

Ukraine: a humanitarian crisis at the doorstep of the European Union

Informing action and investment amidst humanitarian challenges

Conference report

Paris, 14/03/2019



Key Messages

- ***The last armed conflict of Europe:*** The war in Donbas is the only active armed conflict in Europe. There have been 13,000 people killed and 30,000 injured since the conflict started five years ago. There are 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with 30% are over the age of 60.
- ***The separation and disintegration of the socio-economic fabric:*** A 450km frontline, also known as the contact line, cuts in two each of the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, which are industrialized, urban and densely populated. Currently, there are 2.2 million people live in the Government Controlled Area (GCA) and 2.3m live in the Non-Government Controlled Area (NGCA). The artificial separation of the two regions intensifies humanitarian needs, disintegrates the socio-economic fabric and reshapes traditional ties between the regions.
- ***Persisting social connections:*** In spite of those difficulties, social links persist beyond armed violence. Everyone in the region has relatives, children, grandchildren, friends or former neighbors on the other side of the contact line, as proven by more than 70,000 daily crossings. People cross the line of contact for personal, administrative or economic reasons.
- ***Ongoing protection and security concerns:*** Besides the permanent physical insecurity resulting from the daily fighting, people face other protection risks, including restrictions on fundamental rights, such as the freedom

of movement. There are only five crossing points located between GCA and NGCA, therefore it takes hours to cross the border. People who cross the border are exposed to the risk of shelling, land mines and mined fields. Other concerns include the right to pension, the compensation and restitution for those who have lost their housing, the protection of vital civilian infrastructure (water, electricity, heating), as well as the contamination of the area with mines and other unexploded ordnances of war.

- **Access to water at risk:** Daily fighting restricts the provision of around 1.3 million cubic meters of water by the public company Voda Donbasa to 4 million civilians. The water supply system crisscrosses the contact line. The human cost is heavy: nine of the company's employees were killed and 26 injured while repairing or maintaining the infrastructure, which was damaged during fighting. International financial, political and humanitarian support is crucial to ensure that the water company continues to function regularly. The company has also accumulated financial debts, which keep increasing due to conflict-related factors.
- **Significant implications on people's health:** There are 300,000 people who live close to the contact line in the Luhansk oblast (GCA) alone, who are under ongoing realistic danger of shelling, which recently extends far outside of the 0-5 km area. Local inhabitants are also regularly exposed to the danger of land mines (also beyond the immediate proximity to the contact line). As a result of land mines, there were 280 civilians (including eight children) fatal incidents, and more than 2,000 were injured. More than 8,000 buildings and facilities (including medical) were damaged or destroyed and require total reconstruction or renovation, thus putting a huge burden onto the process of provision of quality medical and psychosocial support in the conflict-affected areas. The majority of the inhabitants of the conflict-affected areas were always dependent on Donetsk and Luhansk cities' healthcare centers (i.e. specialized healthcare facilities) which are now in the NGCA, thus making it extremely difficult to have proper access to timely and quality healthcare on both sides, since NGCA facilities are cut off from the nationwide healthcare infrastructure.
- **Mariupol, a successful example:** The City of Mariupol is located in the GCA and faces important logistical and economic problems, as it has been virtually isolated between two areas of tension: the frontline to the northeast, and the Azov Sea to the south. However, local authorities successfully attracted investments by highlighting the potential of the city to potential investors; and provided support to the internally displaced people who live in the city. In early 2019, France has allocated a state loan of EUR 64 million for water treatment, an important example of how long-term investments can also take place in proximity of the contact line.
- **Insufficient humanitarian funding:** As the need for humanitarian assistance in the NGCA continues, the financial support will continue to be required. While the peace process is at a standstill, funding for humanitarian action is insufficient. The United Nations estimate that EUR 162 million is required to meet humanitarian needs in 2019. However, only 36% of the Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded in 2018.
- **Humanitarian and development, a joint framework:** On the other hand, the GCA opens up to development opportunities, which require regional and national strategies and a close cooperation with the state institutions. In this logic, the European Union has developed a Joint Framework connecting humanitarian assistance and institutional development, for a comprehensive approach in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.
- **Stalling negotiations:** Lack of political will from all sides results in lack of progress. Ceasefire agreements are an example where despite the great efforts regularly employed to negotiate temporary ceasefires, engagements are quickly broken. Despite the frustration this may cause, it is nevertheless important to maintain existing negotiation formats, as they provide a platform for dialogues. As a result of negotiations, violations of ceasefire and casualty numbers have been reduced. An additional ongoing engagement of France on this level is therefore crucial.

Our recommendations to France

All discussion points addressed at the 2019 Conference highlighted the actions that France can undertake to improve the humanitarian situation in the conflict-affected area, are the following:

1. **Maintain engagement in negotiations** in order to achieve a sustainable ceasefire. The use of humanitarian diplomacy can be an entry point to build trust among parties.
2. **Financially support the water company Voda Donbasa** in cooperation with other international donors, so that millions of people on both sides of the line of contact are given access to water.
3. **Urge the government of Ukraine to grant a special status to the Voda Donbasa water company** to be allowed to continue its operations in NGCA safely and without violating Ukrainian legislation.
4. **Call on all parties to the conflict to take urgent measures to improve the conditions for crossing the line of contact** including opening at least one additional crossing point (i.e. Zolote, Luhansk region) and simplifying the crossing procedures.
5. **Urge the Government of Ukraine to revise the current legislation** on sexual and reproductive health, mental health and psychosocial support and gender-based violence; and revise the funding allocated to healthcare in order to improve and extend access of the comprehensive system of healthcare services to the conflict-affected population on the both sides of the line of contact.
6. **Promote, support and continue investment in Donbas** to ensure sustainable impact. The City of Mariupol example shows that it is important to invest much closer to the contact line. With continued support in this process, the state institutions will be able to face long-term regional challenges, such as providing for the needs of the population who have lost access to their service centers, which are now located in the NGCA.
7. **Ensure that development and humanitarian initiatives are coordinated effectively**, as per the humanitarian development nexus.
8. **Continue and increase its contribution to the humanitarian interventions** by:
 - Urging the de-facto authorities to lift restrictions imposed on humanitarian aid in the NGCA, as per international humanitarian law provisions;
 - Allocating funds to the humanitarian action, including for the recently launched OCHA Country-Based Pool Fund that will allow increased flexibility.

2019 Conference Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker	Positon, organization
	Moderator	Sophie Lambroschini	Researcher, Marc Bloch Centre
9:00 – 9:30	Registration		
9:30 – 9:45	Welcoming Speeches		
	Valeria Faure-Muntian	French MP, Head of France-Ukraine Parliamentarian Friendship Group at the French Parliament	
	Martin Taschner	Head of Unit for Southeast Europe and Eastern Neighbourhood, ECHO	
	Frédéric de Saint Sernin	Directeur général délégué, ACTED	
9:50 – 10:30	The Humanitarian Situation in Ukraine: An Overview		
9:55-10:10	An overview of the conflict in Ukraine	Jeremy Wetterwald	Country Representative, REACH Ukraine
10:10-10:20	Perspectives from the field	Olga Lishyk	Deputy Governor, Luhansk Oblast Administration, Ukraine
10:20-10:30	Protection of people affected by conflict in eastern Ukraine	Daryna Tolkach	Advocacy Coordinator, Right to Protection
10:30 – 11:50	Panel Discussion: Looking Ahead, Prospects for the Humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine		
	Ioulia Shukan	Assistant Professor, Nanterre University	
	Oleksandr Dubyk	Chief Engineer, Water Company Voda Donbasa, Ukraine	
	Peter Wagner	Head of Support Group for Ukraine, Director at DG Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission	
	Kseniia Sukhova	Deputy Mayor of Mariupol, Ukraine	
	Osnat Lubrani	United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator	
	Marie Dumoulin	Deputy Director of Russia and Eastern Europe, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs	
11:50—12:00	Conclusions		
	Martin Taschner	Head of Unit for Southeast Europe and Eastern Neighbourhood, ECHO	
	Lauriane Gauny	Regional Director for Europe and South Caucasus, People in Need	