



Declassified¹

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27 January 2026

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Minutes

of the hearing on the situation of Ukrainian soldiers who became disabled as a result of hostilities, held in Paris on Thursday, 4 December 2025

Ms Saskia Kluit, Chairperson of the Committee, opened the hearing organised in the framework of the preparation of the report on “The situation of Ukrainian soldiers who became disabled as a result of hostilities” (Rapporteur: Mr Jan Filip Libicki, Poland, EPP/CD) and welcomed Ms Nataliia Kalmykova, Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr Libicki thanked the Minister for her presence. He explained that the Ministry’s perspective on the current situation, needs, funding and support systems for Ukrainian soldiers who had become disabled due to the ongoing war was essential for drafting a comprehensive report. Following a hearing on 4 September in Paris with veterans and the director of the Halychyna rehabilitation centre in Lviv, it was reported that the number of people with disabilities in Ukraine had risen dramatically since the full-scale invasion, exceeding 3 million including over 100 000 persons with war-related amputations. Rehabilitation centres had been largely unprepared, facing shortages of specialists. Some soldiers had only survived by receiving treatment abroad.

During the September hearing, three urgent needs were identified: first, comprehensive medical and psychological rehabilitation due to the prevalence of multiple and complex injuries among soldiers; second, access to housing and employment, since many had been displaced and society had wrongly assumed that amputees could not work; and third, systemic support for regaining independence, such as accessible infrastructure, social assistance, and retraining opportunities.

Ukraine had begun to address these challenges by launching a modern prosthetics programme under which veterans could choose their provider and had costs covered up to 100 000 USD. New occupational standards for prosthetists had been implemented. The Halychyna centre was currently rehabilitating more than 150 individuals monthly and accounted for 36 % of all prosthetic fittings nationwide. Nevertheless, the need for rehabilitation services was expected to last another 60-70 years. The Halychyna centre’s representative emphasised the importance of international cooperation, improved coordination, increased funding - including from frozen Russian assets - and the recognition that disabled veterans could return to work if properly supported. **Mr Libicki** considered the Ministry’s input essential to describe the scale of needs, the capacity of the system and the most urgent shortages - including the lack of psychologists and social support - and define priorities for immediate international support.

Ms Nataliia Kalmykova, Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine

Ms Kalmykova opened the discussion with an overview of the current situation. She noted that Ukraine currently has approximately 1.5 million veterans, of whom around 400,000 had already held veteran status prior to the full-scale invasion. Many of these veterans also suffered war-related disabilities. She highlighted the ageing profile of the armed forces and recent legislative changes that enable soldiers with disabilities to return to combat roles. Ms Kalmykova also recalled the adoption of the Veterans Policy Strategy for 2030, underscoring that the demand for comprehensive veterans’ support remains exceptionally high due to the scale of injuries sustained and the long-term nature of trauma.

¹ The minutes were approved and declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 27 January 2026.

The Minister presented Ukraine as a testing ground for rapidly evolving warfare, emphasising the country's unique experience and obligation to warn the international community about fundamental changes reshaping the modern battlefield. These developments posed direct and unprecedented challenges to military medicine and the long-term support for veterans, also impacting global security. Ukraine's ongoing struggle for European values not only forced innovation and resilience but also reinforced the necessity for international cooperation and adaptation of medical strategies to the changing realities of war.

The Minister described a major strategic shift in military medicine: the so-called CASEVAC crisis. At the onset of the full-scale invasion, the distance for Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC) - from the point of injury to the first point of medical handover - was only 1 to 2 kilometers. However, due to the "dense air saturation" brought about by the proliferation of drones, this distance had critically increased to 10-15 kilometers.

Referring to the changing nature of injuries and evolving needs of veterans, **the Minister** explained that drone warfare had drastically changed battlefield trauma patterns. Over 50 % of all injuries were now caused by drones and their fragments, whereas gunshot wounds accounted for less than 2 %. Traditional military medicine, protective gear and tactics - all tailored to counter firearm injuries - were now misaligned with current threats. Drone-induced injuries typically involved severe shrapnel wounds similar to those caused by grenades, resulting in complex trauma and extensive soft tissue damage across multiple body regions. Another grave consequence of increased CASEVAC distances was the high rate of amputations. Delays in evacuation due to drone air superiority, coupled with the persistent use of anti-personnel mines (often dispersed by drones), had given rise to a surge in amputations, especially of lower limbs at the shin level.

To address these challenges, Ukraine drove unprecedented innovation. The country had begun using evacuation drones to facilitate CASEVAC, allowing remote extraction of casualties over long distances without human involvement. This initiative demonstrated how technology could be harnessed for humanitarian ends. However, technological fixes needed to be completed by a doctrinal change: an overhaul of military training systems, tactics, medical protocols and protective equipment had become imperative.

Beyond acute medical care, Ukraine's experience showed that technological change on the battlefield created a new set of long-term needs for veterans. A comprehensive governmental support system was being built for veterans. It integrated physical, psychological, social and professional support after treatment. It was also intended to reassure the international community of Ukraine's commitment to the long-term well-being of its veterans. Ukraine's rehabilitation networks included 569 service providers operating under unified standards, funded with 6,5 billion UAH (140 million EUR) over 2024-2025. In terms of mental health, over 2 200 medical institutions and 16 000 staff offered services, supported by a network of 150 mental health centres and 326 resilience centres, ensuring barrier-free, community-level access to care. The Government also ran educational programmes to build a culture of emotional resilience, a critical element in a traumatised society. Due to the complexity of war-related injuries, Ukraine developed specialised programmes for veterans with the most challenging conditions, such as those who had lost their vision. Those programmes combined medical, psychological and social support, restoring essential life skills, fostering independence and aiding social integration.

Ukraine was the only country developing a comprehensive veterans policy during an ongoing war. The evolving model included medical and psychological rehabilitation, education, employment, sports programmes and entrepreneurship support. Over 330 000 veterans participated in sports, 4 000 received assistance to launch and develop businesses, 13 000 completed reskilling programmes and 10 000 found new employment. A digital platform for all ministries, "Veteran PRO", was created to facilitate access to evolving veteran services. To further promote inclusion, Ukraine systematically worked to create a barrier-free environment: workplace retrofits for veterans with disabilities, personal mobility enhancements and accessible infrastructure were continuously expanded. 2 000 veterans' assistants, half of whom were veterans or spouses of military personnel, helped veterans across the country resolve non-medical issues. Ukraine's primary goal was to ensure that every male and female veteran not only survived but could also fully reintegrate into society, work, study, start a business, reconnect with their communities and enjoy a fulfilling life.

The Minister then made several appeals to the Parliamentary Assembly. First, facilitation of the review of international medical protocols to reflect new injury patterns was needed. Second, high-tech rehabilitation and prosthetic programmes tailored to the complex injury profiles of Ukrainian veterans should be robustly supported. Third, there was a need for an urgent international dialogue on the regulation of small attack drone technologies to prevent their transformation into widely accessible instruments of terrorism. Fourth, long-term international support for capacity-building within Ukraine should increase. She proposed the establishment of a multi-donor veterans' fund endowed with 50-200 million EUR to co-finance the development of reintegration infrastructure (such as veteran centres, sports facilities and digital platforms) and to invest in rebuilding veterans' human capital for Ukraine's recovery and in specialists training. Finally, she advocated for close coordination with the Ukrainian Government, in particular her Ministry, to ensure that new international initiatives for veterans and their families aligned effectively with Ukraine's existing veterans support systems, avoiding overlap and fragmentation.

In conclusion, **the Minister** presented Ukraine not simply as a nation repelling aggression but as a forerunner confronting an era where even a child's toy could become a deadly weapon, where seconds meant the difference between life and death on the battlefield, and where supporting veterans was central to the security of Europe itself. Europe and the international community should support not only those defending Ukraine but also learn from Ukraine's hard-won experience in this new era of warfare.

Discussion

Mr Libicki congratulated the Minister and Ukraine on their progress in supporting veterans during wartime. Drawing on the hearing in September and the conference of the Parliamentary Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine held in Tallinn, he highlighted three main issues. Did systemic support exist at local level when wounded soldiers returned to small villages? There seemed to be a shortage of tutors or mentors who had already gone through a similar experience to guide veterans with disabilities in adapting to new circumstances: the number of veterans' assistants, currently about 2 000, could possibly be increased. Furthermore, families from small towns needed support to afford accommodation in big cities to stay close to their loved ones during rehabilitation, which was also important for veterans during rehabilitation process.

The Minister stated that there was a need to assess the quality of the tutor's system. Rehabilitation was in place in villages. Her Ministry has drafted a new Veterans' Code to unify the entire system of veterans' policy into a single, coordinated and modern piece of legislation and has submitted it to the Parliament in November 2025. The Government is paying the costs of family housing to accompany the wounded soldiers with disabilities.

Lord Touhig confirmed the need to support the families of the veterans.

Mr Candan asked about the most needed forms of support from the international community.

The Minister explained that housing was very important, in particular because a lot of veterans were internally displaced. To this end, support from Council of Europe Development Bank would be helpful.

Ms Komenko invited members to finance support through voluntary contributions.

Mr Libicki thanked the Minister and reiterated his commitment to explaining to the international community that some funds should be dedicated to help veterans come back to normal life.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and the participants and closed the hearing.

List of presence / Liste de présence

(The names of members who took part in the meeting are in bold / Les noms des membres ayant pris part à la réunion sont en caractères gras)

Chairperson / *Président·e*:

Ms / Mme Saskia Kluit	
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Vice-Chairpersons / *Vice-Président·e·s* :

Ms / Mme Danuta Jazłowiecka	
Mr / M. Armen Gevorgyan	
Lord Don Touhig	

Members / Membres	Country / Pays	Alternates / Remplaçant·e·s
Ms Ogerta Manastirliu	Albania / <i>Albanie</i>	Zz...
Mr Cerni Escalé	Andorra / <i>Andorre</i>	Mme Bernadeta Coma
Mr Armen Gevorgyan	Armenia / <i>Arménie</i>	Ms Hripsime Grigoryan
Zz...	Austria / <i>Autriche</i>	Ms Doris Bures
Mr Andreas Minnich	Austria / <i>Autriche</i>	Ms Agnes Sirkka Prammer
Ms Anne Lambelin	Belgium / <i>Belgique</i>	Mr Andries Gryffroy
M. Benoît Lutgen	Belgium / <i>Belgique</i>	Mme Véronique Durenne
Ms Darijana Filipović	Bosnia and Herzegovina / <i>Bosnie-Herzégovine</i>	Mr Šemsudin Dedić
Ms Atidzhe Alieva-Veli		Mr Kostadin Angelov
Ms Maya Dimitrova	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>	Mr Iljan Iontchev
Mr Marko Pavić	Croatia / <i>Croatie</i>	Ms Rada Borić
Ms Christiana Erotokritou	Cyprus / <i>Chypre</i>	Mr Constantinos Efsthathiou
Ms Ivana Mádllová	Czechia / <i>Tchéquie</i>	Mr Aleš Juchelka
Ms Michaela Šebelová	Czechia / <i>Tchéquie</i>	Mr Ondřej Šimetka
Ms Camilla Fabricius	Denmark / <i>Danemark</i>	Ms Charlotte Bagge Hansen
Ms Hanah Lahe	Estonia / <i>Estonie</i>	Zz...
Ms Minna Reijonen	Finland / <i>Finlande</i>	Ms Miapetra Kumpula-Natri
Mme Sophia Chikirou	France	Ms Sabrina Sebaihi
M. Alexandre Dufosset	France	Mme Liliana Tanguy
M. Alain Milon	France	M. Alain Cadec
Mme Maud Petit	France	M. Jean Laussucq
Zz...	Georgia / <i>Géorgie</i>	Zz...
Mr Vinzenz Glaser	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Christin Willnat
Ms Birgit Bessin	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Martina Kempf
Mr Serdar Yüksel	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Franziska Kersten
Ms Inge Gräßle	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Julian Joswig
Ms Maria Syrengela	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>	Ms Maria-Nefeli Chatziioannidou
Mr Georgios Stamatis	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>	Mr Alexis Tsipras
Ms Mónika Bartos	Hungary / <i>Hongrie</i>	Mme Katalin Csöbör
Ms Mónika Dunai	Hungary / <i>Hongrie</i>	Ms Zita Gurmai
Ms Kolbrún Áslaugar Baldursdóttir	Iceland / <i>Islande</i>	Mr Ragnar Þór Ingólfsson

Mr Joseph O'Reilly	Ireland / <i>Irlande</i>	Mr Rónán Mullen
Ms Elena Bonetti	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Roberto Rosso
Ms Aurora Floridia	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Giuseppe De Cristofaro
Mr Alessandro Giglio Vigna	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Graziano Pizzimenti
Mr Stefano Maullu	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Francesco Zaffini
M. Andris Bērziņš	Latvia / <i>Lettonie</i>	Mr Edmunds Cepurītis
Mr Marc Risch	Liechtenstein	Mr Joachim Vogt
Ms Orinta Leiputė	Lithuania / <i>Lituanie</i>	Mr Zigmantas Balčytis
Mme Stéphanie Weydert	Luxembourg	M. Paul Galles
Mr Michael Farrugia	Malta / <i>Malte</i>	Mr Joseph Beppe Fenech Adami
Mr Ion Groza	Republic of Moldova / <i>République de Moldova</i>	Ms Diana Caraman
M. Régis Bergonzi	Monaco	Mme Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo
Mr Miloš Konatar	Montenegro / <i>Monténégro</i>	Mr Boris Mugoša
Ms Saskia Kluit	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Ms Elly Van Wijk
Ms Carla Moonen	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Mr Theo Bovens
Mr Bekim Kjoku	North Macedonia / <i>Macédoine du Nord</i>	Mr Sadula Duraki
Mr Per Vidar Kjølmoen	Norway / <i>Norvège</i>	Ms Seher Aydar
Ms Danuta Jazłowiecka	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Mr Mirosław Adam Orliński
Mr Jan Filip Libicki	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Ms Magdalena Biejat
Mr Ryszard Petru	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Zz...
Zz...	Portugal	Mr Nuno Fazenda
Mr Carlos Silva Santiago	Portugal	Zz...
Ms Georgeta-Carmen Holban	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	Ms Mirela Elena Adomnicai
Ms Dumitrina Mitrea	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	Mr Iulian Bulai
Mr Robert-Ionatan Sighiartau	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	Ms Maria-Gabriela Horga
Mr Gerardo Giovagnoli	San Marino / <i>Saint-Marin</i>	Ms Alice Mina
Mr Vladimir Đorđević	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>	Mr Predrag Marsenić
Ms Tatjana Pašić	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>	Ms Jelena Milošević
Zz...	Slovak Republic / <i>République Slovaque</i>	Mr Pavol Goga
Mr Dean Premik	Slovenia / <i>Slovénie</i>	Ms Iva Dimic
Ms María Fernández	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Mr Alfonso Rodríguez
Mr José Latorre	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Marta González Vázquez
Ms Carmen Leyte	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Luz Martinez Seijo
Ms Sofia Amløh	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Ms Annika Strandhäll
Ms Victoria Tiblom	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Ms Boriana Åberg
Mme Céline Amaudruz	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	Mme Valérie Piller Carrard
Ms Sibel Arslan	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	Mr Fabian Molina
Ms Gökçe Gökçen	Türkiye	Mr Namık Tan
Mr Berdan Öztürk	Türkiye	Ms Sevilay Özen
Mr Sevan Sivacioğlu	Türkiye	Ms Sena Nur Çelik Kanat
Mr Murat Cahid Cingi	Türkiye	Mr Mustafa Canbey
Ms Olena Khomenko	Ukraine	Ms Larysa Bilozir
Ms Yuliia Ovchynnykova	Ukraine	Mr Andrii Lopushanskyi

Ms Lesia Zaburanna	Ukraine	Mr Rostyslav Tistyk
Ms Alicia Kearns	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Mr Dan Aldridge
Ms Kate Osamor	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Mr Perran Moon
Ms Elaine Stewart	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Mr Mike Reader
Lord Don Touhig	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Ms Michelle Welsh

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Mr / M. Hassan Arif, Morocco / *Maroc*

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Ms / Mme Marina Giovannini, Italy / *Italie*
Ms / Mme Carmen Ionescu, Romania / *Roumanie*
Mr / M. Sabih Gazi Öztürk, Türkiye
Ms / Mme Francesca Arbogast, Executive Secretary SOC Group

Experts / Expert·es

Ms / Mme Nataliia Kalmykova, Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine
Mr / M. Taras Vysotskyi, Deputy Minister of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine
Ms / Mme Sabrina Cajoly, founder of Kimbé Rêd, French West Indies

Other persons present / Autres personnes présentes

Mr / M. Armağan Candan, Cyprus / *Chypre*
Ms / Mme Yuliia Kholodniuk, Chief Staff, Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine

Council of Europe staff / Secrétariat du Conseil de l'Europe

Ms / Mme Anastasiia Saliuk, Head of the Transversal Human Rights Responses Unit, DGI

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée parlementaire

Ms / Mme Louise Barton, Director, Inclusive and Sustainable Societies and Co-operation Directorate / *Directrice, Direction des sociétés inclusives et durables et de la coopération*

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development /
Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

Ms / Mme Catherine Du- BernardHead of the Secretariat / *Cheffe du Secrétariat*
Ms / Mme Aiste RamanauskaiteSecretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*
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Ms / Mme Claire Dubois-HamdiSecretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*
Ms / Mme Özgü Tan.....Assistant/ *Assistante*