



# UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON RECONSTRUCTION

LESSONS FROM EUROPEAN PRACTICES

**A Qualitative Study  
of Grassroots Insights  
from Across Europe**

# CONTENTS

- 1** Introduction

---
- 2** Methodology

---
- 3** Local Democracy & Governance

---
- 4** Community & Volunteering

---
- 5** Education & Children's Welfare

---
- 6** Social Protection & Sustainability

---
- 7** Other topics - Facebook Community findings

---
- 8** Conclusion and Recommendations

---
- 9** A Vision for Tomorrow

---

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This brochure represents the inaugural project of our Association. Through this initiative, we seek to identify and document practical, grassroots-level solutions that can contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction. As an expert in municipal law, my focus is on policies and practices that empower local communities. This project is the culmination of a year-long effort, officially launching in January 2025. It is titled **Women Rebuilding Ukraine with European Inspiration** (#WomenRebuildingUA).

## **Purpose of the Project**

The core idea of this project is to give a voice to Ukrainian women displaced by the war who are now living across various European countries. Observing and experiencing life in stable, well-organized societies, these women work, study, raise children, and, in doing so, identify the principles and daily practices that make these countries strong and prosperous. We are collecting their stories, ideas, and observations, covering a wide range of areas including education systems, healthcare models, social policies, urban planning, and women's rights. The project seeks to translate these insights into practical, actionable solutions that can support Ukraine's reconstruction and community empowerment.

## **Why Women's Perspectives Matter in Reconstruction and EU Integration**

Women's perspectives are essential because they offer a unique understanding of community needs, family dynamics, and social cohesion. They are often at the forefront of caregiving, education, and local initiatives, which provides critical insights into what policies and practices work effectively on the ground. By documenting their experiences across the EU, this project highlights inclusive approaches to rebuilding societies that are resilient, equitable, and aligned with European standards, supporting Ukraine's path toward sustainable development and integration with European frameworks.

## **Link to European Values and Ukraine's Decentralisation Reform**

The project connects the lessons learned from women's experiences to European values such as equality, transparency, civic engagement, and social solidarity. These principles reinforce Ukraine's ongoing decentralisation reform by emphasizing local governance, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment. Observations from life in European countries offer concrete examples of governance models, social policies, and everyday practices that could strengthen local democracy and improve public services in Ukraine.

## **Sample Size, Countries, and Grassroots Character of the Study**

This study combines a grassroots approach with in-depth interviews to ensure a rich and authentic body of insights. Contributions were collected from a closed Facebook group of 1,500 members, "Old us at the new land" providing a safe space for open discussion, alongside 12 semi-structured interviews capturing detailed personal narratives. The participants currently live across multiple European countries, reflecting diverse experiences and perspectives. This dual-method approach balances broad trends with nuanced individual stories, emphasizing the grassroots character of the project and its focus on practical, real-world solutions.

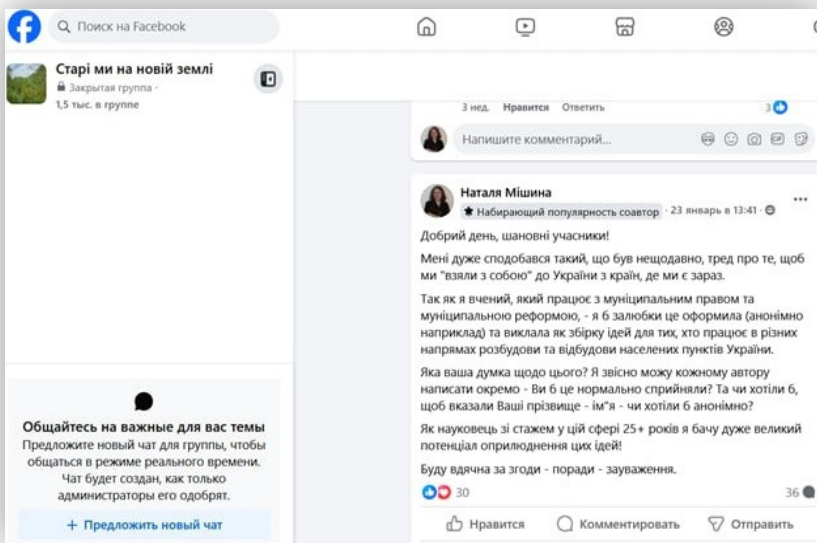
Women have a crucial role to play in rebuilding societies. By documenting their experiences and lessons learned, this project aims to provide inspiration and actionable solutions for a better, more resilient Ukraine, directly linking the insights of today to the Ukraine of tomorrow.

**Natalia Mishyna**  
Project Manager and Head of the EADHC

# 2. METHODOLOGY

## Approach: qualitative contributions + semi-structured interviews

This project employs a dual-method approach to gather a wide and authentic range of insights. The first phase involved collecting qualitative contributions through a targeted call in a closed Facebook community of 1,500 members, titled [Old us at the new land](#), which created a safe space for women to share their observations and experiences openly. In parallel, 12 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women personally known to the project team, allowing for detailed and nuanced stories that complement the broader community responses. By combining these methods, the project captures both general trends and individual narratives, producing a rich and credible body of work.



## Participant diversity: age, professional backgrounds, countries

Participants in the study reflect a diverse range of ages, professional backgrounds, and countries of residence. This diversity ensures that the collected insights encompass multiple perspectives—from working professionals to retired persons, from healthcare and education specialists to entrepreneurs—living across various European societies. Such a varied sample allows the study to capture different experiences of displacement, adaptation, and observation of European systems, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the practical solutions that could be applied to Ukraine's reconstruction.

## Thematic Coding

The collected contributions and interviews were systematically analyzed through thematic coding. Main categories include education systems, healthcare models, social policies, urban planning, women's rights, and everyday practices that promote social cohesion and resilience. This coding process enables the identification of recurring patterns, innovative ideas, and actionable insights, while also preserving the individuality of each participant's story. By organizing the material into clear thematic areas, the project translates personal experiences into practical recommendations for policy and community-level interventions.

## Ethical Principles

Ethical considerations were central to the project's design. Participants were assured anonymity (if they have chosen this option) and informed consent, creating a safe and respectful environment for sharing personal experiences. The project approached sensitive topics with care, acknowledging the emotional and social impact of displacement and war. By prioritizing ethics and sensitivity, the study ensures the dignity and trust of participants while maintaining the integrity of the collected data.

## Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to note that it is not statistically representative of all Ukrainian women displaced by the war. Instead, its strength lies in its depth and grassroots character, offering detailed observations and lived experiences that can inform practical policy decisions and inspire innovative approaches to community empowerment and reconstruction. The findings serve as a source of guidance rather than a comprehensive survey, emphasizing qualitative richness over quantitative generalization.

# 3. LOCAL DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

## 3.1 Mishyna Natalia

[Linked in](#)

[Facebook](#)



President and co-founder of the Etude Académique des Droits de L'Homme et du Constitutionnalisme

Project “What We Would Bring Back: A Collection of European Practices for a Resilient Ukraine” is her idea and initiative

### About:

Natalia Mishyna is a researcher at the SAGE laboratory of the University of Strasbourg, France. She is currently a Marie Skłodowska–Curie Actions 4Ukraine fellow (2023–2025).

With over 25 years of experience in comparative research on municipal law and human rights, she is deeply passionate about translating Ukrainian legal and cultural realities to international audiences.

### Before the war and now:

When the war began, I was the professor of Constitutional Law at the National University 'Odessa Academy of Law', Odessa, Ukraine. I left Ukraine in 2022 and now I live in France. I am grateful to the SAGE Laboratory of the University of Strasbourg to have the ability to continue my research work and to have the safe environment for my son.

### Bridging Two Worlds:

**“If I could bring one thing from France to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be its vibrant culture of associations.”**

Many organisations - **Les Restos du Cœur**, **Promo Ukraine**, **SAU** and the **Fidelio Association** - not only supported me personally, but also demonstrated the transformative power of civic engagement. These associations show how structured, community-driven initiatives can strengthen society, even in times of crisis.

Inspired by this model, I co-founded the **Étude Académique des Droits de l'Homme et du Constitutionnalisme**, an initiative dedicated to exploring how civic participation can support democratic governance and post-conflict reconstruction. I believe that by integrating these principles into Ukraine's legal and social framework, we can empower local communities to play an active role in the country's reconstruction.

To further this mission, I am eager to work with organisations, researchers and funders who share the vision of a resilient, community-driven future for Ukraine.

# 3. LOCAL DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

## 3.2 Sinkevych Olena

Linked 



Co-founder of the Etude Académique des Droits de L'Homme et du Constitutionnalisme

### About:

Olena Sinkevych is a Doctor of Law (specialization: Constitutional and Municipal Law). She is a certified trainer for the Council of Europe's HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) programme.

Her work focuses on constitutional law and international human rights protection. She has authored and co-authored numerous analytical documents on constitutional law, including expert opinions, amicus curiae briefs and legal analyses for the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. With over 25 years of experience, she has played a key role in the development of constitutionalism and human rights in Ukraine. In the coming years, her research will focus on human rights in armed conflict.

### Before the war and now:

When the war began, I was the Professor at the Department of Constitutional Law at Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv, Ukraine. Since 2022 I live between Ukraine and France, creating the safest environment for my children I can.

### Bridging Two Worlds: citizen participation in local self-government.

In France, mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, local councils and public consultations allow citizens to directly influence municipal decisions and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of the community. This active citizen participation strengthens democracy at the local level and fosters trust between authorities and society. The people really shape the reality around them, transforming it thanks to the local authorities. And they volunteer a lot!

Inspired by this model, I co-founded the **Étude Académique des Droits de l'Homme et du Constitutionnalisme**, an initiative that explores how citizen participation can strengthen democratic governance and post-conflict reconstruction. NGOs play a crucial role in this process, acting as a bridge between communities and local authorities by providing expertise, facilitating dialogue and ensuring that citizens' voices are heard in decision-making.

# 3. LOCAL DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE



## 3.3 Kuzina Ruslana

Linked 

### **About:**

As an academic and consultant, I have dedicated my career to advancing sustainability, financial reporting and governance through research, education and policy advisory work, with a strong focus on integrating international standards (IFRS, SDG reporting) into academic curricula and professional development.

### **Before the war and now:**

For years I lived in Odessa with my family and worked as a professor at the Odessa National Economic University, where I led international conferences, academic workshops and interdisciplinary research on sustainability reporting, financial governance and international accounting standards. As head of the Department of Accounting and Taxation, I played a key role in academia.

After the start of the war, I moved to Belgium with my family and now work in the Department of Accounting and Finance at KU Leuven. My research focuses on the barriers to sustainable development caused by geopolitical risks in the EU, which is explored in my forthcoming Palgrave Macmillan manuscript, *Barriers to Progress: The Impact of Geopolitical Risks on SDG Efforts in the EU*.

### **What would I take back to Ukraine from Belgium?**

One important practice to bring back could be participatory budgeting - a system where local residents directly influence how public funds are allocated. In Belgian cities such as Brussels and Ghent, citizens propose projects, vote on priorities and actively shape their communities. This approach promotes transparency, civic engagement and trust in local governance - key elements for Ukraine's reconstruction and decentralisation.

Given Ukraine's ongoing efforts to strengthen local democracy and ensure that post-war reconstruction meets the real needs of communities, the introduction of participatory budgeting could empower residents to help shape their future. A similar model could help channel funds into the reconstruction projects that citizens feel are most urgent - whether it's restoring infrastructure, improving public services or supporting local businesses.

At the same time, the Belgian experience highlights potential challenges - such as ensuring fair participation across different social groups and preventing elite capture of funds. Studying how Belgian cities have addressed these issues could help create a balanced, transparent model tailored to Ukraine's needs.

# 3. LOCAL DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

## 3.4 Facebook Community findings

### Anonymous Contributions:

- When creating communities, the British really love the place where they live. Literally, the street, a café, the local place matters. Working together on a communal garden at a station, flowerbeds in a park, or decorating a street
- In Germany, associations also exist. A Verein is generally a way of life for any initiative: from sports to nature conservation.

A percentage of the tax can be transferred not to the tax office, but directly to some charitable organization; a list of organizations is provided.

- Volunteering in all spheres.
- Protection of children and women from domestic violence, shelters, social housing.
- The pub culture. Not in the sense of needing to get drunk, but in the sense that it's a public place where people come and it's normal to talk and start a conversation with a stranger, who can be of any age. In our country, this function is performed by liquor stands and seedy pubs somewhere near grocery stores, but I'm talking about an adequate, aesthetic version, where it's not just old alcoholic men. In general, the inclusion of mature people in social life.
- Charity shops, England. Shops and networks accept donations in the form of clothes, toys, books, household items, and furniture from the public. Everything is usually in good condition. And then it's sold at relatively low prices. These shops are mostly or partially staffed by volunteers. The money goes to a specific charity cause. But what attracts me here is the idea of using the planet's resources more wisely.
- Vivid community life for the people 60+.

# 4. COMMUNITY & VOLUNTEERING



## 4.1 Khymych Oksana

Linked 

### **About:**

Oksana Khymych is a researcher at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. She is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions 4Ukraine fellow from 2023 to 2025. With over 18 years of experience in finance, entrepreneurship, and startup development, she is passionate about fostering resilient business ecosystems, particularly during times of crisis.

### **Before the war and now:**

Before the war, I was an Associate Professor at Lviv Polytechnic National University, teaching courses on financial management and startup development. I was also an active trainer in entrepreneurship, working with international programs like the British Council's **Creative Spark** and USAID initiatives. In 2023, I moved to the Netherlands, where I continued my research at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as an MCSA4Ukraine postdoctoral scholar.

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to academic discussions on crisis-driven entrepreneurship while ensuring a safe environment for my family.

### **Bridging Two Worlds: citizen participation in local self-government.**

If I could bring one thing from the Netherlands to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be its strong culture of entrepreneurship and innovation-driven cooperation.

While in the Netherlands, I saw how well-structured entrepreneurial ecosystems – supported by universities, incubators, and government initiatives – can drive sustainable economic growth. Inspired by this model, I am dedicated to exploring how entrepreneurship, particularly in creative and crisis-affected sectors, can contribute to Ukraine's economic resilience and recovery.

To advance this mission, I am eager to collaborate with researchers, policymakers, and organizations that share the vision of a strong, innovation-led post-war economy in Ukraine.

# 4. COMMUNITY & VOLUNTEERING



## 4.2 Mazepa Svitlana



### About:

Svitlana Mazepa is an international researcher at Osnabrück University (Germany), an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Law and Procedure, and the former Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law at the West Ukrainian National University. She is an expert with the Council of Europe's HELP project on the course "AI and Human Rights."

Mazepa is a recipient of the Volkswagen Foundation scholarship for the research projects "On Propaganda and Misinformation as Tools of Information War" (2022/2023) and "Digital Violation through Human Rights Dimensions" (2023/2024).

Her professional background includes work in the NCB of Interpol in Ukraine, holding the rank of major of police. She is a member of the International Police Association, a trainer in anti-corruption courses for civil servants, and the author of the book **War, Hate, Propaganda and the Internet: A Dangerous Combination** (Springer, 2024). She has published numerous articles and book chapters and participates in international research projects and conferences.

Svitlana is the Chair of the Ukrainian Hub of the European Law Institute and an elected member of the ELI Council (Austria). Her scientific interests include criminal law, information law and international cooperation in criminal matters. She speaks Ukrainian, Russian, and English fluently and actively studies German and Polish.

### What would I take back to Ukraine from Germany?

A compelling thing to take back could be **Germany's legal and technological frameworks for combating online hate speech and propaganda**. According to my research on propaganda and cyberwar, studying how Germany enforces its **NetzDG (Network Enforcement Act)** - one of the most advanced legal mechanisms against disinformation on social media - might offer valuable insights. I could explore how similar instruments might be adapted to Ukraine's legal landscape to strengthen information security during the war and after.

A similar model could enforce faster removal of pro-Russian propaganda and hate speech while maintaining oversight to avoid censorship. Studying NetzDG's implementation challenges - like over-blocking or legal loopholes - could help craft a balanced, adaptable approach for Ukraine's cyber resilience.

# 4. COMMUNITY & VOLUNTEERING

## 4.3 Tylchyk Olha

Linked 



### About:

Current working position is a professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Barcelona (since 2022), an expert at the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Ukraine, Expert in Independent Professional Expertise (Research into business situations that require specialized legal and / or special knowledge) Kyiv. Co-executor of an international research project at the University of Barcelona "New Regulations on the Urban Transport of people and goods in a digital environment (NURETU)" 2024-2026.

Since 2005 has been teaching Law disciplines at the Universities in Ukraine.

With regard to her post-graduate studies, in 2005 she successfully completed a PhD on the topic of "Proceedings in cases of crimes committed by organized groups at the pre-trial stages of the criminal process". In 2018, she was awarded the degree of Dr. in Law in administrative law and processes, finance law, and information law on the topic of "Administrative and legal methods of counter-acting the shadowing of the economy". With more than 20 years of experience in conducting comparative research and managing comparative research in the field of public law, I continue to publish the results of my own research in Ukrainian, English and Spanish.

The latest publication is devoted to a topic that is relevant today was [published in Spanish](#) as part of a research project on the legal regulation of urban mobility of goods and people.

### Before the war and now:

When the war began, I was the professor of Administrative Law at the University of State Tax Servers of Ukraine, Irpin, Ukraine.

I left Ukraine with my daughter and parents in March 2022 and have been living in Spain ever since. I am grateful to the University of Barcelona for the opportunity to continue my research work in collaboration with colleagues from different countries and for the safe environment for my daughter.

### Bridging Two Worlds:

If I could bring one thing from Spain to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be the area of urban mobility for the transport of goods and people, especially with regard to the mobility of people with disabilities. This area is one of the most sensitive for Ukraine due to the destruction caused and its importance in restoring normal life.

To advance this mission, I seek to collaborate with organisations, researchers and funders who share a vision of a sustainable, community-driven future for Ukraine as a country that is part of Europe and that upholds the highest values of real democracy.

# 4. COMMUNITY & VOLUNTEERING

## 4.4 Facebook Community findings

### Yaroslava Zheyko

Bicycle paths should be separate, or at a distance from car roads.

### Daria Petruka

Bicycle paths + paid parking everywhere + a system of fines for drivers + speed cameras on roads that automatically record speeding and send data to the relevant authority + public transport paid for by the state, not private entrepreneurs, with a system for issuing different travel cards, such as a pensioner's pass

### Kateryna Sviatets

Accessibility of everything for people with disabilities. I'm also a big fan of bike lanes, and I really like roundabouts and "bow-tie" interchanges. Smart landscaping with perennial plants, creating fences and canopies from plants. High taxes on polluting vehicles, toll roads, and zones for lunch/rest/toilets on highways. Separate lanes for public transport.

### Oksana Voloshyna

Air conditioners and Wi-Fi in public transport (working! Not just advertised)

### Krystyna Lysova

Toilets in supermarkets, and in general, a larger number of public toilets, including those equipped with changing tables and for people with disabilities.

### **Anonymous Contributions:**

- Barrier-free environment.
- The transport schedule.
- Accessibility of everything for people with disabilities.
- Barrier-free environment. It seems to me that in Ukraine, this exists on paper. For sidewalks and public transport to be accessible to people with limited mobility (people in wheelchairs and on

crutches, with canes, parents with strollers). This is such a basic convenience that you quickly get used to, and then you feel like crying in Ukraine, even though I am not in a group with limited mobility myself. Curbs - away with them. But at the same time, we need to educate drivers.

- Barrier-free environment... People in wheelchairs (mostly electric) can easily get wherever they want: from beaches to large shopping centers, from the suburbs to the main street of the city. They don't need assistance or help because everything is thought out everywhere.

- The absence of bullying or contempt in society for an "unprestigious" or low-paid profession.

- The ability to say "no" and the ability to accept someone else's "no" (example: can I do this? / can you do this? - no. OK - OK. With no lies about why not and no drama about them being such a jerk for not allowing it)

- Low-rise buildings.

- A ban on high-rise construction in the historical center.

- The absence of stray animals.

Air conditioners and Wi-Fi in public transport (working! Not just advertised).

- Public transport paid for by the state, not private entrepreneurs, with a system for issuing different travel cards, such as a pensioner's pass.

- Separate lanes for public transport.

- The transport schedule.

- Bikes on the metro.

- Wide, two-way bicycle paths on the city's main routes, separated from the car part of the street with concrete, and smaller separated bike lanes on smaller streets (Montreal).

- Barrier-free space. I think in Ukraine it exists on paper. For sidewalks and public transport to be accessible to people with limited mobility (people in wheelchairs and on crutches, with canes, parents with strollers). This is such a basic convenience that you quickly get used to, and then you feel like crying in Ukraine, even though I am not in a group with limited mobility myself. Curbs - away with them. But at the same time, we need to educate drivers.

# 5. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S WELFARE



## 5.1 Fedorova Alla

Linked 

### About:

Alla Fedorova is Associate professor of the Chair of Comparative and European Law of Educational and Scientific Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

At present she is a Marie Skłodowska–Curie Actions 4Ukraine postdoctoral fellow (2023–2025) at the Faculty of Law of Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic (2023–2025).

I am infinitely grateful to the Faculty of Law of Palacký University for a warm welcome and support that they offered me and my daughter.

### Bridging Two Worlds:

If I could bring one thing from Czech Republic as well as other EU States to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be their libraries for the Universities' students.

The ability to find almost any book or article that you would like to read give the inspiration for the research and incredible motivation. Ukrainian Universities would need to think how to fill the libraries with well-known books, textbooks, journals and refill the stock regularly and how to engage students to visit libraries. I am sure that this help our universities to survive and develop.

# 5. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S WELFARE



## 5.2 Kovalkovska Adelaida [Facebook](#)

### **About:**

Adelaida Kovalkovska is a retired engine designer from Odesa, Ukraine.

### **Before the war and now:**

She is a mother of three and a grandmother of two. When the war began, she moved from Odesa to Ulm, Germany, where she now lives with one of her children and misses her family a lot.

### **Bridging Two Worlds:**

If I could bring one thing from Germany and other EU countries to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be their system of community efforts for children. Here in Ulm, children can develop their skills in many different fields through community-run clubs and sections. The quality of these programs is very high, but the price is affordable and depends on the family's income.

When children finish these courses, they are ready for professional education and are competitive without the need for additional private lessons. This approach helps children become true professionals from a young age.

This is something that would greatly help Ukraine's future.

# 5. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S WELFARE



## 5.3 Wished Lilian [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#)

### **About:**

Lilian Wished is a coach, mentor, psychologist and energy therapist.

### **Before the war and now:**

When the war began, I was running my own business in Odessa, Ukraine, where I had a private practice.

I left Ukraine in 2022 and have since lived in several countries, including Lithuania and Germany. Despite these changes, I continue my private practice, as people need help and support now more than ever.

### **Bridging two worlds: encouraging language learning**

If I could bring one idea to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be a stronger system of promoting foreign language learning at all ages.

Language skills open up new opportunities for individuals and society as a whole. In many countries, local and state authorities actively support multilingual education, recognising that speaking several languages improves employment prospects, access to international knowledge and cultural exchange. In Ukraine's future, I see a system where foreign language learning - starting with English as a second state-supported language - is widely encouraged and accessible to all.

Local authorities could play a key role by offering free or subsidised language courses, integrating foreign languages into public education and community programmes, and supporting cultural exchange initiatives. Libraries, schools and community centres could host language clubs and conversation groups, creating an environment where language learning is not just a requirement, but a natural and engaging process.

It would be great to see community leaders making language learning more accessible in Ukraine. Investing in language education is investing in Ukraine's global future, making our country stronger and more connected to the world.

# 5. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S WELFARE

## 5.4 Facebook Community findings

### [Svitlana Shumilo](#)

I see many good things in how educational institutions work here, but I'm afraid we will never learn how to allocate so much money for education...

### [Kateryna Sviatets](#)

Separate buildings and yards for junior and senior schools.

### [Iryna Rohozenko](#)

Oh, I am just delighted with the separation of schools! When I was in school, the worst danger was middle and high school students running through our floor. One would just run by and bump into five people. And their weight is different. What if there's a radiator nearby? There were incidents, fortunately not fatal, but requiring an ambulance. Now my son is in the 1st grade. The oldest students in the school are 4th graders. That's a different weight compared to a 10th grader, and their interests are still childish. It's about both physical and moral safety.

### [Krystyna Lysova](#)

- gardening lessons in school, animals in the class or school that children learn to take care of, more outdoor classes. Not physical education standards, but for example: what a wonderful weather today, let's have a math lesson by the river/in a clearing/just on a playground near the school, etc.

- zero tolerance for bullying in school, not just on paper but also in reality.

- assistants for teachers and special assistants for children with special needs to make the learning process more comfortable for everyone.

- a system of school projects that can include several disciplines at once and develops skills in planning, time management, execution, and project presentation.

[MVKK in Finland - community education for children](#) (Facebook post in Ukrainian) by [Nastya Melnychenko](#). The translation is as follows:

### **Nastya Melnychenko. Community Education**

I want to share my thoughts on community education. My children have been attending a center called MVKK in Finland, a place where immigrant children can go and not feel left out. Today, I had a great conversation with a Finn who works at such a center, and he told me more about it.

He is getting a master's degree in community education, specializing in children with special needs. He explained that the city creates free centers where young people can spend time. These places offer both coordinated and uncoordinated activities. For example, he worked at Turun poikien talo (Boys' House of Turku), a place for boys aged 12-28. He said that while most youth houses are for all genders, this one specializes in supporting children from difficult family circumstances.

The center is not just a place for kids to spend time under the supervision of trained staff; it provides specialized support, including social workers and psychologists. They offer support to children who, for example, have experienced domestic violence.

This system ensures that children, even from families in difficult situations, stay included in the community. They have equal access to leisure activities and clubs, and it prevents them from feeling like outsiders. As stated on the Boys' House website, "You can come to the house as you are and not be afraid of being judged. The house is free of any discrimination."

I have seen this work in practice at the MVKK where my kids go. It's not just a nice slogan; it really works.

I also discovered another program from the city and the University of Turku called "international friend," which connects newcomers with locals. You just write about yourself, and coordinators match you with someone. This is a wonderful initiative, isn't it?

### **Anonymous Contributions:**

- Students have internships in various workplaces; there's an annual school trip that teaches independence; it's forbidden to give gifts over 20 euros at school.

- In Germany, from the 5th grade, students are introduced to professions and the job market. For example, a child has to spend a whole day at one of their parents' jobs. And not just on the phone or watching, but performing an easier version of their duties. My acquaintance told me about these practices for her two children. She is delighted. It's simply useful for awareness and it really integrates the child into their parents' lives.

- Assistants for teachers and special assistants for children with special needs to make the learning process more comfortable for everyone.

- A system of school projects that can include several disciplines at once and develops skills in planning, time management, execution, and project presentation.

# 6. SOCIAL PROTECTION & SUSTAINABILITY



## 6.1 Leheza Yuliia



### About:

Yuliia Leheza is Professor of Civil, Commercial and Environmental Law, Dnipro University of Technology (Dnipro, Ukraine). She teaches the following disciplines: "Civil Law", "Environmental Law", "Mining and Geological Law", "Environmental Security Law", "Legal Status of Citizens in Environmental Relations", "Methodology of Law", was a research supervisor preparation of master's research, member of specialized scientific councils for the preparation of PhD research, editor-in-chief of professional scientific publications "[Law.State.Technology](#)".

### Before the war and now:

Yuliia Leheza is a professor for Dnipro University of Technology in Ukraine. She fled to Germany in 2022 as a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Being under conditions of forced immigration, she wanted to continue her development as a teacher and scientist, so she applied to participate in a project for Germany to support scientists from Ukraine. As part of the project "[Digital competence development through the integration of Ukrainian teachers in teaching and learning \(DIKI\)](#)" she gave a guest lecture on "Environmental Strategies and future perspectives of Ukraine" at Mittweida University of Applied Sciences in 2022, which dealt – among other things – with the implementation of a green deal strategy and the development of a circular economy in Ukraine. Experts hope that these developments will provide a positive impetus for the Ukrainian energy sector. The gradual phase-out of fossil fuels and the shift towards renewable energies would create investment incentives and – in addition to reducing environmental pollution – would have positive socio-economic effects in the regions.

Prof. Leheza's lecture at Hochschule Mittweida was aimed at students on the Master's degree course in Energy Management. In cooperation with Prof. Ralf Hartig and Christina Kolb, the concept of the lecture and learning material for the courses "Energy and Environmental Management" and "Sustainable Development in Macroeconomic Cycles" were developed.

### Bridging Two Worlds:

If I could bring one thing from Germany to help rebuild Ukraine, it would be the decentralisation of the energy system.

'As a federal country, Germany has a highly developed system of local self-government. The experience to be implemented in Ukraine is the experience of decentralisation of the energy system, which requires the preparation of an appropriate legislative framework'.

# 6. SOCIAL PROTECTION & SUSTAINABILITY



## 6.2 Ostrovska Bohdana



### **About:**

Dr. Habil. International Law. UNICEF Expert, Justice for Children & Violence Against Children. UNESCO Chair Expert, Human Rights & Bioethics. Leading Scientific Researcher, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

### **Dignity in Action and the Right to Live Fully:** a Scope of Inclusion for Persons with Disability

This initiative represents a comprehensive strategy aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities, especially children, can live with dignity and respect for their human rights while promoting their inclusion and integration into modern society across all aspects of public life:

1. **Access to Public Life:** Ensures full participation in mobility; housing design and accommodations; services accessibility (education, medical, administrative etc.); employment and entertainment.
2. **Independence and Equality:** Advocates for equal opportunities, supporting their ability to work remotely, while fostering greater independence from external assistance.
3. **Support for Families:** Enables family members to secure fair compensation while caring for a relative with a disability.
4. **Social Integration:** Ability to build their social lives without bullying or stigma, promoting a sense of belonging.
5. **Legal Protections:** Creating and developing a legal framework to ensure protection from discrimination and violence.
6. **Community Programs:** Encourages local community initiatives to promote and protect human rights for individuals with disabilities.
7. **Home Assistance for Children:** Advocates for the rights of children with disabilities to receive assistance at home rather than being placed in closed institutions.

# 6. SOCIAL PROTECTION & SUSTAINABILITY



## 6.3 Plotnytska Svitlana



### **About:**

Svitlana Plotnytska is a researcher at the GRANEM laboratory at IAE Angers, University of Angers, France. She is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions4Ukraine fellow (2023-2025).

With over 20 years of experience in management and marketing research, she is deeply passionate about enabling digital and artificial intelligence sustainability in digitalization transformation.

### **Bridging Two Worlds or how to meet the dual challenge of digitization and sustainability**

How to combine digital technology and sustainable development for the benefit of health, equality and the environment?

To understand this, we develop a challenging field - digital sustainability which refers to the effort of developing and deploying digitalization to secure sustainable economic growth while integrating sustainable objectives. We therefore need to understand how to enable this change, given the current lack of skills and knowledge on how to manage this dual transition.

In this context, the aim of the research is to explore and understand what enhances sustainable digital transformation and to create an enabling environment that promotes commitment to more responsible use of digital technology and AI.

To further this mission, I am eager to work with companies, especially a French Tech cluster, researchers and funders who share the vision of a sustainable digital transformation.

# 6. SOCIAL PROTECTION & SUSTAINABILITY



## 6.4 Sarybaieva Anna (Pysarenko)

[Linked in](#)  
[Facebook](#)

### **About:**

Nearly 20 years of research experience in the fields of administrative law, administrative justice and administrative services.

### **Before the war and now:**

Before the war, I was a Ph. D. (Doctorate), Associate Professor at the Department of Administrative and Financial Law at the National University "Odesa Law Academy."

In 2022, I left Ukraine, first moving to Germany, and I am currently residing in Austria. In 2024, I was a researcher at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna and am now a member of the European Law Institute, actively participating in the institute's events.

### **What I would "bring back" from Austria and Germany?**

- The culture of trade unions,
- Strong protection for employees,
- Social insurance systems.
- The integration of these values into Ukraine's legal and social framework would facilitate the faster restoration of a fair civil society.

# 7. OTHER TOPICS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY FINDINGS

## Animal Welfare

### [Lazy Fox](#)

(...) the absence of stray dogs. There are cats, but they are mostly free-roaming ones who have a home.

### [Oksana Marchuk](#)

(...) animals. Everything has already been developed – just take it and implement it in Ukraine.

#### Anonymous Contributions:

- A humane attitude towards animals, meaning no chains or lifelong torment for dogs.
- The attitude towards stray animals.
- Everything related to the maintenance of domestic animals.
- Stray animal control. There are none.
- For almost three years of living here (Australia, Melbourne suburbs) I have not met a single stray animal. In parks and on beaches, there are clear rules and informative signs about where dogs can be off-leash and where they can't. In parks, there are bags for cleaning up after dogs (as in many other countries), and near drinking fountains for people, everything is arranged for dogs below.

## Architecture & Aesthetics

#### Anonymous Contributions:

- I would advise taking with us the "culture of architecture," where multi-story buildings are not built up with glass balconies called "everyone doing whatever they want." Just today (of all days!) I was in Brno with Yulik on business and I said the following phrase to him in the car: "If our people were given apartments in these buildings now, they would immediately start glazing the balconies however and with whatever they want. And it would be a disaster, like in our Cheryomushky." I don't know about the French, but in Czech cities and the towns surrounding them, it's more than beautiful and clean.
- High taxes on polluting vehicles.
- Low-rise buildings.
- A ban on high-rise construction in the historical center.

## Ecological issues

### [Yaroslava Zheyko](#)

If a tree falls somewhere in a park or on a lawn – leave the trunk in place for the ecosystem.  
When building, don't bury rivers and streams underground, but give water its own place.

It is particularly significant that one of our participants, [Olga Tokariuk](#), highlighted a topic for our next project: domestic violence. Her insights focus on the protection of children and women from domestic violence, as well as the importance of shelters and social housing. This contribution underscores the ongoing challenges faced by vulnerable populations and points to concrete areas where future research and policy development can make a meaningful impact.

# 7. OTHER TOPICS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY FINDINGS

## Sports & Recreation

### Anonymous Contributions:

- Accessible pools in every district of the city or in every small settlement (for example, our town has 17 thousand residents with all the surrounding villages). Both winter and summer. They are accessible not only in price but also so a child can walk there alone, and not sit in a car for an hour.
- I'm also a fan of sports. We live in a town of 6,000 residents, there's a football club, two great fields with a stand, and an electronic scoreboard. In 2022, we lived for a month in another region - in a city of 20,000, and there was also a good football field and club.
- Free infrastructure for sports. At every turn, there are at least three courts: basketball, tennis, and free outdoor gyms. There are really a lot of them, and they are everywhere. It's all clean and functional; someone is constantly taking care of it. People actively use it all. Both young and old, especially when it's warm.
- Accessible sports clubs and pools.
- Free drinking and entertainment fountains everywhere in the summer and ice rinks in the winter; sports fields for different types of sports in every large park; the amount of greenery in general; communal pools and halls are free.

## Waste Management & Sustainability

### [Lesya Moskalenko](#)

My topic is waste management and adapting to climate change at the regional level.

For the first point, it seems clear what and how to do, but we simply lack the political will, both at the state and local levels. There's also the issue of huge investments that Hungary, Poland, or Romania receive from the EU - where would we get that money?

Regarding the second point, regional and local specifics must be taken into account, but the general framework is also clear.

### [Oksana Marchuk](#)

Waste ... Everything has already been developed - just take it and implement it in Ukraine.

### Anonymous Contributions:

- Waste sorting and people paying the real cost of recycling, including separating bio-waste.
- Everything related to waste sorting, collection, and disposal.
- The city hall gives away free yellow bags for recyclable waste. On a certain day, a car comes and collects these bags from the street. In one bag there is paper, tin, and plastic. I still don't quite understand whether they need to be washed, because the locals said they don't and that everything is disinfected during recycling.

# 8. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The insights gathered from Ukrainian women living in Europe highlight the fact that the reconstruction of Ukraine could be greatly improved by adopting practical, grassroots-level solutions observed in European societies. This project shows that Ukraine can build a more resilient, equitable and democratic future by focusing on community-level practices. Their contributions emphasise that impactful change can be driven from the bottom up, in line with the core principles of decentralisation and civic empowerment. The women's perspectives offer a valuable and unique understanding of community needs and social cohesion.

Based on our findings, we propose the following strategic framework for reconstruction, incorporating both short- and long-term goals.

## Short-term recommendations (1–2 years):

- **civic grants for community-led initiatives:** Set up grant programmes specifically for local associations and volunteer groups (like the Verein in Germany). This will empower communities to collaborate on projects such as communal gardens, park beautification and street decoration. These initiatives could also be supported by enabling a percentage of taxes to be transferred directly to charitable organisations.
- **pilots for participatory budgeting:** Inspired by models in Belgium, launch pilot projects for participatory budgeting in key cities. This will promote transparency and trust in local governance by enabling residents to influence the allocation of public funds for urgent reconstruction projects.
- **establish domestic violence shelters:** In direct response to a need voiced by participants, prioritise the creation of shelters and social housing for women and children who are survivors of domestic violence.

This is an immediate and critical action to ensure safety and provide real support to vulnerable populations.

## Medium-term recommendations (3–5 years):

- **inclusive Education & Children's Welfare:** Invest in educational reforms that separate junior and senior schools to improve safety. Additionally, introduce community education programmes and school-based projects that develop practical

skills, including specialised support for children from difficult family circumstances.

- **barrier-free infrastructure:** Create a legal framework and concrete policies for establishing a barrier-free environment, particularly in urban transport and public spaces. This should include removing kerbs and ensuring that public facilities, such as supermarkets and government offices, are accessible to all.
- **community Centres:** Develop a network of community centres that provide free, low-threshold spaces where young people can spend time and engage in both organised and ad hoc programmes. These centres should also offer specialised support from social workers and psychologists.

## Long-term recommendations (5+ years):

- **decentralised energy systems:** Work towards a more decentralised energy system by preparing the appropriate legislative framework. This transition will create investment incentives and have a positive impact on the local economy and environment.
- **cultural Shift in Governance and Participation:** Promote a long-term cultural shift in governance by fostering self-respect and acceptance of different opinions, as well as rejecting social contempt for 'unprestigious' professions. This can be achieved through greater emphasis on local governance, participatory decision-making and community empowerment.

**Synergy with EU accession and the Council of Europe:** all the recommendations outlined in this report align with the European values of equality, transparency, civic engagement and social solidarity. The insights gathered from our study directly support Ukraine's path towards sustainable development and integration with European frameworks. Integrating these principles into Ukraine's legal and social framework would empower local communities to play an active role in the country's reconstruction, demonstrating a commitment to the highest values of real democracy.

# 9. A VISION FOR TOMORROW

This brochure is more than a report; it is a testament to the resilience, hope, and expertise of Ukrainian women. It is a living document, a bridge between the lessons learned today and the Ukraine we are rebuilding for tomorrow.

The insights and recommendations presented here are rooted in the belief that effective reconstruction must be community-driven and based on real-world experiences. We are confident that by embracing these grassroots solutions, Ukraine can not only rebuild what was lost but also create a society that is more resilient, inclusive, and deeply connected to European values.

Thank you for your interest and support in this vital mission.

**Natalia Mishyna**

Project Manager and Head of the EADHC

Email: [eadhc.fr@gmail.com](mailto:eadhc.fr@gmail.com)

Website: <https://eadhc.fr/>

