



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

## **Working Group on Ukraine**

Brussels, 11 May 2021

**For the attention of: The members of the Working Group on Ukraine**

**Subject: Work Programme of the European Committee of the Regions'  
Working Group on Ukraine for 2021-2025<sup>1</sup>**

This work programme has been drawn up in accordance with the remit of the working group (WG) as defined by CoR Bureau Decision 2020/01 of 6 April 2020, aimed at setting out the priorities for the WG's activities corresponding to the CoR's seventh term of office. It also takes into account as far as applicable (i) the Joint Communication on *Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all<sup>2</sup>*; (ii) the priorities laid out in the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement; (iii) the activities selected in the previous work programme of the CoR Task Force on Ukraine 2018-2020; and (iv) the key priorities of the CORLEAP Action Plan 2021-2023.

The Working Group on Ukraine follows up on the activities implemented in 2015-2020 by the CoR Task Force on Ukraine.

The work programme may be updated to take into account developments in Ukraine and any major political, economic, territorial organisation or societal changes.

### **1. Main focus of activities**

The priority objective of the WG is to support Ukrainian local and regional authorities in the ongoing reform processes, particularly by promoting the participation of CoR members in targeted peer-to-peer capacity-building programmes.

The activities of the WG shall also:

- offer political support to the decentralisation reform process in Ukraine;
- facilitate the contribution of local and regional authorities (LRAs) to the Eastern Partnership initiative and other EU policies with a strong local impact;

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<sup>1</sup> Final version adopted at the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions on 4 May 2021

<sup>2</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v6.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/1_en_act_part1_v6.pdf)

- offer an opportunity to debate the challenges faced by Ukrainian LRAs in the process of the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA);
  - provide expertise and support to Ukrainian LRAs in matters related to the regional and local dimension of implementing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement;
- complement multilateral activities within the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) by providing a framework for sustainable bilateral cooperation with Ukrainian local and regional authorities;
- sustain inter-institutional cooperation on Ukraine with other EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, European External Action Service and European Parliament.

## 2. Key topics

The core topics to be addressed in 2021-2025 are:

1. Good governance and local democracy;
2. Local economic development and economic cooperation;
3. Capacity-building of local and regional administrations;
4. Fight against corruption at local and regional levels.

In addition, upon the decision of the members, the activities and deliberations within the WG can touch upon other topics of interest, including – but not limited to – cross-border cooperation, sustainable regional development, tourism development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ukrainian counterparts can also suggest priority themes for discussion, based on the evolving political situation and societal changes in Ukraine. Furthermore, the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the recovery from it can be addressed at the meetings of the WG.

All of the above cooperation strands are aimed at building the resilience of Ukrainian local and regional authorities, as these are facing unprecedented challenges on the economic, political, security and public health fronts.

### 2.1 Good governance and local democracy

This is a crucial area for EU integration as a whole, including for the proper functioning of local authorities and the wellbeing of the citizens in both the EU and Ukraine. Particularly in Ukraine, decentralisation and public administration reform have been the key pillars of change and improved governance in the past several years.

As the decentralisation reform is advancing in its implementation phase, the WG will offer continuous support through policy advice and the sharing of good practices on decentralisation, the division of powers and devolution.

## **2.2 Local economic development and economic cooperation**

Ensuring sustainable local economic development remains one of the main challenges for Ukraine<sup>3</sup>. The efforts of both the Ukrainian authorities and the international donor community are directed towards enhancing economic opportunities for Ukrainians, creating better conditions for international and local businesses, and fostering economic growth at local and regional level. In this context, the WG will support activities aimed at promoting investment opportunities in Ukraine, improving territorial planning and infrastructure development, and improving the system of regional development management, with an emphasis on the development of rural regions.

## **2.3 Capacity-building of local and regional administrations**

The importance of capacity-building for Ukrainian local and regional authorities has been underlined repeatedly during meetings of the CoR Task Force on Ukraine, by the Ukrainian partners themselves and in the CoR dialogue with the EU institutions and other stakeholders. After the successful implementation of the peer-to-peer initiative between the EU and Ukrainian local and regional administrations in 2018-2019, with the financial and technical support of European Commission's "U-LEAD with Europe" programme, the CoR was invited to contribute in a similar way to another programme it implements in Ukraine – the EU Anti-Corruption Initiative (EUACI), specifically within the "Integrity Cities" concept. This, and other peer-to-peer projects will constitute one of the main focuses of the WG in 2021-2025.

Another strand of the efforts to build the capacities of Ukrainian local and regional administrations will be connected with CORLEAP multilateral efforts in this field, particularly related to the launch of the Eastern Partnership Academy for Public Administration.

## **2.4 Fight against corruption at local and regional levels**

Corruption poses a major threat to good governance and democracy and undermines citizens' trust in democratic institutions. In addition, it costs governments billions of euros each year; its prevalence affects citizens, governments and business alike, increasing unpredictability and impeding new investment. Therefore, the fight against corruption needs to remain a long-term priority for national as well as local and regional governments. The above-mentioned EU Anti-Corruption Initiative (EUACI), and its "Integrity Cities" concept provides support to selected Ukrainian city administrations to minimise the risk of corruption and establish sound and transparent procedures. The WG will contribute to this initiative throughout 2021-2025.

## **3. Achieving results**

The WG will seek to enhance its activities with a results-oriented approach towards local and regional authorities in Ukraine on the one hand, and the EU institutions on the other hand.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://decentralization.gov.ua/en/finance>

The WG will seek to establish and continue a regular working relationship with the European Commission's Support Group for Ukraine, the EU-Ukraine Association Council, and the EP's EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee.

Based on the previous experience of successful peer-to-peer exchanges between CoR members and Ukrainian local and regional administrations, the WG will continue contributing to similar targeted exchanges, with the Commission's support.

#### **4. Structure and timing of meetings**

As a rule, the agenda of meetings will include:

- a review of the current state of the decentralisation reform implementation in Ukraine;
- one or two thematic debates on specific areas of one of the listed key topics;
- practical issues related to peer-to-peer exchanges; and
- any other business, to allow members sufficient time to raise questions or submit proposals.

Ensuring gender-balanced representation among speakers will remain a priority.

The WG will meet twice per year, ideally in the margins of the CORLEAP meeting. Use of videoconferencing for certain non-statutory activities in the field of external relations will be considered. Ad-hoc online and live meetings related to the peer-to-peer exchanges may take place separately, under the auspices of the WG.

#### **5. Membership**

The working group will consist of six CoR members, who are all CORLEAP members and can be replaced by six other members/alternates.

#### **6. Synergies**

The work of the WG will complement the activities of CORLEAP and the CIVEX commission to provide coherent and efficient support for the policy debate and ensure that the CoR builds firmly upon the existing inter-institutional network, both inside and outside the CoR.

To achieve the objectives laid down in this work programme, cooperation will be sought and continued with the European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR); the European Commission's Support Group for Ukraine; the European External Action Service, including the EU Delegation in Kyiv; the European Parliament's EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee; other EU institutions and bodies; the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies and projects; the European Investment Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; central government bodies; governments of EU Member States and their bilateral programmes and projects; representatives of academia, civil society and the private business sector.