

EU-UKRAINE CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM		ПЛАТФОРМА ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА УКРАЇНА- ЄС
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**14th meeting, Brussels, 15 December 2023**

### **JOINT DECLARATION**

The EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform (CSP) is one of the bodies set up under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The CSP enables civil society organisations on both sides to monitor the implementation process from the point of view of civil society and to draw up recommendations to the relevant authorities. The 14th meeting of the CSP was co-chaired by **Nadija Afanasieva**, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics, and **Marcin Nowacki**, European Economic and Social Committee.

#### **The CSP members**

1. welcome the historic decision of the European Council to launch the process of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU
2. underline the fundamental value of a democratic social order, call for the strengthening of institutions, procedures and tools, including digital ones, in Ukraine to support democratic, civil, political, electoral and legislative processes;
3. draw attention to the need to prioritise harmonisation of Ukraine's and the EU's policies and to ensure the authenticity of the legislation developed in order to implement these policies;
4. emphasise the importance of inclusive involvement of all segments and resources of society in the reconstruction of Ukraine's economy and the need to secure adequate funding, including by using frozen Russian assets;
5. welcome the adoption of the Ukraine Facility and emphasise that all measures should promote gradual alignment with EU rules, standards, policies and practices and contribute to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of Ukraine and its progressive integration into the EU; in this regard underscore that the indicators for the Ukraine Plan<sup>1</sup> developed by the Government of Ukraine should include sustainability and environmental issues;
6. call for the actions of the Russian Federation and Rosatom to be recognised as nuclear terrorism, in particular the occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station and the shelling of other nuclear power plants in Ukraine;
7. call on the governments, business communities and civil society of the EU Member States, the European Commission and Ukraine to take effective measures to unblock trade via Ukraine's borders with Poland and Slovakia;

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/qanda\\_23\\_3353](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/qanda_23_3353).

8. note the significant progress in the reform of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (CCU), in particular, the adoption of the necessary legislation, the implementation of new procedures for the selection of CCU judges, the resumption of the work of the High Council of Justice and the appointment of the members of the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine;
9. support the improved state policy on protecting the rights and interests of internally displaced persons in Ukraine;
10. welcome Ukrenergo's full-fledged membership of the European Network of Transmission System Operators;
11. welcome the prolongation of the temporary protection mechanism for Ukrainian citizens in the EU;
12. reiterate the joint declaration adopted at the 13th meeting of the CSP<sup>2</sup> on 3 July 2023, as its recommendations remain valid;

#### **On ensuring human rights and the rule of law, the CSP members**

13. stress the need to respect the rule of law and call for the establishment of a system of effective institutions to guarantee human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, non-discrimination against persons belonging to minorities and respect for diversity;
14. emphasise the need to combat corruption and any other form of wrongdoing more strongly in order to prevent selective justice and selective prosecution, particularly in cases of corruption;
15. express concern about the growing political influence of right-wing radical parties in the EU and about the potential danger their anti-European narrative represents;

#### **On the process of Ukraine's European integration, the CSP members**

16. welcome the initiative of the European Economic and Social Committee to involve representatives of Ukrainian civil society as Enlargement Candidate Members in the Committee's activities on a regular basis;
17. call for the reform of the national regulatory policy in order to approximate national legislation with the EU *acquis*;
18. emphasise the need to set adequate transitional periods for the introduction of harmonised legislation and to assess its effectiveness;
19. regret the lack of an effective and transparent mechanism through which the Ukrainian authorities would take into account the recommendations and positions set out in the CSP's joint declarations;

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/13th\\_eu\\_ua\\_csp\\_joint\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/13th_eu_ua_csp_joint_declaration.pdf).

20. call for measures to be taken to promote the de-oligarchisation of Ukraine's national economy; welcome, in particular, the development of a draft law on fair lobbying, the norms of which should be in line with the OECD recommendations on the principles of transparency and integrity in lobbying<sup>3</sup>;
21. propose that the Government of Ukraine and the European Commission analyse and revise the EU's technical assistance programmes for Ukraine, taking into account the objectives of the adopted EU Enlargement Programme and Ukraine's recovery plans;
22. emphasise the importance of strengthening the capacity of the authorities involved in the development and implementation of the recovery plans and in the European integration reforms;

**On political dialogue and foreign policy, regional development and cross-border cooperation, the CSP members**

23. emphasise the importance of developing programmes for the comprehensive restoration of Ukraine's territory, taking into account innovative smart specialisation approaches to regional economic development;
24. encourage Ukraine's integration into the New European Bauhaus initiative in order to implement the European Green Deal in people's everyday lives and promote the sustainable recovery of Ukrainian regions;
25. welcome the fact that Ukraine's government and expert community have stepped up their efforts to implement EU macro-regional strategies and the Three Seas Initiative in the field of transport and digital connectivity (TEN-T and multimodal transport);
26. call for the launch of a cross-border cooperation (CBC) programme between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to ensure close cooperation between the two candidate countries and enhance synergies in the region and to facilitate the formation of a Managing Authority for such a CBC programme within the Government of Ukraine;
27. welcome the fact that funding programmes such as Interreg Europe, URBACT and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) have been opened up to Ukraine, which will facilitate the joint work of Ukrainian and EU partners and increase the capacity of local governments;
28. emphasise the need to develop joint transport infrastructure between Ukraine and the EU;
29. call for support for the preservation and restoration of Ukraine's cultural heritage;

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the legal regulation of lobbying activities in the context of public decision making of 22 March 2017; the Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register.

### **On the economic development and recovery of Ukraine, the CSP members**

30. regret that the European Council, in its December meeting, did not approve a further financial aid package of EUR 50 billion for Ukraine and express their hope that the Council meeting in January 2024 will have a positive outcome in this regard;
31. stress the need to develop plans for Ukraine's recovery, taking into account the challenges and mutually beneficial opportunities of Ukraine's economic integration into the EU single market;
32. encourage strict adherence to the principle of "build back better" in recovery projects based on an innovative approach;
33. call for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the introduction of appropriate reporting in the formation and financing of national economic development projects;
34. call for the introduction of the "innovation principle" in Ukraine's legislative practice to ensure that the impact of regulations on innovation is considered;

### **On employment and social policy, the CSP members**

35. welcome the creation of conditions for the return of Ukrainian refugees, in particular, the introduction of the "eRobota" grant programme, which allows them to receive a grant to start a business or expand their existing business, the introduction of the "eHouse" affordable lending programme and the provision of educational vouchers;
36. call on the Ukrainian authorities to strengthen the role of trade unions on behalf of employees in accordance with the requirements of EU, Council of Europe and ILO documents, including the EU Directive on adequate minimum wages;
37. stress the need to adapt Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation in the area of the gender pay gap and gender-based violence;
38. call on the Ukrainian authorities to ensure access to the labour market for people facing complex problems hindering their social inclusion, as well as to promote the employment of socially vulnerable categories of the population;
39. express concern about the de facto freezing of the activities of tripartite social partnership institutions, which has had a negative impact on social dialogue and social protection of employees;
40. believe that the proposed modernisation of labour law should not weaken its active norms, in particular, the proposed abolition of efficient mandatory norms ensuring workers' rights; note that such an approach does not ensure compliance with the requirements of the Constitution of Ukraine, which stipulates that, when adopting new laws, the content and scope of existing rights and freedoms may not be narrowed;
41. underline the need to bring labour legislation in line with modern realities and to prevent an imbalance of the rights and interests of employers and employees;

42. draw attention to the need to develop comprehensive scientific research on drafting and developing national labour law and adapting it to EU labour and social law;
43. emphasise that Ukraine's status as a candidate for accession to the EU requires it to bring its legal and regulatory framework in line with EU standards, namely Chapter 19 of the European Community *acquis* and note that guaranteeing rights and obligations in the field of labour is an integral part of joining the EU;

#### **On energy, transport, the environment and climate change, the CSP members**

44. appreciate the increasing attention that the European Commission and international institutions are paying to the green recovery of Ukraine and emphasise the importance of ensuring cross-sectoral integration of environmental and climate issues into the country's recovery plans, as well as the need to draw up a green recovery strategy for key sectors and prioritise relevant EU legislation and standards in national programmes;
45. reiterate that the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine should be based on green principles and approaches, including paying more attention to decarbonisation, climate neutrality and environmental protection, and to cross-cutting issues in international, national and local planning documents, as well as ensuring public engagement in these processes;
46. underline the need to significantly strengthen the administrative and inspection capacity in the environmental and climate sector;
47. call for negotiations on the "green cluster" chapters to begin as early as possible, taking into account the high priority given to green issues on the EU agenda, to support Ukraine's efforts in the field of environment and climate change;
48. emphasise that the assessment of the war's impact on the environment must comply with international standards in order to prove in international courts that Ukraine has the right to compensation for damages caused by Russia;
49. call for the further development of cooperation with European environmental monitoring and satellite surveillance programmes, in particular the EU's Copernicus programme;
50. welcome Ukraine's integration into the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register for monitoring air, water and land resources;
51. emphasise the need for Ukrainian industrial companies to provide key information on the environment;
52. insist on the development of a state environmental monitoring system in Ukraine, with unimpeded public access to the data stored in this system;
53. call on Ukraine to ensure civil society's access to environmental information and participation in decision-making, which has deteriorated due to martial law, in particular in EIA and SEA procedures related to Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment;

54. call for improved legislation, in particular, the adoption of primary and secondary legislation to continue environmental reforms, as recommended by the European Commission, as well as the adoption of a climate law and an update to the long-term carbon emissions strategy in line with the EU 2030 framework;
55. insist on the need for concerted actions by Ukraine and the EU to strengthen the defence of the country, for the integration of energy and gas infrastructure with the EU, and for the further strengthening of the sanctions policy towards Russia, including a complete and lasting suspension of EU-Russia trade in energy;
56. call for support for joint actions to strengthen stability and restore Ukraine's energy infrastructure;
57. support the introduction of legislation to facilitate the customs clearance of humanitarian goods imported to Ukraine;

#### **On the healthcare sector, the CSP members**

58. underline the importance of preserving and modernising the healthcare system in order to protect public health, including for people with disabilities, as part of Ukraine's recovery;
59. emphasise the importance of equal access to healthcare services in the areas adjacent to the combat zone, especially for the most vulnerable groups of the Ukrainian population;
60. stress that provision of adequate psychological assistance to the population during and after the end of hostilities should be a priority;

#### **On interaction with civil society, the CSP members**

61. emphasise the need to support and accelerate reforms by changing approaches to the financial assistance dedicated to these reforms;
62. call on civil society organisations (CSOs) to make full use of available digital tools to facilitate interaction between CSOs and the authorities and thus ensure compliance with the principles of good governance;
63. stress that the EU and the government of Ukraine should further expand the country's public funding programmes for CSOs and work on improving dialogue and consultations with them; add that structural and meaningful dialogue should be an integral part of the EU accession process and beyond and that a system and/or structure for civil society should be built up and given sufficient resources;
64. note that additional efforts are needed to address and investigate cases of pressure and threats against civic activists;

#### **On education, science, innovation and the information society, the CSP members**

65. recognise the leading role of education as a system for educating and training individuals, combining knowledge, skills, values, vocational training, experience and competences;

66. emphasise that non-respect of intellectual property rights as a basis for modern innovative development is unacceptable and call for the creation of effective procedures and institutions to this end;
67. emphasise the strategic need to support the education and training system for both vocational-technical education and the adult population (employed or temporarily unemployed) and as quickly as possible adapt it to the growing needs for workers required for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine;
68. recommend that the Government of Ukraine make more active use of the opportunities for cooperation under the 2021-2027 Horizon Europe programme and call for measures to appoint a network of national contact points for this programme as soon as possible;
69. draw attention to the need to step up processes for the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications in Ukraine and the EU;
70. emphasise the importance of bilateral cooperation as well as cooperation under the European Research Area (ERA), in particular through the use of the ERA Forum, the ERA Talent Platform, the Competence Framework for Researchers and the Research Careers Observatory;
71. emphasise the need to improve research infrastructure and policy evaluation research, in particular in areas such as the effectiveness of environmental policies;
72. stress the need for comprehensive financial and psychological support for those scientists and researchers and their families working in Ukraine who face daily challenges in their scientific and professional activities.