

Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbas

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Project «Dialogue for understanding and justice:
European NGOs working together for conflict resolution
in Donbas»



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List of acronyms

ATO – Anti-terrorist operation

IDP – Internally displaced person

NGO – Non-government organization

NPO – Non-profit organization

CSO - Civil society organization

JCCC - Joint Center for Control and Coordination

OSCE - Organization for the security and cooperation in Europe

SMM - Special monitoring mission

LPR - “Luhansk People’s Republic”

DPR - “Donetsk People’s Republic”

UHHRU - Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union

Foreword



This brochure provides an insight into the work of the international civil society platform CivilM+ for conflict resolution in Eastern Ukraine: its goals, its structures, the founding NGOs behind it and its working priorities. The platform was founded in December 2017 as part of the project "Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbas" (2017-2018), coordinated by the DRA.

The war in Eastern Ukraine has become one of the decisive events in Europe since the 1990s: as the result of the interference of the Russian leadership in the political process in Ukraine, the armed conflict and the subsequent formation of two non-recognised republics in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, around 2 million people have been displaced, more than 10,000 killed, many thousands injured and deprived of their livelihoods. The ceasefire, the first point of the Minsk agreements signed in September 2014 and February 2015, has not even been implemented.

The challenges posed by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine can only be met through uniting efforts on multiple levels. As early as 2014, many NGO activists from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries recognised the need to join forces to overcome the conflict and strengthen the role of civil society in its resolution.

The development of CivilM+ was launched by DRA in 2016 together with an initiative group of Ukrainian and Russian, Polish and French NGOs. The aim of this interdisciplinary and multilateral work is to develop proposals for conflict resolution, to strengthen activities of individual NGOs and to keep the numerous aspects of the conflict on the European agenda. The members of the Platform strongly believe that in times when politicians evade solutions, or fail to offer them, the task of civil society is to set up a tar-

geted agenda to improve the situation of the population affected by the conflict.

The platform received the name CivilM+ to underline that the tasks for civil society go far beyond the independent monitoring of the Minsk agreements. NGOs have a role in ensuring the security of the people, taking on humanitarian issues, ensuring freedom of movement in the conflict affected region, working with controversial memories and narratives, mediating dialog between the sides of the conflict, monitoring the overall situation, in particular, the respect for human rights, and working in many other important domains.

We would like to thank all partners and donors who have already supported our work, including the Marion Dönhoff Foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the OSCE and, in particular, the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, whose funding has made the work and development of the platform possible.

*Stefan Melle, Director DRA, Berlin
In October of 2018.*

1. Alexander Hug on the perspectives of Donbas and the role of civil society

Alexander Hug, the former Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine from March 2014 to October 2018, closely observed the armed conflict since its inception. Over the course of last four and a half years Hug repeatedly called for more attention to the conflict, for stronger efforts to protect the people in the region and for implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

DRA spoke to Alexander Hug about the perspectives and needs for conflict resolution, about the potential role of civil society in general and the International NGO-platform CivilM+ in particular as well as about his own future involvement.

Mr Hug, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission systematically registered inconsistencies and violations in the implementation of Minsk agreements. In your opinion, how could civil society contribute to resolving the Donbas conflict? To which extent does it already fulfill this role and what limitations is it facing?

In general, solutions for sustainable peace should be elaborated in consultation with society and with institutions of civil society, in particular. The implementation of a solution is more effective and sustainable if all elements

of society can identify themselves with these solutions. A crucial role in this process is played not by international organizations alone but also by local communities, which makes the involvement of civil society indispensable.

This is already happening in this conflict, but not to the extent that all topics developed by political elites are picked up by society in general. Many people, including in Europe, turn away from the conflict. In this respect, civil society could do more, it could raise awareness about difficult topics.

Do you think that Russian civil society has a special role here?

The responsibility to resolve this conflict clearly lies in Moscow, as can be seen in the role the Russian Federation took on itself in various Minsk agreements. The OSCE refers to this conflict as the conflict in and around Ukraine, and the Russian society is affected by it directly or indirectly. Given that Russia signed the Minsk Agreements, the solution for peace building should be elaborated and implemented in consultation with its society for it to be sustainable.

What possibilities do civil society organizations have to provide help to people on territories not controlled by Ukraine, the so-called "DNR" and "LNR"?

It is difficult, because access to the population over the contact line, in non-government-controlled areas, is limited. Nevertheless, unlike in similar conflicts else-



A.Hug speaking at Autumn Talks conference, Berlin, 2018. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

where, a significant part of the civilian population travels frequently across the contact line, and on the government-controlled side it is easier to get in touch with them, talk to them, facilitate dialogue between communities on both sides of the contact line. Also, we certainly should not forget social media and other means of communication. For the civil society on the government-controlled side these could be tools to reach out directly to the population in non-government controlled areas.

How would you generally estimate the situation of people on the non-government controlled territories? What do they need most? Is it possible to re-integrate them and what would be the best way to do it?

We must bear in mind that integration or re-integration is not a task for people in one part of the country alone, it concerns people on both sides of the contact line. It must be a mutual process for the result to be sustainable.

The perpetual threat to life, well-being and material possessions is particularly pertinent to those who live close to the contact line or have to move across it in order to go to school or work or to visit their relatives. People told me on many occasions very clearly that their greatest wish is for this conflict to be over. At the same time, they make it clear that it is not their conflict and they don't understand the reasons why it continues. This is something I did hear consistently on both sides of the contact line.

What do you think is a key to resolving this conflict?

Arguably, a comprehensive and sustainable solution will not be found at the contact line alone but where decisions are taken, to pursue the steps agreed upon in the Minsk agreements. That is, the solution can be found in Moscow, in Kyiv, in certain areas of Donetsk and in Luhansk regions. These Minsk signatories need to ensure the implementation of provisions that are meant to stabilize the situation. This is crucial. And while civil society should do its job, the sustainable decision is a political decision, and it needs to be made in the centers of power in Moscow and Kyiv.

It means that civil society needs to keep an eye on international negotiations and on ways the agreements are being met. Which is the role of civil society in these negotiations?

I am convinced that civil society could play a meaningful role in peace negotiations. I said earlier that the implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms will be more effective if there is a general understanding about these mechanisms in the society in general. It is crucial and helpful for civil society to be involved in implementation

of the solutions in order for them to be sustainable and effective.

Does civil society have a realistic chance to contribute to these negotiations with any suggestions or ideas?

We need to find a way to involve civil society in order to make sure that some groups are not given preference over others. This requires some coordination, and the international community could play a role in this process. The civil society must be empowered and supported (also financially). I believe that suggestions and ideas from civil society and the general population could have their place in this format to ensure plural and multifaceted contributions to the discussion.

Certainly, the role of the civil society could be an increased participation in decision-making and implementation of agreed measures on one hand and holding decision-makers accountable on the other hand. Participation would ensure that the concerns and needs of the societies affected by the conflict are at the core of the negotiations. Accountability would ensure that the question about the responsibility for all the suffering is not merely asked for the purpose of further fuelling the conflict.

You have been familiar with the initiative CivilM+ from the moment of its conception. We are very grateful for your support. What role, in your opinion, could such platforms play in efforts for conflict resolution, with NGOs from Ukraine, Russia and third countries involved. What would you wish for this platform to achieve?

I am firmly convinced that this conflict can only be resolved through dialogue. The more dialogue - whatever topics may be involved - the greater the likelihood of finding a solution. The discussions facilitated in the framework of the platform may also help to raise awareness about the conflict among those who are not directly involved in it. The conflict is often perceived as a normal state of affairs and not as a situation which requires resolution. The dialogue that you are setting into motion with your platform is crucial to encourage those who have signed the Minsk Agreements to further implement their commitments, to make them aware about concerns of the people affected by the conflict. The understanding that the population needs to be given protection must remain at the core of the discussion.

How long do you think it will take to resolve and overcome the conflict? Are we talking about years, decades, perhaps?

The use of weapons can be stopped in a few hours, as the SMM had a chance to observe on several occasions since the beginning of the conflict. It is a question of political will and political motivation to make these decisions and to implement them on site. All necessary procedures for implementing these decisions have already been elaborated.

Previously you said that the population in the region believes it is not even their conflict. Whose conflict is it?

The main responsibility to end the conflict lies in Moscow and Kyiv, as can be seen in the role they took on themselves in various Minsk agreements. The fact is that the signatories of the Minsk Agreements have collectively established to carry on with conflict resolution efforts - and collectively is the keyword here. That is the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions that put their signatures under seven different agreements. They have realized that there is a problem which is pending a solution.

Does it mean that another, functioning compromise needs to be established?

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine itself cannot be made subject to a compromise. There is, however, an urgent need to elaborate a mechanism for com-

mon inquiries into violations of the Minsk Agreements and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable. At the same time, mechanisms for the prevention of violations need to be developed as well. Currently, these mechanisms are not fully provided for in the Minsk Agreements, and without them there is no responsibility and no accountability for the lack of their implementation. Violations more often than not go unpunished. There are little political costs, and no coherent mechanism to hold those to account who pull the triggers at the contact line. I am firmly convinced that a mechanism for common inquiries and sanctions for violations of the Minsk Agreements is necessary to implement the solutions in a sustainable way.

Having been deeply involved in peace-building process in Donbas for several years, you are leaving now your position at SMM. Will you be able to contribute further to this process?

I will certainly be following the situation in and around Ukraine, and if requested, also contribute my experience where possible so that a solution may be found as quickly as possible. I will continue to support Ukraine and Ukrainians in whatever form that may be possible.

Interview: Stefan Melle / Yuliya Erner (DRA)

Editor: Polina Aronson



Humanitarian assistance arrived to one of the villages near the contact line in the government-controlled areas in East Ukraine.
Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

“The majority of political decisions affecting the settlement of the conflict in Donbas or helping to reduce its negative consequences for the civilian population, raises complex public discussions not only in Ukraine, but also beyond its borders. It is namely these discussions which form public opinion and sometimes even the political will to take decisions. They can both contribute to and impede further steps towards settling the armed conflict.

Representatives of civil society often proceed from the principles of human rights, and not economic interests and political expediency. That is why, in my opinion, any political decision is not legitimised, if it is taken without taking into consideration the opinion of civil society, but means, that is will not be sufficiently effective in solving a whole range of challenges, which need to be solved, both already during the armed conflict, as well as after its peaceful settlement.”

*Valerii Novikov, Luhansk Regional Human Rights Center “Alternative”
(Ukraine)*

2. About the project

The project “Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbass” was implemented by DRA from January 2017 to June 2018. The main aim of the project was to unite civil society efforts for overcoming the military conflict in the east of Ukraine. Various NGOs and initiatives from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries have been working on counteracting the armed conflict in Donbas via different activities since its beginning in 2014. But it was namely the forming of cooperation through bringing together their knowledge, experience and activities and searching for contact points to maximize the effect of their work that became the main priority of the project.

The launch of CivilM+, the international independent platform, which aims to integrate civil society organizations and individual experts from different countries broadly for the peaceful resolution of military conflict in eastern Ukraine, is the main result of the project “Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbass”. The platform works on a wide range of issues (see also Ch.4).

Promotion of trust between NGOs, initiatives and activists from different countries involved in the conflict can support the strategic planning of joint activities, strengthen cooperation, and thus increase the impact of civil society on the conflict resolution and restoration of Donbass as a peaceful European region.

Generally, the key participants of the project are civil society activists and NGOs from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries involved in various projects on conflict issues as recognized experts for the human rights protection, peace building and other spheres of engagement in their countries.

The project had five main areas of activity. The work on the creation of CivilM+, the international independent platform for civil organizations and experts on Donbas issues, became the main point of the project. There is a strong connection between the activities aimed at reintegrating the conflict region and improving the situation of those affected by the conflict, namely, IDPs, refugees, families of missing people, participants of the ATO and their families, and peacebuilding, human rights, educational, humanitarian and other activities. Therefore, the exchange of knowledge and experience, both local and international, is particularly important. Another significant part of the project was the research and documentation of best civil practices of management of Donbas



Donbas Lab – Discussion Panel, Warsaw, June 2017. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

conflict consequences, as well as an analysis of other conflict regions' experiences¹.

To coordinate the efforts of various actors, the project aimed to develop a comprehensive joint civil society strategy for the peaceful conflict resolution.

The development of specific opportunities for joint activities of the civil society organizations from different countries and fields of engagement became the natural outcome of the project strategy.

The informational work was also carried out to improve the international community access to reliable and balanced coverage of the situation in eastern Ukraine and the conflict resolution process. The aim was also to promote more active involvement of European decision makers in dialogue with civil society representatives.

The project was funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

3. Why this project matters

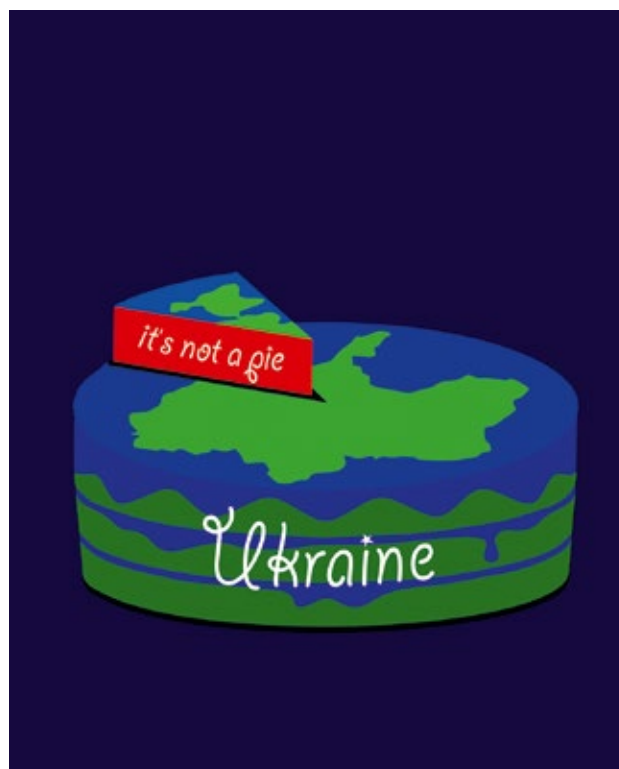
The violent conflict in the eastern Ukraine, where the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" are supported by the Russian Federation, has been going on for more than four years already. There are no signs of cessation: the negotiating capabilities are limited due to the lack of political will of the countries participating in the negotiations, and the diplomatic impact of European institutions remains insufficient. Although conflict escalation was prevented by previous rounds of trilateral negotiations in Minsk, a stable ceasefire has not yet been achieved.

The conflict which has killed about 3000 civilians², forced a million and a half of people to be displaced from the uncontrolled areas within the country, and for some 185,000 people to flee to Russia, continues to cripple Ukrainian democratic development. For Donbas region, it has caused a serious social and economic recession.

The society impacted by military conflict is fragmented and radicalization of opinions is significant, which, in turn, makes it susceptible to political manipulation. There's a negative impact caused by collective trauma, stigmatization of various social groups, disillusionment

¹ See Chapter 6. Variety of activities: the role of civil society in conflict resolution

² https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportUkraineMay-August2018_RU.pdf



Poster "Ukraine is not a pie" by Design Duo PKV2. Source: <http://4.stop-censorship.net>

with European political institutions and growing distrust towards officials which makes people more vulnerable. It is extremely difficult to discuss the possibilities of Donbas restoration. Thus, civil efforts to discuss the prospects of Ukrainian future, including the issues of Donbas, are an important prerequisite -both for the conflict resolution and the democratic consolidation of the country.

Civil society is a key pillar for overcoming the military conflict in eastern Ukraine and lays the groundwork for a stable peace. A large number of NGO activists from Ukraine, Russia and other countries contribute support to inhabitants' of the conflict region, as well as seek to restore the destroyed trust between the communities involved. Humanitarian activities, documentation of war crimes and human rights violations, training of law enforcement agencies and military personnel on human rights issues, awareness-raising about the situation in the conflict region in Ukraine and internationally are widespread. Peacebuilding activity, such as the creation of dialogue opportunities for those affected by the conflict, security restoration, namely, anti-landmine education and demining activities, are also important. NGOs are often specialized in assisting certain target groups, such as IDPs, children, women, ex-soldiers and their families, relatives of missing persons, political prisoners, refugees. The environment near the contact line is often unstable due to security issues.



Residential house destroyed by shelling, Donetsk oblast. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

The civil society capabilities, based on a wealth of experience and expertise, high motivation and extended knowledge of the conflict situation and actors, are not used to the full extent. Due to limited financial and management resources, as well as due to sophisticated interstate relations, there are parallel projects with no action-oriented or informational relation between them often. Many NGOs rely on their own resources, contacts and knowledge only.

There is considerable sectoral fragmentation among civil society representatives dealing with different issues of Donbas situation. The approaches to solving the problems differ and are not always enjoyed by the colleagues from other fields. There are difficulties in the analysis and processing of data connected with organizing a united database of war crimes and human rights violations, since the collaboration between the owners of databases is not always possible due to the lack of agreed-upon rules for the usage of data collected. Also, the cooperation between civil society and state structures remains poor.

There is a particularly deep gap between Ukrainian and Russian civil societies. The growing distrust is mainly based on different narrative framing of the conflict causes and the possibility of its resolution.

There are various successful cases of synergy in human rights and peacebuilding activities achieved by activists from different countries. However, the agenda of most of NGO-coalitions is limited to a number of issues only.

Given the absence of a common understanding of the background to the conflict and the possibilities for joint action of civil societies from different countries, a quick realization of the potential for joint activities is unlikely. Nevertheless, it is possible to consolidate efforts for conflict resolution and strengthen the influence of civil society on justice restoration, and to share knowledge, experience and actions via dialogue and the development of contact points. Close strategic international cooperation between both Ukrainian and Russian NGOs and organizations from other European countries and international structures are required to strengthen the influence of civil society on Donbass conflict resolution. It is important that the international community promotes the background for a scale of joint civil actions (especially for representatives of NGOs from Ukraine and Russia), as well as the implementation of technical and methodological support and the sharing of “best practices”, including the harmonization of creating and sharing united databases.

“I am certain that now it is very important to promote dialogue opportunities on a grassroots level between Ukrainian and Russian societies, as well as dialogue within Ukrainian society between people from the occupied territories (IDPs) and the rest of the country.

At first glance, the rift seems a whole lot stronger than with other conflicts, in as much as we observe little space for actively sharing peace. However, such a view is based on the official discourse, which reproduces subjective perceptions and understandings.

Nonetheless, on an interpersonal level, there is very clearly visible the desire and ability to communicate, plan and build a common future. Society shares these aspirations to a much greater extent than we think. The work of the CivilM+ Platform should be there to help this social dynamic gain weight, strength and visibility.”

*Ann Lereau, L'Assemblée Européenne des Citoyens/AEC
(France)*

4. CivilM+ – history, mission, tasks

At the beginning of December 2017, in Vienna, the Statement on the creation of CivilM+ was signed.

The Platform strives to unite civil society forces in such areas as the protection of human rights, peacebuilding, education and information dissemination, humanitarian work, with a goal of restoration of Donetsk and Luhansk regions as peaceful, integrated and developing regions of democratic Ukraine and united Europe. The platform seeks to involve the inhabitants of the conflict region, refugees and IDPs in all these activities.

CivilM+ is based on democratic values - the respect and protection of human dignity, respect and enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms, including non-discrimination, and provides its members with the opportunity to cooperate in joint initiatives and projects, develop and share joint positions, enjoy mutual support and solidarity, systematize knowledge, improve qualifications and better coordinate work.

CivilM+ main tasks:

- Widening trust and cooperation between civil societies of different countries and in various areas of activity,
- Monitoring compliance with and documenting violations of human rights, hate crimes, and war crimes,
- Providing civil society support for official peace negotiations and strengthening the influence of civil society representatives on them,
- Involving inhabitants, including those who left the region due to the conflict, in the process of restoration of the region and introducing the principles of transitional justice,
- Protecting victims of human rights violations, providing assistance in bringing to justice violators of such rights from all sides of the conflict,
- Involving citizens residing in the conflict zone in other regions of Ukraine, Russia and other countries in the dialogue aimed at overcoming the conflict and its consequences, including using methods of people's diplomacy,
- Activating citizenship in society, involving internally displaced persons and population in the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government, as well as their reintegration into Ukrainian society,
- Raising public awareness about the conflict in Donbass



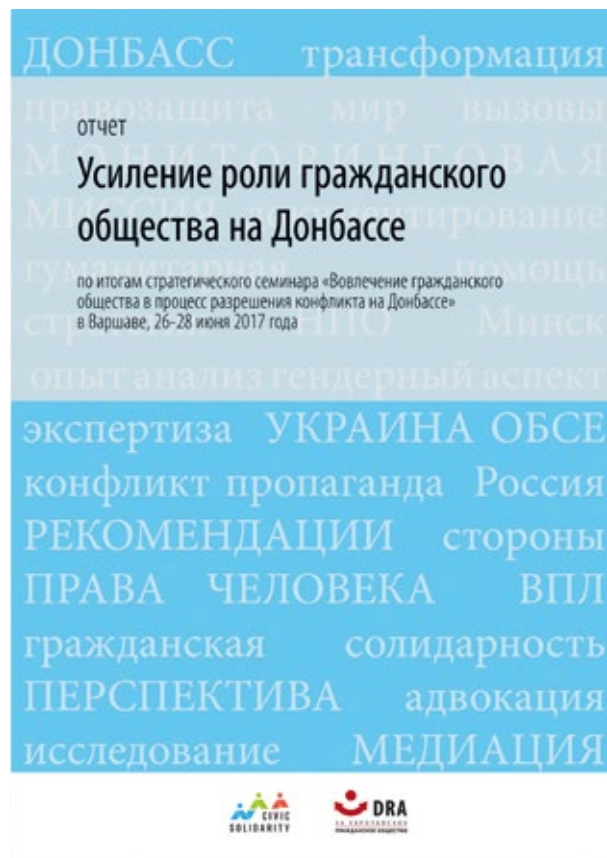
Founding members of CivilM+. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

- on regional, national and international levels and cooperation with media,
- Developing communication and cooperation of civil society institutions with regional and international institutions of the state, economic, educational and other spheres,
- Promoting transparency in conflict resolution processes,
- Countering misinformation, hate speech and language of hostility,
- Supporting projects, programs and activities related to various aspects of the platform,
- Conducting educational and awareness raising activities, projects and programs aimed at strengthening civil society organizations involved in resolving the conflict in Donbas and contributing to the solution of the challenges mentioned above.

The preliminary work for the creation of the CivilM+ has been conducted since 2015. In May 2016, the first meeting of the initiative group of civil society activists interested in interaction and joint research on possible ways of influencing the Donbas conflict took place. In November 2016, a working meeting was held in Berlin, with around 35 NGOs which were invited by the DRA to take part. The first working groups were created to elaborate on a whole host of issues, from the issues of social protection and the work of exit-entry checkpoints to the issues of international negotiation monitoring. During 2017, there were a number of meetings of the so called “initiative group”, which united representatives of international civil society. During these meetings, joint values, rules and principles of the Platform were determined, and responsibilities were discussed. Key activities and sensitive issues important for CivilM+ to become a space of trust and cooperation were raised. All this was a challenge for civil society representatives of the countries involved in the conflict.

In June 2017, the strategic seminar in Warsaw, organized jointly with the Platform for Civil Solidarity and the OSCE/ODIHR, became an important milestone in the Platform’s history. 40 civil society representatives and more than 15 officials from different states and the OSCE discussed various aspects of the conflict in thematic groups. Recommendations were agreed for the further activities of civil organizations and international institutions as a result of three days of work. The official statement on the Platform CivilM+ was signed in December 2017 in Vienna. 12 civil organizations - six from Ukraine, three from Russia, two from France and one from Germany - became the co-founders of the Platform.

Since December 2017, a monthly bulletin “Pulse of Peace in Donbas” is distributed, which allows readers to keep abreast of the latest conflict-related events, such as political issues and the overall situation in the conflict region, as well as legal initiatives. A specific focus is set on civil society activities in Ukraine, Russia and globally



Follow-up report “Enhancing civil society’s impact in Donbas” on the results of the seminar in Warsaw, June 2017. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

to overcome the consequences of the war in the eastern Ukraine. (see also Ch. 6)

There are two forms of participation in CivilM+:

- informational membership, which includes new update, participation in events and working groups of the Platform, signing the statements issued on behalf of the Platform participants,
- full membership, which includes additionally, the right to vote on all the decisions regarding the Platform’s activities.

In order to become a member of the Platform, an organization or an expert must provide two recommendations from the Platform’s actual members.

The structure of the Platform includes the Forum - the general meeting of actual participants, the Coordination Board responsible for operational decisions and the organization of the platform strategy development, the Supervisory Board to monitor compliance with the Platform’s rules, the Secretariat dealing with Participants,

CivilM+ Structure



and the Working groups. Participants of the Platform can create new working groups, which must consist of at least one representative from Ukraine, Russia and other countries in order to maintain a balance in decisions making.

Ensuring the safety of all the participants is a core principle of the Platform.

For more details on CivilM+ see <https://civilmplus.org>

5. Areas of CivilM+ activity

The Platform participants prioritized five strategic directions for 2018-2020 activities.

Conflict mapping

CivilM+ participants strive to purposefully collect and systematize data about the conflict, its actors, processes, context, as well as to ensure access to this data to all concerned.

This thematic area aims to identify the actors and groups involved in Donbas conflict at different levels, as well as to know their motives and interactions, ways of influence, interests, fears and expectations. According to it, a joint vision of the interrelationships between decisions, actions and events related to Donbas conflict will be developed. This will serve as the basis for establishment of CivilM+ action strategy, as well as for recommendations to the stakeholders on the work with each of the involved groups in the process of conflict resolution.

Working in an interdisciplinary international group which unites the civil and academic communities will create a more comprehensive and diverse understanding of the conflict issues.

Dialogue and integration

The reintegration of the society and the establishment of interaction between conflict groups are among the core activities of the CivilM+ platform.

In recent years, the overall situation leads to a deepening mistrust and hostility of the population on both sides of the contact line, as well as a sharp decline in contact and cooperation between Russian and Ukrainian civil societies. Destroyed economic relations and transport facilities as well as informational influence and difficult conditions

of crossing the contact line impede dialogue of groups across the contact line. Propaganda and the “insensitive” vocabulary (using pejorative terms, such as “terrorists”, “nationalists”, etc.) are typical for both Russian and Ukrainian information policy to different extents. As a result, the residents of uncontrolled areas, including activists, are becoming convinced that they are undesirable to Ukraine, the state of their citizenship.

Promoting interaction between representatives of conflicting parts of the society will create conditions for better understanding and trust, and motivate participants to develop common activities and engage with common local issues.

Support of international negotiations

The success of international peace negotiations depends, in particular, on bringing the decisions to life and the implementation support provided by the actors. Each of the existing negotiation formats on Donbas – the Normandy format, the meetings of Ukraine-Russia-OSCE Trilateral Contact Group, the Joint Center for Control and Coordination (JCCC) on ceasefire and stabilization of the demarcation line between the parties, US-Russia bilateral negotiation format – has certain particularities and limitations. The “road map” was not developed for almost two years of work in the Normandy format, the documents developed by the Trilateral Contact Group do not have an official “road map”, and there is no clear mandate for the JCCC.

In particular, the contents of the Minsk Agreements offer a lot of material for a public discussion: What are the needs, chances and limitations which have to be taken into consideration by political decision making in order to assure the progress of implementation and political accountability?

The monitoring of the negotiations and (non-)implementation processes goes alongside with other thematic work of the CivilM+. A joint vision of measures will be developed that can constructively influence the peaceful transformation of the conflict. Recommendations for participants of international negotiations will reflect on the unclear implementation strategy, which produce a negative perception of the mechanism in the Ukrainian society and pave the way for political instrumentalization of issues.

Transitional justice

There is a need to prepare viable solutions for a peaceful co-existence of societies involved in conflict in the future, even the armed violence in eastern Ukraine could not be

stopped yet. The term “transitional justice” brings into focus the complex interlinking of legal work, truth-finding, and reconciliation.

Transitional justice is designed to simultaneously restore the dignity of victims, gradually build mutual trust between the groups involved in the conflict, and contribute to the institutional changes necessary to establish new social relationships. This is required in order to re-establish the rule of law with the rejection of practices that allow full or partial impunity. Monitoring of human rights violations is a significant part of the transitional justice concept development.

Against the background of numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in context of Donbas conflict, a lot of work has been already done concerning the documentation of war crimes and victims. Taking stock of situation in Ukraine and of international experiences in other conflicts, the working group on transitional justice starts with the systematisation of knowledge and experience as for the legal persecution of war criminals, mechanisms of lustration, as well as classification of and reparation for victims. By participating in both analytical work and monitoring, CivilM+ promotes the development and application of the transitional justice concept for Ukraine.

Advocacy and informational work

Even though many actors are familiar with the data about the conflict and civil initiatives in Donbas, public access to balanced and objective information is difficult for a number of reasons. At the same time, misinformation used by all the conflict parties at some point has a strong impact on public opinion in different countries.

CivilM+ has a task of collecting, systematizing and disseminating reliable and balanced data about the conflict in eastern Ukraine on the countries’ level, as well as for the international community. In addition, the Platform seeks to involve European decision makers in the resolution of the conflict. At the same time, there is the process of research and archiving of best practices of dealing with the consequences of this conflict, as well as the analysis of possible implementation of successful practices from other conflict regions. These measures should help to consolidate the efforts of all the possible actors for the peace process.

Raising awareness of the conflict in European societies and countering propaganda will strengthen the involvement of the international community - in particular, the Russian Federation - in conflict resolution.



On the streets of Slaviansk. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

“In the area around the front line, the population is experiencing serious psychological strain. The level of domestic violence is high, there is childhood aggression. Conflicts amongst parents and children are widespread, in connection with the fact that the parents are busy with everyday issues of survival. We observe a lack of cooperation within the family. And there is nowhere to find psychological help on a constant systemic level. Officials reply “once the conflict has finished, then there will be time to think what to do.”

*Nadezhda Khomenko, Country of Free People
(Ukraine)*

6. Variety of activities: the role of civil society in conflict resolution

From the very beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, initiatives to resolve it and support those whose rights were violated appeared at very different levels of society. At the grassroots level, such initiatives were often created by activists with no or minimal previous experience of civil activities. At a more professional level, the new departments with a focus on overcoming the conflict consequences were created by organizations working in the field of human rights or peacebuilding.

Today, both Ukrainian organizations operating in uncontrolled or controlled areas and organizations from other European countries, including Russia, are active.



Table hockey championship for children from the conflict-affected region, 2018. Source: facebook page of "Kraina vilnykh liudey"

There is a wide range of formats, themes and level of activity of civil organizations.

Public actions and awareness-raising events on the ongoing conflict issues and the situation of those affected by it are wide spread.

The situation of IDPs is one of the most frequent subjects for such events and, due to a certain consensus on these issues reached by various organizations, they are often organized by a group of NGOs.

For example, an event called "The Snowball of IDPs' Problems. The fourth year without a thaw", about systemic human rights violations was organized in September 2017 by a number of civil organizations in order to remind the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about the unresolved problems of IDPs which have accumulated like a snowball. At the same time, free public legal consultations were held as the first part of the event in order to make the activities of civil organizations more visible to the general

audience³. In March 2018, the "Invisible Voters" street event was held near the Verkhovna Rada, the participants of the action demanded the adoption of the draft law on voting rights for IDPs⁴.

The issue of political prisoners is among the main subjects of such events. In March 2018, events in support of Denis Bakholdin, a Russian anti-war activist currently accused of participating in ATO on the side of Ukraine, were held internationally. The kind of event differed depending on the situation in the country. So, in Moscow, single-person street actions that did not require any notification to law enforcement agencies, were held. In Kyiv, a solidarity event was organized in front of the Embassy of the Russian Federation, which attracted a lot of media attention⁵. In February 2018, "26 minutes for Kremlin prisoners", the solidarity action in support of Ukrainian political prisoners, organized jointly by Ukrainian and international organizations, took place in Kyiv⁶. In May 2018, a similar event was held with the aim of persuading on Ukrainian authorities to strengthen their efforts to assist political prisoners in Russia and occupied Crimea.⁷

Fewer events are devoted directly to issues of civil dialogue, due to less support for this topic in society. In February 2018, St. Petersburg residents greeted Ukrainians on the anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity and brought flowers to the Consulate General of Ukraine⁸.

Significant efforts are being made by civil organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to victims during the conflict, a number of NGOs specialize in this particular area of activity, having established contacts with European charitable initiatives. For example, around 50 of field humanitarian visits to the liberated parts of Donbass have been carried out by the "East-SOS" Charitable Foundation, which focuses on small towns, primarily, where the help of larger organizations is often inaccessible⁹.

The provision of humanitarian assistance typically comes in the form of a voucher - for example, some 5500

3 <https://hromadske.radio/ru/podcasts/kyiv-donbas/snezhnyy-kom-problem-pochemu-pereselency-mitingovali-pod-kabminom>

4 <http://vpl.com.ua/uk/news/4673/>

5 <https://freedenis.org/2018/03/11/globalsolidarity10032018/>

6 <https://ru.krymr.com/a/photo/29063741.html>

7 https://humanrights.org.ua/material/na_bankovij_proveli_akciju_shhodo_zviltennija_sencova_ta_vsih_branciv_kremlija_chogo_vimagali_vid_vladi_aktivisti

8 <https://www.svoboda.org/a/29055162.html>

9 <http://vostok-sos.org/49-ya-gumanitarnaya-poezdka-vostok-sos-osvobozhdennye-goroda/>



Dissemination of humanitarian assistance. Eastern Ukraine, 2017. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

vulnerable families received multifunctional vouchers in 2018 from the “Country of free people” NGO¹⁰. “Proliska” humanitarian mission has been acting along the entire line of contact since 2014, providing humanitarian assistance to various groups of those in need and dealing with evacuation issues¹¹.

Civil organizations participate extensively in restoring Donbass infrastructure - for example, dealing with repairing school buildings located near the demarcation line. The visits to such schools were carried out by the “East-SOS” Charitable Foundation¹². Another example is the building of playgrounds in front-line cities, carried out by “Tumbler”¹³ project volunteers from Russia and Ukraine. The project “Building Ukraine together”, in addition to restoring or building infrastructure, specializes in networking Ukrainians from the eastern and western parts of the country,¹⁴. Awareness-raising events have a similar aim in

creating dialogue; for example, the “Festival of Opinions” is an annual platform for Luhansk and Donetsk areas controlled by the Ukrainian government which provides the local population with a possibility to discuss the surrounding situation and share ideas of influence¹⁵.

Some civil organizations have focus on dealing with certain categories of those affected by the military conflict. For example, the “Black Tulip” humanitarian mission is engaged in the search, exhumation and burial of those killed during the ATO. This organization provides support to the relatives of such persons and is also involved in the issues of missing persons and prisoners¹⁶.

Among others, the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU) implements the “Map of Memory” project, recording the place and circumstances of the death of various conflict participants¹⁷.

Spreading the word about the war zone situation is a very important duty of the civil society organizations, which helps to make the voices of ordinary people louder.

10 https://www.facebook.com/ngocfp/videos/2063054850691635/?__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARCG8HwwzmrKHzVljQ3XQ2XTXLiFYfo50nfVdYOJ8rhAwa5qxw0RILNt3gJ1-bA9dGy1tICZWJ-sS1ME3bR4L68bLKeUXuRt81ZDp4_IInYy_z5hXQVHhJmdKtE20-akQOK2ZS9SvEzBzWICgq3AIUS2_-WlcmYktWbE3pYL3i11FCjzMW&__tn__=R

11 <https://www.facebook.com/proliskamission/>

12 <http://informer.media/archives/295108>

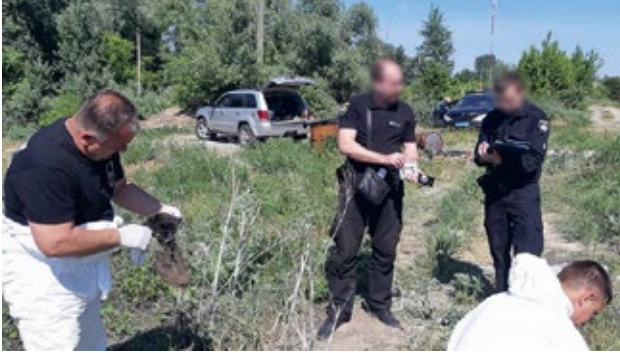
13 <https://www.facebook.com/tumbler.ua>

14 <http://bur.lef.org.ua>

15 https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=328401834371749&id=944953885556987

16 <http://ru.unm.org.ua>

17 <http://memorialmap.org/about>



Search works, 2018. Source: facebook page of Cherniy Tiulpan



Discussing international practices of the response to displacement, eastern Ukraine, 2017. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

The “Shared Kitchen”, - a series of events hosted in Kyiv¹⁸, St. Petersburg and Voronezh¹⁹ to celebrate the International day of Peace 2017. During dinner with people from Ukraine and Russia, any participant could ask the questions about situation in the countries, their personal experiences and ideas of conflict resolution. The “Lights of Eirena” anti-war initiative and the “Almenda” NGO were among the organizers.

The “Open Space” initiative organized a meeting with anthropologist Vadim Lurie and a presentation of his photos “Journey to Donbass and back” in St.Petersburg in May, 2018²⁰. In January 2018, the discussion “Is there a civil society in the conflict region?” took place in Kyiv, where NGOs working in Donbass discussed their work and future plans²¹.

Peacebuilding issues are also discussed by activists and civil initiatives. An anti-war “No violence” march²² with around 200 participants and side events took place in St. Petersburg in September-October 2017²³. The meetings of the mothers of the killed and missing Ukrainian soldiers and those who fought on the side of the so-called “L/DPR” are organized by the “All-Ukrainian Association of the Relatives of Missing and Killed Persons” civil organization²⁴.

Art methods are quite commonly used as a means for civil society activists to share their views. In March 2018, the documentary anti-war play “The War Is Near” about

events in Donbass, Crimea and Syria²⁵ was performed by Teatr.Doc in Moscow.

At the end of October 2017, the presentation of “Crossroads. Nine stories about war and violence”, a graphic novel, prepared by eight Ukrainian civil organizations in cooperation with three NGOs from Western Europe, took place²⁶.

International educational and awareness-raising projects is a possible way to spread the word about the military conflict and to exchange the experience with other countries with similar situations for the development of effective tools of influence for civil organizations. Thus, six information campaigns on the prevention of war-caused domestic violence was created in different Ukrainian regions in the framework of a project implemented by DRA²⁷. The participants of the Luhansk Regional Human Rights Center “Alternative”, together with the “Justice for Peace in Donbass” coalition members, adopted the peacebuilding experience of the organizations working in Balkans²⁸. “The Power of Goodness”²⁹ project dealing with peacebuilding and non-violent communication tools for helpers and school students was implemented in Ukraine by Odessa Regional Group of Mediation together with colleagues from Chechnya, Russia.

Legal issues are covered by a large number of both Ukrainian and Russian organizations. Direct assistance, - such as legal advice for refugees provided by the

18 <http://almenda.org/den-mira-vo-vremya-voyny/>

19 <https://www.facebook.com/lights.of.eirene/posts/1468949609856501>

20 <https://www.facebook.com/events/171000696920826/>

21 <http://vostok-sos.org/v-kyievi-projshla-zustrich-chy-ye-gromadyanske-suspilstvo-v-regioni-konfliktu/>

22 <http://youngspace.ru/aktsionizm/klouny-militaristy/>

23 <https://www.facebook.com/lights.of.eirene/posts/1465842710167191>

24 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/materi-soldat-marinka/29222978.html>

25 <http://teatrdoc.ru/events.php?id=179>

26 <http://uacrisis.org/ua/61888-crossroad-nine-stories-about-war-and-violence>

27 <https://www.austausch.org/novosti-detali/startovali-shest-iz-semi-informacionnyx-kampanij-po-preduprezhdeniju-domashnego-nasilija-obuslovlennogo-posledstvijami-voyny/>

28 <https://jfp.org.ua/coalition/novyny-koalicii/articles/balkans-1>

29 <http://power-of-goodness.org>

“Everything is equally important when talking about the conflict: the reasons for its occurrence and the reasons that it escalated and the context which made it possible. But for the resolution of the conflict, there is just one important factor – the people who are involved in it. Those people, who are active, whether aggravating or diffusing the conflict, those people who simply do not act, who are disoriented in a series of successive events in the conflict, and those people, who actively try to build dialogue. Public organisations will never become states in terms of system, responsibility or representativeness, but they can work in those places, where systemic decisions are currently impossible on a state level. They can propose and test solutions on a small scale, ones that the state cannot try because of risk, inflexibility, the need for agreement at many stages. Public initiatives, volunteer groups, peace-building organisations, human rights defenders – all these forms of civil society representation are much more neutral, more flexible in their methods and more efficient in the possibilities of sharing their experience. That is exactly why they work in those places where state bodies, trying to respond systematically, are years behind in the relevance of their actions.

But the main thing is that all these initiatives consist of people – the main factor in conflict resolution, because each person is an opportunity to build dialogue, to draw upon unconventional experience and simply an enormous motivation to work on conflict resolution.”

*Sasha Romantsova, Centre for Civil Liberties
(Ukraine)*



Theatre play "War is near". Photo: Teatr.doc, all rights reserved

"Civic Assistance Committee" NGO in Russia³⁰, and drafting of new legislation are among the tools used to tackle legal issues surrounding the war. The draft law "On Pardoning", which proposes amendments to the Criminal and Criminal Procedural Codes of Ukraine, as well as the regulation of pardoning and the criteria for its application to those who have committed minor or moderate conflict-related crimes, was prepared by the Center for De-occupation and Reintegration Issues of the "Power of law" all-Ukrainian social movement³¹.

A number of civil organizations are engaged in documentation and monitoring of issues related to military actions in the east of Ukraine. This work is carried out on a coalition basis commonly. The human rights monitoring by the "Justice for Peace in Donbass" coalition, the UHHRU papers on specific issues, such as violations of social rights of IDPs, and the Kharkiv human rights group monitoring are the examples of this activity.

Without doubt, all the NGOs dealing with those affected by the conflict are contributing to its peaceful transformation. They also support the improvement of the local environment and, arguably, understand the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable sections of the population best.

30 <https://refugee.ru/>

31 <https://business.facebook.com/NGOSilaPrava/?fref=mentions>

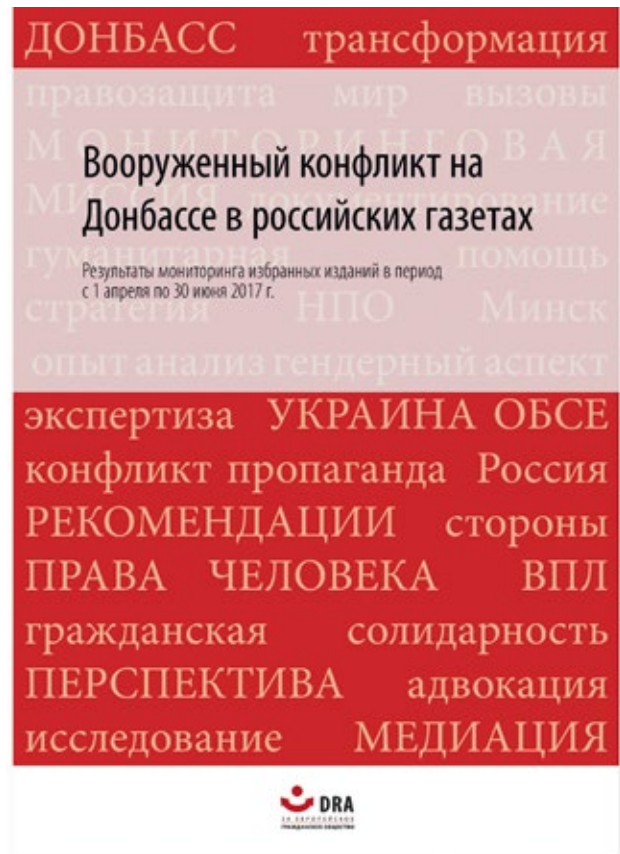
7. War in Ukraine and Russian society

The Russian state is the central actor of the conflict in the east of Ukraine, and the position of Russian society essentially determines the spectrum of possible actions for state power structures. Taking into account the enormous impact of the media on public opinion, it can be assumed that a diversified and impartial description of the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine would allow Russian society to understand the features of modern Russian-Ukrainian relations more deeply, and would make it possible to assess the involvement of various sides in the conflict and how to overcome it. What is the typical information available for the Russian society on the conflict in the east of Ukraine?

Within the framework of the project “Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbass”, the report on Donbass war representation in the Russian Federation was published in fall 2017. The publication “Donbass armed conflict in Russian newspapers” shared the results of the monitoring of some Russian media from April 1 to June 30, 2017.

The media, both state and privately owned, is the main source of information about the military conflict in the east of Ukraine for Russian citizens. For those who do not have the opportunity to map the landscape based on the stories of relatives and friends living in Ukraine or the areas temporarily uncontrolled by Ukrainian government or those who left these areas, or also through the experience of civil society organizations, the media is crucial for developing their own attitude to conflict.

The representation of events varies greatly amongst different media outlets, depending on their political position and proximity to the state. The study included the monitoring of four Russian media - “Rossiyskaya Gazeta”, “Novaya Gazeta”, “Kommersant” and the weekly newspaper “Argumenty i Fakty”. It was found that in most cases the pro-state media news is judgmental and subjective, and a dismissive attitude is adopted. The comparisons offered by the authors, as well as interpretations and characteristics of Ukrainian events correspond to the stereotypes and prejudices characteristic of the state media discourse. The labelling and an aggressive tone used to shape the image of the “Other” is typical. Thus, Russian readers were offered the idea that nationalist and anti-Russian sentiments are strong in Ukraine, the territories of the so-called “D/ LPR” were deliberately isolated from the rest of Ukraine by the Ukrainian government, and the support from European and US partners is weakening. At the same time, these assertions are not supported by any



DRA publication “Armed conflict in Donbas in Russian Newspapers”. Photo: DRA, all rights reserved

facts, and quotes from Russian officials (expressing the state position) or unnamed “Ukrainian experts” are used to prove it.

The message of such media creates the following opinions amongst readers: that events in the south-east of Ukraine are the result of an anti-constitutional coup organized by the West, which was not accepted by the inhabitants of some regions. Donbass conflict is fuelled by military and punitive actions of the Ukrainian government against Ukrainian citizens, so, its resolution is impossible with the lack of political guarantees about the inadmissibility of ethnic cleansing, and a law on the special status of Donbass. Readers also have the idea foisted upon them that the reintegration of the territories not controlled by Ukraine is only possible on the condition of preserving their autonomy, and for this it is necessary to establish a direct dialogue with representatives, controlled by the Russian Federation, of the so-called “L/DNR”.

For privately-owned media, the neutrality of the news, sharing comments from both Russian and Ukrainian officials, the absence of obvious signs of speech aggression, as well as the presence of mainly analytical rather

than news publications are more typical. Not siding with any conflict party, or criticizing the Russian state policy, they describe the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine as launched by the Kremlin mainly and still fuelled by it, including the fact of Russian military personnel are fighting on the separatists' side. There are contradictions between the Russian and Western ways of assessing this conflict, and the international presence is fundamentally important. A propaganda campaign against Ukraine has been unleashed by Russia to discredit the enemy, and the application of sanctions against Russia for the lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements drives the situation into a dead end, since only Ukraine can perform a significant part of the Agreements, while Ukraine has take a number of steps aimed dissociating itself from Russia.

According to the study, it can be concluded that Russian society has a spectrum of sources de jure, but the circulation and availability of pro-state editions are significantly greater than for privately-owned editions. At the same time, the position of pro-state mass media does not provide Russian citizens with a stimulus for participation in civil organizations and initiatives acting in conflict resolution; on the contrary, using the prism of "big politics" for the situation, the average Russian citizen is most likely to continue to identify him/herself with the Russian state and its politics.

“Since the very start of the armed conflict in Donbass, many civil society organisations in Ukraine, including UHHRU, have made efforts to help the local population and those people who moved out of the conflict zone, providing material, psychological, medical, legal and other forms of support to victims of the conflict. Often, there were joint projects and activities with Russian partner organisations, especially when it involved visiting areas not under the control of Ukraine. It is important to unite such initiatives with the aim of exchanging experiences, attracting effective partners and experts, both national and international ones. The CivilM+ Platform is such a space, which unites representatives of various non-governmental organisations from Ukraine, Russian and other European countries, the aim of which is dialogue via bringing together the potential and efforts of each of the organisations, and it is exactly this which carries in it the synergy and raises interest in working together.”

*Aleksandr Pavlichenko, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
(Ukraine)*

8. Founding members of the Platform

Luhansk Regional Human Rights Center "Alternative" (Ukraine)

<https://alterpravo.wixsite.com/alterpravo>

The organisation was founded in 2013, in the town of Alchevsk, Luhansk oblast. Due to the armed conflict, it moved to Kyiv. The main areas of activity are the documentation of human rights violations connected with the armed conflict in Donbas and engaging representatives of civil society in dialogue with the aim of nearing peace and agreement.

L'Assemblée Européenne des Citoyens (AEC) (France)

<http://www.aechca.fr>

A non-governmental organisation, working on protecting fundamental rights and freedoms, peace, democracy and pluralism. The main aims of the organisation are the implementation of international standards of basic rights and freedoms in everyday life, the promotion of peaceful resolution of problems via mutual understanding and peaceful dialogue, improving initiatives of civil society and pluralistic, democratic unions and guaranteeing the rule of law.

Country of Free People (Ukraine)

<https://kvl.org.ua>

The public organisation was created at the very start of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine by activists from the region. Its activities are aimed at helping IDPs, inhabitants of the ATO zone, as well as minimising the consequences of the armed conflict via humanitarian assistance, human rights support, working with children and young people and psychological support.

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (Ukraine)

<https://helsinki.org.ua>

The largest association of human rights organisations in Ukraine, including 29 NGOs, the aim of which is to protect human rights. UHHRU facilitates the development of a

human society which is based on respect for human life, dignity and harmonious relationships between the individual, state and nature via the creation of a platform for collaborating between members of the union and other participants in the human rights movement.

Union "Women of the Don" (Russia)

<https://www.donwomen.ru>

The regional public human rights organisation, oriented at the protection of basic human rights, families and children, implementing programmes to promote gender equality, peacebuilding, civic self-government, the development of a culture of peace and non-violence and the rehabilitation of people who have suffered in the course of the war and terrorist acts.

Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

<http://ccl.org.ua>

A public organisation created to promote and implement human rights values in Ukraine and in the territories of the former Soviet Union. The main aims of the center are promoting reform connected with guaranteeing human rights; the introduction of public control over the actions of law enforcement agencies, courts and local self-governance agencies; documentation of cases of political persecution in Crimea and international crimes in Donbas; educational work and participation in international solidarity programmes.

Kharkiv Human Rights Group (Ukraine)

<http://khpg.org>

One of the oldest human rights organisations in Ukraine carries out work in three areas: helping those whose rights have been violated and carrying out citizen investigations into human rights violations; legal educational work and promoting concepts of human rights via public events and publications; analysing the human rights situation in Ukraine.

Memorial Human Rights Center (Russia)

<https://memohrc.org>

The main aims of the human rights center are assisting to build a developed civil society and democratic state governed by the rule of law, excluding the possibility of

returning to totalitarianism; taking part in the formation of societal consciousness on the basis of values, democracy and law, overcoming totalitarian stereotypes and asserting the rights of the individual in political practices and public life. The organisation conducts various programmes, such as submitting cases of human rights violations to the ECHR, supporting political prisoners, investigating human rights and norms of international humanitarian law in "hot spots", counteracting the fabrication of criminal cases regarding Islamic extremism, helping migrants in legal matters and monitoring political and religious persecution in Central Asia.

Ideas for Change (Ukraine)

<http://ideizmin.com.ua>

The mission of the center of civil initiatives 'Ideas for Change' is the transformation of Ukrainian society from the values of survival to the values of development from the level of local to national communities. The organisation works on transforming and regulating conflicts, foreign and informational policy, developing governmental policies and supporting reforms, controlling public finances, cultural diplomacy, gender equality and supporting leaders of change.

Citizen and Army (Russia)

<http://www.army-hr.ru>

A public initiative bringing together a number of Russian human rights organisations that are active in supporting military personnel, conscripts and alternative forms of service people, monitoring rights violations of this group, as well as providing them legal support.

Ukraine Action (France)

<https://ukraineaction.org>

The aim of the association 'Ukraine action' is to inform French society about human rights in Ukraine, the fate of Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia and events connected with the war in Donbass. Developing the dialogue between Ukrainian and French civil society, the organisation facilitates the development of the rule of law in Ukraine.

DRA e.V. (Germany)

<https://www.austausch.org>

is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Berlin, working since 1992 with the aim of promoting democratic developments in Russia and other East European countries through cooperation with Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and other European NGOs, with independent mass media and in cross-sectoral cooperation. The DRA offers youth and other exchange programs in the field of political education, democracy and active citizenship and works to establish links with Western partners. Moreover, the DRA acts as an agency for volunteers between Eastern and Western Europe.

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This report presents the international NGO-platform CivilM+ for conflict resolution in eastern Ukraine. The independent platform was founded in December 2017 in Vienna by civil society activists from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries, in the framework of the project „Dialogue for understanding and justice: European NGOs working together for conflict resolution in Donbas“, conducted by the DRA with support of the Foreign Office of Germany. Its main goal is uniting the efforts of activists from different countries and areas of work to strengthen the role of civil society in the process of conflict resolution. Providing a reflection on the process of the platforms' creation, the report outlines the reasons, which motivated the development of the CivilM+, the set of goals and areas of joint efforts, which are in strategic focus of its work for 2018-2020. Among them the conflict mapping, monitoring and response on international peace negotiations, developing the framework for transitional justice, re-integration of the conflict region, advocacy work and awareness raising in different countries and on different levels. The Report also provides the opinions of the platforms' members as for an added value of a horizontal cooperation and international civil society networks for the conflict resolution in Donbas.

We hope the publication will raise an interest to the CivilM+ and its goals, and will motivate new civil society actors in Europe, including Ukraine and Russia to join the platforms' work. This report might be useful for those engaged in development of coalitions, networks and civil society platforms.