



The work of civil society organisations (CSOs) is often under the radar and, therefore, not fully understood by the general public. However, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the daily persistent, diligent and sacrificial work of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians for the strengthening and development of democratic society in Ukraine. That is why, **in the context of the Ukraine's accession to the European 'family of nations', the European Union pays considerable attention to assisting Ukrainian CSOs. Continued support to civil society** is not least important now, when the struggle against the Russian aggressor for the very existence of Ukraine and its democratic European future is underway.

This is evidenced, in particular, by the EU allowing all implementing partners to divert and use previously allocated funds to defend Ukraine, save lives, and address the urgent needs of Ukrainian citizens on the third day of the full-scale invasion.

**The EU pays particular attention to supporting and developing independent media at all levels, from national to local.** After all, they are the watchdogs of democracy and the voice of civil society. Their role as truthful information carriers is especially noticeable in the extremely difficult times of the hybrid aggression, which is largely being waged on the information front.

## **The role of civil society organisations in the democratisation of Europe**

Modern civil society and democracy are inseparable, since **it is the democratic order that provides a platform for the establishment of civil society organisations**, development of their capacity, and efficient influence on authorities at various levels and social processes, as well as the right to take part in the adoption, implementation, and oversight of government decisions.

Civil Society organisations were established and consolidated as part of European democratic societies in the second half of the 19th century, when, after the defeat of the Spring of Nations in 1848, there was an acute public demand for generating forces capable of protecting civil rights and freedoms against the incumbent regimes. The most widespread were trade unions, but also organisations focusing on education, women's issues, mil-

itary, sports were established and contributed to shaping the emerging political agenda.

The range of public interests covered by these organisations and movements expanded, especially in the interwar period of the 20th century and after World War II, when the principles of the so-called 'open society'\* became widespread and established. **CSOs became the foundation for the development of post-war European democracies and the subsequent unification of their efforts and aspirations for peace and social well-being through a new international community – the European Union.**

\* 'Open society' is a society where the rule of law, democratically elected government, civil society institutions and protection of minority rights prevail, as defined by Karl Popper.

Moreover, it was civil society organisations that became a key driver in the transformation of the former socialist countries (and later, some of the USSR republics) into modern democratic states. For example, the efforts of the alternative trade union called 'Solidarity' led to the fall of the communist regime in Poland, which in turn triggered a knock-

on effect of democratic transformation in the rest of the former Soviet Union's satellite states. The ideas and programme of Sąjūdis ('Movement') in Lithuania became the starting point for the restoration of independence for all three former Baltic republics, and its leaders became politicians who led the country on the path of European integration.



## Civil Society Organisations in Ukraine

The first non-governmental organisations in Ukraine began to appear in the last third of the 19th century: the Prosvita Society, the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society, and the Ukrainian Women's Movement. The Plast scouting organisation was established in the late 20th century, along with a number of military and sports associations, etc.

Since they operated in a stateless environment, these entities understood their main task in the struggle for independent democratic Ukraine. Subsequently, when the Western Ukrainian People's Republic and the Ukrainian People's Republic were proclaimed, the leaders of these organisations played an active part in the state-building processes, incorporating the principles of democracy and equality into the legislation of both young republics, which soon joined to become united Ukraine.

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*“Ukrainian civil society has shown an incredible miracle by quickly adapting to the new conditions and becoming the government's partner in defending the country.”*

**Katarina Mathernova,**  
EU Ambassador to Ukraine

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Under the Soviet occupation, the totalitarian regime banned the above-mentioned CSOs, creating instead fictitious non-governmental organisations that were fully dominated and controlled by it. It was only during the so-called 'Perestroika' that the first modern NGO in Ukraine appeared – the Lion's Society (1987), followed by the Prosvita ('Enlightenment') and Plast societies. Their members soon became the founders and leaders of the People's Movement, a nationwide

public association that fought for the proclamation of Ukraine's independence.

Today, there are about

**200 000 CSOs**

of various types in Ukraine

If earlier they had almost exclusively a social and political profile, today the scope of CSOs' work covers all facets of Ukrainian society with no exception.

Importantly, the emergence of new CSOs in Ukraine has historically been a response to deep-seated needs for significant shifts and fundamental changes within society, which ultimately determined the nation's development trajectory. Not only did the engagement of these organisations not decline, but it increased with the outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression.

**Ukrainian CSOs proved to be extremely responsive to public demands and are able to address them quickly and effectively.** This is evidenced, in particular, by the findings of an international study of the CSO sustainability index, which shows the continued progress of CSOs in Ukraine.

At the same time, the hostilities and challenges with financing clearly showed the need for meaningful external support. **The lion's share of assistance to Ukrainian CSOs came from the European Union in the very first days of the full-scale invasion.** As EU Ambassador Katarina Mathernova noted in her statement at the Civil Society Development Forum in December 2023, as early as 24–25 February 2022, the EU allowed the flexibility needed for CSOs to provide the support they deemed needed protect Ukraine from the aggressor and supporting people and systems in need of security and safety.





# EU support for Ukrainian civil society organisations during the war

Today, the European Union not only continues to provide assistance to CSOs throughout the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, but also steps it up. Hundreds of organisations working in the areas of human rights protection, women, youth, children, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ communities, temporarily displaced persons, disabled people, veterans, and other socially vulnerable groups, as well as in the development of environmental, business, agricultural, energy, sports, youth, tourism, and other initiatives, have already benefited from the EU's non-repayable assistance in the field of CSO support, with a total of over EUR 104 million in EU funding.

Currently **2330 projects** are being implemented. The vast majority of grants were awarded to individual activists (1 332) and local CSOs (321).

As of the first quarter of 2024, there are

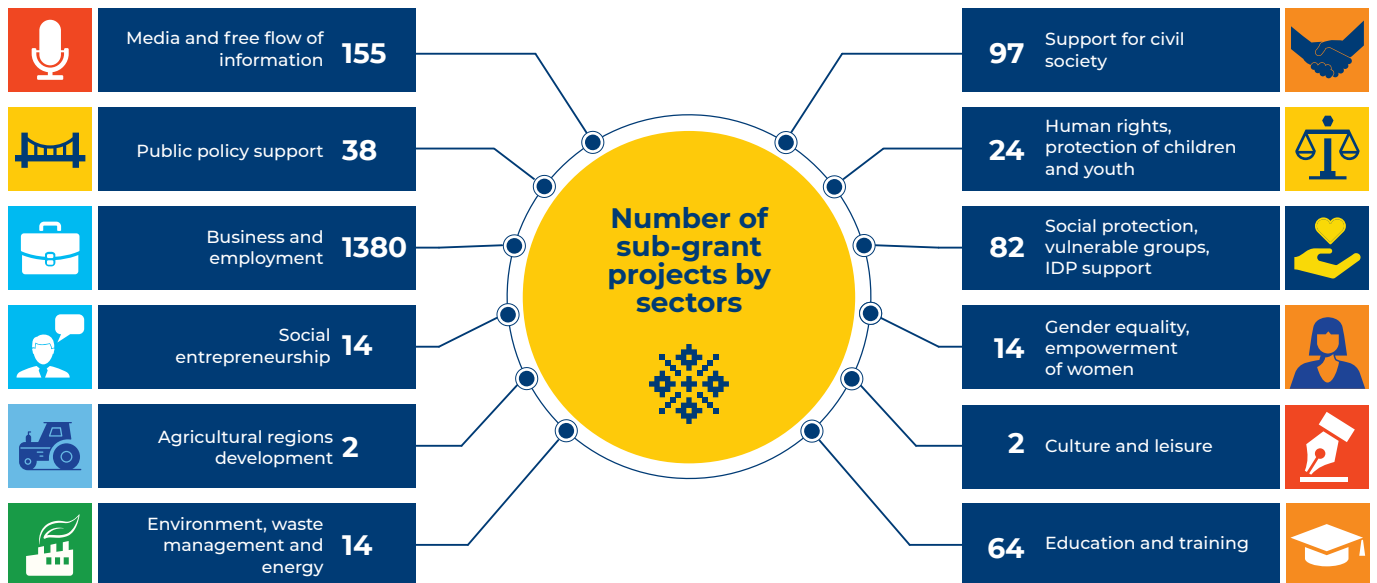
# 63

grant projects active in Ukraine

On average, the minimum amount of an EU grant is about

# EUR 60K

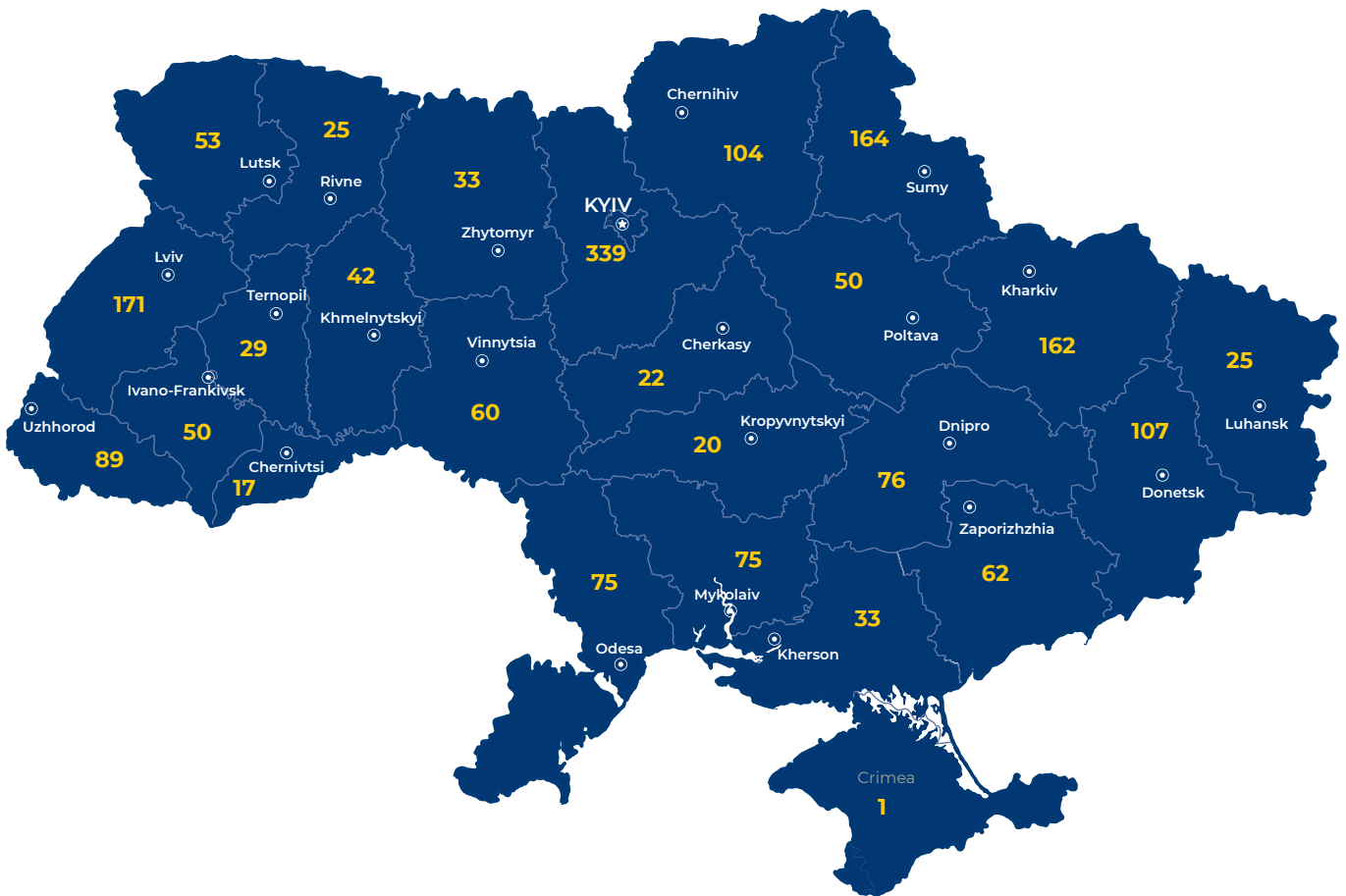
while the maximum is **EUR 10 million**



\* This and the following data has been provided as of June 2024



## Number of grant projects by region



On 2 May 2024, the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine launched the **#TogetherWeAct** communication campaign, dedicated to the **EU's unprecedented support for civil society organisations and media in Ukraine** in wartime. Among many others, the campaign will focus on four areas of EU assistance:



Support for reforms that bring Ukraine closer to the European Union



Support for CSOs that connect people with common interests



Support for socially vulnerable groups



Support for independent media

### KEY EU PARTNERS IN SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN CSOs:

- Eastern Europe Foundation
- International Renaissance Foundation
- Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting
- European Endowment for Democracy
- ISAR Ednannia
- Network 100 Percent Life Rivne





## EU support for independent media during the war

As an integral part of civil society that helps to counteract hostile propaganda, ensure access to relevant and unbiased information, protect human rights, fight corruption, and build and strengthen national democratic institutions, **the media need comprehensive and strong support.**

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression, Ukrainian media have suffered heavy losses: due to hostilities, at least 233 of them have ceased operations (mainly from temporarily occupied territories and regions where hostilities are ongoing), and 76 journalists have been killed. Unfortunately, there is a steady upward trend in these statistics. Due to mobilisation and/or forced emigration, there has been a chronic shortage of qualified media professionals, and there is a lack of technical, financial, and other resources. During the war, the situation with access to information and freedom of speech is deteriorating, as well as the moral and psychological condition of media workers and the safety of their work.

**In the fight against disinformation, raising awareness and media literacy play a significant role.** The European Union is well aware of the threat posed by the constant spewing of Russian disinformation. That is why in March 2022, the EU imposed sanctions on pro Kremlin disinformation and information manipulation channels, as well as Kremlin assets. The existence of free, independent and professional media that publish true stories generally contributes to the strengthening of democracy and resilience of Ukraine.

The European Union supports mass media and journalists in Ukraine in the face of current challenges and threats. Over the past few years, more than **150 media of various levels have received financial assistance from the EU, amounting to more than EUR 15 million.** In particular, the EU supports Suspilne, the Ukrainian national broadcaster, and its flagship initiatives in the field of media literacy.

### MEDIA-RELATED PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN UKRAINE THANKS TO EU SUPPORT:

- Resilient civil society and the media response to the war in Ukraine
- Support to the National Public Broadcaster in Ukraine
- Support to the Ukrainian Media Centre
- Efficient local media: Digital development for community engagement
- Boosting investigative journalism in Ukraine
- Comprehensive awareness-raising campaign on disinformation
- Support to media through the European Endowment for Democracy

This list is far from being complete. It is regularly updated and supplemented with existing and new EU assistance programmes for Ukraine. In addition, numerous EU funded projects that have reoriented their activities should be added to it.

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*“Despite Russia's ongoing full-scale war against Ukraine, the country is working to rebuild and implement reforms in preparation for EU membership. Ukrainian society demonstrates resilience, vitality, and a strong will for democracy, human rights, and European values. The European Union has supported and will continue to support Ukrainians on this path. Cooperation with civil society remains a key priority for the EU in this regard. The EU in Ukraine works with civil society across all sectors and throughout the country.”*

**Stefan Schleuning,**  
Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ukraine

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