

**HIGHLIGHTS**

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



April 23-29, 2021

**COVID SITUATION****DONETSK AND LUHANSK REGIONS REMAIN IN THE 'ORANGE ZONE'**

[According to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine](#), as of 29 April, 4,616 new COVID-19 cases were registered during the past week in government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, and 1,331 cases were registered in government-controlled part of Luhansk region. The self-proclaimed 'DPR' [informed](#) about 1,106 news cases in the past week, while 44 cases [reported](#) by the self-proclaimed 'LPR'. Donetsk and Luhansk regions remain in the 'orange zone', according to Ukraine's within the epidemiological classification.

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PASSES RESOLUTION CONDEMNING RUSSIA**

On 29 April, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning Russia and calling to immediately release its opposition leader Aleksei Navalny and pull its military forces back from the border with Ukraine. As [reported](#) by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty the resolution said that the "scale and striking capabilities" of the Russian troops 'indicate intentions of an offensive'. According to this non-binding resolution, if Russian forces are used to invade Ukraine, "imports of oil and gas from Russia to the EU [should] be immediately stopped" and Russia should be "excluded from the SWIFT payment system" of international bank transfers.

**THE TREAT FOR THE SECURITY OF UKRAINE REMAINS**

Despite Russia's claims that it has ended its military training and the military personnel returned to its bases, the threat for the security of Ukraine remains, experts [say](#). A part of military forces is [still located](#) at a military field in Voronezh region, 150km away from Ukrainian Border. Viktor Muzhenko, former Chief of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (2014-2019) [considers](#) that Russia will apply this escalation technique in cycles. Kurt Volker, former US Special Representative for Ukraine (2017-2019) [notes](#) in his [article](#) that this process was accompanied by a large-scale disinformation campaign, and the reaction from the western countries was passive: "instead of being condemned for these acts, Russia is being praised for its stand-down".

## 'EASTER CEASEFIRE' HAS NOT BEEN AGREED

The Trilateral contact group [had a meeting](#) on 28 April to continue the discussion about the verification mechanism for a ceasefire in Donbas. While the final text of the 'Easter ceasefire' has not been agreed, the parties plan to continue working on it.

## POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR A MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY AND THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

The [discussions](#) are ongoing about the possible options for a meeting of the president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Russian president Vladimir Putin. According to Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's minister of reintegration of the occupied territories, Vladimir Putin's suggestion to meet in Moscow is unacceptable. He [underlined](#) that Russian military withdrawal from the territories of Ukraine that it currently occupies should be the first point of the agenda, as a precondition for the renewal of the bilateral relations. While the conflict is still ongoing, only meetings within the Normandy format are possible. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba [stated](#) that any direct negotiations between Kyiv and the leaders of the so-called 'L/DPR' (something that Vladimir Putin is [insisting](#) on) are unacceptable.

## POSSIBILITY TO WIDEN THE NORMANDY FORMAT

Volodymyr Zelenskyy [voiced](#) a possibility to widen the Normandy format by involving also the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA. Dmitrii Peskov, the spokesperson of the Russian president, [expressed](#) an opinion that such a step would mean the end of the 'Minsk process'.

## 538,000 RESIDENTS OF THE SELF-PROCLAIMED 'REPUBLICS' RECEIVED RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP

The number of residents of the self-proclaimed 'republics' who received Russian citizenship through the simplified procedure can almost double, reaching one million people, [according](#) to Viktor Vodolatskii, a State Duma official. He said in an interview

that as of now, 538,000 Russian passports have been issued in the areas of Donbas that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government. Ukrainian Ombudsman Liudmyla Denysova [expressed](#) concerns that by 2024, up to two million of Russian passports may be distributed in the occupied areas of Donbas. More information on why this is important, what the potential consequences are and what Ukraine can do is available in the [analysis](#) of a Ukrainian human rights defender Alyona Luneva, published by the international civil society platform CivilMlus.