



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

## European Committee of the Regions' Task Force on Ukraine

Brussels, 8 March 2018

**For the attention of:** **Members of the European Committee of the Regions' Task Force on Ukraine**

**Subject:** **Work programme of the European Committee of the Regions' Task Force on Ukraine 2018-2020**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The European Committee of the Regions' Task Force on Ukraine (hereinafter "Task Force") was set up by the CoR Bureau on 12 February 2015 following a request from the Ukrainian side in connection with the initiation of a decentralisation reform in the country.

Since then, the Task Force has met three times, following largely the indicative thematic calendar outlined in its work programme for 2015-2017. The meetings took place on 30 September 2015 in Brussels, on 5 July 2016 in Odessa (Ukraine) and on 30 June 2017 in Khyriv (Lviv region, Ukraine). At these meetings the members exchanged their views on the decentralisation process in general, reform of public administration, horizontal issues pertaining to the proper functioning of LRAs in Ukraine (policy-making, social and economic aspects, rule of law and good governance), and the local and regional dimension of implementing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

The activities of the Task Force also fed into the activities of the European Commission's Support Group for Ukraine, and connected with the work of the European Parliament delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee.

The activities of the Task Force have helped to enhance links between Ukraine and the CoR and its members, and have evolved over the years from offering general policy advice to more concrete projects focused on developing capacity-building in support of public administration reform. Thus at the last meeting of the Task Force in Khyriv, members discussed specific opportunities for peer-to-peer cooperation between the EU and Ukrainian LRAs, particularly with the support of the European

Commission's U-LEAD with Europe: Ukraine Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme.

The current work programme was drawn up on the basis of the Task Force's mandate and outlines its political and operational priorities for 2018-2020. It takes into account the results achieved in 2015-2017, the content of discussions and conclusions of meetings conducted during this period, as well as the future cooperation priorities identified by the Ukrainian counterparts.

## **I. KEY PRIORITIES**

The main objectives of the CoR-Ukraine Task Force are:

- to help deliver expertise on local and regional issues in the interinstitutional context;
- to support peer-to-peer experience-sharing and exchange of best European practices between Ukrainian and European LRAs;
- to provide expertise and support to Ukrainian local and regional authorities in matters related to the regional and local dimension of implementing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

The meetings of the Task Force will primarily concern recent developments in relation to reform and the political and institutional environment in Ukraine. They are of a consultative nature and should contribute to achieving progress in the areas described below.

Taking into account the content of the discussions held during the past three meetings of the Task Force and the current political priorities set by the Ukrainian counterparts, the following topics of cooperation will be considered of primary importance for the period 2018-2020:

### **1. Sustainable local and regional development**

Ensuring sustainable local economic development remains one of the main challenges for Ukraine<sup>1</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 Task Force 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 the emphasis on development of rural regions.

### **2. Provision of high-quality local services**

Providing high-quality administrative services on the ground will help to overcome corruption and increase transparency. The ongoing decentralisation reform in Ukraine has meant vesting additional responsibilities in local and regional authorities, which are expected to deliver high-quality services in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://decentralization.gov.ua/en/finance>

several new sectors, such as primary healthcare<sup>2</sup>, education<sup>3</sup>, and culture. The work done under the supervision of the Task Force should thus include the following themes:

- efficient strategic planning, management and financing of healthcare facilities; ensuring access to healthcare, particularly in rural areas; securing additional funding for investment in local health infrastructure; attracting qualified medical personnel;
- efficient management of local education systems and optimisation of the pre-school and school networks;
- increasing institutional capacity in the fields of culture, education and sport; financing cultural activities at local level.

### **3. Capacity-building**

The importance of capacity-building overall for Ukrainian local and regional authorities has been underlined multiple times during meetings of the Task Force, by the Ukrainian authorities themselves and in CoR dialogue with the EU institutions and other stakeholders, as well as in a CoR-commissioned study on regional development in Ukraine<sup>4</sup>. The activities of the Task Force will focus on enhancing the human-resource capacity of local self-government bodies in Ukraine by attracting best practices and developing training programmes for the leaders of amalgamated communities, project managers, and staff working on socio-humanitarian and economic issues. The priority topics of capacity-building will include budget planning, project management, and strategic planning of regional development.

The key principle to be followed under this heading is facilitation of bottom-up and needs-based capacity-building projects.

### **4. Other topics**

Other specific thematic areas covered by the Task Force activities could include transparency and fairness of public procurement systems, introduction of e-governance and e-services, cross-border cooperation, and the fight against corruption.

## **II. POLITICAL SUPPORT**

The Task Force will continue to offer political support to the ongoing decentralisation process in Ukraine through policy advice and sharing of good practices on decentralisation, division of powers and devolution.

The Task Force will also provide an opportunity to discuss European Neighbourhood Policy, regional policy and EU policies with a strong local impact. The challenges faced by local and regional authorities

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<sup>2</sup> <http://decentralization.gov.ua/en/health#main-info>

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

<sup>4</sup> Lankina, T., Gordon, C. (2017) Regional Development in Ukraine: Priority Actions in Terms of Decentralization. CoR publications

while Ukraine implements the provisions of the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, which will have an impact at local level, will also be part of the Task Force's focus.

The Task Force's activities should provide a clear picture of how important the decentralisation process is for the implementation of reforms in Ukraine and for interregional and cross-border cooperation. To that end, the Task Force will offer a platform for discussion with the aim of determining a pragmatic approach to capacity-building programmes and exchanges of experience on cooperation.

### **III. AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES**

To support the Ukrainian authorities in implementing the decentralisation reform, the Task Force will maintain awareness-raising and civil society involvement as a recurrent priority in its activities. This includes awareness-raising about the ongoing reform, promotion of the EU and its values in Ukraine, involvement of civil society and youth in monitoring work, participation and expert advice in decision-making processes, and budget planning. Relevant institutional stakeholders and – where feasible – representatives of civil society and the media will be invited to Task Force meetings as speakers and participants.

### **IV. OPERATIONAL DIMENSION: FOSTERING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND UKRAINE AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL**

As the decentralisation reform in Ukraine has already entered its implementation phase, fostering practical aspects of cooperation between the EU and Ukraine at local and regional level is becoming crucially important. In view of this, the Task Force will support peer-to-peer experience-sharing and exchange of best European practices between Ukrainian and European cities, municipalities and regions. Based on prior discussions with the European External Action Service and the implementing agency of the European Commission's U-LEAD with Europe: Ukraine Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme, the CoR will continue playing its role of a match maker for peer-to-peer exchanges. This could take the form of visits, training courses, working groups and joint projects within the thematic clusters described in the "Key Priorities" section.

Another exchange option to be explored is the establishment of long-term learning partnerships between public-service training institutions at local and regional level in Ukraine and abroad. This would mean identifying suitable partners for public-service training in the EU. Within the framework of such partnerships, the partners would be free to agree upon topics and measures specifically relevant to their respective institutions.

### **V. PRINCIPLES OF ACTIVITY**

The activities of the Task Force will be based on the principles of subsidiarity and multilevel governance, division of powers between national government and local and regional self-government, and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity.

## **Synergies with CORLEAP and the CIVEX commission**

The work of the Task Force 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 interinstitutional network, both inside and outside the CoR. Since Ukraine will co-chair CORLEAP in 2018, synergies will be sought with CORLEAP's calendar of activities, thematic planning and membership.

## **Interinstitutional anchoring**

The activities of the Task Force will continue feeding into the activities of the Support Group for Ukraine, which coordinates the activities of the European Commission for Ukraine. They will also connect with the EP delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee.

## **VI. INDICATIVE CALENDAR FOR TASK FORCE MEETINGS**

The Task Force will hold up to two meetings each year, with one of the meetings taking place in Ukraine. In exceptional and duly justified circumstances, the CoR Bureau may authorise the organisation of an additional meeting, subject to budget availability and political circumstances.

### **4th UTF meeting: 8 March 2018 (in Brussels)**

Agenda topics:

- recent developments: the decentralisation process in Ukraine
- prospects for future capacity-building cooperation / kick-off event of the peer-to-peer initiative

### **5th UTF meeting: September 2018 (in Kyiv)**

(back-to-back with CORELAP plenary meeting)

Suggested topics:

- recent developments: the decentralisation process in Ukraine
- results of peer-to-peer cooperation / interim report

### **6th UTF meeting: January 2019 (in Ukraine)**

Suggested topics:

- recent developments: the decentralisation process in Ukraine
- results of peer-to-peer cooperation / wrap-up event of peer-to-peer initiative

### **7th UTF meeting: second half of 2019 (in Brussels)**

### **8th UTF meeting: first half of 2020 (in Ukraine)**

### **9th UTF meeting: second half of 2020 (in Brussels)**