

Building Diverse and Inclusive Reintegration Policies and Practices for Veterans in Ukraine

A study of five regions (Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk regions, and the city of Kyiv)



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This project aims to improve the understanding of local authorities and service providers regarding the needs of women and LGBTIQ+ veterans and to promote the capacity, authority, and visibility of CSOs to advance diverse and inclusive services and practices.

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List of abbreviations

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
ASC	Administrative Services Centre
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMU	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CU	Constitution of Ukraine
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GBA+	Gender-based Analysis Plus
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JFO	Joint Forces Operation
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MMC	Military Medical Commission
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoH	Ministry of Health

MSEC	Medical and Social Expert Commission
MSP	Ministry of Social Policy
MoVA	Ministry of Veterans Affairs
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PiH	Participant in hostilities
PFU	Pension Fund of Ukraine
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RMA	Regional Military Administration
RSA	Regional State Administration
TRC	Territorial Recruitment Centre
TR & SSC	Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre
UN	United Nations Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VA	Veterans Affairs (USA) – U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VRU	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
VAC	Veterans Affairs Canada
VSW	Veteran Single Window
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Definitions

Veterans

In this study, veterans refer to individuals who, in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection”, participated in the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and acquired the status of combatants in accordance with paragraphs 11, 19–22 of Article 6 of this Law (including servicemen of the AFU, National Guard of Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine, Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, State Special Transport Service of Ukraine, military prosecutor's offices, operational units of the central executive body, as well as volunteers). They also include persons with disabilities as a result of the war who acquired the relevant status in accordance with paragraphs 10–15 of Part two of Article 7 of this Law.

Veterans' policy

A set of measures implemented by state authorities to create favourable conditions and provide opportunities for veterans' reintegration into civilian life and their full functioning in society.

Gender policy

A system of purposeful actions of state authorities, local governments, institutions, organisations of all forms of ownership, and civil society, aimed at ensuring equal rights, freedoms, opportunities, and conditions for realizing the potential of women and men in all spheres of civic life.

State institutions

Institutions operating within the framework of state power that are responsible for implementing public policy, providing services, and ensuring respect for human rights.

Inclusive space

A social or physical environment in which equal access and opportunities for development, socialization, and self-realization are provided for all individuals, regardless of their social, gender, ethnic, age, or other characteristics.

Inclusivity

The property of policies, institutions, or environments that provides for equal access, participation, and consideration of the interests of all social groups, including ones in vulnerable situations.

Non-discrimination	A key principle of international human rights law that prohibits any direct or indirect limitation of a person's rights based on any ground such as sex, ethnicity, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or other status. Non-discrimination requires not only the avoidance of prejudice but also active action to overcome historically rooted inequalities and protect groups in situations of vulnerability.
Benefits	Legislation establishes benefits provided to certain categories of persons in order to ensure their rights, support or compensation in connection with specific circumstances (e.g. service, disability, etc.).
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	A mental disorder resulting from severe or prolonged traumatic exposure (e.g., participation in hostilities) which manifests itself in the form of anxiety, flashbacks, avoidance of triggers, and maladaptation in everyday life.
Reintegration	The process of returning persons who were in specific circumstances (service, captivity, displacement) to a full-fledged life in society, which includes the restoration of social status, access to rights and services, psychological adaptation and economic stabilization. In Ukraine, the reintegration process is enshrined in relevant regulatory acts and state programmes.
Equality	The principle whereby all people, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, nationality, age, social status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or other characteristics, have the same rights, opportunities and dignity in all areas of life. Equality involves not only formal equality (equal treatment under the law), but also de facto equality – that is, taking measures to eliminate structural barriers and inequalities that prevent certain groups from fully realizing their rights.
Social structure	A set of social groups and communities (classes, professions, demographic and ethnic groups) that interact with each other within society, forming its organisational and hierarchical levels.

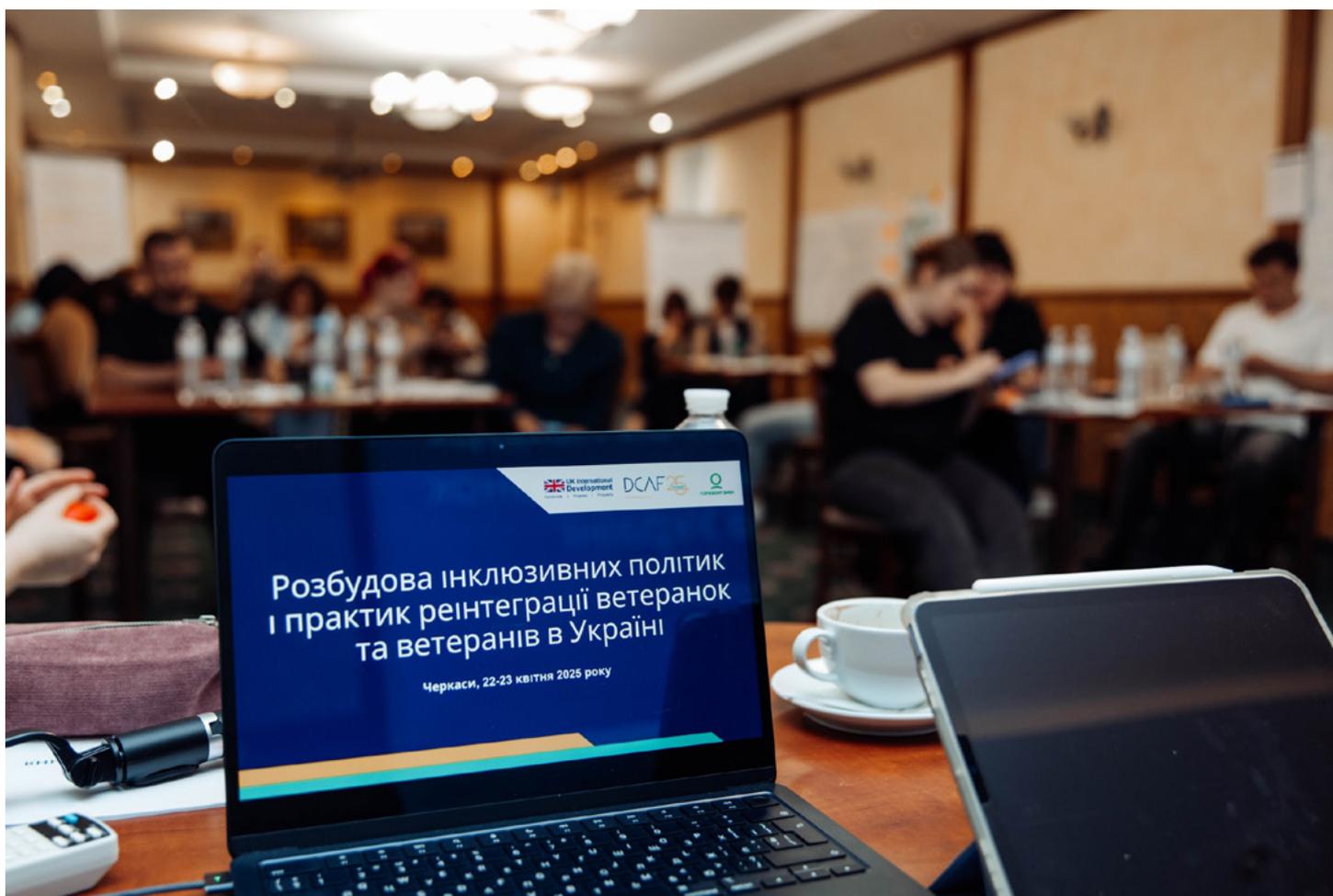
Summary

This study highlights the status and reintegration challenges faced by female and LGBTIQ+ veterans, including persons made vulnerable by disability, internal displacement as well as other veteran groups in situations of vulnerability in Ukraine. Data from five pilot regions, namely the city of Kyiv and the Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, Zakarpattia, and Chernivtsi regions, was collected using a mixed-method approach: interviews, focus groups, online surveys and analysis of the policy and regulatory framework. Its results highlight both important achievements in creating a support system for veterans and significant gaps in implementing inclusive policies in the pilot regions.

Ukraine has a strong regulatory framework in the area of human rights, gender equality and veterans' protection. In particular, it has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. These documents are gradually being implemented at the national level in the form of regulations, strategies and action plans, thus creating the prerequisites for the implementation of transformative, identity-sensitive veterans' policies.

Despite these achievements, the regulatory and legal framework of veterans' policies in Ukraine is fragmented: the current legislation consists of over 150 instruments at the national level alone, which are constantly updated and complicate practical implementation. At the local level, the situation is even more complex: programmes often duplicate or conflict with each other, and national, regional and local policies are not synchronized. In this context, it is important not only to update the existing legislation, but also to develop a comprehensive framework law on veterans' reintegration. Steps have already been taken in this direction through the adoption by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of the Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030 and the related Action Plan, as well as the Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033 and the related Action Plan. However, these documents are yet to be adopted at the local and regional levels.

The results of the study show that the pilot regions are progressing towards creating a basic support infrastructure in the field of veteran reintegration through the creation of dedicated positions and special departments for working with veterans, as well as the development of veteran spaces which not only provide specific services, but also a space to foster community cohesion and promote veteran-led initiatives. The inclusion of veterans as service providers has especially proven to be successful as they are more



CSO Workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

likely to understand their needs and are thus able to build a trusting relationship with people who seek out their services. This in turn enables veterans to feel acknowledged and actively seek out reintegration services.

However, these processes are unevenly effective.

The lack of systemic inclusion remains the biggest common problem. Gender equality in veterans' policies is mostly implemented through general programmes without due regard to the specific needs of women, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons or IDPs, specifically in relation to trauma and mental health support. In many cases, it is civil society organisations that compensate for the lack of institutional attention by providing psychological, social and legal assistance, which is flexible but lacks a stable state foundation.

Furthermore, communication between authorities and veterans with respect to reintegration policies and services remains fragmented, with veterans receiving information from varied sources, in different ways, and through disparate institutions. A significant part of respondents learns about services from unofficial sources: through acquaintances, social media or volunteers. Official information is often provided in

complex language, duplicated in various documents and not adapted to the needs of target groups. Veterans face excessive bureaucracy and blurred responsibilities between institutions, resulting in difficulties in obtaining a veteran status or establishing their disability. Communication is even more scarce in rural areas where veterans have little to no knowledge of what services they are entitled to.

Despite the existence of rehabilitation programmes, a systematic approach to individual support is still lacking. The “veteran assistant” model, which is gaining momentum in the Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions, is a promising tool for tailoring services to the needs of veterans in communities. However, scaling up the model nationwide will require increased human resources and standardization.

To overcome the identified barriers and increase the effectiveness of veterans’ policies in Ukraine, it is important not only to expand the support infrastructure, but also to work on the quality of institutional solutions. This involves deep integration of gender-responsive and inclusive approaches at all levels of policy development and implementation – from the central to the local level. The research shows that a thorough gender analysis of needs, using frameworks such as the Canadian intersectionality-based policy analysis tool, could support better inclusion of the needs of different target groups and ensuring equal access to services in Ukraine.

Special attention needs to be paid to strengthening professional training for support professionals and other service providers. They need to be given a clear understanding of the structural logic of the veteran system, the legal framework, intersectional challenges, and gender-related aspects of veteran reintegration. The availability of adapted information materials, both for professionals and for veterans themselves, is a critically important condition for increasing the effectiveness of support.

It is also recommended to develop new formats of cooperation: for example, paired coordination models, where a veteran and a representative of the authorities or service centre work on solving a case simultaneously. Such cooperation allows for both administrative resources and personal experience to be taken into account, building a system based on trust and mutual understanding.

Along with this, it is important to reduce the administrative burden, ensure the availability of services through channels that target groups actually use (social media, instant messengers, video formats), and form stable arrangements for interagency coordination. Regular data analysis, transparent information storage, and feedback from veterans themselves should become mandatory.

Successful reintegration is impossible without a comprehensive approach and trust between all participants in the process. It is especially important to create conditions in which veterans themselves become co-creators of policies, and not just their subjects. Only by combining state efforts, the civil society sector, international partners, as well as developing horizontal initiatives on the ground, are fair, effective and sustainable veterans’ policies in Ukraine possible.

01

Introduction

In times of social upheaval, armed conflict and war, it is crucial to integrate and take into account the needs of all citizens involved in the resolution of armed conflicts and peacebuilding, including veterans. This issue has become particularly relevant in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and has subsequently intensified following Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. However, historically, reintegration strategies around the world have focused primarily on male veterans, neglecting the needs of women, LGBTIQ+ and other groups in situations of vulnerability. Such exclusion threatens social cohesion and ignores the potential of veterans as a key population group that will ensure sustainable peace and development in Ukraine. Inclusive reintegration is vital to overcoming stigmatization, breaking cycles of violence and rebuilding a just society.

In Ukraine, women are playing an increasingly prominent role in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). Although conscription is optional for women in Ukraine, as of March 2025, over 70,000 women serve in the AFU, accounting for approximately 8% of the total number of military personnel, with approximately 20,000 of them in combat positions¹. This is 20% more than in 2022, and the share of women in the AFU is steadily growing². Official statistics on LGBTIQ+ personnel in the AFU are not maintained, however, according to estimates by civil society organisations, from 14,000 to 50,000 people or from 2% to 7% of military personnel identify themselves as part of this community³. Accordingly, the number of female veterans and LGBTIQ+ community veterans is also growing every year. According to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine (MoVA), the total number of veterans in Ukraine as of the second half of 2024 was 1,360,483⁴. It is forecast that the number of veterans (together with their family members) will be at least 5 million, or 15% of the total population of Ukraine, by the end of the war⁵. Thus, the component of women and LGBTIQ+ representatives makes up a large share of the veteran community.

The process of veterans' reintegration into civilian life is a critically important stage after the completion of military service and requires comprehensive support at the institutional, social and individual levels. Matters of social adaptation, psychological support, access to medical, legal, educational and employment services are becoming particularly acute. Despite the general state policy of supporting veterans, a significant number of representatives of groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, veterans with disabilities, and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, face additional barriers in the process of returning to civilian life. These barriers often remain invisible to the state system, which significantly complicates the development of inclusive policies and reduces the effectiveness of reintegration programmes.

The above barriers and their impact on the quality of reintegration of male and female veterans are thoroughly examined in a number of analytical and sociological studies. In particular, the report "Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Returning to Peaceful Life"⁶ focuses on the gender challenges that women face after service. Various aspects of veterans' needs, barriers, and expectations are systematically analysed

¹ The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine congratulated female military personnel on the International Day of Struggle for Women's Rights [Electronic resource]. Website of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.zsu.gov.ua/golovnokomanduvach-zbrojnyh-syl-ukrayiny-pryvitan-zhinok-vijskovosluzhbovycz-iz-mizhnarodnym-dnem-borotby-za-prava-zhinok/> (accessed date: May 03, 2025).

² Ukrainian Women's Congress. Minister of Defence: Today Ukrainian women can well realize themselves in the Armed Forces of Ukraine [Electronic resource]. December 2, 2022. Available at: <https://womenua.today/news/ministr-oborony-sogodni-ukrayinski-zhinky-mozhut-dobre-realizuvatysya-u-zsu/> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

³ About 50 thousand gay men and lesbian women are fighting for Ukraine. The Telegraph [Electronic resource]. UNIAN. Available at: <https://www.unian.ua/war/blizko-50-tisyach-gejiv-i-lesbiyok-voyuyut-za-ukrajinu-the-telegraph-12315357.html> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

⁴ Veterans' Policy and Community Opportunities. Public Dialogue of the Ukrainian Crisis MediaCentre [Electronic resource; video]. Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre. June 14, 2024. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URn9VrHpc1Y> (accessed date: May 03, 2025).

⁵ Hersak V. Why is veterans' policy in Ukraine not effective? [Electronic resource]. Korespondent.net: blog. 2023. Available at: <https://blogs.korrespondent.net/blog/politics/4705347/>.

⁶ Sociological research "Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Returning to Peaceful Life: Sociological Study" / [Tamara Martseniuk et al.]. Kyiv: UN Women Ukraine, 2020. 100 p. Available at: <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/invisible%20battalion%20uk.pdf>.

in the studies of the Ukrainian Veterans Fund: “Portrait of a Veteran⁷”, “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Male and Female Veterans”⁸, and “Needs of Veterans 2023”⁹. The study “The Situation of LGBT+ Military Members in Ukraine”¹⁰ addresses the unique challenges that arise for members of the LGBTIQ+ community in the army. In addition, scientific publications by Ukrainian researchers¹¹ and reports by international organisations, and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)¹² in particular, provide an analytical vision of existing policies and practices in the field of reintegration. All of these works emphasize the importance of recognizing the diversity of veterans’ experiences and highlight the urgent need to update regulatory and institutional approaches in state veterans’ policies.

At the same time, the reforms taking place in state policy in the field of veterans’ reintegration, in particular the changes stipulated in **the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2024–2027**¹³ lay an important foundation for integrating the principles of diversity and inclusion. From the very beginning of the document, the importance of taking into account gender, regional context and intersecting identities is emphasized. For example, it states: “One person can have several social and legal statuses at the same time”. Among the key principles are objectivity (collection of qualitative data), people-centredness, sustainability, respect – all of which are aimed at taking into account the diverse experiences of veterans. The concept of “women” is mentioned 11 times in the text of the Strategy, and “female” 17 times, which indicates a consistent desire to recognize the specific challenges of female veterans and take into account their experiences in practice. In addition, the creation by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of a special “implementation office” with a focus on policy and expertise indicates a readiness for systemic change.

In this context, the DCAF’s study carried out as part of the project “Building Inclusive Reintegration Policies and Practices for Veterans in Ukraine”, implemented in partnership with the NGO “Horizon of Change” and a network of civil society organisations with the support of the UK Government, is a timely initiative that supports the implementation of the aforementioned Strategy. The project focuses on the experiences of veterans from

⁷ “Portrait of a Veteran: Analytical Study”. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Portrtet-veterana.pdf>.

⁸ Selianinova A., Kuzbida V., Khomenko Y. Analytical study “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Male and Female Veterans”. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rol-derzhavy-u-sotsialniy-reintehratsii-veteraniv-i-veteranok.pdf>.

⁹ Kirillova, Y., Znoviak, V., Kazanska, A., Tkalych, M. Sociological study “Needs of Veterans 2023” [Electronic resource]. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Sociological Group “Rating”. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://veteranfund.com.ua/analitics/needs-of-veterans-2023>.

¹⁰ “The Situation of LGBT+ Military in Ukraine”. [Hanna Hrytsenko (ed.); Pylypenko V., Lazarenko M., Hrytsenko H., Radionova N., Poliakova O., Shcherba D., Diachenko I.; rev. Martseniuk, Tamara]. Kyiv: NGO “LGBT Military and Their Allies”, 2025. Available at: <https://www.lgbtmilitary.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PRINT-Army-UA-.pdf> (accessed date: May 03, 2025).

¹¹ Tiliikina N. V., Piesha I. V. State Veterans’ Policy of Ukraine and Ways to Ensure its Effectiveness // Public administration and national security: electronic scientific publication – 2023. – No. 5. – Section: Functioning and development of state administration mechanisms. – Available at: <https://doi.org/10.25313/2617-572X-2023-5>.

¹² International Organization for Migration (IOM). “Social Reintegration of Veterans in Ukraine: Analysis of Policies and Practices” [Electronic resource]. – Kyiv: IOM Office in Ukraine, 2024. Available at: https://ukraine.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1861/files/documents/2024-01/veterans-social_reintegration_ukr.pdf.

¹³ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 and Approval of the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2024–2027” dated November 29, 2024 No. 1209-p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1209-2024-p> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).



Presentation of findings from the mapping of services and policies for the reintegration of women and men veterans during a roundtable discussion with local government representatives in Uzhhorod.

different social, gender and demographic groups in five pilot regions of Ukraine. Particular attention is paid to those whose voices often remain unheard in the public space: women, people with disabilities, representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as people with experiences of discrimination. The study aims to identify both effective practices and existing vulnerabilities, which allows laying the foundations for long-term, inclusive and equitable policies.

Thus, this study not only explores the implementation of key principles of the current Ukrainian policy in the field of veterans, in particular objectivity, people-centredness and inclusiveness, but also creates sustainable arrangements for the exchange of experience between veterans' organisations, promotes dialogue between civil society and state institutions at the regional levels and amplifies the voice of groups in situations of vulnerability. Thanks to the interregional approach, the project study also identifies successful local practices that can be scaled up at the national level, and serves as a basis for the formation of a reintegration system based on the principles of dignity, respect and social justice.

The report includes an introduction outlining the relevance of the study and its novelty. It is followed by a description of the purpose, methodology (in particular, the mixed approach), data collection tools, ethical considerations and limitations. A separate section is devoted to the analysis of international and national legal and political obligations in the field of veterans' policy. The main part of the report focuses on reintegration practices in five pilot regions, with an emphasis on the needs of women and LGBTIQ+ veterans. International experience of inclusive veteran support is also analysed. The final sections contain conclusions, practical recommendations and appendices with full information on sources, statistics and study tools used.

02

Methodology

2.1. General approach: mixed method

The purpose of the study is to analyse the level of inclusiveness, accessibility, and effectiveness of veteran programmes and services in Ukraine, with a focus on women and LGBTIQ+ veterans, as well as veterans in situations of vulnerability (people with disabilities, internally displaced persons etc.), and to formulate practical recommendations for improving reintegration policies.

The study covers five (Eastern, Central, Western) regions of Ukraine, namely: the Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, and Zakarpattia regions, as well as the city of Kyiv. These pilot regions were selected based on a combination of factors, including the concentration of veteran populations, the presence of local reintegration policies, and the active presence of civic initiatives and coalitions, including members of the national coalition “1325 Women, Peace and Security”.

The main objectives of the study, which covers the five pilot regions of the project, are as follows:

- comprehensive outline of available services and programmes aimed at supporting the reintegration process of veterans in Ukraine, with a special focus on female veterans, LGBTIQ+ veterans, and veterans from other groups in situations of vulnerability.
- identification of key needs and challenges faced by veterans in the reintegration process;
- identifying sources of information for veterans about available reintegration programmes;
- description and analysis of the experience of actual use of services within such programmes, systematization of typical barriers to their use;
- formulation of inclusive recommendations for veterans' policy developers, state and public structures that work and provide services to veterans.

Thus, this study is not only diagnostic, but also practice-oriented in nature. The study uses a mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. The methodology consists of two key components: desk research and empirical field research.

2.2. Desk research

The desk-based part of the study constitutes the analytical basis of the project and involves the collection and systematization of publicly available information on veterans' reintegration in Ukraine. The focus is on matters of inclusion, accessibility, and consideration of the needs of women, LGBTIQ+ persons, people with disabilities, and other groups in situations of vulnerability. The analysis covered current legislation, state policies, official documents, statistics, research, analytical reports, and scientific and journalistic publications.

The review was conducted both at the national level and in the five pilot regions: the city of Kyiv and the Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions. Particular attention was paid to assessing the compliance of state policy with Ukraine's international obligations, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and related documents in particular. The guiding principles of international organisations on human rights and post-conflict reintegration were also taken into account.

The analysis covers the main laws that form the legal framework in the field of supporting veterans, ensuring equality and non-discrimination: the Constitution of Ukraine, the Laws of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans", "On Social Protection of Military Personnel", "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", "On Preventing and Combating Discrimination in Ukraine", etc. Strategic documents adopted after 2022 were also studied, in particular the State Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Strategy for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033.

Separately, the analysis also covered local programmes, action plans, and regulations at the regional and local levels that affect the availability of services for veterans. Significant attention was paid to mapping services available in pilot regions, as well as studying the activities of state and non-state structures involved in reintegration processes.

The analysis was supplemented by data obtained through information requests to central executive bodies, as well as already published studies. In cases where access to official statistics was limited due to national security considerations, open sources were used.

2.3. Empirical research

The empirical component complements the desk research by collecting primary data through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The empirical part of the study was conducted using qualitative and quantitative sociological methods. The field research was conducted from February to July 2025 and included developing a sample, finding respondents (female veterans, LGBTIQ+ veterans, veterans with disabilities and veterans from groups in situations of vulnerability, and male veterans), conducting interviews and focus groups, transcribing and analysing the materials, and preparing a report.

The study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather individual narratives about experiences of reintegration after military service. This format allowed for a safe environment to discuss sensitive topics, especially for respondents from groups in situations of vulnerability who may not always feel comfortable in group discussions. Interviews were conducted with female veterans, LGBTIQ+ community representatives, and professionals who shape or implement reintegration policies.

16 in-depth interviews were conducted with male and female veterans – 3 for each region, except for Zakarpattia where 4 interviews took place. Participants included individuals of all ages, from regional centres and peripheries, with at least three months of service experience in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and at least a three-month adaptation period after discharge. Special attention was paid to involving respondents with intersecting identities (disability, IDP, ethnic minority, etc.). The main topics were the experience of returning to civilian life, access to services, barriers, and expectations from state programmes.

Additionally, 5 expert interviews were conducted with specialists with experience in the field of veterans' policies. They covered the matters of the effectiveness of the reintegration system, the range of available services, examples of successful practices and key challenges, as well as interaction among state authorities, non-state structures and communities. The experts also shared their vision for improving the institutional model. Officials from regional centres of five regions who had at least six months of experience in the field of veteran support were involved. Where it was impossible to involve government representatives, interviews were conducted with representatives of civil society organisations that provide such services.

A total of 21 interviews were conducted involving 9 female veterans, 4 male veterans from the LGBTIQ+ community, 1 veteran from an ethnic minority, and 5 service providers (3 women and 2 men). Respondents were recruited using a snowball method through the network of CSOs established by DCAF within the framework of project events, and through public invitations on social media. Interviews were conducted either in person or remotely (audio/video), in Ukrainian or Russian, with confidentiality in mind. All data were recorded in the form of notes and audio recordings for further analysis.

As part of the qualitative research, 13 focus group discussions were also conducted in all five pilot regions. Two focus groups were organized in each region: one with female veterans, the other with representatives of government agencies and service providers. In Kyiv, three additional focus groups were conducted: one specialized group involving LGBTIQ+ veterans, one mixed group with the participation of female veterans and service providers, and one additional group with female veterans due to the low number of participants in the previous one. In total, 89 people participated in the focus groups, including: 40 female veterans, 7 veterans from the LGBTIQ+ community (5 men and 2 women), and 42 representatives of government agencies and service structures working with veterans (32 women, 10 men).

All focus groups were conducted in person at partner locations in the respective regions. Participants were recruited through personal invitations with the assistance of representatives of the regional network of CSOs established by DCAF that work in the field of assistance to and reintegration of veterans, including women and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community. Discussions were moderated by the study team using a semi-structured guide and lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours, which allowed for in-depth discussion and free expression of participants on sensitive topics. The data were analysed in accordance with the study objectives and allowed to consider the reintegration of LGBTIQ+ and female veterans in the context of their needs.

The study also conducted an online survey aimed to obtain information from a larger number of respondents on the accessibility, effectiveness, and inclusiveness of policies and services for veterans' reintegration in Ukraine — including women, LGBTIQ+, and other groups in situations of vulnerability — to identify needs, gaps, and opportunities for improvement at the national and local levels.

The sample for the online survey was formed taking into account the need to obtain a representative and inclusive picture of the reintegration experience among different categories of veterans and service providers in the five pilot regions of Ukraine (the city of Kyiv and the Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi, Zakarpattia regions). The basis for calculating the sample included two principles: first, proportionality to the total number of veterans in the region; second, even representation of different social groups – female veterans, LGBTIQ+ veterans, male veterans, as well as representatives of state authorities and service structures. The distribution also took into account regional and typological balance (urban/rural locality, different forms of service providers, levels of government, etc.). Each respondent filled out the questionnaire only once, provided that he or she did not participate in other components of the study (interviews or focus groups), which allowed to avoid duplication and expand coverage.

189 questionnaires were received from veterans, including 87 women and 102 men, 54 questionnaires were received from LGBTIQ+ veterans, and 58 were provided by representatives of other groups in situations of vulnerability. 102 questionnaires were received from service providers (94 women, 8 men). See detailed distribution for each pilot region in Appendix 2). Thus, the online survey is not **statistically representative at the national level, but is analytically representative** for the pilot regions and target categories. It allows for informed conclusions about general trends, problems and needs, especially in the context of gender equality and inclusion.

2.4. Research limitations

This study is being conducted in the context of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, which significantly affects the availability, accuracy, and scope of both official and primary collected information. One critical limitation is the lack of up-to-date official gender-disaggregated statistics. Following the full-scale Russian invasion, the government of Ukraine, in particular the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, stopped publishing updated gender-disaggregated data. The available data date from late 2021 or earlier. The lack of such data creates significant challenges for analysing the gender aspects of reintegration policies and makes it impossible to make a representative assessment of the situation.

Additionally, some requests for public information remained unanswered for national security reasons. In some cases, such requests were perceived as a security threat, making it impossible to use traditional methods of collecting secondary data, especially regarding the number of veterans, their socio-demographic characteristics, or regional distribution.

Data collection from female veterans and members of the LGBTIQ+ community was particularly challenging. Due to widespread stigma, mistrust of institutions, and fear of discrimination, many potential respondents from these groups refrained from participating in the survey. Women often cited heavy household responsibilities, childcare, employment, or lack of time as reasons for not participating.

In some regions, the planned number of responses to the online survey was not achieved, which indicates the existing barriers to access for certain groups. In particular, the lower level of participation may be associated with the lack of stable internet, low awareness of the study, lack of trust in surveys, or high levels of stigmatization – especially among representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, female veterans, or other groups in situations of vulnerability. Also, some regions have a less developed network of CSOs, which made the snowball method less effective. It was also found that some questionnaires were filled out incompletely, which could have affected the completeness of the responses and limited the possibility of in-depth analysis of some topics. Partial questionnaires were taken into account in cases where this did not distort the main conclusions, but this factor is taken into account when interpreting the results.

Given the complex environment in which the study was conducted, coordination with partners and data collection required constant adaptation to changing circumstances.

Timelines may have shifted, but efforts were made to ensure maximum openness of communication and adherence to the agreed work plan.

Given the above limitations, this study does not claim to be comprehensive or statistically representative. Its purpose is to provide preliminary analytical findings and identify key trends, needs, and barriers to policy-making in the field of reintegration of veterans, including women and LGBTIQ+ members. The findings should serve as a basis for further research, consultation, and improvement of public policy and international support programmes.

2.5. Ethical principles and data protection

All participants in the study participated on the basis of voluntary and informed consent. Before participation, each respondent was informed of the purpose of the study, data collection methods, possible risks and benefits, and had the right to refuse or terminate their participation in the study at any time without explanation or any negative consequences.

As the study concerns groups in situations of vulnerability, including individuals with experiences of combat, discrimination, violence or traumatic events, the researchers adhered to the “do no harm” principle, that is they undertook to avoid intrusive, potentially traumatic or invasive questions; during interviews and focus groups, the respondents were informed about the possibility of contacting psychosocial support specialists (if necessary); and in case of stress during interviews and focus groups, communication was immediately stopped and the participant was offered support.

All data collected are confidential unless otherwise stated and were collected with the written consent of the participants. The study uses generalizations or codes to identify respondents. The study data are stored on a secure online platform in accordance with the requirements of the GDPR, the Law of Ukraine “On Personal Data Protection” and other applicable regulations. Only authorized members of the study team have access to the information. The study data will be permanently deleted within two months after the completion of the project.

03

National Context

Gender equality is a key principle of human rights, democratic governance and social justice. In the field of veterans' policy, it has particular importance, as it contributes to the formation of approaches that are sensitive to the diverse experiences, needs and challenges of veterans, including women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. These groups are still underrepresented in public policy, although they often experience multiple forms of vulnerability, namely as participants in hostilities, as persons with disabilities and as representatives of marginalized communities.

To develop a truly inclusive veterans' policy, it is crucial to understand the regulatory framework that underpins the state's commitment to ensuring equality of rights and opportunities. Ukraine, as an active participant in the international legal system, has undertaken a number of commitments in the areas of human rights protection, gender equality, social protection and reintegration. This forms the basis for the development of national legislation and state policy, including in the veterans' sphere.

This section provides an overview of the main international documents, legal arrangements and national regulations that define Ukraine’s obligations to ensure the rights of female veterans and LGBTIQ+ veterans. This overview focuses on changes in regulations and state policies that have occurred since 2022. In particular, it examines the provisions of new strategies, action plans and recommendations for the implementation of regulations such as **the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030¹⁴ and the Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033¹⁵**, as well as their relationship with the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Special emphasis is placed on the practical implementation of veterans’ policy in the field of reintegration, state programmes and key implementing agencies. In this context, the study provides additional empirical evidence that can strengthen the case for policies that take into account the needs of gender-diverse groups of veterans, including women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.



CSO member asking a question to the trainer during the CSO workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

¹⁴ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 and Approval of the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2024–2027” dated November 29, 2024 No. 1209-p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1209-2024-p> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

¹⁵ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033 and Approval of the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2025–2027” dated December 31, 2024 No. 1350p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1350-2024-p> (accessed date: June 03, 2025).

3.1. International obligations of Ukraine

Ukraine has undertaken a wide range of commitments aimed at ensuring human rights and gender equality. These commitments are the basis for the formation of national legislation and policies, especially in the context of recovery, integration and the development of a safe and inclusive society for veterans, including women and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Unlike women's rights, which have been the subject of international legal regulation since the 1970s, the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons remain a relatively new topic in international law and policy and have only recently begun to gain systemic recognition. It is important to note that the legal regulation of LGBTIQ+ persons' rights in international law is gradually expanding due to the interpretation of fundamental human rights, in particular the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Although no universal international treaty currently explicitly defines the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons, a number of international instruments, court decisions and positions of international organisations provide a solid legal basis for their protection.

The international legal framework for equality begins with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)¹⁶, which recognizes in its preamble that *“the peoples of the United Nations have in this Charter reaffirmed their faith ... in the equal rights of men and women”*; Article 1 provides that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”; and Article 2 prohibits discrimination. The principle of equal rights of women and men to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, has been further reaffirmed in **the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**¹⁷ and its Optional Protocols (1991) and **the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**¹⁸, which Ukraine ratified in 1973. It is important to note that the UN Human Rights Committee, one of the United Nations treaty bodies established to monitor States' compliance with the provisions of **the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** (ICCPR), in its General Comments (e.g., No. 18 on non-discrimination)¹⁹ and in its conclusions to state reports, has repeatedly called on States, including Ukraine²⁰, to ensure equality for LGBTIQ+ persons in access to healthcare, justice, employment, participation in public administration, and recognition of gender and sexual identity. Additionally, the UN Human Rights Committee in the case of *Toonen v. Australia* (1994)²¹ recognized that the

¹⁶ United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). Resource available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (accessed date: June 17, 2025).

¹⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols thereto (1973). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_043 (accessed date: May 23, 2025).

¹⁸ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1973). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_042#Text (accessed date: June 07, 2025).

¹⁹ Human Rights Committee. General Comment No. 18: Non-discrimination (Articles 2.1 and 26). Universal guiding document on the interpretation of ICCPR treaty obligations. Adopted on 10 November 1989 at the 37th session of the Human Rights Committee. Available at: <https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Human%20Rights%20Committee,%20General%20Comment%2018.pdf> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

²⁰ UN Human Rights Committee. *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Ukraine*. (CCPR/C/UKR/CO/8), 2021. Resource available at: <https://undocs.org/en/CCPR/C/UKR/CO/8> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

²¹ United Nations, Human Rights Committee. *Toonen v. Australia*, Communication No.702/1996; decision on inadmissibility, April 4, 1994. OHCHR JURIS Database. Resource available at: <https://juris.ohchr.org/Details/702> (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

criminalization of homosexual relations violates the right to private life (Article 17) and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 26) of the ICCPR. This became a precedent for the recognition of the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in international law.

The key international instrument in the field of gender equality is **the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1980)²² and its Optional Protocol (2003)²³**, according to which Ukraine is obliged to take measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination, which is understood as “*any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex... in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field*”²⁴. In addition, the Optional Protocol provides women with the right to individually apply to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in case of violation of their rights guaranteed by this Convention.

Although the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not explicitly mention LGBTIQ+ persons, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’s Official General Recommendations No. 28 and No. 33²⁵ interpret its provisions as obliging States Parties to protect women from discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This means that States must take into account the needs of LGBTIQ+ women in policy-making, provide them with equal protection against discrimination, and ensure equal access to justice, health, education, and other social services.

By ratifying **the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2009)²⁶**, Ukraine has also undertaken to ensure the full realization of the rights of persons, including veterans, who have become disabled as a result of war. The Convention guarantees such people equal access to medical, psychological and social rehabilitation, the right to work, protection from discrimination, and full participation in civic life.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security (2000)²⁷ and subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467, 2493, which together form the Women, Peace, Security agenda²⁸, are of particular importance for matters of gender equality in Ukraine. They recognize the critical role of women in the prevention of wars, armed conflicts, peacekeeping, reconstruction, and the need to mainstream gender in the security and defence sectors.

²² UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1980). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_207#Text (accessed date: June 09, 2025).

²³ Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2003). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_794#Text (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

²⁴ UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1980). Article 1. Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_207#Text (accessed date: June 09, 2025).

²⁵ Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. *The UN Committee General Recommendations on the Rights of Women*. Resource available at: <https://www.dls.gov.ua/normative-documents/women-rights/general-recommendations-of-the-UN-Committee-on-the-Woman-Rights/> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

²⁶ On the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: Law of Ukraine dated December 16, 2009 No. 1767VI. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1767-17> (accessed date: June 25, 2025).

²⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security of October 31, 2000. Available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/WPS%20SRES1325%20.pdf> (accessed date: May 24, 2025).

²⁸ United Nations. UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Available at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/en/thematic-areas/women-peace-security/normative-frameworks/security-council-resolutions> (accessed date: May 24, 2025).

Ukraine has also ratified all the core **conventions of the International Labour Organisation**, such as the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (1956)²⁹, the Maternity Protection Convention (1956)³⁰, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1961)³¹, and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (1999)³². Ukraine is also a party to **the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**³³, which aims to improve the status of women by actively involving them in all spheres of public and private life by ensuring women's full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

At the level of sustainable development, Ukraine supports **the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030**³⁴ adopted by world leaders in 2015. Ukraine officially approved all 17 goals, including the goal on gender equality, in 2019³⁵ and submitted its first voluntary national report on their implementation³⁶ in 2020.

In 2020, Ukraine joined a number of initiatives to express political will to promote gender equality and empower women. In September 2020, Ukraine received official status as a member of the **Biarritz Partnership**³⁷, which aims to strengthen the responsibility of the G7 countries and consolidate the efforts of other countries to achieve equality between women and men³⁸. By joining this partnership, Ukraine committed to creating barrier-free public spaces that are friendly to families with children and low-mobility groups; introducing children to the principles of equality between women and men; preventing violence; reducing the gender pay gap and creating more significant childcare opportunities for men³⁹. In December 2020, Ukraine joined the Equal Pay International

²⁹ International Labour Organization. *Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value* (Convention No. 100, 1951). Resource available at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312245 (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³⁰ International Labour Organization. *Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (Convention No. 103)*. Database "Legislation of Ukraine". Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/993_122 (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³¹ International Labour Organization. *Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation* (Convention No. 111, 1958). NORMLEX. ILO Database. Resource available at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312256 (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³² International Labour Organization. *Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities* (Convention No. 156, 1981). Database "Legislation of Ukraine". Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/993_010 (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³³ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 15, 1995. Available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_507 (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³⁴ United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine. *Sustainable Development Goals in Ukraine*. Available at: <https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/sustainabledevelopment-goals.html> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

³⁵ President of Ukraine. Decree "On Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine until 2030" No. 722/2019 dated September 30, 2019. Official online representation of the President of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/7222019-29825> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

³⁶ Sustainable Development Goals: Voluntary National Review. Department for Strategic Planning and Macroeconomic Forecasting, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine. (n.d.). Resource available at: https://mof.gov.ua/storage/files/26295VNR_2020_Ukraine_Report.pdf (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

³⁷ Ukraine has received the official status as a member of the Biarritz Partnership. Official online representation of the President of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-stala-povnopravnoyu-uchasniceyu-partnerstva-biarric-63521> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

³⁸ Empowering Women: Annex for the Biarritz Partnership on Gender Equality. (2019). Available at: <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/resources/documents/2020/03/annex-for-the-biarritz-partnership-on-gender-equality27032650?lang=en> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

³⁹ Dmytro Kuleba on joining the Biarritz Partnership: Ukraine is committed to protecting human rights and combating discrimination. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. (September 12, 2020). Resource available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-pro-priyednannya-do-partnerstva-biarric-ukrayina-viddana-zahistu-prav-lyudini-ta-borotbi-z-diskriminacyeyu> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

Coalition⁴⁰, an international initiative led by the International Labour Organisation, UN Women, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to promote equal pay for work of equal value⁴¹.

Ukraine's obligations as a member of the Council of Europe play an important role in shaping the national legal framework in the field of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, Ukraine is a party to **the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and its Protocols (1997)**⁴² and **the European Social Charter (2006)**⁴³, which guarantee protection against discrimination, equal pay, and the right to social protection.

The ECHR enshrines the principle of equal rights and the prohibition of discrimination as a fundamental norm of the European system of justice. In particular, Article 14 of the Convention declares that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth therein shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, membership of a national minority, property, birth or other status. Protocol No. 12 (ratified by Ukraine in 2006) further expands the scope of the prohibition of discrimination – not only within the rights guaranteed by the Convention, but also within any rights provided for by national law. These provisions have formed the basis of numerous decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which establish that equal treatment and non-discrimination must apply in all areas – from access to justice to social services.

Among the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, those that are important for Ukraine are the ones that emphasize the state's obligation to protect women from discrimination, especially in the context of domestic violence, gender inequality in employment, and access to justice. For example, in the 2020 case of *Levchuk v. Ukraine*, the ECtHR found that the Ukrainian authorities failed to provide an adequate response⁴⁴ to cases of domestic violence, which constituted a violation of Article 8 (the right to respect for private and family life) in conjunction with a discriminatory approach under Article 14. Also significant is the 2021 case of *Tkheldze v. Georgia*⁴⁵, which, although not directly relevant to Ukraine, set an important standard regarding the obligation of states to prevent gender-based violence.

⁴⁰ The Government of Ukraine has become a member of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. (December 10, 2020). Resource available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uryad-ukrayini-nabuv-chlenstva-u-mizhnarodnij-koalitsiji-za-rivnu-oplatu-praci-epic> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

⁴¹ Members of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). (n.d.). Resource available at: <https://www.equalpayinternationalcoalition.org/members/?search=&order=DESC&memberType=Government> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

⁴² Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of November 4, 1950. Database "Legislation of Ukraine". Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text (accessed date: May 24, 2025).

⁴³ European Social Charter (revised) of May 3, 1996. Database "Legislation of Ukraine". Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_062#Text (accessed date: May 24, 2025).

⁴⁴ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Levchuk v. Ukraine*, application No. 17496/19, judgement of September 3, 2020. HUDOC. Resource available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-203931> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

⁴⁵ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Tkheldze v. Georgia*, application No. 33056/17, judgement of July 08, 2021. HUDOC. Resource available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-210854> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

Although the ECHR does not explicitly mention LGBTIQ+ persons, its Articles 8 and 14 have formed the basis for the development of the practice of protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in the ECtHR. The ECtHR has repeatedly issued judgements that have expanded the scope of legal protection for this group.⁴⁶ the case of *Dudgeon v. the United Kingdom* in 1981, the Court found the criminalization of homosexual relations in Northern Ireland to be a violation of the right to private life. In the case of *Lustig-Pr⁴⁷ and Beckett v. the United Kingdom* in 1999, the dismissal of military personnel on the grounds of their homosexuality was also found to be in violation of the ECHR. In the case of *Goodwin⁴⁸ the United Kingdom⁴⁹ Vallianatos and Others v. Greece* in 2013 and *M.A⁵⁰ v. Italy* in 2023, the ECtHR found that the refusal of states to grant legal status to same-sex couples constituted discrimination. Finally, in the 2023 case of *Maymulakhin and⁵¹ v. Ukraine*, which concerned the situation where two men had been living together since 2010 and, following the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, one of the applicants joined the NGU and was informed that it was his mother who would be informed in the event of his death as he did not have a wife. The ECtHR ruled in its judgment that Ukraine violated the rights of same-sex couples by failing to provide them with any form of legal recognition, contrary to Articles 8 and 14 of the ECHR. This judgment obliges the state to establish a legislative arrangement for the recognition of same-sex partnerships.

The decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) are binding upon Ukraine in accordance with Part Two of Article 55 of the Constitution of Ukraine, Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Execution of Decisions and Application of the Practice of the European Court of Human Rights”⁵², as well as in accordance with Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights⁵³, which provides for the obligation of the member states to execute the final decisions of the ECtHR. This means that the case law of the ECtHR must be directly taken into account in the national legal system, in particular when adopting regulatory acts, judicial decisions and formulating policies related to human rights.

⁴⁶ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Dudgeon v. the United Kingdom*, application No. 7525/76, judgment of October 22, 1981. HUDOC database. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-57473> (accessed dated: June 12, 2025).

⁴⁷ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Lustig-Prian and Beckett v. the United Kingdom*, applications Nos. 31417/96 and 32377/96, judgment of September 27, 1999. HUDOC database. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-58407> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁴⁸ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Goodwin v. the United Kingdom*, application No. 28957/95, judgment of July 11, 2002. HUDOC database. Resource available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=002-5265> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁴⁹ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Vallianatos and Others v. Greece*, applications Nos. 29381/09 and 32684/09, judgment of November 7, 2013. HUDOC database. Resource available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-128294> (accessed date: June 13, 2025).

⁵⁰ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *M.A.V v. Italy*, application No. 50764/22, judgement of December 14, 2023. HUDOC Database. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-228164> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁵¹ European Court of Human Rights. Case of *Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine*, application No. 75135/14, judgement of June 01, 2023. HUDOC database. Available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-224984> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁵² Law of Ukraine “On the Execution of Decisions and Application of the Practice of the European Court of Human Rights” dated February 23, 2006 No. 3477-IV. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/3477-15> (accessed date: July 03, 2025).

⁵³ Council of Europe. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of November 4, 1950 (ratified by Ukraine on July 17, 1997). Available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_004#Text (accessed date: July 03, 2025).

Ukraine's progress in this direction has been slow, but an unprecedented step forward was made in July 2025, when the Desnianskyi District Court of Kyiv officially recognized a same-sex couple as a family, establishing legal recognition of their relationship at the national level for the first time in Ukraine⁵⁴. This sets a potentially significant precedent for LGBTIQ+ veterans, as it opens up the possibility of equal access to social protection, benefits, medical and rehabilitation programmes that were previously formally tied to the “traditional” definition of family. If consistent consideration is given to the practice of the ECtHR and decisions of domestic courts, veterans' rights policies should be adapted to the principles of non-discrimination, which will strengthen the legal recognition and protection of LGBTIQ+ veterans in Ukraine.

It is also important to note that in 2022, Ukraine ratified **the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention (2011))**⁵⁵, which aims to protect, prevent and ensure legal accountability, as well as develop strategies to combat domestic violence and violence against women.

Finally, **the Association Agreement between Ukraine, of the one part, and the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part (2014)**⁵⁶, plays an important role as it directly obliges the participating state to pursue a policy of equal opportunities in the fields of employment, education, and social security. This agreement is binding. Additionally, the European Union, in its documents, including the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025⁵⁷ and the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2020–2025⁵⁸, highlights that combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is an integral part of the European integration process.

There are no uniform standards for veterans' policies globally, but support for veterans, including their rehabilitation, reintegration and protection of rights, is recognized as an important component of security and humanitarian policy, including by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Approaches remain within the competence of member states (see examples in Section 5), but the Alliance sets certain guidelines that are also relevant for partner countries, including Ukraine. For example, NATO's 2002 Strategic Concept⁵⁹ considers the reintegration of military personnel after service as

⁵⁴ “A Ukrainian court recognises a same-sex couple as spouses for the first time”. *Analytica.kiev.ua* (July 03, 2025). Available at: <https://analytica.kiev.ua/news/yypershe-v-ykrayinskomy-sydi-odnostatevy-pary-viznali-podryjjiam.html> (accessed date: July 03, 2025).

⁵⁵ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_001-11#Text (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

⁵⁶ Association Agreement between Ukraine, of the one part, and the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part (2014). Resource available at: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_011#Text (accessed date: June 16, 2025).

⁵⁷ European Commission. EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025. Resource available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

⁵⁸ European Commission. EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025. Resource available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁵⁹ NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). “2022 Strategic Concept: Keeping the Peace, Protecting People”. Adopted at the Madrid Summit on June 29, 2022. Resource available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

an important element of allies' security, and the NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security⁶⁰ (2018, updated in 2021) defines NATO's approaches to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and related resolutions. It covers three main areas: women's **participation** in security and decision-making processes, **the protection** of women and girls in armed conflict, and **the integration** of a gender perspective into all areas of the Alliance's activities. It also commits member states and partners to take into account the specific needs of women in veterans' programmes, including in the areas of rehabilitation, psychological assistance and social protection.

The agreed NATO-Ukraine objectives pay special attention to the integration of the gender component in the security and defence sector. Every year, Ukraine adopts an Adapted Annual National Programme under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission⁶¹, where the priorities include equal access of women and men to positions, gender-responsive training of personnel, and consideration of the needs of female veterans in transition programmes to civilian life. Although there is no direct mention of LGBTIQ+ veterans in official NATO documents, the Alliance adheres to the principle of non-discrimination and inclusiveness. In practice, the exchange of experience between member states where there are state programmes to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ military personnel and veterans (in particular, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) is supported.

Thus, the international regulatory framework creates a solid foundation for building an inclusive veterans' policy in Ukraine, covering not only women but also LGBTIQ+ persons, and should set standards for national legislation, reintegration programmes, and social protection.

⁶⁰ NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). "NATO/EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership for Peace) Policy on Women, Peace and Security" (approved in 2018, updated in 2021). Resource available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227578.htm (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁶¹ Ministry of Economy of Ukraine. Annual National Programmes of Ukraine-NATO Cooperation: Adapted Annual National Programme (aANP) – a key Euro-Atlantic integration instrument. Resource available at: <https://me.gov.ua/Documents/Detail?id=1848ff64-b70e-444b-afc2-03704567f3b1&lang=uk-UA&title=RichniNatsionalniProgramiSpivrobotnitstvaUkrainiZNato> (accessed date: June 11, 2025).



Representatives of civil society organizations working with women and men veterans at the workshop “Research Methods and Data Collection” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Kyiv as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

3.2. National legislation of Ukraine: the basis for ensuring veterans’ rights, gender equality and inclusiveness

National legislation of Ukraine plays a key role in fulfilling the state’s international obligations and forming an effective veterans’ support system. Matters related to male and female veterans and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community intersect with various areas – security, healthcare, education, social protection, human rights and local self-government.

The Constitution of Ukraine (CU) is the basis of veterans’, social and gender policies. CU Article 21⁶² establishes that all people are free and equal in their dignity and rights, and CU Article 24⁶³ prohibits any privileges or restrictions on the grounds of gender, race, religion, political beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence or other grounds. CU Article 17⁶⁴ defines the state’s obligation to protect servicepersons and their family members, and Articles 43, 46 and 49 guarantee the right to work, social protection and medical care, which creates the foundation for the legal protection of veterans⁶⁵.

⁶² Constitution of Ukraine of June 28, 1996 No. 254k/96-BP. *Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. 1996. No. 30. Art. 141. Article 21. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254k/96-bp#Text> (accessed date: June 11, 2025).

⁶³ Ibid. Article 24.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Article 17.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Articles 43, 46, 49.

3.2.1. Gender equality and anti-discrimination policies

Ukraine has begun to implement a gender equality policy on this constitutional foundation and with due regard for international obligations. Since 2014, after announcing its course for European integration, Ukraine has intensified the development of gender equality and non-discrimination policies. This process accelerated after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. Key regulatory legal acts in this area include:

- The Law of Ukraine “**On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men**” (2005)⁶⁶, which aims to achieve equality between women and men in all spheres of society. Article 1 defines equal rights as “*the absence of restrictions or privileges on the grounds of sex*”, and equal opportunities as “*equal conditions for the exercise of equal rights by women and men*”⁶⁷.
- The Law of Ukraine “**On the Principles of Preventing and Combating Discrimination in Ukraine**” (2014)⁶⁸, which prohibits discrimination, in particular on the grounds of sex, but does not contain a separate mention of sexual orientation or gender identity, which limits the human rights potential of the law.
- The Law of Ukraine “**On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence**” (2017)⁶⁹, which defines forms of domestic violence and obliges the state to protect victims.
- **The Law of Ukraine “On the Legal and Social Protection of Survivors of Sexual Violence Related to the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and Urgent Interim Reparations”** (2025)⁷⁰, which establishes a list of forms of conflict-related sexual violence (CSRV), and also defines the rights of survivors and the principles of their protection, in particular, equality of rights and opportunities, data protection, the presumption of lawfulness of the applicant’s actions, and orientation towards the needs of each survivor, regardless of gender or age.

⁶⁶ Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” dated September 08, 2005 No. 2866-IV. Database “Legislation of Ukraine. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15#Text> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

⁶⁷ Ibid. Article 1.

⁶⁸ Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Preventing and Combating Discrimination in Ukraine” dated September 06, 2012 No. 5207VI (edition of May 30, 2014). Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/5207-17> (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

⁶⁹ Law of Ukraine “On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence” dated December 07, 2017 No. 2229-VIII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2229-19> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

⁷⁰ Law of Ukraine “On the Legal and Social Protection of Survivors of Sexual Violence Related to the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and Urgent Interim Reparations” dated November 20, 2024 No. 4067IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/4067-20> (accessed date: June 23, 2025).

Ukraine has also adopted a number of national, regional and sectoral plans to implement international obligations and national legislation. In particular, the main national policies in the field of ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment include:

- **The National Human Rights Strategy (2021)**⁷¹, which defines ensuring a comprehensive gender approach to the formation, monitoring and assessment of state policy in all spheres of civic life as one of its priorities. The document also provides for the introduction of systemic measures to overcome gender discrimination, in particular through combating gender stereotypes. As part of the implementation of this strategy, **an Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy for 2021-2023**⁷² was adopted which included the state's obligations to protect the rights of war veterans, persons with special merits before the Motherland, injured participants in the Revolution of Dignity and their family members. In particular, the plan provided for the creation of a comprehensive system of veterans' support, the introduction of social and psychological rehabilitation programmes, access to medical care, lifelong education and promotion of the development of entrepreneurial initiatives with mandatory consideration of the gender approach. A new action plan for the period after 2023 has not yet been approved.

- **The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Commitments of the Government of Ukraine Undertaken within the Framework of the Biarritz Partnership International Initiative for Gender Equality**⁷³. This Plan is a national instrument for the implementation of international commitments in the field of gender equality. Female veterans are not identified in the document as a separate target group, however, measures related to women who have experienced violence in wartime potentially include female military personnel. LGBTIQ+ veterans are also not directly mentioned. However, the Plan uses the concept of "gender-based violence", which, in accordance with international practice, covers violence related to sexual orientation or gender identity. At the same time, the lack of direct mention of LGBTIQ+ persons means that their needs will remain outside the focus of policy implementation. The main measures envisaged in this plan were implemented by 2024, in accordance with the established deadlines, although individual obligations remain relevant for the further development of state policy in the field of gender equality.

⁷¹ President of Ukraine. Decree "On Approval of the National Human Rights Strategy" dated October 22, 2021 No. 119/2021. Resource available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1192021-37537> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

⁷² Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution "On Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy for 2021–2023" dated June 23, 2021 No. 756. Resource available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-planu-dij-z-realizaciyi-nacionalnoyi-strategiyi-u-sferi-prav-lyudini-na-20212023-roki-i230621-756> (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

⁷³ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order "On Approval of the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine" dated April 14, 2021 No. 1578-p. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1578-2020-p#n10> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

- **The State Social Programme for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025**⁷⁴ is a key strategic document that defines a set of state measures in the field of preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Female veterans and LGBTIQ+ veterans are not recognized as a separate target group, which complicates guarantees of their protection. However, the programme provides for taking into account the needs of women who have experienced violence, in particular in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War. This is critically important, as female veterans can be characterized by vulnerability to sexual violence, PTSD, and social isolation.
- **The Second National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security (until 2025)**⁷⁵ laid the foundation for integrating a gender approach into Ukraine's security and defence policies. The plan envisages equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, the development of gender-responsive arrangements for identifying, preventing and responding to security challenges, and the creation of conditions for post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice. Particular attention is paid to protection from gender-based violence and CRSV, as well as to increasing institutional capacity for the effective implementation of the Women, Peace, Security agenda.
- The document recognizes female veterans as a separate target group and provides for measures for reintegration and economic recovery, access to psychological assistance, and protection from violence. Particular emphasis is placed on women's participation in peace processes, post-war reconstruction, and planning and implementation of transition programmes from military service to civilian life. Priority measures include expanding opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship among female veterans, supporting the professional development of women in the civil society sector and civil protection agencies, and establishing systems for monitoring appointments to leadership positions, taking into account the principles of gender equality. It also stipulates that state authorities should ensure the integration of gender analysis into the legislative and regulatory framework for responding to security challenges, and that communication strategies should take into account the needs of different social groups, including persons with disabilities and the elderly. **Action plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security" (until 2025) should be developed and approved not only by central executive bodies, but also by regional and local administrations.**

⁷⁴ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution "On Approval of the State Social Programme for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence until 2025" dated February 24, 2021 No. 145. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/145-2021-n#Text> (accessed date: May 20, 2025).

⁷⁵ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order "On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security until 2025" dated October 28, 2020 No. 1544-p. Available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-nacionalnogo-a1544r> (accessed date: May 24, 2025).

- **The State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030 with Amendments from 2025 and the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2025-2027⁷⁶.** The updated version of the Strategy for the first time establishes the systematic recognition of female veterans and LGBTIQ+ women as separate groups in situations of vulnerability who need comprehensive state protection. They are included in the list of target categories along with women with disabilities, Roma women, and women living with HIV. Such recognition demonstrates an important shift from gender-neutral to gender-responsive policy, in which the diversity of experience is taken into account as soon as at the level of task formulation. The problem of multiple discrimination is separately noted – this allows assessing the situation not only on the basis of gender, but also taking into account the intersection of gender, age, military experience, disability, sexual orientation, etc. This approach is especially relevant for female veterans, who may be women, people with disabilities, IDPs, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. In the healthcare section, the Strategy emphasizes the need for psychological assistance for victims of violence, rehabilitation, and access to medical services – which directly correlates with the current needs of female veterans, including experiences of PTSD, sexual violence, and combat injuries. However, the document only briefly mentions LGBTIQ+ individuals, without specifying their needs – for example, it does not mention transgender veterans, for whom access to gender-positive medicine, legal gender recognition, and protection from discrimination are critically important.

At the same time, effective implementation of normative documents and policies in the field of equality is impossible without the implementation of a systemic approach that ensures the consideration of the gender dimension at all stages of decision-making. That is why the central tool of modern gender policy is the implementation of a gender approach – a strategy for integrating a gender approach into all stages of policy formation, implementation and assessment at all levels of government. It provides that the needs of women and men must be taken into account in each regulatory act, budget decision, state programme or service through a preliminary assessment of the needs of the population, the application of gender analysis arrangements and gender-responsive budgeting when making decisions and organizing monitoring of the implementation of gender obligations and work⁷⁷. To facilitate the implementation of this policy, the law provides for the possibility of appointing responsible persons and advisors on gender matters in executive bodies and local self-government authorities⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy until 2030” dated April 03, 2025 No. 439-p. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/439-2025-p#Text> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

⁷⁷ Coordination Centre for Legal Aid Provision. Report “The FLA System Gender Strategy” (2025) [PDF]. Resource available at: <https://legalaid.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/genderna-strategiya-systemy-bpd.pdf> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

⁷⁸ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution “Procedure for Ensuring the Integration of a Gender Approach into the Process of Forming, Implementing and Assessing the Effectiveness of State Policy” dated September 12, 2018 No. 733. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/733-2018-p> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

The importance of implementing a gender approach lies in the fact that it allows not only combating the consequences of inequality, but also preventing its reproduction at the institutional level. In the context of veterans' policy, this means that every initiative – from medical care to rehabilitation programmes – should be developed taking into account the different needs of veterans by gender, age, health status, social status, sexual orientation, presence of children or disability status. The implementation of a gender approach also involves the mandatory collection of gender-disaggregated data, analysis of the potential impact of policies on different population groups, and the implementation of targeted measures aimed at overcoming systemic inequality.

In cases where significant imbalances or violations of the principle of gender equality are identified, specific, targeted measures are taken to redress the balance and prevent further discrimination. These may include special support programmes for certain groups, adjustments to access procedures, information campaigns, or regulatory changes.

Related to the gender approach is the course on barrier-freeness – an approach aimed at eliminating physical, informational, digital, social and cultural barriers that prevent people from fully participating in civic life. **The National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine by 2030**⁷⁹, initiated in 2021, provides for an intersectoral approach to creating an inclusive environment for all population groups, including veterans. In this context, barrier-freeness should include not only ramps or transport accessibility, but also gender-responsive services, language, access to information and services for people with different experiences, including women, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people and IDPs.

Despite significant regulatory progress in the field of gender equality and anti-discrimination, the impact of relevant legislation on veterans' policies remains limited. Gender and veterans' policies have been developed in parallel and only after 2014, and especially since 2022, has there been a gradual convergence driven by the new needs of female veterans and the public demand for inclusivity.

⁷⁹ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030” dated April 14, 2021 No. 366 p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/366-2021-p> (accessed date: May 05, 2025); Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. “On Amendments to the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030” dated March 25, 2025 No. 294p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/294-2025-p> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

3.2.2. Legislative basis of veterans' policy in Ukraine

Legislative regulation of veterans' policy in Ukraine is multi-level, fragmented and complex. It includes more than 150 regulatory legal acts⁸⁰: laws, resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, presidential decrees, departmental orders, state programmes, strategies and action plans⁸¹. Most of them are periodically updated, but a significant part still does not take into account modern challenges related to gender equality and the needs of different groups of veterans⁸².

The main laws shaping veterans' policy:

- **The Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service” (1992)**⁸³, which describes the process of discharge from service, which is the starting point for the transition to civilian life⁸⁴. Although formally presented as gender-neutral, it retains the masculine construction of military service. The amendments introduced in 2025 only partially recognize the participation of women in the service, but do not take into account their specific needs.
- **The Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” (1993)**⁸⁵, which defines the categories of veterans, their status and benefits. According to this law, war veterans are “*persons who participated in the defence of the Motherland or in hostilities on the territory of other states*”⁸⁶. War veterans include participants in hostilities, persons with disabilities as a result of the war, and participants in the war. Participants in hostilities (PiH) are considered “*persons who participated in the performance of combat missions to defend the Motherland as part of military units, formations, associations of all types and branches of the Armed Forces of the active army (navy), in partisan detachments and underground and other formations both in wartime and in peacetime*”⁸⁷. Persons with disabilities as a result of war are considered to be “*persons from among the military personnel of the active army and navy, partisans, underground fighters, workers who became disabled as a result of injury, contusion, mutilation, disease received during the defence of the Motherland, the performance of military service duties (official duties) or related to being at the front, in partisan detachments and formations,*

⁸⁰ Hersak V. Why is veterans' policy in Ukraine not effective? [Electronic resource]. *Korespondent.net*: blog. 2023. Available at: <https://blogs.korespondent.net/blog/politics/4705347/> (accessed date: May 13, 2025).

⁸¹ Overview dossier on the Veterans' Policy Strategy in Ukraine [Electronic resource]. Research Service of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://research.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/33204.pdf> (accessed date: May 13, 2025).

⁸² Tilikina N. V., Pesha I. V. State Veterans' Policy of Ukraine and Ways to Ensure Its Effectiveness. Public Administration and National Security: electronic scientific publication 2023. No. 5. Section: Functioning and Development of State Administration Mechanisms. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.25313/2617-572X-2023-5>.

⁸³ Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 25, 1992 No. 2232-XII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2232-12> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

⁸⁴ Selianinova A., Kuzbida V., Khomenko Y.. Analytical study “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Male and Female Veterans”. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rol-derzhavy-u-sotsialny-reintehratsii-veteraniv-i-veteranok.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (October 22, 1993). Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” No. 3551-XII. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

underground organisations and groups and other formations recognized as such by the legislation of Ukraine, in the area of military operations, on front-line sections of railways, on the construction of defensive lines, naval bases and airfields during the Civil War and World War II or participation in hostilities in peacetime⁸⁸."

- At the same time, the law contains a number of gaps, in particular, the status of members of voluntary formations of territorial communities, as well as persons who are voluntarily and confidentially involved in the implementation of the tasks of the resistance movement, is currently unclear⁸⁹. Also, despite numerous isolated changes and additions⁹⁰, the law retains a masculine approach that is focused on privileges and does not take into account gender specifics. Women, LGBTIQ+ persons and other categories of veterans in situations of vulnerability are not directly mentioned, which reduces the effectiveness of providing services to these groups.
- **The Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Members of Their Families” (1991)⁹¹**. This law establishes guarantees for the state safeguards for the rights of military personnel and their families. It regulates social benefits, compensation, medical care, labour and housing matters for military personnel and members of their families both during service and after discharge. Women are not directly mentioned, although the law contains general formulations that apply to all military personnel regardless of sex. The specific needs of women (for example, those related to pregnancy, childcare) are not singled out. There is no mention of LGBTIQ+ representatives. The law does not contain provisions on non-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **The Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” (1991)⁹²**, which enshrines the rights to an accessible environment, work, education, and social guarantees for all persons with disabilities, including veterans. At the same time, the law does not contain any mention of women or LGBTIQ+ persons as separate categories of persons with increased vulnerability, which complicates their real inclusion in support programmes.

88 Ibid.

89 Information Department of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2023). State Policy in the Sphere of Social Protection of Veterans: Analytical Report. Resource available at: <https://research.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/32349.pdf> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

90 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of State Veterans’ Policy Regarding Veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War”. Available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/gromadskosti/category/193-consultations-with-the-public/proekt-zakonu-ukraini-pro-osnovni-zasadi-derzhavnoi-veteranskoi-politiki-schodo-veteraniv--veteranok-rosiysko-ukrainskoi-viyni> (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

91 Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Members of Their Families” dated December 20, 1991 No. 2011XII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2011-12> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

92 Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” dated March 21, 1991 No. 875XII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/875-12> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

In addition to these basic laws, veterans' policy in Ukraine is shaped by an extensive system of legislative acts and by-laws covering various aspects of support: from medical services to pensions, housing, employment, and entrepreneurship. All these documents form a comprehensive regulatory framework, but were adopted mainly in the 1990s–2000s and have only been partially updated after 2022. Although formally gender-neutral, most of them do not take into account the specifics of female military and LGBTIQ+ veterans, and do not provide for inclusive implementation arrangements.

Thus, in the field of medical and rehabilitation services, the current legislation guarantees free assistance, including medical check-ups, dental prosthetics, psychological support, health resort treatment, provision of medical products and prosthetics for male and female veterans. These services are regulated by the laws “On Rehabilitation in the Sphere of Healthcare”⁹³, “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine”⁹⁴ and “Fundamentals of the Legislation of Ukraine on Healthcare”⁹⁵. At the same time, a number of by-laws of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (MoH) and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (MSP) detail the arrangements for providing these services. However, the legislation does not define arrangements for adapting medical and rehabilitation programmes to the needs of various social groups of veterans, and LGBTIQ+ persons or female veterans in particular, who may have specific requests related to psychosocial support or bodily experience, which requires a gender-responsive approach.

In the field of social protection and cash payments, the Law of Ukraine “On Social Services”⁹⁶ (2019 and 2023 editions) and the Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine”⁹⁷ remain fundamental. They enshrine the right to benefits, one-time cash assistance, housing subsidies, and access to social services. Despite the fact that the law uses gender terminology in the context of domestic or gender-based violence, female veterans are not defined as a separate category of service recipients, and LGBTIQ+ persons are not mentioned at all. Such a gap in legal regulation effectively excludes them from the circle of beneficiaries without special interpretation or additional initiatives at the level of local authorities. Currently, it is the responsibility of the executive bodies of cities of regional significance and communities to ensure the provision of social services in accordance with this law, but the lack of centralized instructions does not contribute to the inclusion of categories in situations of vulnerability.

⁹³ Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation in the Healthcare Sector” dated December 03, 2020 No. 1053IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1053-20> (accessed date: July 05, 2025).

⁹⁴ Law of Ukraine “On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” dated October 06, 2005 No. 2961IV. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2961-15> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

⁹⁵ Law of Ukraine “Fundamentals of the Legislation of Ukraine on Healthcare” dated 19.11.1992 No. 2801XII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2801-12> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

⁹⁶ Law of Ukraine “On Social Services” dated January 17, 2019 No. 2671-VIII (edition of 2023). Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2671-19> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

⁹⁷ Law of Ukraine “On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” dated March 21, 1991 No. 875-XII // Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/875-12> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

The professional adaptation and employment of veterans is regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On Employment of the Population”⁹⁸ and the Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Members of Their Families”⁹⁹. They provide for the possibility of receiving vouchers for training, guarantees of reinstatement to the previous job after service, access to employment services, and preservation of insurance record. However, the regulatory framework is focused on general provisions and is not adapted to the situations of veterans who have been discriminated against, persecuted, or in need of reorientation based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment of veterans are supported through tax breaks, government grant programmes, mentoring initiatives, and advisory assistance, the implementation of which is coordinated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and the Ukrainian Veterans Fund¹⁰⁰. Financing of business projects, training programmes, and information campaigns create opportunities for the development of self-employment. At the same time, current programmes do not take into account the barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ veterans or veterans with disabilities due to mental disorders related to war trauma or stigmatization.

Housing is regulated by the Law of Ukraine “**On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection**” and Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 606, No. 881, No. 115, No. 168¹⁰¹, which determine the conditions for granting preferential loans, compensation for the construction, purchase or repair of housing. The Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “**On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection**” regarding the Assignment of One-Time Cash Assistance”¹⁰² ensured an equal approach to compensation for the families of deceased volunteers. However, the system does not take into account situations in which servicemen had same-sex partners who de facto performed the functions of family members. Due to the absence of the institution of civil or registered partnership, such persons are not entitled to housing benefits, compensation or registration of assistance after the death of a loved one.

⁹⁸ Law of Ukraine “On Employment of the Population” dated July 05, 2012 No. 5067-VI. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/5067-17> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

⁹⁹ Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Military Personnel and Members of Their Families” dated December 20, 1991 No. 2011-XII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2011-12> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

¹⁰⁰ Selianinova A., Kuzbida V., Khomenko Y. Analytical study “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Male and Female Veterans”. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rol-derzhavy-u-sotsialny-reintehratsii-veteraniv-i-veteranok.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated June 19, 2006 No. 606 “On Approval of the Procedure for the Use of Funds Provided for in the State Budget to Provide Housing for Certain Categories of the Population”. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/606-2006-n#Text>; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 28, 2021 No. 115 “On Approval of the Procedure for Providing Monetary Compensation for the Purchase of Housing to Certain Categories of Persons who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of UKRAINE, as Well as to Members of Their Families”. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/115-2021-n#Text>; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated September 16, 2022 No. 881 “On Amendments to Certain Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Social Protection of War Veterans”. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/881-2022-n#Text>; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated February 14, 2024 No. 168 “Certain Matters of Providing Housing for War Veterans and Their Family Members”. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/168-2024-n#Text>.

¹⁰² On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” Regarding the Assignment of One-Time Cash Assistance: Law of Ukraine dated April, 15, 2025 No. 4351IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/4351-20> (accessed date: July 05, 2025)

It is worth noting separately the **Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances”**¹⁰³, which defines the legal arrangement for establishing the status of a missing person, the creation of a related register, the rights of relatives to social benefits and their participation in search operations. The law is important in the context of veterans who were captured or disappeared during hostilities, but does not provide for the recognition of civil partners as having the right to compensation or representation of the interests of a missing person if the partnership is not officially registered.

Similarly, the **Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Validly Found to Have Been Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Their Family Members”**¹⁰⁴ defines guarantees for former prisoners of war. It contains provisions on the assignment of status and the provision of compensation and medical, psychological and social services. However, it also does not take into account the rights and participation of partners of such veterans in accessing social assistance, despite the fact that in real life they may be the only ones who take care of the survivor.

Positive developments have also been made at the legislative level, in particular the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans” to Clarify Certain Provisions of the Law”¹⁰⁵, which regulates the use of an electronic veteran’s certificate. In addition, the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Pension Provision for Certain Persons from Among the Participants of Hostilities, Persons with Disabilities as a Result of the War, and Family Members of the Deceased Defenders of Ukraine”¹⁰⁶ expanded access to pension guarantees for persons with disabilities as a result of the war.

Important developments in the context of integrating a gender approach are currently taking place. For example, the **Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policies” Regarding the Formation of a Comprehensive Approach to Domestic Policy in the Veterans’ Sphere” (2025)**¹⁰⁷. For the first time, it is declared at the law level that the state should not simply provide benefits or payments, but create conditions for veteran’s full life in civil society based on the recognition of their role in preserving statehood. The policy should

¹⁰³ Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Status of Persons Missing in Special Circumstances” dated July 12, 2018 No. 2505-VIII. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/2505-19> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

¹⁰⁴ Law of Ukraine “On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Validly Found to Have Been Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression Against Ukraine, and Their Family Members” dated January 30, 2024 No. 3578-IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/3578-IX> (accessed date: May 05, 2025).

¹⁰⁵ Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans” to Clarify Certain Provisions of the Law” dated October 08, 2024 No. 4000IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/4000-20> (accessed date: June 30, 2025).

¹⁰⁶ Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Pension Provision for Certain Persons from Among the Participants of Hostilities, Persons with Disabilities as a Result of the War, Family Members of the Deceased Defenders of Ukraine” dated December 18, 2024 No. 4157 IX. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/4157-20> (accessed date: June 30, 2025).

¹⁰⁷ Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policies” Regarding the Formation of a Comprehensive Approach to Domestic Policy in the Veterans’ Sphere” dated March 11, 2025 No. 4285 IX. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/4285-20>.

be based on the principles of an individual approach, non-discrimination, long-term support, and – most importantly – the integration of veterans into the life of communities, access to medical, educational, labour and cultural rights.

The law pays special attention to the creation of a comprehensive infrastructure for returning from military service to civilian life, interaction between security and social protection sector bodies, development of veteran entrepreneurship and prevention of the consequences of combat experience (PTSD, addictions, suicidal behaviour). The law also intends to modernize the social protection system, provide a state information system for accounting and communication, which directly responds to existing challenges – fragmentation of access, lack of information, administrative complexity of procedures.

Thus, the Law creates a framework vision for a comprehensive, long-term, non-discriminatory veterans' policy, which should be implemented through multi-level interagency coordination, taking into account the individual needs of veterans and their families, and include cultural, educational, and economic aspects of reintegration.

The draft Law “**On the Basic Principles of the State Veterans’ Policy Regarding Veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War**” (2023)¹⁰⁸ uses inclusive language and mentions gender equality, but lacks specific arrangements for implementation, monitoring, or funding. LGBTIQ+ persons are completely absent from the text. Ukrainian legislation formally prohibits discrimination, but does not recognize sexual orientation or gender identity as protected characteristics in the context of veterans’ policy, which contradicts obligations under the ECHR and the ECtHR case law.

Of particular importance are strategic documents approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Among them, the two most important at the moment are the following strategies and operational plans:

- **The Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2024–2027**¹⁰⁹ are aimed at ensuring comprehensive support for veterans and their family members through six main areas: restoration of well-being, protection of physical and mental health, access to education and employment, support for families, economic independence and guarantees, as well as commemoration and participation in national security. For its implementation, a Coordination Headquarters has been created, which brought together representatives of all ministries and central executive bodies, departmental implementation plans have been developed and approved, specialized veterans’ policy units have been created in all regional military administrations, and their formation is ongoing at the level of district state administrations. The document provides for a number of activities, including those that need to be carried out in communities – and the development

¹⁰⁸ Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of the State Veterans’ Policy Regarding Veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War, Veterans with Special Merits to the Motherland, Their Family Members, and Family Members of the Deceased Defenders of Ukraine” (2023). Resource available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/gromadskosti/category/193-consultations-with-the-public/proekt-zakonu-ukraini-pro-osnovni-zasadi-derzhavnoi-veteranskoj-politiki>.

¹⁰⁹ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 and Approval of the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2024–2027” dated November 29, 2024 No. 1209-p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1209-2024-p> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

and approval of operational plans for veterans' policy on the ground in particular. Communities can receive funding in the form of subventions for their implementation – including for support measures, for launching the activities of specialists in supporting veterans and demobilized persons at the community level, as well as for creating public spaces.

The Strategy and the Operational Plan declare inclusiveness through the use of feminine pronouns and general principles of equality, but do not ensure proper consideration of gender specificities. Female veterans are formally identified as a target group, but their specific needs, such as reproductive health, burden of caring for children or relatives, stigmatization, remain ignored due to the lack of targeted measures or support arrangements. The needs of the LGBTIQ+ community are completely ignored: there is simply no mention of LGBTIQ+ veterans, same-sex partners, or measures against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Despite the reference to the Law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men”, the document does not contain any mention of other state plans or strategies on gender equality. Thus, although declarative principles of equality are present, the strategy does not integrate specific gender-responsive approaches, which creates the risk of excluding female veterans and LGBTIQ+ veterans from the reintegration and support process.

- **The Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033 and the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2025-2027**¹¹⁰. The Strategy defines a comprehensive approach to veterans' reintegration into civilian life. The main areas include: protection of rights and freedoms, preservation of health, professional adaptation, development of veteran communities, participation in civic life, digitalization of services, interagency coordination and development of relevant infrastructure at the central and local levels. The Operational Plan of Measures details specific steps for implementing the Strategy, provides for the participation of central and local executive bodies and defines performance indicators. However, despite the declaration of inclusiveness and interagency coordination, the Strategy and the Plan of Measures also lack a systematic gender approach. The lack of mention of women and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as the use of neutral language, create a risk of marginalization of these groups in the process of returning to civilian life and receiving proper state support.

Thus, Ukrainian veterans' policy has made steps towards gender responsiveness, but it still does not fully comply with UN standards, the ECHR, and the ECtHR case law. Special attention is needed for groups that experience multiple discrimination – female veterans, LGBTIQ+ persons, and transgender military personnel. Without clear mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, and adequate resource provision, the risk of risk of formalizing the policy and reducing its effectiveness remains.

¹¹⁰ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Order “On Approval of the Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033 and Approval of the Operational Plan of Measures for its Implementation in 2025–2027” dated December 31, 2024 No. 1350p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1350-2024-r> (accessed date: June 03, 2025).

3.2.3. Peculiarities of the legal status of LGBTIQ+ veterans

Ukrainian legislation has never contained and does not currently contain formal prohibitions on the participation of homosexual and bisexual individuals in military service. This indicates that such individuals have the legal right to serve in the army and acquire the status of a veteran. At the same time, the legislation on veterans does not recognize LGBTIQ+ as a separate category of military personnel with potentially specific needs. This leads to the fact that after completing their service, such individuals do not have access to specialized medical or psychological services focused on the experience of discrimination or persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Legislation in the field of veterans' policy does not contain any mention or consideration of LGBTIQ+ as a social group with unique needs, does not recognize partners of such individuals as family members, does not guarantee access to specific medical, social or psychological support. Current Ukrainian legislation does not recognize civil partnerships, including same-sex partnerships, as legally significant relationships. This has direct consequences for LGBTIQ+ servicepersons and veterans: their partners cannot be recognized as family members and, accordingly, do not have access to any of the benefits provided by law. For example, partners cannot make medical decisions in the event of injury, do not have the right to receive a body for burial in the event of death, do not receive one-time payments or benefits, as is allowed to official family members. They also do not have the right to a survivor's pension, participation in the distribution of property, inheritance, leave for family reasons, etc. Draft laws No. 9103¹¹¹ and No. 12252¹¹², designed to introduce the institution of registered partnerships, could solve this problem, but have not yet been adopted.

Some positive developments in this direction are taking place. Law No. 3515-IX allowed military personnel to submit personal instructions in which they can indicate a civilian partner as a person entitled to receive financial support in the event of the military's death, capture or disappearance. This is the only arrangement today that allows partners to receive some protection and assistance. However, this arrangement is partial and not automatic, as it requires a prior expression of the will of the military, and in its absence, the partner automatically loses all rights. This once again emphasizes the need for the introduction of legislative recognition of partnership relations.

Also, the formal absence of service bans for LGBTIQ+ people does not mean that they can fully serve without harassment. Transgender people, HIV-positive people, or those who are harassed for their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are often forced to leave the service, which calls into question their right to receive veteran status. Without official status, there is no access to veteran benefits, medical care, rehabilitation,

¹¹¹ Zherukha P. Registered partnerships for same-sex and opposite-sex couples, in support of draft Law No. 9103 "On the Institute of Registered Partnerships" [Electronic resource]. Electronic petitions. Official online representation of the President of Ukraine, 2023. Available at: <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/185864>.

¹¹² Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine in Order to Bring Them into Line with the Requirements of Articles 8 and 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) and Council Regulation (EU) 2016/1104 of 24 June 2016 Implementing Enhanced Cooperation in the Area of Jurisdiction, Applicable Law and the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions in Matters of the Property Consequences of Registered Partnerships" No. 12252 dated November 27, 2024. Available at: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45293>.



Trainer taking notes at the CSO workshop on “Advocacy Campaign Planning and Development” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Puscha-Vodytsia as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

education, or housing. The system itself does not take into account discriminatory circumstances that may affect early termination of service, and does not recognize LGBTIQ+ partners as full participants in social programmes for veterans’ families.

Separately, the following obstacles to obtaining veteran status and access to services faced by transgender people should be highlighted. Thus, persons diagnosed with “transsexualism” or “gender dysphoria” (F64.0, F64.8 according to ICD-10) are recognized as completely unfit for military service in peacetime¹¹³. During martial law, only limited suitability is possible if the condition is not sharply expressed. In cases where the legal transition is not completed (documents have not been changed), a transgender person is subject to conscription as a person with the gender indicated in the documents, which creates legal and ethical conflicts. If a transgender person does not have time to undergo a legal change of gender or their medical condition is interpreted as a “severely expressed disorder”, such a person may be excluded from military service without

¹¹³ International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10). Version: 2019 [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en>.

further recognition as a veteran¹¹⁴. This makes it impossible to access medical and social benefits provided for veterans. In addition, current legislation does not provide any gender-responsive medical support for transgender veterans.

Similar problems with status and medical support arise for HIV-positive military personnel. Ukrainian legislation allows HIV-positive individuals to serve if their disease is under control (stage 1–2, compensated condition)¹¹⁵. Such individuals are recognized as fit or partially fit and can obtain veteran status. However, in reality, there is no regulatory arrangement for continuous access to therapy during military service. This poses a risk to the health of military personnel, and in some cases may lead to discharge from service or avoidance of service, which complicates the acquisition of legal veteran status. In addition, HIV-positive veterans face an insufficient number of specialized medical services within the veterans' medical support system.

Also, despite formal declarations of equality, Ukraine lacks an effective arrangement to prevent and combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The draft Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Combating Discrimination”¹¹⁶, which expands criminal liability for hate crimes, including those on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, could, if adopted, fill this gap, but it has not yet been adopted as of mid-2025.

Thus, despite the lack of overt prohibitions, LGBTIQ+ veterans remain invisible to the system, facing discrimination, exclusion from support programmes, and lack of rights for their partners. Draft laws on registered partnerships and amendments to criminal legislation on hate crimes remain unadopted.

¹¹⁴ “The Situation of LGBT+ Military in Ukraine”. [Hrytsenko, Hanna (ed.); Pylypenko V., Lazarenko M., Hrytsenko H., Radionova N., Poliakova O., Shcherba D., Diachenko I.; rev. Martseniuk, Tamara]. Kyiv: NGO “LGBT Military and Their Allies”, 2025. Available at: <https://www.lgbtmilitary.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PRINT-Army-UA-.pdf> (accessed date: May 03, 2025).

¹¹⁵ Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 402 dated August 14, 2008 “On Approval of the Regulations on Military Medical Examination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine”. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1109-08#Text>.

¹¹⁶ Draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Combating Discrimination” No. 5488 dated May 13, 2021. Resource available at: http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=71891.



Veterans and a local police officer taking the stand during the roundtable with local authorities in Chernivtsi.

04

The State of Veterans' Reintegration in Ukraine

4.1. Institutional framework: key programmes and services in the field of veterans' policy and institutions, organisations and individuals involved in their creation and provision

Within the framework of the general overview of the legislative and institutional framework of veterans' policy in Ukraine, a special place is occupied by the map of service providers and arrangements for accessing them at the local level. The adopted national regulatory documents have created the foundation for building a multi-level and multi-actor veteran support system. However, the effectiveness of this system largely depends on how it is implemented in communities – who, how and under what conditions provide services, as well as the extent to which the real needs of veterans, and women, persons with disabilities and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community in particular, are taken into account.

It is at the regional level that a typical interaction scheme between a veteran and state and local institutions is being developed, which includes a wide range of services¹¹⁷.

Services that a veteran can currently receive:

- **Status registration:**
 - Obtaining the status of a Participant in Hostilities (PIH);
 - Obtaining the status of a person with a disability as a result of war;
 - Obtaining data from the Unified State Register of War Veterans.
- **Registration of benefits:**
 - for housing and communal services, purchase of solid fuel and liquefied gas;
 - for travel in transport;
 - for cars and parking;
 - for housing / rental (lease) of housing / preferential free major repairs;
 - compensation for owned premises;
 - vouchers for health resort treatment or monetary compensation instead (for persons with disabilities as a result of the war).
- **Pension (registration or recalculation)**
- **Financial assistance:**
 - one-time payment;
 - annual one-time payment;
 - local payments to veterans and their families (if provided locally).
- **Obtaining a land plot**
- **Nutrition for children**
- **Legal advice**
- **Information consultations**
- **Social services (a total of 18 basic services¹¹⁸), including:**
 - home care,
 - physical escort,
 - social adaptation
- **Healthcare:**
 - Referrals to MSEC and MMC
 - Primary and secondary care
 - Emergency care
 - Psychological help
 - Prosthesis
 - Rehabilitation
- **Employment and assistance with starting a business**
- **Training**
- **Sports (payments and/or classes and competitions)**
- **Involvement in cultural and commemoration events**
- **Protection and restoration of rights**

¹¹⁷ Your status is your strength. Veteran's Handbook [Electronic resource]. Representative of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in Lviv region; with the support of the MHP-Gromadi programme for the reintegration and implementation of veterans' rights. Kyiv, 2025. 138 p. Available at: *local user file / source on request*; NGO "Pryntsyyp". Veteran's Navigator: a digital tool for supporting veterans and veteran families [Electronic resource]. 2025. Available at: <https://navigator.pryntsyyp.org/veterans> (accessed date: June, 06, 2025).

¹¹⁸ Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" dated January 17, 2019 No. 2671-VIII. Database "Legislation of Ukraine". Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2671-19#Text> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

In every community, regardless of its type (city, town, or village), a veteran or his family member can seek information, advice, and services from the following representatives of state or local authorities and services:

- Administrative Services Centre (ASC)¹¹⁹;
- The relevant executive committee (city, town or village council);
- Office or department of social protection of the population or office or department for veterans' policy (the latter, if available);
- Social service providers (Social Services Centre, Territorial Social Services Centre, Social Services Provision Centre);
- Veteran's assistant (if available);
- District/city TR & SSC¹²⁰;
- Pension Fund of Ukraine (service centres);
- Employment Centre (district/city branches);
- Medical facilities (primary and secondary levels, multidisciplinary hospitals (if available));
- Legal aid office or local free secondary legal aid centre.

A detailed distribution of service types by administrative-territorial structure level (from rural communities to the city of Kyiv) is provided in the table in Appendix 1. This table allows visualizing what services and in what form are available to veterans depending on the scale of the community.

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and his representatives in the regions play an important role in protecting the rights of veterans on the ground. The Commissioner's offices, including the regional offices, monitor the observance of veterans' rights, accept complaints about violations, facilitate conflict resolution, and cooperate with local governments in the field of human rights protection. Their activities are especially important in the context of ensuring access to services for categories of veterans in situations of vulnerability, including women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+.

It is also important to note the role of the representative offices of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, which are located mainly in regional centres, where they operate under regional state administrations (RSAs) or regional military administrations (RMAs). They operate as part of structural units, mostly in the form of office or departments on veterans' policy, and are responsible for coordinating and implementing state veterans' policy at the regional level.

Information for veterans and their families in communities is provided through various channels: personal meetings, both in the format of receiving citizens and in the form of open events, round tables or conferences; telephone hotlines operating at city and village councils; official websites of local governments with up-to-date contacts and sections for

¹¹⁹ Uniform local self-government web portal "Vulyk". *List of administrative services centres (ASCs)*. Available at: <https://vulyk.gov.ua/#tsnap-list> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

¹²⁰ Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. *Regional Military Commissariats — Contacts*. Official website of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.mil.gov.ua/kontakti/oblasni-vijskoma> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

veterans; printed materials – announcements, leaflets, booklets placed in ASCs, hospitals or administrative buildings; as well as digital tools such as local chatbots or specialized portals, if such have been developed in a particular community.

Currently, the gradual **creation of institutions and standardization of services** aimed at veterans is taking place. Due to the reform initiated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, “Veteran Single Windows”¹²¹ are being created in ASCs – specialized points where a person can receive a full list of administrative and information services related to veteran status.

The “Veteran Single Window” provides for:

- creating a uniform database of veteran services;
- simplifying the receipt of documents and consultations – within one visit or upon one request;
- clear navigation, accessibility, and convenience off-line and on web resources;
- using automated processes for receiving and processing applications (if technically possible).

This logic is further developed in the format of the project “I am a Veteran”¹²², which envisages the creation of **physically autonomous ASCs for veterans** as separate institutions operating solely to support individuals who have returned from the frontline.

Another important direction is the development of the so-called “**Spaces of Care**”¹²³ – service platforms that are created on the basis of healthcare facilities and are focused on rehabilitation, psychological support and social adaptation of veterans, in particular those who were injured. These spaces should also have waiting areas, individual consultations, and even childcare, which is especially important for female veterans.

In parallel, **uniform standards for veteran spaces** are being implemented at all levels – from the community to the region – in accordance with the Order of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine dated June 5, 2024 No. 168¹²⁴. These are specialized

¹²¹ The creation and functioning of the “Veteran Single Window” in ASCs are based on the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Approval of Methodological Recommendations for the Provision of Administrative Services to War Veterans and Persons Subject to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection”” dated February 27, 2024 No. 167-p. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resource available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/167-2024-p> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

¹²² The project is being implemented in the Dnipropetrovsk, Zakarpattia and Kharkiv regions and the city of Kyiv. Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Project “I am a veteran”: a comprehensive service for military personnel and their families in ASCs [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine and regional authorities. Available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/presenter/category/86-novini/zruchni-ta-dostupni-poslugi-dlya-veteraniv-viyni-ta-chleniv-ihnih-simey-u-tsnap>
<https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/news/«я-ветеран»-нову-комплексну-послугу-для-військових>
<https://carpathia.gov.ua/news/kompleksna-posluha-ia-veteran-vidteper-dostupna-v-41-tsnapi-zakarpattia>
<https://kyivcnap.gov.ua/News/Details/71160618-c2be-497d-9181-e4bf54675177> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹²³ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Spaces of care for veterans: creation of a network of support offices in regional healthcare facilities [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/presenter/category/86-novini/zahisnikitazahisnitsimozhutotrymatyposluyvprostorakhturbotiproveterananachernigivshchyni1> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹²⁴ Order of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine dated June 5, 2024 No. 168 “On Approval of Methodological Recommendations on the Creation and Functioning of Veteran Spaces” [Electronic resource]. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/v0168923-24> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).



Representatives of civil society organizations working with women and men veterans at the workshop “Research Methods and Data Collection” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Kyiv as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

hubs that not only provide access to services, but also form communities and support veteran leadership, development of initiatives, and civic activism. Methodological recommendations for the standards provide for the mandatory presence of consultation, educational, psychological, sports, and leisure areas, as well as the consideration of barrier-free access and the needs of various categories of veterans. Funding is provided from the state, local budget, or from other sources not prohibited by law.

Activities of specialists in veterans' social support play an important role in the structure of services. This component is regulated by the “Procedure for Ensuring the Activities of Specialists in Supporting War Veterans and Demobilized Persons”¹²⁵. They are a key link between the veteran and state services, particularly in small communities where access to services is difficult. Although the legislation does not provide for a special focus on female veterans or LGBTQ+ persons, the individualized approach provided for in the document allows taking these needs into account within the framework of policy implementation on the ground.

¹²⁵ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution dated September 16, 2022 No. 881 “On Amendments to Certain Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Social Protection of War Veterans” (as amended by CMU Resolution dated February 28, 2024 No. 115) [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/881-2022-n#Text> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

An equally important institutional link is **specialized departments and divisions on veterans' policy matters** at regional, city and district state administrations¹²⁶. Their function is not only to coordinate between structures, but also to implement a comprehensive approach to supporting veterans. Along with expanding the powers of local authorities, these units can develop regional programmes, conduct needs analysis, and contribute to the creation of an inclusive environment.

At various levels of state and local government, **advisory and consultative councils on veterans' affairs are also being created**¹²⁷. These are platforms that involve representatives of civil society, families of the deceased, and veterans themselves in analysing the situation, preparing decisions, and interacting with the authorities. Such councils contribute to identifying real needs, as well as integrating veterans' experience into local policy-making.

Regarding the gender component, most regions declare adherence to the principles of gender equality, in particular within the framework of the implementation of the National Action Plan under UN Security Council Resolution 1325, programmes to prevent violence or human trafficking. At the same time, the actual consideration of the gender perspective is fragmented. Despite the available methodological recommendations on gender analysis, auditing or budgeting, gender advisors are not involved, needs assessments are not conducted, and programmes remain declarative or duplicated without coordination in many communities.

Financing of the veteran services system is provided both from the state budget and through local budgets. It is important to note that land registration is currently impossible during martial law, as this right is limited. Also, due to insufficient funds in the state budget, funding for health resort treatment has been suspended, but financing of small initiatives from the local budget is possible. However, in cases where it comes to informing female veterans or supporting LGBTIQ+ community initiatives, alternative sources of funding are often indicated – grants, partnership programmes or donor funds. This indicates **insufficient integration of such needs into budget plans** at the national and local levels.

As a result, even despite the existence of legislative frameworks and a certain institutional architecture, the implementation of veterans' policy in communities is often limited by a lack of resources, personnel, knowledge and systematicity, especially in small communities. That is why it is important to develop initiatives between communities, support from civil society organisations, veterans' associations, religious communities, business and international partners. They often provide flexibility, responsiveness to the real needs of veterans and create support models that can be scaled up at the state level over time.

¹²⁶ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution dated July 11, 2023 No. 702 "On Certain Matters of the Activities of Territorial Bodies of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and Units on Veterans' Policy" [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/deiaki-pytannia-diialnosti-terytorialnykh-orhaniv-ministerstva-u-spravakh-veteraniv-ta-pidrozdiliv-s702-110723> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹²⁷ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Advisory and consultative bodies (Veterans' Council, Public Council, etc.) [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/category/189-advisory-and-consultative-bodies> (accessed date: June 06, 2025); Commissioner of the President of Ukraine. Regulations on the Advisory Council on Veterans' Affairs [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/273/2020> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

Non-governmental organisations, the veterans' movement, business, church, volunteer initiatives and international partners also have a major impact on veterans' policy in Ukraine. They play a key role in supporting veterans' reintegration, especially in the context of the full-scale war launched in 2022. These actors are often the first to fill the gaps left by the state – in particular in the field of psychosocial support, gender-responsive services and assistance to LGBTIQ+ and female veterans.

Non-governmental organisations often provide psychological assistance, career support, rehabilitation programmes, and advocate for the rights of veterans, including underrepresented groups. Veteran activism plays a significant role, as veterans themselves create mutual support communities, join local governments, and open businesses and organisations.

Business is beginning to play an increasingly important role: companies are opening vacancies for veterans, launching adaptation programmes, and individual banks are offering preferential terms for doing business with veterans. At the same time, systematic cooperation between business and the state and the veteran sector is only taking shape.

Churches and religious organisations are often a source of moral support, especially in small communities. They provide chaplaincy services, initiate humanitarian assistance, and organize support and rehabilitation programmes.

Volunteer initiatives have remained the basis of support since 2014: many of them have developed into professional structures that help with treatment, rehabilitation, housing, employment and legal matters. At the same time, the local volunteer movement has also intensified in 2022–2024, which is especially effective in communities where state services are not always available.

International partners involved include the United Nations Organisation (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and numerous international foundations, including the International Renaissance Foundation, the Kvinna till Kvinna (Woman to Woman) Foundation, and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, which not only provide funding but also support institutional development, including gender mainstreaming in veterans' reintegration policies, the development of rehabilitation standards, training programmes, and support programmes for women and LGBTIQ+ veterans.

Overall, it is civil society and international actors that have become the drivers of an innovative and more inclusive approach to veterans' policy in Ukraine, often shaping new standards ahead of the state.

Thus, the framework of veteran policy in Ukraine spans the state, regional, and local levels. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs, its representations in RSAs/RMAs, as well as the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights play a central role. Services are provided on the ground by ASCs, social protection departments, employment services, healthcare facilities, and veterans' assistants. The initiatives "Veteran Single Window", "I am a Veteran", "Spaces of Care", as well as social advisors are in operation. Consultative and advisory councils ensure the participation of veterans in policy-making. Although the institution of gender advisors has been established, their involvement is limited in practice. Veterans' policy is implemented according to different models: institutional, community-centred, fragmented, or digitally-oriented ones – depending on the capabilities of the region and the level of community involvement.



Project team preparing to present the key findings of the project's mapping study on existing services and policies for veteran reintegration during the roundtable with local authorities in Chernivtsi.

4.2. Description of the local context and overview of veterans' reintegration services and practices in the pilot regions

4.2.1. Dnipropetrovsk region

The Dnipropetrovsk region is one of Ukraine's largest – both in terms of area (31,914 km²) and in terms of population (over 3.1 million people)¹²⁸. According to its administrative division, the region includes 7 districts. There are 86 territorial communities in the region, which unite a total of 1,501 population centres: 22 cities, 44 urban-type settlements and 1,435 rural population centres¹²⁹. The region is an important industrial, logistical and security centre which also plays a leading role in the development of veterans' policy. Moreover, the Dnipropetrovsk region borders the line of direct contact between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. After the start of the full-scale invasion, the region received a significant number of internally displaced persons, as well as organisations and institutions evacuated from the Donetsk region¹³⁰. All this impacts the load on social and administrative services, in particular in the context of serving veterans and veterans' communities, including in the field of healthcare.



As of April 1, 2025, 109,253 people from among the category of war veterans and persons equated to them were registered in the region¹³¹. In the period from February 24, 2022, to April 01, 2025, 49,577 people received the status of war veteran, of whom 48,494 were men and 1,083 were women (2.2% of the total number)¹³². This indicates a low level of women's representation among new veterans, despite their active participation in the war. The most numerous age categories are as follows: 36–40 years of age (8,596), 41–45 years of age (7,808), 46–50 years of age (7,335)¹³³. Also, during this period, 2,707 people received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war, of which only 43 were women (1.6% of the total number). This fact also demonstrates insufficient consideration or underestimation of the impact of the war on the health of female military personnel¹³⁴.

¹²⁸ Decentralization in the Dnipropetrovsk region [Electronic resource]. Portal "Decentralization". Available at: <https://decentralization.ua/areas/0562> (accessed date: May 06, 2025).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Suspilne. The Dnipropetrovsk region received over 450 thousand IDPs – which cities and communities received the largest number of IDPs [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://suspilne.media/dnipro/930571-dnipropetrovsina-prijnala-ponad-450-tisac-vpo-do-akih-mist-ta-gromad-pereihala-najbilsa-kilkist-pereselenciv> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹³¹ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-05 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of war veterans who acquired the status after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-04 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of people who received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

The implementation of veterans' policy in the region is coordinated by the Department of Veterans' Policy of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration¹³⁵, which consists of 24 people¹³⁶. Its powers include the implementation of state policy in the field of social protection of veterans and their family members, participation in the formation and implementation of regional programmes aimed at rehabilitation, retraining, employment, psychological support and other aspects of veterans' reintegration. The Department coordinates between local governments, territorial divisions of central executive bodies, municipal institutions and veteran organisations. It is also responsible for regulatory and legal support for the implementation of veterans' policy, prepares proposals for the regional budget, ensures the consideration of veterans' needs, protects personal data, and provides educational and methodological support to specialists involved in the provision of services. In general, the Department plays a key role in ensuring the consistency, continuity and adaptability of the implementation of veterans' policy at the level of the Dnipropetrovsk region.

Also, the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration has a permanent commission of the regional council for war veterans, persons with disabilities as a result of war and children of war, which performs an advisory, monitoring and control function regarding the implementation of regional programmes, decisions and initiatives concerning veterans. In addition, there is a Department of Social Protection of the Population of the Regional State Administration, which is responsible for administering social services, providing benefits, compensations, targeted assistance, including to veterans in difficult life circumstances.

The institute of specialists in social support for veterans working in ASCs, local governments or municipal institutions is being actively implemented in the region¹³⁷. Currently, the region has 18 municipal institutions/non-profit enterprises of the Dnipropetrovsk region that employ specialists in support of war veterans and demobilized persons¹³⁸.

The Dnipropetrovsk RMA forms and implements targeted support programmes for veterans, including the Comprehensive Support Programme for War Veterans, Their Family Members, Family Members of Deceased War Veterans, Family Members of

135 Order of the Head of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration "On Approval of the Regulations on the Department of Veterans' Policy of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration" dated November 22, 2023 No. 3-495.0.3-25. Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

136 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. Response to the request of the civil society organization "Common Goodness" dated April 21, 2025 No. 2025/04-21/2 regarding veteran support programmes. Letter No. 190/0/48-25 dated April 28, 2025.

137 Methodological recommendations on the organization of the activities of specialists in social support of war veterans, members of their families and members of the families of the deceased Defenders of Ukraine. Approved by Order of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine No. 189 dated October 24, 2023.

138 Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration. Information on municipal institutions/non-profit enterprises of the Dnipropetrovsk region, which employ specialists in supporting war veterans and demobilized persons [PDF document]. Resource available at: https://adm.dp.gov.ua/storage/app/media/VETERAN/02-04-2025/розміщення_на_сайті_01.04.2025.pdf (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

Deceased Defenders of Ukraine in the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2024-2028¹³⁹ and the **Comprehensive Programme for Social Support, Rehabilitation of Persons Who Directly Participated in the Implementation of Measures Necessary to Ensure the Defence of Ukraine, Protect the Security of the Population and the Interests of the State in Connection with the Military Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and Members of Their Families in the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2020-2025**¹⁴⁰. A regional action plan for 2025-2027 has also been prepared to implement the **Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030 in the Dnipropetrovsk Region**¹⁴¹. The latter provides for an analysis of the needs of veterans, as well as expanding and deepening access to services and benefits for veterans. The programmes cover a wide range of services, but so far do not take into account the specific needs of female veterans or LGBTIQ+ veterans and veterans as separate categories.

There are also a Regional **Targeted Social Programme for the Development of Family and Gender Policy in the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2023-2027**¹⁴² within the framework of the RMA. However, its practical implementation is currently limited. Formally, the programme provides for the implementation of a gender approach in the activities of state authorities and support for the principles of equality, however, its content component is focused mainly on symbolic and representative events. A significant part of the budget allocations is directed to the organisation of celebrations, awards dedicated to holidays, and commemorations of women's achievements, rather than to systemic institutional transformation or the development of gender equality arrangements. As a result, despite the declarative existence of the programme, it currently does not create a sustainable impact on policies, services, or institutional practices related to the support of women, in particular veterans, or groups in situations of vulnerability on the basis of gender.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, the functions of implementing veterans' policy are assigned to each territorial community in all districts¹⁴³. These tasks are performed differently depending on the community's organisational structure. In a number of communities, separate departments on veterans' matters have been created; in others, the relevant

¹³⁹ Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. Decision "On Amendments to the Decision of the Regional Council dated June 21, 2024 No. 394-20/VIII "On the Comprehensive Support Programme for War Veterans, Their Family Members, Family Members of Deceased War Veterans, Family Members of Deceased Defenders of Ukraine of the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2024-2028" No. 27320/VIII. Available at: <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/rishennia/про-внесення-змін-до-рішення-обласно-273/> (access: June 14, 2025); Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. Decision "On Amendments to the Decision of the Regional Council dated June 21, 2024 No. 394-20/VIII "On the Comprehensive Support Programme for War Veterans, Their Family Members, Family Members of Deceased War Veterans, Family Members of Deceased Defenders of Ukraine of the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2024-2028" No. 29020/VIII. Available at: <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/rishennia/про-внесення-змін-до-рішення-обласно-290/> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

¹⁴⁰ Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. Decision "On Amendments to the Decision of the Regional Council dated March 27, 2020 No. 570-22/VII "On the Comprehensive Programme for Social Support, Rehabilitation of ATO/JFO Participants, Their Family Members in the Dnipropetrovsk Region for 2020-2022" and Extension of its Duration until 2025" No. 180. Resource available at: <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/rishennia/про-внесення-змін-до-рішення-обласно-180/> (accessed date: June 11, 2025); Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. *On Amendments to Decision of the Regional Council No. 221*. Official website of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. Resource available at: <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/rishennia/провнесеннязміндорішенняобласно221/> (accessed date: June 14, 2025).

¹⁴¹ Order of the Head of the State Administration dated January 15, 2025 No. 3-17.0.3.3-25 "On Approval of the Regional Action Plan for 2025-2027 for the Implementation of the Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030 in the Dnipropetrovsk Region".

¹⁴² Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. *On Amendments to Decision of the Regional Council No. 256*. Official website of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council. Resource available at: <https://oblrada.dp.gov.ua/rishennia/провнесеннязміндорішенняобласно256/> (accessed date: June 13, 2025).

¹⁴³ Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. *Contact information for interaction with the veteran sector* [PDF]. Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/storage/app/media/VETERAN/02-04-2025/kontaktu.pdf> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

powers have been delegated to employees of social protection departments. These functions can also be transferred to municipal institutions or non-profit enterprises.

Each territorial community forms its own plan and programme of actions in the field of implementing veterans' policy in accordance with resources and capabilities it has. The difference between territorial communities is quite significant. For example, the city of Dnipro has a high level of institutional capacity in the field of veterans' policy. A separate unit on veterans' matters has been created under the city council, several veterans' spaces are operating, social support specialists are actively working, and partnership initiatives with international organisations such as the International Research and Exchanges Board, Pact, and German International Cooperation are being implemented. The city has established a system of access to administrative services through "single windows" in ASCs, and information is also disseminated through specialized online platforms and printed materials.

In many rural or small territorial communities, however, the functions of implementing veterans' policy are often assigned to general social protection departments. There are no specialized spaces for veterans, and access to retraining programmes or medical services is limited due to geographical remoteness or lack of personnel. Information is mostly provided through announcements in village councils or by word of mouth. In such communities, the role of community initiatives or ASCs is much more important in ensuring a basic level of access to services.

It should be noted separately that veteran spaces exist and are actively being created in the Dnipropetrovsk region at all levels – regional, district and local. These are multifunctional facilities aimed at the reintegration of war veterans by providing comprehensive support through information sharing, consultations and organisation of their rehabilitation and adaptation¹⁴⁴. Currently, there are 28 veteran spaces in the region, which were created, either partially or fully, with the assistance of central or local authorities. At the same time, there are over 10 veteran spaces created by civil society organisations, volunteers and activists¹⁴⁵.

A good practice is coordination between different levels of government and structures to create a fully inclusive space for veterans. One example is the opening of a "Veteran Care Space" office in the region. This is an inclusive social space to support defenders who are undergoing rehabilitation after injuries or illnesses. The initiative was implemented with the participation of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Dnipropetrovsk RMA, the "Come Back Alive" Charitable Foundation and with funding from Public Joint Stock Company "Ukrnafta". A comfortable environment providing legal, social, psychological and career consultations has been arranged on an

144 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Order "On Approval of Methodological Recommendations on the Creation and Functioning of Veteran Spaces" dated June 05, 2024 No. 168. Resource available at: https://mva.gov.ua/media/1/kablukova/Наказ_Мінветеран_від_05.06.2024_168_Про_затвердження_Методичних_рекомендацій_щодо_створення_та_функціонування_ветеранських_просторів_4.pdf (accessed date: June 04, 2025).

145 International Renaissance Foundation. Directory "Veteran Spaces of Ukraine" [Electronic resource]. Kyiv, 2023. Available at: <https://www.irf.ua/publication/dovidnyk-veteranski-prostory-ukrayiny>. Screen title. (accessed date: June 04, 2025).

area of 100 m². The space is completely barrier-free and focused on dignity, respect and effective veterans' reintegration into civilian life ¹⁴⁶.

The region's administrative services infrastructure is very well developed: 161 access points to administrative services (63 main offices, 17 branches, 78 remote locations and 3 mobile offices of ASCs), which operate 242 Single Windows, where war veterans and their family members can receive the maximum number of administrative services in one visit¹⁴⁷. Veterans can also receive advice, information and assistance regarding veteran services within the framework of the comprehensive service "I am a Veteran"¹⁴⁸.

Veterans also have access to pension, housing and transport benefits and compensation. These include free housing, a 3% preferential mortgage for people with disabilities of groups I–II, compensation of up to 50% of the cost of housing, and social housing. In addition, compensation for housing rent is provided at up to 75% of the cost, depending on the population centre, and free housing repairs are offered once every 10 years, provided that a number of criteria are met. These programmes are registered through the ASC, social protection agencies or online through the Diia portal. All of them are uniform services.

Also, veterans and servicemen can receive free legal aid in the Dnipropetrovsk region from civil society initiatives, in particular from "Yurydychna Sotnia", "YurShtab" (online format, anonymously) and the E-sprava service, which offers consultations both online and in person. The state system of free legal aid is currently undergoing reorganisation – local centres have ceased operation since April 2024, and their functions have been transferred to the South-Eastern Interregional Centre, which is the region's main legal aid administrator.

Male and female veterans have the right to free treatment, rehabilitation, prosthetics and psychological support on a formally equal basis. Free medical care can be received in military hospitals (in particular, the 38th hospital in Dnipro), state and municipal healthcare facilities, as well as in 47 private hospitals that have signed contracts with the National Health Service of Ukraine. The rehabilitation department of City Clinical Hospital No. 4 in Dnipro, the Solonyi Lyman Centre, Kryvyi Rih City Hospital No. 5, City Hospital No. 1 in Kamianske, and the Slobozhanske Central Hospital stand out from the other specialized institutions – all of them provide comprehensive rehabilitation services free of charge. For prosthetics, a step-by-step procedure is provided through the MMC, the ASC and social services agencies. A regional hospital for veterans has also been opened in Dnipro and Rozdory, and national-level care is provided by the

146 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. "The first "Veteran Care Space" office opened in the Dnipropetrovsk region." Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/news/u-dnipropetrovskii-regioni-vidkryly-pershyi-kabinet-prostir-turboty-pro-veterana> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

147 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Convenient and accessible services for war veterans and their family members in the ASC [Electronic resource]. Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine: [official website]. 2023. Available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/prescentre/category/86-novini/zruchni-ta-dostupni-poslugi-dlya-veteraniv-viyini-ta-chleniv-ihnih-simey-u-tsnap>. Screen title.

148 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Convenient and accessible services for war veterans and their family members in the ASC. Press Centre of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Resource available at: <https://mva.gov.ua/prescentre/category/86-news/zruchni-ta-dostupni-poslugi-dlya-veteraniv-viyini-ta-chleniv-ihnih-simey-u-tsnap-1?utm> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

SUPERHUMANS Centre¹⁴⁹. Separately, we should mention the three rehabilitation centres within the Recovery project¹⁵⁰.

In addition, according to the interactive map of the National Health Service of Ukraine¹⁵¹ in the Dnipropetrovsk region, dental prosthetics are also included in the list of free medical services for veterans. As of June 2025, such services are provided by 26 accredited healthcare facilities in the region. This allows veterans to have wide access to quality dental care, including prosthetics, without financial burden, provided that there is an appropriate referral. All of these institutions formally serve veterans, but do not have clearly formulated protocols adapted to sensitive categories of beneficiaries.

For socio-psychological adaptation, there are resort houses “Sonyachnyi” and “Orlivshchyna”, which accept male and female veterans upon referral from social protection agencies. Psychological assistance and support are also provided according to uniform patterns. However, studies show that veterans with injuries related to sexual violence, discrimination or losses have specific signs of traumatization that require adapted approaches. This is especially true for women and LGBTIQ+ veterans, who may face double stigmatization.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, veterans, persons with disabilities as a result of war, and their family members can undergo professional adaptation, which includes initial training, retraining, advanced training, or acquiring a new specialty. It is also possible to receive education of second (master's) level based on the first level – with a shortened period of study. The cost of training is compensated by the state. Training is organized through vocational education institutions of the State Employment Service or other licensed institutions. To do this, an applicant needs to contact the veterans' policy unit (in the district state administration or the executive body of the community), receive career guidance, receive a referral, and conclude a tripartite agreement with an educational institution. In addition, free training vouchers are provided for veterans who were injured, traumatized, or got ill during the war. Vouchers are issued by the State Employment Service – for this purpose, an applicant needs to submit an online application through the contact centre or apply in person. These services from state and local authorities and service agencies are also uniform, the education and employment system in the region does not provide for preferences or positive discrimination support. Public announcements of vacancies or courses lack gender-inclusive wording or quotas for women, people with disabilities, transgender people, or LGBTIQ+ veterans.

A gender approach is implemented through individual initiatives, mainly by donors or non-profit organisations. For example, the Women's Employment Centre, operating in Dnipro, conducts trainings for internally displaced persons, female veterans and women with disabilities. Created with the support of international partners (UN, Denmark), it helps with

¹⁴⁹ Superhumans Centre. Information about activities: <https://www.superhumans.com/en/> (accessed date: July 2025).

¹⁵⁰ Recovery UA. About the network of rehabilitation centres: <https://recoveryua.org/en/home> (accessed date: July 2025).

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Health of Ukraine. National Health Service of Ukraine. *Pilot project on free dental prosthetics for veterans and other persons who defended the state – interactive map of service providers*. Resource available at: <https://edata.e-health.gov.ua/e-data/dashboard/pilotnyi-proekt-zuboprotezuvannia-map> (accessed date: June 07, 2025).

career guidance, employment and retraining¹⁵². At the same time, the project “Reskilling Ukraine”, implemented by the Swedish Beredkspalsyftet CSO with the support of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, demonstrates a focus on women and female veterans, where women are offered courses and training in such professions as drivers, excavator operators, front-end loaders, solar power plant operators, etc. However, not all training is gender-responsive. For example, the online training programme “Veteran’s Wife”, while useful, has a stereotypically gendered focus, designed to portray a woman as a support figure for a military husband, rather than as an independent professional or veteran.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, a state sports programme for veterans is being implemented. This initiative provides an opportunity for veterans and participants in hostilities with disabilities to receive quarterly financial assistance of 1,500 UAH for visiting gyms, swimming pools and other physical education facilities. Also, the Dnipropetrovsk State University of Internal Affairs works with veterans separately and conducts training in mixed martial arts (boxing, wrestling), arm wrestling and table tennis for people with musculoskeletal disorders¹⁵³.

There are a number of civil society organisations in the Dnipropetrovsk region that provide support to veterans, including female veterans and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community.

It is worth highlighting Veteran Hub as one of the most active organisations working with a broad veteran audience. It provides crisis psychological assistance, organizes support groups and consultations for veterans and their family members. The Ukrainian Veterans Fund also implements support programmes, including those that include a component of work with LGBTIQ+ veterans and female veterans.

As for the support of female veterans, the Women’s Veteran Movement plays an important role, uniting female veterans to protect their rights, strengthen their presence in the security sector, develop leadership potential, and participate in state-building processes. The Dnipropetrovsk region also has the Female veterans and Volunteers Coalition which consists of over 30 active women. It focuses on support, training, and advocacy activities. The NGO “Common Goodness” is a civil society organisation that actively works in the Dnipropetrovsk region in the field of protecting veterans’ rights, paying attention to inclusivity and support for categories in situations of vulnerability, such as female veterans and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community.

The NGO “Ukrainian LGBT+ Military and Veterans for Equal Rights” operates for the representatives of the LGBTIQ+ veteran community in Ukraine. It unites over 500 participants. The organisation focuses on human rights protection, advocacy, and creation of a safe environment for self-realization. There also the VETERANKA community in

¹⁵² Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. TV channel “DniproTV”. *Training for female entrepreneurs: new opportunities for IDPs, female veterans and women with disabilities*. Resource available at: <https://dnipro.tv/news-dnipro/treninh-dlia-pidpriemnyts-u-dnipri-novi-mozhlyvosti-dlia-vpo-veteranok-i-zhinok-z-invalidnistiu/?utm> (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

¹⁵³ Dnipro State University of Internal Affairs. *Official website*. Resource available at: <https://dduvs.edu.ua/> (accessed date: June 08, 2025).

Dnipro, which develops the idea of a women's military uniform, exchange of experience, and support between female veterans.

Gender Stream is a public movement which plays an important role in the field of psychological support for female veterans. It organizes a specialized hotline, individual consultations and group sessions. There are also local women's initiatives in the region, for example, the group "Livyi Bereh" in Dnipro, which holds meetings for women with war experience, including those with disabilities.

The TitansUA project deserves special attention¹⁵⁴. It is a socio-educational project for veterans, implemented under the patronage of the Head of the Dnipropetrovsk RMA, Serhii Lysak. The initiative is designed to facilitate the transition of defenders back into civilian life by creating a supportive community on the peer-to-peer principle. The project covers the areas of socialization, training, employment, patriotic education and mentoring, and also forms a culture of respect for veterans in the home front. Within the framework of the TitansUA project, participants gain access to meetings, sports events, retraining programmes and entrepreneurship support.

Veterans in the Dnipropetrovsk region are provided information through official websites¹⁵⁵, personal communication, and social media. It is important to note that the Dnipropetrovsk RMA has developed a veteran's guide "Pixel"¹⁵⁶, which contains useful and important information on the path of a veteran's adaptation to peaceful life. The guide outlines such areas as rehabilitation, prosthetics, education, work, own business, sports, and recreation, where each area has a dedicated section with detailed information, links to useful resources and contacts of relevant institutions and organisations. The guide is available on the Dnipropetrovsk RMA website, and the information is constantly updated.

Overall, the mapping indicates a high level of organisational infrastructure and functional capacity of the region in implementing the general veterans' policy. At the same time, there is a critical shortage of inclusive programme design and lack of targeted support for women and LGBTIQ+ community members. This requires adaptation of reintegration policies with the involvement of targeted components, development of professional capacity of service agencies, and application of the principles of implementing a gender approach at all levels.

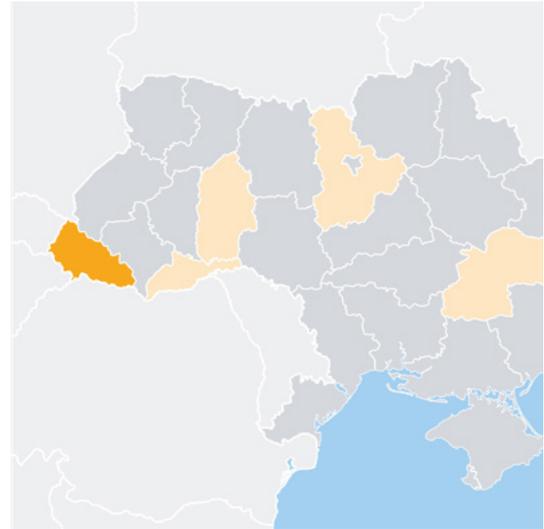
154 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. *Social and Educational Project for Veterans "TitansUA"*. Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/veteranam/sotsialno-osvitnii-proiekt-dlia-veteraniv-tytanyua> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

155 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. *Portal for Veterans*. Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/veteranam> (accessed date: June 10, 2025).

156 Dnipropetrovsk Regional Military Administration. *Information Brochure for Veterans* [PDF]. Resource available at: <https://adm.dp.gov.ua/storage/app/media/VETERAN/veteranapiksel150425v2.pdf> (accessed date: May 16, 2025).

4.2.2. Zakarpattia region

The Zakarpattia region is a border and mountainous region located in the far west of Ukraine, bordering four EU countries. The region is the most remote from the war zone in Ukraine. Its total area is 12,777 km², and the population is approximately 1,253,791 people (according to 2021 estimates, 52% of the population were women, 48% were men)¹⁵⁷. According to its administrative division, the region includes 6 districts. There are 64 territorial communities in the region, which unite a total of 609 population centres¹⁵⁸ – 11 cities, 19 urban-type settlements and 579 rural population centres¹⁵⁹. After the start of the full-scale invasion, the region became a refuge for a significant number of IDPs (up to 300,000 people), as well as families of military personnel¹⁶⁰. Thus, the Zakarpattia region plays an important role in the reception, temporary adaptation and support of veterans, in particular in the matters of rehabilitation, social support and integration into communities.



Another feature of the Zakarpattia region is that it is home to Ukraine's largest Roma community. According to the official 2001 census, this figure is about 14,000 people, but unofficial estimates range from 40,000 to 100,000¹⁶¹. Some Roma do not have documents, which makes it impossible to access veteran, medical and social services. The lack of basic education, knowledge of the language (some speak Romani or Hungarian), and digital skills makes it difficult to disseminate information. There is a lack of an institutional approach to working with Roma communities. Communication with the community is complicated, and access to rights and programmes is limited, in particular in the field of veterans' policy.

According to official data, as of April 2025, 9,823 people received the status of war veteran in Zakarpattia, of which 418 were women (4.3%)¹⁶². This is the highest indicator of the number of female veterans among the pilot regions, which may indicate both the higher activity of women in the war and the better accounting system in the region. The

¹⁵⁷ Main Department of Statistics in the Zakarpattia Region. Distribution of the existing population by sex in the Zakarpattia region (as of January 01, 2021) [Electronic resource]. Available at: https://www.uz.ukrstat.gov.ua/catalog/2021/dop_01.pdf. Screen title.

¹⁵⁸ Decentralization in the Zakarpattia Region [Electronic resource]. Portal "Decentralization". Available at: <https://decentralization.ua/areas/0312> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Department of Information Policy of the Zakarpattia RMA. Support for Internally Displaced Persons in Zakarpattia in Figures [Electronic resource]. Zakarpattia RMA. October 19, 2024. Available at: <https://carpathia.gov.ua/news/pidtrymka-vnutrishno-peremishchennykh-osib-na-zakarpatti-u-tsyfrakh> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

¹⁶¹ Ombudsman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Human Rights. *Monitoring visit to the Roma settlement in the city of Uzhhorod, Zakarpattia region* [Electronic resource]. 2023. Available at: https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/uk/news_details/monitoringovij-vizit-doromskogo-poselennya-vm-uzhgorod-zakarpatskoyi-regioni (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

¹⁶² Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-05 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of war veterans who acquired the status after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

largest number of veterans is in the age group of 31–45¹⁶³. 629 people were registered as a person with a disability as a result of the war, of which only 14 were women (2.3% of the total number of people)¹⁶⁴.

Currently, the implementation of veterans' policy in the Zakarpattia region is generally entrusted to the Population Social Protection Department of the Zakarpattia Regional Military Administration (RMA). The Department shows experience and professionalism in its work, trying to implement initiatives such as the Resilience programme (*programa Zhyttestiykosti*), which consists of cooperation with civil society organisations. Also, in January 2025, a specialized Office of Veterans' Policy was created within the Department, which is gradually gaining institutional capacity¹⁶⁵. In accordance with the approved Regulations, this Office implements state policy in the field of social protection of war veterans, members of their families and families of the deceased, coordinates the provision of services, participates in programme planning, supports veteran spaces, and implements rehabilitation and adaptation measures. However, as of July 2025, the Office is not fully staffed, and employees have not undergone specialized training, which affects the Office's effectiveness.

There is also the Coordination Council for Veterans Affairs which operates at the regional level under the Zakarpattia RMA. It is a consultative and advisory body aimed to facilitate the implementation of policies, involve the public and provide recommendations to executive bodies¹⁶⁶. The council includes representatives of state authorities, veteran NGOs, medical and educational institutions. However, according to an analysis of the official RMA website, the last recorded meeting of the Council took place in 2021, which indicates its actual inactivity¹⁶⁷.

Among the positive practices, it can be noted that the Zakarpattia RMA is gradually implementing the institute of veteran support: from recruitment and qualification to the practical involvement of specialists in communities. The gradual scaling up (34 assistants¹⁶⁸ in 25 communities, training at the Development Centre¹⁶⁹) indicates a serious desire to institutionalize support for veterans on the ground. According

163 Ibid.

164 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-04 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of persons who received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war after February 24, 2022. 1 page Received: May 01, 2025

165 Regulations on the Office of Veterans' Policy of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration. Available at: <https://carpathia.gov.ua/npas/pro-polozhennia-pro-upravlinnia-z-pytan-veteranskoi-polityky-zakarpatskoi-oblasnoi-derzhavnoi-administratsii> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

166 Regulations on the Department of Veterans' Policy of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]: Order of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration dated June 30, 2025 No. 460. Available at: https://carpathia.gov.ua/gromadskosti/kosultacijna-rada-u-spravah-veteraniv/polozhennya_krusv (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

167 Composition of the Coordination Council for Veterans Affairs at the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration [Electronic resource] // Official website of the Zakarpattia Regional Military Administration. Available at: https://carpathia.gov.ua/gromadskosti/kosultacijna-rada-u-spravah-veteraniv/sklad_krusv (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

168 34 veterans' assistants work in the Zakarpattia region [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Zakarpattia Regional Military Administration. Available at: <https://carpathia.gov.ua/news/u-zakarpatskii-regioni-pratsiuiut-34-pomichnyky-veteraniv> (accessed date: July 06, 2025). There were already more than 50 such employees at the time of publication according to data from the round table on the topic of the report, which was held in Uzhhorod on August 1, 2025.

169 The first Veteran Development Centre opened in Zakarpattia [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Zakarpattia Regional Military Administration. Available at: <https://carpathia.gov.ua/news/na-zakarpatti-vidkryly-pershyy-tsentr-veteranskoho-rozvytku> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

to available information, more than 2,700 applications have been processed since the launch of the veteran assistant institute (October 2023). The most frequent applications are for assistance with document processing, assignment of statuses, and clarification of rights and benefits. However, despite the announcement of the creation of veterans' policy departments in all six districts of the region and the appointment of responsible persons in each community¹⁷⁰, this institutional network is often merely nominal. The lack of specialized education, insufficient level of personnel training, and staff turnover remain key challenges. The Regional Office formally coordinates the process, but the effectiveness of interaction depends on the human and resource potential of territorial communities.

There are also several key regional programmes for social protection of the population in the Zakarpattia region, including those geared towards supporting war veterans, military personnel and their families. For example, the "Care" (*Turbota*) programme (2022–2024) is a regional tool that was in effect at the time of the introduction of martial law¹⁷¹. It is aimed at strengthening the social protection of categories of the population in situations of vulnerability, and people with disabilities, low-income and other socially unprotected groups. Although veterans were not a separate target category of the programme, some of the measures also covered their needs. The Regional Programme for Social Support of War Veterans, Military Personnel and Their Family Members (2023–2024) also operated in the region¹⁷². Approved by Order of the RMA Head dated May 11, 2023, No. 450, this programme was a targeted tool for supporting participants in hostilities, family members of the deceased and military personnel. It included measures for medical care, prosthetics, social adaptation, legal support, as well as commemoration of the deceased.

Currently, the Regional "Protection" ["Zakhyst"] Programme (2025–2027) is in effect – it is a continuation of the policy of supporting veterans at a new stage¹⁷³. Approved on September 17, 2024 (order No. 877), the programme is aimed at comprehensive – medical, financial, psychological and rehabilitation – assistance. Particular attention is paid to the integration of veterans into communities, assistance to the families of the deceased, employment support and access to housing. Also, all 64 territorial communities of Zakarpattia have approved their own expenditures or programmes that provide support for veterans, family members of the deceased, prisoners of war or missing persons. These can be both separate targeted programmes and measures within the framework of more general social initiatives.

Online access to services is provided through the "Zakarpattia Assistance" (*Dopomoha Zakarpattia*) platform¹⁷⁴. Through the site you can, *inter alia*, submit applications for

¹⁷⁰ Zakarpattia joined the implementation of the experimental project "Veteran's Assistant" [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration. Available at: <https://carpathia.gov.ua/news/zakarpattia-pryednalosia-do-realizatsii-eksperymentalnoho-proiektu-pomichnyk-veterana> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

¹⁷¹ Zakarpattia Regional State Administration. Office of Veterans' Policy. Response to the request of the NGO "Volunteers of Transcarpathia" regarding the implementation of veterans' policy in the region: [letter No. 06/06–38 dated April 14, 2025]. Zakarpattia RMA. 5 pages. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gz5hH9wtcR32FJOWujP10QisPnZPsXmH/view> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

pension recalculation, military registration, financial assistance, etc. Currently, the “I am a Veteran” service is being launched – a comprehensive administrative tool that will allow providing services to demobilized defenders on the single window principle. However, the region still lacks a single regional veteran’s guide – a centralized digital or printed resource with contacts, action algorithms, and instructions. This significantly complicates access to information, especially in rural areas. Moreover, all these regional programmes remain gender neutral.

Zakarpattia is Ukraine’s only region that has not only developed and approved its own regional action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy under UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, Security, but also provided for its funding: in 2023, UAH 400 thousand was allocated from the regional budget for the implementation of the programme¹⁷⁵. The Zakarpattia region also has a Regional Targeted Social Programme for the Development of Family and Gender Policy for 2023–2027¹⁷⁶, which provides for a comprehensive approach to gender equality: preventing domestic violence, supporting families, increasing the role of women in socio-political life, and implementing the gender budgeting methodology. Within the framework of this programme, gender training activities for government specialists, information campaigns and seminars for public activists are implemented, and the activities of women’s civil society organisations are also supported. However, according to available data, practical implementation remains limited – a significant part of the resources is allocated to symbolic actions, while there are no clear indicators of effectiveness, systematic integration of female veterans or LGBTIQ+ representatives into the programme. At the same time, despite political support and strategic vision, official messages and events practically do not mention female veterans as a separate target group, and LGBTIQ+ veterans do not appear in any context at all. This indicates a focus on general gender matters, without specifying the needs of groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalized groups in the veteran environment. It also seems that the implementation of regional programmes for the social protection of veterans and gender policy is taking place in parallel, without integrating approaches and taking into account the specific needs of female veterans and the LGBTIQ+ community. In this regard, support for female veterans is being taken on by civil society organisations, such as the “Women’s Veteran Movement”, “Vesta”, and “Women’s Advisory Centre of Zakarpattia”, which implement projects and hold events aimed at female veterans.

If we talk about legal support for veterans, it is provided in veterans’ spaces, through Free Legal Aid Centres, as well as by partners – for example, the Sylni Foundation, which supports survivors of sexual violence. The eOselia programme is being implemented, which allows compensating part of the mortgage interest for veterans. At the same time, there is a shortage of municipal housing in the region, which limits local housing possibilities.

175 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Implementation of the National Action Plan 1325 at the Regional Level [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2023. Available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/uploaded; https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/uploaded-files/Виконання%20НПД%201325%20на%20регіональному%20рівні.docx>. Screen title.

176 Department of Social Protection of the Population of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration. Regional Programmes → Family and Gender Policy [Electronic resource]. Official website of the Department of Social Protection of the Population of the Zakarpattia Regional State Administration. Available at: <https://zaksoc.gov.ua/regionalni-programi/simeina-ta-genderna-politiki> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

Social services include one-time assistance to the wounded, prisoners, families of the deceased, individual support from social workers, gifts for children of veterans. Access to services is possible through the network of ASCs – 62 access points in the Zakarpattia region. Also, there is the veteran spaces “VDOMA” which operates in 12 communities.

Psychological assistance is provided in hospitals, social service centres, and “VDOMA” spaces. There are specialized programmes – “How are you?” (*Ty yak?*), online support groups (*Zelenyi Hudzyk*), and services provided by international partners, including UNDP. Also, there is the Charitable Foundation “Tree of My Life”, which provides comprehensive psychological support and rehabilitation services for veterans¹⁷⁷.

It is important to note that the Zakarpattia Regional Centre for Social Services does not implement separate programmes to support veterans, however, from 2024 to April 2025, 896 veterans applied to the region’s local social service centres¹⁷⁸. Social services for veterans are provided at the community level, in particular within the framework of the social adaptation standard approved by the Ministry of Social Policy. The centre trains specialists, cooperates with regional structures and veteran initiatives, but points to a shortage of qualified personnel in communities.

The Specialized Regional Hospital for War Veterans (a regional municipal non-profit enterprise) in the Zakarpattia region was liquidated, and its functions were transferred to the Novak Hospital. In addition, veterans receive assistance at the Kravets Rehabilitation Centre and the Sports Rehabilitation Centre. Medical services currently include treatment, rehabilitation, and prosthetics, but the study did not identify any specialized programmes for female veterans. It is planned to open a new rehabilitation centre in Uzhhorod with an area of 1,500 m² with inclusive infrastructure, but this is only a project.

In the Zakarpattia region, the process of veteran employment continues. With the support of the employment service, 117 veterans were employed, 25 people received education vouchers, and 18 received grants within the eRobota framework. The Veteran Development Centre at the Uzhhorod National University was opened in 2024 and provides support in training for better employment. Grant programmes from businesses and private entrepreneurs are being launched too. Veterans also receive support from civil society organisations and international partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organisation for Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Mountain Seed Foundation, which implement women retraining, psychological support and assistance programmes. Cross-border cooperation plays an important role in the development of these initiatives. However, the study shows that this is a small part of the overall needs of veterans and indicates the requirement to intensify professional adaptation programmes, expand opportunities in the labour market, and take into account the gender dimension in employment policies.

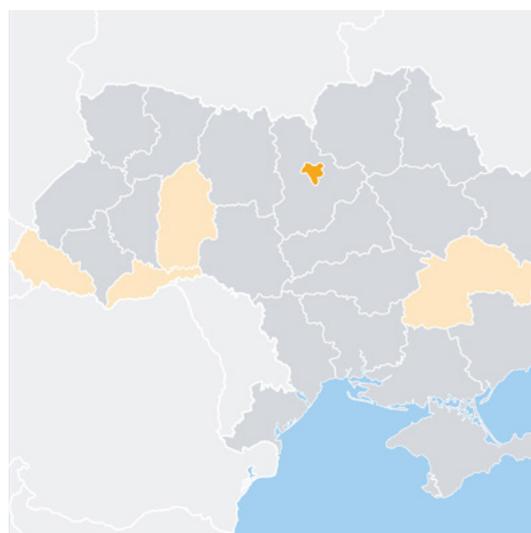
¹⁷⁷ Charitable Foundation “Tree of My Life”. Official website [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://tree-of-my-life.org> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

¹⁷⁸ Zakarpattia Regional Centre for Social Services. Response to the request of the NGO “Volunteers of Transcarpathia” No. 270/05-03 dated April 15, 2025 regarding the provision of information on the implementation of social support for families of war veterans in the region’s territorial communities [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/13mljj3N7tsOxPBP6hfGIMMv7jPdbh5aN/edit> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

Thus, the Zakarpattia region demonstrates high potential in creating a veteran infrastructure. However, the lack of personnel specialization, absence of gender policy, and low involvement in rural communities remain key challenges. A significant part of the Roma population is deprived of access to services due to communication and documentary barriers. Veterans' policy requires a targeted component to take into account and address the needs of groups of the population in situations of vulnerability. The lack of a regional veteran guide also remains a critical issue. It is necessary to implement a regional plan for the implementation of the Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030 with a clear focus on inclusion, gender equality and professionalization of services.

4.2.3. City of Kyiv

The city of Kyiv is the capital of Ukraine, located in the central-northern part of the country. The total area of the city is 839 km². The population of the capital exceeds 2.9 million people according to 2024 data. Kyiv has a special administrative status – it is not part of any region, and at the same time performs the functions of a separate administrative-territorial unit and the regional centre of the Kyiv region. Unlike other regions, the territory of Kyiv is not divided into communities in the classical sense of the decentralization reform, however, by its administrative structure, the city consists of ten districts, which have district state administrations¹⁷⁹.



Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Kyiv has become not only a centre of strategic management, but also a place where military personnel often come after rotation and demobilization. It is also home to many families of military personnel and veterans, as well as IDPs. This has created an increased need for an integrated system of veteran support, which includes medical, psychological, legal, social, educational and vocational services.

As of April 1, 2025, 32,650 people received the status of a war veteran in the city, of whom 31,727 were men and 923 were women¹⁸⁰. The share of women is 2.8% – one of the highest among all Ukrainian regions. This is explained, *inter alia*, by the high share of women in the logistics, administrative and medical units, which are concentrated geographically in the city. The main age groups among veterans are 41–45 years old (5,083 people), 36–40 years old (4,895), 46–50 years old (4,778) and 56–65 years old

¹⁷⁹ City of Kyiv [Electronic resource]. Portal “Decentralization”. Available at: <https://decentralization.ua/areas/44> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

¹⁸⁰ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-05 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of war veterans who acquired the status after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

(4,834)¹⁸¹. During the same period, 3,343 people received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war, of whom only 64 were women (1.9% of the total number), which is a rather low figure¹⁸².

The Kyiv City State Administration coordinates the implementation of veterans' policy through the Department of Social and Veterans' Policies. According to the staffing list, as of January 1, 2025, the Department had 143 employees, of which 13 employees were assigned to the Office of Veterans' Policy, and 9 people worked in the Office of Gender Equality¹⁸³.

The city has a Comprehensive City Programme for Social, Medical and Psychological Veterans Support for 2024–2026, which was updated in 2025 to take into account new challenges and priorities, including a focus on interregional cooperation and the involvement of international donors¹⁸⁴. The programme covers a wide range of areas of assistance to participants in hostilities, veterans and their family members. It provides administrative support, including the assignment of statuses, the conducting of individual consultations, as well as assistance in processing applications to pension institutions and healthcare and rehabilitation facilities. Within the framework of medical and rehabilitation assistance, the programme provides referrals for treatment, organisation of prosthetics and access to psychological support. The social component of the programme includes annual payments, one-time financial assistance dedicated to memorable dates and compensation for transportation costs for the families of the deceased. Particular attention is paid to psychological adaptation through group classes, family meetings and sports and rehabilitation activities. The programme also includes information and legal support, namely the organisation of seminars, information campaigns and legal consultations. Finally, the focus is on employment and sports rehabilitation in order to motivate veterans to actively participate in civic life and provide them with assistance in finding a job, including involvement in sports initiatives and adaptation activities.

It is important to mention other programmes that briefly concern veterans, such as the City Target Programme “Care. Meeting the Needs of Kyiv Residents” for 2025–2027¹⁸⁵. It is aimed at social protection of the low-income segments of the capital's population, in particular people with disabilities, the elderly, families of veterans, internally displaced persons and other categories in situations of vulnerability. The programme provides for the provision of targeted assistance, support in difficult life circumstances, as well as

181 Ibid.

182 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-04 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of persons who received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

183 Staffing of structural divisions of the executive body of the Kyiv City Council (Kyiv City State Administration) as of January 01, 2025 [Electronic resource]. Official portal of the Kyiv City Council. 2025. Available at: https://media-stg.kyivcity.gov.ua/kyivcity/sites/26/2025/03/11/Shtatka_20250101.pdf.

184 Comprehensive City Target Program for Medical and Social Protection, Adaptation, Psychological and Social Rehabilitation of Veterans and Their Family Members for 2024–2026, approved by Order of the Kyiv City Military Administration No. 503-p dated May 1, 2024. Pravda PRO. 2025. [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://pravdapro.online/zhyttya-pislya-vijny/dopomoga-z-vidnovlennya-dlya-veteraniv-u-kyievi-v-2025/>. Screen title. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

185 Kyiv City Council. Decision No. 1651/9617 of May 01, 2024 “On Approval of the City Target Programme “Care. Meeting the needs of Kyiv residents” for 2025–2027” [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://media-stg.kyivcity.gov.ua/kyivcity/sites/26/2024/08/09/1651-9617.pdf>. Screen title. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

social services guaranteed by the state. A good example of a targeted approach is the City Target Programme “Support for Kyiv Residents – Defenders of Ukraine” for 2023–2025¹⁸⁶. It provides for social support, medical and psychological assistance, professional adaptation and financial support for participants in hostilities and their family members. The programme also includes measures for rehabilitation, support for veterans, families of the deceased and the development of veteran initiatives in the capital.

The city of Kyiv is also carrying out an action plan to implement the National Action Plan under UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, Security for 2023–2025¹⁸⁷. It provides for a wide range of initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of women in the security sector, preventing gender-based violence, strengthening the institutional capacity of state authorities, ensuring gender equality in the areas of healthcare, education, social protection, and civic participation. The document covers a number of educational, human rights, analytical, and communication activities. However, despite its structure and interagency coordination, the plan does not mention female veterans or LGBTIQ+ representatives as separate target groups, which limits its inclusiveness in the field of veterans' policy.

One of the key tools for implementing veterans' reintegration is the Kyiv Military Hub, a city centre for comprehensive support for participants in hostilities, veterans and their families, which functions as a single window: it provides legal, psychological, social, medical, rehabilitation services and professional support. Through the Kyiv Military Hub Centre, veterans and their families can also receive consultations on all matters related to receiving benefits, social payments, housing registration, health resort treatment, medical services, a Kyiv resident card, support programmes, housing and communal services compensation. The centre assists in processing documents, restoring lost ID cards, submitting applications to the MMC, MSEC, receiving the status of a family member of the deceased, receiving assistance for burial and processing pensions. The centre has more than 21 access points in different districts of the city.

There are 19 administrative services centres (ASCs) in Kyiv in all districts of the capital, which provide residents with access to state and municipal services, including the processing of benefits and veteran documents, the issuing of social assistance, etc. The Kyiv ASCs implement the single window principle for veterans, which involves the integration of all services within a single request: consultation, support, application submission, information

There are active organisations in Kyiv that provide free legal assistance to veterans. Among them are Yurydychna Sotnia, the Free Legal Aid Centre and the civil society organisation “Pryncyp”, which provides support to veterans and military personnel and has its own Telegram bot for on-the-spot consultations.

¹⁸⁶ City Target Programme “Support for Kyiv Residents – Defenders of Ukraine” for 2023–2025 [Electronic resource]. Department of Social Policy of the Kyiv City State Administration. Available at: <https://dsp.kyivcity.gov.ua/prohramy/miska-tsilova-prohrama-pidtrymka-kyian-zakhysnykiv-ta-zakhysnyts-ukrainy-na-2023-2025-roky>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Kyiv City State Administration. *Action Plan to Implement the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, Security in the City of Kyiv for 2023–2025*. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MaHybnyWZ5cR9EKULug31m-1C5O531Z3/view> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

There are a number of initiatives in Kyiv that provide psychological support to veterans and their families. These include the Centre for Mental Health and Trauma Therapy “Integratsia”, the Centre for Psychosocial Support of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (CETA Programme), the organisations “Varto Zhyty”, “Vilnyi Vybir”, “Blakytnyi Ptakh”, as well as the Psychosocial Support Service for Families of Military Personnel. Services include both individual consultations and group sessions, psychiatric care, crisis interventions and psychoeducation. There is also a hotline 0 800 211 444.

The city has specialized medical and psychological rehabilitation centres, including the Lisova Poliana Centre (in Pushcha Vodytsia), the Kyiv City Narcological Clinical Hospital “Sociotherapy”, and the Kyiv Regional Psycho-Neurological Hospital in Vorzel. Additionally, physical rehabilitation, massage, prosthetics, and dental treatment services are provided here. There are also programmes to compensate for transportation costs for people with disabilities.

Kyiv has an extensive infrastructure for employment and career guidance for veterans. The city employment centre provides consultations, holds job fairs, and organizes retraining courses.

A number of civil society initiatives and programmes operate in the field of professional adaptation and civil integration of veterans in Ukraine. Among them are “Veteran Hub”, “Free People Employment Centre” and “Space of Opportunities”, which offer support in employment, retraining, counselling and mentoring. Veterans can also take advantage of online educational courses, including “Your Own Therapist” and “Adaptation to Civilian Life”, as well as join the “Practice” and “After Front Navigator” projects aimed at transitioning back into civilian life.

Special attention is paid to supporting groups in situations of vulnerability from among veterans. In particular, The NGO “Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights” provides mental health services, conducts advocacy campaigns, supports a veteran hub in Kyiv, and develops a mutual support network for LGBTIQ+ military and veterans in all regions of Ukraine. The NGO “Insight” is also actively involved in the field of human rights protection of the LGBTIQ+ community, including the military, at the national level.

The field of support for female veterans is represented by the following organisations: “Ukrainian Women’s Guard” provides legal, psychological, and integration assistance to Ukrainian women, including servicewomen and their families, and the NGO “Veteranka” (Women’s Veteran Movement) promotes the participation of women in the security and defence sector, develops women’s leadership and representation at all levels of decision-making.

The charitable organisation “EKTA Initiative” contributes significantly to targeted support. It works with women from groups in situations of vulnerability, including female veterans and residents of rural communities. The organisation provides humanitarian, psychological and social support, implements projects in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy, including in military units. The head of the organisation is also the coordinator of the Kyiv regional secretariat of Coalition 1325.

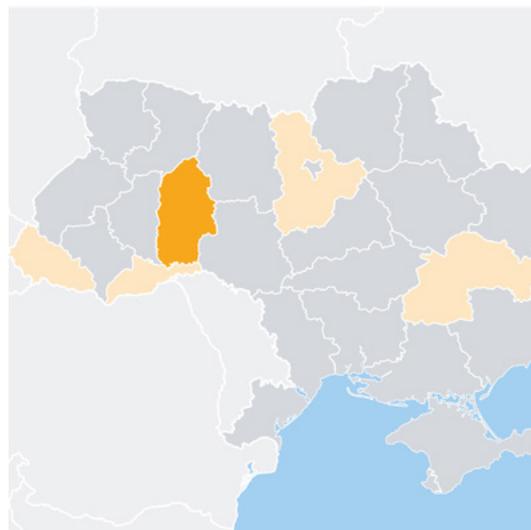
Another example of a systemic approach is the charitable organisation “After Service”, established in 2022. Its activities include psychological rehabilitation, educational support, employment promotion and community building. The organisation focuses on overcoming social isolation, supporting mental health and reducing suicide risks among veterans after returning to civilian life.

These organisations demonstrate modern, inclusive approaches to supporting veterans, taking into account the gender, social, and mental needs of each group.

The city of Kyiv has one of the most developed institutional infrastructures in the field of veterans' policy. There is also a very well-developed website with information, however, the absence of an adapted veteran's guide, the lack of inclusive activities for certain groups (women, representatives of national minorities, veterans with disabilities) remain as challenges.

4.2.4. Khmelnytskyi region

The Khmelnytskyi region is located in the centre of western Ukraine and borders seven other regions, making it an important transit, logistics and administrative centre. The total area of the region is 20,645 km², and the population is about 1.2 million people (approximately 53% women and 47% men by estimate). According to its administrative division, the region includes three districts. There are 60 territorial communities in the region, which unite 1,457 population centres, including 13 cities, 24 urban-type settlements, and 1,420 villages¹⁸⁸.



The region has a significant rural component, as well as great potential for the development of small and medium-sized businesses. Historically, the Khmelnytskyi region has not been the epicentre of hostilities, but since 2014 it has become an active supplier of human and resource reserves to the frontline. After the start of the full-scale invasion, the region has received tens of thousands of IDPs, mainly from the southern and eastern regions. This creates an additional burden on social services and infrastructure, but the region's population is actively participating in mobilization, volunteering, and post-war reconstruction. The relatively peaceful situation in the region creates favourable conditions for veterans' reintegration, but at the same time presents challenges in ensuring sustainable social services and interagency coordination.

¹⁸⁸ Decentralization in the Khmelnytskyi region [Electronic resource]. Portal “Decentralization”. Available at: <https://decentralization.ua/areas/0382> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

As of April 2025, 20,714 people in the Khmelnytskyi region were granted veteran status. Of these, 20,393 were men, and only 321 were women, which is 1.5% of the total number of people and is one of the lowest indicators among Ukraine's regions¹⁸⁹. This may indicate both the limited involvement of women in military service and insufficient recognition of their contribution. The most numerous age the following groups of male and female veterans: 36–40 years old (3,337 people), 31–35 years old (3,044), 41–45 years old (2,994)¹⁹⁰. 423 people received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war, of which 405 were men and 18 were women¹⁹¹. The share of women among them is 4.3%, which is higher than among the general veteran community in other pilot regions.

The Veterans' Policy Office of the Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration is a primary actor in the implementation of veterans' policy at the regional level. It has a staff of 9 people¹⁹². Its activities are coordinated through the related Regulations¹⁹³. The Office operates within the Regional State Administration and performs tasks assigned by both the state and local authorities in the field of veteran support. The Office not only performs the tasks of the Ministry of Veterans, but also interacts with it in the creation and implementation of state programmes. The emphasis on the social adaptation of veterans, support for their families, and safeguards for the rights and freedoms during the transition from military service back into civilian life is of significant importance. The document also provides for a comprehensive approach to preventing social and economic alienation of veterans – through programmes of social protection, psychological support, involvement in civic life, and rehabilitation. Although an Advisory Council on Veterans Matters under the Regional Administration is provided for, it is actually inactive.

At the district level, departments for veterans' policy operate under the Khmelnytskyi, Kamianets-Podilskyi, and Shepetivka district state administrations¹⁹⁴. In addition, persons in charge of veterans' affairs have been appointed in the communities of the region, which indicates a high level of organisational decentralization.

In the Khmelnytskyi region, both the Regional Comprehensive Programme of Social Protection of the Population for 2024–2025 and targeted (focused) programmes¹⁹⁵ aimed at addressing the specific needs of war veterans, their families and persons with disabilities are being implemented to support veterans. Among such targeted measures

¹⁸⁹ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-05 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of war veterans who acquired the status after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-04 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of persons who received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

¹⁹² Veterans' Policy Office of the Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/?page_id=142836, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

¹⁹³ Regulations on the Veterans' Policy Office of the Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]: approved by Order of the Head of the Regional Military Administration dated April 26, 2024 No. 142/2024-p. Available at: <https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Положення.pdf>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

¹⁹⁴ Veterans' Policy Office of the Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/?page_id=142836, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

¹⁹⁵ Support programmes for 2025 [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/?page_id=157393, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

are provision of financial assistance, financing of the recreation of children of deceased Defenders, support for veteran entrepreneurship, etc. The “Regional Comprehensive Programme of Social Protection of the Population for 2024–2025” is a strategic document of the Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration aimed at implementing social policy in the region¹⁹⁶. The programme covers a wide range of support – from help to low-income people and people with disabilities to support for war veterans, participants in hostilities and internally displaced persons. Particular attention is paid to the development of veteran services, social adaptation of demobilized persons, rehabilitation, and support for families of deceased military personnel. The programme also provides for funding measures to develop social services, implement modern methods of targeted assistance, and support volunteer and community initiatives. It is based on the principles of comprehensiveness, interagency cooperation, and prioritization of categories of the population in situations of vulnerability.

Another important step was the approval of the “Operational Plan of Measures for 2025–2027 for the Implementation of the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 in the Khmelnytskyi Region”¹⁹⁷. The document clearly structures the tasks, responsible executors, deadlines, sources of funding and expected outcomes. The focus is on veterans and their family members. It is planned to improve the quality of services, adaptation and reintegration conditions for them. The plan provides for a comprehensive analysis of existing veterans’ support programmes and service providers in order to identify gaps and increase effectiveness. It focuses on systematizing assistance, ensuring access to services, and building partnerships between authorities, communities and public veteran organisations. Special attention is paid to the consideration of the needs of various categories of veterans, in particular, female veterans, as well as the families of the fallen Defenders of Ukraine. The plan outlines tasks to improve accounting procedures, support, information provision, and development of the human resources potential of those working with veterans.

It is important to note that the Women, Peace, and Security programme in the Khmelnytskyi region, as in other pilot regions covered by the study, is being implemented in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325. This is confirmed by Official Order of the Head of the Regional Military Administration dated March 21, 2023, No. 131/2023-p, which approved the regional action plan for its implementation¹⁹⁸. The programme provides for a gender-responsive approach to security and veterans’ policy, support for women in the military, as well as prevention of violence, in particular in war conditions. At the same time, despite the above-mentioned and the presence of a gender

196 Regional Comprehensive Programme of Social Protection of the Population for 2024–2025 [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. 2025. Available at: <https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Обласна-коплексна-программа-24-25.pdf>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

197 Operational Plan of Measures for 2025–2027 for the Implementation of the Veterans’ Policy Strategy until 2030 in the Khmelnytskyi Region [Electronic resource]: approved by Order of the Head of the Regional Military Administration dated February 06, 2025 No. 96/2025-p. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration, 2025. Available at: <https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Операційнь-план.pdf>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

198 Order on Approval of the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security [Electronic resource]: Order of the Head of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Military Administration dated March 21, 2023 No. 131/2023-p. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/doc/dirmil/2023/03/131r_210323.pdf, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

portrait of the region¹⁹⁹, female veterans remain invisible in this document both for the state and local government system, and for the public. The action plan does not contain specific measures focused on the needs of this category. There is also a complete absence of any mention of representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community, which indicates a limited approach to inclusiveness in the implementation of the Women, Peace, Security policy at the regional level.

One of the tools for implementing veterans' reintegration in the Khmelnytskyi region is the work of support specialists. There are 68 specialists in the region for the support of veterans and demobilized persons, located in communities throughout the region²⁰⁰. Their role is extremely important, because the "peer-to-peer" model provides more effective, sensitive and trusting communication with veterans, contributing to their adaptation and reintegration into civilian life.

Also, at least three veteran hubs are actively operating in the Khmelnytskyi region: in the city of Khmelnytskyi (the first in Ukraine, opened in October 2023), in Kamianets-Podilskyi (opened in December 2023), as well as at the Shepetivka District Military Administration (opened in February 2024)²⁰¹. Each of these hubs provides veterans with psychological and legal support, employment consultations, and rehabilitation services. Additionally, the municipal institution "Veteran Space "VETERAN PRO" started in operations in Khmelnytskyi in 2025. It is the first of its kind in the region, implemented with the support of the deputies' corps of the regional council²⁰². The space offers a wide range of services: psychological, information and consulting assistance, physical education and sports rehabilitation, support for veteran entrepreneurship, retraining, and self-development. The activities also include educational events – conferences, seminars, trainings and master classes. The staff already includes specialists in supporting veterans, and the platform includes experts, civil society organisations, and clergy, which strengthens communication and adaptation potential.

In the Khmelnytskyi region, there are 52 administrative services centres (ASCs), covering cities, towns and rural communities, ensuring the availability of services for residents in a comfortable format²⁰³. There is also an extensive free legal aid network in the region, including a regional centre for secondary legal aid and more than 16 offices in communities, including in Khmelnytskyi, Starokostiantyniv, Shepetivka, Krasyliv, Vinkivtsi and others (about 17 points in total). These centres ensure free protection of the rights of veterans and other categories in situations of social vulnerability – including the preparation of procedural documents, representation in courts, legal support in the

199 Gender Policy in the Khmelnytskyi Region [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/?page_id=50462, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

200 Information on specialists in supporting veterans and demobilized persons in the Khmelnytskyi region [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. 2025. Available at: <https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ФAXIBLIИ.pdf>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

201 In 2023, a veteran hub will operate in Khmelnytskyi to support defenders and their families [Electronic resource]. Suspilne Novyny. October 25, 2023. Available at: <https://suspilne.media/633940-2023-u-hmelnickomu-pracue-veteranskij-hab-dla-pidtrimki-zahisnikiv-ta-ih-simej/>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

202 Veteran space "VETERAN PRO" has begun its activities [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://km-oblrada.gov.ua/veteranskyj-prostir-veteran-pro-rozpochav-svoyu-diyalnist/>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

203 Administrative Services Centres in the Khmelnytskyi Region [Electronic resource]. Khmelnytskyi Regional State Administration. Available at: https://www.adm-km.gov.ua/?page_id=1397, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

preparation of documents. The Khmelnytskyi local centre provides citizens with access to services both in a stationary office and through mobile consultation points set up in partnership with the Red Cross²⁰⁴.

In 2025, in cooperation with international partners, a separate centre for veterans began operating on the basis of one of the veteran spaces within the framework of “Recovery”, a psychosocial and medical rehabilitation programme. It is aimed at restoring mental health, physical rehabilitation, and integrating participants in hostilities into communities.

The Khmelnytskyi region is an active participant in the U-LEAD with Europe programme. In 2025, a regional meeting was held to launch a new phase of the programme until 2027. The main areas are institutional capacity, modernization of municipalities, and implementation of European standards. This allows strengthening the human resource base in communities, including in the field of veterans' policy, improving the quality of local governance, and ensuring access to grant instruments.

The Khmelnytskyi Regional Centre for Social and Psychological Assistance is worth highlighting, as it not only provides temporary housing and basic services to IDPs, but also implements psychosocial support programmes for women, including veterans and survivors of violence. This centre is an example of integrating the needs of veterans into the regional social protection system.

There are a number of civil society organisations in the Khmelnytskyi region that support veterans. Among them is the NGO “Participants of the ATO of the Khmelnytskyi Region and War Veterans”, which has been providing legal and civic support to military personnel since 2015, as well as coordinating their interaction with government agencies. The NGO “Veteran Space of the Khmelnytskyi Region” has been operating since 2020, organizing educational events, forums, and programmes to support veterans, and involving specialists with military experience in their work.

The NGO “Zakhyst – Association of Volunteers” stands out from others²⁰⁵. Created during the period of full-scale war as a platform for helping veterans and their families, the organisation brings together volunteers, social workers, and veterans themselves to provide psychological, informational, and legal support, as well as conduct educational and rehabilitation activities. Its feature is the creation of a veteran space that works as a centre for assistance, communication, and adaptation. The NGO also coordinates the activities of specialists in supporting veterans in communities, actively involves female veterans and people with disabilities, implementing approaches of equality and inclusion. Thanks to its stable structure and partnerships, the organisation has become an example of an effective model of veteran support at the community level.

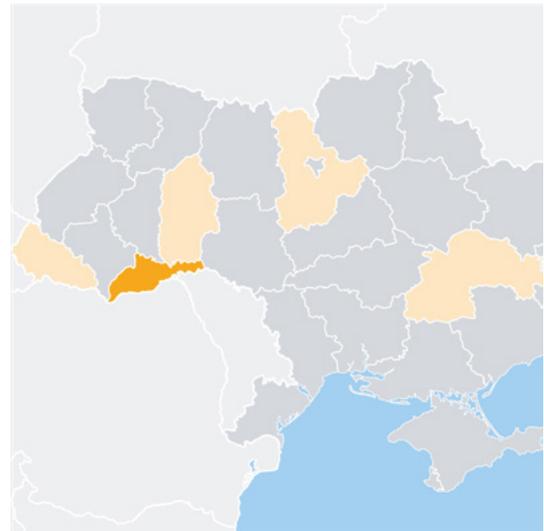
204 Centres and offices of free secondary legal aid in the Khmelnytskyi Region [Electronic resource]. FLA system (Coordination Centre for Legal Aid Provision). Available at: <https://legalaid.gov.ua/tsentry/>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

205 NGO “Zakhyst – Association of Volunteers” [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://zakhyst.org.ua/#about>, free. Accessed date: July 06, 2025.

The Khmelnytskyi region demonstrates gradual but purposeful development in the field of veterans' policy: comprehensive and targeted support programmes are being implemented, and a network of veteran spaces, ASCs, free legal aid centres and support specialists are operating here. The active role of civil society organisations, in particular the NGO "Zakhyst", as well as cooperation with international partners create the basis for effective veterans' reintegration. Although the official websites of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Administration and Regional Council provide a significant amount of information on veterans' policy, a systematic public directory for veterans and veteran services does not exist at the regional level currently. At the same time, matters of inclusion, participation of female veterans and interagency coordination require further strengthening, in particular through updating the role of the advisory council and improving gender-responsive policies.

4.2.5. Chernivtsi region

The Chernivtsi Region has a compact territory of 8,097 km², making it one of the smallest regions in Ukraine²⁰⁶. The population is about 901,000 people (approximately 53% women and 47% men by estimate)²⁰⁷, with about 30 percent of the population living in the regional centre, the city of Chernivtsi. Administratively, the region is divided into three districts consisting of 52 territorial communities which, in turn, cover 807 population centres, including 11 cities, 8 urban-type settlements, and 788 villages²⁰⁸.



The Chernivtsi region has a strong social potential in the field of veterans' policy. Due to its relatively safe location in the west of Ukraine, it has become an important region for the return of military personnel, the development of veteran services and reintegration. The region is actively developing partnerships with international organisations, implementing initiatives for institutional support of communities, covering such areas as healthcare, education, employment, psychosocial support. Involving local resources and donor support contributes to building a systemic approach to providing assistance to veterans and their families.

²⁰⁶ Political map of the Chernivtsi region [Electronic resource]. Civic network OPORA. Available at: <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/politichna-karta-chernivetskoyi-regioni-19655> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

²⁰⁷ Gender Profile of the Chernivtsi Region [Electronic resource] / NGO "Centre of Civic Activity "Synergy"". Chernivtsi, 2023. Available at: <https://bukoda.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/23/soczahyst/gender/vidpovidalni/gendernui-profil-chernivezkoi-regioni.pdf> (accessed date: July 06, 2025).

²⁰⁸ Decentralization in the Chernivtsi region [Electronic resource]. Portal "Decentralization". Available at: <https://decentralization.ua/areas/0372> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

As of April 1, 2025, 5,297 people received the status of war veteran, of whom 5,163 were men and 134 were women (2.5% of the total number of people)²⁰⁹. This is a low percentage of female veterans among the pilot regions of Ukraine. The largest number of veterans belong to the following age groups: 41–45 years old (746), 36–40 years old (742), 46–50 years old (692)²¹⁰. 520 people have the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war, including 485 men and 35 women (6.7% of the total number of people)²¹¹, which is higher than the general gender indicator among veterans in the pilot regions.

Coordination of veterans' policy in the region is carried out by the Office of Veterans Affairs at the Chernivtsi Regional Administration in cooperation with the departments of social protection, healthcare, education, employment centres, veteran NGOs and international organisations. Although it has only 5 employees, the Office performs complex functions – from policy development to coordination of interagency interaction with social services, healthcare facilities, civil society organisations²¹². The Regulations on the Veterans' Policy Office of the Chernivtsi Regional Administration define the functional structure and powers of this unit²¹³. The document establishes the main areas of the Office's activity: implementation of state policy in the field of social protection of war veterans, their family members, as well as persons who suffered as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. The Regulations provide for interagency interaction, coordination with local governments, development and implementation of regional programmes, participation in the formation of the regulatory framework, monitoring and analytical activities. A special feature is the focus on inclusiveness, adaptation to the needs of different categories of veterans, including those with disabilities, and families of the deceased. The Office performs advisory, organisational, and analytical functions, which lays the foundation for a comprehensive approach to veterans' policy at the regional level.

Veterans' reintegration in the Chernivtsi region is implemented through regional and targeted programmes. Thus, the "Regional Programme of Social Support for Defenders and Their Family Members for 2025 in the Chernivtsi Region"²¹⁴ provides for a set of measures aimed at ensuring an adequate level of social protection for persons who participated in the defence of Ukraine, as well as their families. The document is designed for one year and is targeted, with clearly defined categories of beneficiaries. The programme includes financial assistance to both veterans themselves and family members of deceased, captured, or missing Defenders. It provides for compensation

209 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-05 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of war veterans who acquired the status after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

210 Ibid.

211 Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Response to public information request No. 0805-04 dated May 01, 2025 regarding the number of persons who received the status of a person with a disability as a result of the war after February 24, 2022. 1 page. Received: May 01, 2025.

212 Chernivtsi Regional State Administration. Veterans' Policy Office of the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://bukoda.gov.ua/chernivecka-oda/structure/upravlinnia-z-pytan-veteranskoi-polityky>

213 Chernivtsi Regional Military Administration. Regulations on the Veterans' Policy Office of the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration: Order No. 1304-p dated December 18, 2023 [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://bukoda.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/23/uploaded-files/polozennia.pdf>.

214 Chernivtsi Regional Military Administration. On Amendments to the Regional Programme of Social Support for Defenders and Their Family Members for 2025: Order dated May 19, 2025 No. 698-p [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://bukoda.gov.ua/npas/pro-vnesennia-zmin-do-rehionalnoi-prohramy-sotsialnoi-pidtrymky-zakhysnykiv-i-zakhysnyts-ta-chleniv-ikh-simei-na-2025-rik>.

for the costs of dental prosthetics, provision of solid fuel, rehabilitation of children of deceased soldiers, and organisation of social, cultural, and educational events. Particular attention is paid to psychological support and rehabilitation of veterans, as well as financing the initiatives of veteran civil society organisations. The programme specifically addresses the needs of internally displaced persons who have veteran status, which demonstrates an effort to reach groups in situations of greatest vulnerability. Overall, the programme is an important component of regional veterans' policy, although its short-term nature and social focus require adding sustainable development, employment, and reintegration tools.

In the context of gender equality, it is important that the region has approved the "Plan of Measures to Implement the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on Women, Peace, Security until 2025 in the Region"²¹⁵. The document provides for a number of actions aimed at ensuring gender equality, increasing the participation of women in peacebuilding, security, conflict resolution, and supporting victims of violence. The plan includes educational activities, raising awareness among professionals, ensuring women's access to medical, psychological, and social services, creating conditions for women's participation in policy-making, as well as collecting and analysing gender-responsive data. At the same time, actions regarding female veterans or representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community are not detailed, which indicates the need for deeper inclusion in the implementation of the programme.

The Chernivtsi RMA website publishes contact details of institutions and individuals to whom veterans, IDPs, and family members of fallen Defenders of Ukraine can turn. Such a system demonstrates an example of effective local practice in veterans' policy, which is based on intersectoral cooperation, institutional integration, and accessibility of services.

There are 22 municipal institutions in the region that have specialists in supporting veterans²¹⁶. The focus is on developing a network of veteran spaces. The city of Chernivtsi plays a leading role in forming the service infrastructure: all three operating veteran spaces in the region are located here, including "Place of Strength". Also, a directory for veterans has been developed in Chernivtsi, which helps navigate among available services, institutions and civil society initiatives. The city of Chernivtsi is distinguished by a high level of activity in the field of veterans' policy: a developed network of services operates here: a single window model has been implemented and a directory for veterans has been created, which helps to navigate among available services, contacts and opportunities for reintegration.

In the Chernivtsi region, a support ecosystem for veterans and their families is gradually being formed based on a combination of state, municipal and civil society initiatives. In the healthcare sector, 15 facilities operate that have concluded contracts with the National Health Service for the provision of inpatient rehabilitation, and the construction

²¹⁵ Chernivtsi Regional State Administration. Plan of Measures to Implement the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on Women, Peace, Security until 2025 in the Region: Order dated January 22, 2021 No. 81-p [Electronic resource]. Available at: https://bukoda.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/23/archrozp/2021/01/81-p_vid_22_01_2021.pdf.

²¹⁶ Chernivtsi Regional State Administration. Specialists in supporting veterans in communities of the Chernivtsi region [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://bukoda.gov.ua/chernivecka-oda/structure/upravlinnia-z-pytan-veteranskoi-polityky/fakhivtsi-iz-suprovodu-veteraniv-u-hromadakh-chernivetskoi-regioni>.

of a regional rehabilitation centre seating 60 patients is underway with the support of the Recovery programme. Additionally, there are psychological support spaces, including the “Survivor Relief Centre”, “VILNA”, “VONA”, and “Pobratym”.

Administrative services are provided by 31 ASCs, however, the full-fledged “Single Window” model for veterans has currently been implemented only in the city of Chernivtsi. This model provides quick and convenient access to benefits, consultations, and services and is recommended for scaling up to cover other region's communities.

Professional adaptation is implemented through the “Skills Forge for Veterans” programme and tools of the State Employment Service. In 2022–2025, 1,436 veterans applied for services, of which 208 were employed, 26 received training vouchers, and 36 (22 veterans and 14 veterans' wives) took advantage of grants to start a business. Successful examples of self-employment include both traditional areas (farming, woodworking, catering) and innovative ones (shrimp farming, agrodrones, pest control services, dance studios, barbershops).

The Veteran's Wife initiative, implemented in collaboration with communities, promotes the psychological and economic resilience of veterans' families through educational lectures, legal counselling, and entrepreneurship support. And the Veterans' Sports: Strength of Spirit project provides free physical training, which helps improve the psycho-emotional state and socialization of participants in hostilities.

Despite the activity in the field of veteran support, the region has not yet developed specialized regional programmes aimed at this category. The lack of programmes for female veterans and LGBTIQ+ individuals is particularly noticeable. Their partial support is ensured by psychological assistance spaces and the activities of civil society organisations.

Among them, the Centre of Civic Activity “Synergy” stands out, which implements a number of initiatives to develop women's entrepreneurship and support human rights and gender equality. The centre works with various social groups – IDPs, women from rural communities, veterans and military personnel. Its activities include public opinion research, analytics, and development of joint programmes with government agencies.

In addition, there are other civil society organisations in the region that implement initiatives in the field of reintegration, mental health, education, and involvement of veterans in civic life, namely: “Veteran Space”, the NGO “Pobratym”, initiatives based on employment centres, and informal retreat projects.

Thus, the Chernivtsi region demonstrates active participation in the formation of service infrastructure for veterans. However, the lack of a coordinated regional programme and uneven access to services in communities indicate the need for strategic planning, expansion of targeted initiatives, and support for groups in situations of vulnerability from among the veteran community.

In general, all the five pilot regions of Ukraine implementing veterans' policy activities provide the same types of services, formed in accordance with basic state guarantees and priorities. The main areas include socio-economic support, psychological and physical rehabilitation, medical care, administrative and legal assistance, education, professional development, as well as benefits and payments in the areas of housing, transport, sports, and pensions.

In particular, each region has employment counselling centres and implements retraining, entrepreneurship grant support and financial literacy programmes. At the same time, veterans and their families have access to psychotherapeutic sessions, rehabilitation activities, medical services, legal consultations, as well as social integration activities – cultural events, sports competitions, volunteer initiatives. Thanks to this, a sustainable framework of veteran service infrastructure is being created at the local level with adaptation to the specifics of communities.

Each of the pilot regions is implementing a veteran social support programme that offers an individual approach to providing services, assistance in restoring documents, obtaining benefits, access to treatment, training, and employment. These programmes employ social support specialists who coordinate interaction among veterans, government agencies, and communities.

In addition, veteran spaces have already been created or are in the process of being created in all regions. They are specialized multifunctional centres that act as hubs for providing informational, psychological, legal, and educational support, as well as promoting veterans' reintegration into the community through networking, community-building activities, and leadership development among veterans and veteran organisations.

Also, according to current legislation²¹⁷, central, regional and local authorities provide for the possibility of involving gender advisors – both full-time and part-time ones – as well as creating special departments that work on gender equality matters. Coalitions 1325 operate in all pilot regions covered by the study, however, there is currently no person who would deal with gender matters in the regions' veterans' policy.

²¹⁷ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution dated October 9, 2020 No. 930 “On Certain Matters of Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men”. Database “Legislation of Ukraine”. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/930-2020-n#Text> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

4.3. Veterans' reintegration in the pilot regions

4.3.1. Socio-demographic portrait of male and female veterans in the study

The study had two main stages: qualitative and quantitative. During the qualitative stage, interviews were conducted with 21 respondents, 16 of whom had experience of military service in the context of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and were then at various stages of transitioning back into civilian life. The study covers five regions of Ukraine: the Dnipropetrovsk, Zakarpattia, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi regions and the city of Kyiv. All respondents were distributed equally between the regions, which allows for geographical balance and tracking both common and regionally specific challenges in the field of reintegration (geographical distribution is presented in Table 1).

10 female veterans (62.5%) and 6 male veterans (37.5%) were involved in the interviews. Five of the men openly identify themselves as representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community – four indicate their affiliation with the LGBTIQ+ community, one defines himself as pansexual. One respondent identifies himself as a representative of the Roma community. Such openness allows the study to look at hidden discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the veteran environment and in the social services system.

The average age of the interviewed veterans is 36.6 years. All interviewees, except for one of Roma ethnicity, have higher education or secondary vocational education. Also, 14 interviewees provided information about their current employment. Among them, 10 were women and 4 were men.

Female veterans demonstrate high professional involvement in the fields of education, medicine, social work, psychological counselling, volunteering and community activities. There are also cases of work in the human rights sector, veteran initiatives and individual entrepreneurship. For example, one of the female respondents works as a coordinator in the veteran space, another is engaged in psychological support for brothers and sisters in arms, and another runs her own business. Male respondents are also represented in the civil society sector, IT and volunteer initiatives. There are participants who combine activism with professional employment, in particular in the field of digital security and legal services. It is worth noting that some of them have unstable employment or work according to their own schedule, and also note that they are interested in adaptive employment programmes. In general, the employment structure reflects the orientation of veterans towards the areas of “helping others”, public benefit and psychological support – as a continuation of combat experience transformed into peaceful activities. This indicates a high potential for participation in the development of veteran services from within.

The participants have different family statuses: 3 people are widowed, 3 are married, and 2 are in a civil partnership. There are also respondents who are not married but are in a relationship. Regarding parenthood, 8 out of 16 respondents have children, and three of them are mothers or fathers of three children. The greatest burden is observed among widows – two participants in the study are raising three children on their own.

A separate category is made up of veterans who have a disability acquired as a result of military service. There were three such respondents in the study. Two participants directly stated that the disability was acquired during the performance of official duties. The third participant has an established disability group 3.

Table 1. Distribution of in-depth interview participants by region, role (service providers, government officials/veterans) and gender

Region	Number of government representatives and service providers		Total	Number of veterans		Total
	Women	Men		Women	Men	
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	0	1	1	2	1	3
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	1	0	1	2	1	3
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	0	1	1	2	2	4
<i>Khmelnyskyi region</i>	1	0	1	2	1	3
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	1	0	1	2	1	3
<i>Altogether</i>	3	2	5	10	6	16

As part of the qualitative research, 13 focus group discussions were also conducted in all five pilot regions. Two focus groups were organized in each region: one with female veterans, the other with representatives of government agencies and service providers. In Kyiv, three additional focus groups were conducted: one specialized group with LGBTIQ+ veterans, one mixed group with the participation of female veterans and service providers, and one additional focus group with female veterans due to the low number of participants in the previous group. In total, 89 people participated in the focus groups, including: 40 female veterans, 7 representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community (5 men and 2 women), and 42 representatives of government agencies and service structures that work with veterans (32 women, 10 men). The overall distribution of participants in the focus groups is presented in Table 2.

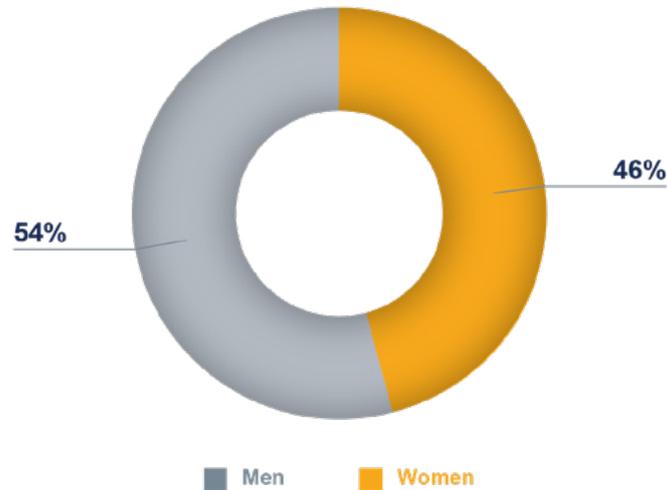
The absolute majority of those interviewed in the focus groups are women with experience of serving on the front lines, including since 2014 (as volunteers, under contract). Although most respondents do not detail their motivation for service, some of them explain it by the desire to protect children from mobilization, professional duty, patriotism, the desire to prove themselves in the military profession or to be next to their husbands at the front.

The participants in the survey represented different age categories, mostly all of working age. Marital status is also diverse, but the vast majority of them have children. At first glance, these women have been quite successfully reintegrated into civilian life and are currently working in both the civic and commercial sectors: they work as psychologists with their own practices, realtors, representatives of charitable organisations, etc. However, the participants of the focus group study also included veterans who, due to the loss of physical and psychological health, currently do not have systematic employment and are looking for their own ways to transition back into civilian life.

Table 2. Distribution of focus group participants by region, role (service providers/veterans) and gender

Region	Number of service providers		Total	Number of veterans		Total
	Women	Men		Women	Men	
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	3	2	5	6	0	6
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	5	0	5	6	0	6
<i>Feb 18, 2025</i>	4	0	4	6	0	6
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	0	0	0	2	5	7
<i>March 21, 2025</i>	5	5	10	8	0	8
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	5	3	8	6	0	6
<i>Apr 25, 2025</i>	10	0	10	8	0	8
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	32	10	42	42	5	47
<i>Khmelnytskyi region</i>						
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>						
<i>Altogether</i>						

Qualitative research is logically complemented by quantitative research. The quantitative research involved 189 respondents, of whom 102 were men (54%) and 87 were women (46%). One respondent did not indicate their gender.

Figure 1. Composition of respondents by gender

A significant portion of the study participants also identify themselves as members of the LGBTIQ+ community – 54 people, which is 29% of the total. Of course, this distribution does not reflect the actual structure of the veteran community by gender and orientation. However, it fully meets the stated goals of the study as a whole.

The age structure is dominated by respondents aged 35–44 (34%), 25–34 (30%), and 45–54 (25%), which indicates the sample's concentration in the active working age. Young people under 24 are less represented (4%), as are older respondents (55–64 – 7%).

Geographically, the study covered the five pilot regions of Ukraine. The largest number of participants came from the Khmelnytskyi region (28%) and the city of Kyiv (25%) and its suburbs, followed by the Zakarpattia region (21%), the Dnipropetrovsk region (16%), and the Chernivtsi region (11%).

Table 3. Geographical distribution of quantitative research participants

Answer option	Number of people	Share, %
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	30	16%
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	40	21%
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	47	25%
<i>Khmelnytskyi region</i>	52	27%
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	20	11%

The vast majority of the study participants live in cities (78%), reflecting the predominantly urban focus of the study. At the same time, 10% of respondents live in towns and another 13% in villages, which allows the analysis to include the experiences of residents of smaller population centres.

In terms of education, the majority of participants have higher education (62%), another 24% have completed vocational education, and 12% have completed secondary education. This indicates a generally high level of educational capital among respondents, which is important to consider in designing educational or vocational reintegration programmes.

As far as the marital status is concerned, 47% of respondents are married, 35% are single, 14% are divorced, and 4% are widowed. This structure allows for the coverage of different life circumstances and needs in the context of reintegration. At the same time, it should be taken into account that more than half of the veterans in the surveyed sample are actually single by marital status. Given the specifics of the sample by gender and sexual orientation, these figures are high and indicate the potential risk for such people to be left alone in a situation of returning from war, without the support of a partner or close circle, or without the opportunity for a partner (in the case of homosexual couples who cannot officially register a relationship) to represent the interests of the veteran when receiving reintegration services.

Almost every third respondent, or 31% of the respondents, has an officially confirmed disability, which indicates a significant proportion of people with potential special needs, both physical and psychological. It is also worth noting that 92% of the respondents have official veteran status, which confirms the relevance of the sample for the analysis of reintegration processes.

Special attention should be paid to the analysis of the profile of individual subgroups of the respondents in situations of vulnerability who formed the study sample, namely:

1. female veterans,
2. representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community,
3. veterans with disabilities, including those resulting from military operations.

Profiling these groups yielded the following results.

Profile of female veterans who participated in the study

The study included 87 women, which is a sufficient target group for analysing gender-responsive needs among female veterans and women dealing with reintegration matters. The geographical distribution is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Geographic distribution of female veterans participating in the quantitative research

Answer option	Number of people	% Among female respondents
<i>Khmelnyskyi region</i>	30	35%
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	25	29%
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	13	15%
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	11	13%
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	8	9%

Almost 90% of the women surveyed have official veteran status, which confirms the sample's relevance for studying the needs of this particular category. Also, virtually every fourth participant in the study (about 25%) has a disability, which is an important indicator for accessibility, inclusion and development of special reintegration routes projects. About 75% of the respondents do not have official disability status, but this does not exclude the presence of hidden or unregistered conditions that affect the quality of life.

The women who participated in the survey are mostly of active working age. The largest representation is among respondents aged 35–44 (40% of all participants in the female veteran subgroup). This is a typical active group that combines experience, potential for adaptation and, often, the burden of family and social obligations (minor children, elderly parents, etc.). The second largest group was made up of women aged 25–34 (25%), which indicates the involvement of younger veterans who are potentially more open to new formats of support.

The vast majority of the study participants have higher education (63%), which indicates the high intellectual potential of the audience and the possibility of their involving in retraining, mentoring or entrepreneurship programmes. 28% have vocational education, which indicates a significant layer of women who may be interested in short-term retraining courses, obtaining higher education or receiving grants to start their own business.

The majority of women surveyed (88%) do not identify as LGBTIQ+, however, 12% openly declared their membership in this group. This is important given the need for a safe environment, additional arrangements of non-discrimination, and psychological support.

More than half of the women are married or in a relationship (53%), which is often accompanied by increased workload in everyday life, raising children or caring for relatives. 25% are not married, and another 15% are divorced. 7% are widowed, which indicates the importance of taking into account emotional trauma, the need for long-term support – psychological and, probably, legal, organisational, and everyday assistance.

Profile of LGBTIQ+ respondents

The study included 54 respondents who identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community. The geographical distribution is presented in Table 5. It is important to note that the Zakarpattia region has minimal representation, although the share of this region in the overall sample is significant. In addition, no respondent from the Chernivtsi region identified themselves as a representative of the LGBTIQ+ community. This may indicate both different levels of visibility and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ (stigma in the western regions of Ukraine), and uneven access to safe spaces for participation in the study.

Table 5. Geographic distribution of LGBTIQ+ respondents in the quantitative research

Answer option	Number of people	% Among LGBTIQ+ respondents
<i>Khmelnyskyi region</i>	23	43%
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	14	26%
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	11	20%
<i>City of Kyiv</i>	6	11%
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	0	0%

The group includes both female and male veterans, which allows analysing it not only as a social category which finds itself in situations of vulnerability, but also as an active part of the veteran community with its own needs and experiences. The group of LGBTIQ+ respondents who participated in the study is young (the largest age category is 25–34 years old (54%), educated (67% of respondents have higher education), mostly male (82% of respondents), and geographically concentrated in the capital city and the eastern region.

The absolute majority are single (85%), which indicates:

- lack of legalization of LGBTIQ+ relationships in Ukraine;
- increased likelihood of social isolation for veterans in this group, especially in the case of disability, injury, or depression.

Only 9% are married, and the share of divorced or widowed people is less than 6%, which is due to younger age and structural barriers to registering partnerships.

Only 6% of respondents have a disability, which is a relatively low figure. This may be due to both the lower number of such cases in the younger group and the reluctance to disclose the status, fear of discrimination when combining LGBTIQ+ status and the status of a person with a disability.

91% have official veteran status, confirming the target relevance of the sample. These respondents have already gone through state recognition procedures and, therefore, may

be ready to further participate in reintegration programmes, provided that the latter are inclusive and safe.

Overall, this group demonstrates a high level of potential for implementing reintegration programmes if an appropriate environment free from stigma and barriers is provided.

Profile of respondents with disabilities

The study included 58 respondents with disabilities, a significant subgroup whose responses allow for informed conclusions about the needs and barriers to accessing reintegration services. The sample includes both men (62%) and women (38%). The geographical distribution is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Geographic distribution of respondents with disabilities

Answer option	Number of people	% Among respondents with a disability
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	17	29%
<i>Khmelnyskyi region</i>	16	28%
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	11	19%
<i>Kyiv and suburbs</i>	9	15%
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	5	9%

Respondents with disabilities are a highly educated (55% of respondents from this group have higher education), mature in age and life experience group of veterans (the largest age categories of respondents in this group are aged 45–54 (38%) and 35–44 (29%)), mostly men (62% of respondents in this group), a significant proportion of whom (45%) are single. 97% have the official veteran status, which emphasizes the importance of taking disability into account precisely in the context of combat experience. This also indicates a high level of paperwork among this group. However, it was women and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community that noted that obtaining the status of a person with a disability in connection with combat operations was the most challenging issue.

Thus, a general analysis of three veteran categories in situations of social vulnerability in the veteran community – women, LGBTIQ+ representatives, and people with disabilities – demonstrates a deep interdependence of demographic characteristics, social challenges, and potential. Although each group has its own specifics, significant intersections can be traced between them, which allows us to speak about the need for a holistic, intersectoral approach to reintegration.



Discussions between members of civil society organizations at the CSO workshop on “Advocacy Campaign Planning and Development” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Puscha-Vodytsia as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

First, all three groups have an active age core, but the majority of respondents are in the age category of 25–44. This means that we are talking about people in the phase of social, professional and personal formation. It is this category of veterans that bears the greatest burden – both from the state’s expectations regarding the re-engagement in productive activities, and from household responsibilities, caring for the family or overcoming the consequences of hostilities. At the same time, significant educational potential is evident in all samples: more than half of the respondents have higher education. This refutes possible fears about the social passivity of groups in situations of vulnerability and emphasizes the presence of intellectual resources for retraining, mentoring or self-employment. However, even with a high level of education, this capital is not always converted into opportunities – due to physical, structural or cultural barriers. For example, for people with disabilities, this may be physical limitations, for LGBTIQ+ people – discrimination, and for women – career breaks due to motherhood or care work, combined with a pause in the development of civilian skills due to participation in hostilities.

Social isolation emerges as one of the most dangerous common threats for all three groups. It has a different nature: for LGBTIQ+ people, it is the lack of legal recognition of partnerships and alienation from communities; for women, it is the loss of a partner or emotional overload in marriage after returning from war (stigma due to “abandoned

children”); for people with disabilities, it is physical isolation or lack of social contacts. All these manifestations indicate a hidden but powerful need for the formation of supportive environments, solidarity groups, and emotional support programmes.

Although over 90% of the respondents have official veteran status, this does not always translate into real access to services. Often, status is a formality that does not take into account the complex configuration of needs, determined by a combination of disability, gender, sexual identity, or age. Therefore, programmes that focus only on “veteran status” without a deeper analysis of cross-cutting characteristics risk being ineffective or even perpetuating inequalities.

The situation with LGBTIQ+ representatives points to another important aspect – stigma combined with veteran experience can lead to double invisibility. The majority of LGBTIQ+ respondents are men, concentrated in large cities, mostly young, which indicates a willingness to participate in civic life, but only if there is a safe space. Similarly, among people with disabilities, men aged 45+ predominate, which indicates the depletion of resources and the need for long-term rehabilitation, not only physical, but also social.

In short, the three categories – women, LGBTIQ+, and people with disabilities – form a mosaic of intersecting identities that reinforce each other’s vulnerabilities, but at the same time reveal the potential for solidarity, support, professional growth, and social transformation. Reintegration policies must stop perceiving these groups as separate “niches” and start seeing them as dynamic, complex realities. That is why the future of effective reintegration is not one-size-fits-all solutions, but contextual support pathways, flexible participation formats, inclusive decision-making arrangements, and a focus on the dignity, experience, and voice of veterans themselves.

Thus, the socio-demographic profile of the study demonstrates a fairly diverse but fully representative sample, combining different regions, gender and sexual identities, age categories, education levels, disability and veteran status. This creates the basis for a comprehensive analysis of needs, barriers and experiences in the field of reintegration.



Inna Sovsun, Member of Parliament of Ukraine, gives a presentation to civil society organizations working with women and men veterans during the workshop “Advocacy Campaign Planning and Development,” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Change in Pushcha-Vodytsia as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

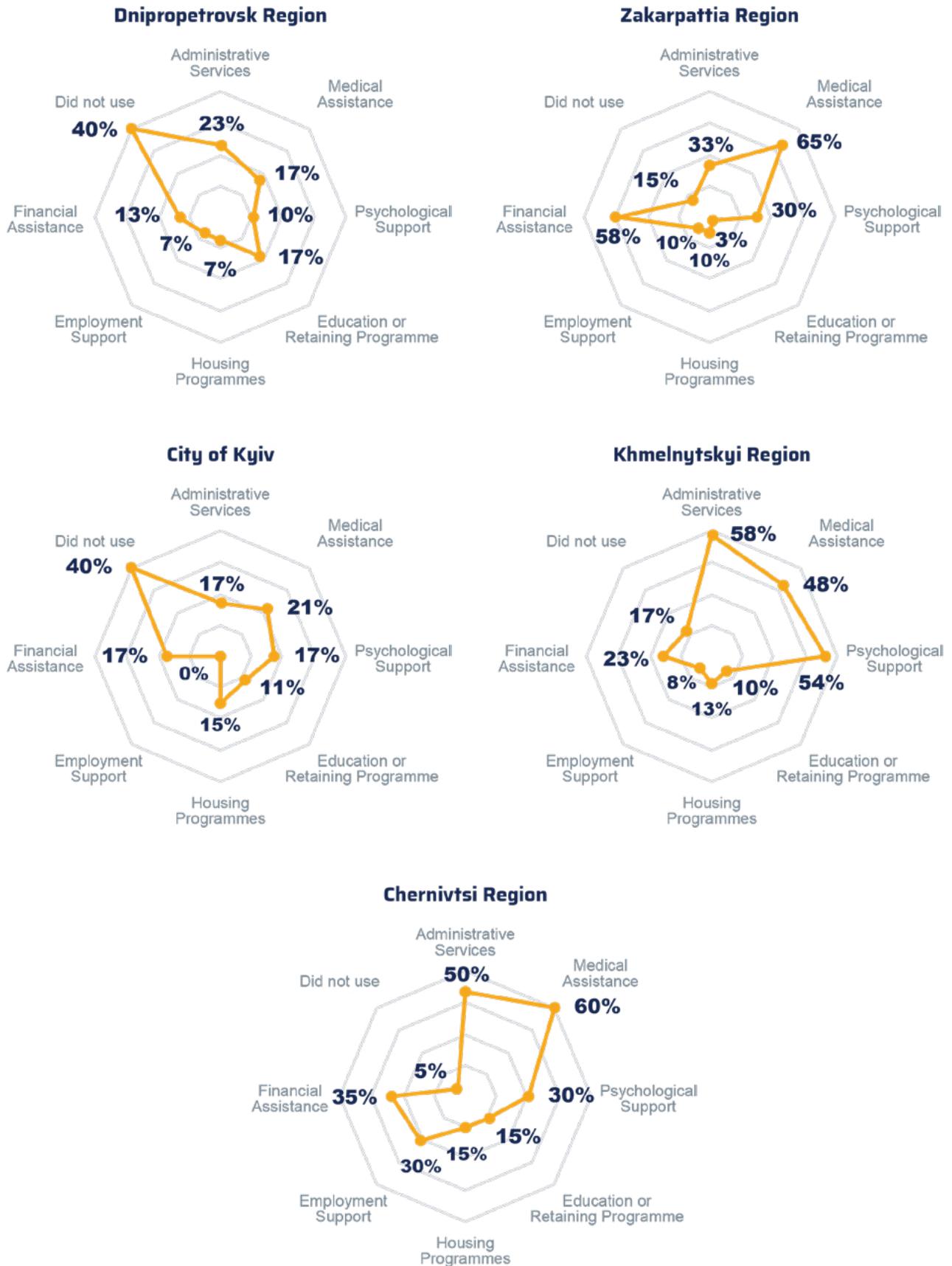
4.3.2. Experience of veterans in the pilot regions

Reintegration support for veterans, declared at the state level, often does not correspond to the real experience of its users. This section analyses the extent to which existing services and benefits truly cover the veteran community, what services veterans use in practice, and what barriers prevent full access to assistance. Special attention is paid to regional specificities, good practices, and challenges faced by representatives of groups in situations of vulnerability – women, people with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ veterans. The vision and wishes of veterans regarding the future of reintegration policy in Ukraine are separately outlined.

Programme Use

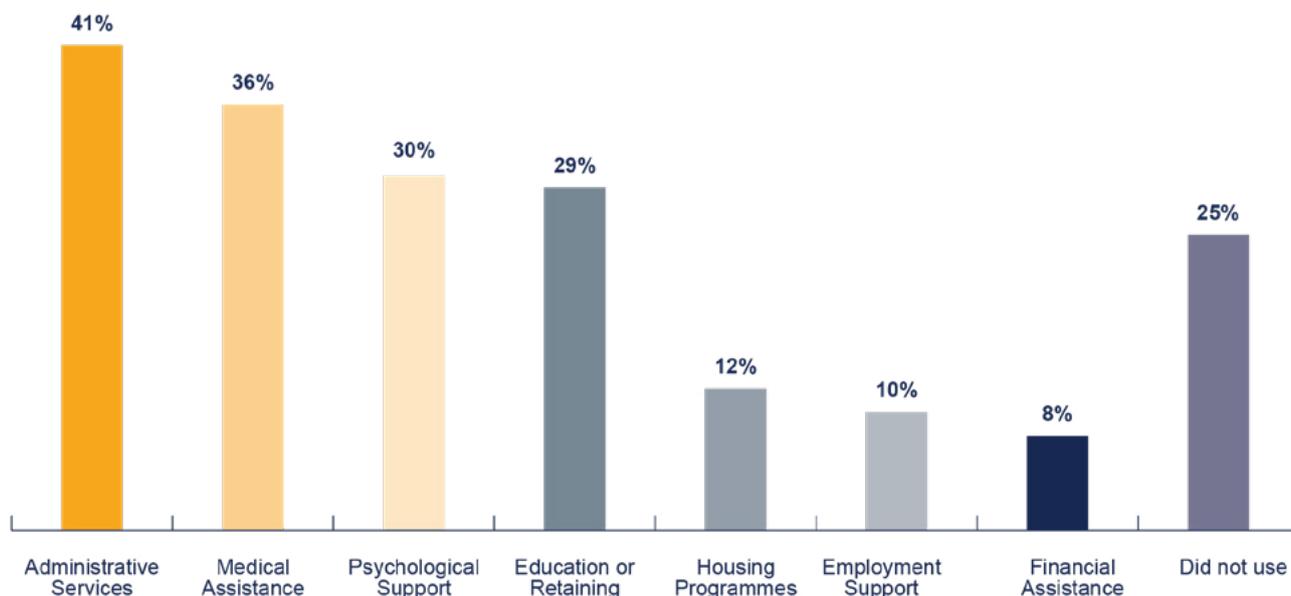
Despite the presence of formally declared support arrangements in all the pilot regions covered by the study, the actual use of programmes and benefits among veterans is fragmented and uneven. Analysis of the use of reintegration services among veterans in different regions demonstrates significant variations (Figures 2–6), due not only to different accessibility or awareness, but also to personal circumstances, trust in institutions, and psychological readiness to seek help.

Figures 2-6. Level of use of reintegration services among respondents, distribution by region



However, there are trends common to all pilot regions. First of all, the overall level of use of services and benefits that can be attributed to reintegration remains low – even against the background of the fourth year of full-scale war. 25% of surveyed veterans in Ukraine did not use any of the options at all (Figure 7). The highest level of refusal is in the Dnipropetrovsk region (45%) and Kyiv (40%), while this indicator is only 15% in the Zakarpattia region, which is the lowest figure.

Figure 7. Level of use of reintegration services among respondents



Among those who used services, the most popular were administrative services (e.g., ASCs) and medical assistance. Administrative support was applied for as follows: in the Khmelnytskyi region – 58% of respondents, in the Chernivtsi region – 50%, in the Zakarpattia region – 33%, in the Dnipropetrovsk region – 23%, and in the city of Kyiv – only 17%. Medical assistance was applied for: in the Zakarpattia region – 65%, in the Chernivtsi region – 60%, in the Khmelnytskyi region – 48%, in the city of Kyiv – 21%, in the Dnipropetrovsk region – 17%. At the same time, services that ensure long-term reintegration – education, retraining, housing, employment – remain marginal: in all regions, their level of use varies within 5–13%.

Some respondents explain their non-participation in programmes by saying that “everything is fine with them” or that “others need it more”. However, others point to systemic barriers – excessive complexity, lack of transparency, or psychological discomfort of procedures. These factors particularly impact groups in situations of vulnerability – women, people with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ veterans, who more often reported stigma, lack of sensitivity, and discrimination from service providers.

Summarizing the above results, it can be stated that in fact, veterans **mainly use rehabilitation services and not reintegration services.**

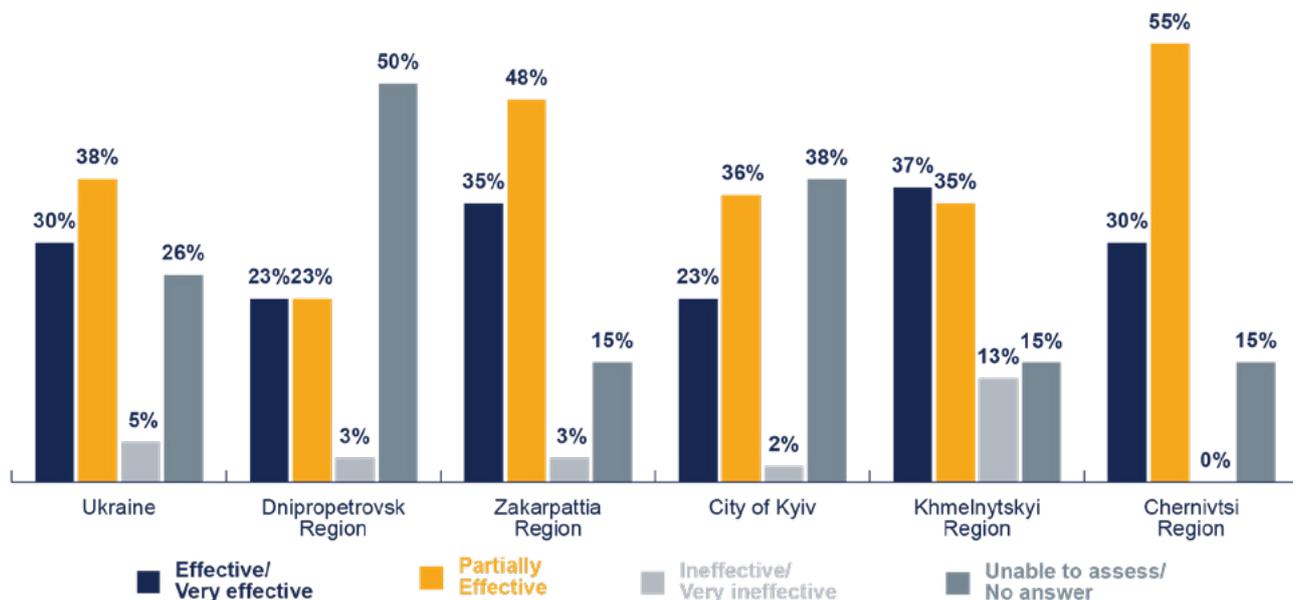
Assessing the effectiveness of veterans' reintegration programmes

Based on their own practical experience of using the services and despite the fact that there has been a noticeable increase in attention to the topic of veterans' reintegration in Ukraine in recent years, only 5% of respondents called the current programmes "very effective". Another 25% consider them simply effective – this is a group of respondents who are more likely to recognize the presence of certain positive elements or experience of interaction with effective initiatives. However, the largest share – 38% – is inclined to partial approval, that is, respondents recognize the presence of individual components that have worked, but do not see systemic effectiveness as a whole.

On the other hand, 5% of respondents openly stated that the programmes are ineffective, another 1% described them as "very ineffective". But the most telling figure may be 24% – that is how many people failed to give any assessment and another 3% simply left the question unanswered. This may indicate a complete lack of any experience interacting with the system (which correlates with the level of use/non-use of services), as well as disappointment, apathy or loss of trust in the state services, which is also an indicator of poor work in reaching the target audience.

Respondents' assessment of the effectiveness of reintegration programmes also differs significantly among regions: the highest level of positive assessments ("effective/very effective") is observed in the Khmelnytskyi region (37%) and Zakarpattia (35%), while this indicator is much lower in Kyiv (only 23%), and the highest share of negative assessments ("not effective") is recorded in the Dnipropetrovsk region – 50%. In regions with a larger number of veterans or a higher burden on social services (in particular, in the Dnipropetrovsk region and Kyiv), respondents are more likely to express critical assessments, which may indicate a lack of resources, coordination, or accessibility of services. In contrast, in less burdened regions, such as the Khmelnytskyi region or the Zakarpattia region, positive assessments prevail, which may indicate better targeting of programmes or lower expectations. The high percentage of "partially effective" responses also indicates the presence of individual elements of support that need to be refined to achieve a holistic and sustainable effect.

Figure 8. Assessment of the effectiveness of reintegration programmes, overall and by region



Assessing the effectiveness of the programmes by respondents from individual groups in situations of greater vulnerability allows us to draw more solid conclusions on this matter. It can be seen that the most clear and expressive assessments were provided by representatives of the group of veterans with disabilities, while the least confident in their assessments and having difficulty answering were representatives of the LGBTIQ+ veteran community.

Table 7. Assessment of the effectiveness of reintegration programmes by individual groups of respondents

Answer option	Women veterans	LGBTIQ+ persons	Persons with disabilities
Very effective/ effective	33%	25%	35%
Partially effective	41%	30%	51%
Ineffective	7%	4%	9%
Unable to assess / no answer	19%	41%	5%

The aspect of inclusivity was particularly critical. Over 60% of all respondents believe that reintegration programmes do not take into account the specific needs of groups in situations of vulnerability or cannot provide a clear answer (Figure 9). This applies not only to physical accessibility, but also to institutional readiness to work with veterans with disabilities, with female veterans who, *inter alia*, have experience of torture and captivity, with LGBTIQ+ people who are in service or have been demobilized, etc. At the same time, only 39% of the respondents fully agreed with the statement that everyone has equal access to available services.

Figure 9. Perception of reintegration programmes: Are the needs of male and female veterans equally met, distribution of responses, overall and regional distribution



In none of the regions did the majority of respondents answer affirmatively. The highest level of scepticism was recorded in the Chernivtsi region, where 65% of respondents believe that the programmes do not meet everyone’s needs, and only 25% answered positively. A similar picture is observed in the Dnipropetrovsk region (60% answered “no”), which may indicate the difficulty of adapting the programmes to a large number of participants in hostilities. The least critical, but still predominantly negative attitude was recorded in Kyiv and the Khmelnytskyi region. In general, this indicates that the vast majority of veterans do not feel equal access to support programmes. This gives grounds to argue that state policy is often based on a uniform approach, not taking into account the multi-layered experience of veterans, and therefore their needs. The programmes are focused on the average “adult male military serviceman” and are too slow to adapt to social realities, which include more women as veterans, more people with psychological trauma, and people with disabilities and special needs.

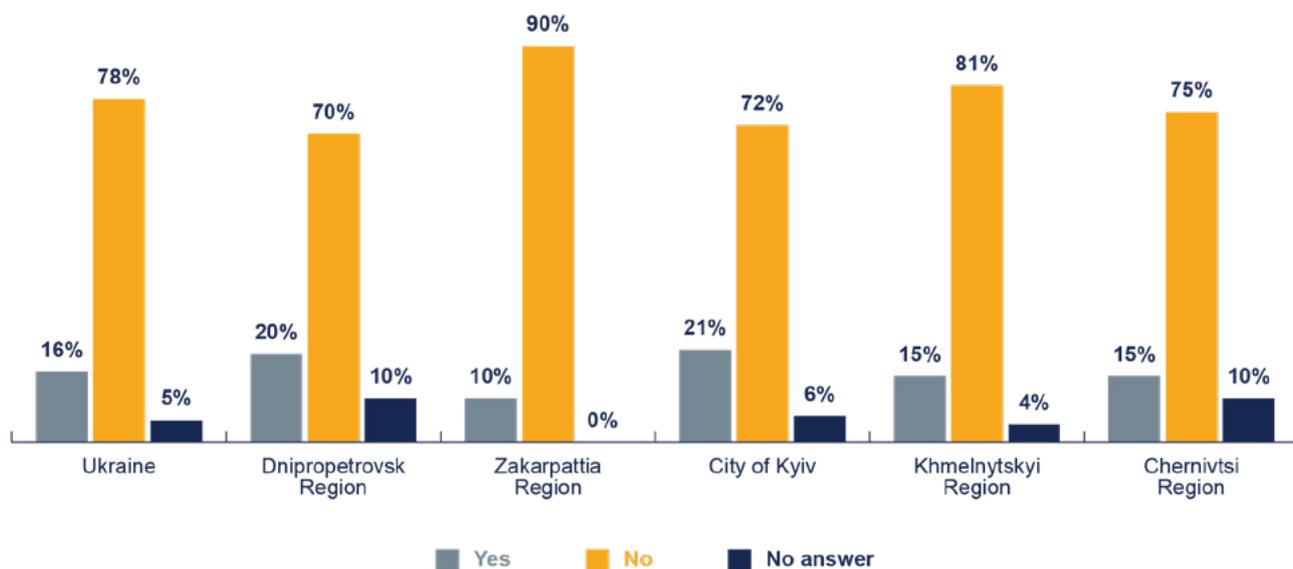
Table 8. Assessment of equality of access to reintegration programmes by individual groups of respondents

Answer option	Women veterans	LGBTIQ+ persons	Persons with disabilities
<i>No, unequal access</i>	56%	50%	52%
<i>Yes, equal access</i>	40%	43%	46%
<i>No answer</i>	4%	7%	2%

These assessments are partly correlated with the open-ended responses of respondents, who express disappointment with the practical implementation of state programmes, as well as with the results of previous stages of the study. Survey participants admit that initiatives look logical and consistent at the level of formal documents and state rhetoric, but their implementation on the ground often causes distrust and frustration.

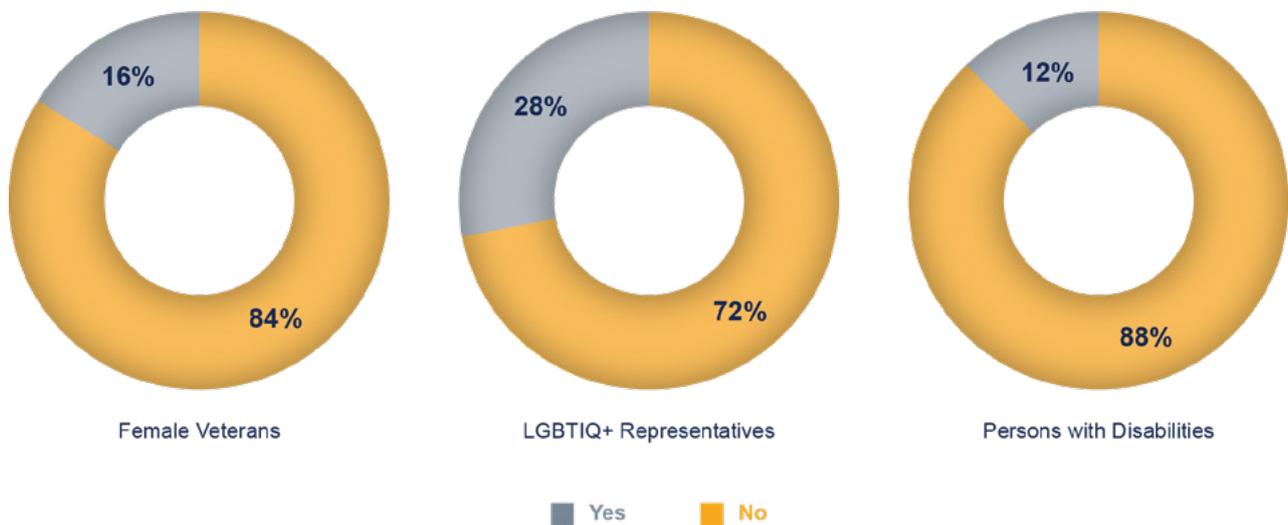
In this context, it is worth noting separately the so-called “institutional fatigue” of respondents, since many of them have already lost the desire to participate in surveys, initiatives or services precisely because of the negative experience of previous interaction. And this, in turn, creates a vicious circle: the state does not have complete information about real needs, because it cannot reach the most vulnerable; and they, in turn, believe less and less in the advisability of seeking help. Moreover, 16% of respondents (actually every seventh participant in the study) indicated that they had a traumatic experience and directly encountered discrimination in the process of seeking help or receiving reintegration services. This percentage is almost twice as high in the group of LGBTIQ+ veterans.

Figure 10. Respondents' experiences of discrimination when seeking assistance/using reintegration programmes, regional distribution



Thus, the challenges in the effectiveness of reintegration programmes are not only a problem of tools, but above all a problem of trust, participation and visibility. Without involving veterans themselves in their design and implementation (as discussed during both in-depth interviews and focus groups), no reform will be perceived as legitimate or viable.

Figure 11. Respondents' experiences of discrimination when seeking assistance/using reintegration programmes, gender distribution



This poses the task of a deep reboot for the state – not only in the regulatory and legal sphere, but also in the culture of interaction, focus on humanity, and flexibility of reintegration programmes that are created and implemented in all the studied regions and in the country as a whole.

4.3.3. Main barriers to veterans' reintegration

The study identified four main groups of barriers that hinder veterans' reintegration in the pilot regions.

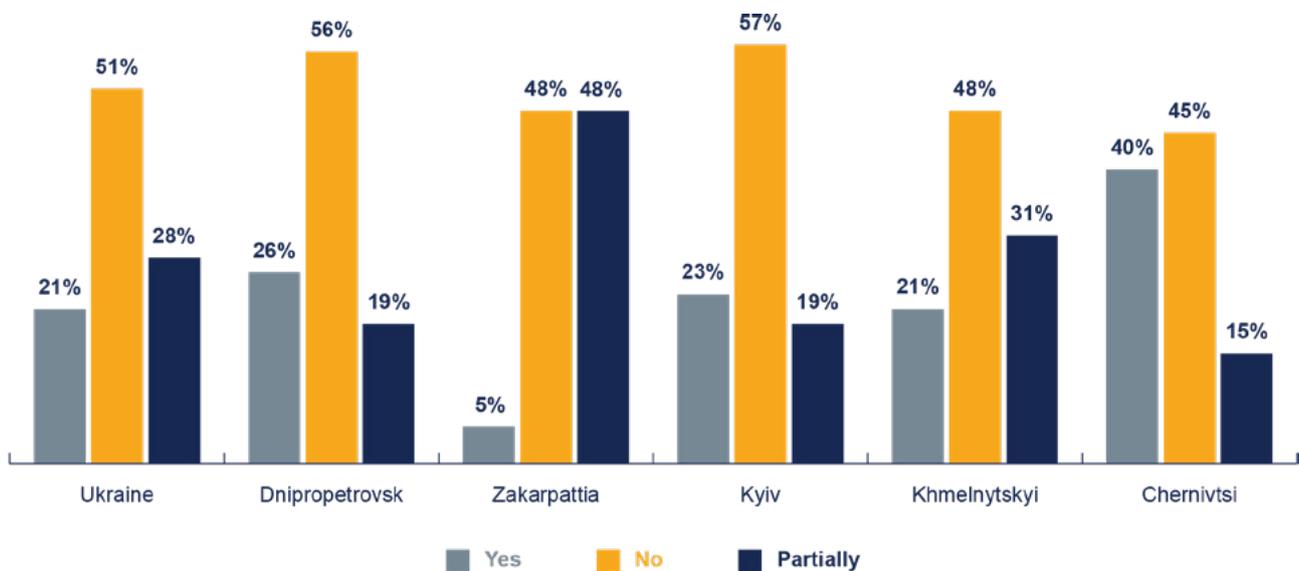
Information barriers

Veterans' awareness of available support options, legal arrangements, and reintegration programmes is a critical factor in their successful transition back into civilian life. However, the results of the quantitative survey indicate that the level of awareness among respondents remains extremely low, which in turn creates a deep gap between formally available services and actual access to them.

When asked about their awareness of current laws and regulations related to veteran support, the vast majority of respondents – 97 people (51%) – answered negatively, indicating that they were not familiar with the relevant legislation. This is a particularly worrying indicator, given that knowledge of one's rights and procedures for accessing services is a basic prerequisite for using reintegration arrangements.

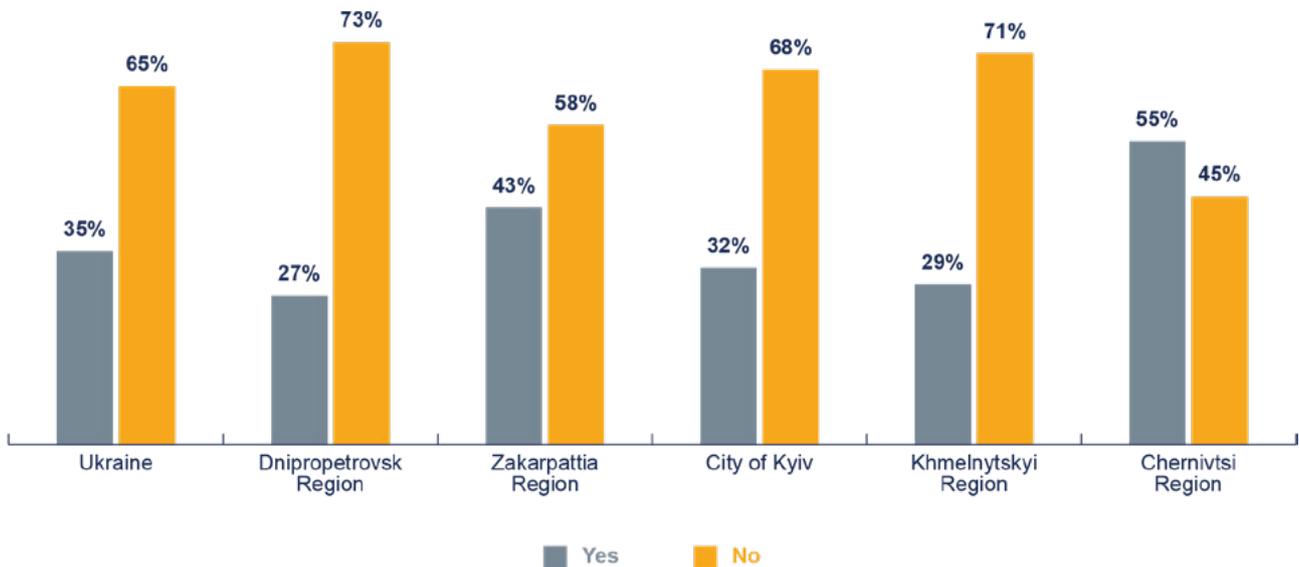
Another 53 respondents (28%) indicated their level of awareness as “familiar to some extent”, which indicates a partial or situational understanding of the content of the policies, without a systematic awareness or ability to apply this knowledge in practice. In fact, this may indicate respondents’ ignorance, however, they chose the so-called socially acceptable answer (in an effort to appear more knowledgeable than they actually are). Also, regional differences in the level of respondents’ awareness of the legislation on veteran support can be explained by several factors: the presence or absence of access to official information and legal assistance, the activity of local veteran organisations and civil society initiatives, the level of involvement of the region in hostilities, which affects the number of veterans, as well as the general level of education, digital literacy and media activity of the population, which contribute to or, conversely, complicate the dissemination of knowledge about the relevant legislation.

Figure 12. Level of respondents’ awareness of legislation on veteran support, regional distribution



The situation with awareness of local reintegration programmes is even less encouraging. Only a few respondents were able to name specific initiatives or services operating in their region. 123 people (65% of all respondents) directly indicated that they knew nothing about existing support programmes in their city or community. This indicates a systemic problem in the dissemination of information, as well as uneven implementation of policies on the ground. In fact, even if a state or regional initiative formally exists, it does not reach its target audience, remaining “on paper” or in a narrow circle of experts.

Figure 13. Level of respondents' awareness of local reintegration programmes, regional distribution



It is worth noting that veterans' awareness of local programmes varies among the regions, although it remains extremely low in each of them. In the Khmelnytskyi and Dnipropetrovsk regions, 71% and 73% of respondents, respectively, are unaware of local programmes showing the highest rates, while western regions (the Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions) demonstrate significantly higher awareness. In Kyiv, the level of awareness is close to the average indicator for the sample. The only region where the level of awareness is positive (more respondents know about local programmes than do not know) is the Chernivtsi region. There, 55% of respondents answered this question positively, but this may also be due to the small size of the subsample in the region.

At a qualitative level – in interviews and focus groups – respondents unanimously emphasized that information on reintegration programmes is either fragmented or completely unavailable, especially at the local level. Most of them could not name any specific government initiative adapted to their needs, and communication is perceived as formal or ineffective.

“The main problem is not that the services are bad, but that people don't know about them.”

(Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“The biggest problem right now is veterans' awareness and inclusivity. It has completely failed.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

Several participants indicated that even the presence of an official resource does not guarantee access to meaningful information:

“Information accessibility is not when there is a website, but when you understand where to go. And we have a website, but it does not necessarily mean that there is anything there.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

The experience of veteran self-organisation also proved to be an important factor in access to information:

“Until I started volunteering, I didn't even know that I owned anything.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

Finally, the lack of a proactive approach on the part of the state has also been the subject of criticism:

“They don't call and ask: “How are you doing after the war?” If you don't look for it yourself, you won't get anything.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

In general, the level of veterans' awareness of support programmes is a determining factor in their real accessibility: without a clear understanding of the available opportunities, even the best initiatives remain ineffective. Information transparency is not an additional element, but a fundamental component of an effective reintegration policy.



Women veterans attending the presentation of the project's mapping study on existing services and policies for veteran reintegration at the roundtable with local authorities in Uzhhorod.

Administrative, bureaucratic and financial barriers

Respondents describe a long and exhausting process of receiving assistance. Instead of trust, there is the need to “prove” one’s right, to overcome bureaucracy, confusion between institutions, and numerous formal procedures. People often feel forced to ask for what is already theirs:

“It’s like you don’t deserve it, but you’re begging for alms. You constantly have to collect something, wait, and search.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

One of the most common complaints was ineffective inter-institutional interaction, which leads to duplication of functions, blurred responsibilities, and waste of time. Veterans are forced to figure out who is in charge on their own, explain their rights to officials, or remain completely unanswered:

“There is zero communication between structures. You either make your way through it yourself or you get nothing.”

Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“I applied for a pension online, without any problems. But MSEC was no luck, it took more than 3 months, I made an appointment with one official, they send me to another, all hours are busy in the Helsi system for 2 weeks in advance, then they say that some photocopy or certificate is missing... So I didn’t apply. I didn’t receive any benefits from the state...”

(Male veteran, Kyiv)

“I didn’t know I was entitled to a payment. I ended up with another person and they helped me get a larger payment (but I found out about my payment by accident).”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

Despite the formal existence of programmes at the state, regional, and local levels, the lack of funding and clear coordination often nullifies their effectiveness:

“Formally, there are benefits. But either there is no budget, or you applied to the wrong place. It will take six months before you find someone in charge.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

Female veterans particularly highlight the invisibility of their own needs in the support system and the lack of gender responsiveness. They say that information about benefits is often unavailable, and the services themselves are seen as closed, that is, accessible only to those with connections or experience.

In addition, focus group participants repeatedly drew attention to the complexity, inaccessibility, and confusing language used in official information. Often, the wording is too difficult to understand, and those responsible for assisting veterans either lack sufficient training or knowledge, or are unwilling to explain in simple terms.

“Social workers are sitting around waiting until retirement. They don’t update their knowledge, they don’t know how to communicate with veterans.”

(Female veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Respondents also repeatedly emphasized that the state system of communication with veterans was formalized, overloaded, and often indifferent to individual requests.

“The state, unfortunately, today pushes away veterans. If you want support, look for it yourself.”

(Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“When I was released from captivity, there was no support, no friends, no mother. I was all alone.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

These challenges are especially critical for those in vulnerable situations. Constantly changing procedures, the lack of a single algorithm of actions, and conflicting information only complicate access to real help.

For veterans with disabilities, physical access to services often remains unattainable. Lack of barrier-free environments, difficult logistics, inaccessible transportation, or unsuitable premises make even filing documents a challenge:

“I can’t get to the centre – it’s a whole operation. And then you have to stand in line and wait until they hear you.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

Thus, administrative, bureaucratic and financial barriers significantly complicate the veterans’ access to appropriate support, turning formally guaranteed services into a difficult and exhausting path. The lack of clear procedures, proper communication, professional staff and sufficient funding, as well as ignoring the specific needs of various groups, in particular women and people with disabilities, not only reduce the effectiveness of programmes, but also undermine trust in the entire system of reintegration support.

Stigma and psychological barriers

One of the most important reintegration problems, mentioned by respondents from all pilot regions, is the general attitude towards veterans, as well as their personal feelings after returning from the front. It is impossible to consider the provision of individual reintegration services outside this context, and it is this context that largely determines the success or failure of their use.

Veterans often face a cold or condescending attitude from government officials, which causes internal resistance and distrust. Alienation and distrust of the state often become reasons for self-exclusion from programmes.

“We didn’t send you there – that’s what they tell us.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

“I have to force everything out myself. People are subhuman.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

Most testimonies illustrate that reintegration is not a formality or a one-time administrative act, but a deeply personal, sometimes painful and multi-layered process of returning to oneself in a changed environment. Veterans do not simply leave the combat zone – they enter a new reality, where there are no clear instructions, understandable rules and shared experiences. This gap is especially acutely felt due to the lack of a smooth transition and support from military institutions, services and rules to civilian ones.

Transition is accompanied by a sense of alienation, a break with old social ties, and the need to rebuild one’s identity, where you are no longer a soldier, but not yet a “civilian”. This is especially felt at the intersection of roles and identities, both for female veterans and for LGBTIQ+ veterans.

“Pretending that nothing happened is the hardest thing. Because it did. And it’s with you.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

“I felt like I was a stranger. Not even in my family – in the air. You come back, and here people live on, and you are from a different space.”

(Male veteran, Kyiv)

This is a transitional state, often dominated by confusion, silent pain, and a desire to be heard without unnecessary questions. In fact, this is where the need arises not only for services, but for empathetic, human support that acknowledges and accepts the experience without trying to simplify or bypass it. However, the absolute majority of respondents say that after serving they face not even a misunderstanding of their experience, but outright stigma from society:

“It seems to me that women are not given time to breathe out all this. Especially if they have children or a husband who is a military man or was killed or wounded. And the children, parents fall on her shoulders... Men are allowed to be alcoholics, to be aggressive, because: “Well, what did you want? He fought! He has PTSD.” And women can’t do that, yeah, they get more condemnation.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

“I never said that I had served, because then... questions started. Sometimes I have to show my PiH ID in transport when I go to Kryvyi Rih. And then I feel somehow uncomfortable... I once heard from an adult woman – what are you doing there, at the front? They call you on the carpet there, put you on your knees... and you do this there (a hint at providing sexual services to male military personnel – ed.)”

(Female veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“I’m ashamed to show my PiH ID when using public transport. When I was 9 months pregnant, I got into a shuttle bus, showed my PiH ID – and the driver said it wasn’t valid... and tried to force me to get out. A 70-year-old woman defended me. And some old women joined the driver’s side: “Why are you fussing over your PiH ID?” I threatened to call the police.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

More than half of the respondents in the qualitative phase of the study in all pilot regions noted that the problem with attitude when using transport benefits was most acute and the situation was worsening at the local level.

This reaction creates not just isolation, but a sense of devaluing the service experience itself. Instead of the expected recognition, respect, or even neutral acceptance, veterans often encounter hidden suspicion or outright condemnation and mockery.

Stereotypes dominate in the civilian environment: a military woman is not a “poster heroine”, but a woman who could not realize herself in civilian life, in particular her personal life, and went to the front because of selfish motives, the desire to find a partner, etc. Often, the stigmatization of female veterans is built around harmful stereotypes: “it is women of easy virtue who go to the army,” “a normal woman will not abandon her children and husband,” etc. A relative exception is made for women with a medical education, but they also experience open or hidden social condemnation.

These narratives stigmatize female veterans, making it difficult for them to find employment, integrate socially, and interact with their environment. This is especially painful for female veterans, whose experiences remain “invisible” in the civic sphere, and therefore incomprehensible and often unexpected. Such social distrust reinforces internal isolation, forcing women to hide their stories, adapt through silence, or avoid seeking help. The feeling that you are perceived as a potential problem and a representative of a marginalized part of society is not just a barrier, but a direct denial of the principles of a dignified return. These study findings are supported by previous findings in publications

If we consider the possibility of further service and building a military career, then female veterans exist in a double invisibility: in the civilian environment they are forced to struggle with the expectation of “normality”, where their combat experience is devalued, and in the military – to prove their professional capabilities.

“I live in a military camp, my circle of friends is limited and we also have “waiters” [for Russians to come – Translator]. I try to limit my communication with them. I’ve been living there for a long time, but unfortunately, there is no support or understanding for me as a wounded woman and my son. If I tell something about war prisoners, for example, then I’m always “lying”. You come to the military registration and enlistment office, your battle buddies, they’re supposed to help – no...”

(Female veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

They feel pressure to be both “strong like on the front lines” and “soft like at home,” and it is this role tension that often goes unsupported. Women are often given additional responsibilities – childcare, emotional stability for the family – without taking into account that they themselves are in a state of crisis.

“I think women have a harder time. Women face bigger challenges, and a woman is a mother, a daughter. And she needs to get back to normal, “you hide your PTSD somewhere”.

“He’s a hero, and she’s not a heroine. And women are often reminded that women can leave the army without getting injured, but men can’t.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

“Being a female veteran is not as cool as being a male veteran.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

It is important that, at the same time, female veterans often expressed the belief that they were more adaptable and had a greater opportunity to better reintegrate into society after returning, due to the presence of everyday household workloads and a variety of social roles. At the same time, they emphasize that men have a much harder time going through this – not due to society or existing reintegration programmes, but only the women’s own attitudes are at work.

“A woman can cry, go to the store and have a fight... And men keep everything to themselves. They shared with me, but they won’t with a civilian woman... My husband and I divorced when I was a civilian and he was a soldier. Now we are even closer to each other than when we were married. Because now I understand him more (why they chip in to buy something for one of their comrades, etc.). I observe a couple of neighbours, where the husband returned after a concussion, and the wife is a civilian. I see that he is frank with us, but when he crosses the threshold of his house – his mouth is locked. I know everything about my boys (brothers-in-arms – ed.). A man psychologically cannot stand that he is being written off (especially a man with an amputation), while he is supposed to provide for his family...”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

“Men have a harder time experiencing this situation (returning from the army – ed.). I don’t know of any cases where women drank themselves to death, for example. And men have to be “led along”, men usually return to the frontline because they can’t find themselves in civilian life...”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

At the same time, LGBTIQ+ veterans report distrust and fear of discrimination when they seek services and benefits. This is especially true in rural communities, where “everyone knows each other” and publicity can lead to social isolation. Common stereotypes include the perception of military personnel as “aggressive men” or the belief that “veterans get paid a lot” and therefore do not need help. Such perceptions only deepen stigmatization.

The conflicting perception of veterans in society exacerbates the problem and does not contribute to their reintegration. One respondent said:

“At work they ask: “Are you sure you’re ok?” I keep quiet. Because if you say you served, they look at you as if you were a bomb.”

(Male veteran, Kyiv.)

These narratives create an atmosphere of isolation and stigmatization, forcing veterans to remain silent about their experiences and avoid seeking help. Often, fear of judgment or misunderstanding becomes a determining factor in avoiding any formal interaction – not because of the lack of need, but because of the lack of a safe and accepting environment.

Overall, stigma, emotional exhaustion, and the lack of a safe environment for the recognition of combat experience are profound obstacles to veterans’ reintegration, who often feel alienated in their own society. Without sensitivity, social acceptance, and empathetic support, even the highest quality services remain inaccessible – not for technical reasons, but for psychological reasons.

Content-related barriers

Veterans expressed the opinion that reintegration programmes are outdated and not adapted to the needs of the veteran community today. Often these programmes were developed taking into account the experience of veterans of previous generations and do not consider the realities of modern warfare, the age and gender structure of new veterans. One of the respondents noted:

“These benefits were created for veterans 70+, not for 28-year-old women who don’t need a health resort, but a quality education and English.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

Some respondents point out that there should be an option when choosing among reintegration and rehabilitation programmes.

“Women need separate programmes. You're not always ready to be in the mix with men after the front.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

In addition, psychological support often appears formal or unprofessional. Instead of professional help, veterans encounter incompetence or emotional overload from the specialists themselves. One respondent noted:

“Psychologists? Twice psychologists have made me cry during sessions. I don't need pity – I need a professional.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

Another respondent noted that there were no modern rehabilitation and recovery centres in her area. This creates disappointment and lost hope for rehabilitation. As a result, many people deliberately avoid participating in programmes that, in their opinion, do not meet the real demand, needs or life situation.

In this context, the request from veterans representing the LGBTIQ+ community, who experience significant discrimination due to the inability to get recognition of their family relationships, is also important. This was also mentioned by the study participants.

“There are no laws in the country that recognize LGBTIQ+ families. Many gay men, under the pressure of public rejection, accept that they have no rights and do not even notice that their lives are not normal, and end in old age in loneliness. Guys are so used to living in a diminished role that they consider it the norm... There are couples of active military personnel and veterans who live with partners, and veteran programmes to support families do not include LGBTIQ+ families. I applied for such a state programme, just decided to have fun. I sent a request for a civil partner. I received a response that the programme applies exclusively to heterosexual couples.”

(Male veteran, Kyiv)

Thus, the challenges, namely the difficulty of understanding the essence of the programmes, the lack of awareness and related coordination, administrative barriers, insufficient resources (both human and financial ones), stigma and society's unwillingness to interact with veterans, which are mentioned by veterans from the pilot regions covered by the study, correlate and confirm the results of previous studies in this area, in particular the sociological study “Needs of Veterans 2023”²¹⁸, the study “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Veterans”²¹⁹, and the sociological study “*Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female veterans Returning to Peaceful Life*”²²⁰.

²¹⁸ Kirillova, Y., Znoviak, V., Kazanska, A., Tkalich, M. (2023). Sociological study “Needs of Veterans 2023”. Ukrainian Veterans Fund of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Sociological Group “Rating”. <https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/needs-of-veterans-2023>.

²¹⁹ “The Role of the State in the Social Reintegration of Male and Female Veterans” / [compiled by authors] Ukrainian Veterans Fund. Kyiv: UVF, 2024, 28 p. <https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Rol-derzhavy-u-sotsialnyy-reintehratsii-veteraniv-i-veteranok.pdf>.

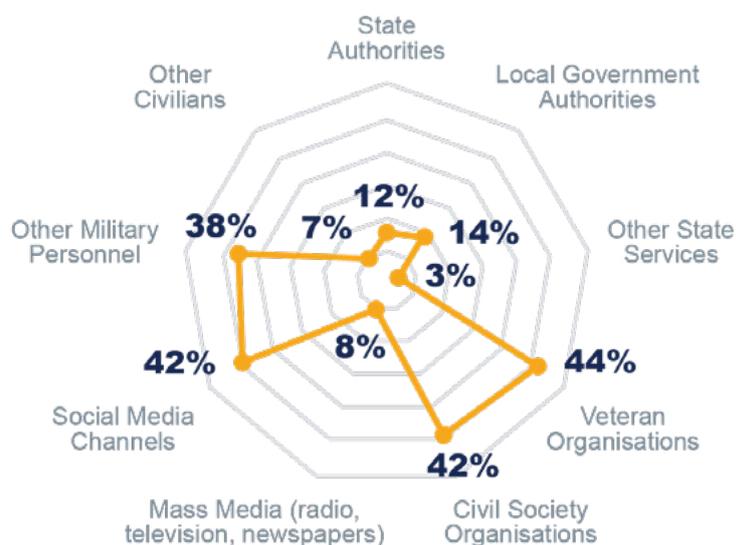
²²⁰ Martseniuk T., Kvit A., Hrytsenko H., Vasylenko L., Zviahintseva M. (2019). *Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female veterans Returning to Peaceful Life* [Sociological Study; ed. T. Martseniuk]. Kyiv: UN Women in Ukraine. <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/invisible%20battalion%20uk.pdf>.

4.3.4. Positive practices for veterans' reintegration

Awareness through horizontal networks

The study shows that veteran and civil society organisations, social media, as well as personal contacts in the veteran and military environment (friends, acquaintances, colleagues) are the main sources of information about reintegration programmes for the vast majority of respondents (38-44% of the respondents mentioned them). Neither traditional mass media (radio, television, newspapers), nor official information channels at the state or local government level are actually popular sources of information for the surveyed veterans. As for the mass media, the only exception is Kyiv – there this information channel was mentioned by at least 11% of respondents, contrary to the other regions which provided isolated responses.

Figure 14. Respondents' sources of information about reintegration programmes



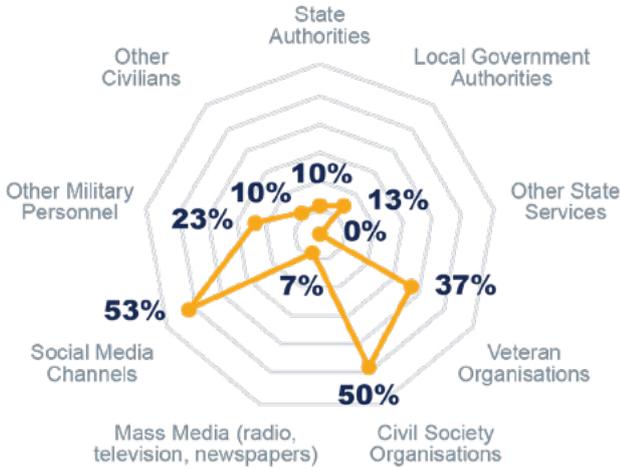
Such informal sources often prove to be more effective and efficient, as they are based on trust and horizontal connections. However, the systematicity and reach of such channels remains limited – they mainly reach active participants in the veteran community, leaving more groups in vulnerable situations or isolated groups out of communication.

As for regional differences, the distribution of information sources is quite atypical in the Khmelnytskyi region as compared to the other studied regions: over 52% of respondents from this region received information either from other military personnel (for comparison, this figure is only 23% in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zakarpattia regions), as well as from veterans' organisations (54% compared to 37% in the Dnipropetrovsk region and 43% in the Zakarpattia region). Bykovyna shows the highest rate of information received from veterans' organisations (70%), but it is difficult to draw valid conclusions due to the small number of respondents from the Chernivtsi region.

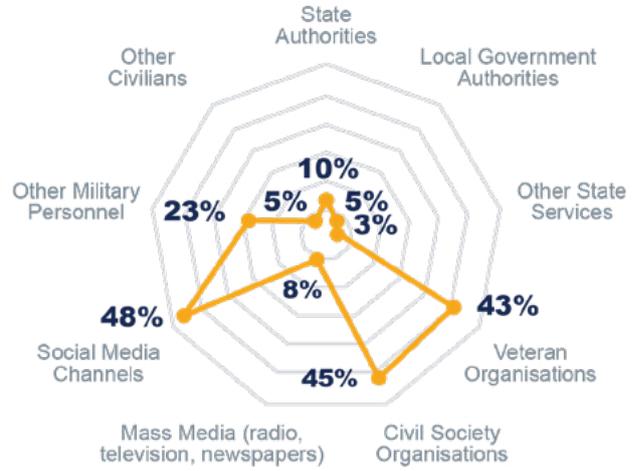
In addition, the role of local authorities in the Khmelnytskyi and Chernivtsi regions in informing veterans about local reintegration programmes is relatively high: 21 and 25%, respectively, which makes them the highest rates among the studied regions.

Figures 15-19. Sources of information for veterans regarding local reintegration programmes, regional distribution

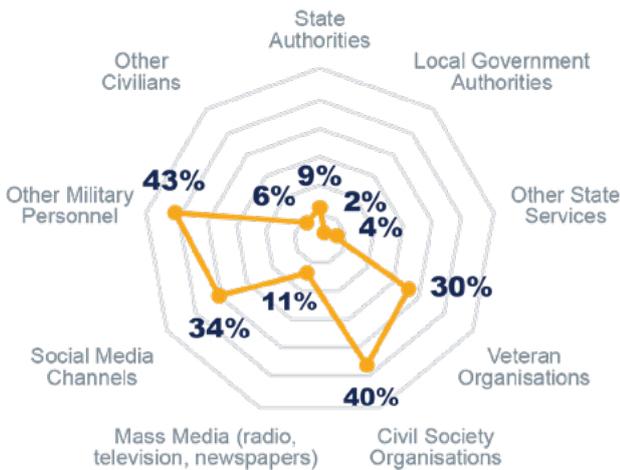
Dnipropetrovsk Region



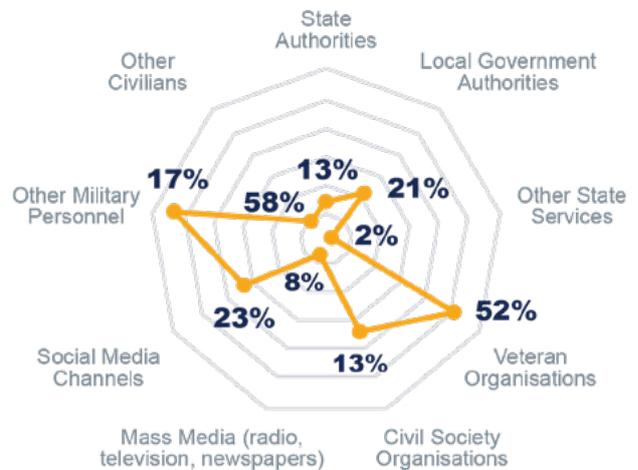
Zakarpattia Region



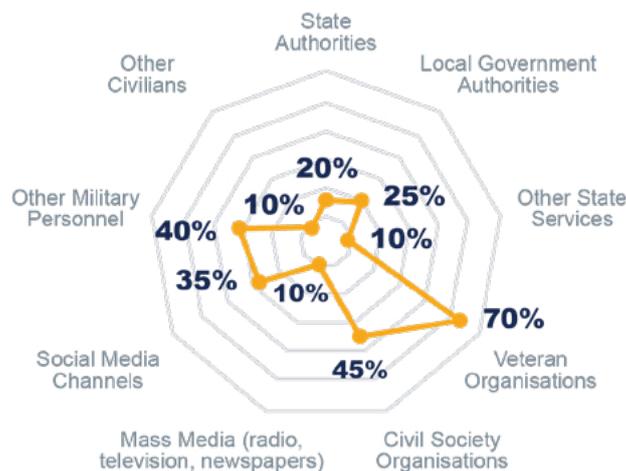
City of Kyiv



Khmelnyskyi Region



Chernivtsi Region



For comparison, this figure reaches only 5% for local governments in the Zakarpattia region and no more than 2% in Kyiv. On the other hand, the role of social media as a channel of information in Chernivtsi and Khmelnytskyi regions is much lower: for example, if in Dnipropetrovsk region 53% of respondents mentioned social media as a channel of information about reintegration programmes, then there were only 35% of such responses in the Khmelnytskyi region.

The results of the study suggest that the higher level of awareness of reintegration programmes in the Khmelnytskyi and Chernivtsi regions is associated not only with the presence of active veteran organisations and their cooperation with local authorities, but also with the characteristics of the communities themselves. The smaller size of population centres, close social ties, and the “everyone knows everyone” effect can contribute to faster and more personalized dissemination of information, as well as create a more accessible environment for the inclusion of veterans in local initiatives.

Overall, the results of the qualitative research point to clear, accessible, and targeted information as a key positive practice on the ground, as it takes into account not only general conditions but also the needs of specific groups: women, people with psycho-emotional trauma, LGBTQ+ people, veterans with disabilities. This is especially true in peripheral communities, where information is disseminated more slowly or is completely ignored by local administrations.

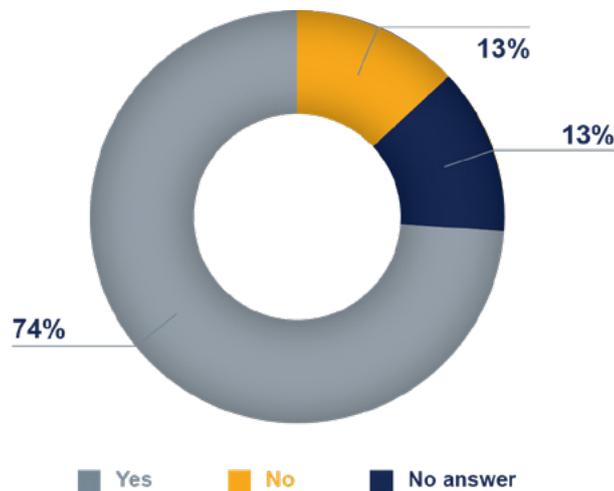


Participants of the CSO workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

Peer-to-peer support and mentoring

Respondents' social involvement and interaction with the veteran community demonstrate the importance of horizontal connections in the reintegration process. The majority of respondents – 140 people (74%) – indicated that they maintained contact with other veterans, although for some it is episodic or situational in nature. 24 respondents (13%) responded that they did not maintain such connections, and another 25 (13%) refrained from answering.

Figure 20. Level of respondents' interaction with the veteran community

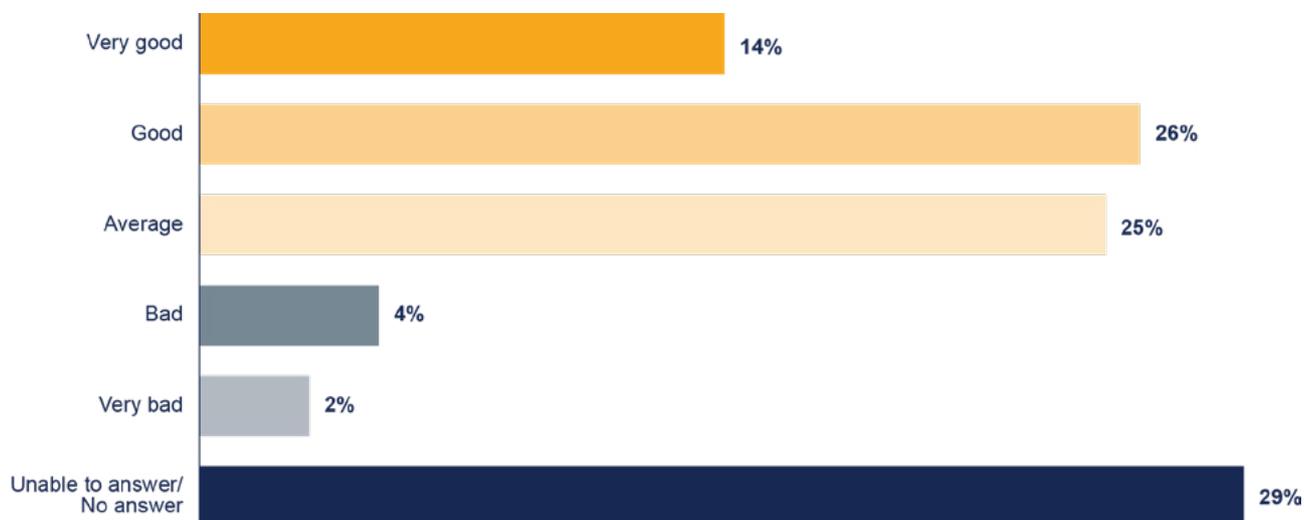


Regarding involvement in the activities of civil society organisations, 43 respondents (23%) are members, while 135 (71%) are not members of any NGO or initiative. In fact, only one in five veterans is formally a member of organisations of this kind, which indicates either a limited availability of such organisations on the ground, or a lack of trust or interest among veteran community representatives in such a formalized movement.

However, 44% of respondents reported using the services of NGOs during their reintegration process. This is an important distinction: even those who are not members of NGOs turn to them for support, which actually evidences the demand for their activities. The services include psychological support, legal advice, group classes, and assistance with documents or medical certificates.

NGOs' ability to protect the interests of groups in situations of vulnerability was mostly assessed positively. 14% rated this ability as "very good", 27% as "good". Thus, over 40% believe in the ability of the civil society sector to help veterans in their reintegration, which is fully correlated with the data on appeals to such structures for assistance, as well as with the data on usage information received from NGOs as a source of information on available reintegration opportunities (see previous results of responses). However, this role can and should be strengthened, as 29% of respondents were unable to provide an appropriate assessment or left the question unanswered, which indicates their insufficient experience of interacting with civil society initiatives in the process of their own reintegration.

Figure 21. Assessment of the ability of civil society organisations to protect the rights of veteran groups in situations of vulnerability



One of the reintegration support models is based on the role of a veteran support specialist who works directly in veteran spaces or hubs. The task of these people is to coordinate veterans, explain their rights, help with documents, and provide referrals to necessary consultations and services. Over 1,400 such specialists have already been employed in Ukraine, and their number is systematically growing.

Veterans' spaces are not just offline hubs, but real support communities: here veterans feel accepted, receive a "space of emotional safety" and clear navigation through the assistance system. According to the All-Ukrainian Association of Communities, there are currently over 300 such spaces, creating a powerful network for local integration of veterans' policy²²¹.

The answers obtained during in-depth interviews and focus groups are fully correlated with the results of the quantitative study: respondents noted that NGOs are often the only space where LGBTIQ+ representatives or veterans with disabilities feel accepted.

“The more such civil society organisations there are, the more useful they will be, because at least they explain something – unlike the state structures.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“Yes, I am a member of the NGO “Ukrainian Military”. Their activities are at the highest level. They really help.”

(Male veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

However, access to NGOs is also selective: it depends on social capital, personal contacts, geography of residence, and involvement in the veteran community.

²²¹ Holding of the interregional forum “Veteran Spaces” [Electronic resource]. Portal “Communities of Ukraine”. 2023. Available at: <https://hromady.org/vidbuvsya-mizhregionalnij-forum-veteranski-prostorij/>. Screen title.

Finally, another trend emerges from the open-ended responses: it is often NGOs that replace the functions of state institutions, especially in terms of emotional support, navigation through the benefits system, and assistance in document processing.

“The NGO ‘Ukrainian LGBT Military for Equal Rights’ helped me a lot with food and household matters in the first months.”

(Male veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“The more such organisations there are, the more comfortable it will be for veterans – it is much easier to apply to them than to a state institution.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

This indicates not only the effectiveness of the third sector, but also the overload of activist structures, as they operate in a mode of constant mobilization, often without clear funding and institutional support.

Veterans highly appreciate such initiatives: they emphasize the importance of an informal, empathetic approach and a quick response. In addition, the support specialist at the centre acts as a “single window”, reducing bureaucratic barriers and creating trust in the state and non-governmental sectors. These practices demonstrate that a comprehensive model that combines professionalism, community identity and accessibility of services really works as a safeguard against isolation and stigmatization, teaching veterans to actively participate in their own reintegration.



Veterans attending the presentation of the project's mapping study on existing services and policies for veteran reintegration at the roundtable with local authorities in Uzhhorod.

Cooperation between civil society organisations and local authorities

Some veterans positively assess individual initiatives at the local level, especially those implemented in partnership with civil society organisations.

“The more such civil society organisations there are, the more useful they will be. They really work while state organisations work only on paper”.

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“NGO ‘Pobratym 4.5.0’ is an example of effective work: they resolve requests in the chat, reducing the burden on authorities.”

(Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

However, even in these cases, fragmentation, lack of long-term planning, and risks of dependence on the personal enthusiasm of coordinators or donor support are noted.

Individual respondents talk about specific positive experiences in interacting with individual representatives of healthcare facilities, with whom they managed to build trusting relationships. This emphasizes that even in an imperfect system it is possible to create support centres that compensate for institutional failures – but this is more of an exception, depending on the so-called “human factor”, than a systemic phenomenon.

“I work with a family doctor who constantly supports me... But I understand perfectly well that this is not a system – I’m just lucky.”

(Male veteran, Zakarpattia region)

4.3.5. Expectations and suggestions from interviewed veterans

Summarizing veterans' expectations regarding future reintegration programmes, several key guidelines can be identified that are repeated in the respondents' statements regardless of region, gender, or service experience. These expectations indicate not only the need for better organisation of assistance, but also a deeper demand for rethinking the very logic of interaction between the state and the veteran as a social actor.

First, veterans expect a **horizontal partnership** that involves mutual respect, collaboration, and shared decision-making instead of a paternalistic, instructive approach. In current programmes, the veteran is often positioned as a service receiver, while respondents clearly articulate the need to be actors, that is, to participate in the formation of policies, influence their content, and assess their effectiveness.

“I help my brothers and sisters simply as a person. If I have something to share, I do it.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

“In our LGBTIQ+ veteran community, we provide psychological, medical, legal, and even household support.”

(Male veteran, Kyiv)

Second, there is a clear demand for **real participation of veterans in the development of programmes** – not at the stage of formal consultation, but as full partners. Respondents note that it is those who have gone through war who have a unique understanding of the specific needs after returning, and that is why they can act as professional informants, experts on experience, mentors for systemic change.

“Programmes should be for the veteran, with the veteran. Please don’t make up anything without us.”

(Female veteran, Khmelnytskyi region)

The third expectation is **the stability and long-term nature of services**. Currently, many initiatives are implemented with donor support or in the format of short-term projects of civil society organisations, which causes veterans a feeling of temporality, instability and constant uncertainty. After military experience, which in itself is accompanied by the loss of basic security, the need for stability and sustainability of assistance becomes particularly important.

“Psychologists are simply being fired... We will lose the fight for mental health if there is no state intervention...”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

“Civil society organisations are the only thing that really works. But they lack funding, resources, and specialists.”

(Female veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Institutional adaptability – the programmes’ ability to take into account the specifics of target groups – is also important. Respondents emphasize that “the same conditions for all” do not work if the system ignores factors such as gender, sexual orientation, health status, psycho-emotional background. For example, female veterans need services that recognize not only their combat experience, but also social challenges caused by double discrimination. It is worth highlighting the request from female veterans to create self-support groups based on shared experience, mutual respect, and a safe space. Focus group participants emphasized that such initiatives had not only an emotional and psychological function, but also helped feel solidarity, recognition, and the point of being together in a veteran environment.

“We are women, we were also captives, we were beaten just like the boys. We need support.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

“If we gathered women, offered manicures and pedicures, we would get together and talk. And that would be support...”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

Such initiatives – even in the form of informal meetings, joint leisure or exchange of experiences – are seen by female veterans as simple but effective tools for psychological rehabilitation and social integration. This also highlights the need for a sensitive, gender-oriented approach in the formation of reintegration programmes. For LGBTIQ+ veterans, confidentiality, a safe environment and a tolerant attitude are especially important.

“I often have to lie (about an LGBTIQ+ partner – ed.) that he is my cousin... There just has to be a family... Give us the opportunity to create legally recognized families.”

(Male veteran, Chernivtsi region)

“I have a lot of LGBTIQ+ friends who are on the front lines, and they have problems – their partners can't see them in the hospital because they're not 'official' relatives”.

(Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

One of the key expectations expressed during the focus group discussions was **the need for simple, understandable and human communication**. Respondents repeatedly indicated that official information regarding services, benefits or procedures was often presented in overly complex, bureaucratic language that was intimidating and made it impossible to access support:

“Social workers don't explain things properly. You sit, read, and there's the same thing five times in a row, just in different words.”

(Female veteran, Kyiv)

In this context, respondents noted as a positive practice the approach being developed by civil society organisations, in particular within the framework of the “Plain Language, Easy Reading” initiatives. This approach assumes that official information should be written in simple, understandable language, adapted to the needs of the target audience – concisely, accessible and free of excessive terminology. According to veterans, this form of communication is not only convenient, but also increases the level of trust in institutions.

At the same time, the study participants emphasize the need **to create comprehensive reintegration centres** based on the single window principle and a universal access point for various rehabilitation services, rather than fragmented services that are not equally relevant for all those who returned from war.

“If a veteran knew that he could go to one place and get everything there – treatment, a swimming pool, and rehabilitation – it would be ideal...”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)



Veterans attending the presentation of the key findings of the project's mapping study on existing services and policies for veteran reintegration at the roundtable with local authorities in Chernivtsi.

According to the results of interviews, focus groups, and quantitative surveys, respondents repeatedly expressed a clear request for **rehabilitation programmes** that include not only the veterans themselves, but also **their family members – partners and children**. The importance of such programmes is particularly emphasized during the period of transitioning back into civilian life, when participants in hostilities face difficulties in emotional adaptation, restoring relationships, and adjusting to daily life.

“I think it makes sense to unite families to go out and spend some time in nature together, because military people understand each other better.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“We want to have retreats for mothers, for families. Because it is a source of support, unification, and healing.”

(Female veteran, Chernivtsi region)

According to respondents, involving families in reintegration processes helps reduce isolation, improve understanding within the family, and reduce the level of tension that arises after returning from the front lines. Such programmes are perceived not only as psychological support, but as a real resource for restoring relationships and stabilizing family life.

Finally, veterans emphasize the need for **a professional, empathetic approach** from staff. This is not just about technical competence, but also about a deep understanding of the context of war, the experience of trauma, and the specifics of PTSD. It is important that professionals working with veterans possess not only the tools of social work, but also empathy, nonviolent communication skills, and ethical sensitivity.

“I was nervous about the music, the laughter. It’s like coming from one world to another.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“Not everyone wants to even go out in public... Psychological support is needed, but it’s very difficult to pull a person by the hand...”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

As a result, a clear image of the desired model of reintegration support is formed: people-centred, informal, widely available, adaptive services that are based on trust, safe contact, understanding, forming a circle of “buddies”, veterans and their families, and cooperation. It is this approach – empathetic, contextual, inclusive – that veterans consider as the key to a successful transition back into civilian life. And the interviewed veterans dream of creating their own separate services (as social business projects).

“I would create centres (rehabilitation centres – ed.) not only in institutions, but in shopping malls – so that people can go where it’s convenient for them.”

(Male veteran, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“I want to have my own massage parlour so that military personnel can come for free. This is my dream.”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

“I kept thinking to myself, if I had the money and the opportunity, I would create a horse farm so that both boys and girls could recover...”

(Female veteran, Zakarpattia region)

Such inspiring examples, along with the negative assessment of existing services, prove the need to review the principles of building reintegration programmes in general, as well as the need to change the model of cooperation between state structures and civil society initiatives towards strategic partnership, greater involvement, but not a mere transfer of functions that the state is unable to effectively perform.

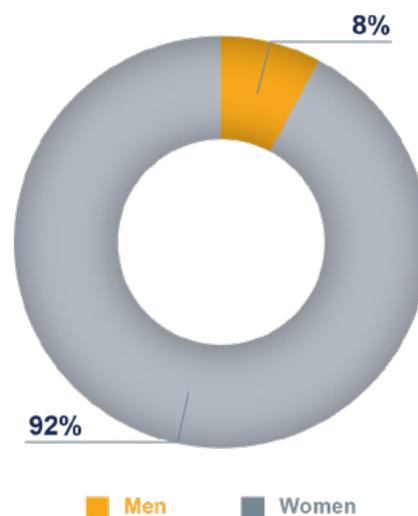
4.4. Perspectives on veterans' reintegration: service providers and government representatives in the pilot regions

4.4.1. Socio-demographic portrait of service providers and government representatives involved in veterans' reintegration in the study

As part of the study, in addition to the survey of veterans, a survey was conducted of government representatives and representatives of the reintegration service system (hereinafter referred to as service providers) in the specified target regions. In total, 102 respondents participated in the study's quantitative phase.

The initial social portrait of professionals involved in institutional veteran support demonstrates a clear predominance of women among service providers reaching 92% of the sample. This imbalance is typical for the social sector, in particular in the context of psychological support, administration, social work, medical or educational services. It indicates the feminization of the veterans' care sector, and also potentially affects which aspects of reintegration are assessed as priorities (e.g. emotional support, access to services for veterans' families, etc.).

Figure 22. Gender composition of the sample of service providers



The largest number of respondents among service providers was represented by the city of Kyiv – 49% of the total number, followed by the Dnipropetrovsk region with 25% and the Chernivtsi region with 22%.

Table 9. Geographical distribution of service providers that participated in the study

Answer option	Number of people	Share, %
<i>Dnipropetrovsk region</i>	26	25%
<i>Zakarpattia region</i>	2	2%
<i>Kyiv</i>	50	49%
<i>Khmelnitskyi region</i>	2	2%
<i>Chernivtsi region</i>	22	22%

The sample demonstrates a clear predominance of large urban centres, primarily the capital city, which is likely due to a greater concentration of programmes, resources, and institutions involved in supporting veterans.

At the same time, this indicates a lower representation of local contexts. This should be taken into account when interpreting further assessments: the findings mostly reflect experience working with veterans in administratively active environments that have greater access to information, infrastructure, and funding and do not coincide with the geographical structure of the sample of veterans.

Also, during the qualitative phase of the study, interviews and focus groups were conducted with service providers and government officials responsible for veterans' reintegration. The interview participants were 5 respondents, one from each pilot region, of whom 3 were women and 2 were men, and the focus groups were attended by 42 representatives of state and local authorities and service structures working with veterans (of whom 32 were women and 10 were men). A separate subgroup of respondents (5 people) consisted of service providers who work in the field of supporting veterans and the veteran community but also have their own experience as a veteran. These professionals represent both the state sector and civil society, have managerial, human rights, medical or project experience, and provide support in areas such as social adaptation, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and support for reintegration cases.

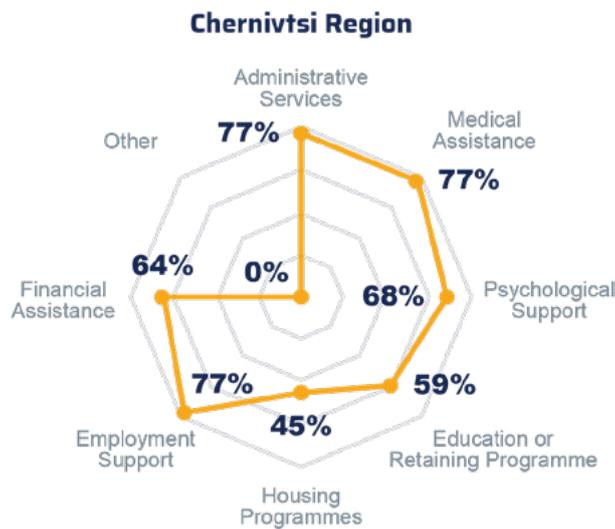
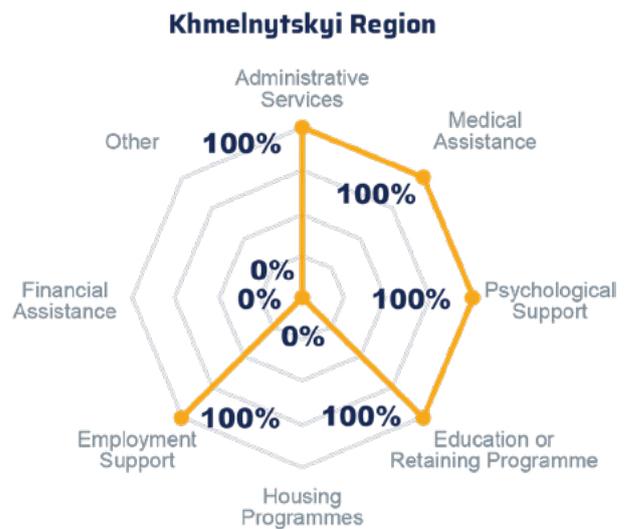
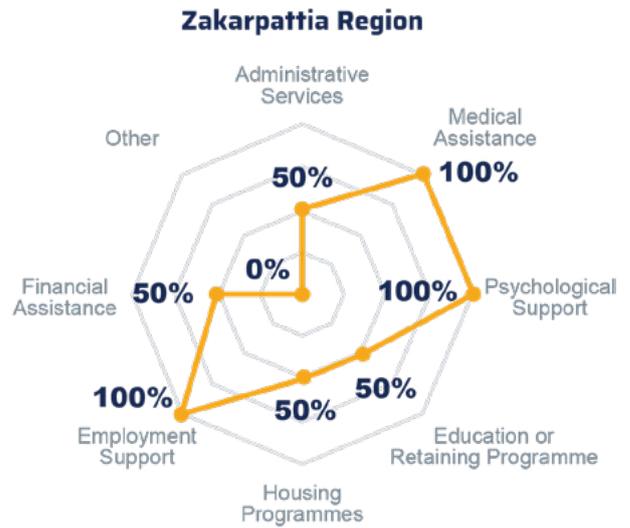
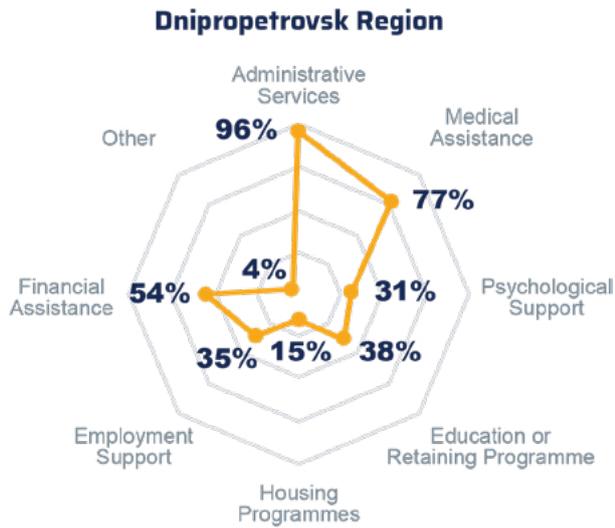
4.4.2. Reintegration services for veterans: accessibility and effectiveness through the eyes of professionals

Focus group participants and interviews with service providers confirmed the availability of basic infrastructure for veterans' reintegration in all the regions studied. The analysis of the availability of reintegration services by region in the quantitative analysis (Figures 23–27) shows that the widest coverage of all key types of support (medical, administrative, psychological, educational, housing, employment) is declared by service providers in the Dnipropetrovsk, Zakarpattia, and Khmelnytskyi regions – in each of these regions, almost all respondents indicated the availability and use of all these services. In Kyiv, the availability of such services is also high, but less complete in terms of long-term support, namely housing programmes and employment. In the Chernivtsi region, a slightly lower level of coverage of housing programmes is recorded, although basic services are also available. Overall, basic reintegration services (medical, administrative, psychological) are well represented in all regions, while education and housing, which require longer institutional involvement, demonstrate a lower level of actual availability. This reflects a typical problem for the regions – the prioritization of short-term forms of assistance over tools for deeper social adaptation.



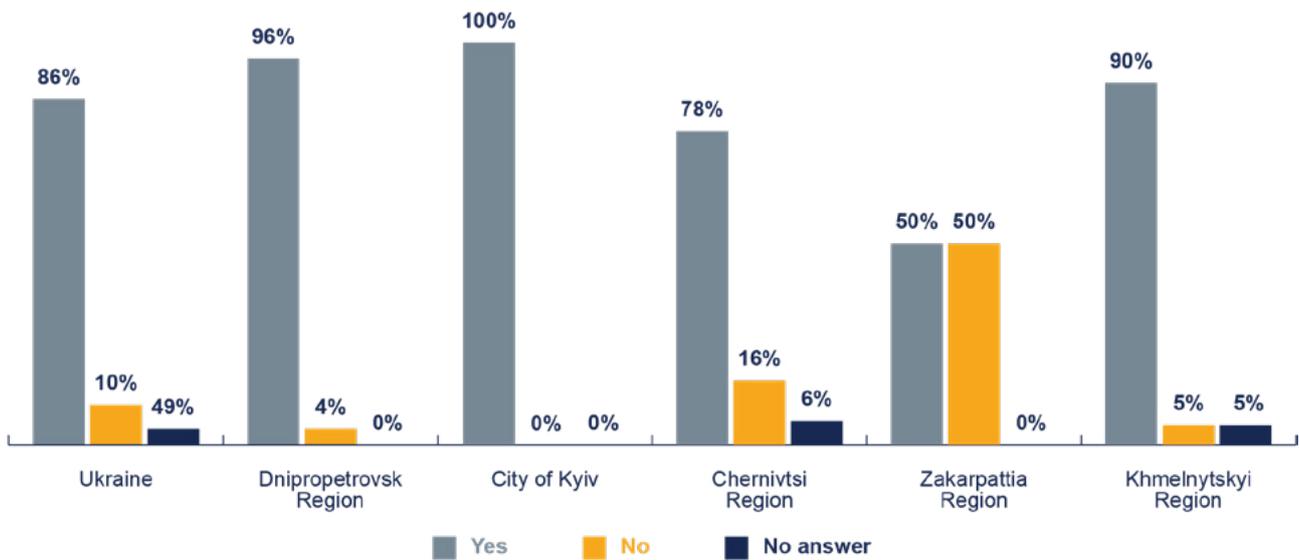
Participant of the CSO workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

Figures 23-27. Availability of reintegration services for veterans



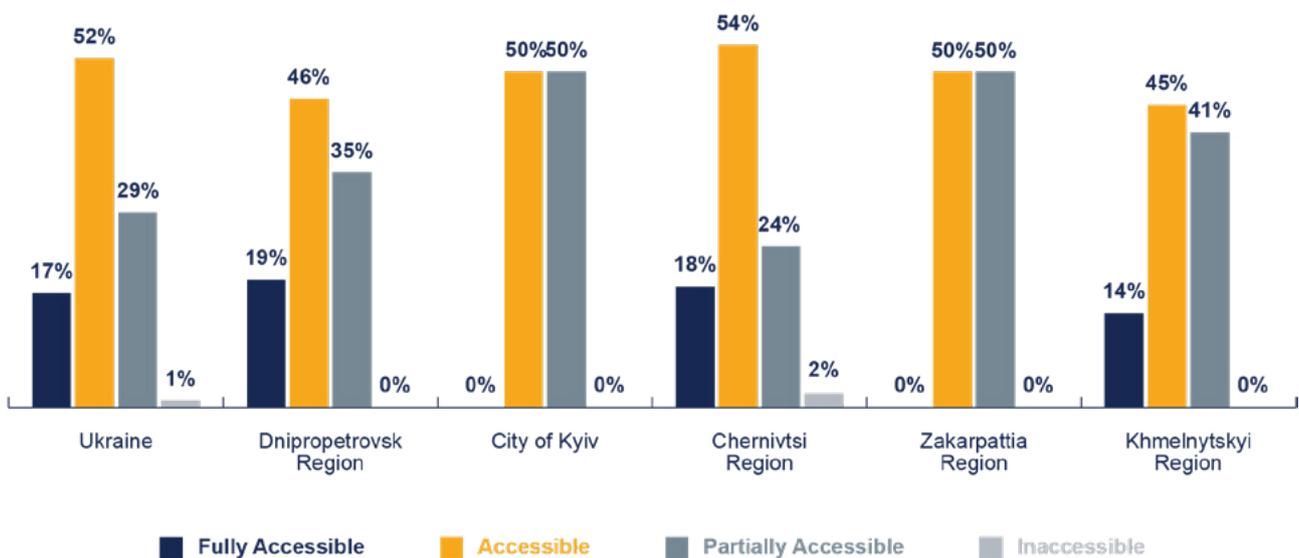
Service providers believe that veterans, including female veterans, LGBTIQ+ and veterans in situations of vulnerability, have access to these services. Service providers in the Zakarpattia region are most positive about this, while those in the Khmelnytskyi region are least confident (Figure 28).

Figure 28. Assessment of access to reintegration programmes for all veterans, distribution by region



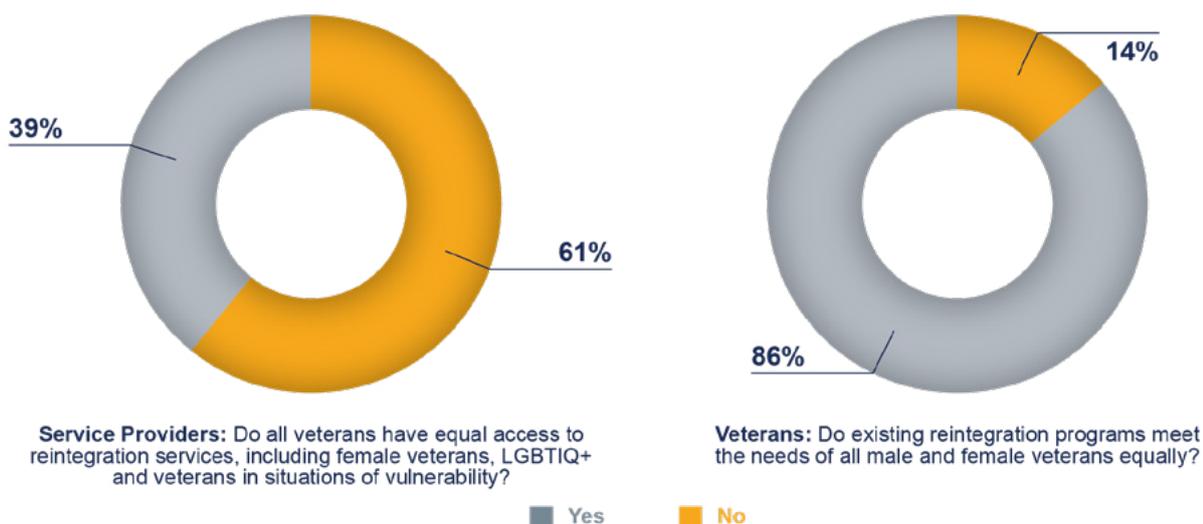
At the same time, according to respondents, the level of access to reintegration services for male and female veterans varies. The highest level of access was noted in the city of Kyiv (72% rated it as “high” or “very high”), while half of the respondents indicated a lower level of service availability (50% each) in the Zakarpattia and Khmelnytskyi regions. A slightly above-average assessment prevails in the Dnipropetrovsk and Chernivtsi regions – 65% and 59%, respectively (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Level of accessibility of services for all veterans, distribution by region



Equally important is the comparison of responses to questions about equality of access to reintegration services between veterans and service providers. However, while 86% of responding providers gave a positive assessment, only 39% of veterans did so (a gap of more than double) (Figure 30). These discrepancies are very significant and indicate a problem with the sensitivity of programmes to the needs of the real veteran audience.

Figure 30. Equity in access and provision of reintegration services: comparison of veterans' and providers' assessments



Thus, the vast majority of service providers acknowledge the existence of an available reintegration system and consider it to be sufficiently effective in basic parameters. The average level of support is a “balance point” between the state’s attempts to act and systemic gaps in implementation.

Regarding equality of access, the official perception of providers is mostly positive – the majority considers the system to be inclusive. However, veterans’ assessments categorically do not coincide with the assessments of service providers. This may indicate either that an impartial assessment of the needs of male and female veterans is not carried out and appropriate provision of services and support is not ensured by state and local authorities’ representatives, or it may also reflect the specific focus of the study, where it is female veterans and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community who do not feel that the veterans’ reintegration system in Ukraine meets their needs.

This information is confirmed by a report from the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Human Rights, which identifies a number of issues. Firstly, state institutions of the veterans’ rehabilitation and reintegration system are scattered among several ministries and various local and regional authorities, which, in the absence of coordination, leads to fragmentation of the process. Secondly, the vast majority of issues with which veterans and their family members addressed the Commissioner during 2024 concerned the conditions and quality of medical services, the timing of calculation and payment of due social benefits and the granting of PiH statuses. A number of violations were identified here, which are associated with delays, limited human resources, as well as constant changes in programmes and practices.

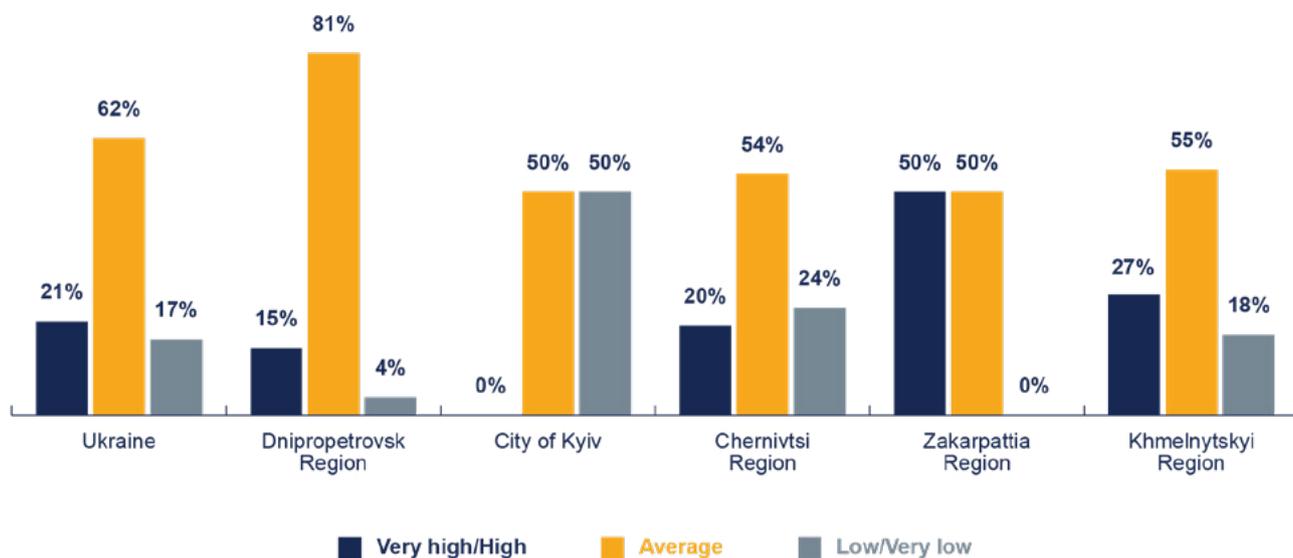
These hypotheses are also confirmed when analysing the level of representation of reintegration services according to a specific list: for example, from 51 to 83% of service providers noted that in their regions virtually all types of services were accessible to veterans (except for housing programmes, which were mentioned by 34% of respondents). At the same time, the analysis of the level of use of these types of services among the surveyed veterans is much lower, as discussed in the previous sections of the study. For example, medical care, the accessibility of which was indicated by 75% of service providers, was actually used by 41% of veterans. This difference is no less significant for other types of services.

Table 10. Reintegration services accessible at the local level, assessment of service providers

Answer option	Number of people	Share, %
<i>Administrative services</i>	85	83%
<i>Medical assistance</i>	77	75%
<i>Psychological support</i>	70	69%
<i>Education and retraining</i>	54	53%
<i>Housing programmes</i>	35	34%
<i>Employment support</i>	57	56%
<i>Financial assistance</i>	52	51%
<i>Other</i>	3	3%

Analysis of service providers' responses shows that the overall level of support for veterans within the reintegration system in Ukraine is most often assessed as "average." This option was chosen by over 60% of respondents in all regions studied. At the same time, the extreme options of the scale – "very high" and "low and very low" – were almost never recorded, which indicates a relatively restrained perception of both the positive and negative aspects of the system.

Figure 31. Assessment of overall support for veterans by the reintegration system, opinion of service providers, regional distribution

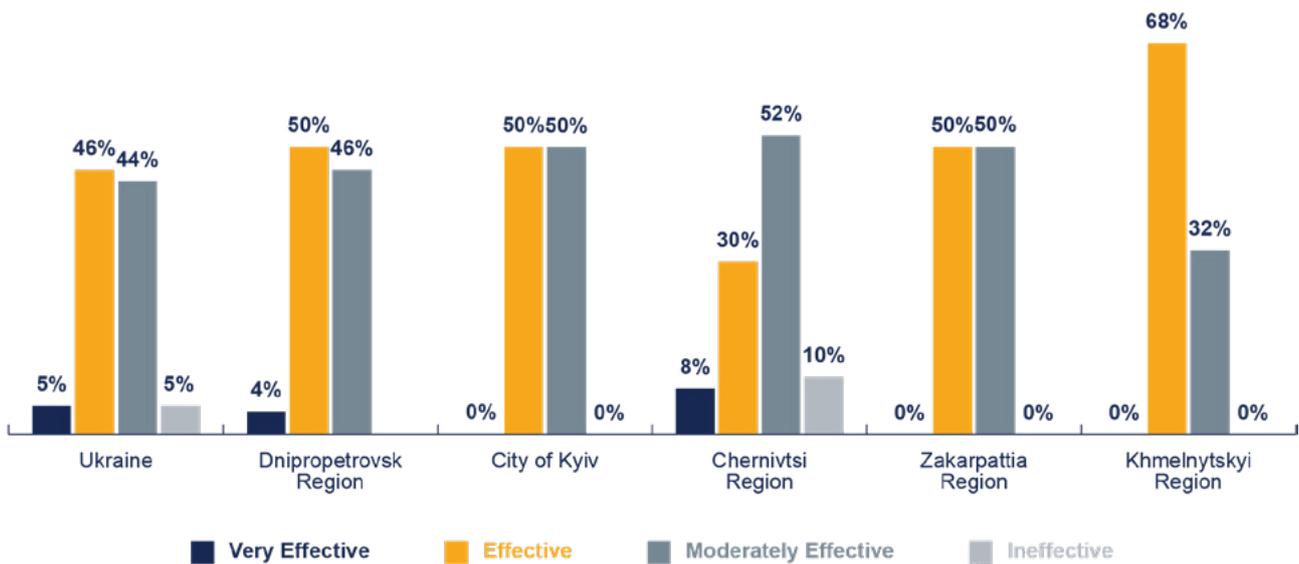


Such unanimity and, at the same time, vagueness of assessments may indicate the perception formed in the professional community that the reintegration system in Ukraine actually functions, but has numerous limitations in its efficiency and effectiveness:

- the simultaneous presence of both strong and weak links in the system;
- the development of individual service sectors, which allows the respondents to compare experiences;
- the relative transparency and publicity of the sphere, which shapes both expectations and criticism.

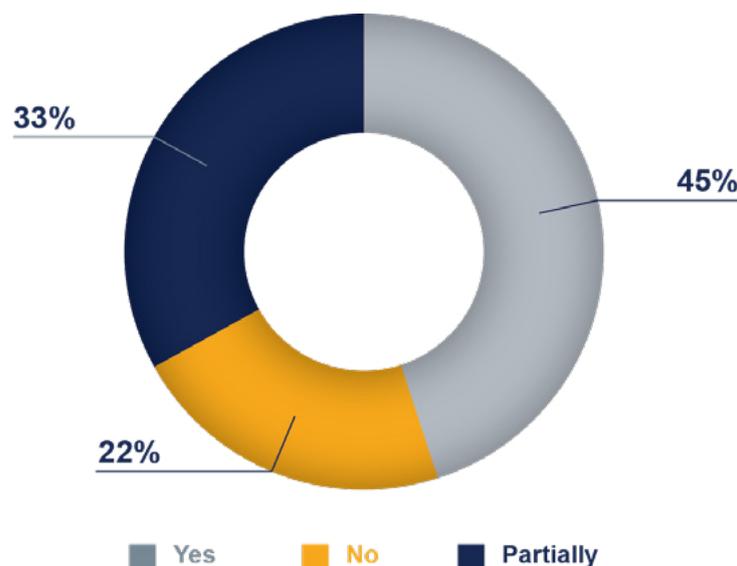
In the regional context, the assessments of representatives of the Dnipropetrovsk region differ significantly: over 95% of respondents-service providers in this group believe that services are provided at an average or higher level. In contrast, in the veteran community, the assessments of effectiveness are almost twice as restrained: about 47% of veterans gave an average or higher assessment of services (“partially effective”, “effective” and “very effective”), while 40% of respondents could not decide on it in general, which may indicate a hidden negative experience or lack of experience using services.

Figure 32. Assessment of the effectiveness of providing reintegration services to veterans, regional distribution



At the same time, 45% of surveyed service providers believe that the reintegration system takes into account the needs of female veterans, LGBTIQ+ and other veteran groups in situations of vulnerability, while 33% think that the needs of these groups of veterans are only partially taken into account, and 22% of service providers believe that the needs are not considered.

Figure 33. Considering the needs of veteran groups in situations of vulnerability in reintegration policies



Analysis of service providers' responses allows us to identify three key trends that characterize the accessibility and effectiveness of reintegration programmes for veterans. First of all, administrative services, medical services, and psychological support constitute the three most common types of assistance available in most regions. Their presence indicates the focus of the current system on basic and short-term forms of support.

For example, in Kyiv, mentions of psychological assistance reach 86%, which is the highest rate among the regions. At the same time, services with a long-term impact – housing programmes, education, and retraining – are much less represented, even according to the experts themselves.

Second, the reintegration system remains unbalanced in the types of accessible support, which requires cross-sectoral integration, development of “soft” components, and unification of access standards. Despite the declared availability of a wide range of services, almost 30% of providers indicated that these services were accessible only partially, incompletely, or could not provide a clear answer.

The third trend is the gap between the perceptions of providers and the experiences of veterans themselves. Although most experts assess the level of accessibility and inclusiveness as acceptable, veterans themselves demonstrate much more restrained assessments. This indicates a systemic problem of the gap between formal perceptions of effectiveness and the real experiences of users. This situation complicates the objective assessment of programmes and requires greater attention to the contextual needs of different groups of veterans.

Thus, despite the formal availability of a support infrastructure, the actual level of accessibility, effectiveness and responsiveness of services to veterans' needs remains insufficient. This highlights the need to rethink approaches to the functioning of the reintegration system, in particular, to increase its flexibility and transparency, as well as to introduce quality assessment indicators by region and target group.



Representatives of civil society organizations working with women and men veterans at the workshop “Effective Communication with Women and LGBTQI+ Veterans, Active Servicemen, and Members of their Families,” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Uzhhorod as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

4.4.3. Systemic challenges for veterans' reintegration

Despite the existence of state policies and individual reintegration programmes, service providers unanimously emphasize the deep systemic challenges that make it difficult for veterans to return to civilian life. These barriers have both structural and interpersonal dimensions, and are especially acute in cases of interaction with groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, LGBTIQ+ people, and veterans with disabilities. Importantly, service providers both confirm and elaborate on the challenges for reintegration outlined by veterans, but also add new areas and aspects that are specific to the sphere of state and local governments.

Information barriers

According to the results of the qualitative phase of the study with service providers, one of the key barriers to veterans' reintegration was identified not so much as a lack of information, but rather its fragmentation, delay, or inconsistency with the actual behavioural practices of veterans in accessing knowledge about available services and support for veterans.

“Information is our weakest link. People learn from Telegram channels, from acquaintances, but definitely not from the state. And then there are those who simply don't want to hear anything – because they have lost trust.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

This creates a problem of information isolation: veterans, especially in rural areas, are often unaware of existing programmes or do not believe in their real effectiveness. Low levels of trust in official sources, insufficient presence in local media, and lack of personalized communication deepen this sense of alienation.

Even when the state tries to establish awareness – for example, through training of local representatives – the effectiveness of such measures largely depends on the human factor, not on systemic guarantees.

“We recently taught 254 elders about benefits, communication, and how to properly meet a veteran. Whether they do it or not is a personal factor, some do and some are reluctant.”

(Female respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

Respondents directly point to the lack of horizontal communication between institutions – for example, when the TRC has key data but does not transfer it to social services. As a result, service providers learn about the veterans post factum, after they themselves applied – that is, when they could have been without support for months.

“The problem is that we don't know when a veteran shows up. The TRC knows this, but they don't give that information.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

Respondents noted that the presence of information channels in itself is not a guarantee of anything. Classic communication channels (official websites, social media, Facebook groups) do not fulfil the expected function – not because they do not exist, but because they do not resonate with the behavioural habits of veterans. In such conditions, informal chains of trust remain the most effective: veteran chat rooms, personal contacts, brothers and sisters in arms communities. However, some respondents noted that they are officially prohibited from being presented on social media as state and local authorities. Therefore, this greatly complicates communication and information exchange between service providers and veterans. This issue requires discussion and official agreement.

“Nobody reads a Facebook group. The most powerful thing is their communication with each other, because they trust each other.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

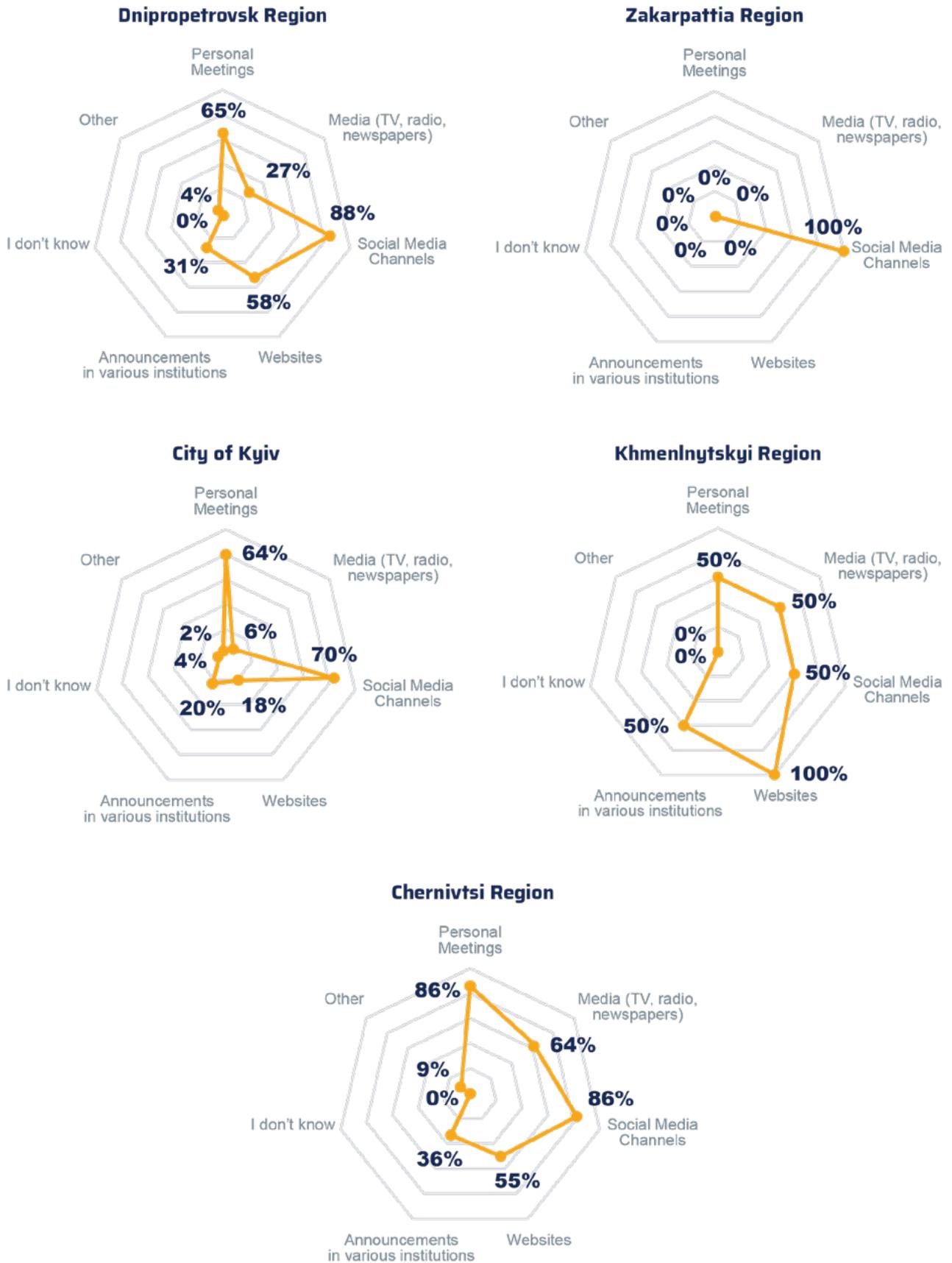
“There is a veterans’ chat on social media. We tell people at all events, when we travel to villages, that we are there and invite them to join us. It is better to contact them after getting to know them.”

(Female respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

This highlights an important feature of the modern system: informal networks that operate on trust are often more effective than formal sources. For service providers, this means a shift in approach from transmitting information to building trust. It is important not to simply publicize the service, but to build a connection that makes the veteran want to use it. As a result, communication must occur through horizontal connections, reputation, and personal presence, not just through centralized instructions.

The results of the service provider survey demonstrate the variety of channels for informing veterans about reintegration programmes (Figures 34–38).

Figures 34-38. Ways of informing veterans about reintegration services by service providers, distribution by region



The most common are digital platforms, namely social media (on average 56% of respondents) and websites (44%). In the Khmelnytskyi and Zakarpattia regions, 100% of respondents named social media as the main source of information. At the same time, in the Chernivtsi and Dnipropetrovsk regions, priority is given to personal meetings (86% and 65%, respectively), which indicates the high value of direct contact – especially in the regions with limited coverage of digital channels.

Classic media (radio, television, newspapers) are mentioned less often, namely: 64% in Chernivtsi region, 50% in the Khmelnytskyi region, and only 6% in Kyiv. Announcements in institutions and administrations also play a minor role and are noted by less than half of respondents in most regions. Some providers also indicate other formats of information – telephone calls, individual social assistance, online lectures – but these are isolated mentions. About 9% of respondents were not able to determine how veterans receive information at all, which may indicate the lack of a uniform approach or weak coordination.

The qualitative phase of the study deepens this understanding: according to many respondents, the key barrier is not the lack of channels, but the fragmentation, delay, or inconsistency of information with the habits and expectations of the veterans themselves.

“Information is our weakest link. People learn from Telegram channels, from acquaintances, but definitely not from the state. And then there are those who simply don't want to hear anything – because they have lost trust.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

Veterans are often unaware of the programmes or do not trust official sources, which is especially noticeable in rural communities. Even when local authorities organize training for community representatives, the effectiveness depends heavily on the human factor:

“We recently taught 254 elders about benefits, communication, and how to properly meet a veteran. Whether they do it or not is a personal factor, some do and some are reluctant.”

(Female respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

Institutional incoherence also complicates access to support. In particular, information about a veteran's return remains only in the TRC, while social services learn about it too late:

“The problem is that we don't know when a veteran shows up. The TRC knows this, but they don't give that information.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

It has often been mentioned that even the presence of official channels (websites, Facebook pages, etc.) does not guarantee results – they do not coincide with the information behaviour of the target audience. In response, an informal system of trust arises:

“Nobody reads a Facebook group. The most powerful thing is their communication with each other, because they trust each other.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

“There is a veterans’ chat on social media. We tell people at all events, when we travel to villages, that we are here and invite them to join us. It is better to contact them after getting to know them.”

(Female respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

The problem is further complicated by the fact that some government agencies are prohibited from being present on social media:

“We are officially prohibited from communicating via Facebook – and that’s why many people simply don’t find out the information.”

(Anonymous, focus group)

This highlights an important feature of the modern system: informal networks that operate on trust are often more effective than formal sources. For service providers, this means a shift in approach from transmitting information to building trust. It is important not to simply publicize a service, but to build a connection that makes the veteran want to use it. As a result, communication must occur through horizontal connections, reputation, and personal presence, rather than just centralized instructions.



Representatives of civil society organizations working with veterans at the workshop “Research Methods and Data Collection” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Kyiv as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

Administrative, bureaucratic and financial challenges

One of the key barriers that service providers are focusing on is the lack of a coherent state policy in the field of veterans' reintegration. The problem lies not only in the lack of programmes or resources, but primarily in the fragmentation of interagency coordination, unclear implementation algorithms and blurred responsibility of implementers. This creates duplication of local and regional programmes, fragmented funding and incoherence of actions at the national and local levels.

“There is no separate funding as such, because there is no separate policy. Each body works somehow on its own – whoever came up with whatever, implements it. And the veteran remains at the crossroads of responsibility.”

(Female respondent, Zakarpattia region)

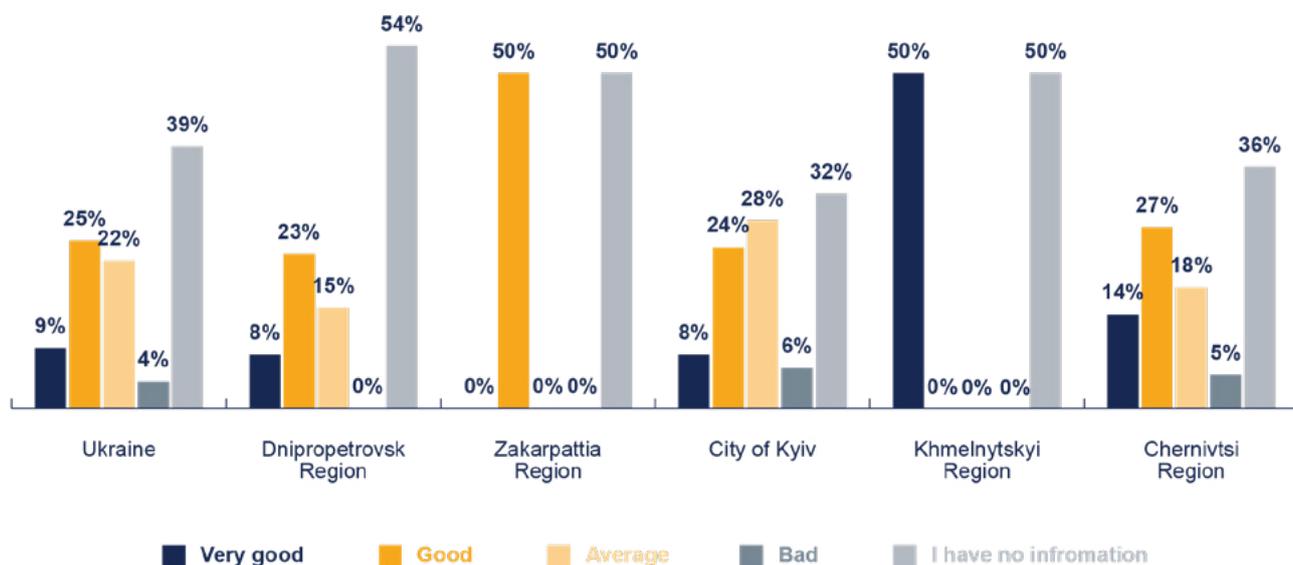
In a decentralized system, local administrations often do not perceive reintegration as a priority, and interaction with civil society organisations is an exception.

“The Kyiv City State Administration has no desire to study civil society organisations, to bring donors to them. This is a common culture of all communities: they do not want to develop policies and play the long game. There is no culture of relationships.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

These observations are also confirmed by the results of the quantitative survey analysis – the generalized assessments of cooperation are shown in the figure below.

Figure 39. Assessment of cooperation between state and non-state organisations (civil society organisations, private structures, church, etc.) in the field of veterans' reintegration, regional distribution



Overall, only 9% of respondents in Ukraine rated this cooperation as “very good”, another 25% as “good”, while 39% as “poor” or “absent”, and 23% did not have enough information to assess it at all. This situation suggests that, despite some positive examples, effective interaction between structures is the exception rather than the rule.

The highest rates of positive assessment of cooperation were recorded in the Khmelnytskyi region (50% “very good”) and the Zakarpattia region (50% “good”), which may indicate the presence of established arrangements for intersectoral interaction in these regions. However, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, more than half of respondents (54%) consider this cooperation to be poor or non-existent, and only 4% consider it to be very good. In Kyiv and Chernivtsi, there is also a significant percentage of respondents who were unable to assess cooperation due to lack of information (32% and 36%, respectively), which may indicate low visibility of joint initiatives or insufficient transparency of communication at the community level.

Such a contrast between regions demonstrates the unevenness of institutional interaction in Ukraine, and also indicates the need to systematize coordination arrangements between the state and civil society sectors, as well as to implement more transparent and understandable models of cooperation that would ensure sustainable support for the veteran community.

Almost half of respondents across all regions point to bureaucratic obstacles: frequent changes in regulations, insufficient training of staff, fear of taking on responsibility, which creates a sense of insecurity even among those who want to help. This also leads to the fact that service providers cannot refer veterans to the appropriate institution or organisation.

The greatest difficulties arise in sectors with limited resources: medical, social, educational fields. There is a lack not only of professionals (psychologists, rehabilitation specialists, social workers), but also of transport and infrastructure, especially in rural communities.

“I’m not for quantity – I’m for quality. We need to monitor and assess quality, because adding a service is easy, but ensuring that it is of proper quality requires people and professionals both of which are lacking.”

(Female respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“The healthcare sector is overwhelmed. People with amputations are lying in the corridors.”

(Male respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Thus, systemic vulnerability lies not only in objective resource limitations, but also in the lack of coordinated policy, personnel support, and trust. For the sustainability of the system, it is necessary not only to increase the number of services, but also to ensure their quality, humanity, and compliance with veterans’ real needs.

Stigma and psychological barriers

According to the research, service providers clearly outline the depth of the psychological challenges that veterans face after returning from war. Their testimonies indicate that one of the main barriers is distrust in the support system and emotional exhaustion, which prevents them from seeking help even in critical situations.

According to service providers, many veterans do not seek help because they either do not believe in its effectiveness or do not want to relive a traumatic experience in a dialogue with a specialist whom they consider far from being “a buddy”.

“There is a huge distrust. Veterans don't trust the system; they don't trust psychologists without experience. And sometimes they are just tired. After the war, they want silence, not another line or interview.”

(Female respondent, Zakarpattia region)

Service providers emphasize that the process of transitioning back into civilian life is always accompanied for veterans by physical, emotional, and social transformations that are difficult to fit into existing standards of support.

“They return to civilian life wounded, as family members of the deceased or with disabilities. They don't return just because they want so – they're not allowed to do this. They have PTSD, flashbacks.”

(Female respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

“Veterans divide people into “us” and “them”, they got used to this in war, there are problems with trust in society, in people, in their families. It is important to teach both employers and collectives to accept veterans back. If they are going to study, teachers should be trained to speak correctly, understand the psychology, the potential triggers, and how to react. It is difficult for veterans to find go-to guys.”

(Female respondent, Chernivtsi region)

Service providers working with the veteran community also state that despite the formal presence of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and in the information space, their needs remain almost invisible in the reintegration system, and they also become objects of sexism and prejudice. According to one of the study participants, who implemented initiatives to support female veterans, there is an acute shortage of programmes specifically targeted at women, especially when it comes to experiences of violence or stigma.

“There is a certain ‘deafness’ to the topic of women’s experiences in war. If a woman wants psychological help, she is often sent to the general queue, where she may also be told something like: “Well, why did you go there? (to the war – ed.).”

“Sexism is present in both society and the army, I faced that issue... They say: ‘she didn’t go there to fight, but to solve some other problems’ (a hint at arranging her personal life – ed.). It’s already difficult for a woman to make a decision, and then there’s the stereotype: “She left her child and her husband...”

(Female respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Experts emphasize that PTSD, flashbacks, and profound emotional changes in veterans require systemic, long-term support that the current infrastructure cannot provide:

“They have PTSD, flashbacks... Changing their social role... It’s difficult because it’s not typical of life.”

(Male respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

“A change in social role: first from civilian to military, and then vice versa. And it’s difficult, because it’s not typical of life. In the army, everything is clear, but in civilian life, everything is blurred...”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

Providers separately note the lack of institutional readiness to work with groups in situations of particular vulnerability: LGBTIQ+ veterans, female veterans who have experienced violence, and veterans with disabilities. This unpreparedness is both technical and emotional.

“We don’t yet know how to talk to people who come back different. Completely different. And until we ourselves have lived their experiences, we won’t be able to be effective.”

(Male respondent, Zakarpattia region)

Another hidden barrier is that the burden of support increasingly falls not on the state, but on the shoulders of a few activists who are themselves veterans. They simultaneously work as coordinators, psychologists, and facilitators, often without proper compensation.

“There is a group of people who pull everything. They organize events, meetings, help. But no one helps them themselves. And they are the first to burn out.”

(Male respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Thus, according to service providers themselves, the greatest vulnerability of the system is not only the problems of veterans, but also the vulnerability of those who support them: activists, doctors, social workers. Their burnout threatens informal support networks, which are often the only available resource for veterans.

Content-related barriers

Service providers emphasize that one of the deepest problems in the field of reintegration is not the lack of programmes as such, but the fact that many of them are formal in nature and do not meet the real needs of veterans, especially women, minorities, and people in difficult life circumstances.

Most of the interviewed participants cannot recall any gender-specific programmes at the level of the pilot regions. Even those specialists who mentioned individual initiatives could not explain how these programmes take into account the needs of veteran communities in combination with gender specificity. This indicates the fragmentation of approaches, the lack of a clear methodology and practical integration of the gender component into reintegration policies.

The views of the providers themselves remain fragmented: some are convinced that women do not need separate support, while others, on the contrary, emphasize the specific challenges and discrimination that female veterans face.

“There’s no difference, women fight on an equal footing with men, so why should there be a separate programme? They themselves will feel uncomfortable...”

(Male respondent, Zakarpattia region, has veteran status)

“There is a difference in the perception that women are not the ones who fight – this needs to be debunked in headquarters, everyone needs respect and honour. Women can return because of children and pregnancy. There is a difference in medical treatment – there have many problems with the reproductive system. Problems in starting a family. In obtaining benefits, documents. They seek psychological help more often... They do not understand, they are looking for where and how they can get a service.”

(Female respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

Despite the growing presence of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and public discussions about the role of women in war, the institutional level still demonstrates uncertainty in approaches to their support. Even within the same focus group in the same region, completely opposite opinions could be heard – from the attitude towards the reintegration of female veterans as a simpler process compared to men, to the thesis about the invisibility of the problems of women with veteran status, who simply resigned themselves to the fact that they do not have the right to full assistance that would take into account their specific gender needs.

“In my opinion, it’s easier for women. We perceive women as even greater heroines. Because women serve less, there are more open social elevators for them.”

(Male respondent, Kyiv)



“I think the difference (between male and female veterans – ed.) is as follows: you’re back, so you can carry on. Women are quickly forgotten. They get over it faster and restore social ties, because women already have so many roles. Men need more time, they don’t communicate with those they were friends with before. They are glorified more.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

The results suggest that gender responsiveness in reintegration programmes is likely to remain declarative or fragmented – intuitive rather than structured – in many cases. Respondents’ comments indicate a general awareness that women have different demands and challenges after demobilisation, but there is no clear understanding of how these challenges should be integrated into support policies.

Instead of clear arrangements, we see cautious formulations, assumptions, or individual efforts – such as male professionals’ attempts to understand women’s emotional state without appropriate training. This creates a situation in which female veterans are forced to either remain silent or seek out “buddies” – those who understand without words. Providers emphasize that female veterans often remain without access to specialized support due to the lack of a safe environment, female professionals, protocols that would take into account the experiences of CRSV or reproductive needs.



“Women don’t really open up to me as a man, but when they do, they tell me: I don’t understand what to do, who to turn to.”

(Male respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

It should be noted separately that service providers and government officials responsible for creating and implementing reintegration policies partly do not recognize LGBTIQ+ veterans as a community with special needs or problems with rehabilitation and reintegration.



“I think we don’t have such people... They are all equal – men, women. We shouldn’t single anyone out.”

(Male respondent, Zakarpattia region)

At the same time, a separate topic in the conversation with the providers was the situation with Roma veterans. Participants noted the complete lack of state attention to this group: low level of education, lack of documents, lack of advocacy and communication about this community – all this turns Roma veterans into another “invisible” group with zero access to reintegration arrangements.

In these conditions, it is service providers who take on the role of not just specialists, but mediators, translators, and sometimes the veteran’s only allies in the new reality. The respondents’ awareness of transition as a complex process that requires a systemic approach does not always find support in the state vertical, but it is they who see the daily gaps between political declarations and reality. And therefore, they are increasingly trying not only to respond, but also to influence: through advocacy, partnerships, individual assistance practices and in cooperation with veterans, in the civil society sector.

“I saw a new trend: the veteran movement is rising and it is forming new rules. ... We will work ourselves: delegate to us the authority in respect of prisoners of war, 300s, etc. A change in attitude: veterans are not victims, but those who are ready to take responsibility. I saw this at the city level.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

“When we return and see that there are issues that have not been resolved, we solve them ourselves as best we can. We need to find some way out for people so that they can turn to us to overcome their problems... There is no job in rural areas, people with physical disabilities cannot find employment. We need to think about what conditions to create for them so that they can provide for themselves at least and benefit someone. So that they do not include themselves in the category of those who are completely unnecessary to the state.”

(Male respondent, Zakarpattia region, has veteran status)



Participant of the CSO workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

4.4.4. Positive practices for veterans' reintegration

The results of the study indicate that effective veterans' reintegration into communities is most successfully implemented under conditions of trust, a personalized approach, horizontal connections, and intersectoral cooperation. Best practices often arise not within centralized programmes, but from below – through initiatives created by veterans themselves, volunteers, or local organisations.

Trust as the basis for effective reintegration

Service providers cite trust and horizontal connections within the veteran community as key effectiveness factors. Personal experience, understanding of the specifics of trauma, and shared identity create space for genuine communication and support. This is why veteran initiatives often have a greater impact than formal institutions:

“We see that what works best is what the veterans themselves do. There is trust, understanding without unnecessary words. When a comrade comes, it's not like going to an office, it's like coming home.”

(Focus group female respondent, Chernivtsi region)

Such initiatives create safe spaces where it is possible to openly talk about emotional states, needs, or difficulties of post-war adaptation.

Psychological help

The effectiveness of psychological support is significantly increased when it is provided by veterans with combat experience. This allows for contact to be built without unnecessary barriers and mistrust, especially for those with PTSD or other consequences of combat operations:

“When you've been through war yourself, people come to you and open up to you in a completely different way. It's like a password. A person sees that you don't need to be persuaded.”

(Female respondent, Kyiv)

This is not about formal counselling, but about empathetic, deep therapeutic work that takes into account traumatic experiences.

The power of informal and local initiatives

Volunteer and local initiatives often demonstrate flexibility and pinpoint effectiveness. They are not burdened by bureaucracy, respond promptly, and at the same time maintain a high level of empathy:

“These may be small projects – one psychologist and three volunteers, but the effect is colossal. Because they don’t ask for a hundred papers, they ask: how are you?”

(Focus group female respondent, Khmelnytskyi region)

Examples of such practices – Titans. UA projects, veteran spaces, retreats with partners – illustrate the potential of communities based on support, not control:

“Titans are people who don’t wait for instructions, but initiate, unite, and create themselves. We coordinate not only events among ourselves, but also requests for psychological help and employment. It works.”

(Male respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

Cooperation of the civil society sector with local authorities

Another factor for successful reintegration is effective cooperation between local governments and civic initiatives. The effectiveness of such cooperation largely depends on trust and openness on both sides:

“If the government doesn’t listen to the civil society sector, nothing will happen. But when there is cooperation, then we can build a centre, a service, a route together. We have succeeded in this in some united territorial communities”.

(Male respondent, Dnipropetrovsk region)

One example of an effective model is the Veteran Support Specialist programme. Its effectiveness is largely determined not only by the concept, but primarily by the human factor – who exactly this specialist is, whether he/she has his/her own service experience, whether he/she has received appropriate training, and whether he/she is able to inspire trust from the veteran community:

“We have specialists in supporting veterans in communities. These are those who went through the war themselves and can become leaders. But success depends not on the programme itself, but on how it is implemented on the ground, whether there is trust in this person.”

(Focus group female respondent, Zakarpattia region)

At the same time, it is important that such a specialist is not just “a buddy”, but also a well-trained specialist – with an understanding of the basics of psychological support, communication and social navigation. An equally important factor is the availability of support from local authorities and other service structures. It is the combination of professional training, personal involvement and institutional support that creates the conditions for the real success of such programmes.

Thus, positive reintegration practices are not based on scale or resources, but on trust, empathy, shared experiences and intersectoral collaboration. Scaling them up requires not only funding but also maintaining sensitivity to context, humanity and real dialogue.



Women veterans taking the stand during the presentation of the key findings of the mapping study on existing services and policies for veteran reintegration at the roundtable with local authorities in Uzhhorod.

4.4.5. Expectations and suggestions from surveyed service providers and government representatives

Contrary to the widespread perception of service providers as passive executors of state policy, the results of the study demonstrate a different reality: they are active participants in change. In situations where the state system turns out to be ineffective or inconsistent, it is service providers who take the initiative, seeking flexible solutions based on practical experience and proximity to the needs of the veteran community. Their proposals are not abstract – they are formulated in a specific, concrete way, and born “on the field.”

The key leitmotif in most of the initiatives announced is the need to build a holistic, transparent, and understandable support system. This is not just about expanding existing programmes, but about creating a single, intuitive route for veterans – a kind of “roadmap” of reintegration with clear instructions, support, and the possibility of personalized access.

The need for a single point of entry and coordinated institutional interaction was voiced in a number of interviews. Focus group respondents offer simple but potentially effective ideas:



“Create a hospital rating, like on Google Maps.”

“A single structure where all problems – medical, social, and household ones – are solved.”

“Support is mandatory: legal support first and foremost. A person should not seek, but be guided.”

“Current legislation records reintegration only on paper. A veteran has to go through 7 circles of hell to get something... There must be a shoulder of support after returning.”

These proposals are based on the understanding that it is the fragmentation of the system that creates the most barriers: from loss of time to loss of trust. The request for mandatory, professional support – legal, psychological, social – is especially pronounced. The importance of taking into account gender needs is also emphasized: support for motherhood, safe spaces for women, a women’s circle and the possibility of recovery – not only physical, but also emotional.

At the heart of all these initiatives is not only the demand for functionality, but also for humanity and dignity. As experience shows, trust is central to the reintegration system. And it is the service providers who work daily, in communities and on the front lines of social interaction, who are best aware of how fragile this trust is. On the one hand, they do not always have the authority to change systemic decisions, but on the other hand, they do everything possible at the level of available resources. Their work is to restore this trust daily in conditions of limitations, which only strengthens the need for institutional support for their efforts.

05

International Practice of Inclusive Veterans' Reintegration

International experience of countries with a long history of military participation, large-scale veteran support programmes and developed approaches to inclusion is an important source for understanding effective reintegration models. The practices of Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America demonstrate how state systems can take into account gender characteristics, the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, intersectionality and the potential of civil society. For Ukraine, this is especially relevant in the context of full-scale war, increased social burden on communities and the need to form an inclusive, people-centred veterans' policy.

5.1. Canada

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) considers a veteran to be any person who has served in the Canadian Armed Forces, received an honourable discharge, and successfully completed basic military training²²².

According to the 2021 census, there were 461,240 veterans in Canada, of whom women make up approximately 14–16% (75,000–94,000 people)²²³. About 27,000 Canadian veterans, or 4%, identify as LGBTIQ+²²⁴. This figure reaches 8.7%, among female veterans compared to 3.2% among male veterans²²⁵.

Gender policy in the field of veterans' reintegration in Canada deserves special attention. The legislative framework for Canada's gender policy is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms²²⁶, the Human Rights Act²²⁷, the Employment Equity Act²²⁸, the Gender Budgeting Act²²⁹ and the Accessible Canada Act²³⁰. In 2023, Canada introduced the third National Action Plan in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, paying special attention to crisis response, combating gender-based violence and supporting women's leadership²³¹. All these legislative acts are harmoniously combined with the policy of a gender-responsive approach to veterans in Canada, which is implemented through Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)²³². This arrangement is enshrined in the related Strategy and is a key tool of Veterans Affairs Canada to ensure equality and inclusivity in all aspects of its activities. This policy aims to systematically integrate the principles of a comprehensive gender approach into the processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment of programmes and services provided to veterans, their families and employees of the Ministry.

The main objective of GBA+ is to examine how policies or initiatives may affect various groups of veterans differently. The analysis takes into account a wide range of identities, including gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, education, geography,

²²² Veterans Affairs Canada. *Our Mandate and Values*. Available at: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/about-vac/our-values/mandate> (accessed date: May 13, 2025).

²²³ Veterans Affairs Canada. *Life after Service Study: Female and Male Veterans in Canada*. Available at: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/about-vac/research/info-briefs/female-and-male-veterans-canada> (accessed date: June 05, 2025).

²²⁴ Veterans Affairs Canada. *Departmental Results Report 2021–22*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2022. Available at: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2025/acc-vac/V3-1-11-2022-eng.pdf (accessed date: May 29, 2025).

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Justice Canada. Available at: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/charter-charte/charter-poster.pdf> (accessed date: June 04, 2025).

²²⁷ *Canadian Human Rights Act*, R.S.C 1985, c. H-6. Justice Canada. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca> (accessed date: June 03, 2025).

²²⁸ *Employment Equity Act*, S.C. 1995, c. 44. Justice Canada. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²²⁹ *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act*, S.C. 2018, c. 27, s. 314. Justice Canada. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.2/FullText.html> (accessed date: June 06, 2025).

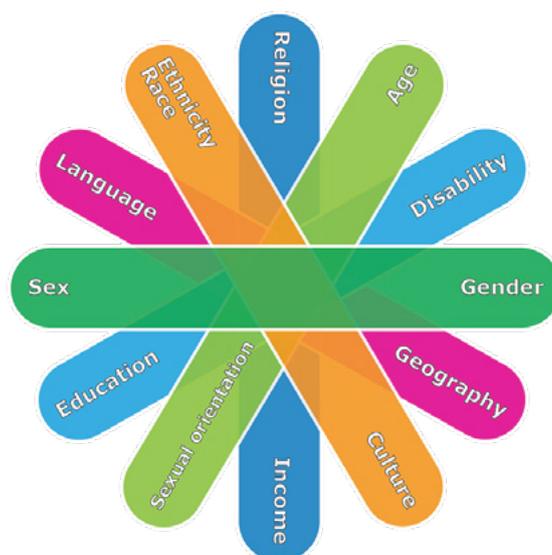
²³⁰ *Accessible Canada Act*, S.C. 2019, c. 10. Justice Canada. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

²³¹ Global Affairs Canada. *Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023–2029*. Available at: https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/cnap_wps-pnac_fps.aspx?lang=eng (accessed date: June 12, 2025).

²³² Women and Gender Equality Canada. *Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Resources*. Available at: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca> (accessed date: June 07, 2025).

language, and income. An important component of this policy is also the concept of intersectionality – the understanding that a person can simultaneously belong to multiple groups in situations of vulnerability, for example, being a woman, a veteran with a disability, and identifying as LGBTIQ+ (Figure 40). This approach allows not considering these characteristics in isolation but shaping policies that respond to the holistic experience of the person.

Figure 40. Intersectionality of gender policy, the example of Canada²³³



In Canada, GBA+ implementation is coordinated at all levels: the Deputy Minister provides overall leadership, division heads are responsible for implementation in their areas, and a dedicated team provides training and advice and interacts with Women and Gender Equality Canada²³⁴. All Veterans Affairs Canada employees are required to receive GBA+ training and apply it in their daily work. Effectiveness is assessed through surveys, reports, and data analysis that take into account the intersectional identities of veterans.

Veterans Affairs Canada's programmes are universal in access, yet clearly address the needs of groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, LGBTIQ+ people, and Indigenous peoples. They cover a wide range of services, from financial assistance to medical, psychological, and rehabilitation interventions (including support for trauma related to military service violence), job and career transitions, higher education, and veteran entrepreneurship. Many initiatives have an integrated gender component, such

²³³ Tidal Equality (March 4, 2021). *A Venn Diagram of Belonging: Where identities, equity and inclusion intersect* [online]. Available at: Tidal Equality (accessed date: May 2025).

²³⁴ Women and Gender Equality Canada. Official website. [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

as Vocational Rehabilitation Services²³⁵ and the Helmets to Hardhats programme²³⁶, which address the needs of caregivers, people with disabilities, or those facing barriers to the labour market. At the same time, there are specialized programmes aimed exclusively at female veterans, such as The Pepper Pod²³⁷ and Servicewomen's Salute²³⁸, which focus on social integration, mentoring, and emotional recovery.

Female veterans face unique challenges in reintegration, driven by both their military experience and societal expectations. They are more likely to report sexual violence during military service, have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, are more likely to live in poverty, and have lower pensions. Additional factors include career breaks due to caregiving responsibilities, part-time employment, and challenges with recognizing military experience in the civilian sector. Given these circumstances, Veterans Affairs Canada supports a number of initiatives specifically aimed at addressing the structural barriers women face in post-service life.

Programmes for LGBTIQ+ veterans play a special role. Through the LGBT Purge Fund²³⁹, Veterans Affairs Canada²⁴⁰ not only provides compensation to those who suffered discrimination during their service, but also supports processes of reconciliation, remembrance, and institutional change. Forums are organized, testimonies of LGBTIQ+ veterans are published, therapeutic programmes such as Women Warriors' Healing Garden²⁴¹ are implemented and a glossary of LGBTIQ+ terms has been created to ensure cultural sensitivity. Veterans Affairs Canada provides mandatory training for staff on LGBTIQ+ matters and works with organisations, including Rainbow Veterans Canada²⁴², Egale Canada²⁴³ and VETS Canada²⁴⁴, to deliver services that are inclusive and equitable.

235 Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a programme for veterans, former members of Canadian law enforcement agencies, their families and caregivers that provides free assistance in restoring health, finding work and employment after service [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/education-and-jobs/find-new-job/vocational-rehabilitation-injured-veterans> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

236 Helmets to Hardhats is a Canadian initiative that promotes employment of veterans, military personnel and their family members in the construction industry [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://helmetstohardhats.ca/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

237 The Pepper Pod is a Canadian retreat centre that supports female veterans, retired or retiring military personnel, and their partners [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://pepperpod.ca/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

238 Servicewomen's Salute is a Canadian national initiative focused on recognizing and honouring the contributions of women in the Armed Forces [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://servicewomensalute.ca/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

239 The LGBT Purge in Canada was a period of systemic discrimination that lasted from approximately the 1950s to the 1990s, during which Canadian government agencies — including the Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the federal public service — harassed, fired, or forced the dismissal of individuals suspected of belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. These actions were accompanied by humiliation, interrogation, psychological testing, and career destruction, often without any evidence or legal basis. This policy was not officially ended until the 1990s. In response to this historical injustice, the Government of Canada issued a formal apology to those affected in 2017.

240 The LGBT Purge Fund is a not-for-profit corporation that was set up to manage a portion of settlement funds allocated for victims of discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ members of the Canadian military, law enforcement, and civil service from the 1950s to the 1990s [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://lgbtpurgefund.com/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

241 Women Warriors' Healing Garden is a Canadian non-profit initiative that provides free chiropractic, gardening, art, and pet therapy programmes in a safe environment to women in the military, 2SLGBTQI+, BiPok, and Indigenous veterans [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://womenwarriorshg.org/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

242 Rainbow Veterans of Canada. Who We Are. [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://rainbowveterans.ca/who-we-are/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

243 Egale Canada. Canadian national 2SLGBTQI+ human rights organization [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://egale.ca/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

244 VETS Canada (*Volunteers and Veterans Helping Veterans of Canada*). A voluntary organization that provides assistance to homeless veterans or veterans in crisis [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://vetscanada.org/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).



CSO member asking a question at the CSO workshop on "Advocacy Campaign Planning and Development" organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Pusch-Vodytsia as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

At the local level, Veterans Affairs Canada works with regional offices, community organisations, and municipalities to integrate GBA+ gender impact analysis into daily practice. Grants from the Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund²⁴⁵ often support local projects that address the needs of women or LGBTIQ+ veterans. For example, The Pepper Pod initiative²⁴⁶ has been successfully implemented in some provinces in collaboration with health systems, education institutions, and municipal governments.

Thus, through a multi-level, intersectoral, and intersectional approach, Veterans Affairs Canada not only provides comprehensive support to veterans, but also shapes a policy culture focused on inclusivity, historical justice, and real equality in peace and crisis contexts.

²⁴⁵ Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund. [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/what-we-do/volunteer-fund> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁴⁶ The Pepper Pod. A space of support for female veterans in Canada [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://pepperpod.ca/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

5.2. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

In British law, a veteran is anyone who has served at least one day in the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) as well as Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations²⁴⁷. According to the Ministry of Defence, the number of veterans in the UK is decreasing – from 2.56 million in 2015 to 2 million in 2022²⁴⁸.

In 2021, there were 251,400 female veterans in England and Wales, representing 13.6% of the total number of veterans²⁴⁹. As of 2022, women made up 11.3% of regular military personnel and 15.6% of reservists²⁵⁰. According to the census, 0.9% of veterans identified as gay or lesbian, 0.5% as bisexual, and a further 0.1% as other identities, making a total of around 25,750 LGBTIQ+ veterans²⁵¹.

The UK is implementing gender-responsive policies through a range of government and community initiatives that recognise historical inequalities and the need for inclusive support. There is a particular emphasis on the need to develop a specific strategy for female and LGBTIQ+ veterans.

According to research conducted in the UK, female veterans have been identified as having their own specific needs in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes²⁵². Their experience differs significantly from that of men and is marked by a number of profound socio-economic and psychological challenges. Women were more likely to serve in “humanitarian” units, were more likely to be discharged for medical reasons, and faced lower incomes and limited career opportunities after their service, due in part to caring responsibilities. On a psychological level, they are twice as likely to develop PTSD and are also significantly more likely to have experienced sexual violence during their service, which has a significant impact on their health and subsequent integration into civilian life.

In response to these challenges, the UK has introduced targeted programmes for female veterans, covering four key areas: employment, mental health, social inclusion and cross-institutional engagement. In the area of employment, the Military Women Programme²⁵³, run by the Forces Employment Charity, offers mentoring, career coaching, training

²⁴⁷ Veterans Key Facts [Electronic resource]. Armed Forces Covenant. Available at: <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Veterans-Key-Facts.pdf> (accessed: May 22, 2025).

²⁴⁸ Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans Residing in Great Britain, 2015 [Electronic resource]. GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2015> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁴⁹ Characteristics of UK Armed Forces Veterans, England and Wales: Census 2021 [Electronic resource]. Office for National Statistics (ONS). Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁵⁰ Women in the Armed Forces [Electronic resource]. Armed Forces Network. Available at: <https://www.armedforcesnetwork.org/armed-forces-community/women-in-the-armed-forces/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁵¹ Characteristics of UK Armed Forces Veterans, England and Wales: Census 2021 [Electronic resource]. Office for National Statistics (ONS). Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/characteristicsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwalescensus2021/census2021> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁵² Female Veteran Experiences of Support in Civilian Life [Electronic resource]. Centre for Military Women's Research, September 2023. Available at: https://www.centreformilitarywomensresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ARU-Female-Veteran-Experiences-of-Support-in-Civilian-Life-Report-Sept-2023_FINAL.pdf (accessed May 22, 2025).

²⁵³ Military Women Programme a charitable initiative of the Forces Employment Charity, which provides mentoring, career coaching and employment support to female veterans [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/military-women-programme/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

opportunities and support in finding employment. The Poppy Factory²⁵⁴ provides a tailored approach to women with disabilities or health problems, offering flexible job search support. Additional support is provided by the Smart Works charity²⁵⁵, which provides professional clothing, interview coaching and career advice to female veterans.

There are specialist mental health services, including Op COURAGE through the UK's National Health Service²⁵⁶, which provides support tailored to women's experiences. There is also Combat Stress, which²⁵⁷ focuses on treating PTSD, anxiety and depression, and Salute Her UK²⁵⁸, which provides therapeutic support to women who have experienced sexual violence in the military.

Social integration is provided by organisations such as the Women's Royal Army Corps Association (WRAC Association)²⁵⁹, which provides charitable assistance and community support, Sisters in Service²⁶⁰, a professional network of women in the health sector, and the Female Veterans' Alliance²⁶¹, which advocates for and develops veterans' communities.

In response to the fragmentation of the system, coordination arrangements have been implemented, including the Female Veterans' Transformation Programme²⁶², which develops tools to improve access to medical, social and financial services, and the Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster²⁶³, which coordinates veterans' organisations and ensures intersectoral interaction with government agencies.

Around 1.5% of British veterans identify as LGBTIQ+. Until 2000, they were banned from serving openly in the military, leading to dismissals, loss of ranks and benefits²⁶⁴. In 2023, the government recognised this policy as a "moral stain"²⁶⁵ on the country's

254 The Poppy Factory is a British charity that supports veterans, particularly female veterans, in finding job through individual consultations and support [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.poppyfactory.org/femalesupport/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

255 Smart Works is a charity that helps unemployed women (including veterans) through coaching, interview coaching and the provision of professional clothing [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.smartworks.org.uk/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

256 Op COURAGE is an NHS mental health service providing tailored support for veterans and their families as they transition back to civilian life [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

257 Combat Stress is a leading UK charity providing clinical care to veterans with PTSD, anxiety and depression [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://combatstress.org.uk/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

258 Salute Her UK is a service that provides gender-responsive therapeutic support to female veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.saluteher.co.uk/> (accessed date: May 22, 2022).

259 "Women 's Royal Army Corps Association is an organization that provides support and charitable assistance to female veterans in the United Kingdom [Electronic resource]. Available at: wraca.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

260 Sisters in Service is a professional network of female veterans working in the health sector, providing emotional support, sharing experiences and career development [Electronic resource]. Available at: sistersinservice.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

261 "Female Veterans Alliance is a civil society organization that creates a space for mutual support of female veterans and advocacy of their interests [Electronic resource]. Available at: femaleveteransalliance.org (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

262 Female Veterans' Transformation Programme is an initiative that is developing a toolkit to improve access to health, social and financial services for female veterans [Electronic resource]. Available at: fvtp.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

263 Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster is a platform for coordinating the work of veterans' and government structures to improve policies to support female veterans [Electronic resource]. Available at: cobseo.org.uk/clusters/female-veterans/ (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

264 Government Equalities Office. National LGBT Survey: Analytical Report [Electronic resource] / Government Equalities Office. London: Government of Great Britain, 2018. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b3b2d1eed915d33e245fbc3/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

265 UK Government. Prime Minister issues historic apology to LGBT veterans [Electronic resource] / UK Government. 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-issues-historic-apology-to-lgbt-veterans> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

history and introduced a compensation programme, which includes payments of up to £70,000, the possibility of reinstatement, the return of medals and a formal apology²⁶⁶. The organisations Fighting With Pride²⁶⁷, SSAFA²⁶⁸ and Age UK²⁶⁹ play a key role in implementing these measures, in particular through the Operation Sterling initiative. They provide veterans with assistance in obtaining compensation, legal support, psychological support and mentoring programmes.

Despite the widespread availability of programmes, a significant proportion of veterans and LGBTIQ+ individuals do not know where to turn for help. The most common sources remain social media, primarily Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, where both official pages and informal veteran communities operate. However, many veterans do not use social media, and searching the Internet is often complicated by a lack of initial knowledge. Information from charitable organisations and regimental communities is valuable, but knowledge about them is also a barrier. Some research participants pointed to the difficulty of using government resources, in particular the Veterans ' Gateway platform²⁷⁰, which, although accumulating a lot of useful information, is perceived as overloaded and unintuitive.

Thus, the UK is making progress in addressing discrimination against female and LGBTIQ+ veterans, but challenges remain related to the lack of a uniform gender strategy and the availability of information. The most effective elements of the system are compensatory arrangements, specialized NGOs, and initiatives that take into account the intersectional needs and life trajectories of female veterans.

266 UK Government. LGBT Veterans Independent Review: Report and Financial Recognition Scheme [Electronic resource] / UK Government. 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lgbt-veterans-independent-review> (accessed: May 22, 2025).

267 Fighting with Pride is a charity that supports LGBTIQ+ veterans, particularly those who have been affected by the ban on service [Electronic resource]. Available at: fightingwithpride.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

268 "SSAFA – the Armed Forces charity is the oldest British veterans' charity, providing social, legal and housing support [Electronic resource]. Available at: ssafa.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

269 Age UK – Operation Sterling – telephone support, advice and assistance to older LGBTIQ+ veterans on finances, social protection and housing, in partnership with Fighting With Pride [Electronic resource]. Available at: ageuk.org.uk (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

270 Veterans' Gateway is an official platform that brings together information about government and charitable services for veterans in the UK [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

5.3. United States of America

There are approximately 1.7 million female veterans in the United States (US), representing 10.9% of the total number of veterans²⁷¹. Over 1 million veterans identify as LGBTIQ+²⁷², including 134,300 who are transgender people²⁷³.

The issue of veterans' reintegration has until recently been a priority area of US public policy, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has consistently implemented gender-responsive approaches through the Center for Women Veterans²⁷⁴. Key documents shaping gender-responsive policy in the US include the National Action Plan on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security²⁷⁵, as well as a number of federal laws, in particular the Veterans Health Care Act of 1992²⁷⁶ and Deborah Sampson Act of 2020²⁷⁷. Policy analysis is carried out through arrangements similar to the Canadian Gender-Based Analysis, which allows taking into account the needs of different social groups, including LGBTIQ + veterans.

The United States has a comprehensive system of veterans' reintegration programmes that are sensitive to the experiences of women and LGBTIQ+ people. The core programmes available through the Department of Veterans Affairs include a wide range of services: healthcare, vocational training, educational benefits, housing support, and psychological support²⁷⁸. While these services are formally open to all veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs is actively working to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of women and LGBTIQ+ people.

VA places special emphasis on creating a safe environment for LGBTIQ+ veterans. There is a separate LGBTIQ+ Veterans Health Programme that aims to reduce stigma, increase staff awareness, include transgender healthcare, and ensure respect for patients' gender identities²⁷⁹. The State Department of Veterans Affairs also partners with local and

²⁷¹ US Census Bureau. *Veterans Day 2024: Nov. 11*. Census.gov. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2024/veterans-day> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

²⁷² Disabled American Veterans. *LGBTQ+ Veterans: Topics & Resources*. DAV National Headquarters. Available at: <https://www.dav.org/get-help-now/veteran-topics-resources/lgbtq-veterans> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

²⁷³ Mallory, C., Brown, T. N. T., & Sears, B. (2019). *The impact of military service on transgender veterans in the US*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Available at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-military-service-us/> (accessed date: May 04, 2025).

²⁷⁴ *Center for Women Veterans* [Electronic resource]. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: <https://www.va.gov/womenvet/> [Screen title]. (Accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁷⁵ National Action Plan on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security and Strategy on Female Veterans in the United States [Electronic resource]. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: <https://www.va.gov/womenvet/>. [Screen title]. (Accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁷⁶ US Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 [Electronic resource]. Public Law 102–585. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/house-bill/929>. Screen title. (Accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁷⁷ *Deborah Sampson Act of 2020* [Electronic resource]. enacted as part of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020; details available via U.S. Government Publishing Office. Available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/COMPS16361?utm> [Screen title]. (Accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁷⁸ US System of veteran reintegration programs [Electronic resource]. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp. [Screen title]. (Accessed date: May 22, 2025).

²⁷⁹ LGBTIQ+ Veterans Health Program [Electronic resource]. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/>. [Screen title].

national LGBTIQ+ organisations that provide support to veterans who have experienced discrimination or are in difficult life circumstances²⁸⁰.

US female veterans also face unique post-service challenges. Their experiences include a higher risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder, higher rates of military sexual trauma, and significant economic hardship²⁸¹. In response, VA has implemented the *Women Veterans Health Care Program*²⁸², which provides services for reproductive health, gynaecology, psychological support, and treatment for injuries sustained while serving in the military. Each VA's healthcare facility has a female veterans coordinator to help navigate the system and access services.

In addition to government programmes, non-governmental initiatives are also active. For example, the Veterans Empowered & Thriving organisation works with women through creative support formats²⁸³; Boots to Heels helps adapt to civilian life and find work²⁸⁴; the Minority Women Veterans Organisation focuses on supporting female veterans from ethnic minorities²⁸⁵.

Overall, the U.S. approach to reintegration of female and LGBTIQ+ veterans is based on a combination of government programmes and community initiatives. This allows for a broader range of needs to be addressed, social and cultural barriers to be considered, and a more effective transition back into civilian life to be ensured for all who served in the military.

At the local level, the US policy is implemented through regional offices of the State Department of Veterans Affairs, which are staffed with female veterans coordinators, LGBTIQ+ specialists, and advisory and hotlines. However, due to recent decisions by the State Department of Veterans Affairs, such services have faced cuts, especially in support of transgender veterans: as state workers face new exclusionary directives, services are often terminated, forcing veterans to seek alternative local organisations and advocacy groups.

However, starting in January 2025, the current administration has imposed significant restrictions. Donald Trump's Executive Order of January 20, 2025, titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism"²⁸⁶ banned funding of gender policies, and the White House began removing the term "gender identity" from regulatory documents. Subsequently, the Department of Veterans Affairs revoked access to hormone therapy

280 VA's Collaboration with LGBTIQ+ Organizations [Electronic resource]. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: <https://www.va.gov/LGBT/>. [Screen title].

281 Female Veterans and Post-Service Challenges in the United States [Electronic resource]. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Available at: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/latestinformation/facts.asp>. [Screen title].

282 Women Veterans Health Care Program [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

283 "Veterans Empowered & Thriving [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://veteransempowered.org/> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

284 Boots to Heels. *Official Website*. Available at: <https://www.bootstoheels.com> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

285 Minnesota Women Veterans Organization. *Official Website*. Available at: <https://www.mwvo.org> (accessed date: May 14, 2025).

286 Executive Order of the President of the United States of January 20, 2025, titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism" [Electronic resource]. Official website of the White House. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).



Representatives of civil society organizations working with women and men veterans at the workshop “Advocacy Campaign Planning and Development,” organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Pushcha-Vodytsia as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

and other medical services for transgender veterans who had not previously received such services. The Department of Veterans Affairs also allowed staff to deny services on political or family grounds – for example, in assisting Democratic veterans or unmarried women. In addition to restrictions on medical services for transgender people, on June 6, 2025, the Supreme Court temporarily allowed the implementation of Executive Order No. 14183 of January 27, 2025, which prohibits transgender individuals from serving in the armed forces²⁸⁷.

These decisions sparked mass protests by veterans: in June 2025, the Unite for Veterans and Rally to Save It protests were held in Washington and Illinois, the aim of which was to stop the State Department’s layoffs of approximately 80,000–83,000 Veterans Affairs employees and to protect their rights²⁸⁸. However, the Executive Orders has not been yet recalled.

²⁸⁷ U.S. Supreme Court Order of June 6, 2025, Temporarily Allowing the Application of Executive Order 14183. Prohibition of Transgender Persons from Serving in the Armed Forces. Electronic Resource. SupremeCourt.gov Document: <https://www.supremecourt.gov> (accessed May 22, 2022).

²⁸⁸ Unite for Veterans: A mass protest by veterans in Washington, D.C., to stop the firing of VA employees. [Electronic resource] Available at: <https://www.unite4veterans.org> (accessed date: May 22, 2025); Rally to Save It: A rally in support of VA staff that took place simultaneously in several states. [Electronic resource]. Available at: <https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2025-05-30/veterans-rally-dday-washington-17961966.html> (accessed date: May 22, 2025).

5.4. Relevant approaches to adaptation in the Ukrainian context

International experience shows that effective veterans' reintegration is based on a systemic, multi-level policy that takes into account the individual needs of different categories of veterans, including gender-based, social or identity-based ones. Such approaches combine gender responsiveness, intersectionality, interagency coordination and strong partnerships between the state, the civil sector and local initiatives. Canada, the UK and the USA demonstrate different models, where flexibility of services, support for civil society organisations and regional decentralisation are key factors for success.

For Ukraine, it is advisable to:



Introduce a national arrangement for analysing policies through the prism of intersectionality (analogous to Canada's GBA+) as a mandatory step in developing veteran support programmes.



Develop specialized services for female veterans and LGBTIQ+ individuals, including medical, psychological, and career tools tailored to their experiences.



Institutionalize the institute of coordinators for gender inclusion in veterans' policy at the level of regions and territorial communities.



Support veteran communities through peer-to-peer support and grant programmes for initiatives working with groups in situations of vulnerability.



Create a single digital platform for accessing information, similar to the Veterans' Gateway (Great Britain), with an adapted search for different categories of veterans.



Adapting such approaches will contribute to the formation of an inclusive, fair, and effective reintegration model in Ukraine that meets the realities of post-war reconstruction and modern human rights standards.

06

Conclusions

The goal of the study, which was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness, inclusiveness and accessibility of services for veterans in five regions of Ukraine, was achieved. Information was collected through 21 in-depth interviews, 13 focus groups and 189 online survey responses, as well as through an analysis of the regulatory framework and local programmes. The analysis of the collected data allowed us to identify progress, barriers and opportunities in the field of reintegration, with a special focus on women, LGBTIQ+ people, persons with disabilities and other groups of veterans in situations of vulnerability.

All pilot regions demonstrate positive dynamics in creating a basic infrastructure for supporting veterans, through the opening of veteran spaces, the launch of individual support programmes and the provision of specialized services. Such initiatives are best developed in large cities, where several intersectoral platforms and multidisciplinary teams operate. However, uneven coverage and staffing capacity remain challenges, especially in smaller communities. In remote areas, there is a lack of trained professionals, and no inclusive approach to working with veterans who have complex experiences, in particular those related to sexual violence, disability or LGBTIQ+ identity.



Representatives of civil society organizations working with veterans at a workshop on MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.

At the regulatory level, Ukraine demonstrates a commitment to international standards, gradually implementing key documents into national legislation. However, the formal existence of policies does not yet guarantee their effective implementation on the ground. Coordination councils, regional strategies and action plans often remain inert, with limited ability to influence budgeting or the formation of practical support arrangements.

In these conditions, civil society organisations play a leading role in implementing an inclusive approach. They are drivers of change, especially in supporting female veterans, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, or IDPs. Their advantage is flexibility, better communication with target groups, and rapid adaptability. However, without systemic support from the state and integration into strategic frameworks, these initiatives remain fragmented and cannot be scaled up.

It is also worth noting that in some contexts, business structures, religious communities, or international organisations can play a role in supporting veterans. Businesses can be involved in providing employment for veterans, church structures in providing spiritual or moral and psychological support, and international organisations in implementing institutional changes. However, international assistance is mainly focused at the central level, and its penetration into the regions, and even more so into communities, remains limited. In the absence of a functioning state coordination mechanism, this creates the risk of uneven access to resources to support veterans on the ground.

A separate challenge is information. A significant part of veterans is not aware of available services or receives contradictory information. The creation of both printed and digital “veteran guides” is a positive practice, but the overall communication policy needs to be improved to include clear guidance for veterans on their rights and what services are available to them, in harmony with national and regional policies. Information campaigns should consider the low level of digital skills of part of the target audience, the need for accessible language, as well as the psycho-emotional state of veterans.

Against this background, horizontal forms of support, namely veteran communities, brothers and sisters in arms networks, and local self-help groups, are becoming increasingly important. They are perceived as emotionally safe and effective in responding to specific needs. However, without interaction with government structures and systemic support, these initiatives cannot be sustainable and scalable.

Valuable lessons can also be drawn from international reintegration experiences. In particular, Ukraine would benefit from adapting and integrating arrangements for intersectional policy analysis similar to the Canadian GBA+, which integrates the needs of different social groups from the early programme development stage. Similarly, devising specialized services targeted at women veterans and representatives of the LGBTIQ+ community in the fields of healthcare, psychological support, and career development, would be a significant step towards tailored reintegration. This could be done for example by introducing gender advisors and coordinators at the regional and community levels, who would ensure a systematic approach to inclusion in policies. In parallel, initiatives based on the “peer-to-peer” principle should be supported, in particular through flexible grant programmes for veteran communities that work with groups in situations of vulnerability. An effective tool could also be the creation of a single digital platform – a hub for access to information, similar to the British Veterans’ Gateway, which would take into account the needs of different categories of veterans and simplify navigation in the support system.

The study also emphasizes the need to rethink the approach to reintegration itself. Women, men and other veteran communities should not be seen as passive recipients of assistance, but as policy-makers, carriers of experience valuable for building an inclusive, sustainable society. Equal participation of target groups in decision-making should become the standard, not the exception. In the long term, it is precisely such transformative reintegration, based on partnership, dignity, and respect for diversity, that can ensure not only effective veterans’ transition back into civilian life, but also strengthen democratic institutions and social cohesion in post-war Ukraine.

Presentation of a CSO member during the workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.



07

Ways Forward For Inclusive Veterans' Reintegration in Ukraine

7.1. **Civil society organisations and veteran initiatives**

Data from the pilot regions confirm that civil society plays a key role in supporting those groups of veterans who remain invisible in official programmes, namely women, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, and IDP veterans. At the same time, there is fragmentation, duplication of functions, and limited coordination both between CSOs and with state service providers.

To enhance the effectiveness of their work, civil society organisations may consider the following steps:

01. Deepening coordination through coalitions and joint initiatives.

Combining efforts, resources, and tools through the creation of inter-organisational coalitions would help reduce duplication of services and ensure more complete coverage of the needs of veterans, including women, LGBTIQ+people and veterans in situations of vulnerability due to disability and displacement. Creating, where it does not exist, and constantly updating a public, dynamic registry of NGOs working in this area will help increase the visibility of services and make navigation easier for target groups.

02. Strengthening the participation of civil society organisations in the development and monitoring of state policy in the field of veterans' reintegration.

The civil sector can effectively influence the formation of inclusive policies through participation in advisory boards, consultations, working groups and the decision-making process at the community, regional and central government levels. Mastering the arrangements for submitting comments, proposals, and expertise to documents such as regional strategies or UNSCR 1325 Action Plans allows for influencing the content of veteran programmes.

03. Developing institutional capacity through the implementation of data management and planning systems based on veterans' needs.

A single database with up-to-date information about the needs of target groups, the effectiveness of services, and available resources would allow organisations to more accurately plan activities, coordinate with other entities, prepare budgets, analytical reports, and ensure transparency of their work.

04. Implementing and consolidating an inclusive and accountable approach in the daily work of civil society organisations.

This includes conducting regular gender audits, collecting feedback from woman and men veterans, and involving groups in situations of vulnerability in programme assessments. It is also important to ensure regular training for staff, in particular on topics such as trauma-informed interaction, sensitive communication, and ethics when working with people with PTSD, experiences of violence, or other vulnerabilities.

05. **Creating safe formats for interacting with veterans from groups in situations of vulnerability and maintaining constant feedback.**

The experience of female veterans has shown that they often lack the opportunity to voice their needs in a trusted, protected space. NGOs can respond to this need through small self-support groups, anonymous surveys, regular meetings in closed safe formats, or regular communication and informal check-ins.

06. **Developing training programmes for employees of civil society organisations.**

Education is key to quality service delivery. Staff should be trained not only in human rights and working with groups in situations of vulnerability, but also in organisational management, monitoring, partnership building, interagency cooperation, and fundraising. CSO employees should also be trained on gender-specific aspects of veteran reintegration, including specific needs of women, LGBTIQ+ people s, people with disabilities and IDPs, including in relation to their experiences of trauma from the war.

7.2. **Possible steps for regional and local authorities, as well as veteran service providers**

Regional military administrations and communities demonstrate growing interest and progress in developing veterans' policies. However, data from the regions indicate a certain disorganization in the implementation of initiatives, an insufficient level of coordination, and limited responsiveness to the needs of different groups of veterans.

Possible steps at this level:

- **Analysing and coordinating existing and future programmes in the field of veterans' reintegration.** No region has a comprehensive database of programmes or mapping of services. This complicates both veterans' access to services and partnership among all parties involved. Conducting an independent audit of existing initiatives, including regional and targeted programmes, will help avoid duplication, reduce inefficient use of resources, and create a logical support architecture. It is appropriate to establish a temporary working group under the RMAs in the pilot regions to review existing programmes and align them with Women, Peace, Security Agenda 1325, the Veterans' Policy Strategy until 2030, and the Strategy for the Formation of a System for Returning from Military Service to Civilian Life until 2033.
- **Deepening gender-responsive analysis.** Canadian experience (Gender-Based Analysis Plus, GBA+) shows that systematically taking into account different identities (gender, age, health status, geography, caregiving responsibilities, etc.) in policies development significantly increases their relevance and sustainability. The first steps have already been taken in the pilot regions of Ukraine – in particular, gender portraits of the regions have been compiled – but this data is not currently integrated into

programme planning. To increase the effectiveness of local policies, it is advisable to complement this work with a qualitative analysis of the impact of existing and planned initiatives on different groups of veterans, including women, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities, and IDPs. Developing and piloting a simplified analysis tool based on GBA+, for example, in the form of a checklist or template for local administrations, in partnership with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, UN Women, or specialized think tanks such as DCAF, could be an effective tool for action. In the future, it can be integrated into the process of approving local action plans or grant applications for veteran programmes.

- **Strengthening feedback from veterans.** Surveys, focus groups, and dialogue meetings, especially in communities with high levels of distrust of the state, would help better assess not only statistics but also the quality of services (accessibility, convenience, safety).
- **Adapting communication channels.** As the study showed, in most pilot communities, veterans learn about opportunities not from official websites, but from Facebook groups, through “word of mouth”. It is important to support those formats that are truly trusted. Therefore, it is appropriate to form an information communication strategy taking into account the real usage habits of veterans.

7.3. Cross-cutting vectors for action

A number of areas are relevant to all stakeholders:

- **Expanding the network of veteran spaces, including mobile ones.** Data from the regions show that communities where veteran spaces operate – even in a temporary or mobile format (as in the Dnipropetrovsk region) – show a significantly higher level of trust in local institutions, more active participation of female veterans in programmes, and reduced stigma. This indicates the feasibility of scaling up such practices, in particular through co-financing from the State Regional Development Fund or local budgets with donor assistance. In rural communities, mobile field formats or partnerships with local institutions (libraries, health centres, schools) can be effective.
- **Long-term and identity-responsive psychological support.** One of the most common needs voiced in focus groups and interviews is **access to long-term, gender-responsive psychological support** that considers traumatic experiences, individual identities, and life circumstances. In many reported cases, the assistance provided was limited to one-time consultations. Given this, an appropriate step may be to launch separate grant programmes for civil society organisations that have the relevant expertise and work with veterans with PTSD, CRSV experiences, and IDPs.

- **Overcoming social stigma.** In all pilot communities, respondents indicated barriers to seeking help due to fear of judgment or discrimination, especially when it comes to mental health struggles, LGBTIQ+ identities, or experiences of violence. Communication campaigns to prevent and overcome stigma, integrated into state programmes (for example, within the framework of the Ministry of Veterans' communications strategy), as well as local initiatives that visualize the diversity of veterans and promote solidarity in communities, can be an effective tool.
- **Partnerships with businesses, carriers, local institutions.** The practice of some communities (for example, in the Chernivtsi region) also demonstrates the potential of partnerships with businesses – carriers, educational centres, employers. Such agreements, even small in scale, have a tangible effect on veterans' daily lives. Establishing a transparent arrangement for concluding memorandums between local governments and the private sector, with the participation of the state or international projects, can ensure the sustainability of such initiatives.
- **Training of professionals working with veterans.** These include primarily veteran support specialists, social workers, veteran coordinators, psychologists, medical personnel, as well as representatives of ASCs and employment services. Training topics may include inclusive communication, intersectoral interaction, working with PTSD, burnout prevention, gender responsiveness, and support for veterans from the LGBTIQ+ community, veterans with disabilities, and other groups in situations of vulnerability.
- **Raising awareness of community leaders.** It is advisable to organize regular training formats for territorial community heads and their teams: explaining changes in legislation, considering cases of implementing inclusive veterans' policies at the local level, exchanging experiences between communities, and developing local solutions based on the practices of other regions.
- **Information products for veterans and veteran families.** The request for convenient, simple and understandable information about available services was heard in all pilot communities. It is advisable to support the creation of a veteran guide (in paper and digital formats), which would contain a list of available services, algorithms for obtaining them, contact points of access and clarification of rights. Such a tool, integrated into mobile applications, chatbots and web platforms, will reduce barriers to access to rights and services, especially for groups in situations of vulnerability.

Trainer presentation to civil society organizations working with veterans during the CSO workshop on MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) organized by DCAF and the NGO Horizon of Changes in Cherkasy as part of a project funded by the UK Government.



ГОРИЗОНТ ЗМІН

ЗРЦНА

Як можна Уж
розширити
фундації?

Як би було
краще у
практиці?

Чи варто
середній
інформатор

Чи варто
бути
завжди

08

Annexes



Annex 1. Matrix of services accessibility for veterans in territorial communities

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Information consultations					
	Village (Settlement) Council (Executive Committee)	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	City Council (Executive Committee of the City Council)	City Council or District Council in the city (Executive Committee)	Kyiv City State Administration or District State Administration in the City of Kyiv
	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Social Services Provision Centre or Social Services Centre, or Territorial Social Service Centre, or municipal institution – veteran space	Social Services Centre, or Territorial Social Service Centre, or municipal institution – veteran space	Social Services Centre, or Territorial Social Service Centre, or municipal institution – veteran space	Social Services Centre, or Territorial Social Service Centre, or municipal institution – veteran space	Social Services Centre, or Territorial Social Service Centre, or municipal institution – veteran space
	Support Specialist/ Veteran Assistant	Support Specialist/ Veteran Assistant	Support Specialist/ Veteran Assistant	Support Specialist/ Veteran Assistant	Support Specialist/ Veteran Assistant
	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights
Status registration					
Obtaining PiH status	ASC	ASC (unit of social protection of the population)	ASC	ASC under a District Council in the city	ASC under the District State Administration in the City of Kyiv
	TR & SSC or its unit in a district	TR & SSC or its unit in a district	District TR & SSC	District TR & SSC of the city	District TR & SSC of the city
Obtaining the status of a person with a disability as a result of war	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	City Council (Social Protection Division)	District Council in the city (Division of Social Protection of the Population or Veterans' Policy Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection of the Population or Veterans' Policy Division)
		Starosta or Starosta's representative			
Obtaining data from the Unified State Register of War Veterans	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC in the relevant district of the city	ASC in the city
	Written request by mail to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs	Written request by mail to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs	Written request by mail to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs	Written request by mail to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs	Written request by mail to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Registration of benefits					
For housing and communal services, purchase of solid fuel and liquefied gas;	ASC	ASC	ASC	A remote workplace of the ASC unit (if any) or the ASC in the community centre	A remote workplace of the ASC unit (if any) or the ASC in the community centre
	Service Centre (citizen service unit) of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre (citizen service unit) of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre (citizen service unit) of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre (citizen service unit) of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre (citizen service unit) of the Pension Fund of Ukraine
	Apply for benefits in Diia, the mobile application of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Apply for benefits in Diia, the mobile application of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Apply for benefits in Diia, the mobile application of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Apply for benefits in Diia, the mobile application of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Apply for benefits in Diia, the mobile application of the Pension Fund of Ukraine
For using public transport	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Unit in the District TR & SSC	Unit in the District TR & SSC			
For cars and parking	ASC	ASC (if there is a branch)	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Unit of social protection of the Village (Settlement) Council	Starosta or his/her representative	Social Protection Division of the City Council	Department of Social Protection of the OVA	Department of Social Policy of the Kyiv City State Administration
			Veteran policy units or veteran support specialists in the City Council	Municipal parking services	Unit of veterans' policy or veterans support specialist at the Kyiv City State Administration
					Service centres of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kyivtranspark service
		Veteran hub	Veteran hub	Veteran hub	Veteran hub
For housing / rental (lease) of housing / subsidize free major repairs	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Executive Committee of the Village (Settlement) Council	Executive Committee of the Village (Settlement) Council	Executive Committee of the City Council		
		Starosta (Starosta's representative)			
Compensation for owned premises	ASC	ASC	ASC		
	Unit of social protection of the population of the Village (Settlement) Council	Unit of social protection of the population of the Village (Settlement) Council	Unit of social protection of the City Council	District Council in the city (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)
		Starosta (Starosta's representative)			

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Vouchers for health care resort treatment or monetary compensation instead (for people with disabilities as a result of the war)	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Unit of social protection of the Village (Settlement) Council – transfers to the Division of Social Protection of the Population of the District State Administration	Unit of social protection of the Village (Settlement) Council – transfers to the Division of Social Protection of the Population of the District State Administration	Unit of social protection of the City Council – transfers to the Division of Social Protection of the Population of the District State Administration	District Council in the city (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)
	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (mail or electronic application)	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (mail or electronic application)	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (mail or electronic application)	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (mail or electronic application)	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (mail or electronic application)
		Starosta (Starosta's representative)			
Pension (registration or recalculation)					
Civil or disability pension	ASC (transfers to the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine)	ASC (transfers to the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine)	ASC (transfers to the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine)	ASC (transfers to the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine)	ASC (transfers to the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine)
	Representative of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (reception at the ASC or Village (Settlement) Council)	Representative of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (reception at the ASC or Village (Settlement) Council)			
	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine
Military pension	TR & SSC (district TR & SSC unit)	TR & SSC (district TR & SSC unit)	TR & SSC (district TR & SSC unit)	TR & SSC in the city (transfers documents to the MD PFU in the relevant region)	TR & SSC in the city (transfers documents to the MD PFU in Kyiv)
Financial assistance					
One-time payment	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	TR & SSC (District TR & SSC unit)	TR & SSC (District TR & SSC unit)	TR & SSC (District TR & SSC unit in the city)	TR & SSC (District TR & SSC unit in the city)	TR & SSC (District TR & SSC unit in the city)
Annual one-time payment	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	
	Representative of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (reception at the ASC or Village (Settlement) Council)	Representative of the Pension Fund of Ukraine (reception at the ASC or Village (Settlement) Council)			
	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service Centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine	Service centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine in the city	Service centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine in the city	Service centre of the Main Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine in the city

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Local payments to veterans and their families (if provided locally)	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	ASC (workplace)	ASC Unit	District ASC	District ASC
		Village (Settlement, City) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	City Council (Division of Social Protection)	District Council in the city (Division of Social Protection of the Population and Veterans' Policy Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection of the Population and Veterans' Policy Division)
Obtaining a land plot					
	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Village (Settlement) Council (Executive Committee of the Village (Settlement) Council)	Village (Settlement) Council (Executive Committee of the Village (Settlement) Council)	City Council (Executive Committee of the City Council)	District Council in the city (Executive Committee)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Executive Committee)
		Starosta (Starosta's representative)			
Meals for children of veterans (kindergarten, school)					
	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	City Council (Education Division)	District Council in the city (Education Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Education Division)
	Educational institution	Educational institution	Educational institution		
Legal advice					
	Legal Aid Office	Legal Aid Office	Legal Aid Office	Legal Aid Office	Legal Aid Office
	Village (Settlement) Council (legal unit)	Village (Settlement, City) Council (legal unit)		Centre for providing free secondary care	Centre for providing free secondary care
Social services					
	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Village (Settlement) Council	Village (Settlement) Council	City Council (Division of Social Protection of the Population)	District Council in the city (body of social protection of the population)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (body of social protection of the population)
	Social Services Centre	Social Services Centre	Social Services Centre	Social Services Centre	Social Services Centre
	Social Services Provision Centre	Social Services Provision Centre			
	Territorial Social Service Centre	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	Territorial Social Service Centre	Territorial Social Service Centre in districts of the city	Territorial Social Service Centre in districts of the city
	Other municipal institution for the provision of social services	Other municipal institution for the provision of social services	Other municipal institution for the provision of social services	Direct social service provider	Direct social service provider

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Healthcare					
Referral to MSEC	Family doctor	Family doctor (local general practice clinic)	Family doctor	Family doctor	Family doctor
Referral to MMC	TR & SSC or its unit in a district	TR & SSC or its unit in a district	TR & SSC	TR & SSC	TR & SSC
Primary aid	Family doctor	Family doctor (local general practice clinic)	Family doctor	Family doctor	Family doctor
Emergency care	Ambulance	Ambulance	Ambulance – 103	Ambulance – 103	Ambulance – 103
Psychological help	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection of the population)	Starosta (Starosta's assistant)	Hospitals	Regional Social Services Centre or its branches	Social Services Centres of Kyiv districts
	ASC	Field social services teams	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Social Services Provision Centre, Social Services Centre, Territorial Social Service Centre	Community Social Services Centre	City Social Services Centre or Social Services Provision Centre or Territorial Social Service Centre	Municipal psychological assistance centres or regional clinics with psychotherapy/ medical and social rehabilitation units	Municipal psychological assistance centres or regional clinics with psychotherapy/ medical and social rehabilitation units
	Other municipal facility or veteran space		Other municipal facility or veteran space	Veteran hubs and spaces	
Prosthesis	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection)	Village (Settlement, City) Council (unit of social protection)	City Council (unit of social protection)	District Council in the city (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division)
	Electronic account of a person with a disability	Electronic account of a person with a disability	Electronic account of a person with a disability	Electronic account of a person with a disability	Electronic account of a person with a disability
	Diia Portal	Diia Portal	Diia Portal	Diia Portal	Diia Portal
Rehabilitation	Territorial Social Service Centre	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Village (Settlement) Council (unit of social protection)	Village (Settlement, City) Council (unit of social protection)	City Council (Division of Social Protection of the Population)	District Council in the city (body of social protection of the population)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (body of social protection of the population)
			Social Services Centre / Social Services Provision Centre	Regional centres for medical and social rehabilitation of veterans	Rehabilitation centres at healthcare facilities (including private ones with state compensation)

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Rehabilitation	Family doctor	Family doctor (local general practice clinic)	Family doctor	Family doctor (local general practice clinic)	Family doctor
			City healthcare facilities	Regional war veterans' hospitals (also hospitals of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine)	War veterans' hospitals (also hospitals of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine)
				Regional healthcare facilities	
				Rehabilitation units at multidisciplinary hospitals	
	eHealth	eHealth	eHealth	eHealth	eHealth
Employment					
	Employment centre (unit (sector) of the district branch of the regional employment centre)	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	Regional employment centre (district branch unit of the regional employment centre or district branch of the regional employment centre)	District employment centre	Regional or district employment centre
	Village (Settlement) Council	Village (Settlement) Council			
Training					
	Employment centre (unit (sector) of the district branch of the regional employment centre)	Employment centre (unit (sector) of the district branch of the regional employment centre)	Regional employment centre (district branch unit of the regional employment centre or district branch of the regional employment centre)	Regional or district employment centre	Regional or district employment centre
	Online application	Online application	Online application	Online application	Online application
	Diia	Diia	Diia	Diia	Diia

Services	Rural or settlement territorial community	Starosta district	Urban territorial community (including district centres)	Regional centre city	City of Kyiv (with a special status)
Sports (payments and/or classes and competitions)					
	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC	ASC
	Unit of culture, youth and sports of the Village/ Settlement Council	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	Unit of physical culture and sports (City Council)	Regional Division of Physical Culture and Sports	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Social Protection and Veterans' Policy Division, as well as Department of Youth and Sports)
	Local school, gym or house of culture		Unit of veterans affairs (City Council)	Regional Invasport centre (especially for veterans with disabilities)	Invasport centres, municipal sports complexes
	Veteran spaces		Division of Social Protection (City Council)	Regional veteran hubs/communities	
	Diia	Diia	Diia	Diia	Diia
Involvement in cultural events and commemoration					
	Unit of culture, youth and sports of the Village/ Settlement Council	Starosta (Starosta's representative)	Unit of veterans' affairs of the City Council and Division of Culture and Tourism of the City Council	District Council in the city (Division of Culture and Information Policy and units of veterans' affairs)	District State Administration in the City of Kyiv (Division of Culture and units of veterans' affairs)
	Clubs, houses of culture, libraries	Local cultural institutions (if any), schools, religious communities	City libraries, theatres, museums, palaces of culture	Museums, philharmonics, regional theatres	Veteran space
	Veteran space	Veteran space	Veteran space	Veteran space	
Protection and restoration of rights					
	Police (community police officer)	Police (community police officer)	Police unit of the District Police Division	District police unit	District police unit
			Patrol police – 102	Patrol police – 102	Patrol police – 102
	Prosecutor's Office	Prosecutor's Office	Prosecutor's Office	Prosecutor's Office	Prosecutor's Office
	Court	Court	Court	Court	Court
	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights	Representative of the VRU Commissioner for Human Rights

Annex 2. Veteran interview questions in the five pilot regions

Introduction to the interview

Meeting, presentation of the DCAF project and study, description of the interview structure and confidentiality conditions.

Questionnaire for male and female veterans in the pilot regions

Thematic unit 1: Socio-demographic portrait

Socio-demographic portrait

1. What is your name? (you can use a pseudonym or answer anonymously)
2. What is your gender?
3. Do you identify as LGBTIQ+ or another vulnerable group representative? If so, which one?
4. How old are you?
5. Where do you live? (city/village, and also indicate one of the five pilot regions: Kyiv city, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi or Zakarpattia regions)
6. What is your marital status? Do you have children?
7. What is your highest level of education?
8. Are you currently employed? If so, please describe your job. If not, are you looking for a job?
9. What is your religious affiliation (if any) and is it important in your life?
10. What is your nationality and ethnic origin?
11. Do you have a disability? If so, is it a result of military service?

Thematic unit 2: Military service and veteran status

1. When and for how long did you serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine? When did you receive veteran status?

Thematic unit 3: Awareness of and participation in reintegration programmes

Explanation: Veteran reintegration into civilian life is the process of returning military personnel to civilian society after service, including social adaptation, employment, access to health services, psychological support, and legal assistance. It involves both state and community initiatives aimed at ensuring the full inclusion of veterans in civic life.

1. Are you aware of specific reintegration programmes for veterans (both women and men)? If so, what are they and who implements them in your area? (If the respondent is a woman, an LGBTIQ+ person, or belongs to another vulnerable group: Are you aware of programmes specifically designed for veterans of your group?)
2. How did you find out about these services?

Thematic unit 4: Access to Benefits and Services for Veterans

1. Do you use any benefits or services provided by the state to veterans?
2. If so, then which ones, and how do you assess them? If “no”, then why?

Thematic unit 5: Assessment of existing programmes

1. Do you believe that current reintegration programmes meet the needs of all veterans? (If the respondent is an LGBTIQ+ person or a representative of another vulnerable group: Do these programmes sufficiently address the needs of your group?)
2. Have you experienced discrimination, prejudice, or difficulties in obtaining services or benefits? (If the respondent is an LGBTIQ+ person, woman, or representative of another vulnerable group, ask for details)

Thematic unit 6: Expectations from reintegration programmes

1. What do you think should be improved or changed in programmes of veterans’ reintegration into civilian life?
2. Should reintegration programmes for female veterans be separate from those for men, or would mixed groups be more effective?
3. Should such programmes be implemented exclusively by the state, or should non-governmental organisations be involved?

Thematic unit 7: Social connections and support

1. Are you a member of veterans’ organisations or NGOs involved in the reintegration of veterans in Ukraine? If so, what organisations are they, and how would you access their activities?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything else you would like to add about veteran reintegration?
2. Would you be willing to participate in further discussions or share additional thoughts?

Annex 3. Questions for interviews with government officials / service providers / experts in the field of veteran reintegration in Ukraine

Introduction to the interview

Meeting, presentation of the DCAF project and study, description of the interview structure and confidentiality conditions.

Questionnaire for government officials and service providers in the pilot regions

Thematic unit 1: Socio-demographic portrait

Socio-demographic portrait

1. What is your name? (you can use a pseudonym or answer anonymously)
2. What is your gender?
3. Do you identify as LGBTIQ+ or another vulnerable group representative? If so, which one?
4. How old are you?
5. Where do you live? (city/village, and also indicate one of the five pilot regions: Kyiv city, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Khmelnytskyi or Zakarpattia regions)
6. What is your marital status? Do you have children?
7. What is your highest level of education?
8. Are you currently employed? If so, please describe your job. If not, are you looking for a job?
9. What is your religious affiliation (if any) and is it important in your life?
10. What is your nationality and ethnic origin?
11. Do you have a disability? If so, is it a result of military service?

Thematic unit 2: Assessment of the veteran reintegration system

Explanation: Veteran reintegration into civilian life is the process of returning military personnel to civilian society after service, including social adaptation, employment, access to health services, psychological support, and legal assistance. It involves both state and community initiatives aimed at ensuring the full inclusion of veterans in civic life.

1. What do you think about the current system of reintegration of veterans into civilian life in Ukraine?

Thematic unit 3: Service provision and access

1. What reintegration services are provided in your region for veterans?
2. Are these services provided equally to everyone?

Thematic unit 4: Prospects and effectiveness of reintegration services

1. What is an example of the most effective state programme for the reintegration of veterans in your region? What is its special feature?

Thematic unit 5: Gender aspects, LGBTIQ+ and vulnerable groups

1. Are there other programmes in your region / community that specifically support female veterans, LGBTIQ+, or other vulnerable veteran groups that are funded from the regional or local budget? Is there any funding for them?
2. Do you know of any projects of civil society organisations at the regional/community level that are specifically aimed at supporting female veterans, LGBTIQ+, or other vulnerable veteran groups? If so, please name them.

Thematic unit 6: Coordination and interaction between stakeholders

1. How is the provision of services for veterans coordinated at your level between all parties involved? (Male and female veterans, state authorities, civil society organisations, international partners, other organisations and structures, such as businesses, church, etc.).

Thematic unit 7: Informing veterans about reintegration opportunities

1. How do you currently inform veterans about the opportunities and benefits available through reintegration programmes?
2. Are there any difficulties in providing information? If so, what are they?

Thematic unit 8: The future of the reintegration system

1. What changes or improvements would you recommend to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of the reintegration system for female veterans, LGBTIQ+ or other vulnerable veteran groups in your region?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the legislation, practices, or challenges of veteran reintegration in your region?
2. Would you be willing to participate in further discussions or share additional thoughts as this project progresses?

Annex 4. Guide for a focus group with female veterans

Introduction

Greetings, introduction of the project, study and participants, explanation of the work format.

Key issues for discussion¹

1. How has your life changed since returning from service and reintegrating into civilian life?

- What is your life like? Have you experienced changes in the way your family, friends, colleagues, or community treat you?
- How do you assess the accessibility of education, work, legal support, medical care and psychological support, as well as help in dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?
- Have you considered continuing your military career or obtaining military education?
- Have you faced discrimination because you are a female veteran? In what areas of life was this most noticeable?

2. Do you receive support after returning from service as a veteran from government or non-government bodies and institutions? Please tell us in detail.

- What support did you receive from the state after returning from service? (e.g., participant in hostilities status, medical care, social benefits, etc.)
- Did any government agencies or public services offer you participation in any special programmes for veterans? Which government agencies and which programmes? Was it easy to participate in them? To apply for benefits? What difficulties did you encounter?
- Did you receive support from non-governmental organisations, veterans' communities, or international foundations? If so, what services were helpful to you?

3. What positive experiences have you had in the process of transitioning to civilian life?

- Were there any positive moments in your reintegration into civilian life?
- Who was most helpful to you in the process of reintegration into civilian life as a female veteran?
- What assistance programmes are most effective in supporting female veterans?
- Are there examples of successful reintegration that are worth following?

4. In your opinion, does the experience of male veterans differ from that of female veterans in the process of reintegration into civilian life?

- Do you face the same challenges as the male veterans you know? If not, what is the difference?
- What unique challenges do female veterans face? (e.g., veteran status recognition, career restrictions, childcare, financial independence)
- Are there stereotypes about female veterans, and how do they affect your reintegration?

¹ The main questions are highlighted in bold, while possible clarifying questions are listed in simple text in the sub-items.

5. How do you or your female veteran friends learn about available services and programmes for reintegration into civilian life?

- Which communication channels work best?
- Do all veterans have equal access to information about their rights? What barriers prevent this?
- How can government and non-government organisations more effectively inform female veterans about their opportunities?
- Are there special information resources for female veterans, and are they sufficiently disseminated?

6. How effective is the interaction between government agencies, civil society organisations, and veterans in your region?

- Are enough female veterans included in veterans' organisations and initiatives? And in state bodies and services?
- How can coordination between these structures be improved to better support female veterans?
- Are there enough platforms or initiatives to discuss and address the problems of female veterans?

7. How would you describe the ideal reintegration programme for female veterans? (Please share your ideas, we will write them down, structure them, and try to include them as recommendations in our report)

- What should be the priority?
- Should separate programmes be developed for female veterans, or should they be part of general programmes for all veterans?
- What role, in your opinion, should the state play in supporting female veterans?
- What role, in your opinion, should veterans' organisations and civil society organisations play in shaping state policy on reintegration?
- Should civil society organisations, veterans' organisations, or international organisations create their own reintegration programmes and replace the state? Explain your opinion.

Ending

Summarising the discussion, thanking and informing the participants about further steps in the study.

Annex 5. Guide for a focus group with LGBTIQ+ veterans

Introduction

Greetings, introduction of the project, study and participants, explanation of the work format.

Key issues for discussion¹

1. How has your life changed since you returned from military service to civilian life?

- What are the main challenges LGBTIQ+ veterans face upon return? Do you experience social isolation, discrimination, or lack of support?
- How do society and veterans' organisations perceive LGBTIQ+ veterans? Are there stereotypes about your role in the military and civilian community?

2. Are there enough opportunities in your region for the reintegration of LGBTIQ+ veterans into civilian life?

- What services and support do you receive upon return? (e.g., medical, psychological, legal, education, employment services). Who provides them? Does everyone have equal access to these services?
- Are there any difficulties in obtaining documents or receiving social benefits? What are they?
- Have you ever had to hide your LGBTIQ+ identity when contacting government or veterans' organisations?

3. What positive examples of the reintegration of LGBTIQ+ veterans can be highlighted? What factors contributed to their success?

- What programmes or initiatives really work to re-integrate veterans, including LGBTIQ+ people, and can be expanded or adapted in other regions?
- Are there any examples or stories of effective cooperation between LGBTIQ+ veterans, government agencies, and civil society organisations? If so, please tell us.

4. Are there differences in the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ veterans compared to heterosexual male and female veterans?

- Are there barriers to access to services, support programmes, or employment that specifically affect LGBTIQ+ veterans?
- How can government programmes be improved to better meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ veterans?
- Are there examples of international experience that can be adapted in Ukraine to ensure more inclusive support for LGBTIQ+ veterans?

¹ The main questions are highlighted in bold, while possible clarifying questions are listed in simple text in the sub-items.

5. How do you or your LGBTIQ+ veteran friends learn about available services and programmes for reintegration into civilian life?

- Which communication channels work best?
- Do all veterans have equal access to information about their rights? What barriers prevent this?
- How can government and non-governmental organisations more effectively inform LGBTIQ+ veterans about their opportunities?
- Are there specific information resources for LGBTIQ+ veterans, and are they sufficiently disseminated?

6. How effective is the interaction between government institutions, civil society organisations, and LGBTIQ+ veterans in your region?

- Are enough LGBTIQ+ veterans included in veterans' organisations and initiatives? And in state organisations and structures?
- How can coordination between these structures be improved to better support LGBTIQ+ veterans?
- Are there enough platforms or initiatives to discuss and address the issues of LGBTIQ+ veterans?

7. How would you describe the ideal reintegration programme for LGBTIQ+ veterans? (Please share your ideas, we will write them down, structure them, and try to include them as recommendations in our report)

- What, in your opinion, are the top priorities in improving reintegration programmes for LGBTIQ+ veterans?
- Should we develop separate programmes for LGBTIQ+ veterans or is it better to integrate them into general veteran programmes?
- What role should state bodies, local authorities, and civil society organisations play in supporting LGBTIQ+ veterans?

Ending

Summarising the discussion, thanking and informing the participants about further steps in the study.

Annex 6. Guide for a focus group with government representatives and service providers and/or experts in the field of veteran reintegration in Ukraine¹

Introduction

Greetings, introduction of the project, study and participants, explanation of the work format.

Key issues for discussion²

1. In your opinion, how has the life of female veterans changed after returning from service and during the process of reintegration into civilian life?

- What are the main challenges veterans face upon returning to civilian life? Do they experience social isolation, discrimination, or a lack of support?
- How does society perceive female veterans? Are there stereotypes about female veterans?

2. What level of access do female veterans have to government services, social services, and support in your region?

- Are there enough opportunities in your region for the reintegration of female veterans into civilian life?
- What services and support do veterans receive upon return? (e.g., medical, psychological, legal, education, and employment services). Who provides them? Do all have equal access to these services?
- Do female veterans have any difficulties in obtaining documents or receiving social benefits? What are they?

3. Do you know and can you share examples of positive experiences of reintegration of female veterans into civilian life?

- What positive examples of the reintegration of veterans can be highlighted? What factors contributed to their success?
- What programmes or initiatives really work and can be expanded or adapted in other regions?
- Are there cases of effective cooperation between veterans, government agencies, and civil society organisations?

¹ This guide can also be used for mixed focus groups.

² The main questions are highlighted in bold, while possible clarifying questions are listed in simple text in the sub-items.

4. Are there differences in the challenges that male and female veterans face after returning from service? What are they?

- Are there gender barriers to access to services, support programmes, or employment?
- How can government programmes be improved to better meet the needs of female veterans?

5. How do veterans in your region learn about reintegration programmes and services?

- Which communication channels work best?
- Do all veterans have equal access to information about their rights? What barriers prevent this?
- How can government and non-government organisations more effectively inform veterans about their opportunities?

6. How effective is the interaction between government agencies, civil society organisations, and veterans in your region?

- How can coordination between these structures be improved to better support female veterans?
- Are there enough platforms or initiatives to discuss and address veterans' issues?

7. How would you describe the ideal reintegration programme for female veterans? (Please share your ideas, we will write them down, structure them, and try to include them as recommendations in our report)

- What do you think are the top priorities in improving reintegration programmes for veterans?
- Should separate programmes be developed for female veterans or should they be better integrated into general veteran programmes?
- What role should state bodies, local authorities, and civil society organisations play in supporting veterans?

Ending

Summarising the discussion, thanking and informing the participants about further steps in the research.

Annex 7. Online questionnaire for veterans (including women veterans, LGBTIQ+ and vulnerable groups)

Section 1: Socio-demographic portrait

1. Select your gender:

Female

Male

Other (specify): _____

2. Do you identify as LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer people, etc.)

Yes

No

Other: _____

3. Please indicate your age category:

18–24

25–34

35–44

45–54

55–64

65+

4. In which of the project's pilot regions do you live?

Chernivtsi region

Dnipropetrovsk region

Khmelnytskyi region

Kyiv city

Zakarpattia region

5. Please indicate where you live.

City

Settlement

Village

Other (specify): _____

6. What is your highest level of education?

Primary

Secondary

Vocational

Higher education (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or equivalent)

Other (specify): _____

7. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

Other (specify): _____

8. What is your religion?

- Christianity
- Catholicism
- Greek Catholicism
- Judaism
- Islam
- I do not practice any religion

Other (specify): _____

9. What is your nationality and ethnic group? (*Open-ended question*)

10. Do you have a disability?

- Yes
- No

11. Did you participate in an interview or focus group conducted by the NGO “Horizon of Changes” as part of the DCAF project?

- Yes
- No

12. Please indicate where you received this questionnaire? (*Open-ended question*)

Section 2: Military service and veteran status

1. When and for how long did you serve in the military? (*Open-ended question*)

2. Do you have official veteran status?

- Yes
- No

(If “no”, what difficulties did you face?): _____

Section 3: Awareness of programmes and policies for the reintegration of veterans in Ukraine

Reintegration is the process of returning military personnel to civilian life after completing their service, which includes social, economic, psychological, and legal adaptation. It involves supporting veterans in the areas of employment, medical care, access to education, psychological rehabilitation, and social inclusion.

1. Are you familiar with key laws, bylaws, or other regulatory documents related to veterans' reintegration in Ukraine?

Yes
No
Partially

(If "yes", please specify with which ones): _____

2. Do you know about veteran reintegration programmes in your region/district/community?

Yes
No

(If "yes", please specify which ones you know): _____

3. Where did you learn about these programmes? (Select all that apply)

State authorities
Local government authorities
Other government services
Veterans' organisations
Community organisations
Media (television, radio, newspapers)
Social media or channels (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, etc.)
From other military personnel
From other civilians

Other (please specify): _____

Section 4: Access to services and benefits

1. What reintegration services have you used? (Select all that apply)

- Administrative services
- Medical care
- Psychological support
- Education or retraining programmes
- Housing programmes
- Employment support
- Financial assistance
- Did not use

Other (please specify): _____

2. Please rate the effectiveness of these services.

- Very effective
- Effective
- Partly effective
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective
- Cannot rate

3. If you did not use any services, please explain why. (*Open-ended question*)

Section 5: Quality of current veteran reintegration programmes in Ukraine

1. Do you think that existing reintegration programmes meet the needs of all veterans equally?

- Yes
- No

(If “no”, please explain): _____

2. Have you experienced discrimination or prejudice in accessing reintegration programmes or benefits?

- Yes
- No

(If “yes”, please provide more details): _____

3. What changes or improvements would you suggest to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of these programmes? (*Open-ended question*)

Section 6: Social connections and support

1. Do you maintain contact with other veterans?

Yes

No

(If “yes”, how do these connections help your reintegration?): _____

2. Are you a member of any veterans’ organisations or civil society organisations working in the field of veterans’ reintegration in Ukraine?

Yes

No

(If “yes”, please name these organisations): _____

3. Did you use the services of civil society organisations during the reintegration process?

Yes

No

(If “yes”, please name these organisations): _____

4. How do you assess the ability of civil society organisations to represent and advocate for the interests of veterans, especially LGBTIQ+ or vulnerable groups of veterans?

Very good

Good

Average

Poor

Very poor

Cannot assess

5. What role, in your opinion, should veterans’ organisations and civil society organisations play in supporting the reintegration of veterans in Ukraine? (*Open-ended question*)

Section 7: Future prospects

1. How do you see yourself in three years? (*Open-ended question – optional*)

2. What services or support would help you achieve your goals in the future?
(*Open-ended question*)

Section 8: Final thoughts

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or the reintegration process? (*Open-ended question*)

Annex 8. Online questionnaire for representatives of state authorities, institutions and services, as well as local government authorities working in the field of veterans' reintegration in Ukraine

Section 1: Socio-demographic portrait

1. Select your gender:

Female

Male

Other (specify): _____

2. Do you identify as LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer people, etc.)

Yes

No

Other: _____

3. Please indicate your age category:

18–24

25–34

35–44

45–54

55–64

65+

4. In which of the project's pilot regions do you live

Chernivtsi region

Dnipropetrovsk region

Khmelnyskyi region

Kyiv city

Zakarpattia region

5. Please indicate where you live.

City

Settlement

Village

Other (specify): _____

6. What is your highest level of education?

Primary

Secondary

Vocational

Higher education (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or equivalent)

Other (specify): _____

7. What field do you work in?

State administration (regional or district level)

Central executive authorities

Local government

Free legal aid centres

Social services

Healthcare facilities

Educational institutions

Employment centre

Other (specify): _____

8. What is your religion?

Christianity

Catholicism

Greek Catholicism

Judaism

Islam

I do not practice any religion

Other (specify): _____

9. What is your nationality and ethnic group? (*Open-ended question*)**10.** Do you have a disability?

Yes

No

11. Did you participate in an interview or focus group conducted by the NGO "Horizon of Changes" as part of the DCAF project?

Yes

No

12. Please indicate where you received this questionnaire? (*Open-ended question*)

Section 2: Overall assessment of the veteran reintegration system

Reintegration is the process of returning military personnel to civilian life after completing their service, which includes social, economic, psychological, and legal adaptation. It involves supporting veterans in the areas of employment, medical care, access to education, psychological rehabilitation, and social inclusion.

1. Rate the overall effectiveness of the veteran reintegration system in Ukraine.
 - Very effective
 - Effective
 - Partly effective
 - Ineffective
 - Very ineffective

2. Rate the level of support for veterans by the veteran reintegration system in Ukraine.
 - Very high
 - High
 - Average
 - Low
 - Very low

3. What are the main strengths of the current veteran reintegration system in Ukraine?
(Open-ended question)

4. What are the key gaps or weaknesses in the veteran reintegration system in Ukraine? *(Open-ended question)*

5. Does the reintegration system take into account the needs of female veterans, LGBTIQ+ and other vulnerable groups of veterans?
 - Yes
 - Partially
 - No

(If “partially” or “no”, please explain): _____

Section 3: Accessibility and quality of services

1. What reintegration services for veterans are available in your region/city/district?

(Select all that apply)

- Administrative services
- Medical assistance
- Psychological support
- Education and retraining
- Housing programmes
- Employment support
- Financial assistance

Other (specify): _____

2. Rate the accessibility of these services for veterans in your region.

- Fully accessible
- Accessible
- Partially accessible
- Inaccessible
- Totally inaccessible

3. Do all veterans have equal access to these services, including female veterans, LGBTIQ+, and vulnerable veterans?

- Yes
- No

(If “no,” please explain): _____

4. How many times has your organisation or institution provided services or information within the framework of reintegration programmes to female veterans specifically?

- 0
- 1-5
- 5 – 10
- More than 10
- Don't know

5. How effective are these services in meeting the needs of veterans?

- Very effective
- Effective
- Moderately effective
- Ineffective
- Totally ineffective

6. Do these services meet international standards for the reintegration of veterans?

- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Don't know

Section 4: Co-operation and stakeholder engagement

1. What civil society or veteran organisations do you cooperate with in the field of veterans' reintegration? (*Open-ended question*)
2. Are these organisations involved in the development and implementation of reintegration policies at the national/regional/district or city level?
Yes
No (If no, why?)
Don't know

(If "yes", please give examples. If "no", please explain why): _____

3. How do you assess the cooperation between government and non-government organisations (CSOs, private structures, church, etc.) at your level (region, district, city, village, settlement) regarding the reintegration of veterans?
No information
Very good
Good
Average
Poor
Very poor

4. Do international organisations assist in the reintegration of veterans at your level (region, district, city)?
Yes
No
Don't know

(If "yes", please specify which ones): _____

5. How effective is the cooperation between local and international organisations?
No information
Very effective
Effective
Moderately effective
Ineffective
Totally ineffective

6. What recommendations would you give to improve cooperation between government, civil society, and international organisations? (*Open-ended question*)

Section 5: Informing veterans

1. How does your organisation/institution inform veterans about the possibilities of reintegration programmes?

Personal meetings
Media
Social media
Websites
Advertisements in various institutions
Don't know

Other: _____

2. Do you think that you or your organisation/institution has sufficient capacity to inform veterans about these programmes?

Yes
Partially
No

(If "partially", what additional support is needed? If "no", what is preventing you?):

3. Do you know how to effectively disseminate information about reintegration programmes among veterans?

Yes
No

(If "no", what additional skills or resources do you need to do this?):

Section 6: Policies and recommendations

1. What changes or improvements would you recommend for the reintegration system at your level (region, district, city)? (*Open-ended question*)

2. In your opinion, how should veteran reintegration programmes in Ukraine be managed?

Exclusively by the state

By the state and local self-government authorities

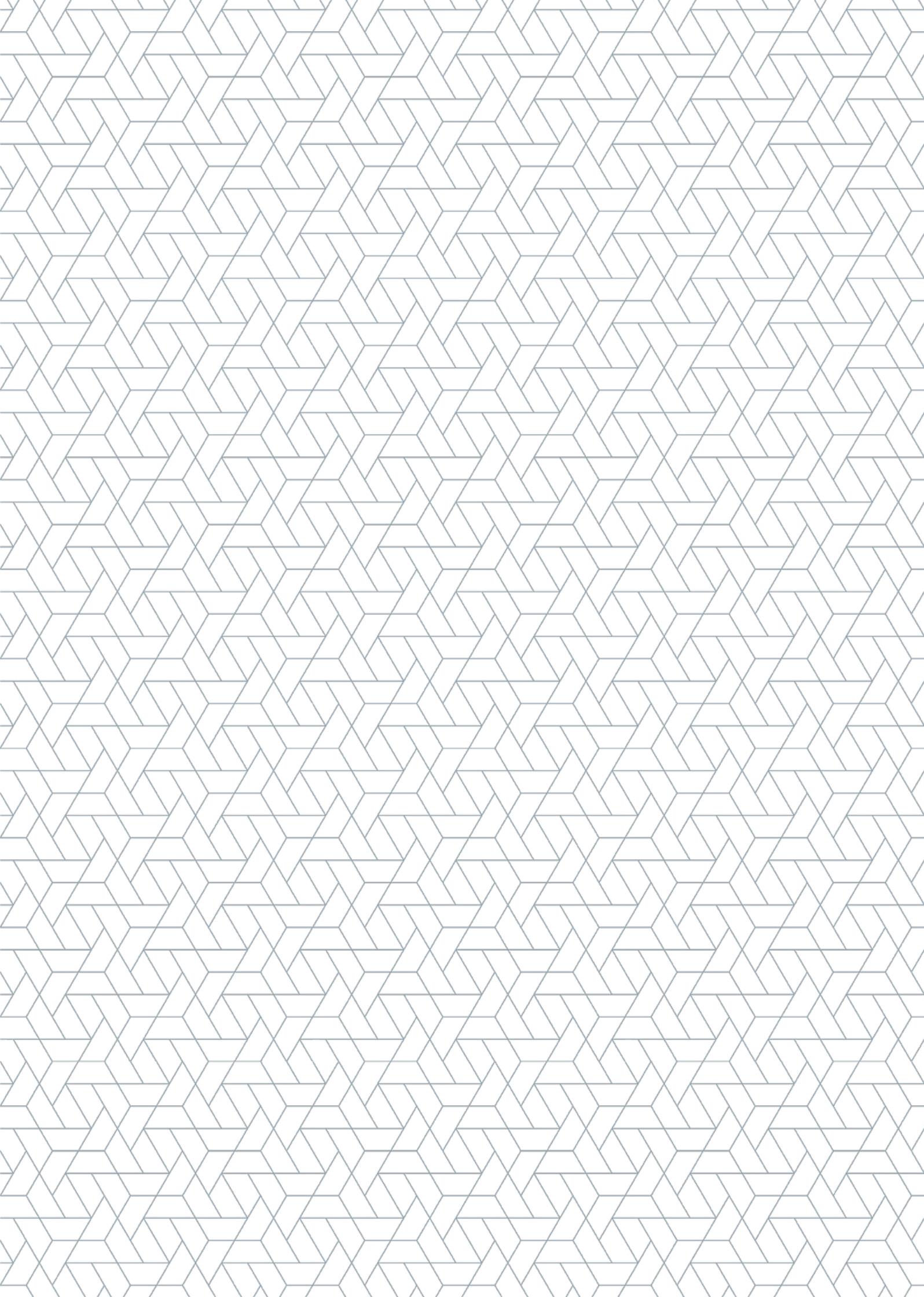
By the state and non-governmental organisations

By all of the above

Other (specify): _____

3. What do you see as the priorities for improving the reintegration of veterans in the next three years? (*Open-ended question*)

4. How do you see the future of the veteran reintegration policy in Ukraine?
(*Open-ended question*)





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