***The search for ways to restore Ukraine’s sovereignty over the occupied Donbas: public opinion on the eve of presidential elections***

*This nationwide study was conducted jointly by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Center sociological service on December 19-25, 2018, in all regions of Ukraine region except for Crimea and occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. A total of 2,017 respondents were polled age 18 and over. The theoretical sample error does not exceed 2.3%.*

*Funding for the nationwide survey was provided by the MATRA project of the Royal Dutch Embassy in Ukraine.*

*The regional public opinion study was conducted in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (on territory that is controlled by Ukraine) by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (using the network of the Ukrainian Sociology Service firm) on November 1-11, 2018. In every oblast, 500 respondents were polled based on a sample that represents the adult population of the oblasts (with the exception of occupied territories). The sample is representative of such indicators as sex, age, education and place of residence. The theoretical sample error does not exceed 3.5%.*

*The regional survey was conducted within the framework of the project “Moving forward the peace process in the Donbas:  increasing inclusiveness of the local communities in the potential peace making mission and fostering local ownership of possible peace initiatives” and with financial support from the Embassy of Canada in Ukraine.*

**The majority of Ukrainian citizens share the idea that there is currently an ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia (72%).** This view is most widespread in the western (91%) and central (79%) regions. In the south, this view is held by 62%, and in the east – by 47%. Nearly every fifth person in these regions was undecided in responding to this question. The public opinion study in the Ukraine-controlled part of the Donbas found that the views of this region’s residents were essentially split in half – 39% believe that currently there is an ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, and 40% say there is isn’t.

**50% of Ukrainian citizens agree that for the sake of peace in the Donbas, it is worth to accept compromises with Russia and the self-proclaimed republics, but not all of them; only 16% are for any kind of compromises. Seventeen percent of Ukrainians support the use of force to resolve the conflict. Among Donbas residents there is a significantly higher level of readiness to find any kind of compromises to achieve peace (46%),** and also less support for a forcible solution to the conflict (10%).

At the same time, Ukrainian citizens find the majority of possible compromises that are discussed publicly and provided for by the Minsk agreements as unacceptable. **The least acceptable ones for Donbas residents, and for Ukrainian citizens overall, is the conduct of elections under the conditions of militants, amnesty for all combatants who fought against the Ukrainian army, and forming law enforcement bodies in the non-government controlled areas exclusively with local representatives.** For Donbas residents, as well as for those in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, the most acceptable compromises are for giving “special status”to the non-government controlled areas, giving the Russian language official state, adopting a law on neutrality and non-aligned status for Ukraine, and restoring trade with the occupied territories.

**Most Ukrainians believe that the most effective measures for achieving peace is to restore a normal life in the liberated territories (30%) and international pressure on Russia (32%).** For Donbas residents, the main way to establish peace is restoring a normal life in the Ukraine-controlled territories (48%). 18% of respondents consider putting pressure on Russia in the form of sanctions as a necessary step for achieving peace. Compared to overall moods in Ukraine, people in the Donbas prefer such measures as, giving the occupied territories “special status” within Ukraine (24%) and making Russian an official state language (19%). The region’s citizens also more often, compared to Ukraine overall, believe measures of a social and humanitarian nature are appropriate such as, simplifying procedures for crossing the line of contact, social payments for residents of the occupied territories and trade with these territories.

**Close to half of citizens in Ukraine overall and in the Ukraine-controlled part of Donbas prefer returning the occupied territories to pre-war conditions.** Nearly 20% of Ukrainian citizens and 28% of Donbas residents see them as part of Ukraine, but more independent from the central government. It should be emphasized that neither Donbas nor Ukraine overall support independence for these territories or them being a part of Russia. In the Donbas, only 1.7% wanted to see “DPR” and “LPR” as independent states and 1.6% as part of Russia. However, Donbas residents assessed the likelihood of getting the occupied territories back ambiguously: 25% believe in their return in the next five years, another 25% – in the long-term prospective, and 17% believe it is impossible to return these territories to Ukraine.

**The chances for having a U.N. peacekeeping mission in the occupied territories is most supported in the western (73%) and central (66%) regions, and considerably less in the southern (50%) and eastern (23%) regions as well as in the Donbas (30%).** However, should there be a peacekeeping force, the majority of citizens are of the opinion that the peacekeepers should be stationed throughout the occupied territories up to the border with Russia and not only along the line of contact.

**Forty-nine percent of Donbas residents believe that Russia is a party to the conflict in eastern Ukraine; 27% disagree with this opinion and 24% didn’t respond to this question.** At the same time, a third of Donbas residents are convinced that Russia sends arms to the “DPR” and “LPR”, 27% say that Russia controls all the political and military actions of the self-proclaimed republics, and 23% say that Russian army fights on the self-proclaimed republics’ side. Another 24% mentioned humanitarian assistance from Russia to the Donbas.

The principal blame on what is currently happening in the Donbas, 57% of Donbas residents place on the current Ukrainian government, another 33% blame the previous regime of Viktor Yanukovych, 24% on the Maidan, 22% on Russia, 19% on the U.S., and 14% on the militants who used arms to seize power.

To resolve the conflict, citizens who live in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts more often place hope on the presidential candidate whom they support in the next elections (26%), on the Ukrainian people (24%), Armed Forces of Ukraine (14%) and incumbent Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (12%).

The main sources of information on events in the Donbas for the region’s residents is watching Ukrainian television channels (63%), online sources (47%), family, friends and acquaintances (41%) and social media networks (29%). Russian TV channels are watched by 16% of citizens, and another 15% get information in the local press.

**SURVEY FINDINGS**

1. **In your opinion, is there a war right now between Ukraine and the Russian Federation?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, December 2018* | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Yes | 71.5 | 39.1 |
| No | 14.5 | 39.8 |
| Difficult to say | 14.0 | 21.1 |

**2. Currently, there are constant negotiations on the ways to quell the armed conflict in the Donbas. In your opinion, to achieve peace, should there be compromises with Russia and the leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, May 2016* | *Ukraine, December 2017* | *Ukraine, May 2018* | *Ukraine, December 2018* | *Donbas, July 2017* | *Donbas, November2018* |
| Peace at all costs, any compromise should be agreed upon with whomever and for whatever | 22.5 | 18.1 | 19.7 | 16.2 | 40.9 | 46.2 |
| For peace, it is worth compromising, but not on all of them | 47.3 | 49.0 | 50.2 | 51.2 | 36.8 | 34.3 |
| Peace in the Donbas can only be established from a position of strength when one side wins | 17.8 | 17.1 | 16.8 | 17.8 | 9.1 | 9.7 |
| DIFFICULT TO SAY | 12.3 | 15.7 | 13.2 | 14.8 | 13.2 | 9.8 |

1. **Which compromises do you believe are acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas?**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, December 2018* | | *Donbas, November 2018* | |
|  | Acceptable | Unacceptable | Acceptable | Unacceptable |
| Giving and enshrining in the Constitution “special status” for certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts | 29.6 | 48.4 | 42.8 | 29.7 |
| Adopt a law on neutrality and non-aligned status for Ukraine | 30.0 | 45.0 | 52.4 | 20.1 |
| Amend the Constitution to make Russian an official state language | 28.4 | 51.7 | 55.5 | 22.2 |
| Full amnesty for all combatants who fought against the Ukrainian military | 15.2 | 59.7 | 26.9 | 45.4 |
| Hold local elections under the conditions demanded by the militants | 12.6 | 59.8 | 30.1 | 43.5 |
| Form local police forces, courts and prosecutorial offices in the non-government-controlled areas exclusively with local representatives | 17.3 | 52.7 | 26.7 | 41.1 |
| Consent for special political and economic relations between the temporarily non-controlled territories and Russia | 24.6 | 48.0 | 32.8 | 36.1 |
| Re-open blockaded connection routes and restore trade with the “DPR” and “LPR” | 27.0 | 43.9 | 62.0 | 12.2 |

*\* The responses of “Difficult to say” were not included in the table.*

1. **What decisions, in your opinion, should be taken to establish peace in the Donbas?** *(no more than 3 response options)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, May 2018* | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Separate the territories occupied by the “DPR” and “LPR” from Ukraine | 9.8 | 6.2 |
| Give the “DPR” and “LPR” special status within Ukraine | 12.9 | 24.3 |
| Introduce a federative government system in Ukraine | 8.7 | 11.1 |
| **Successfully restore a normal life in the Donbas territories that Ukraine controls** | **30.6** | **47.7** |
| Hold lawful elections on the territories controlled by the “DPR” and “LPR” | 13.0 | - |
| Make Russian an official state language | 6.5 | 19.1 |
| Amnesty for all combatants who fought in the Donbas | 7.2 | 9.4 |
| **Force Russia to stop intervening in the conflict in the Donbas (intensify sanctions, pressure by international structures on Russia)** | **32.0** | **17.8** |
| Stop funding the territories occupied by the “DPR” and “LPR” (pension payments, salaries, etc.) | 7.1 | 4.5 |
| Reject the prospect of NATO accession, enshrine neutral status for Ukraine in the Constitution | 6.6 | 8.5 |
| Use military force to restore Ukraine’s control over the territories of “DPR” and “LPR” | 14.2 | 7.8 |
| Other | 2.1 | 4.5 |
| Difficult to say | 15.8 | 17.1 |

1. **In your opinion, should the state take such steps of a social and humanitarian nature in relation to citizens who remained in the non-controlled territories of the Donbas?**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| УУ | *Ukraine (May 2018)* | | *Donbas (November 2018)* | |
|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Lift restrictions on social and pension payments to Ukrainian citizens who live in the non-controlled territory | 40.5 | 35.1 | 73.5 | 17.0 |
| Simply the procedure for crossing the contact line, facilitate the receipt of passes | 48.3 | 30.8 | 73.8 | 14.2 |
| Simplify the receipt of any administrative services in frontline settlements | 59.5 | 21.5 | 79.2 | 10.7 |
| Simplify access to education at Ukrainian education institutions of different levels for residents in non-controlled territory | 66.6 | 15.8 | 80.9 | 8.5 |
| Provide support (financial and material) to residents of non-controlled territory who wish to move to territory controlled by Ukraine | 59.8 | 19.6 | 71.0 | 12.7 |
| Allow trade with the non-controlled territories regarding food products and basic necessities | 46.4 | 29.0 | 68.3 | 13.9 |
| Strengthen control over the provision of payments to internationally displaced people to prevent abuse | 63.9 | 14.9 | 39.3 | 37.8 |
| Tighten control over passage through the line of contact | 47.1 | 26.2 | 21.2 | 50.8 |

*\* The responses of “Difficult to say” were not included in the table.*

1. **Regarding the political future of the “DPR” and “LPR” territories, which version do you prefer?**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, October 2015* | *Ukraine, May 2016* | *Ukraine, June 2017* | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| For the “DPR” and “LPR” to return back to the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts on pre-war conditions | 49.1 | 47.9 | 55.0 | 49.9 |
| For the “DPR” and “LPR” to return to Ukraine, but with special status having received more independence from Kyiv | 22.4 | 24.6 | 20.1 | 28.0 |
| For these territories to attain autonomy within Ukraine | 9.5 | - | - | - |
| For the “DPR” and “LPR” to become independent states | 4.5 | 7.4 | 6.6 | 1.7 |
| For the “DPR” and “LPR” to become a part of the Russian Federation | 0.2 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 |
| Difficult to say | 12.2 | 16.9 | 16.3 | 18.4 |

1. **How do you feel about the proposal to deploy a peacekeeping force to the territories of “DPR” and “LPR”?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, May 2016* | *Ukraine,*  *June 2017* | *Ukraine,May 2018* | *Ukraine, December 2018* | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Positive | 58.0 | 60.2 | 60.6 | 54.4 | 29.7 |
| Negative | 21.1 | 21.1 | 19.6 | 24.8 | 47.3 |
| Difficult to say | 20.9 | 18.7 | 19.8 | 20.8 | 23.0 |

1. **Should a peacekeeping force be deployed, where, in your opinion, should it be stationed?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, December 2018* | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| At the line of contact between the Ukrainian military and “LPR” and “DPR” | 18.0 | 15.4 |
| Throughout the entire territory of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts occupied by the “LPR” and “DPR” up to the border with Russia | 47.6 | 44.3 |
| Difficult to say | 34.4 | 40.4 |

*\* Data regarding the Donbas is presented as a percentage of those who support the deployment of a peacekeeping mission or who chose the “Difficult to say” option when responding to the previous question.*

1. **How do you feel about having a temporary international U.N. administration in the territories of the “DPR” and “LPR” after the deployment of a peacekeeping force?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Ukraine, December 2018* | *Donbaas, November 2018* |
| Support | 48.5 | 20.9 |
| Do not support | 24.5 | 49.8 |
| Difficult to say | 27.0 | 26.7 |

1. **Who, in your opinion, is at fault for what currently is happening in the Donbas?** *(Choose all that apply)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| The current government of Ukraine | 56.6 |
| The government of the previous regime (Party of Regions, Viktor Yanukovych and his circle) | 32.6 |
| The previous local government in the Donbas | 14.6 |
| Russia | 22.5 |
| European Union countries | 8.9 |
| The U.S. | 18.6 |
| NATO | 4.9 |
| Ukrainian oligarchs | 22.7 |
| The Maidan that divided the country | 24.3 |
| Local Donbas residents who don’t agree with current government’s policy | 5.7 |
| Ukrainian nationalists | 8.0 |
| Militants who seized power in parts of the Donbas using arms | 13.9 |
| Other | 0.8 |
| Difficult to say | 16.2 |

1. **In your opinion, is Russia a party to the conflict in eastern Ukraine?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Yes | 48.5 |
| No | 26.7 |
| Difficult to say | 24.3 |

1. **What do you believe is Russia’s role in this conflict?** *(choose all that apply)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Russia support pro-Russian forces in the Donbas mostly through diplomacy | 6.8 |
| Russia provides the Donbas with humanitarian assistance | 24.5 |
| Russia supplies arms to the “DPR” and “LPR” | 33.6 |
| Russian armed forces take part in fighting alongside the “DPR” and “LPR” | 23.3 |
| Russia controls the “DPR” and “LPR” and manages their political and military actions | 27.1 |
| Difficult to say | 17.7 |

1. **On whom and on what do you place hope to resolve the armed conflict in the Donbas?** *(choose all that apply)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbaas, November 2018* |
| On Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko | 11.9 |
| On the presidential candidate for whom I will vote in the next elections | 25.6 |
| On the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine | 4.3 |
| On the party for whom I will vote in the next elections | 6.2 |
| On the Ukrainian government | 8.6 |
| On the Armed Forces of Ukraine | 14.3 |
| On Ukrainian civil society organizations and volunteers | 6.5 |
| On the Ukrainian people | 24.0 |
| On Russian President Vladimir Putin | 5.5 |
| On the Russian Duma | 1.6 |
| On the European Union | 7.3 |
| On the U.S. | 7.1 |
| On the U.N. (with rights to deploy a peacekeeping mission) | 9.5 |
| On NATO | 5.6 |
| Other | 2.1 |
| I believe the situation is hopeless and have no hope in resolving it | 11.5 |
| Difficult to say | 20.6 |

1. **In your opinion, will the self-proclaimed “DPR” and “LPR” return to the fold of Ukraine and when will this take place?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| I think this will happen soon, in the next 1-2 years | 12.3 |
| I think this will happen in the next 5 years | 13.2 |
| I think this will not happen soon, maybe in the next 6-10 years | 9.7 |
| Maybe this will happen, but only in the long-term future | 15.4 |
| I think these areas will never return to Ukraine | 17.4 |
| Difficult to say | 32.0 |

1. **From which information sources do you find out about what is happening in the Donbas?** *(choose all the information sources that are significant for you)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Donbas, November 2018* |
| Ukrainian TV channels | 63.0 |
| Russian TV channels | 16.0 |
| Ukrainian radio | 10.1 |
| Russian radio | 0.4 |
| National Ukrainian newspapers, magazines | 5.9 |
| Local newspapers, magazines | 14.6 |
| Russian newspapers, magazines | 0.1 |
| Internet sites | 47.3 |
| Online social media networks | 28.8 |
| Meetings with government officials, lawmakers | 1.0 |
| Representatives of civil society organizations, volunteers | 2.2 |
| Family, friends, acquaintances | 41.4 |
| In fact, there are no reliable information sources that say what really is happening in the Donbas | 10.1 |

**REGIONAL BREAKDOWN**

1. **In your opinion, is there a war right now between Ukraine and the Russian Federation?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East\** | *Donbas* |
| Yes | 91.3 | 79.1 | 62.4 | 46.9 | 31.9 |
| No | 1.9 | 9.9 | 15.2 | 32.3 | 39.8 |
| Difficult to say | 6.8 | 11.0 | 22.4 | 20.8 | 21.1 |

*\* excluding Donbas*

1. **Currently, there are constant negotiations on the ways to quell the armed conflict in the Donbas. In your opinion, to achieve peace, should there be compromises with Russia and the leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Peace at all costs, any compromise should be agreed upon with whomever and for whatever | 5.2 | 21.1 | 15.0 | 19.5 | 46.2 |
| For peace, it is worth compromising, but not on all of them | 532 | 48.8 | 58.1 | 49.7 | 34.3 |
| Peace in the Donbas can only be established from a position of strength when one side wins | 24.2 | 18.1 | 10.1 | 15.1 | 9.7 |
| DIFFICULT TO SAY | 17.4 | 11.9 | 16.8 | 15.5 | 9.8 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by enshrining in the Constitution “special status” for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 13.7 | 16.9 | 50.8 | 52.5 | 42.8 |
| Unacceptable | 66.0 | 61.8 | 23.1 | 24.8 | 29.7 |
| Difficult to say | 20.3 | 21.3 | 26.1 | 22.7 | 27.5 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by adopting a law on neutrality and non-aligned status for Ukraine?***(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 12.1 | 21.8 | 52.7 | 47.5 | 52.4 |
| Unacceptable | 62.4 | 55.6 | 19.1 | 25.6 | 20.1 |
| Difficult to say | 25.6 | 22.6 | 28.2 | 26.9 | 27.5 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by making Russian an official state language?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 12.9 | 17.4 | 49.0 | 49.2 | 55.5 |
| Unacceptable | 71.5 | 65.6 | 29.9 | 23.8 | 22.2 |
| Difficult to say | 15.6 | 17.0 | 21.2 | 27.0 | 22.3 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by giving full amnesty to all combatants who fought against the Ukrainian military?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 7.4 | 11.3 | 17.4 | 26.9 | 26.9 |
| Unacceptable | 69.8 | 68.4 | 53.9 | 41.0 | 45.4 |
| Difficult to say | 22.8 | 20.4 | 28.6 | 32.1 | 27.7 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by holding local elections under the conditions that militants demand?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 4.7 | 13.5 | 12.9 | 18.2 | 30.1 |
| Unacceptable | 73.8 | 65.7 | 47.3 | 44.7 | 43.5 |
| Difficult to say | 21.6 | 20.8 | 39.8 | 37.1 | 26.3 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by forming local police forces, courts, and prosecutorial offices in the non-government-controlled areas exclusively with local representatives?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 7.4 | 17.1 | 24.1 | 23.3 | 26.7 |
| Unacceptable | 63.4 | 60.8 | 41.5 | 36.6 | 41.1 |
| Difficult to say | 29.2 | 22.1 | 34.4 | 40.2 | 32.2 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by consenting to special political and economic relations between the non-controlled territories and Russia?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 13.7 | 20.1 | 22.0 | 42.1 | 32.8 |
| Unacceptable | 61.3 | 59.7 | 39.4 | 23.3 | 36.1 |
| Difficult to say | 24.9 | 20.2 | 38.6 | 34.6 | 31.1 |

**Do you feel it is acceptable to stop the war in the Donbas by re-opening the blockaded connection routes and restoration of trade with the “DPR” and “LPR”?** *(%)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Acceptable | 13.3 | 21.0 | 25.3 | 48.4 | 62.0 |
| Unacceptable | 54.3 | 58.4 | 27.8 | 20.8 | 12.2 |
| Difficult to say | 32.3 | 20.6 | 46.9 | 30.8 | 25.0 |

1. **How do you feel about the proposal to deploy a peacekeeping force to the territories of “DPR” and “LPR”?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West | *Center* | *South* | *East* | *Donbas* |
| Support | 73.4 | 65.6 | 49.8 | 23.3 | 29.7 |
| Do not support | 8.2 | 17.1 | 15.8 | 54.9 | 47.3 |
| Difficult to say | 18.4 | 17.3 | 34.4 | 21.8 | 23.0 |