



PEACE SUPPORT UKRAINE  
SOSTEGNO ALLA PACE IN UCRAINA

# UKRAINIAN YOUTH FORUM FOR JOINT ACTION REPORT



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# Executive Summary:

## Youth Forum for Joint Action

### November 23, 2023

The Youth Forum for Joint Action held in Kyiv on November 23, 2023, underscored the pivotal role of Ukrainian youth in responding to the full-scale invasion of February 2022 and mitigating its impacts on the country showcasing resilience and commitment in the face of adversity. Young Ukrainians have actively engaged in humanitarian response, advocacy, community organizing, volunteering, and military service.

The forum provided a platform for Ukrainian youth to articulate their visions for the country's future, addressing priorities, needs, and challenges. Speakers from diverse youth initiatives, movements, organizations, and networks shared insights, fostering a practical space for dialogue with national and international partners and allies.

The event aimed to showcase the significant contributions of youth during the invasion and connect them with international stakeholders. By bringing together youth, experts, and practitioners, the conference highlighted existing capacities, and the broader picture of youth aspirations for Ukraine's future.

Thematic sessions and working groups explored areas such as *Youth Education, Training, and Empowerment; Youth Participation in Decision-Making; Youth Healing; and International Solidarity*. Following the forum, recommendations and best practices were presented to stakeholders, collaborative planning sessions took place within Inter-Agency Working Groups, and a Networking Session facilitated interactions between Ukrainian youth and international partners.

Key highlights include the urgency for immediate action, emphasizing the central role of youth in Ukraine's recovery. Themes of unity, dialogue, and proactive initiatives emerged as essential for post-war reconstruction. The collective vision shared involved empowering youth to contribute dynamically to political decisions, social recovery, cultural identity, and international reputation. The healing of Ukrainian youth from the scars of war requires a comprehensive approach, prioritizing mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. Mobilizing international solidarity and aid for youth was emphasized, acknowledging challenges and fostering global support for a stronger, more resilient Ukraine.

Keynote speeches highlighted the profound impact of war on Ukrainian youth, challenging perceptions, and calling for concrete resources. A retrospective overview of the panels praised the proactive approach of Ukrainian youth, calling for space for youth dialogue and emphasizing their role in garnering international support.

Working group sessions recognized challenges in occupied territories, post-war reintegration, and youth well-being, discussing strategies for enhanced participation, mental health initiatives, and education support. International organizations outlined programs for mental health, humanitarian response and recovery.

The Ukrainian Youth Forum for Joint Action showcased the resilience, agency, and aspirations of Ukrainian youth, and emphasized the urgent need for international solidarity, concrete support, and a nuanced understanding of youth challenges and capabilities in Ukraine.

## Definitions

We suggest using the term "post-/during-war recovery and reconstruction" or "recovery and reconstruction", when broadly referring to the multifaceted process of Ukraine's post-/during-war restoration and recovery, which involve rebuilding infrastructure and housing, improving physical functioning and minimising disability in individuals, revitalising economic activities, social networks, and services, as well as enhancing resilience and cohesion.

The term "recovery" would be advised when referring to revitalising economic activities, social networks and services, resilience and cohesion that were impacted by the war and shifts towards the needs of humanitarian relief.

By social resilience, we mean the proactive ability of society (social groups) to respond to war outcomes, cope, adapt and transform itself, developing the vision of how society should look in the future.

To articulate the notion of Ukrainian identity: Ukrainian identity encompasses a deep-rooted sense of belonging to the Ukrainian nation as a distinct community, united by a shared name, symbols, geographic and ethno-social origins, historical memory, and a complex of spiritual and cultural values, including the Ukrainian language and folk traditions.

Ukrainian national (civil) identity allows individuals to identify themselves as Ukrainians regardless of their ethnic background. Modern Ukraine has embraced diverse cultural, social, and other traditions of the peoples who have inhabited its territory for centuries. Furthermore, Ukraine is a political nation that transcends any single ethnic, linguistic, or religious identity, embracing pluralism. Individuals may identify as Ukrainian speakers, Russian speakers, or speakers of Crimean Tatar and remain committed to defending Ukraine. Likewise, individuals of various religious affiliations, including Ukrainian Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or Jewish, can stand united in solidarity for the country.

In contemporary Ukraine, the principles of dignity for all are becoming fundamental, with life, dignity, and freedom serving as the cornerstone values for Ukrainians. Other key Ukrainian values include: Independence - the autonomy of thought and action. Universalism - tolerance and the protection of well-being for all individuals and nature. Kindness - the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of loved ones. Tradition - respect for cultural and religious customs and ideals, embodying a conservative orientation.





# About Youth Forum for Joint Action

## The Youth in Ukraine

Ukrainian youth have been at the forefront of the response to the full-scale invasion of February 2022 and addressing the impacts of the war on the country: as part of the humanitarian response or working to organize aid and support towards Ukrainians both in Ukraine and in diaspora; as activists advocating for youth political participation and representation within local and national politics; as volunteers working to rehabilitate infrastructure and bring together their communities in most-affected areas; in the army, and in many other ways.

## The Youth Forum

Youth during the war in Ukraine both inside the country and abroad have been a driving force for resilience, for survival, and for addressing the impacts of the war on all sectors of society. The Ukrainian Youth Forum for Joint Action created a platform for Ukrainian youth to debate their visions for the future of the country. This initiative aimed to identify the priorities, needs, and challenges confronting Ukrainian youth both within the country and abroad. Additionally, it sought to highlight the solutions and programs proposed by young people to address these issues.

## Speakers

Speakers came from across Ukraine's incredible youth initiatives, movements, organisations and networks. The Forum provided a practical space, together with national and international partners, allies and state institutions, to listen and learn from youth, and map together key programs, priorities, and how to support youth as key actors in shaping resilience, recovery and building the future of Ukraine.



The Youth Forum provided a space to honor and showcase the enormous response to the full-scale invasion brought about by youth and to connect them to international stakeholders. By bringing together youth, international experts and practitioners, the conference provided a platform to make visible not only the success stories of youth engagement, showcasing the existing capacities to overcome the impacts of war, but also what they mean on the broad picture of what youth are trying to create and catalyze to build together the future of Ukraine. The Forum facilitated a space to discuss international stakeholders' priorities and open opportunities in terms of youth programming and exchange with youth and civil society organizations working on and with youth. The stakeholders were engaged in identifying needs and priorities for youth programming in times of war.

### Forum Structure

The conference facilitated knowledge sharing and best practices among the participants; encouraged the development of innovative, inclusive and comprehensive approaches of youth in recovery programming; fostered collaboration and partnerships among different organizations and institutions and strengthened the capacity of local NGOs and civil society actors engaged in the abovementioned initiatives. It comprised panel discussions and interactive workshops: various sessions were designated to explore specific thematic areas relevant to youth programming, which included Youth Education, Training, and Empowerment in Ukraine, Youth Participation in Decision-Making and Politics, Youth Healing, Youth Mobilising International Solidarity and Aid.

Following the conference and stemming from the panel and working group discussions:

- Recommendations and best practices in programs led by and serving youth were presented to both national and international stakeholders
- Collaborative planning sessions took place within dedicated Inter-Agency Working Groups.
- A Networking Session facilitated interactions between Ukrainian youth and international stakeholders.

By the end of the Youth Forum, participants had the opportunity to showcase their initiatives, exchange ideas and experiences, hold conversations with high-level actors in a facilitated space, and foster new partnerships and collaborations. The conference resulted in a comprehensive report outlining the key challenges and needs identified, and recommendations for moving forward unitedly; and will feed into the research endeavor on the experiences of Ukrainian youth during war and programming priorities and opportunities.

## 01. Opening: Keynote Speeches

In her keynote speech **Polina Sokur, "Brave to Rebuild" Field Coordinator** invited participants to step into the shoes of Ukrainian youth, describing the challenges and responsibilities they face amidst conflict, urging global leaders and peacekeeping organizations to take tangible actions in support of Ukraine's resilience and future.

I spent a ridiculous amount of time thinking about what I should be talking about in my speech. Not because I have nothing to say but because there are so many important topics I want to mention that I can't decide where to start. So I invite you to put yourself in the shoes of Ukrainian youth. **What is it like to be a young Ukrainian?**

We were in elementary school when Russia decided to start this war. I remember this feeling of dark sharp horror that was slowly spreading through my whole body when I looked in my fathers eyes and for the first time in my life I saw the true fear. But let's get back to the question: how is it like being a Ukrainian youth?

Well, it's when you get to learn how to make Molotov's cocktails earlier than you learn how to drive.

It's when you teach your parents about the cultural traditions of your country.

It's when all your family and friends and even your dog are donating as much as possible.

It's when you know the price of every word in your national anthem.

It's when you are not saving money for a "black day" but sending it to your friends who joined the Armed Forces because you know they need new equipment to continue protecting you.

It's when you meet with your friend group at the funerals.

It's when in crowded places you are still hoping to see a person who would look similar to your friend who was killed last year.

It's having an insane amount of responsibilities and still feeling that you are not doing enough.



It's when you get used to death and anger.

It's feeling incredible pride for your friends and knowing that their stories are movie-worthy.

Foreign people like to ask "how aren't you tired or scared"? The truth is that sometimes we are. "Don't you want to stop and have a rest?" they usually ask after. How can we rest? Our friends are in the trenches, our colleagues haven't been home for 9 years, some of our relatives are under occupation, but most importantly how would we explain it to our killed loved ones? To our ancestors?

I wish every time some "experts" are talking about giving up, complaining that war takes too many resources and time, the memorial on the Independence Square would appear in front of their eyes. The one with thousands of small flags. Each flag symbolizes one life that Russia has stolen. There you barely can find a place to put a new flag. And that's only a part. And that's only from 2022 to 2023.

We are strong and unstoppable, but we are not endless and the best of us are already dead. We want the world to be more serious. We are not "that boring part of the news", we are not an entertaining reality TV show for other countries, we are not a trend. We need real help and yes, we will need it for many years because war takes everything from us. We need actions, not words. Resources, not pieces of advice or sympathy. We need to know that there is going to be justice for all the war crimes. We need to know the peacekeeping organizations are doing something instead of only promising and talking. We need to know that international media are not spreading Russian propaganda. We need to know that we have trustworthy allies.

It's not fair we do the job of global peace organizations instead of living our best young years, spending them getting our hearts broken in the bars and doing crazy haircuts. We want it too. We want to travel the world and have no worries. We want to live in tents on a beach. But our beaches are mined and occupied.

We are brave but not immortal. And I don't understand what the world is waiting for.

So my message is don't close your eyes if you are scared. Don't turn away from the problems if they seem complicated. Ukrainian youth is ready to fight as long as it's needed. But the world leaders and peacekeeping organizations have to understand that the more time they spend talking without taking any real action, the less young Ukrainians are left there to cooperate with them.

Federica Dispenza, representing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), delivered a powerful keynote speech at the Ukrainian Youth Forum for Joint Action, emphasizing the active role of youth in the recovery and renewal of Ukraine. Here are the key points highlighted in her speech:

- **Youth as the Present and Future:** Federica Dispenza challenged the common notion of youth as solely the future of the country. Instead, she emphasized that young individuals are an integral part of Ukraine's present, actively contributing to community recovery and restoration processes.
- **Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index Assessment:** Shared insights from the recent assessment, acknowledging the challenges faced by the youth in terms of future uncertainty and stable income. However, highlighted the increasing engagement of young people in community life, stronger civic duty, and enthusiasm to make a difference.
- **Superpowers of Youth:** Emphasized the superpowers of Ukrainian youth and the need to harness these capacities for the benefit of their communities. Shared examples of small projects initiated by young people to strengthen mental health resilience and enhance media literacy.
- **Concrete Resources for Youth Empowerment:** Stressed the importance of providing concrete resources to support the implementation of youth-driven ideas. Cited examples from the FUNdraiser Challenge where funding was awarded to all 15 projects that made it to the final event.
- **Engagement in Visioning for the Country:** Highlighted the role of UNDP in sustaining the engagement of youth as agents of change. Discussed capacity development events for youth in student self-government bodies and the importance of removing barriers to their participation in civic activism.
- **Local Administrations and Youth Engagement:** Addressed the need to empower not only youth but also local administrations to effectively engage with young people. Shared UNDP's initiatives in supporting local administrations in launching recovery offices and events to strengthen youth involvement in decision-making processes.
- **Call for Collaboration:** Encouraged all stakeholders, including young leaders, organizations, and government representatives, to stay open, broad-minded, and hopeful in their commitment to each other. Reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to supporting the role of youth in Ukraine's recovery and sustainable development.

In conclusion, Federica Dispenza expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the forum and renewed UNDP's commitment to working side by side with Ukrainian youth for a brighter future.

## 02. Youth-Led Recovery: Vision, Voices and Joint Action During War and After

The panel provided a retrospective look at the proactive nature of Ukrainian youth, emphasizing their role in the ongoing and future recovery of the country. Key points raised include:

- **Youth as Catalysts for Recovery:**

1. Ukrainian youth have proven to be a generation inclined towards action, actively contributing to the recovery process.
2. The pivotal role of youth in shaping Ukraine's current and future recovery cannot be overstated.

- **Avoiding Complacency:**

1. Despite ongoing recovery efforts, it is crucial to maintain focus and avoid complacency.
2. Decisions made today will significantly influence the trajectory of Ukraine's future.

- **Proactive Engagement of Youth:**

1. Opportunities for recovery are not solely in the hands of current leaders but also lie in the proactive engagement of the youth.
2. The call is to create a dedicated space for dialogue, voice concerns, and actively contribute to the recovery process.

- **Immediate War Challenges:**

1. Ukraine is far from fully recovered, and the political landscape poses challenges, demanding a shift in focus to address immediate war impacts.
2. Prioritizing support for the Armed Forces, essential skills training, and geopolitical vigilance are paramount.

- **Youth-Driven Global Support:**

1. Youth, as a driving force, must actively participate in shaping the narrative and garnering international support.
2. Emphasis on unity and dispelling the effects of Russian propaganda is crucial to place Ukraine firmly on the global agenda.

- **Civil Society Prioritization:**

1. Recognizing the disconnect between recovery forums and the ongoing war, civil society, especially the youth, must prioritize direct involvement in supporting the military.
2. Joint actions are needed to bridge the gap and ensure the inclusion of youth concerns in the recovery agenda.

- **Holistic Recovery in Education:**
  1. The Institute for Peace and Common Ground underscores the importance of holistic recovery efforts, particularly in education.
  2. Initiatives like the "Peaceful School" and "Peace Support Ukraine" aim to rebuild practices and foster dialogue among all stakeholders.
- **Diverse Challenges of Youth:**
  1. Recognizing diverse challenges, the focus extends beyond the ongoing war to post-war reintegration of veterans and the well-being of the younger generation.
  2. "Peaceful School" instills mediation skills and conflict resolution techniques in teenagers, addressing challenges posed by online learning from the occupied territories.
- **Unity and Economic Sustainability:**
  1. Amid polarization and radicalization, a nuanced approach is necessary, with a focus on unity to win the war.
  2. Economic challenges demand support for small and medium-sized businesses, proposed by initiatives like the "Vidnova UA" program.
- **Preventing Internal Conflicts:**
  1. Challenges faced by youth in occupied territories require targeted dialogue and understanding.
  2. Proactive efforts are necessary to prevent internal conflicts during the eventual end of the war.
- **Comprehensive Support for Youth:**
  - Articulating the needs of youth, initiatives must address practical needs of self-reflection and resilience.
  - Paying attention to youth in hiring processes is crucial, ensuring their active participation in shaping the recovery landscape.

The panel emphasized the urgency for immediate action, highlighting the youth's central role in Ukraine's recovery. Themes of unity, dialogue, and proactive initiatives emerged as essential for navigating the complexities of post-war reconstruction. The collective efforts of the youth will play a pivotal role in determining Ukraine's recovery trajectory.

## 03. Working Groups Outputs

### Youth Education, Training, and Empowerment in Ukraine

As Ukraine looks towards the future, the role of education in shaping empowered and capable youth cannot be overstated. This working group explored a multifaceted strategy that involves educating, training, and empowering the youth of Ukraine, with a focus on fostering adaptability, modernity, and a youth-centric approach across various educational levels.

#### **EDUCATE**

Revitalising the Educational System: A Call for Adaptability

The educational system, spanning from middle and high school to university, requires a transformation that prioritizes adaptability and modernity. Implementing a curriculum that is flexible, skills-oriented, and grounded in practical experiences is essential. This shift aims to equip students with the skills necessary to adapt to the rapidly changing environment.

#### **TRAIN**

Non-Formal Education and Civic Skills

Beyond formal education, there is a need to invest in non-formal education programs that cultivate civil society skills. Civic education, vocational training, and access to information are pivotal components of this training strategy. By enhancing leadership skills, the youth can actively contribute to societal development and post-war recovery.

#### **EMPOWER**

Mentorship, Grants, and Projects: Catalysts for Change

Empowering the youth involves providing them with the necessary tools and resources. Mentorship programs, grants, and engaging projects are vital avenues for instigating positive change. The concept of "change-makers" at the city and district levels is emphasized, promoting problem-solving skills and community development.

#### **PROGRAMS LIKE *UPSHIFT AND BEYOND***

Highlighting initiatives such as UPSHIFT, alongside other programmes, signifies a commitment to training and providing resources for youth-led projects. These programmes play a crucial role in shaping the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking of the younger generation.

### INTERGENERATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

#### Fostering Dialogue Between Teachers and Students

One challenge lies in bridging the gap between teachers and students. Initiatives must be taken to encourage meaningful conversations within educational settings. Increasing the prestige associated with the teaching profession, along with improving remuneration and the development of young people's skills, is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment.

### CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

#### Enhancing the Role of Civil Society Organisations

Increased involvement of civil society organisations is imperative for creating a holistic educational landscape. These organisations can act as facilitators, ensuring that the voices of the youth are heard, and contributing to the overall development of educational policies and practices.

In conclusion, the future of Ukraine relies heavily on the education, training, and empowerment of its youth. By adopting a comprehensive strategy that includes adaptive educational systems, non-formal education, and empowering initiatives, Ukraine can nurture a generation of young leaders ready to tackle the ongoing challenges and facilitate the recovery process. The collaboration between the state, international organisations, donors, and civil society is crucial for the success of these initiatives and the overall country restoration and development.

### Youth Participation in Decision-Making and Politics

Youth participation in decision-making and politics is crucial for facilitating the youth-led recovery process in Ukraine. However, several challenges hinder the active involvement of young people in shaping the political landscape. This working group explored the problems faced by Ukrainian youth and proposed strategies to overcome these obstacles, emphasising the role of education, communication, and inclusive spaces.

#### Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Youth:

- **Desire to Leave:** Many young people express a strong desire to leave Ukraine, driven by perceptions of better opportunities abroad.
- **Limited Recognition of War Impact:** From some working group's notes, it has emerged that not every young individual comprehensively acknowledges the significant influence of war on both their personal lives and communities.

- **Disregard for Youth Opinions:** The opinions of young people, particularly within the educational system, are often overlooked.
- **Pressure to Emigrate:** External pressures, such as societal expectations, contribute to the belief that life is better abroad.
- **Stress and Uncertainty:** The prevalent atmosphere of stress and uncertainty impedes the ability of young people to plan for the future.

#### Changes in Young People's Lives:

- **Shift in Planning:** Many young individuals have stopped planning ahead, prioritizing safety over comfort.
- **Clustering Tendency:** There is a tendency for young people to cluster together, seeking safety in numbers.
- **Growing Digital Communication:** The rise of digital communication has altered the ways in which young people interact and express themselves.

#### Strategies to Enhance Youth Participation:

- **Joint Activities:** Encouraging the organization of joint activities to foster unity and a sense of community among young people.
- **Influencing Parents:** Empowering youth to influence their parents and communities by educating them about the importance of youth perspectives.
- **Rights Awareness:** Providing education on rights to enable young people to assert themselves and participate actively.
- **Joining Initiatives:** Encouraging young individuals to seek and join existing initiatives that align with their interests and values.
- **Unity:** Promoting unity among young people to amplify their collective voice and impact.
- **Self-Management in Schools:** Advocating for self-management initiatives within educational institutions to ensure the inclusion of youth opinions.
- **Corruption Reduction:** Working towards reducing corruption levels, fostering a more transparent environment for youth involvement.
- **Inclusive Spaces:** Creating inclusive spaces that welcome diverse perspectives and actively involve young people.
- **Influence and Responsibility:** Encouraging self-awareness among young people regarding their influence and responsibility as citizens.
- **Education and Decision-Making Skills:** Prioritizing education on decision-making skills to equip young individuals for active participation.
- **Changing Power Dynamics:** Advocating for changes in power dynamics to ensure youth representation in decision-making bodies.
- **Fighting Stereotypes:** Successively challenging and dismantling stereotypes that hinder youth participation.

Strategies for Effective Communication:

- **Mass Media and Social Networks:** Utilizing mass media and social networks as platforms for communication, cultural exchange, and the creation of youth spaces.
- **Cultural Development:** Focusing on cultural development, including modern formats of education and training.
- **Community-Level Initiatives:** Promoting initiatives that start at the community level and move from the bottom to the top.
- **International Collaboration:** Facilitating the acquisition and exchange of experiences with youth from other countries through cooperation and collaboration.
- **Dissemination of Information:** Actively disseminating accurate information about the real situation in Ukraine to combat disinformation.
- **National Image Building:** Creating a positive image of Ukraine through youth initiatives and policies.
- **Integration of IDPs:** Integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs) through youth-focused initiatives, contributing to the development of Ukrainian language, culture, and identity.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Increasing employment opportunities for young people within government agencies to ensure financial stability.

Building a Youth-Centric Future for Ukraine:

The vision for the future involves empowering youth to be creative, innovative, and proactive in initiating quick and effective solutions. By implementing these strategies, Ukraine can cultivate a dynamic environment where the youth actively contribute to political decisions, and social recovery, shape cultural identity, and foster an international reputation as a center for youth empowerment and culture.

## Youth Healing from War: Rebuilding Ukraine's Future

The ongoing war imposes significant challenges on the youth of Ukraine, affecting their environment, relationships, and mental well-being. This working group explored the multifaceted impact of war on Ukrainian youth, emphasizing the importance of healing initiatives and proposing solutions for their physical, mental, and spiritual recovery.



### The Impact of War on Ukrainian Youth:

- **Changing Environment:** The war has led to a profound transformation in the living environment of Ukrainian youth, shaping their perceptions, values, and aspirations.
- **Family and Social Circles:** The war has disrupted family circles, causing stress and altering the dynamics with parents, friends, and the broader community.
- **Work and Study:** The youth grapples with the challenges of pursuing education and employment amidst the stress and uncertainties of life amid war.
- **Loss of Confidence:** Many young individuals have experienced a loss of confidence in themselves and the world around them, impacting their self-esteem and motivation.

### Dimensions of Youth Recovery:

- **Security:** Analysis of the security situation, both physical and emotional, is crucial for understanding the youth's needs and planning for their future.
- **Employment:** Assessing employment opportunities and creating pathways for youth to contribute to the rebuilding process is essential for economic stability.
- **Social Circles:** Fostering supportive social circles to help combat feelings of isolation and provide a sense of community.
- **Influence on Authorities:** Encouraging self-organization and empowering the youth to articulate their demands and visions for the future, influencing governmental policies.
- **International Exchange:** Facilitating exchange programmes with other states and international youth organizations to promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

### Healing: Importance and Solutions:

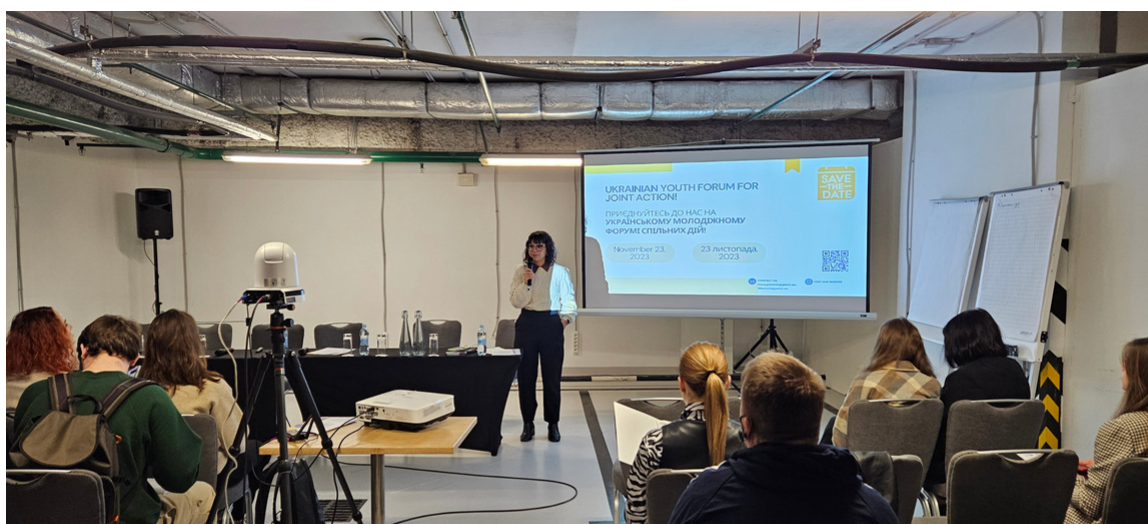
- **Moving Forward:** Acknowledging the importance of healing for progress, both physically and mentally, and spiritually fostering the groundwork for the country's future development.
- **Peace and Harmony: Prioritizing** peace and harmony within oneself and the world as essential elements for the holistic healing of Ukrainian youth.
- **New Model of Interaction:** Working towards a new model of social and interpersonal interaction that is based on empathy, understanding, and collective healing.



### Healing Solutions:

- **Historical Trauma:** Recognizing and addressing historical trauma through therapeutic approaches that facilitate reflection and understanding.
- **Psycho-Emotional Recovery:** Utilizing theatrical arts, art therapy, musical battles, and other cultural initiatives to aid in psycho-emotional recovery.
- **Occupational Therapy:** Engaging in occupational therapy, such as the Gardens of Victory initiative, to provide practical and purposeful activities for healing.
- **Development of Fine Motor Skills:** Encouraging the development of fine motor skills through activities like handmade crafts, needlework, and painting.
- **Therapeutic Practices:** Incorporating therapeutic practices like hippotherapy and zootherapy to connect with nature and animals for emotional healing.
- **Volunteering and Charity:** Involving youth in volunteering and charity initiatives to provide a sense of purpose and community service.
- **Faith and Psychological Support:** Integrating faith-based practices and professional psychological and psychiatric assistance for comprehensive healing.
- **Dialogue Practices:** Promoting open dialogue practices to encourage communication and understanding among individuals and communities.
- **Interest Clubs and Education:** Establishing interest clubs and providing educational opportunities to foster personal growth and skill development aligned with market needs.
- **Family Support:** Offering psychological support to families and enhancing family relationships for a stable support system.
- **Basic Needs Satisfaction:** Ensuring social assistance and equal rights to address the basic needs of the youth, fostering a sense of inclusion.
- **Ecological Restoration Initiatives:** Promoting initiatives for the restoration of ecological balance, emphasizing the connection between environmental health and personal well-being.
- **Spaces for Communication:** Creating safe and inclusive spaces for young people to communicate, share experiences, and build a sense of community.

The healing of Ukrainian youth from the scars of war requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. By prioritizing mental, physical, and spiritual well-being through a range of initiatives, Ukraine can empower its youth to rebuild not only their own lives but also contribute to the social recovery and restoration of the entire nation.



## Mobilizing International Solidarity and Aid for Ukrainian Youth: Challenges, Strategies, and Paths to Recovery

As the international community's attention towards Ukraine decreases, there is an urgent need to mobilize support, particularly for the youth facing the complex consequences of war and the challenges brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic. This working group explored the reasons behind the call for international solidarity, outlines strategies to mobilize aid, and sheds light on the roles of Ukrainian youth in shaping their own recovery.

### Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Youth:

- **Youth at the Front:** The direct involvement of youth at the front lines poses unique challenges, including trauma and loss.
- **Limited Right to Education:** Many young people have effectively lost their right to education due to the disruptions caused by war and displacement.
- **Traumatization:** The youth face an increased level of depression, anxiety, and psycho-social challenges as a result of the traumatic experiences of war.
- **Lost Childhood:** The combined impact of the war and the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a lost childhood for many Ukrainian youth.
- **Different Experiences:** The diverse experiences of those who lived through the war in Ukraine and those outside the country need careful consideration for effective support.

### Roles of Ukrainian Youth:

- **Helping Those in Ukraine:** Ukrainian youth play a crucial role in providing assistance to their peers within the country.
- **Participation in Decision-Making:** Encouraging youth participation in decision-making processes ensures that their voices are heard in shaping their own future.
- **International Exposure:** Providing opportunities for youth to travel abroad, experience different perspectives, and bring back insights contributes to personal and societal growth.

### Ways of Support:

- **Mini Grants:** Offering mini grants for implementing youth-led initiatives promotes innovation and community development.
- **Online Study Opportunities:** Providing opportunities for free online education abroad supports the continuous learning of Ukrainian youth.
- **Skill Development:** Investing in skill development, including innovation and English language proficiency, opens doors for employment and personal growth.

- **Mental Health Support:** Creating spaces for dialogue, therapy, and sports involvement addresses mental health challenges and promotes well-being.
- **Preventive Medicine:** Implementing programs in preventive medicine, including HIV, AIDS, and sex education, contributes to the overall health of the youth.

Recovery:

- **Infrastructure, Social, and Economic Recovery:** Rebuilding infrastructure, fostering social connections, and promoting economic recovery are essential components of a human-centered rehabilitation process.
- **Mental and Physical Well-being:** Prioritizing mental and physical well-being, both at the individual and state levels, forms the foundation for comprehensive recovery.

Why Mobilize International Solidarity:

- **Decrease in International Attention:** The waning focus on Ukraine necessitates efforts to rekindle global awareness and support.
- **Youth Veterans and Women:** Providing a platform for the voices of youth veterans and women ensures a comprehensive understanding of the diverse impact of war.
- **Highlighting Youth Diversity:** Emphasizing the diversity within the youth demographic is crucial for building inclusive alliances.
- **Building Alliances:** Mobilizing international solidarity involves building alliances with global organizations, governments, and NGOs to address the multifaceted challenges faced by Ukrainian youth.
- **Setting an Example and Blueprint:** Ukraine can serve as an example for other nations facing similar challenges, offering a blueprint for recovery and resilience.
- **Stimulating Intercultural Communication:** Fostering intercultural communication breaks down barriers and promotes a shared understanding of the Ukrainian youth experience.
- **Offering Alternative Narrative and Literacy:** Counteracting disinformation with factual information and alternative narratives is essential for shaping a more accurate global perception of Ukraine.
- **EU Integration:** Integration into the European Union is a long-term goal, and international aid plays a pivotal role in achieving this.

How to Mobilize International Solidarity:

- **Collecting Evidence-Based Data:** Presenting evidence-based data in a user-friendly format is crucial for illustrating the challenges faced by Ukrainian youth and the capacity of state institutions.

- **Engaging Funding Organizations:** Reaching out to funding organizations such as GIZ, UN, and USAID through conferences and forums promotes collaboration and support.
- **Investing in Soft Power:** Utilizing soft power, including artists, storytellers, and diaspora networks, contributes to effective communication and advocacy.
- **Constructive Communication Abroad:** Constructive communication abroad involves speaking up loudly through pop-culture, user-friendly media, and employing various languages to convey messages effectively.
- **Communication Strategy:** Implementing a communication strategy, including speech classes, talking points, manuals, and common narratives, ensures a consistent and impactful message.

Mobilizing international solidarity and aid for Ukrainian youth is an imperative step towards rebuilding the nation. By addressing the challenges, involving the youth in their recovery, and fostering global support, Ukraine can emerge stronger, more resilient, and serve as an inspiration for others navigating similar paths to recovery.

## Priorities Lines of Youth Support by International Organizations

### UNDP's Youth Program:

- UNDP has been supporting the youth program in Ukraine since 2014, now integral to the international policy framework.
- The program has 5,000 alumni in civil society, local government, and educational institutions across Ukraine.
- Volunteerism surged, with a notable increase from 6% to 30% in first-time volunteers in 2022.

### Youth Engagement Challenges and Opportunities:

- Despite 72% of youth willing to join the recovery process, only 1% claimed active contribution, emphasizing the need for action.
- UNDP initiated dialogues and the Vignova program in 2023, linking outcomes to local authorities, engaging over 700 people and renovating 24 youth spaces.

### **UNDP's Commitment and Future Plans:**

- UNDP is committed to sustaining institutional youth infrastructure, promoting cooperation, and ensuring meaningful youth involvement in decision-making.
- Emphasis on evidence-based approaches, ongoing studies on the war's impact on youth, and resource support.

### **GIZ's Involvement in Ukraine:**

- GIZ has been active in Ukraine since 1993, focusing on effective governance, energy efficiency, and sustainable economic development.
- Introduced dual education projects, vocational school support, and the "Fair Transition" pilot project for green jobs.

### **Youth Empowerment by GIZ:**

- GIZ's emphasis on youth engagement since 2018, producing graduates employed in key institutions.
- Collaborated with vocational schools through projects like EU4Skills, offering short courses and retraining programs.
- "Fair Transition" focuses on shifting from coal to renewable energy, creating green jobs and preparing a workforce for the evolving energy industry.

### **UNFPA's Mission and Youth Empowerment:**

- UNFPA's mission has been centered on safe childbirth, wanted pregnancies, and fulfilling young people's potential since 1997.
- UNFPA empowers youth to broaden their horizons, actively engage in decision-making, and collaborates based on current needs.

### **Addressing Mental Health Challenges:**

- Rise in volunteerism and civic initiatives among youth, but mental health challenges surfaced, affecting 22% since the war began.
- Initiatives like "Resilience 2.0," "Mentalochka" podcast, and "No Trivia" chatbot aim at addressing mental health issues.

### **Inclusive Society Challenges:**

- Challenges in constructing an inclusive society for young people with disabilities, including discrimination and limited access to services.
- "Idea Bank" project supports about 30 youth projects addressing mental health, recovery, and integration of individuals with disabilities.

**Ukrainian–Danish Youth House Initiatives:**

- Collaborative efforts of the Youth House emerged from Danish organizations, focusing on cultural exchange and collaboration.
- Programs, events, workshops, and grants actively engage over 5,000 participants, promoting youth empowerment and collaboration.

**Insights on International Solidarity:**

- Challenges in international organizations truly understanding and empathizing with the situation in Ukraine.
- Emphasis on empathy, awareness of privilege, and avoiding victimizing language when discussing the impact of war.
- Recognition of the agency of young people in Ukraine and a call for fair practices in funding and support.

The panel highlighted extensive support and initiatives by international organizations for Ukrainian youth, focusing on engagement, mental health, green job creation, and inclusivity. Challenges in understanding and empathizing with the situation were addressed, emphasizing the transformative power of youth in shaping Ukraine's recovery.

## 04. Main Findings and Highlights

**Keynote Speeches:**

- War's profound impact on Ukrainian youth highlighted, challenging the perception of youth as only the future.
- Emphasis on active roles of youth in the present, harnessing their capacities for community benefit.
- Challenges faced, including trauma, loss, and disrupted education rights, underscored.
- Resilience acknowledged, calling for concrete resources to support youth initiatives.
- Urgent call for removing barriers to youth participation and global solidarity, demanding international recognition, tangible actions, and justice for war crimes.

### **Retrospective Overview of First Panel:**

- Praise for proactive approach of Ukrainian youth in the recovery process.
- Call for creating space for youth dialogue, voicing concerns, and shaping the narrative.
- Prioritization of support for Armed Forces, training, and geopolitical awareness.
- Emphasis on the role of Ukrainian youth in garnering international support and dispelling propaganda.

### **Working Group Sessions:**

- Recognition of challenges in occupied territories, post-war reintegration, and youth well-being.
- Strategies for enhancing youth participation, mental health initiatives, and education support discussed.
- Importance of comprehensive approach, collaborative efforts, and international support highlighted.

### **International Organizations' Commitment:**

- UNDP, GIZ, UNPF outlined programs for mental health, humanitarian response, and recovery.
- Ukrainian-Danish Youth House as a dynamic facilitator empowering youth through cultural exchange and collaboration.

### **Conclusion:**

- Emphasis on true empathy and nuanced understanding of the agency of Ukrainian youth.
- Call for internationals to listen and stand in solidarity, recognizing transformative power beyond defined experiences.
- Calls for fair funding practices and dispelling misconceptions about the role of young people in community-based efforts.

Ukrainian Youth Forum for Joint Action showcased the resilience, agency, and aspirations of Ukrainian youth. The Forum highlighted the urgent need for international solidarity, concrete support, and a nuanced understanding of challenges and capabilities of youth in Ukraine.



The Youth Conference is a part of the ongoing initiative: **Peace Support Ukraine Project** - supported by the 8xmille Soka Gakkai Buddhist Institute - serving as a catalyst for long-term collaboration, learning, and knowledge exchange within the peacebuilding community. Participants will continue their commitment through other cross-sectorial activities and opportunities within the project, e.g. trainings, online workshops, and the Online Youth Conference to be organized in February 2023. Furthermore, participants will be encouraged to maintain their engagement through the established knowledge sharing platform and explore opportunities for joint projects and advocacy efforts.





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**PEACE SUPPORT UKRAINE  
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