

Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine

Project Key achievements in 2020

The project "***Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine***" is implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as part of the *Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022*.

The project aims to improve the quality of local democracy in Ukraine by strengthening institutional frameworks and by supporting local authorities and their national associations in their efforts to promote ethical decision-making and more citizen-oriented, inclusive and transparent local governance.

The project is focused on support to decentralisation and the implementation of good practices of local democracy through local and international expertise and capacity-building activities, as well as peer-to-peer exchanges with the participation of members of the Congress.

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Strengthened leadership and institutional capacities of local authorities

- Advisory and expert support was provided to Ukrainian national and local authorities on matters related to local self-government and constitutional reforms. Discussions on the Draft Law "On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine" were held with the Parliament, the Government, local authorities and their national associations on 24 and 25 February 2020, with the contribution of the Congress Constitutional Advisor. The draft law "On the City of Kyiv - Capital of Ukraine" was reviewed by a member of the Congress Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and recommendations were provided on its compatibility with the constitutional principle of the separation of powers and the proportionality principle laid down in Article 8.3 of the Charter;
- Congress recommendations on the voting rights of IDPs were further implemented through the adoption of the Resolution of the Central Electoral Commission (No. 88, May 2020) on the registration procedure which allowed voters to change their voting addresses according to their factual place of residence prior to the local elections held on 25 October 2020.

Improved consultation and dialogue between national associations of local and regional authorities

- The Community of practice on local democracy in Ukraine (CoP) was established as a platform for exchange. At the same time, it serves as a mean to reinforce the capacities and institutional position of Ukrainian local and regional authorities and their national associations, enabling them to advocate

jointly for their common interests and needs in a context of ongoing reforms on local self-government;

- The CoP streamlines the elaboration of joint positions among national associations based on good practices and identified measures to safeguard integrity and the principles of free and fair elections held during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Increased capacities of local authorities in implementing ethical, innovative and inclusive policies

- 13 selected Ukrainian local authorities from 10 oblasts of Ukraine representing different sizes of municipalities including three oblast centres were supported to implement local initiatives on ethical, transparent and participatory decision-making with a view to raising awareness, participation and engagement of under-represented groups, as well as providing equal opportunities for women and men to participate in local political life;
- A team of 12 international and national experts provided on-site and distance guidance on policy development, governance processes as well as on methodologic approaches to ensure sustainability of the initiatives and measure the change;
- A series of nine webinars were organised to develop values-based leadership and to facilitate the exchange of experiences on thematic areas deemed crucial for achieving effective and sustainable results from local initiatives, such as participatory budgeting, gender mainstreaming, youth participation, open government and inclusive decision-making, in particular in times of crisis.

Enhanced open government at local level

- As a result of the continued support provided to national authorities, as well as local authorities and their national associations, the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) established a Platform for National – Local Dialogue on Open Government in Ukraine, in line with the OGP Local Strategy and with a view to enhance the implementation of the Fifth Action Plan on implementation of the Open Government partnership Initiative for 2021 – 2022;
- Three Ukrainian municipalities (Khmelnysky, Ternopil and Vinnytsya) became new members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Local Programme;
- This platform represents a unique opportunity to enhance consultation and co-creation between national and local levels, in line with the OGP Local Strategy, and to boost open government in Ukraine: a fast-increasing number of local authorities are coming to the realisation that improving and diversifying their open government practices and applying sustainable and inclusive policies will better address the interests and needs of their citizens.

Strengthened gender-sensitive policy making at local level

- A guide for women and men in local politics on [*Preventing and combatting sexism at the local level in Ukraine*](#) was developed to equip local office holders and candidates with the necessary knowledge to recognise and address sexism and gender-based discrimination in their institutions, thereby enabling women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels;
- An e-course on "Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level in Ukraine" was designed and launched to enhance the knowledge of newly elected local councillors and municipal officials on gender equality, and promote equal participation of women and men in policymaking at local level in Ukraine.

Strengthened human rights-based approach and local democracy principles

- A pool of educators on local democracy and human rights was created to increase the participation of young people in community life as a means of fostering social cohesion and anchoring democratic principles based on respect of human rights at local level;
- Young people from six municipalities of Eastern Ukraine (Bakhmut, Kostyantynivka, Kramatorsk, Lysychansk, Mariupol and Starobilsk) applied newly acquired knowledge and skills for developing local projects, and motivated their peers to join them in taking part in local political life and thus strengthening the community's social cohesion.