



Thematic Report

The impact of the crisis in Ukraine on its western regions

INTRODUCTION

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) was established on 21 March by Permanent Council Decision 1117. Since its inception the SMM has established ten Monitoring Teams throughout the country, three of which cover the western regions of Ukraine: (i) the office in Ivano-Frankivsk covering the regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, Transcarpatia and Ternopil, (ii) the office in Chernivtsi covering the regions of Chernivtsi, Vinnytsya and Khmelnytskyi and; (iii) the office in Lviv covering the regions of Lviv, Volyn and Rivne. Whereas these regions are not represented as “Western Ukraine” in any administrative division of the country, they share a common history and have mostly demonstrated a common political orientation, which was again the case in the last parliamentary elections of 26 October 2014. It is therefore possible to adopt a regional approach for analysis.

In line with its mandate the SMM monitored the development of the situation in the western regions of Ukraine. In order to stay abreast of these developments and how they are perceived within these regions the SMM monitoring teams keep regular contacts with a wide spectrum of interlocutors including local authorities, civil society representatives, religious leaders, community leaders, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other stakeholders. The SMM teams also interact daily with the population at large and pay specific attention to ensure that women and all age groups are equally included among their interlocutors.

This report outlines the impact of developments in Crimea and Donbas, and Maidan-related events, giving a snapshot from the western regions of Ukraine. It is based on observations that the SMM has made in the western regions of Ukraine with the objective of enhancing the understanding of security-related developments in this part of the country. Overall, the region has seen a rise of dissatisfaction with the post-Maidan governments and with regional and local government institutions. Several prominent activists and civil society leaders have been expressing their growing concerns over what they perceive to be a slow implementation of constitutional and legislative reforms and the lack of progress in the fight against corruption. This dissatisfaction appears to be further compounded by the effects of the conflict in the Donbas and, in particular, the resulting economic impact on all regions of Ukraine.

While the western regions of Ukraine might not carry an immediate strategic importance in the context of the ongoing conflict in the east they remain nevertheless an important factor in reinforcing the cohesion and long-term stability of the country. These regions were influential in shaping the Maidan movement ideals and are also home to several sizable minority communities.

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KEY FINDINGS AND OUTLOOK

This reports details five key areas that have proven to be common denominators in SMM observations in the western regions of Ukraine in the period April through December 2014:

- Self-defence groups (SDGs) emerging in the framework of the Maidan events were often founded mainly to provide security instead of police forces and later jointly with the police forces which lacked the trust of the population especially following Maidan events. SDGs have played an important role in enhancing or restoring this trust in the police and security forces and have mostly transformed into political organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in political activities.
- Reactions to the mobilization have been generally supportive. However, some reactions were also critical of a perceived lack of resources and in particular equipment provided to the conscripts. This matter has triggered several protests throughout the regions. The SMM has also observed expressions of widespread frustration about allegations of corruption and nepotism in the process of mobilization.
- There is a palpable rise of patriotism, which is being expressed widely and frequently. This increased patriotism, however, has not led to a noticeable increase in support for radical parties, i.e. Svoboda and Pravyi Sektor (Right Sector).
- The engagement of civil society in the western regions of Ukraine has substantially developed since March 2014, and is now playing a crucial role for instance in addressing some of the issues arising from the conflict in the east, e.g. internal displacement and voluntarily supporting soldiers with equipment. Most activities and resources of civil society organisations are being absorbed by issues connected with the conflict, while other important topics are being neglected or side-lined.
- The western regions of Ukraine are also hosts to a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) both from Crimea and the Donbas. While IDPs have generally been welcomed with hospitality and provided with assistance and resources, there appears to be some resentment against young male IDPs from the Donbas who are sometimes perceived to be evading fighting duties.

Based on these findings the SMM concludes that the situation and trends it observed present an opportunity to strengthen dialogue initiatives, notably between the IDPs from the Donbas and the host communities in the western regions of Ukraine, where the citizens have shown capacities to overcome past inter-community conflicts and could help promote their experience in the peaceful coexistence of diverse groups and communities for the benefit of the entire Ukraine.

1. MAIDAN: THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

The impact of the Maidan movement has been profound and far-reaching on society and government institutions, and the relations between them. The results of Maidan brought about significant changes of key leadership positions throughout the region which also substantially impacted on the political landscape and decision-making

processes. The resignation of high-level officials in February and March 2014 as a result of the fall of President Yanukovich's government was followed by a round of dismissals of key officials. For instance, in the Chernivtsi region 11 district heads were dismissed by early April. These changes along with the Presidential and Parliamentary elections were important steps in consolidating the legitimacy of the new government and its institutions in these regions.

However, these changes were not sufficient in themselves to develop trust between the population and the government institutions, as the vast majority of the personnel of these institutions remained unchanged. Civil society and the population at large, encouraged by the results of their engagement, were determined to hold the institutions to account regarding the implementation of changes called for by Maidan. This was perhaps the most visible in the security sector where there were strong concerns over the police given the prominent enforcement role it had played in the attempts to bring the Maidan movement to a halt as well as a long-standing problematic relationship between the police and society.

2. THE EMERGENCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF SELF-DEFENCE GROUPS

The Maidan events triggered a unique response by citizens in efforts aimed at ensuring overall security and safety and restoring trust in the police. These efforts centred on the emergence of self-defence groups (SDGs). This phenomenon was particularly noted in the western regions of Ukraine.

While on Maidan the SDGs were aimed at self-defence in the true sense of the word, subsequently some actors used their visibility during the protests to pursue political goals. Within this context, the "Pravyi Sektor" (Right Sector), formed during Maidan as a coalition of small pre-existing far right nationalist groups, is of particular importance as it has gained nationwide visibility. It should be noted that the Right Sector promotes an ultranationalist program and is often perceived in eastern Ukraine as having a fascist and violent agenda. While the Right Sector has remained active throughout the western regions to different degrees, its presence and support base is perhaps most visible in the Ivano-Frankivsk region. By now it is mostly viewed as a political party and the latest parliamentary election results showed that it had a stronger support base in the Lviv region than in the Ivano-Frankivsk region.

The first SDGs appeared in the western regions of Ukraine during the Maidan events when they organised transport for volunteers and collected aid for those protesting in Kyiv. In a context of growing lack of trust in the police, perceived as inefficient, understaffed and corrupt, the SDGs acted as law enforcement actors. In Lviv city, notably, they played an important role for a period of two weeks in providing security after protesters on 19 February had taken over the building of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs, which had left the city *de facto* without police control. Similar situations were observed in other areas. In the Chernivtsi region, the possibility of Russian troops being sent to the Moldovan breakaway region of Transnistria was perceived as a security threat, and was another contributing factor to an increased role played by the SDGs. Unarmed groups started patrolling their neighbourhoods and the border area. The general perception among these groups was that they had no other choice but to ensure safety and security as they perceived the police and the government structures to be either absent or corrupt.

As the security situation began to improve in March-April, joint patrols were conducted by SDG members and the police, which contributed to restoring the trust of the citizens in the police. Additionally, the SDGs also played an important role in supporting the public demand to address the issue of corruption, e.g. through active participation in demonstrations but at times also through more violent means.

When the “Anti-Terrorism Operation” (“ATO”) was launched, much of the SDGs’ attention was drawn to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, which included assistance to IDPs, soldiers fighting in the east and their families and the “ATO” itself. Citizens from these regions significantly contribute to the “ATO” in the form of soldiers and material and financial support, and at the same time were heavily affected by the unfolding events in eastern Ukraine. In particular, many citizens of these regions have served, been wounded and died in the “ATO”.

As of May the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) established special purposed battalions and battalions of territorial defence respectively, which channelled into official structures many volunteers and members of SDGs. Such MIA battalions were established in the Lviv, Volyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Vinnytsia and Khmelnytskyi regions, while MoD battalions were established in all the regions. Some SDGs collectively joined these battalions, while others switched to a stand-by mode or suspended their activities altogether. In Lviv city e.g. only five out of 17 SDGs originally formed remain active.

3. REACTIONS TO THE MOBILIZATION

There was a strong support in most of the western regions to the government’s launch of the “ATO” which was widely perceived as a military response to an attack on Ukraine’s territorial integrity. As such, there were no challenges to the mobilization of conscripts *per se* but rather movements of protests against the modalities of the conscription and conditions of deployment. Major points of contention concerned the lack of proper equipment as well as the ability for the elite, those with connections and money, to avoid conscription, both of which were seen in relation to allegations of corruption amongst officials. Many support initiatives were born out of concern for the deployment conditions of a family member but also found their roots in the mobilisation spirit of Maidan.

The Chernivtsi region stands apart in this regard as it saw the emergence of three waves of protests concerning mobilization, some of which with the participation of ethnic Romanians. The first one was between 16-22 June which coincided with the return of the first fallen soldiers and was motivated by the desire to have those deployed in the east recalled back from the front line. The second wave of protests between 22-29 July was triggered by the third round of conscription. These protests did not appear to be organised but attracted crowds of up to one thousand participants at times. It was demanded that the conflict was brought to an end swiftly and questioned why male IDPs and “well connected” people were not enlisted. The second wave of protests were calmed as a result of more concerted efforts by regional and central level military and political figures to inform the public on the mobilization process. The third wave of protests between 13 August and 6 September differed substantially from the other in so far as it did not concentrate on the conditions of

mobilization but rather was a protest against potential criminal charges being brought against draftees who did not report for duty.

In Ivano-Frankivsk, the creation of the 5th battalion, which was composed of new recruits, reservists and a small number of volunteers raised concerns among the population from the onset. Upon learning about the equipment of the battalion, protests were organized at the base in Delyatin demanding that its deployment be postponed until more adequate equipment was issued and these demands were met. Once deployed in Ilovaysk, Donetsk region, the 5th battalion came under heavy fire. After suffering sustained casualties the commander ordered a retreat against orders to keep his position. His subsequent indictment for desertion was met with outrage within the Ivano-Frankivsk region, protests supporting him were held and funds to post his bail were raised. There is a perception amongst certain interlocutors that the (first) post-Maidan Governor of Ivano-Frankivsk lost his position due to his support of the commander.

In the Lviv region, citizens were also concerned about the provision of equipment for soldiers and there were sporadic complaints over the way mobilization was being conducted and a couple of protests demanding rotation in due time.

4. PERCEPTION OF THE CONFLICT

Most interlocutors in the western regions of Ukraine describe their regions as pro-European and perceive Maidan not only as a heroic victory but also as the foundation for their “European” future. The pro-European orientation was clearly demonstrated in the results of the parliamentary elections.

The annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the east, mostly viewed in the western regions as an outside intervention, are perceived by many not only as an attack on Ukraine’s sovereignty but also holding them back in their European aspirations of a stronger democracy with an accountable government, rule of law, individual freedoms and higher standards of living. Based on the SMM’s observations, the society’s response to the combination of these events appears to have resulted in an increased sense of unity transcending ages, ethnicities, genders and socio-economic backgrounds. The view that Ukraine is experiencing an outside intervention has been voiced by most of the SMM interlocutors throughout the western regions of Ukraine in majority and minority communities alike. Few currently perceive the events as an internal conflict.

Despite this perception, the SMM has observed relatively few instances of active opposition in the western regions towards perceived policies and positions of the Russian Federation. When they do occur it is generally in the form of protest, organised or spontaneous in front of the Russian Federation consulate in Lviv for instance and rarely exceed 30 participants; one of these was organised by members of the Russian community.

Other such examples include actions of economic nature; e.g. a newly established Ukrainian NGO succeeded in advocating for the Lviv city council to pass a decree stipulating that all products originating from the Russian Federation should be clearly labelled as such in local stores. The Ivano-Frankivsk regional council would later take

similar measures. There were a few protests in front of Russian Federation bank “Sberbank Rossia” premises in Chernivtsi and Lviv, with attacks resulting in minor material damages in the latter. In Kalush area, Ivano-Frankivsk region, the Automaidan group did similar actions against VTB bank branches.

In Ivano-Frankivsk the Right Sector/Self-Defence blocked Lukoil fuel stations for several weeks during the summer.

Additionally, in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, the SMM witnessed two disputes in Kosiv and Kolomyia between local authorities and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate. Both cases revolved around property disputes, which originate from Ukraine’s independence but their revival is viewed by some interlocutors as linked to the ongoing conflict. In the Chernivtsi region, several church communities in villages transferred from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyiv Patriarchate as well. Finally, from amongst the minority communities, the Jewish community organized a performance held in Lviv city against what they said was the Russian Federation’s attempt to divide the Ukrainian people.

The perception that the current situation is a result of outside intervention was also shared by SMM interlocutors among the minority communities in the western regions. Overall, it appears that the spirit of reforms stemming from the Maidan movement has reached beyond the ethnic lines to create a common cause. This, as well as the events in Crimea and the conflict in the east have rallied the communities behind a renewed sense of common Ukrainian identity. Representatives of the communities as well as community members, except for the Russian community, have consistently expressed to the SMM that the events in Ukraine have not negatively impacted on inter-community relations. Nevertheless, there are nuances in the communities’ positions *vis-à-vis* the conflict and its potential medium to long-term implications.

The Russian community is heterogeneous in its political views and while its members identify as ethnic Russians there is no pronounced feeling of belonging to an overall Russian community. This is perhaps most visible in the perception of the community leadership by its members who do not always identify with their positions and view them as controversial and divisive at times. From regular meetings with its members the SMM has observed that, despite this fragmentation there is a prevailing feeling among the ethnic Russians that the current events and in particular the role played by the Russian Federation is calling into question some aspects of their identity and sense of belonging. This has particularly been the case within mixed families. Others have declared themselves “Ukrainian patriots”.

Most members of the Russian community the SMM spoke to have reported a negative impact on their relations with the majority community overall but no differences of the perceptions of the use of the Russian language. In Chernivtsi in particular, community members continue to view the use of Russian language as a bridge between communities. Some interlocutors have expressed concern regarding the potential emergence of stereotypes regarding the Russian community that over time would lead to a perception of their community which does not account for their varied individual positions, views and beliefs.

As regards the perception of the majority community on the Russian community, the SMM has not observed any indication that the conflict has triggered a change in perception of the Russian community or a change of perception regarding the use of the Russian language.

As for other communities, the general observation is an increased sense of solidarity towards the majority community and an overall support towards the cause of Ukraine, which has taken different forms, from provision of material and financial support to the armed forces, to direct involvement in the mobilization process.

Representatives of the Polish community in the Lviv region, for example, have expressed to the SMM that they felt that the current state of vulnerability Ukraine is facing has created a dynamic that has substantially improved the relationships between ethnic Poles and Ukrainians in the region. This was exemplified in the views of the SMM interlocutors by the high level of attendance of this year's commemoration of the "Volyn Massacre" of 1943. The ceremony was placed under the banner of reconciliation with Ukrainian representatives issuing strong apologies and statements of understanding.

Another example is the Romanian community who have also stated to the SMM that events in Ukraine have contributed to strengthening ties between the Romanian minority and the majority community. However one prominent community leader in Chernivtsi assessed that the conflict did not have any impact at all and that relations remained somewhat tense due to historical reasons.

Representatives of the Hungarian community in the Transcarpathia region issued statements regarding their concerns on mobilization. The Rusyn community, an ethnic group who speak an eastern Slavic language, has been under close monitoring by local authorities and some of its members arrested due to suspicion of separatism.

The preference of the Jewish community has clearly been to keep a distance from Ukrainian-Russian dynamics although they have participated in the general effort to support fund raising efforts for supporting "ATO" soldiers. For instance, in Chernivtsi they organized a charity fair of Jewish art with many pieces containing both Jewish and Ukrainian symbols. The Jewish community feels well integrated in the western regions of Ukraine and some interlocutors raised concerns over what they perceive to be efforts from the Russian Federation to attribute anti-Semitic motives to the right wing parties in these regions. Their main concern in this area is that there be forces at play including the media attempting to undermine the overall atmosphere of tolerance in the region.

5. RISE OF PATRIOTISM

Signs of patriotism are visible on a daily basis throughout the western regions of Ukraine and the SMM has observed their sharp increase of the events in Crimea and the launch of the "ATO". Such signs would include the display of Ukrainian flags, painting of bridges, benches, rails, and poles in the colours of the Ukrainian flag. An increased number of people are wearing traditional Ukrainian clothing or displaying Ukrainian symbols. The spirit of patriotism is also visible in terms of civic actions

through civil society and NGOs having mobilised in order to support the IDPs from Crimea and the east as well as the strong mobilisation to support the “ATO”. The majority of interlocutors engaged in the support of IDPs or the “ATO” describe their activities as their “patriotic duty”.

This visible rise in patriotism has not been accompanied with an increased social or political radicalization. This might, however, be explained by the current sense of unity in supporting the “ATO” and the real test for potential radicalization will occur when the political situation allows for a stronger focus on continued reforms or on the implementation of certain aspects of the current reforms and, in particular the lustration. The reform process, particularly lustration, represents a priority which most of the SMM interlocutors see as unavoidable and intimately linked to the Maidan process.

6. CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

In popular perception, one key lesson from Maidan for the citizens and civil society organisations (CSO) is that they have an active role to play in shaping the political, policy and social framework of their country but also that their continued engagement is necessary for achievements to be maintained and momentum sustained. The mobilization of civil society has been remarkable in the levels of engagement and participation across the population. Although CSOs continue to engage in a number of important issues in Ukraine including human rights, the scope of their engagement has shifted according to priorities as events unfolded.

The effects of internal displacement became one of these key areas of engagement. As of March, IDPs from Crimea started arriving in the western regions of Ukraine soon to be followed by IDPs from the eastern regions. Many organizations like the Red Cross existed prior to the conflict and have been able to quickly move in and support IDPs in close co-operation with volunteers who had gathered in crisis support organizations. In addition to this, individuals also provided direct support to IDPs through different means such as the provision of accommodation, food, clothing or firewood.

As of May, IDP support continued but the core of the efforts of the population started shifting to a broad and far reaching support to the “ATO”. The backdrop of many of these initiatives was the perception of a poor state of preparedness of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Initiatives of this sort were often started by individuals or a small group of persons and grew rapidly. These were initially aimed at supporting a relative, colleague or friend being deployed in the “ATO”. For example, the students of the Chernivtsi University Department of Journalism collected funds to purchase equipment for university personnel being deployed to the “ATO” zone. Other such individual and spontaneous initiatives were broader in scope such as health workers in Chernivtsi region who gathered more than UAH 1 million to provide the medical supplies for the work of eleven doctors and nurses who were deployed to the “ATO” area. In the Ivano-Frankivsk region several NGOs, in large parts run by women, conducted similar activities.

The support for the “ATO” did not stop at the provision of equipment, funds and supplies but also extended to providing support to the families of “ATO” soldiers as well as a broad range of support to soldiers upon their return or wounded soldiers, including legal and psychological support. For instance, in Lviv and Chernivtsi the nation-wide NGO “Future of Ukraine” provides psychological counselling services. In Chernivtsi, the same NGO organized gatherings for children of “ATO” participants and supported traumatized IDP children.

Other groups have focused on supporting the “ATO” “spirit” through various initiatives. For instance, in Chernivtsi the NGO “Patriotic Community of Bukovina” seeks to raise the patriotic spirit of the population by painting national symbols on objects in public space and the “Union of Ukrainian Women” provides Sunday school sessions on patriotic education for girls at the age of 12-13.

With current government and civil society efforts focused on supporting the “ATO” there are relatively few actors engaged in furthering the reforms demanded on Maidan. Organizations often concentrate on anti-corruption efforts through the lustration process. In Chernivtsi for instance, the NGO “Public Lustration” has developed a questionnaire which is sent out to officials inquiring about their position, assets and association with the past regimes in order to determine if they are “eligible” for a public function. In Lviv, the NGO “People’s Council” is also engaged in similar functions. While there has been excellent communication between the authorities and civil society, albeit mainly the Right Sector and the SDGs, in the immediate post-Maidan period this has since been fast eroding. The authorities appear to be especially hesitant to co-operate with civil society on matters of corruption and budget oversight. The Chernivtsi regional administration however has taken the unusual and constructive approach of arranging for training sessions on anti-corruption for CSOs.

As all efforts and more importantly funding are being directed towards supporting the “ATO” process and lustration, long-standing NGOs working on core issues have seen their work substantially slow down or stop altogether. Some NGOs have seen their human rights, gender and anti-trafficking projects cut due to budgetary reallocations.

While there are widespread associations formed by persons from the western regions of Ukraine supporting IDPs from the east, the SMM has not been able to identify an instance where the IDPs from the east themselves had established a structure to support their own interest. This is a sharp contrast with the Crimean IDPs who have established associations to promote their culture, interests and integration such as the NGO “Vetan” (‘Homeland’ in Tatar language) in Vinnytsya.

Another key activity rarely observed by the SMM from the civil society project landscape is dialogue or any broad co-operation between CSOs based in western and eastern regions of Ukraine. Many SMM interlocutors attribute this to the lack of counterparts in the east rather than a lack of trust towards “the east” as a whole, stereotype views on the people from the eastern regions, or the current dynamics supportive of a military answer to the conflict in the form of the “ATO”.

7. IMPACT OF IDPS AND RELATION WITH HOST COMMUNITIES

	Crimea	East	Total
Ivano-Frankivsk	306	2581	2887
Transcarpatia	253	2908	3161
Ternopil	306	2136	2442
Chernivtsi	362	1886	2248
Vinnytsya	602	8315	8917
Khmelnitski	552	4877	5429
Lviv	2897	6760	9657
Volyn	246	2641	2887
Rivne	341	2862	3203

The table above shows the official data of registered IDPs in the western regions of Ukraine on 31 December. Government institutions and NGOs at the time agreed that these figures, reflecting State Emergency Service registration, are likely to be an order of magnitude below the reality on the grounds. Nevertheless, the overall numbers of IDPs displaced within the western regions are low compared to the rest of the country.

The circumstances that led the IDPs from Crimea and those from eastern Ukraine into displacement differ in many regards and have greatly contributed to create two distinct groups in terms of their integration and perceptions by host communities.

The first wave of IDPs originating from Crimea arrived in March and was triggered by the events in Crimea. As these events unfolded without military fighting, the ongoing displacement from Crimea is more linked to the personal circumstances of the displaced. The displacement was often triggered by reported violation of their freedom of movement, expression, religion and language and fear of targeted harassment due to political engagement, religious, linguistic or cultural affiliation, to professional future under unfamiliar Russian Federation regulations as well as to uncertain economic prospects. The displaced from Crimea were able to relocate to the western regions in a relatively organized manner, with some assets and most family structures remaining intact. Within the group of IDPs arriving from Crimea, the Crimean Tatar community stands out and is posing protection concerns.

The second wave of IDPs arrived from the east in late April and peaked during July and August, coinciding with the heightened military activities in the “ATO” zone. By the end of 2014, IDPs continued to flee and their displacement was mostly triggered by the deteriorating security situation directly linked to the ongoing fighting such as shelling as well as to the subsequent deterioration of the living conditions, partly as a result of the adoption of government resolutions 595 and 637 in November on cutting funds of state-run institutions in territories not under the control of the government. In the absence of a standing agreement between the fighting parties regarding the safe passage of civilians the flight of the IDPs has mostly been organized on an *ad hoc* and precarious basis. As a result the IDPs from the east tend to arrive in the west with fewer resources and in need of greater support. They are mostly women, children and elderly persons, which is due to the fact that in many cases the male family members

have stayed behind to look after the property or are engaged otherwise in their place of origin.

By and large the response of the host communities has been overwhelmingly supportive and host communities have played a central role in providing a wide array of support to the displaced to the point of taking over some tasks otherwise expected of government bodies. For instance, in Chernivtsi the NGO “Volunteers Movement of Bukovina” (VMB) plays a key role in managing the influx of IDPs, including in finding accommodation for them. Towards the end of the year, however, the SMM observed some indication that this initial support by the host community was slightly diminishing.

Throughout the regions, the initial response of local administrations has generally been limited to education and health sectors as well as the provision of social benefits. In Ivano-Frankivsk, Transcarpathia and Ternopil regions e.g. the regional administrations set up effective coordination centres for IDPs. All other support including in-kind support with food, hygiene articles, firewood as well as housing was provided through the host communities and often on a private basis. Other forms of support were also organized at the community level such as in Lviv and Chernivtsi where individuals offered Ukrainian language support classes to IDP children at the beginning of the school year.

None of the SMM interlocutors have mentioned concerns over the Crimean IDPs and the SMM has not observed any resentment towards or conflicts between them and host communities. This can be explained by several factors. With the exception of Lviv they are present in relatively small numbers and do not represent a substantial economic burden. Also they arrived prior to the launch of the “ATO” and are perceived by and large as victims of an outside intervention and their choice to relocate to the western regions is perceived as a clear sign of loyalty to Ukraine. Moreover, the Crimean IDPs have been able to organize themselves. In Lviv for instance, they established their own NGO “Crimean Wave” which together with “Krim SOS” (Lviv and Kherson based) provides support to all IDPs but dedicates special attention to fostering the integration of Crimean Tatars in the society and to promoting their cultural and religious rights. Crimean Tatars formed an NGO in Chernivtsi as well.

For IDPs originating from the east the situation has proven to be more nuanced. There is a sense of resentment that male IDPs of fighting age originating from the “ATO” zone seek refuge in the west and receive full support from the local population rather than remain and fight for the protection of their land and properties. This sentiment started to become visible with the second wave of mobilization and increased substantially in July when the first “ATO” recruits originating from the west died. This has led to the building up of a certain level of discrimination against male IDPs from the east with certain business owners for example stating that they would not offer employment to them. The SMM has also observed that in a few instances IDP families including a male of fighting age would have difficulty renting a property, especially in Lviv. In general, male IDPs are careful to keep a low profile within the host communities. This social pressure also contributes to a far lower level of registration of male IDPs from the east than are actually present throughout the western regions of Ukraine. In addition to the social pressure in displacement another

reason for the lack of interest in registering as IDP is the concern at that time that this would bring negative repercussions, ranging from social pressure to personal security concerns, when and if they return to the east.

The SMM has also observed that there is a certain level of fatigue from host communities to have to shoulder some of the financial burden resulting from hosting the IDPs from the eastern regions of Ukraine. For instance, individuals who have offered to host IDPs in their houses continue to have to cover out of their own pocket the utility costs, which they had hoped would be reimbursed by the government.

Most members of the host communities and their representatives agree that these regions do not carry as much of a burden with regards to IDP population as other regions, especially the east. There is nevertheless a possible risk of increased tensions between IDPs and the host communities as the influx of IDPs may continue against a backdrop of the deployment and return of local community members to and from the “ATO” as well as stagnating or diminishing economic resources and prospects.