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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 September 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” (Mr Jan Filip Libicki, rapporteur) and welcomed experts: Mr Volodymyr Hera, lecturer at the Military Academy and lieutenant colonel in the Ukrainian army, Mr Mykhailo Bakaliuk (*online*), veteran, and Mr Danylo Kryvko (*online*), Director of the State Rehabilitation Center “Halychyna”.

The Committee authorised the participation of Mr Roman Hera, who was accompanying Mr Volodymyr Hera and Ms Anna Huk, who was accompanying Mr Libicki.

Mr Libicki stated that although the war in Ukraine was continuing, discussions had already begun about the country's reconstruction and how it should be financed by the international community. One important consequence of the conflict was the large number of soldiers who had become disabled. Part of the reconstruction funds had to be devoted to helping them. Many member States of the Council of Europe had long ago signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which guaranteed persons with disabilities the right to live full and independent lives. For Ukrainian soldiers who had been disabled by the war, financial assistance was essential to regain independence and adapt to a new way of living.

His report stressed the need to secure funds not only from international reconstruction funds but also from an appropriate share of the frozen assets of the Russian Federation. To complete the report, three main issues had to be explored in order to understand the experience of disabled soldiers from their own perspective, analyse the current forms of support in both big cities and small towns, and identify wounded soldiers' real needs to help them return to independent living.

For this work, he planned to rely on four experts: two directors of rehabilitation centres and two wounded soldiers. The private centre Sviatenko, founded by Ms Sviatenko (unfortunately absent for health reasons), and the State centre “Halychyna” in Lviv, managed by Mr Kryvko, would provide professional knowledge. Lieutenant Colonel Volodymyr Hera, injured in 2014 during the invasion of Crimea, and Mr Mykhailo Bakaliuk, wounded in 2023, would share personal experiences. They had been contacted through the Polish Foundation Education for Democracy and via private Ukrainian connections.

Ms Kluit expressed gratitude for the soldiers' sacrifice at the service of their country; their fight was the defense of Europe's freedom. She gave the floor to Mr Hera.

Mr Volodymyr Hera, lecturer at the Military Academy and lieutenant colonel in the Ukrainian army

Mr Hera shared his personal experience from the war. Ten years earlier, while serving in the Lugansk region near the Russian border, he had been severely wounded during a reconnaissance mission. Large pieces of shrapnel had damaged his spinal cord, leaving him unable to walk. The war had lasted for more than ten years and that no one knew when it would end.

¹ The minutes were approved and declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 4 December 2025.

He showed his Ukrainian soldier's boot, explaining that it symbolised the defence of Ukraine, the border of Europe, the civilisation and human values. Many young men and women could no longer wear such boots because they had lost their legs, arms, eyes or other body parts while protecting their lives and the lives of other people. Wounded Ukrainian veterans faced many problems.

First, rehabilitation centres and old medical facilities were in poor state. Some of them were located in ancient monasteries. After his injury, he faced infection, which he survived only thanks to the treatment in a German clinic. Ukraine lacked trained doctors and nurses specialised in military injuries and polytraumas.

Second, there was a need for psychological rehabilitation. Many soldiers had previously been teachers or factory workers. They suffered deep trauma.

Third, wounded soldiers faced housing and employment problems. Many homes had been destroyed, and many people believed that those who had lost limbs could no longer work. However, in reality, they could still contribute to society if they received proper training and support.

Finally, he expressed sincere gratitude to the international community, especially Poland and the United Kingdom, for their military and financial aid, hoping that together they would stop the Russian invasion and bring victory to Ukraine.

Mr Mykhailo Bakaliuk (online), veteran

Mr Bakaliuk recalled that the war in Ukraine began in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and occupied Donetsk and Lugansk. Since then, Ukraine suffered continuous Russian attacks, destruction, and urgently needed international support. Before the large-scale invasion, he had worked in private companies as a sales manager and the head of department, providing engineering consulting. In May 2023, he had joined the Ukrainian Army's 47th Mechanical Unit. On 13 June 2023, in Zaporijia region, he had gotten injured by a landmine and lost a leg. After that, he began a long journey of rehabilitation, prosthesis and other related activities.

Mr Bakaliuk presented the social project VYMIR (Inclusive Solutions for Veterans and People with Disabilities in Ukraine) developed with the NGO "Terra Integrity", working alongside the Ukrainian Government to implement innovative social and rehabilitation solutions. As the Deputy Head of the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Irpin City Council, he advocated for greater accessibility, inclusivity and quality rehabilitation services. As a person with a disability, he understood the challenges of returning to an active life and emphasised the need for an inclusive system that empowered people to contribute to society.

Ukraine faced a new social reality, with over 3 million people with disabilities – about 8% of the population – and more than 100 000 new amputations since the full-scale invasion. Despite these challenges, in particular the lack of human resources, the country achieved major progress through its assistive devices programme, managed by the Ministry of Social Policy which provided prostheses, orthoses and other mobility aids. This programme gave individuals the freedom to choose their providers, and for soldiers injured in combat, the State fully covered the costs – up to 100 000\$ per prosthesis.

Another breakthrough was the introduction of new professional standards and the creation of four master's programmes in 2024 to train new specialists known as "prosthetist-orthotist" (orthotists) who helped amputees recover and reintegrate. However, significant challenges persisted, including infection control (he had experienced a re-amputation because of infection), the absence of an integrated case management system (coordination of medical, social and professional support) and limited employment opportunities for veterans and people with disabilities, mainly due to lack of resources.

He called for international cooperation, emphasising that rebuilding Ukraine required joint efforts, resource sharing and the use of frozen Russian assets. Veterans and people with disabilities were drivers of change, whose leadership and resilience could help shape a more inclusive and developed Ukraine. He had a vision for joint projects and worked with the Ministry of Veterans Policy Projects to help Ukraine and international partners, promote cooperation, share experience and support national rebuilding.

The Chairperson thanked both veterans for showing how their efforts for the entire population could improve lives in Ukraine and beyond.

Discussion

Ms Piller Carrard appreciated the testimonies which clarified the reality of the situation. She asked Mr Bakaliuk about cooperation with foreign organisations on medical advancements, particularly prostheses and their affordability for people with disabilities in Ukraine, noting it was already a major challenge in non-war countries.

Finally, she inquired about the professional reintegration and retraining of veterans given the financial and practical difficulties of the country.

Ms Kluit asked whether Ukrainian soldiers of different age groups had distinct needs in terms of treatment and rehabilitation. She also inquired about challenges faced by Ukrainian soldiers receiving rehabilitation abroad and how host countries could best support and assist them upon recovery or reintegration.

Mr Hera replied that age did not matter when receiving medical or psychological help after injury. He thanked the Netherlands for its support to veterans, suggesting continued cooperation in social and sports programmes to integrate Ukrainian veterans. Accessibility of buildings was a major problem as many Ukrainian buildings lacked elevators, which limited opportunities for disabled professionals like himself, a trained lawyer, who could not access workplaces at law firms because of the lack of elevators.

Mr Bakaliuk explained that his prosthesis was produced by Ukrainian specialists using European parts and praised their professionalism. He mentioned Dnipro-Prothesis, a State company in Dnipro, with strong rehabilitation facilities, international certification, and openness to cooperation. Ukraine needed to improve accessibility of infrastructure which was not user-friendly for many amputees. Representing the European Romada in Kyiv Oblast, he described efforts to adapt urban spaces, promote inclusivity and change public attitudes. International collaboration should develop inclusive environments benefiting all citizens. His community could serve as a pilot project for such initiatives.

Mr Galles thanked the rapporteur for addressing such an important topic, recalling his recent visit to Kyiv on the issue of Ukrainian children abducted by Russia, during which he had paid tribute to Ukrainians who defended freedom and Europe. He was deeply moved by the diversity of victims including young, old, women, and Belarusians fighting for Ukraine. As a Luxembourger, he reflected on his country's long period of peace and noted that some of his compatriots were fighting alongside Ukrainians. There was the urgent issue of abducted Ukrainian children and the lack of funding caused by the war. Finally, he asked how Ukrainians perceived public awareness and empathy within Ukraine and across Europe.

Mr O'Reilly thanked the contributors, praising Mr Libicki for addressing a crucial issue. Beyond war casualties, the life-changing and traumatic injuries with horrendous implications for people were often overlooked. It was important to raise awareness and stimulate action in this context.

Mr Bakaliuk noted societal pressure and unpreparedness to interact with people with disabilities, including veterans with amputations or severe injuries. He had a negative experience himself, with civilians not being ready to see so many people with disabilities around them. He had become a mediator in the Department for Veterans Affairs to promote inclusivity and ethical communication by sharing his experience. Highlighting over 130 000 amputations but also people who lost hearing or sight, or injuries of face, body or internal organs, he emphasised the need for tolerance and expressed willingness to exchange knowledge with international partners to foster understanding and support.

Mr Hera explained that Ukraine, a country at war for ten years, inevitably faced injuries among both young and older soldiers. He personally had received strong support. Civilians and veterans must develop a mutual understanding of the harsh realities of war.

The Chairperson encouraged both speakers to stay in contact to update on progress, acknowledged the sacrifices of Ukrainians of all ages, and stressed the importance of making Ukraine's struggle a shared European concern.

Mr Danylo Kryvko (online), Director of the State Rehabilitation Centre "Halychyna"

Mr Kryvko, a maxillofacial surgeon, explained that the centre provided comprehensive care for patients with amputations and severe injuries, including surgical treatment, prosthetics, physical, psychological and social rehabilitation. Emphasising social adaptation, the centre ensured patients can reintegrate into society and realise their potential. Since the start of the full-scale war, over 3 200 patients had been treated, with 1 800 receiving prosthetics. According to the National Health Service of Ukraine, that represented over 150 patients per month. The centre handled 36% of Ukraine's amputee rehabilitation cases, confirming its key national role for prosthetics and rehabilitation.

Due to high demand, the centre was constructing a new 300-bed complex and establishing a surgical department to accelerate care and rehabilitation. **Mr Kryvko** stressed the importance of restoring not just physical health but also social roles, including retraining and employment for veterans. Inclusive outreach programmes educated society about veterans with injuries, for example meetings of veterans with school children. Sports, such as activities on an inclusive sports ground and participation in international competitions like the Invictus Games and Paralympics, aided physical recovery and rebuilt confidence. Operating under the constant threat of attacks, the centre anticipated long rehabilitation needs, for 60 to 70 years. He concluded by calling for international support in personnel training,

modern prosthetics, rehabilitation technology, and infrastructure, aiming to restore dignity, quality of life, and a sustainable future for those who defended Ukraine.

The Chairperson warmly thanked the speaker for helping soldiers get back on their feet in times of hardship.

Discussion

Mr Bovens asked about cooperation with neighbouring or other European countries.

Mr Stamatis explained that Greece had hosted Ukrainian disabled soldiers despite the lack of rehabilitation centres. European and international cooperation was important to support soldiers with physical and psychological disabilities after the war despite funding challenges. He also made a link with the recent UN report on 21 000 disabled children in Gaza and urged international action to provide medical, psychological and social support after the war.

The Chairperson thanked him for raising awareness about the urgent needs of children in Gaza and in Ukraine. She encouraged European countries to host and assist Ukrainian soldiers in rehabilitation efforts, noting that some nations were already doing so. Members should contact their ministers to expand support through funding, knowledge sharing and medical staff exchanges to strengthen institutions such as Mr Kryvko's centre. What could be done to help such centres improve their work?

Mr Kryvko confirmed that there was ongoing cooperation with many foreign countries, mainly for sending patients to Germany, Poland and Italy for rehabilitation and surgery. Due to the obviously high number of patients, Ukraine faced a shortage of specialists. His centre sought to expand local training, establish new departments and use cooperation to improve education and medical expertise.

Ms Khomenko provided additional information about the State policy on veterans with regard to legal status and benefits. The Ministry of Veterans was responsible for developing policy and implementation. Veterans with disabilities were entitled to a wide range of social guarantees. Ukraine provided free medical treatment, prosthetics, sanatorium care, transport, housing, tax benefits, financial support, and access to training. There were mechanisms for housing compensation, including destroyed or occupied property. Recent legislation guaranteed free prosthetics for disabled servicemen and veterans with disabilities, regulated prices and ensured the individual right to choose the type of prosthetic device. The State also financed professional adaptation, retraining and acquisition of new skills or specialisation. Ukraine run an experimental driving school for disabled veterans and offered further education, including second master's degrees. In professional adaptation services, 265 veterans were supported this year, 1 024 last year, with 2 282 applications currently registered. Veterans were entitled to expanded screening for combat-related conditions like PTSD, hypertension and chronic pain. Services included individual and group psychological therapy, benefiting 12 000 veterans, and a sports and social integration programme providing small financial support for activities, alongside a three-layer psychological support system based on the severity of symptoms. Ukraine's defense budget limited resources for veteran support, but experimental aid programmes for physical and psychological recovery were developed. Key needs included 1) certified psychologist training, 2) suicide prevention materials and methodologies, and 3) funding for trainers to expand qualified professional support for veterans, including those with disabilities.

Mr Libicki appreciated the members' questions and thanked Mr Galles and Ms Kluit for highlighting the main goals of the report. Ukraine's financial efforts had focused heavily on defence, often overlooking veterans and wounded people. Similarly, discussions on reconstruction had prioritised infrastructure over direct support for individuals. The report aimed to convince governments, parliaments and the public to support this aspect of Ukrainian life. He was in contact with Deputy Minister Oleg Shymanskyi for the Ministry of Veterans' perspective as a next step in preparing his report.

The Chairperson thanked all 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 Jorida Tabaku	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
Mr Stefan Schennach	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	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>	Zz...
Ms Petya Tsankova	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>	Zz...
Ms Zdravka Bušić	Croatia / <i>Croatie</i>	Ms Rada Borić
Ms Christiana Erotokritou	Cyprus / <i>Chypre</i>	Mr Constantinos Efstathiou
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 Karin Liltorp
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 Balcytis
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
Mme Christine Pasquier-Ciulla	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</i>	Mr Sadula Duraki
Ms Lisa Marie Ness Klungland	Norway / <i>Norvège</i>	Ms Linda Hofstad Helleland
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...
Ms Jamila Madeira	Portugal	Mr Nuno Fazenda
Mr Carlos Silva Santiago	Portugal	Mr Telmo Faria
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
Mme Anna Záborská	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 Martínez Seijo
Ms Sofia Amlöh	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>	M. Pierre-Alain Fridez
Ms Gökçe Gökçen	Türkiye	Mr Namık Tan
Mr Berdan Öztürk	Türkiye	Ms Sevilay Özen
Mr Sevan Sivacioğlu	Türkiye	Ms Sena Nur Çelik Kanat
Mr Cemalettin Kani Torun	Türkiye	Mr Mustafa Kaya
Ms Olena Khomenko	Ukraine	Ms Larysa Bilozir
Ms Yuliia Ovchynnykova	Ukraine	Mr Andrii Lopushanskyi
Ms Lesia Ziburanna	Ukraine	Mr Rostyslav Tistryk

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

Partners for Democracy / Partenaires pour la Démocratie

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

Secretariat of Delegation or of Political Group / Secrétariat de Délégation ou de Groupe politique

Ms / *Mme* Marina Giovannini, Italy / *Italie*

Mr / M. Redjep Prekopuca, North Macedonia / *Macédoine du Nord*

Mr / M. Sabih Gazi Öztürk, Türkiye

Experts / Expert-es

Mr / M. Volodymyr Hera, lecturer at the Military Academy and lieutenant colonel in the Ukrainian army / *professeur à l'Académie militaire et lieutenant-colonel dans l'armée ukrainienne*

Other persons present / Autres personnes présentes

Mr / M. Roman Hera

Ms / *Mme* Anna Huk

Mr / M. Mykola Movchan

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*

Ms / *Mme* Jannick DevauxSecretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*

Ms / *Mme* Claire Dubois-HamdiSecretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*

Ms / *Mme* Özgü TanAssistant/ *Assistante*