

Strong municipalities, satisfied citizens

State institutions are learning how to offer high-quality and citizen-oriented services at local level

The challenge: Barriers to decentralisation

In 2014, Ukrainians from all walks of life came together to demand greater democracy in the country. In what became known as the ‘Revolution of Dignity’, they asserted their right to self-determination. Since then, Ukraine has invested in a comprehensive decentralisation reform programme with a view to strengthening local self-government, thereby making government more responsive and ultimately enhancing Ukrainian democracy. At the heart of the reform lie the newly created 1,469 municipalities (or hromadas), which constitute the primary level of local self-governance. Key laws and guidelines have already been introduced, and more are currently being discussed in Parliament. Budgetary and tax legislation, for instance, has been adapted to enable local authorities to better mobilise their own revenue and strengthen municipal financial systems. Since the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019, the new administration has signalled its commitment to this path and to accelerating change. However, achievements have to be sustained in the long run. In fact, for many newly created municipalities, the work has only just begun. Staff in local, regional and national administrations still do not have all the necessary skills to take on new tasks.



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There continues to be a lack of financial resources hampering their ability to provide quality local public services. Meanwhile, central government needs to coordinate the reform process more effectively, and clearer communication of the objectives and benefits of the reform are needed.

Our approach: Effective institutions nationwide

Through U-LEAD with Europe, GIZ supports national, regional and local administrations to become more responsive to citizens' needs. The programme's work is guided by the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local-Self Government, which is a key international agreement on the crucial role of local governments to promote citizens' wellbeing.

U-LEAD with Europe delivers seminars, advisory services and study trips to allow representatives from different levels of government to obtain the expertise they need to enhance regional development. They learn how to improve the decentralisation processes, law and land use planning, but also communication, budget management and financial planning. This ensures that the public sector service providers get the funds they need. Communities are advised how the amalgamation process into larger and more effective municipalities can best be designed.



Training for communities on primary healthcare reform implementation

As service providers for the Ukrainian population, municipalities also learn how they can involve citizens in their decision-making processes, develop local tourism and exploit business potentials. In addition, local schools and healthcare centres are enhanced.

Many of the programme's services are provided through its 24 regional offices and the recently opened European Project Office in Mariupol. Through these regional offices, which cover all of Ukraine's 24 oblasts, including the government-controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk, the programme operates nationwide.

U-LEAD with Europe is the multi-donor initiative financed by the German Government and the European Union and receives contributions from Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia and Slovenia.



Reforms and trainings improve the work in Primary Healthcare Centres



Protective kits include medical masks, hand and surface disinfectants, protective gowns, contactless thermometers, protective glasses, and respirators



Georg Milbradt: "Having their own resources is very important for local governments"

Prof. Georg Milbradt, Special Envoy of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Ukrainian reform in the areas of governance and decentralisation, is convinced that "successful decentralisation is not

Our results: Hundreds of thousands learning new skills

Since 2016, the programme has organised over 7,500 trainings, consultations and conferences. These have reached over 180,000 participants from all government levels, half of whom are women. Of the participants surveyed, 81 percent said that they apply their new skills and knowledge in their work, for instance by using new tools or by working in a more citizen-oriented manner. Over 750 municipalities have adjusted their internal processes in order to exercise the increased powers granted by the decentralisation reform more effectively. Learning has also been made available online on the u-learn.org.ua platform and so far 580 certificates have been issued to online learners from the municipalities. U-LEAD has organised around 1,020 dialogue events with citizens and conducted the nationwide *I am hromada* campaign to promote the decentralisation process. Ultimately, these efforts contribute towards a higher standard of living, specifically in rural areas.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

With the support of the EU, U-LEAD with Europe and the Centre for Public Health developed and distributed 500,000 newspapers, 100,000 leaflets and 45,000 posters to over 800 rural hromadas to raise awareness of COVID-19. In cooperation with Caritas Ukraine, U-LEAD with Europe has procured and delivered protective kits with the most necessary medical equipment to over 900 hromadas in need. The initiative engaged 11 regional manufacturers in producing over 300,000 face masks for over 900 municipalities. The programme conducted 14 webinars on coping with the COVID-19 crisis with up to 1,600 participants from Ukraine, Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Italy, Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, Sweden, Switzerland and Poland.

only achieved by transferring responsibilities to the local level, but by providing it with the appropriated funds to perform the new tasks. Having their own resources is very important for local governments – now they can decide how to spend the money. I think this has been very successful. However, it must be combined with building up capability through amalgamation."

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