



The war in the eyes of different generations:

**views on life and reintegration
perspectives in the conflict zone
in eastern Ukraine**



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Federal Foreign Office

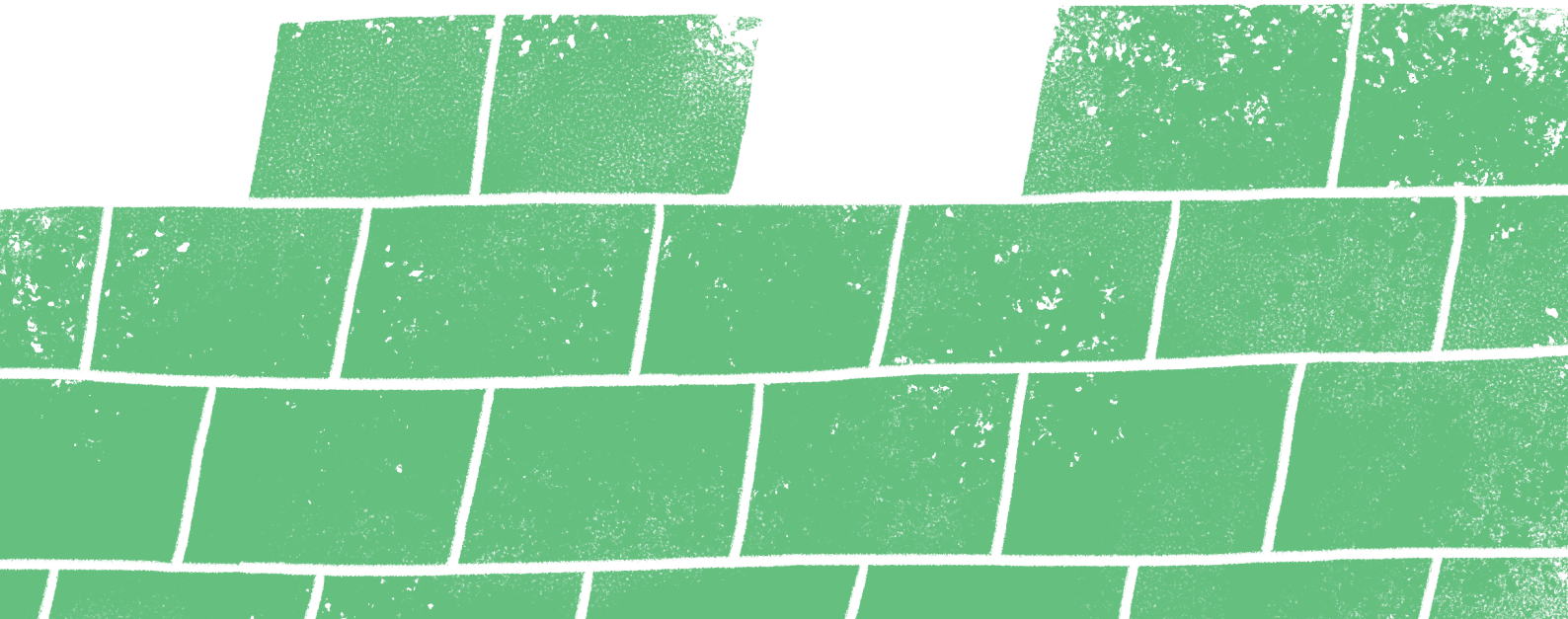
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Introduction



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The war that began in eastern Ukraine in 2014 caught residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts at different stages in their lives. School children, students, young professionals, parents, middle-aged people, pensioners – everyone experienced the shock of the armed conflict and were forced to restructure their lives with an eye to the war. Such historical events evoke an enormous emotional reaction and shape the formation of world views and

values, especially in children and young people who are at a critical stage of learning¹.

Although the shared suffering of war does, in a sense, erase generational differences, promoting togetherness and solidarity, these differences still remain and can manifest themselves in matters with regards to coping with the effects of the conflict, in views on regional development and reintegration. Social

1 Caballero M, Baigorri A. Glocalising the theory of generations: The case of Spain. *Time & Society*. 2019;28(1):333-357. doi:10.1177/0961463X18783374

apathy, fragmentation and mistrust between different social groups in the conflict region create fertile ground for populist and authoritarian elites and political instrumentalization, making the region less resistant to the influence of propaganda, among other things.

When we talk about different generations, it is important to remember that individuals are grouped not according to age, but according to the similarity of life situations in which people find themselves in the context of historical events². The writers behind American generational theory, Neil Howe and William Strauss, suggested that the trajectories of individuals' lives are influenced more by socio-historical events than by shared values³.

The realities of war have an enormous impact on a person's "life choices" – where to live, what education institution to attend, where to work, to whom to commit one's life, what to strive for etc. The current circumstances condition these decisions for Donbas residents, which, in turn, cumulatively define the future of the entire region and its individual communities. **For this reason, authorities on a local and national levels, international organizations, civil society and other actors involved in conflict resolution and mitigating the consequences of the conflict need to understand:**

- **What motivates people in the conflict region to act this way or that way?**
- **Do residents of the conflict-afflicted areas have any choice or are forced to act under pressure from circumstances? How to change these circumstances?**
- **What conditions need to be created for representatives of different generations to ensure their inclusion in the development of their communities?**

- **What interests and goals do different generations have and how they coincide with one another?**
- **What mechanisms can promote social cohesion?**

Paying attention to these and similar questions help avoid political mistakes, develop stable societal structures, creates the framework for the proactive action strategy to prevent, in particular, the abuse of social contradictions and frustration.

The topic of generational differences in the context of the armed conflict in Donbas is even more interesting, if we take into account that historical crises form a new generation that is capable of building a future with new foundations, which will be accepted or rejected by the following generation⁴.

In order to draw the attention of the actors in the field of conflict resolution to the need for a differentiated approach to conflict resolution, regional development and safe integration, the international civil society platform CivilMPlus organized a virtual fact-finding mission. In September 2021, a group of experts from six countries (Ukraine, France, Germany, Lithuania, Russia, USA) carried out five online meetings with civil society activists, representatives from local authorities and journalists from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. At these meetings, the experts asked questions and discussed with the participants their perceptions of intergenerational differences on the issues, circumstances and future perspectives in the context of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.

For some of the interviewees, the wording "generational conflict" at first was problematic,

2 Мангейм К. Проблема поколений. Новое литературное обозрение. 1998. #2 (30) [Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations"].

3 Strauss W, Howe N. Generations: The history of America's future, 1584-2069. New York, NY: William Morrow & Co. 1991

4 Caballero M, Baigorri A. Globalising the theory of generations: The case of Spain. Time & Society. 2019;28(1):333-357. doi:10.1177/0961463X18783374

because they did not see such a conflict or were not sure about the meaning of the question. In this study, by generational conflict we mean the differences in needs, interests, values, beliefs and behaviours inherent in different generations

in the conflict region, which affect social cohesion and which must be considered when developing strategies for conflict resolution and reintegration.

Terminology

When using direct quotes, we retain the terminology used by the interviewees. The CivilMPlus platform and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany do not necessarily share the choice of words and opinions expressed in this publication.

The authors were not determined to use one set of wording, considering the multiple layers of the conflict and the broad spectrum of approaches to its resolution depending on the stakeholder's scope of activity (human rights, peacebuilding, state and international political institutions, academic, civil, political and other actors). The main purpose of this publication is to reflect the complexity of the matter and the necessity to pay attention and to consider the variety of generations affected by the conflict.

Methodology

5 online discussions

32 respondents



17 males 15 females

from 18 to 78 y.o.

- civil society representatives
- activists
- representatives of local government
- journalists
- students
- internally displaced persons

For this publication, the opinions of participants in the five online discussions were analysed regarding intergenerational differences in the conflict region and how these differences manifested themselves. The discussions took place from the 21-24 September 2021. The experts interviewed 32 people (made up of 17 men and 15 women between 18 and 78 years old) who were civil society representatives, activists, representatives of local government, journalists and students from Avdiivka, Bakhmut, Druzhkivka, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Myrnohrad, Pokrovsk, Slovyansk (Donetsk oblast) and Sievierodonetsk (Luhansk oblast). Thirteen participants identified themselves as IDPs from areas temporarily outside of Ukrainian government control. Thematic content analysis was used to work with the material.

The statements, generalizations and conclusions quoted in this publication are not representative and do not reflect the views of any one group. The purpose of this publication is to show the widest possible range of opinions on the topic of generational conflict that were expressed during the discussions in order to provoke debate. All quoted statements have been anonymized to allow a more open discussion. Fictitious names were assigned to the meeting participants at the processing stage for quotation purposes. Information about the respondents' age and city of residence is indicated if the participants provided this information.

In parallel, the members of the CivilMPlus platform carried out a qualitative structured survey. 51 respondents aged between 17 and 78 expressed their views. This survey is also not representative and reflects only the opinions of respondents – participants in local civic initiatives in the conflict zone and their social circle. The answers were anonymous, only the age of the respondents is known.

Generational Conflict and Armed Conflict. Opinions.

During the discussions, different views were expressed about the existence of generational conflict in the conflict region. Three main approaches to this question could be observed in the discussions: 1) generational conflict in the context of the war is tangible, 2) the war erased generational differences, 3) generational conflict exists, but is no different from generational conflict in any other region or country.

Speaking about the existence of generational conflict, participants often pointed to the older generation's fixation on the past:

"People are still not out of this state of mind yet, they bemoan the fact that it used to be one way and now it is another, and they start comparing and not saying "let's develop and go forward to something new", but "let's go back to the way it was, when life was easy in our youth", - noted Olga, 50, from Slovyansk.

A participant from another discussion, a representative of the local authorities Maksim, 40, from Slovyansk, commented:

"A large proportion of the adult population, given the fact that they formed their values and interests in Soviet times, some of them are today still living in the Soviet Union, in a state that no longer exists (...) Unfortunately, Russia supports and provokes these opinions about the Soviet Union, about its restoration and, let's put it this way, its development including in our territory."

Several participants started to talk about generational differences, mentioning the role of young people. Here is the original statement from Aleksey, 38:

"If we look at the makeup of the militias that are fighting in Donbas as military collaborators, there are for certain far fewer pensioners than young people, to be fair. In principle, it's not possible for this to influence the resolution of the conflict in Donbas, it is only relevant in some post-conflict situations. As things stand, only the decisions made in the Kremlin influence the resolution of the conflict in Donbas."

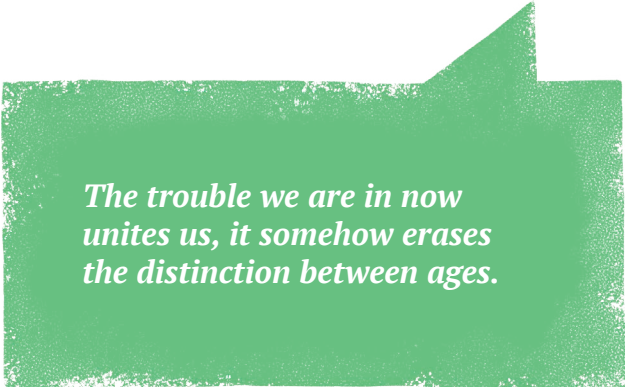
Elena, 62, from Sievierodonetsk, spoke about her experience of perceiving generational conflict:

"My aunt, who came from Donetsk, has already been living with me for two weeks now. Over the past 10 days, I've been to different institutions with her – the bank, the pension fund. I go shopping with her, listen to her take on the situation and listen to the comments from the other people that we're standing in line with, waiting for an appointment in a bureaucrat's office. Some people... To me, young people are those who are 50, I think. How inconsiderate they are in their remarks to people of the older generation! Many of them think that those who have lived 75 years, 80 years, have overstayed their welcome, that they are interfering with their lives, that they are getting our pensions, they don't mince their words. I am very offended by these young people, their lack of restraint, their lack of understanding for the situation"

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This comment also illustrates the point made by another participant Evgenia from Slovyansk, that the generational conflict is a struggle for resources and is not a specific phenomenon in eastern Ukraine. It is no different in the conflict region from generational conflict in other regions of Ukraine:

"I also moved from Donetsk to the controlled territories and I understand that you cannot say [that], politically speaking, only people of the older generation have anti-Ukrainian or anti-government views. In fact, political views have nothing to do with age. But generational conflict exists in a traditional form that we can observe not only in eastern Ukraine."



The trouble we are in now unites us, it somehow erases the distinction between ages.

Values, attitudes and beliefs are not tied to age and, therefore, we cannot speak of any generational confrontation – this is an idea that was repeatedly voiced during the discussions:

"The trouble we are in now unites us, it somehow erases the distinction between ages. (...) I remember when they liberated Slovyansk in 2014. I saw various young people. We immediately started forming a self-defence unit in Slovyansk at the military commissariat base. And immediately, local council elections were being organized. There were two different trends, people of different ages. Some ran to the base to enlist in the ranks of the self-defence

unit and later fought. And there were some who went, in just the same way, not to miss their turn, to enrol as city council deputies. So it's impossible to sum up "overall" about all young people," Aleksandr, 40, said.

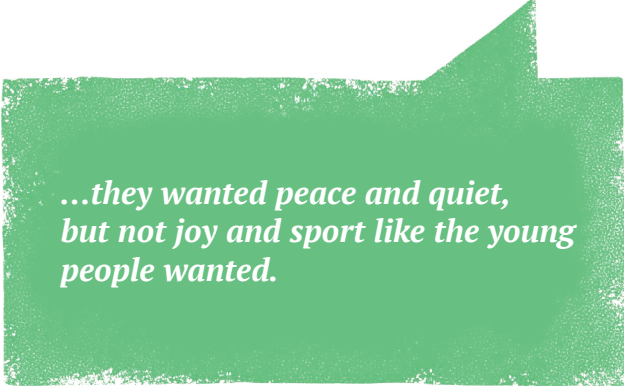
"There are a lot of stereotypes. There are vastly differing positions among the age categories. Sievierodonetsk was occupied for 3-4 months. Fortunately, it was liberated at the end of July 2014. During the occupation, we had an incident in the town, where a Ukrainian flag was hoisted directly in front of the occupied city council building, across the street in the city's Palace of Chemists. The Ukrainian flag was raised at night and at the time it was not known by whom. For those people in the occupation who were waiting on Ukraine, it was very, very emotional. At the same time, it was done in such a way, that it seemed like an illusion, that everything around was mined. That is, the flag hung for nearly the whole day. (...) When it became clear after the liberation who had done it, it seemed more likely that it would be some young people who decided to do such a deed. But it was two people who at the time were already in their seventies," recalled Yulia, 49, from Sievierodonetsk.

The idea that the war erases the divides between generations along the line of demarcation was voiced multiple times. Inna from Bakhmut talked about it in this way:

"...all the people there are united in the common task of surviving this situation. Security and safety issues are solved. It's like everyone there is holding tightly together. When shelling happens, then the children cling to their parents and parents cling to their children. In such a troubled situation, there is no conflict."

“Everyone wants to have a good life”

The younger generation is ambitious, quick to process information and make decisions, mobile, seeks self-fulfilment, wants quick results and is not tied to a place. The older generation wants stability and prosperity. The absence of problems and unrest is more important to them than changes for the better. Obviously, these differences affect where people of different generations draw their satisfaction in life from.



...they wanted peace and quiet, but not joy and sport like the young people wanted.

“Everyone wants to have a good life. Some want to have a good life like it used to be, in their opinion, when they were young in the Soviet Union, and others, the younger ones, want to live in the future, but they don’t all want to build it, not everyone understands that, politically, it needs to be built and somehow participated in,” commented Svetlana from Mariupol.

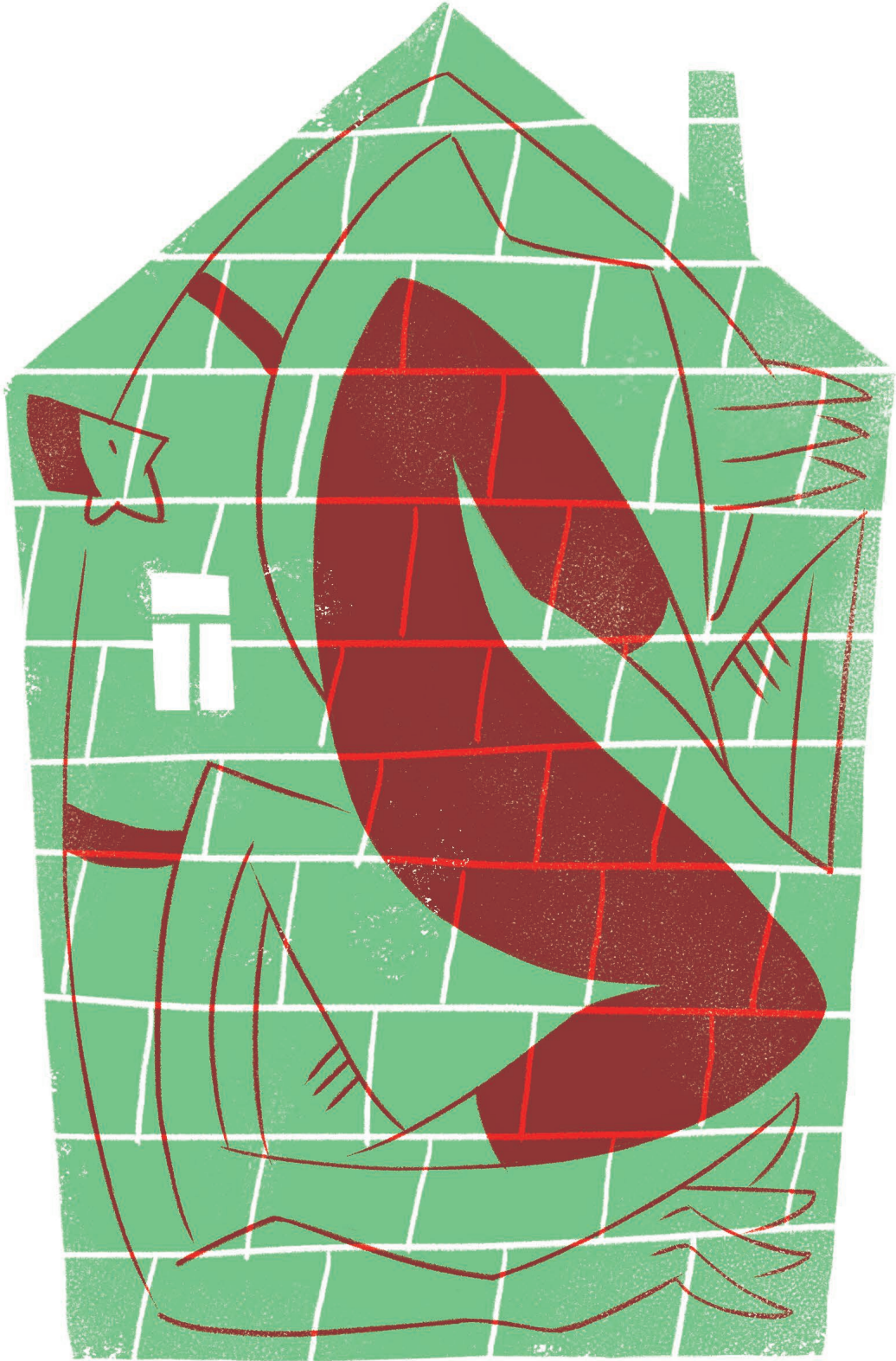
For different generations a good life can mean mutually exclusive things, which also manifests itself on an everyday level:

“We have a participatory budget programme, where people submit projects and the town council implements them. Naturally, there are projects that involve young people, and there are those that involve older people. And when young people

submitted a project and collected votes, then, naturally, they went around the houses and people of different ages. A football pitch, for example, in the yard, which could be done for the youth and they could play football. The older people did not want to sign and vote for such projects because they wanted peace and quiet, but not joy and sport like the young people wanted,” Maksim, 40, from Slovyansk, said.

However, have the conditions been created for a fully secure and prosperous life for the younger and/or older generation in Ukrainian-controlled territory in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts? Young people see no prospects for themselves and leave. And people of the older generations are only remembered during elections, the participants said. The discussions showed that the needs and interests of all age groups are not fully taken into account in the development of the region. Moreover, parents can impose on their children an understanding of what a “good life” is. This situation, according to some respondents, may be more common in the temporarily occupied territories in eastern Ukraine⁵.

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Why are young people leaving?

The majority of respondents during the discussions and in the survey results were in agreement that young people want to leave the conflict region. Economic factors play a major role in this decision, along with other reasons:

- More job prospects in regions not affected by the war.
- Higher wages in larger cities such as Kharkiv or Kyiv, or abroad.
- Unwillingness to work in factories and mines – the main places of work in the industrial region.
- Lack of their own housing in their hometown, or, in the case of displaced families, in the town where their parents live.

“Young people don’t want to work in the factories and mines. For young people, Lysychansk has become a nest where you grow up and leave,” commented Sergey, 24.

“My nephew went to the Czech Republic three months ago, and even though he had a job here, the money he earned here, he only spent it on transportation and the food that he took with him to the factory. He worked in the pipe factory in Rubizhne. And then he left,” another participant shared this story.

“The housing problem”

The problem of acquiring housing is usually most pressing when young people begin their independent lives. However, the war also presented the same challenge to those people who were forced to leave their homes because of the war, regardless of their age or stage in life:

“Talking about older people. We do not have an opportunity to buy a home here. This is the first and most important reason. We are deprived of the opportunity to take out low-interest loans. This way is shut off for us. I now understand that either I will live in rented housing for the rest of my life without having my own...”, shared Viktoria, 58, an IDP from Donetsk, living in Druzhkivka.

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The first opportunity to leave the region of conflict is entering higher education. Some participants believed that parents are pushing their children of school-leaving age to do this, while others opined that school leavers are now given more opportunities to choose on their own where to study. Regardless of how independently the person decides to enrol, this choice is often based on material opportunities and convenience.

"My son started studying this year at Kharkiv Polytechnic, choosing to focus on bioengineering and biotechnology. And I want to say that among the five applications which he could submit, Dahl University [East Ukrainian National University, moved from Luhansk to Sievierodonetsk in 2014] was not one of his priorities. It was his choice. Through him, I talk with his friends and I know that his classmates have started at Dahl University.

He finished at a strong lyceum in Sivierodonetsk where people passed the ZNO [from the Ukrainian for external independent evaluation, examinations for admission to universities] with high scores. I know that there were students who went to Dahl University, putting it as a first priority, who had scores of over 180 points, who could have been eligible for state-funded places at the country's most prestigious universities. When I asked them what made them decide, why they stuck with this choice, they mostly said such mundane things. The dormitories are well renovated, if they'll live in dormitories. Or if it's those from the north of Donbas, it's being able to live at home, not having to deal with everyday difficulties like students from other towns. With such marks, it is practically a guaranteed scholarship, it's certainly a chance to be strong compared to perhaps weaker fellow students," explained Yulia, 49, from Sivierodonetsk.



Fewer and fewer young people are coming from the uncontrolled areas

School leavers and students from certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are also choosing to study where it will be easier for them and where they will have more prospects.

"I can start from 2014, when I and half of my group left. I was studying at the Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages. Some stayed, some left, much like the lecturers. There it was basically a question of whether you had any relatives or acquaintances in Ukrainian territory, if you did, then you left. If not, then why would you throw away your apartment, your house and pay for accommodation in other cities if you can stay here. At that time, there were two programmes. There was one programme from the MON [Ministry of Education and Science] of Ukraine as an auditing student. And there was an identical programme in Russia. I have a few former classmates who went to Russian universities under the same programme. (...) If you look further, at the point when they're deciding for themselves. If they are in that territory, then they look objectively at what would be more beneficial or better for them. They have already received "DPR" diplomas, this is in addition to the fact that they have "DPR" passports and they are actively going to get Russian ones. Yes, they don't have a residence permit. But, believe me, if their parents have any means or money, they can easily travel to Rostov and buy themselves a residence permit somewhere," Ruslan said, who relocated to Slovyansk.

way. But nevertheless, children who are live in the uncontrolled areas, they're less and less oriented towards Ukraine. (...) The increasing separation from young people in Ukraine, it is making a huge gulf within this generation. In 2014, when families were leaving, the children were so pro-Ukrainian that they were in conflict with their whole class. The parents were leaving because of their kids, because the children couldn't be together with their classmates because of their beliefs. This is the 8th year, we have a very different set of young people because the patriotic ones

Other respondents with information about the situation in the temporarily occupied areas noted that young people have become more oriented towards Russia.

"Now they're giving students diplomas from the University of Pyatigorsk and some other universities too. It's happening in a kind of strange



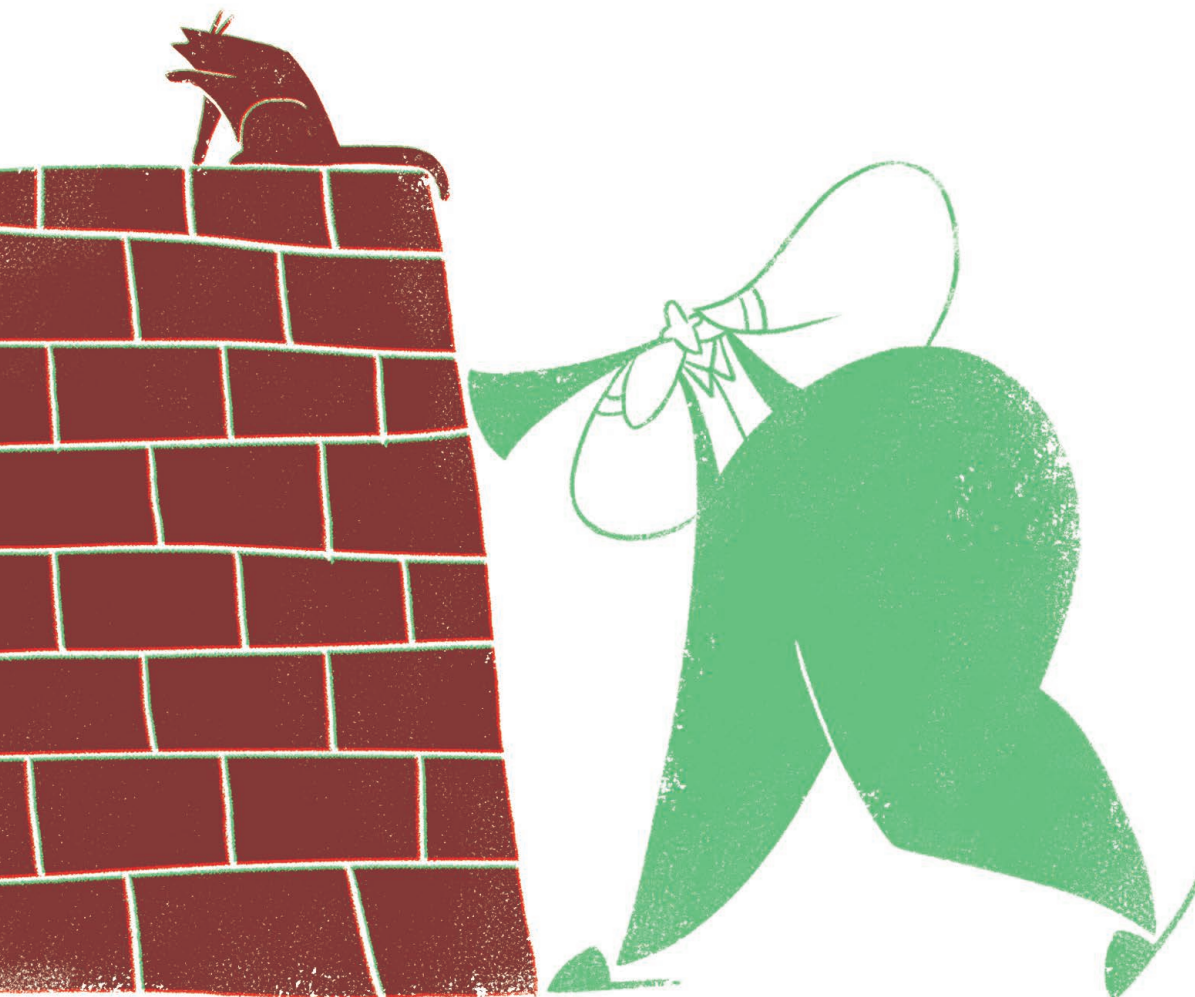
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left," Inna explained, an IDP from Donetsk, living in Bakhmut.

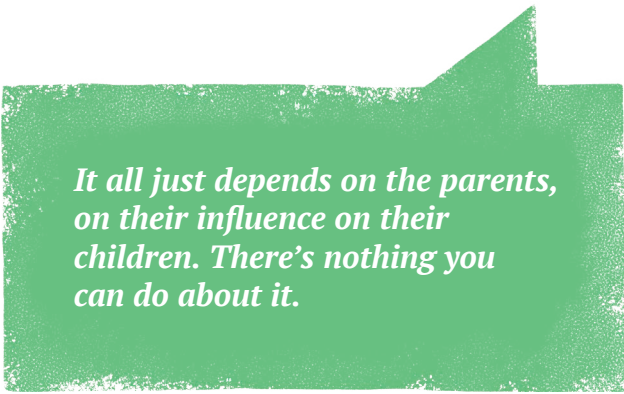
The following reasons were cited as why university entrants from the areas uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government prefer not to enrol at Ukrainian universities: difficulties with submitting documents, problems with crossing the line of demarcation and, therefore, with travelling home during their studies and lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian language.

"I was studying two years ago. We had Ukrainian language once or twice a month. You can't really learn anything in this time. Based on my sister

who started studying this year, she is having big problems with Ukrainian, she finds it difficult to understand. If it was easy for me, it is very difficult for her. She also says that her classmates from Donetsk have a hard time with Ukrainian. This is a big disadvantage. All the lecturers are speaking Ukrainian after all. One of her classmates started studying in a programme called "Donbas - Ukraine", without knowing Ukrainian. I don't know what kind of difficulties he had passing this exam. But he said that he got in straight away. Some people at some universities weren't even asked to take exams. They just came, registered there, everything fine, everything great, you're accepted," Alina said, a displaced student from Donbas.



It is notable that this orientation towards Russia is not related to ideological or political stances, at least it was not mentioned as a major factor in choosing a university. Some participants noted that young people are not influenced by propaganda but rely heavily on their parents' opinions:



It all just depends on the parents, on their influence on their children. There's nothing you can do about it.

"It all just depends on the parents, on their influence on their children. There's nothing you can do about it. Everyone had a different upbringing and everyone looks at everything differently. So it's just a matter of adults influencing their kids.

For instance, my mother has a relaxed attitude towards everything, she says: it's your choice. Everything is fine. I know one person whose dad categorically refused saying "you're going to get a Russian passport," Alina maintains.

According to the respondents, fewer and fewer young people are deciding to move to the controlled areas, fearing a breakdown in relations with their families and a lack of understanding from their loved ones:

"Now, unfortunately, it's becoming ever rarer that we have successful reintegration cases based on practical examples. For example, we facilitated, in a private capacity, the arrival of two young people from Yenakiieve and found them employment in Kyiv. These are people who overcame this generational conflict. That's to say, their relatives don't understand them, even their brothers and sisters don't understand why they still gravitate towards Ukraine. I mean, they took a risk, they moved... They graduated from universities in the non-controlled territories," this was the experience shared by Evgeny from Slovyansk.

“The Underground Factor”

The participants of the discussions agreed that expressing loyalty to Ukraine in the uncontrolled territories can be risky. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain what the residents of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts actually think, how they perceive reality and on what basis they make decisions:

“There is an iron curtain, the area is under the control of the secret services. People there are afraid to talk in the kitchen even with their relatives. (...) Certainly, for a year, year and a half now, can only talk on the telephone, there’s no flow of people anymore. We are practically cut off, very tightly cut off by a wall, more so than the Berlin Wall. We have virtually no contact. And to what extent can the people here, when they come here, talk freely? We now have practically no contact with these people, the radio jamming is more powerful than in Soviet times. The threat to people’s safety has to be compared with Stalinist times,” said Vitaly from Kramatorsk.

Social abandonment – the “outlook” of the older generation

Although a significant number of participants said that there are many stereotypes about the generations and you cannot “paint everyone with the same brush”, some characteristics in relation to the older generation were repeatedly mentioned during the discussions. Many older and elderly people look back to the past, to the Soviet Union and Russia, they resist change, and they see no prospects for the future. Even such phrases as a “dependent mentality” were voiced, which some participants believed is



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reinforced by the government through civilian-military administrations. Older people were viewed as being unable to think critically and their susceptibility to propaganda was stressed. It was said that it is difficult to motivate them to learn and to participate in community life, even though they strive to improve their places of residence.

"...often, the older generation has more positive experiences of interaction with the state aggressor of Russia, whereas the younger generation were less connected with Russia and, in my personal observations, they are less affected by the "us-them [svoi-chuzhoil]" association. Here Russia considers Ukraine to be its inalienable territory, but Ukraine considers itself to be a sovereign state. And in this context, it's often the older generation, in my opinion, who is still more inclined to the former imperial centre. And this manifests itself even in our security structures. If up until 2014 in our Armed Forces or in the SBU, you could, to put it bluntly, come across a portrait of Felix Dzerzhinsky, then nowadays there's a been a certain generation change. The older people retired who were saying "Putin - it's certainly an aggression, but it was after all the Soviet Union". The young people who came, they don't think like that so often, they believe that Ukraine is a sovereign state." Valentin from Slovyansk said.

"The older generation prefers stability... This is how it should be, it might be bad, but it's stable: today bad, tomorrow bad, the main thing is not to make it worse. The young people want to have a better life, they are ready to change something, to do something to have a better life, and the older generation is drawn to the idea that you shouldn't change anything because it might get worse. It may be that the road to Europe is good, but the question is "Will we be fed on the way?" believes Konstantin, 56.

"If you look at typical courtyards in Sievierodonetsk, there are a lot of homemade things. This is

a sign that people still want to change something, to decorate their conventional courtyard, but it's not a given that they will actually manage to make something very beautiful, but they at least try to make some changes to their environment. If we want them to be involved in some form of greater public life, in marginal urbanism, to put it that way, then it seems to me that this will be very difficult, because if you look at the elections and how they happen here. These people, probably, don't always go to the polls solely out of boredom, as we tend to think, but for some reason they vote for the same old stuff," Sergey, 24, said.

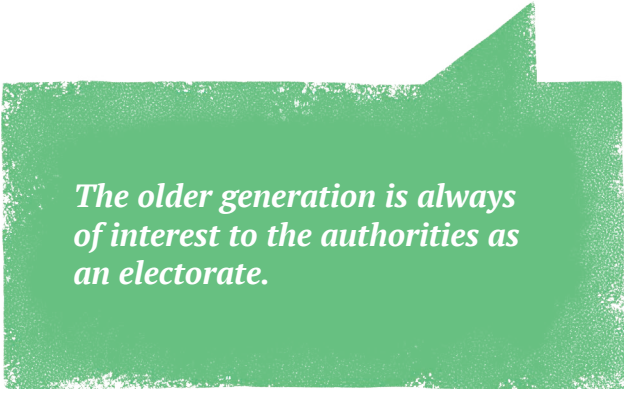
The sense of insecurity, uselessness, abandonment and apathy with which older people live makes them easy targets for information warfare and political manipulation.

"It's more of a conflict when people don't feel socially protected and it's more of a protest conflict and people are grasping at straws, let's say, for that which they know. Reaching for values that they know, that they understand, from when things were good. That is why it's not a generational conflict but it's a conflict of social abandonment, social insecurity," Vitaly from Kramatorsk believes.

"The problem is the older generation doesn't see any prospects for the future. They're not living, they're just living out their days. They lose interest in everything. For the older generation, we need to break this attitude towards life," Konstantin, 56, says.

"Yesterday we had a self-help group and we talked about how they feel alone. We talked about how their self-esteem is going down, that they have a feeling, as they call it, "we have complexes". These "complexes" mean that people understand that they are a little bit behind on modern digital technologies and so on (...) It is very important for a person of a certain age to be needed, to

be visible in society, and they become visible during an election campaign. This also leads to a generational conflict. This is what's visible to the naked eye in our society," said Viktoria, 58.



The older generation is always of interest to the authorities as an electorate.

"The older generation here has been used to spark a war, an artificial war. Donetsk was never a poor city. Since independence, Donetsk was on the rise. But people were indoctrinated, also through the older generation, to believe that Ukraine is fleecing us and let's all go to another country. And so it was that it was namely people from the older generation who went to these rallies, that blocked the way for the Ukrainian army, that should "you're fascists" for the most part. Now you have to understand that I'm not talking about 100%. (...) There's also a middle-aged segment,

30-50-60 years old. These are the people who first participated in the volunteer movement. The people who were one of the first to go to the front. I saw a lot of these ATO people, volunteers in 2014 who were 50+, 40+. (...) So then these older people, they were used to show informationally, in a hybrid fashion, that almost all of Ukraine, almost all of Donbas is in favour of breaking away and leaving, and making a separatist split. That's the first thing. The second thing is that they were very aggressive. I've had situation where I walking with a bracelet in the colours of my country's flag and some old woman may curse me, shove me, these people standing with "DPR" and Russian flags have thrown stones at me. They were the majority of them. When I would walk past clusters of these people, most of them were from the very old generation. That's why it's very difficult for us to say "your life was not lived in vain". (...) These are the people who for 30 years after the restoration of Ukraine's independence, they had to do something with these 30 years, to build the country. And when the country, for example, was being plundered and corruption was flourishing, these people had an obligation to build a civil society," remarked Ekaterina.

"Narratives about the older generation are narratives of information warfare. The older generation is always of interest to the authorities as an electorate", Svetlana from Mariupol added.

The role of information, communication and education

During one of the discussions on the topic of generational conflict, the term “mankurts”⁶ was used to refer to the older generation which educates the young generation without instilling patriotic values and was raised as a question about the lack of sufficient efforts to shape the national identity of the population. On the other hand, respondents to the structure survey often (in 20 out of 51 instances) mentioned the role of educational institutions in shaping values. However, this role was assessed differently, both as insufficient and as “imposing” patriotism. Some of the discussion participants acknowledged a failure in the information war.

“How can you lose something that you don't engage in? So that we don't have the attitude that “God is up high and the Tsar is far away”. So that we understand that even in Kyiv, when we talk about something it's not just that we are filling airtime, but that this is really important and this is necessary. (...) If they will understand us, listen to us and see the situation through our eyes, because we live here, we were under occupation, but today we live in this city. Then, I think, the question about whether our children will leave or stay will to some extent, to a greater extent, I think disappear”, said Aleksandr, 70.

The younger and older generation have different sources of information and different speeds of processing it. Young people use the internet, the older generation reads newspapers and watches television.

“Young people don't watch television at all. We recently had a discussion about the Dom TV⁷ channel. We were sitting around and chatting. He said, “Well, there's the Dom TV channel. And I said, “Okay, do you watch TV?”. He said, “I don't”. Given that the radio signals are blocked and don't even reach these areas, what is the point of this project, who is it for? The target audience is a little different. And if we're talking about young people, then question of blocking “VKontakte”, for them from those areas it sounds like “Okay, you're telling us that we're being influenced, but you're also restricted in the sense that you're blocking this because you don't want to hear the truth or you don't like another opinion.” That's to say, that's also a triggering position. I have a pro-Ukrainian position, if I watch “Russia-1” or some local “republican” channel, it does not mean that I will immediately change my opinion,” Ruslan said, who was displaced from Horlivka to Slovyansk.

Intergenerational communication primarily takes place within families and educational institutions. In the absence of a Ukrainian television signal near the contact line, Russian television broadcasts influence the older generation in families, who then pass this influence on to the younger generation.

“It's also very interesting to talk to young people. It is all the influence, in principle, of parents that, for instance, Maidan and the war – that's a cause-and-effect relationship. In fact, a lot of teachers also see it this way. All in all, it's very sad. Talking to young people, you hear what their teachers

6 The term “mankurt” comes from a novel by Chinghiz Aitmatov and denotes those who do not know or appreciate their culture, history, traditions, and moral traditions of their people and therefore easily become the object of foreigners' will. (регі.) (Энциклопедический словарь крылатых слов и выражений. – М.: «Локид-Пресс».Вадим Серов.2003. <https://slovaronline.com/browse/5162053e-6b68-3612-b03e-47d88c0e518a/%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D1%83%D1%80%D1%82>)

7 Dom is a bilingual channel launched by Ukraine's Culture Ministry for Russian-occupied Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts



tell them, what their parents tell them. The whole sadness is in the information space that is created and different generations perceive it differently. (...) In terms of communication, of course, Ukraine is really lacking and because of this the solution to the problem may be different for all generations. The solution to the problem in the head of a teenager may be different from the same grandmother who watches Russia TV and so on," Irina from Avdiivka shared.

"Along the line of demarcation, there are few young people left and the majority are elderly people. The absence of Ukrainian television has a major impact. And so people are under the influence of Russian channels and this of course also has a major impact on young people, because they are somehow cut off from life. When they go to school they watch one thing, at home a completely different thing. Their parents, grandparents talk about a third thing. So, I can't say that it's clearly pronounced. You can't record it. But that's the situation," said Inna from Bakhmut.

However, during the discussions, there was also the notion that the younger generation does not take "at face value" even the information which comes from their parents. An interesting observation was shared by Yana, an IDP from Crimea living in Mariupol:

"Family, of course, unites generations. The family instils values. In the USSR, all information from the media was taken as truth. Today, young people don't just categorically accept information, they question it. What I had to observe when I went out to the grey zone, I happened to work both with families, I mean grandparents, uncles, aunts, dads, moms, teachers etc. and I worked with children. I saw the colossal difference between how adults look at the events taking place and how children look at them. At what really surprised me at some point was that despite the fact that teachers and grandparents are nostalgic not even for the Soviet Union, I would say, but more for excellent peaceful relations with Russia and that they want to have more to do with Russia than Ukraine, the young adults and children and teenagers (I had to

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work with them too) choose a different position. This really surprised me in fact. And what also surprised me is that they cannot say it openly. In our small groups they could say it, but when an adult appeared, they were embarrassed, they tried not to raise these issues at all. That is, they could draw a Ukrainian flag, but if a teacher came in, they would hide it somewhere."

In addition, during the discussions, Evgeny noted the divisive role of some politicians' statements:

"All sorts of political restrictions and speeches by certain politicians are simply disastrous for unification, for reintegration, for maintaining loyalty to Ukraine. By October 1, a law on the foundations of national identity policy will be brought before the Verkhovna Rada. It, unfortunately, is also rather aggressive and does not take into account the interests of those people who would like to reunite with Ukraine and become a fully-fledged member of civil society because they are physically distanced. This is a great source of bitterness. I really hope that Ukraine will look

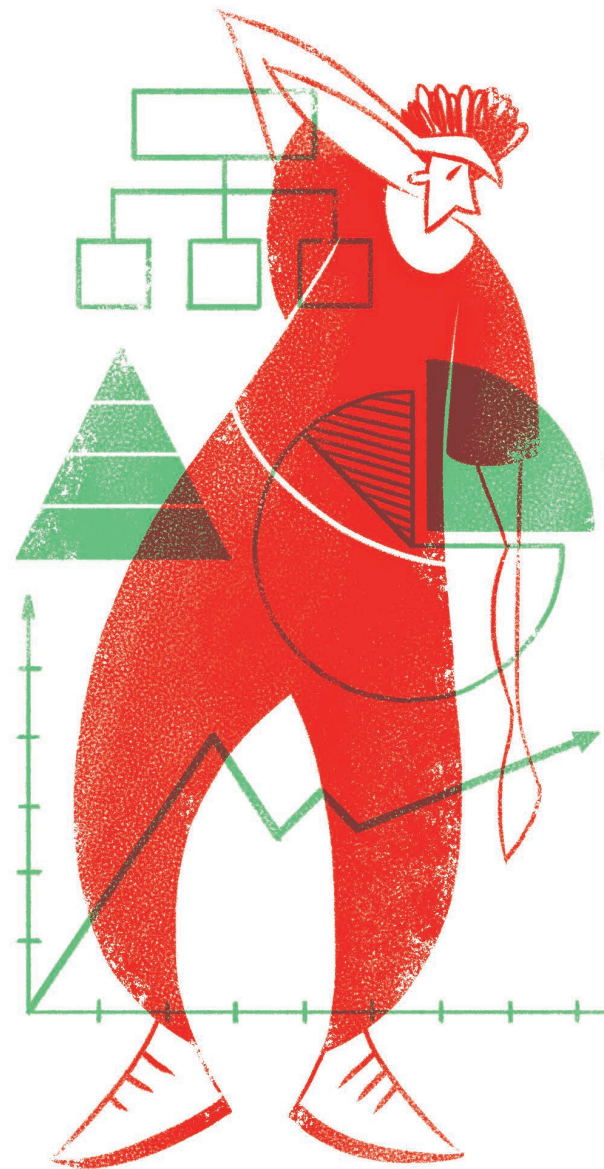
for different mechanisms so that it's not political slogans, but economic measures and some form of aid measures that help people return to Ukraine or those behind that line feel like they are part of Ukraine."

The results of the structured survey showed a somewhat different picture. Of the 51 respondents, 14 noted the negative influence of media on generational conflict, four noted a positive influence and the rest either denied the existence of such an influence or had difficulty assessing if it was positive or negative.

Moreover, the results of the survey may indicate that civil society organizations do not always communicate their work in a way that is accessible for representatives of different generations. This opinion was expressed by 28 of the 51 respondents. At the same time, it was often pointed out that the information either does not reach people from the older generation because they either do not use the channels through which it was communicated, or it is presented

in an unclear form. Even some younger respondents noted the difficulty in understanding information from civil society organizations. Here are some example responses:

- *Unfortunately, I can't understand all these schemes and reports. (60 year old)*
- *No. They show something, but the older generation doesn't understand it. (78 years old)*
- *Not really – older people don't always have access to such resources. (22 years old)*
- *No. It's all too abstruse and 'snobby'. There's some statistics, infographics. (21 years old)*



Generational differences and reintegration



Of the 51 respondents to the structured survey, 12 did not see any intergenerational differences having any impact on safe reintegration. Among such factors indicated in response to this question such as clashing values, interests, views, lack of understanding and difficulties in agreeing with each other, some kind of opposition between generations was also noticeable. For example, here are the answers from the oldest (78) and youngest (17) respondent to the question about the influence of intergenerational differences on reintegration:

- *"We want order but young people can only break things" (78).*
- *"It's influenced by the fact that the older generation does not consider the opinions of the younger generation" (17).*

In the discussions with activists, journalists, representatives from civil society and local authorities, issues of reintegration in the context of intergenerational differences was seen as a very distant, but at the same time very problematic, prospect.

"In my opinion, reintegration is impossible in the near future. Why? Because Russia will not simply give away these territories for nothing. As sad as it is, we are not ready to reintegrate these territories. Why? Because as soon as we reintegrate them, we will get a toxic population right away. I mean, we liberated Slovyansk, you can see for yourself how much "vata8" is still there, who these people voted for, what choice they made in the local elections, right up to the fact that we had to introduce a military administration, you know?"

As for the generational problem, here we have a royal flush. We get a generation that was born in 2014 and has never seen Ukraine. They have seen the occupation, they have seen the "DPR" and they don't know how to live any differently. And what do we do with these children, you know?" Stepan noted, an IDP from Donetsk, living in Kramatorsk.

Furthermore, reintegration is seen as problematic also from the point of view of reconciling the older generation, especially as young people are leaving the conflict region.

"If there was reintegration then I think the fight would be more between the older generation and the other older generation. The young people would bicker a little bit and then literally a year later they would forget about it. Young people are not so wrapped up in ideology" Vadym said, who lives in Pokrovsk.

"If we're talking about reintegrating people, we have to understand what they are thinking about, what set of information do they and go from there. How do we move forward? To be



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honest, I would put the emphasis on young people because the older generation is harder to "change". The older we get, the more conservative we become," noted Ruslan, who lives in Slovyansk, during a different discussion.

"Now unfortunately we see a generation growing up already in the 8th year of the conflict. My child was born in 2013 in Donetsk and I see his peers, children of my friends and colleagues who are living in Donetsk. If we take such indicators, such parallels then, unfortunately, optimism about

reintegrating people and territories, because the territories can now only be reintegrated by people in a non-military way, then there is less and less optimism. As for the teenagers and young people aged between 19-35, there is a chance ehere. And everything depends on the opportunities that we can provide them," is Evgeny's opinion, who lives in Kramatorsk.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the results of the discussions and responses to the survey are not representative, we obtained a certain array of opinions on the issue of generational conflict and its potential impact on the resolution and mitigation of the consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The identified differences between the situations, values, strategies, behaviour and information sources of the different generations speak of the need to continue to study and discuss this topic, to find mutual understanding, to form solidarity and cohesion between representatives of the different generations. A comprehensive, differentiated approach to community development, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reintegration that includes the perspectives of all population groups is important. The recommendations collected below are solutions suggested by the discussion participants and respondents to the structured survey.

- 1. Dialogue within and between generations.** Many respondents emphasized the need for spaces for intergenerational dialogue, as well as the organization of joint activities, the involvement of different generations in projects and youth exchanges between regions and countries. In addition, it is important to establish communication between the authorities and representatives of all generations.
- 2. Restoring ties with residents of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.** This includes opening checkpoints, simplifying the procedures to obtain a Ukrainian passport, more active campaigns to encourage applicants to enrol in Ukrainian universities, assistance in learning Ukrainian and the deferral of taking language exams for admission to Ukrainian universities.
- 3. Stimulation of economic development in the region and improving citizens' quality of life.** Providing young people with more job prospects, financial independence and support in buying housing. In addition, participants pointed to the need for economic transformation from mining and chemical and heavy industry to more modern sectors of the economy.

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4. **Including young people in the life of communities** by encouraging their social and economic activity through supporting projects, not only through cultural events.
5. **Increasing computer literacy among the rural population and older people.** This will help reduce the gap between people of different generations.
6. **Formation of national identity.** Participants from one of the discussions insisted on the need to cultivate civil feelings and a “branding” of Ukraine for its citizens. Survey respondents often pointed to the need for a unified “informational space” or a “large-scale campaign” to minimize generational differences.
7. **Establishing communication with older people** to overcome social apathy and feelings of abandonment, as well as building resistance to political manipulation. This is relevant to both the authorities and civil society organizations.

Appendix

Respondents' answers to the qualitative structured survey



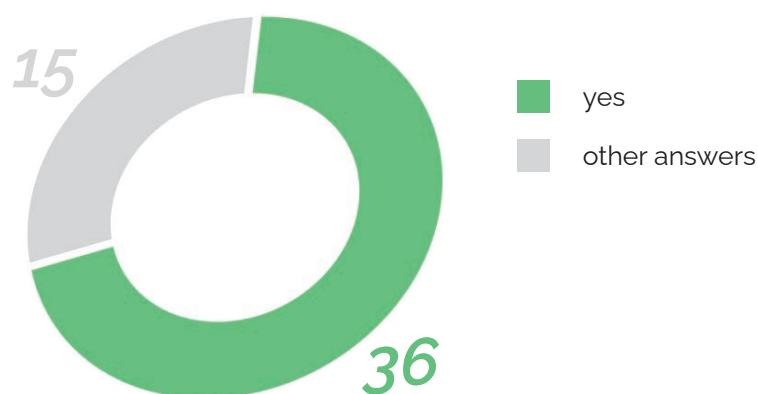
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In September – October 2021, a questionnaire containing 28 general and specific open questions on the topic of generational conflict, dialogue between generations and work with young people, the role of civil society etc. was distributed through local civic initiatives. During this time, 51 responses were collected. The respondents were participants in the activities of civic initiatives in Donbas and their social circle. The survey was anonymous. The respondents were asked to specify their age in the questionnaire. Respondents had the opportunity to skip any question.

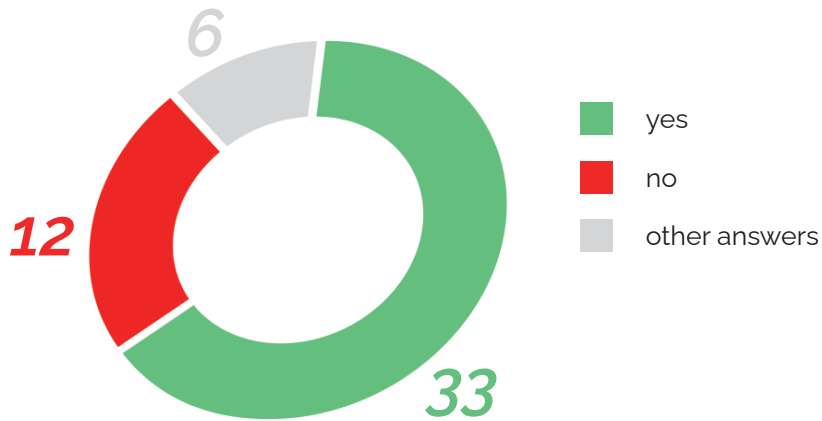
Age group	60 – 80	35 - 60	17 - 35
Number of respondents	8	11	32

Below are answers to questions where at least one third of respondents (16) gave similar answers.

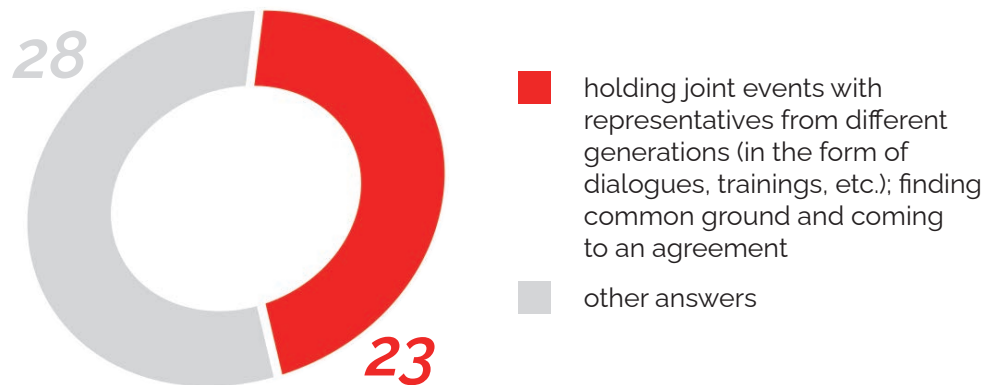
Do you sense a generational conflict in Ukraine today, particularly in the conflict region?



Does generational conflict affect the reintegration process?

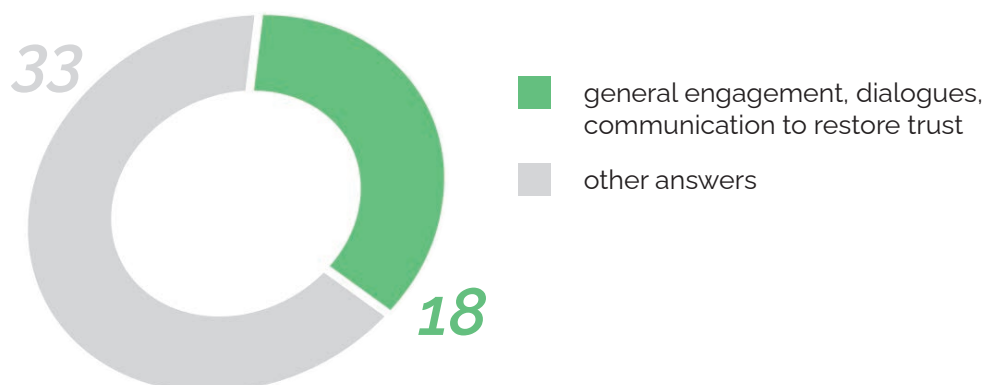


What can be done to develop a shared vision for the future of Ukraine and understanding for the stages of this process among people of different generations?



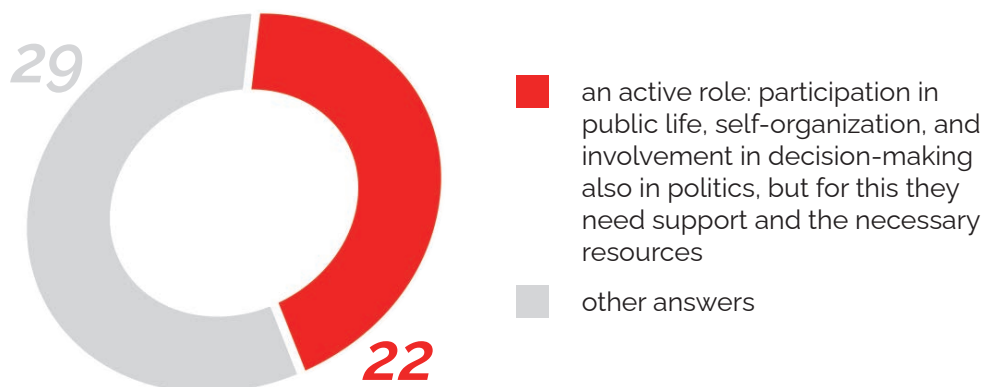
How can broken social ties begin to be rebuilt in the context of the ongoing conflict?

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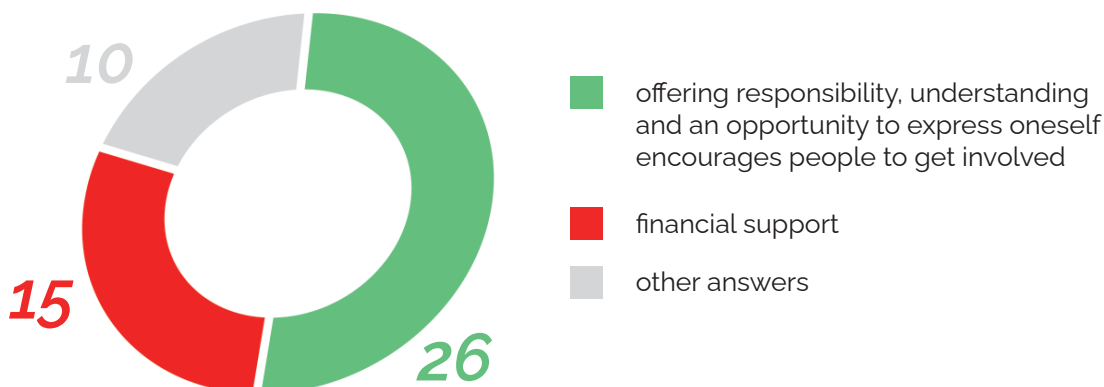


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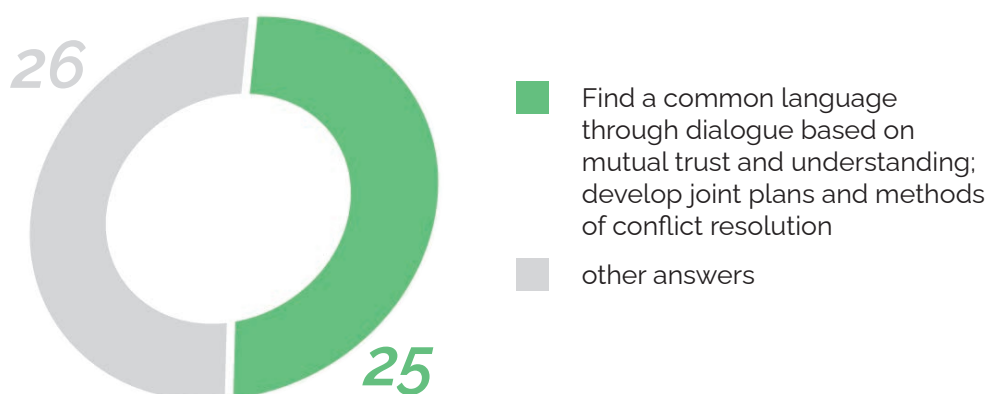
What role can young people play in the development of their (conflict) region and what opportunities do they have to do so?



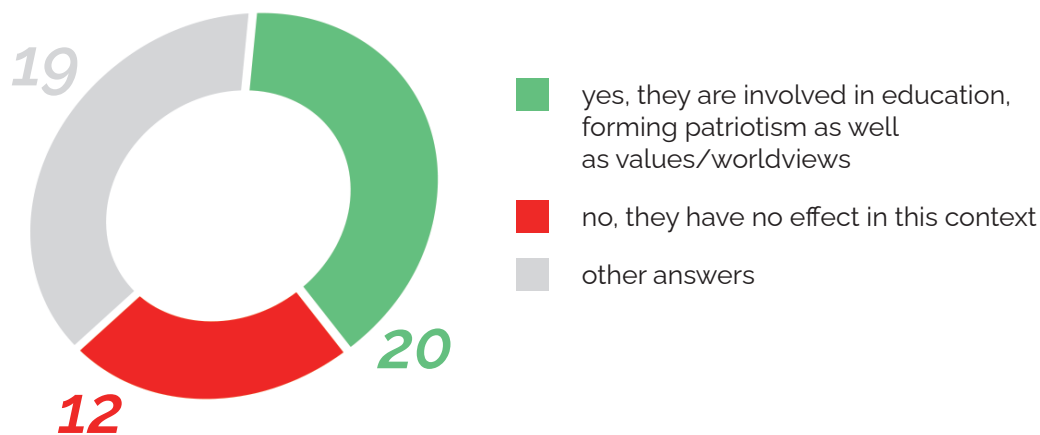
How can young people be motivated to take responsibility and participate in solving the problems of their (conflict) region?



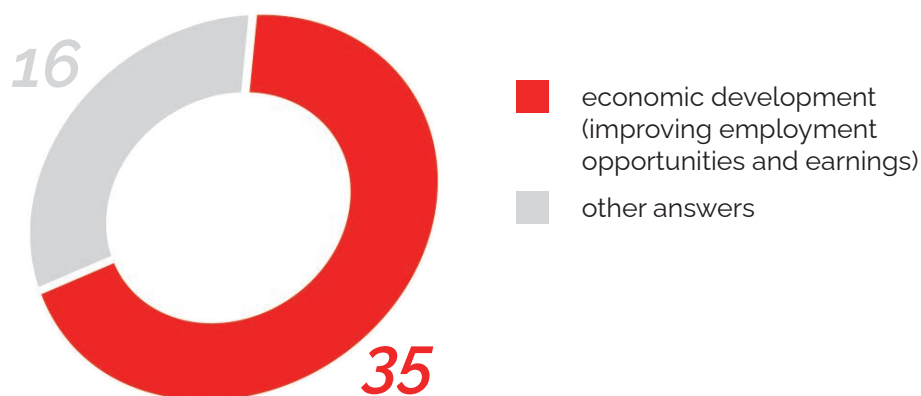
What are the goals and ways of building intergenerational dialogue regarding a vision for future development of the conflict region?



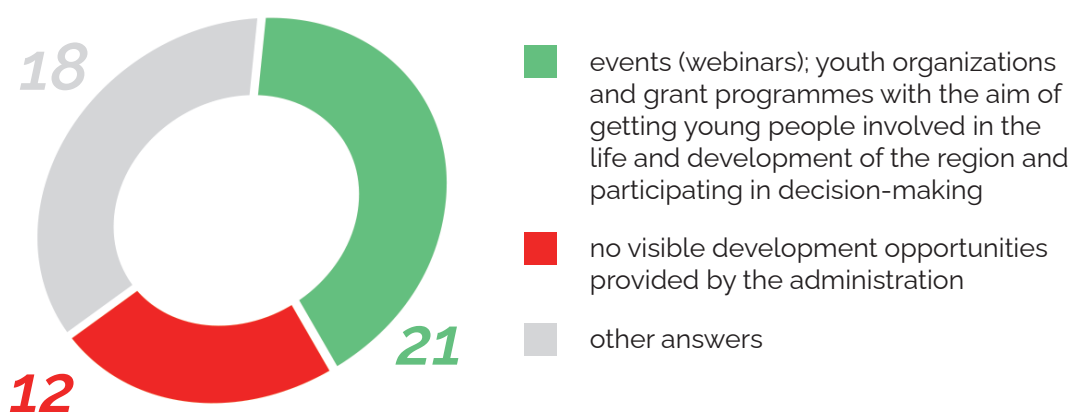
To what extent are Ukrainian universities and schools involved in conflict resolution on the level of communicating values and calls to action? Do these institutes contribute to resilience?



What conditions would increase the willingness of young people to stay and realize themselves in the region?

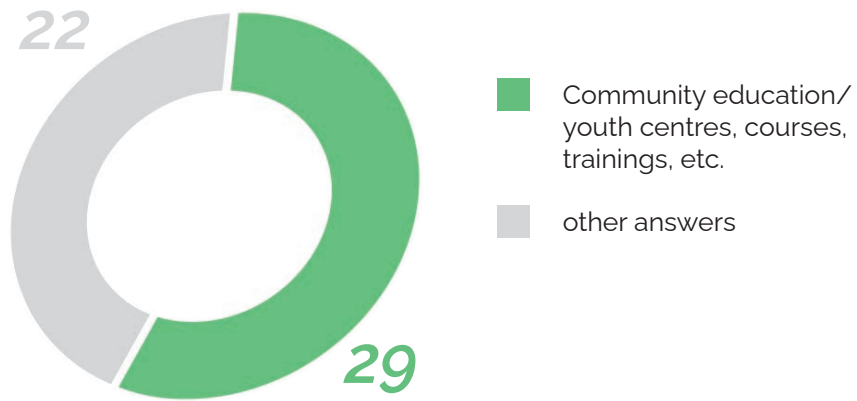


What opportunities for youth development are provided by local administrations/government agencies?

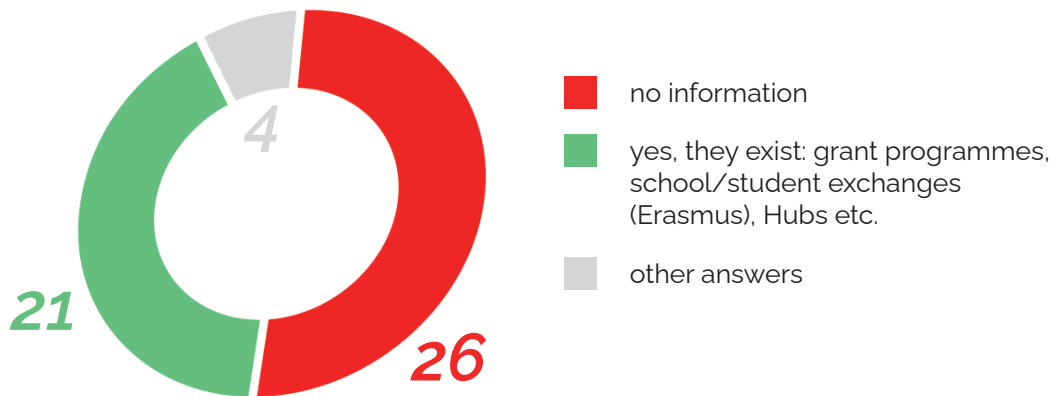


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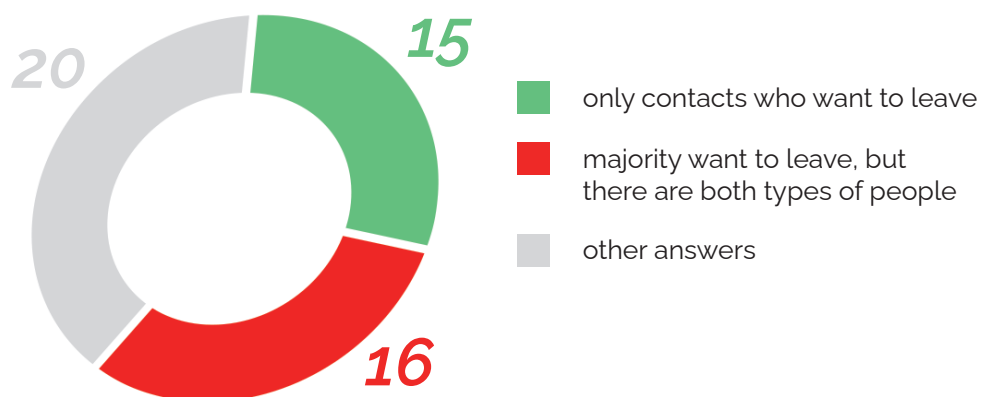
Which non-formal education structures exist?



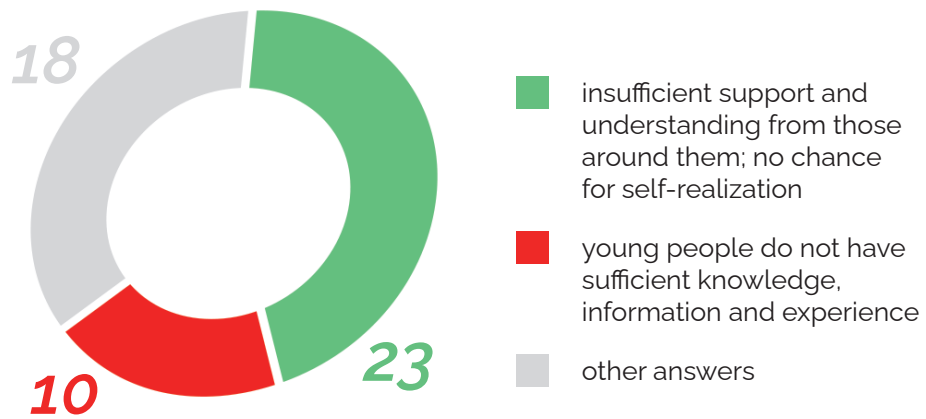
Are there structures in the conflict region for youth exchanges, and if so, how are they used (West-East Ukraine, international)?



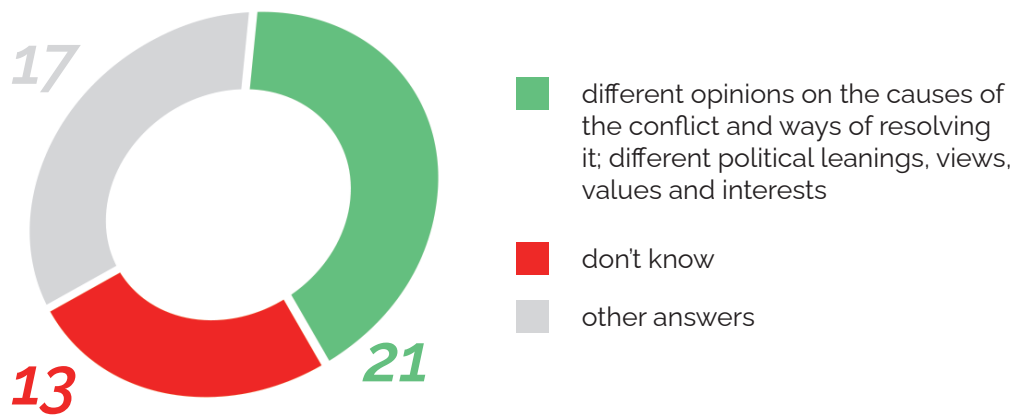
Are there young people in your community who a) would like to leave, or b) definitely want to stay in the conflict region and see chances for self-realization?



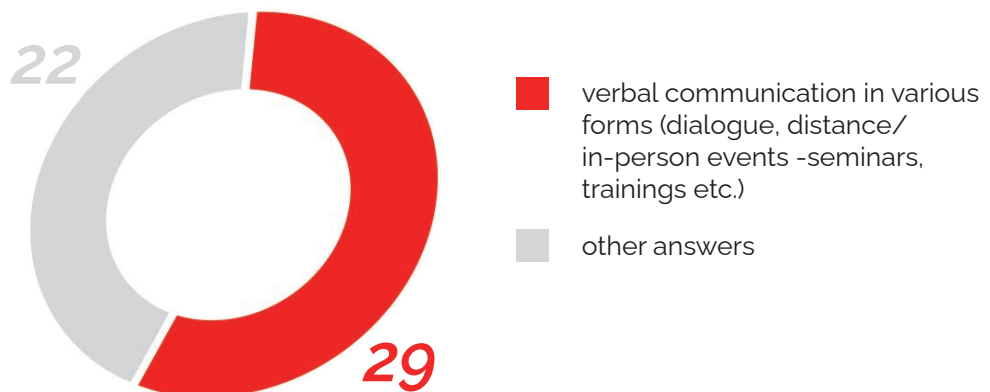
What problems do young people who want to become socially active face?



What conflicts, differences, and obstacles exist between generations in eastern Ukraine, especially in terms of their views on the conflict and the future of the region?

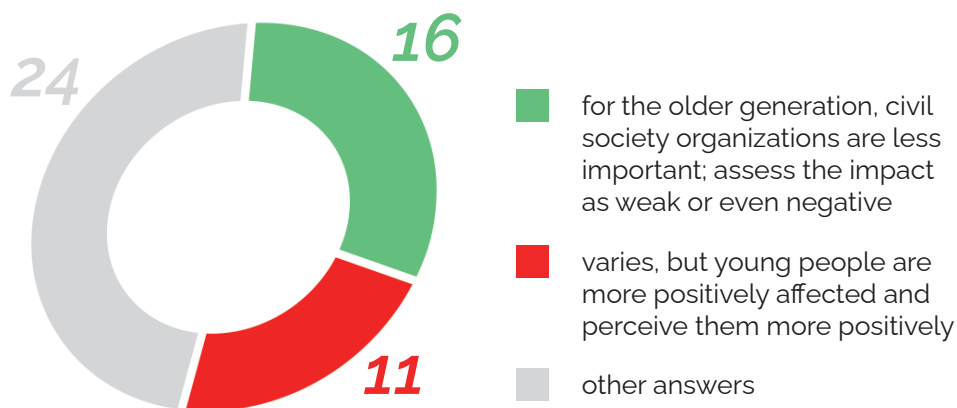


What form of communication is necessary to reach out to both groups and strengthen dialogue?

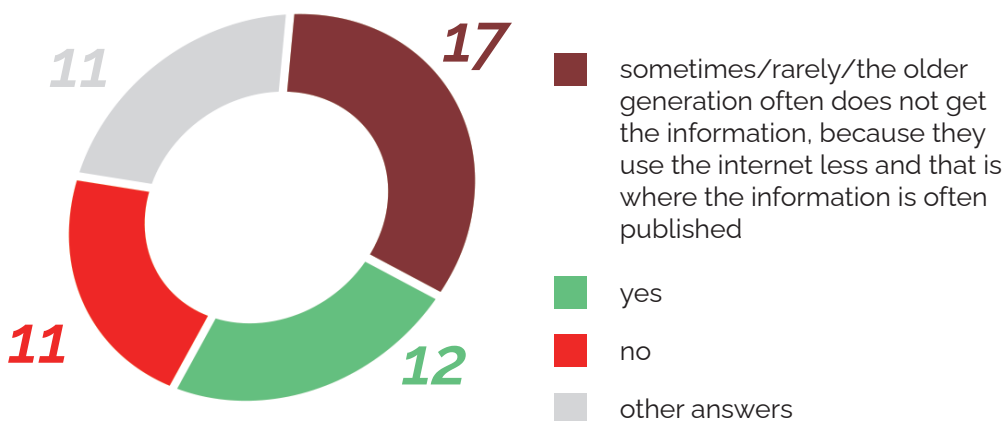


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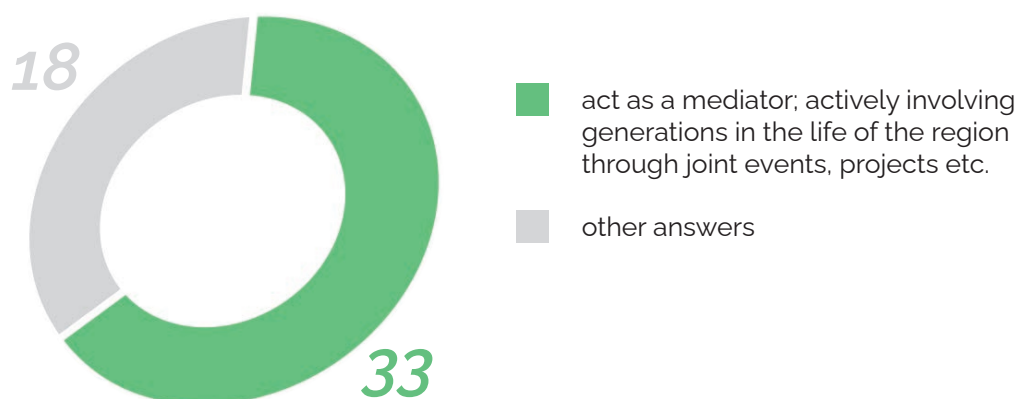
How do people of different generations assess the impact of civil society on their lives?



Do civil society organizations communicate their work and products in a way that is understandable for different generations?



How can civil society organizations contribute to intergenerational dialogue and the development of social cohesion in the conflict region?



For notes

About CivilMPlus

The international platform CivilMPlus is aimed at strengthening the role of civil society in restoring peace, supremacy of international law and human rights protection in eastern Ukraine. Since 2017, CivilMPlus has united over 25 independent European NGOs and experts which implement joint project within the platform. In addition to creating a solid foundation for peacebuilding and dialogue, the platform uses and promotes the knowledge and the expertise about the developments in the conflict zone to anchor the situation in Ukraine on the European agenda. Through our partnerships and the continues expansion of the network, the platform strengthens the influence of civil society at the local, national and international levels. We are convinced that restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and supporting its democratic development are prerequisites for sustainable peace, security and prosperity in Europe.