

## The Future of Donbas: Public Opinion in Ukraine and its Regions

*A national opinion poll was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in cooperation with the Razumkov Center Sociological Service from May 19 to 25, 2018 in all regions of Ukraine, with the exception of the Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. 2019 respondents aged 18 and over were polled. The theoretical sample error does not exceed 2.3%.*

*The polling was conducted with the financial support of the "ENGAGE" program for promoting civic activity, which is financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact Ukraine.*

*For comparison, the results of nationwide public opinion polls conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in collaboration with the Razumkov Center on December 15-19, 2017, as well as from May 11-16, 2017 and December 16-20, 2016 are presented.*

- Only 17% of citizens support the establishment of peace in the Donbas by use of force. Most supporters of such an option reside in the Western (24%) and the Central (19%) regions of Ukraine, while support for using force is much less in the South (8%) and in the East (11%). At the same time, only 20% of respondents agree on peace at any price. The majority of citizens - 50% - believes that **"for the sake of peace it is necessary to accept some compromises, but not all"**
- Among the important issues for reintegration is the state social and humanitarian policy regarding citizens from non-government controlled areas (NGCA) of the Donbas. **Almost every suggested step was supported by the majority of the Ukrainians.** The most supported steps in the social and humanitarian spheres are facilitating access to education at various levels in Ukrainian educational establishments for residents of uncontrolled territories (67% of citizens support and only 16% - do not support); strengthening control over the implementation of payments to internally displaced persons in order to avoid abuses (64% support, 15% - against); providing financial and material support to residents of uncontrolled regions who seek to move to Ukraine-controlled territories (60% support, 20% against); as well as simplification of receiving any administrative services in front-line settlements (60% - for, 21% - against). At the same time, public support for removing restrictions on social and pension payments for citizens of Ukraine residing in SDDL<sup>1</sup> is more controversial (40% support, while 35% oppose), as is the simplification of crossing the line of delineation (48% - for, 31% against). 47% of citizens stand for the strengthening of control over the demarcation line crossing, 26% are against. Permission to trade in food products and essential goods with NGCA territories is supported by 46% of citizens, while 29% oppose such trade.
- **The survey revealed a lack of societal consensus on what Ukraine's policy towards occupied territories should be.** 17% of Ukrainians consider it necessary to officially recognize these occupied territories and to stop any trade, payments, and contacts with them (including movement of people from these territories). 20.5% of respondents support maintaining an economic blockade, but preserving humanitarian relations (movement of people, pension payments, water and electricity supplies); 22% support the idea that it is necessary to allow trade in critical goods (food and everyday goods from Ukraine and anthracite from SDDL) with the maximum support of humanitarian ties - 22%; finally, the

---

<sup>1</sup> SDDL – Separate Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk region

proposal to maximize both humanitarian and commercial ties with uncontrolled territories gained the support of 20% of the polled citizens. At the same time, every fifth respondent (20%) has not determined his or her vision of an optimal policy option with regarding the uncontrolled territories (SDDLRL).

- ***Among actions to be taken to establish peace in the Donbas, citizens consider only two to be effective: international pressure on Russia***, which will force it to cease interference in the Donbas, (32%) ***and the successful restoration of the normal life in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donbas*** (31%). All other possible solutions are not considered effective for establishing peace: giving the "DPR" and "LPR" special status within Ukraine is seen as a path for the establishment of peace by 13% of the population; the holding of legitimate elections in territories controlled by the "DPR" and "LPR" - by 13%; 9% consider the introduction of a federal system in Ukraine effective; granting Russian the status of the second state language is supported by 6.5%; 7% also support amnesty to all those who participated in combat actions in the Donbas - 7%; another 7% suggest the cessation of financing of territories occupied by the "DPR" and "LPR" (payment of pensions , salary, etc.). Ukraine's refusal from future NATO membership is supported also by 7%. 14% of the respondents said that re-establishing Ukraine's control over the territories of the "DPR" and "LNR" is only possible by military force. This option is supported mainly in the Western (20%) and Central (18%) regions of Ukraine.
- ***Support for the international peacekeeping operation in the Donbas remains unchanged*** at 60%, just as last year. At the same time, only one in five respondents in Ukraine (20%) continues to oppose such an initiative. The most positive attitude towards the prospect of the introduction of a peacekeeping contingent is in the western region in the Donbas (79% support, 3% - do not) and in the central (69% and 13%, respectively), support is also prevailing in the South (56% vs. 29%). In the eastern region thoughts are divided: 33.5% support the introduction of peacekeeping contingents, 40% - do not support such an idea and 27% could not determine.

## SURVEY RESULTS

**1. Different strategies and ways to settle the armed conflict in the Donbas region are being widely discussed. Do you find it necessary to compromise with Russia and leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk republics for the sake of peace?**

|                                                                                                         | <i>October<br/>2015</i> | <i>May<br/>2016</i> | <i>June<br/>2017</i> | <i>December<br/>2017</i> | <i>May<br/>2018</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 – Peace is above all; we must be ready to accept all compromises – no matter with whom and about what | 20.7                    | 22.5                | 17.9                 | 18.1                     | 19.7                |
| 2 – Most compromises for the sake of peace can be justified, but not all of them                        | 52.4                    | 47.3                | 52.4                 | 49.0                     | 50.2                |
| 3 – Peace in Donbas can be achieved only through power and force – when one side of the conflict wins   | 13.6                    | 17.8                | 17.7                 | 17.1                     | 16.8                |
| 4 – NOT SURE                                                                                            | 11.4                    | 12.3                | 12.0                 | 15.7                     | 13.2                |

**2. Do you think the state should take the following social and humanitarian policy measures regarding citizens in the non-government controlled areas? [Choose one answer in each row]**

|                                                                                                                                                  | Yes  | No   | Not sure |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Remove restrictions on social benefits and pensions to Ukrainian citizens living in the non-government controlled areas                          | 40.5 | 35.1 | 24.4     |
| Simplify the crossing of the demarcation line to the best extent possible, make it easier to obtain permits                                      | 48.3 | 30.8 | 21.0     |
| Simplify access to all administrative services in front-line areas to the best extent possible                                                   | 59.5 | 21.5 | 19.0     |
| Simplify access to education in Ukrainian educational institutions of all levels for Ukrainian citizens in non-government controlled areas       | 66.6 | 15.8 | 17.6     |
| Provide financial and humanitarian aid to Ukrainian citizens in non-government controlled areas who want to move to areas controlled by Ukraine. | 59.8 | 19.6 | 20.5     |
| Allow trade in food and basic goods with the non-government controlled areas                                                                     | 46.4 | 29.0 | 24.5     |
| Strengthen control over the implementation of payments to internally displaced persons in order to avoid abuses                                  | 63.9 | 14.9 | 21.2     |
| Strengthen control over the crossing of demarcation line                                                                                         | 47.1 | 26.2 | 26.6     |

**3. What should be Ukraine's policy for the uncontrolled territories in the long-term? (choose one answer you prefer most)**

|                                                                                                                                                                             |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1 – Officially recognize these territories as occupied areas and stop any trade, services, payments, and contacts (including movement of people from these territories).    | 16.8 |
| 2 – Keep the economic blockade but maintain humanitarian ties (movement of people, payment of pensions, water and electricity supply) at the same time                      | 20.5 |
| 3 – Allow the trade in essential goods (everyday products and food from Ukraine, anthracite from the uncontrolled areas), maintain humanitarian ties to the extent possible | 22.3 |
| 4 – Try to develop both humanitarian and commercial relations with the uncontrolled areas                                                                                   | 19.7 |
| 5 – Other                                                                                                                                                                   | 0.6  |
| 6 – Difficult to answer                                                                                                                                                     | 20.1 |

**4. In your opinion, which actions should be taken to establish peace in Donbas? (Choose no more than three options)**

|                                                                                                                               |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 – Secession of territories occupied by "DPR" and "LPR" from Ukraine                                                         | 9.8         |
| 2 – Providing DPR and LPR with special status within the framework of Ukrainian state                                         | 12.9        |
| 3 – Introduction of federal system in Ukraine                                                                                 | 8.7         |
| <b>4 – Successful restoration of prosperous life in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donbas</b>                                | <b>30.6</b> |
| 5 – Holding legitimate elections in territories controlled by the "DPR" and "LPR"                                             | 13.0        |
| 6 – Granting Russian the status of the second official state language                                                         | 6.5         |
| 7 – Amnesty for all participants in combat actions in Donbas                                                                  | 7.2         |
| <b>8 – Force Russia to stop interference in Donbas conflict through strengthening of international sanctions and pressure</b> | <b>32.0</b> |
| 9 – Cease to finance occupied territories (payment of pensions , salaries, etc.)                                              | 7.1         |
| 10 – Deny the prospect of NATO membership, consolidate the neutral status of Ukraine in the Constitution                      | 6.6         |
| 11 – Restore Ukrainian control over the territories occupied by "DPR" and "LPR" by using military force                       | 14.2        |
| 12 – Other                                                                                                                    | 2.1         |
| 13 – Difficult to answer                                                                                                      | 15.8        |

**5. What is your attitude to the introduction of international peacekeeping forces on the Donbas?**

|                         | <i>October<br/>2015</i> | <i>May<br/>2016</i> | <i>June<br/>2017</i> | <i>May<br/>2018</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 – Positive            | 52.7                    | 58.0                | 60.2                 | 60.6                |
| 2 – Negative            | 26.9                    | 21.1                | 21.1                 | 19.6                |
| 3 – Difficult to answer | 20.4                    | 20.9                | 18.7                 | 19.8                |

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

- 1. Different strategies and ways to settle the armed conflict in the Donbas region are being widely discussed. Do you find it necessary to compromise with Russia and leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk republics for the sake of peace?**

|                                                                                                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Peace is above all, we must be ready to accept all compromises – no matter with whom and about what | 13.3        | 14.4          | 33.4         | 26.9        | 19.7           |
| Most compromises for the sake of peace can be justified, but not all of them                        | 47.3        | 52.7          | 45.4         | 51.5        | 50.2           |
| Peace in Donbas can be achieved only through power and force – when one side of the conflict wins   | 24.5        | 19.0          | 8.4          | 10.7        | 16.8           |
| NOT SURE                                                                                            | 14.9        | 13.9          | 12.8         | 10.9        | 13.2           |

- 2. Do you think the state should take the following social and humanitarian policy measures regarding citizens in the non-government controlled areas?**

**REMOVE RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL BENEFITS AND PENSIONS TO UKRAINIAN CITIZENS LIVING IN THE NON-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREAS? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 29.9        | 35.8          | 50.4         | 52.2        | 40.5           |
| No                  | 47.4        | 38.5          | 17.4         | 27.4        | 35.1           |
| Difficult to answer | 22.6        | 25.7          | 32.2         | 20.4        | 24.4           |

**SIMPLIFY THE CROSSING OF THE DEMARCATION LINE TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, MAKE IT EASIER TO OBTAIN PERMITS? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 36.8        | 40.2          | 65.6         | 62.3        | 48.3           |
| No                  | 45.8        | 36.6          | 8.6          | 19.0        | 30.8           |
| Difficult to answer | 17.4        | 23.2          | 25.8         | 18.7        | 21.0           |

**SIMPLIFY ACCESS TO ALL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES IN FRONT-LINE AREAS TO THE BEST EXTENT POSSIBLE? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 49.5        | 57.2          | 72.3         | 65.8        | 59.5           |
| No                  | 31.7        | 23.8          | 6.3          | 16.1        | 21.5           |
| Difficult to answer | 18.8        | 18.9          | 21.4         | 18.1        | 19.0           |

**SIMPLIFY ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN UKRAINIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF ALL LEVELS FOR UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN NON-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREAS? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 65.6        | 65.4          | 77.4         | 64.2        | 66.6           |
| No                  | 19.3        | 15.9          | 4.6          | 17.7        | 15.8           |
| Difficult to answer | 15.1        | 18.7          | 18.0         | 18.1        | 17.6           |

**PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN AID TO UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN NON-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREAS WHO WANT TO MOVE TO AREAS CONTROLLED BY UKRAINE? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 51.8        | 63.4          | 66.1         | 58.9        | 59.8           |
| No                  | 26.8        | 18.9          | 7.3          | 19.9        | 19.6           |
| Difficult to answer | 21.3        | 17.7          | 26.6         | 21.2        | 20.5           |

**ALLOW TRADE IN FOOD AND BASIC GOODS WITH THE NON-GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREAS? (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 35.3        | 48.2          | 55.5         | 49.6        | 46.4           |
| No                  | 43.1        | 31.5          | 12.1         | 20.7        | 29.0           |
| Difficult to answer | 21.6        | 20.3          | 32.4         | 29.8        | 24.5           |

**STRENGTHEN CONTROL OVER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PAYMENTS TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN ORDER TO AVOID ABUSES (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 73.0        | 70.8          | 66.1         | 44.9        | 63.9           |
| No                  | 11.4        | 12.6          | 7.4          | 24.8        | 14.9           |
| Difficult to answer | 15.7        | 16.5          | 26.5         | 30.3        | 21.2           |

**STRENGTHEN CONTROL OVER THE CROSSING OF THE DEMARCATION LINE (%)**

|                     | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes                 | 61.4        | 51.9          | 42.1         | 29.9        | 47.1           |
| No                  | 20.8        | 24.6          | 15.9         | 38.1        | 26.2           |
| Difficult to answer | 17.8        | 23.5          | 41.9         | 32.0        | 26.6           |

**3. What should be Ukraine's policy towards the uncontrolled territories in the long-term?**

*(Choose one answer you prefer most)*

|                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 – Officially recognize these territories as occupied areas and stop any trade, services, payments and contacts (including movement of people from these territories).           | 30.2        | 17.8          | 5.1          | 8.8         | 16.8           |
| 2 – Keep the economic blockade but maintain humanitarian ties (movement of people, payment of pensions, water and electricity supply) at the same time                            | 19.4        | 25.5          | 18.9         | 15.0        | 20.5           |
| 3 – Allow the trade in essential goods (everyday products and food from Ukraine, anthracite from the uncontrolled areas), maintain humanitarian ties to the best extent possible. | 16.3        | 25.3          | 20.9         | 23.9        | 22.3           |
| 4 – Try to develop both humanitarian and commercial relations with uncontrolled areas                                                                                             | 12.0        | 12.5          | 27.8         | 33.5        | 19.7           |
| 5 – Other                                                                                                                                                                         | 0.5         | 0.3           | 0.7          | 1.1         | 0.6            |
| 6 – Difficult to answer                                                                                                                                                           | 21.7        | 18.6          | 26.8         | 17.8        | 20.1           |

**4. In your opinion, which actions should be taken to establish peace in Donbas? (Choose no more than three options)**

|                                                                                                                               | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 – Secession of territories occupied by "DPR" and "LPR" from Ukraine                                                         | 11.6        | 11.0          | 3.7          | 9.3         | 9.8            |
| 2 – Providing "DPR" and "LPR" with a special status within the framework of Ukrainian state                                   | 4.7         | 9.2           | 17.6         | 23.7        | 12.9           |
| 3 – Introduction of federal system in Ukraine                                                                                 | 3.3         | 4.3           | 21.6         | 14.2        | 8.7            |
| <b>4 – Successful restoration of prosperous life in the Ukraine-controlled areas of Donbas</b>                                | 26.1        | 27.8          | 41.7         | 34.1        | 30.6           |
| 5 – Holding legitimate elections in territories controlled by the "DPR" and "LPR"                                             | 12.0        | 8.9           | 22.5         | 15.7        | 13.0           |
| 6 – Granting Russian the status of the second official state language                                                         | 1.2         | 1.7           | 22.1         | 11.2        | 6.5            |
| 7 – Amnesty for all participants in combat actions in Donbas                                                                  | 2.3         | 2.9           | 15.7         | 14.0        | 7.2            |
| <b>8 – Force Russia to stop interference in Donbas conflict through strengthening of international sanctions and pressure</b> | 45.2        | 38.8          | 21.8         | 15.7        | 32.0           |
| 9 – Cease to finance occupied territories (payment of pensions , salaries, etc.)                                              | 7.6         | 7.6           | 3.1          | 7.9         | 7.1            |
| 10 – Deny the prospect of NATO membership, consolidate the neutral status of Ukraine in the Constitution                      | 2.9         | 3.6           | 9.6          | 13.2        | 6.6            |
| 11 – Restore Ukrainian control over the occupied by "DPR" and "LPR" territories by using military force                       | 20.4        | 17.9          | 9.7          | 5.8         | 14.2           |
| 12 – Other                                                                                                                    | 0.7         | 3.5           | 1.0          | 1.7         | 2.1            |
| 13 – Difficult to answer                                                                                                      | 18.2        | 18.2          | 11.1         | 12.5        | 15.8           |

**5. What is your attitude to the introduction of international peacekeeping forces on the Donbas?**

|                         | <i>West</i> | <i>Center</i> | <i>South</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>Ukraine</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 – Positive            | 79.3        | 69.5          | 55.6         | <b>33.5</b> | 60.6           |
| 2 – Negative            | 3.3         | 12.8          | 28.7         | <b>39.7</b> | 19.6           |
| 3 – Difficult to answer | 17.4        | 17.7          | 15.7         | <b>26.8</b> | 19.8           |