the State Program on the Physical, Medical, Psychological Rehabilitation and Social and Professional Re-adaptation of Participants of the Anti-Terrorist Operation and Persons Who Participated in Measures to Ensure National Security and Defense, Repulse and Restrain Armed Aggression of Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, Ensuring Their Implementation for the Period until 2022] №475-п, July 12, 2017, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/en/475-2017-%D1%80#n9>>.



short-term education, training, employment and tools. In fact, it is short-term material and / or financial support to meet basic needs, which can last up to a year. In contrary, the reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic development process<sup>8</sup>.

Reintegration programs typically do not provide packages of activities, benefits, or assistance that people can claim, but provide support in the form of services based on the needs, aspirations, and availability of specific assistance. The focus of targeted assistance will be on improving their working capacity, which - depending on their education and work experience - may include retraining (training), support for business or cooperative development and employment. Further support will be provided in the form of business development and microfinance services, and the connection of new enterprises created by veterans to production chains and markets<sup>9</sup>.

It is worth noting that if you look at the Action Plan of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (of September 29, 2019)<sup>10</sup>, then according to certain goals and indicators, we can conclude that the Government provides for certain reintegration measures. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs of Ukraine (hereinafter - the Minister)<sup>11</sup> also speaks about this. Therefore, although it is impossible to say that Ukraine has a comprehensive reintegration program as a single strategic document, there is a strategy of the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs of Ukraine.

There is also a variety of local (regional) regulations governing the provision of services and benefits to veterans and their families. After the approval of the Concept of Local Government Reform and Territorial Organization of Power<sup>12</sup>, which provided for the transfer of powers and funds from the central government to local governments – the regional budget have doubled at least, which also allocate funds for veterans. Such a transfer of powers and finances has expanded the ability of residents of the regions to directly influence the distribution of funds and require local authorities to spend them rationally. It is important to note that not all ATO / JFO participants and their families are well aware of what benefits or services are covered by the regional or state budget, which, according to social services representatives heard during the interviews, leads to many misunderstandings, for example, regarding the procedure for receiving benefits or services, payments, the availability of different queues, and in general – about the fact that there are programs at different levels – state, regional, local, etc.

In most oblasts, separate social protection programs have been approved exclusively for ATO / JFO veterans and members of their families. Such programs may include medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, financial assistance, land allocation, and housing construction.

Budget programs for veterans in the field of health care in the regions differ in the list of areas of care, the form of presentation: it can be several programs to provide, for example, patients with cancer, hepatitis and cardiovascular problems, or one general program containing includes various areas of medical care (comprehensive program). The programs include the purchase of new equipment, the support of health care facilities, the purchase of consumables and medicines for the treatment of patients, etc.

Veterans' housing programs are quite relevant in the context of the economic crisis and low incomes. Local authorities, based on the possibilities of budgets, mostly use provision of loans (for example, in the city of Kharkiv), payment of interest on loans or co-finance government programs such as "Own House" (construction of housing in villages).

<sup>8</sup> UN, 'Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards', United Nations, 2014, <[https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic\\_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html](https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/democratic_governance/DDR-operational-guide.html)>.

<sup>9</sup> Transition International, 'Concept Note on Community Based (Re)integration and Security (CBRS)', Transition International, 2015, <<https://www.transitioninternational.com/ti/concept-note-on-community-based-reintegration-and-security-cbrs/>>.

<sup>10</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Resolution 'Про Програму діяльності Кабінету Міністрів України' [On the Action Plan of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine] №188-IX, October 4, 2019, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2019, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/188-IX#Text>>.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Oksana Koliada, the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories, and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine "Що менше людей зі статусом "переселенець", то ефективніше ми працюємо" – міністерка ветеранів та окупованих територій [The fewer people with 'IDP' status, the more efficient we work' – Minister of Veterans and Occupied Territories], Hromadske TV, 2019, <<https://hromadske.ua/posts/yaksho-pereselenci-povnocinno-zhivut-u-gromadi-mi-spracyuvali-efektivno-ministerka-veteraniv-ta-okupovanih-teritorij>>.

<sup>12</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Concept 'Концепція реформування місцевого самоврядування та територіальної організації влади в Україні' [Local Government Reform and Territorial Organization of Power in Ukraine] approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 'Про схвалення Концепції реформування місцевого самоврядування та територіальної організації влади в Україні' [On the Approval of the Concept of Local Government Reform and Territorial Organization of Power in Ukraine] № 333-р, April 2, 2014, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2014, <<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/333-2014-%D1%80>>.

Programs to support physical culture and sports exist in almost every region of Ukraine, their approval is not mandatory, but quite common. However, veterans in the target communities noted that these programs either did not exist or were very limited in their communities. For example, there is only one gym in Chuhuiv which has no discounts for veterans and no local program that could help solve this problem.

According to a study of regional programs, the level and effectiveness, content and quality of social services provided to veterans differ significantly in each region of Ukraine. Not all of the above programs are reintegrative in the classical sense. Rather, they are social protection programs. In addition, these programs are generally common to the region and include more different groups than just veterans and their families, which, on the one hand, is in line with the principles of reintegration, but reduces the proportion of veterans who can receive relevant services. Although the Concept states that programs should not focus on material assistance, but on creating opportunities, in practice a completely different situation can be observed. Most regional programs focus on social protection and material assistance. However, while financial assistance is important, it does not address reintegration issues in any way. In addition, the issues of economic development of the region as a tool for reintegration of veterans are often overlooked. Thus, regional programs, like state ones, prioritize the employment of veterans, but often do not take into account the resources available in the community, such as the real labor market in the region, opportunities for enterprises to expand and hire new employees, skills and interests of veterans themselves.

The Minister and the latest documents of the relevant Ministry declare the involvement of veterans in identifying and prioritizing their needs, for example through the public council established in March 2019 at the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine<sup>13</sup>. The Minister also repeatedly stressed the importance of conducting research on the needs of veterans and opportunities to meet them. At present, we cannot analyze the methods of these studies and assess how realistically veterans and related groups were or will be involved in this process (according to the plan attached to the reintegration and readaptation program, such studies were to take place in 2019, but on the date of this report, information on research results has not yet been made public).

At the level of the declaration remains the issue of community involvement in the processes of socialization and re-adaptation, not even reintegration, of veterans. The lack of a clear understanding and strategy of involving communities in reintegration processes contributes to the stigmatization of veterans and the formation of a biased image of veterans as aggressive recipients, according to the participants of discussions, of "infinite benefits."

In general, the significant progress has been made in the development of national strategies for the rehabilitation and re-adaptation of veterans and their families compared to 2016. However, judging by the analysis, it can be concluded that the most important element of the strategy, namely a comprehensive approach to the reintegration of veterans in the program proposed by the government, has been lost. It is important to note that the emphasis on the relationship between economic development, community involvement and the adaptation of veterans and other groups affected by hostilities is essential for the sustainable outcome and reduction of the security threat posed by non-reintegrated groups. Therefore, all measures and programs aimed at improving the situation of veterans and other affected groups, and proposed by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs of Ukraine, should be developed and considered as an integrated approach based on this principle.

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<sup>13</sup> After September 2, 2019 – the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories, and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine.

## *2. Conflict potential of communities*

### **2.1 Veteran reintegration risks and causes of conflicts in communities**

Assessing the potential for conflict is, first of all, identifying sensitive issues that may cause conflicts between the groups involved. After conducting this research, the experts organized and summarized the most common causes of conflict.

1. Lack of standards (defined principles) for the creation of regional reintegration programs. As mentioned above, local programs are very diverse, there is no established practice of developing such programs (meaning rehabilitation and re-adaptation programs defined by law). On the one hand, this is an advantage - because local governments can take into account the regional context. On the other hand, it is a disadvantage, as few people use the state program or concept as pointers and mostly form programs at their own discretion. Very often such programs look like regular social assistance programs. Thus, they create a demand from veterans for temporary solutions to their problems at the expense of taxes of other citizens. Which, in turn, creates tensions between the civilian population and those affected by the conflict.
2. Uncertain real needs of veterans and their families. As a result, unmet needs and inefficient use of state and local budgets allocated to veterans. For example, the needs for vouchers to recreational/healthcare facilities have not been identified. As a result, from 20% to 40% of the planned funds are returned to the state budget annually. At the same time, the queue for vouchers does not disappear, and the level of supply remains within 21%. Also, some of the benefits are not relevant and not in demand: for example, extraordinary (priority) free overhaul of residential buildings and apartments owned by veterans and priority current repairs of residential buildings and apartments; extraordinary use of all communication services and extraordinary installation of apartment telephones on preferential terms. Although the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection" of October 22, 1993 (current version of September 25, 2019) provides veterans with a number of social guarantees, most of them are almost impossible to implement. After all, the state does not pledge the necessary funds in full, and local governments finance the relevant benefits only at its discretion. It is clear that there are not enough public funds for everything, but no one consults with veterans to identify current needs and prioritize them. As a result, veterans feel "unnecessary" and dissatisfied with the services offered by the state.
3. Low awareness of the population about the opportunities and restrictions on receiving services and benefits for veterans and their families. According to social services workers and local self-government bodies (LSG), they often face resentment from veterans when the LSGs are unable to provide services and / or benefits quickly due to incomplete procedures or insufficient funding (e.g. housing or financial compensation for housing purchase, vouchers for recreational/health care facilities). Existing means of informing veterans about social services, benefits, employment opportunities (LSGs websites, personal receptions) are not always effective due to lack of Internet access in remote areas, lack of gadgets, and lack of time to visit social services. Thus, a number of veterans and their families are left without the necessary information.
4. In some communities, the communication between LSG bodies and representatives of veteran public organizations is carried out either through official correspondence, or is absent or exists between a limited number of veterans' organizations (the most active, those participating in city competitions of social projects or having personal connections with LSGs). Due to the formalized procedure, communication is slowed down, acute issues remain unresolved, which is a factor of dissatisfaction with the work of local self-government. Communication with certain "chosen" organizations causes representatives of other veteran public organizations to feel injustice, reduces trust in both local self-government bodies and NGOs that cooperate with the authorities. Also, this situation contributes to the formation of myths and stereotypes about the work of local self-government.

5. Lack of effective interagency communication. This risk applies to large communities, where the number of departments and their staff is large. In some communities, due to the lack of effective interdepartmental communication between the departments of local self-government, military enlistment offices, employment center (lack of a common database of persons entitled to social assistance, benefits) information about existing social protection programs does not reach veterans, their families, family members of deceased combatants.
6. Lack of a clear system of receiving services and benefits. Yes, the government has declared the creation of a "single window" for veterans and a single state register of veterans<sup>14</sup>, but they are not yet operational. Moreover, the authors believe that the lack of a unified system is the source of many conflict situations. In the absence of a simple and clear system, the stakeholders (service and benefit providers, as well as target groups) build other systems of relationships that help them solve current problems and issues. For example, the principles of calculating benefits for housing and communal services due to different standards for individual regions and suppliers, depending on the availability of the meters, are unclear, etc. The problem of obtaining benefits outside the place of registration (for rented housing) has not been resolved yet: landlords are reluctant to formalization of rental agreements; the need to independently obtain a certificate from the Department of Social Protection of Population (DSPP) at the place of registration about the non-receipt of benefits there (the district DSPP does not have access to data on beneficiaries of other districts) and other problems. As a rule, in order to solve them, the veterans often turn to veterans' organizations or people who have established contact with local self-government. This leads to the organization of work in "manual" mode. This format forces local self-government bodies to constantly solve some problems or issues when they are "asked" or "pressed" (according to the participants of the discussions) in each case, instead of systematically performing the planned work. In turn, it contributes to the perception of government agencies as those that do not want to do anything and who need to be influenced or pressured. If this approach is not changed, there will always be veterans who have "everything solved" and those who are "very dissatisfied".
7. Inconsistency of professional training of human resources to the tasks assigned to them. The task of working with the families of "problematic" veterans is assigned to the Centers of social services for families, children, and youth (CSSFCY) and regional social services. As a rule, various CSOs and international partners train personnel to work with injured combatants. There is no defined system of certification and support of such "trained" specialists. Also, no one deals with their professional support and psychological and supervisory assistance of these specialists. There is no system for selecting such specialists, which, for example, would provide a psychological assessment of how ready they are for such work. As a result, non stress-resistant professionals often work with stressed clients and injure each other even more. This contributes to a decline in trust in public institutions that provide social services and to misunderstandings and stigma. In such circumstances, veterans have the impression that they are not respected or understood, or that the services provided are perceived as useless (most often – the offered psychological rehabilitation services for veterans, psychological assistance to their families). But it is worth noting that this factor manifests itself to varying degrees in different communities. For example, in Chuhuiv, almost all participants in the discussions described the professionals who provide social services as heroes who do the impossible and treat each visitor with attention.
8. Social assistance programs for veterans and members of their families intersect, by certain provisions, with articles of social protection programs of other categories of the population in need of social protection (for example, assistance to the poor, orphans). The problem of underfunding is inherent not only in veterans' social protection programs, but also in other programs, and this situation becomes the basis for creating tension in society, when socially vulnerable groups have to compete for the resources of social programs.

<sup>14</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, news article 'Єдиний державний реєстр, Е-ветеран, "Ігри Нескорених" та численні заходи з реабілітації та реадaptaції ветеранів та членів їхніх сімей з'явилися у цільовій програмі Мінвeterанів' [The Unified State Registry, E-Veteran, Invictus Games, and numerous measures for the rehabilitation and re-adaptation of veterans and their families have appeared in the target program of the Ministry of Veterans], Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine website, <<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/yediniy-derzhavnij-reyestr-e-veteran-igri-neskorenih-ta-chislenni-zahodi-z-reabilitaciyi-ta-readaptaciyi-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej-zyavilis-u-cilovij-programi-minveteraniv>>.

9. In addition to financial and infrastructural barriers, there are also barriers established by bylaws. For example, in order to implement the provisions provided by law, as a rule, there are a number of restrictions that actually modify the declared right. For example, the above-mentioned Law “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” establishes the right to receive free medicines, and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Resolutions №333 of 25.03.2009 and №1303 of 17.08.1998 determine the procedure for its implementation. If a combatant who fell ill with the disease is outside the list of 35 items, then, applying for free medicine under the provisions of the law, receives a refusal and misunderstanding from the seller of the pharmacy. In addition to the limited list of medicines provided at public expense, most pharmacies (as private legal entities) are unaware of the procedure for providing preferential medicines and medications<sup>15</sup>. If the veteran is not well aware of the reasons for such refusal, they will most likely blame the pharmacy and the apothecary. Or - an example with preferential transportations. If local LSGs have been able to reach an agreement with the carriers, the veterans will have preferential travel. And if such settlements exist almost in all localities, for many regions transportation between settlements, for example, to district centers or regional centers, is still paid, and there are all medical institutions and many government services that provide the necessary services to veterans located there. And in the opinion of many (not all) - this is primarily the fault of the carrier, which does not comply with the law. And there are many such examples. Such situations also contribute to the emergence of prejudice against veterans, or vice versa - prejudice against veterans to "civilians".
10. Segregation of veterans. According to the law, the veterans have the right to an emergency appointment with a doctor or social worker. This kind of positive discrimination in communities is often perceived negatively. Veterans are often placed in a separate group even from other groups that have the same or similar benefits. As a result, we have the opposite result – a separation instead of reintegration into society.

## 2.2 Possibilities for risk management and conflict resolution

Given that conflict issues cannot be resolved by communities alone, and until they are resolved at the state level in order to reduce tensions and find a solution that could satisfy the participants at this time, the authors of the study suggest using a facilitated dialogue tool.

Dialogue - that is, the exchange of views and opinions that have and create meaning - is one of the methods often resorted to when dealing with conflict issues. Approaches such as mediation and negotiation, commonly used to overcome differences at the political and social levels, also contain elements of dialogue. Whether the dialogue is conducted at the highest national level or at the level of regional meetings or public gatherings, a key element in conflict situations (especially those that can potentially become violent) is caution in the comprehensive preparation, organization and conduct of dialogue meetings.

Unlike "discussion" and "debate", which focus primarily on the content of communication, "dialogue" focuses on building relationships between its participants. Another difference is that public discussions or debates often have a competitive component - that is, participants try to prove that their position is better - while "dialogue" involves mutual understanding and aims to reach agreement. In fact, when communicating about a conflict or during a conflict, these two ways of communicating - debate and dialogue - are often mixed. In order to make this clear to the participants and to use communication constructively, it is necessary to have good facilitation skills.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Oksana Koliada, the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Temporary Occupied Territories, and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine "Що менше людей зі статусом "переселенець", то ефективніше ми працюємо" – міністерка ветеранів та окупованих територій [The fewer people with "IDP" status, the more efficient we work" – Minister of Veterans and Occupied Territories], Hromadske TV, 2019, <<https://hromadske.ua/posts/yaksho-pereselenci-povnocinnno-zhivut-u-gromadi-mi-spracyuvai-efektivno-ministerka-veteraniv-ta-okupovanih-teritorij>>.



## **Professionally prepared and conducted dialogues in the community can help:**

1. Raise public awareness of government activities and improve government transparency;
2. Shift from conflict to understanding, support and constructive partnership;
3. Involve the community in effective decision-making. Secure the support of the community to the implementation of decisions, because participation in decision-making motivates them to implement them.
4. Find a way out of a stalemate, when the problem is not solved for a long time;
5. Overcome conflict processes within communities.

This approach was used by IPCG experts in the communities covered by the study (Chuhuiv, Kharkiv, Ivano-Frankivsk). Dialogue meetings helped ease tensions between local self-government bodies and local CSOs working with veterans and related groups, as well as between competing CSOs. Responses to these meetings were received from the LSGs such as: "we finally talked to "normal" veterans who do not shout"; "they (veterans) know the subject and they have a lot of ideas" and so on. The result of these meetings was joint work on reintegration programs on the ground (see the next section). At the same time, the dialogue had a therapeutic effect. Participants were able to voice all their requests to each other in a safe environment, and this allowed participants to hear each other.

This tool allows both to involve the community in their own development and to mobilize existing resources.

The Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, TOT and IDPs of Ukraine plans to create veterans' spaces throughout the country<sup>16</sup>. These spaces can become not only platforms for providing support, but also platforms for dialogue format of interaction of veterans with other groups in communities, local self-government bodies and with each other, gathering feedback on state programs concerning veterans and related groups, developing ideas on community development. It is important to involve not only veterans and members of their families in such processes, but also representatives of vulnerable groups, businesses, and a wider range of civic activists.

The peculiarity of working in a dialogic approach is the duration and inclusiveness of the process. Such processes also help to overcome prejudice against combatants (those serving in the Armed Forces) and the stigma of veterans formed, inter alia, by ineffective approaches to providing services to them.

Dialogue is often seen as a tool for resolving conflicts. At the same time, without dialogue it is impossible to achieve a comprehensive and lasting result in the formation of a local rehabilitation program at the community level. It is at the community level that the process of analyzing security risks, existing needs of target groups, resources that can be mobilized for economic development of the community, providing social and psychological assistance to those in need, and planning joint steps towards reintegration and development can be most effectively built. Involving business and promoting initiatives that promote community economic development, microfinance and support of business projects, the creation of entrepreneurial forums for small and medium business development are priority areas in reintegration and dialogue programs for veterans, government, community and business.

The dialogue tool can also be effective in building relationships between the various veterans' organizations. Veterans' disparities and conflicts between different associations are common in communities where IPCG experts work. Involving additional target groups (e.g. IDPs, youth at risk, etc.), such as those with the same needs with veterans, in dialogue processes to find common solutions and planning can have the best reintegration effect.

<sup>16</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, news article "Єдиний державний реєстр, Е-ветеран, "Ігри Нескорених" та численні заходи з реабілітації та реадaptaції ветеранів та членів їхніх сімей з'явилися у цільовій програмі Мінвeterанів" [The Unified State Registry, E-Veteran, Invictus Games, and numerous measures for the rehabilitation and re-adaptation of veterans and their families have appeared in the target program of the Ministry of Veterans], Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine website, <<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/yediniy-derzhavniy-reyestr-e-veteran-igri-neskorenih-ta-chislenni-zahodi-z-reabilitaciyi-ta-readaptaciyi-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej-zyavilis-u-cilovij-programi-minveteraniv>>.



In the provision of services, the key principle should not be the distribution of social and material benefits, but the provision of specific and targeted assistance aimed at the ultimate goal - the reintegration of veterans into civilian life. Thus, one of the key programs should be a program to help veterans in the formation of life skills, resilience (civilian life skills).

## 2.3 Cases of regional initiatives developed through dialogues

### Chuhuiv

In October and November 2019, several dialogue sessions and pre-dialogue meetings were held in Chuhuiv to work on a local program for the reintegration of veterans. The dialogue was attended by members of the initiative group, which included representatives of local self-government and civil society, including veterans' organizations, as well as the Advisory Committee established during the FBA project in previous years.

During the discussion on the reintegration of ATO / JFO veterans and security at the community level, the representatives conducted the monitoring of a current City Program of Social Support for Participants in the Anti-Terrorist Operation / Joint Forces Operation and Members of Their Families for 2019-2020 (hereinafter in this section - the Program), which was approved by the decision of the XXXVIII session of the VII convocation №1261-VII from 05.11.2018. As a result of the analysis of the measures included in the Program, the joint proposals for their improvement were developed and submitted during the dialogue.

Taking into account the opinion of ATO / JFO veterans, the current program was divided into areas of activity and included 7 sections (there were 4 sections). The activities of the Program were adjusted so as to involve the target groups in the life of the community as a whole, and not to separate them.

For example, the following initiative was proposed for the unit "Provision of social services and first aid, motivation to receive the services of qualified professionals." In addition to creating a database of ATO / JFO participants living and serving in Chuhuiv, it was proposed to create a working group with ATO / JFO veterans, public activists, representatives of local self-government to teach the basics of crisis psychology, effective interaction, planning joint work to develop further measures to increase the motivation of ATO / JFO veterans and their successful reintegration into the community. In addition to veterans of the ATO / JFO and representatives of the local self-government, such a working group was proposed to include representatives of the police, military enlistment office, and entrepreneurs. It was suggested also involving local media, volunteers, and a local information and educational hub as the partners of the working group. According to the participants, the activity should start in January 2020 and last for 3 years with a possible extension if necessary.

Another measure was included into the Program to ensure the interaction of local governments with NGOs of ATO / JFO veterans and identified the person responsible for its implementation, as well as promoting the implementation of best practices (national and international) of reintegration of ATO / JFO veterans and security at the community level.

During the discussion of the Program, attention was paid to providing financial support by involving public organizations of ATO / JFO veterans to participate in the city competition to determine programs (projects, activities) and organize field receptions on social protection and social security.

One of the proposed events aimed at raising public awareness took place on November 15, 2019. A reception was held for the heads of the Department of Social Protection of Population, the Department of Education and Health and the Employment Center, at the military units stationed in the city. The event was aimed at informing the military and their families about changes in current legislation on the provision of benefits and the importance of cooperation of ATO / JFO veterans to jointly address the problems faced by veterans and their families. Particular attention was paid to the issue of psychological assistance, rehabilitation of veterans, and the need to inform about the importance of psychological rehabilitation.

According to the participants of the working group during the dialogue meetings, the project became useful and aimed at uniting the community, providing social support to ATO / JFO veterans and their families, as well as creating a safe environment in the community.

The dialogue format provided the participants with an opportunity to create an atmosphere of understanding, thanks to which there were proposals for cooperation between representatives of the city council and veterans. It should be added that the dialogue format is a clear demonstration of the mechanism of participation (participatory approach) for the development and adoption of important decisions for the community.

### **Ivano-Frankivsk and Kharkiv**

As mentioned in the previous section, a dialog processes can be very lengthy. Taking into account the size of the cities of Ivano-Frankivsk and Kharkiv, as well as the short period of implementation of the pilot program, the project did not have time to achieve tangible results in the dialogue process. In Kharkiv, for example, where there is currently no reintegration program, it has only so far been possible to reach an understanding among the members of the initiative group and to form an action plan to work on a draft program.

In Ivano-Frankivsk, where planned reintegration programs for veterans already exist, both at the city and oblast levels, the initiative group members analyzed the community's need for additional resources to improve the efficiency and quality of existing veterans' services and assistance, but during the dialogue meetings they concluded that socio-political processes are currently not conducive to making changes to the local program for a number of reasons, the main of which is the process of completing the formation of Ivano-Frankivsk amalgamated territorial community (ATC) (it is expected that it will include 22 affiliated communities), entails the need to revise the budget and include the interests and needs of new members in the existing program. An additional factor complicating the process is uncertainty. In 2020, elections of the Chairman and Council of Ivano-Frankivsk ATC are to take place. This is traditionally a factor that makes any initiatives that result in new financial commitments or changes to the city budget less likely. Therefore, the members of the initiative group came to the conclusion that they do not see the need to make changes to the existing program, which was adopted for 2016-2020, and will return to this issue next year.

The work of initiative groups in Kharkiv and Ivano-Frankivsk is planned to continue after the local elections next year.

# 3. Recommendations for development of DDR programs in Ukraine

The following recommendations are conditionally divided by subjects into government agencies, local self-government bodies, and civil society. The authors of the report understand the conditionality of this division and the fact that the work on the programs should take place in cooperation with national and local authorities and with the involvement of veterans and other members of civil society.

## 3.1 Recommendations for the state central executive bodies

1. Development and adoption of a state concept for the reintegration of veterans and other groups of victims of hostilities. It is important to emphasize that reintegration is a comprehensive process that includes rehabilitation, re-adaptation, economic development, and community development. This process is based on the approach of creating opportunities for self-satisfaction of the needs of veterans by them, and is not limited to providing benefits or material assistance.
2. The reintegration process should be based on the principle of inclusion in the community, which means the direct involvement of veterans and other groups affected by the conflict with the community in the process of developing, planning, implementing and evaluating any activities aimed at reintegrating veterans and other conflict-affected groups. The community should also benefit from the reintegration program (especially IDPs and unemployed youth). The dialogue process, which involves participants in the process of discussion and joint decision-making, is a recommended approach to the implementation of this principle. Working with the stigma of involving other affected groups and stakeholders in the concept (including involving a single window in the concept, not limiting it to a single target audience - veterans, or working on hubs - separate spaces for veterans).
3. The concept of reintegration and the activities outlined in the program should emphasize the importance of not just creating spaces for veterans (such as hubs), but creating spaces for self-help, including on the basis of existing public veterans' organizations, and supporting existing ones.
4. Regular assessment of the ratio of needs to the proposed opportunities, needs analysis. In general, taking into account the existing programs and legislation, as well as feedback from veterans, it can be assumed that the existing programs are not yet sufficiently focused on the needs of ATO / JFO participants, which necessitates measures to protect and ensure the interests of veterans utilizing funds from local budgets. This necessitates the creation of an adequate assessment and monitoring system to study the needs of veterans and use the results of such monitoring in the development of local social protection programs.
5. To determine the role and powers of local self-government bodies and public organizations in the work on local and state reintegration programs in the relevant state program and concept. Local authorities and civil society organizations should have the authority and competence to identify, on the basis of an analysis of local needs and opportunities, and to implement the reintegration program measures.
6. Formation of a single national standard of DDR programs and development of framework of reintegration programs, which would define key principles and approaches to reintegration and could be used by regions. The state program is not able to close all issues and be flexible enough to change in a timely manner according to the needs of veterans. However, this is not necessary, because the local programs can be adapted to the specific context of the region and work much better with the needs of their community and veterans.
7. Further capacity building of national authorities and local self-government bodies in the formation and implementation of DDR programs. For quality work on reintegration issues it is necessary to have qualified personnel and appropriate methodological tools.

8. Evaluation of the effectiveness of programs, services, and benefits. The availability of social protection programs for veterans and their effectiveness, as well as identification of the best practices for social protection of veterans in the world and in Ukraine require a separate study. The Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, TOT and IDPs of Ukraine should develop universal tools for evaluating such programs and help regions implement a system for monitoring and evaluating these programs.
9. The main focus in evaluating programs should not be on quantitative indicators, as it is now, but on qualitative ones. It can be seen that that the agencies report, for example, on the number of doctor visits or health trips, but there is no information on how these visits were assessed by veterans or members of their families. The analysis should be made whether they were able to get the help they needed, or it was easy for them to get certain services, or did they find out about vacancies at the employment center.

## **3.2 Recommendations for the local self-government bodies**

1. Regularly map economic and other opportunities and requests for the reintegration of veterans and other conflict-affected groups. The results of mapping opportunities, analysis of security and social context should determine local approaches to the implementation of the reintegration program.
2. Carry out constant monitoring of conflict situations related to the reintegration of veterans (provision of services, benefits, interaction with providers of benefits and services) in order to promptly respond to emerging problems and monitor the effectiveness of local and state programs.
3. Invest in local budgets for program monitoring specialists (if such specialists are not already engaged), for conducting dialogues, strategic sessions, public meetings for the development, adjustment and monitoring of local programs.
4. Develop / amend existing programs with the involvement of residents and adopt the statutes of territorial communities, other local regulations on local democracy, adding the facilitated dialogue and mediation in the management of local affairs to the existing mechanisms of citizen participation.
5. Form working coordination groups for direct communication between representatives of LSG, military enlistment offices, employment centers, veteran NGOs and NGO of members of veterans 'families, families of deceased combatants, volunteers (if necessary – police representatives) to address operational issues, inquiries from veterans' NGOs, veteran activists who are not included in comprehensive programs of social protection of veterans.

## **3.3 Recommendations for the NGOs, activists, experts working with communities**

1. Provide recommendations for the establishment of local reintegration programs and be actively involved in their development, including those responsible for the implementation of measures envisaged by the program together with local self-government bodies.
2. Provide assistance to local self-government bodies in gathering information for monitoring and evaluation of regional programs.
3. Assist local self-government bodies in informing target groups about the existing opportunities for reintegration in the community.
4. Facilitate dialogue between existing veterans' civil society organizations and involve other groups affected by the conflict in these dialogues to create a common agenda for certain groups and communities.

# Conclusions

The purpose of this study was not to collect statistics on the number of conflicts related to veterans and their families in a first place, but to understand why responses are so contradictory to state rehabilitation and rehabilitation programs and local social protection programs, and why, according to discussions, there is a widespread opinion about the state's indifference to the affairs of veterans among them and their families.

In recent years, Ukraine has made significant progress in establishing a state policy for the rehabilitation and readaptation of veterans and their families. An important step in this direction was the newly created Ministry of Veterans, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine (for the purposes of this section – the Ministry), the recent amendments to the thematic state program and the start of work on a single register of veterans. However, a very little attention is still paid to the complexity of the reintegration process of veterans by the Government, and this may lead to the fact that all the initiatives developed by the Ministry will not yield the expected results. The vastness and complexity of the legal framework for the provision of benefits and services to veterans and their families and the low awareness of these categories contribute to difficulties in obtaining benefits and services, and as a result, create a sense of indifference to veterans on the part of the state. Simplifying the system of benefits and services for veterans could partly reduce the existing tension related to this issue. The rest can be overcome by involving veterans, other groups suffered from military actions, and the community in the development of inclusive reintegration programs based on the analysis of veterans' needs, their monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, it should be emphasized the importance of creating opportunities to maintain mental health not only for veterans, their families, groups affected by the conflict, but also for government officials and local governments who work with these groups in order not to deepen the trauma of participants in the process and to provide quality assistance.

The presence of a large number of victims of the conflict, not just combatants and IDPs, is a serious security risk that is not immediately apparent and requires a lot of joint efforts to address it.

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