

SHELTER

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION FOR THE UKRAINIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE CENTRES (ASCs) IN WARTIME

March – April 2022

Report on the results of a monitoring exercise conducted in March and April 2022
by the Swedish-funded project in support to development of ASCs in hromadas –
PROSTO

Project PROSTO "Support to Services Accessibility in Ukraine" works to improve the capacity of local self-governments to deliver qualitative services to the residents of hromadas. The Project is funded by the Government of Sweden.

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Abbreviations and special terms

ASC	Administrative Service Centre
hromada	Local self-government/community
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organisation for Migration (United Nations)
OCHA	The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
starosta	A community "elder", who is the local council's representative in a village or settlement or similar territory that is subordinated the local council of a hromada. The starosta can be authorised to make decisions, provide services, or keep registers on the level of his or her local territory.



Introduction, objective, scope, and methods

This report summarises the monitoring of the preconditions for ASCs to provide administrative service for the residents of Ukrainian hromadas during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The widespread military activities have put immense pressure on Ukraine, its government and government structures, its local communities, and its population. The humanitarian situation in the country varies largely and so do the conditions for service provision. Some local communities and cities are temporarily occupied by the Russian invaders, some are located on the frontline and directly affected by combats, whereas a majority of the Ukrainian communities is behind the frontline with preserved infrastructure but must attend to the many people fleeing for protection in the calmer parts of the country.

Since the 24 February, almost 13 million Ukrainians have had to flee their homes. Close to 5 million have fled the country as refugees and the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ukraine was in mid-April estimated to 7.7 million and keeps increasing according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). [1]

The monitoring was conducted in two waves, in March and April 2022 by PROSTO, a project in support to development of ASCs in Ukrainian hromadas, funded by the Swedish government through the Swedish agency for international development cooperation, Sida and implemented by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions through its subsidiary SKL International.

The objective for the monitoring is to understand the current rapidly changing situation for ASCs and adapt the project's activities accordingly. The monitoring primarily focuses on the ASCs' conditions to provide services in general and to IDPs in particular, including monitoring of the humanitarian situation in the community (hromada) as a whole and the role assigned to the ASCs in times of the current Russian invasion.

Scope

The monitoring included 140 hromadas in 23 of Ukraine's 24 oblasts. It was possible to interview 122 of the selected 140. Only geographical and demographical data were collected about the remaining 23 hromadas that could not be reached.

As a comparison - before the Russian invasion started, 1 030 Ukrainian hromadas had established an ASC (which equals approximately 72 % of all hromadas in Ukraine) [2]. This monitoring exercise has thus covered 14 % of all hromadas with an ASC. It does not claim to statistically reflect the situation in all Ukrainian ASCs in hromadas but aims to provide an informed analysis of how ASCs cope in wartime, what effects their ability to function and what their main challenges are.

Selection criteria

The selection of hromadas for this monitoring was primarily based on previous acquaintance. Many of the team's experts have previously worked for the U-LEAD with



Europe Programme¹ and have thus cooperated directly with hundreds of hromadas in all 24 oblasts. Therefore, it was easy to reach out to partner hromadas of that programme, as a trustful relationship was already established before the war started. The aim for the selection of hromadas was to have a representation of all oblasts, which was achieved with the exception of Odesa oblast².

Hromadas in the Western regions of Ukraine are over-represented, as they can be more active, and are more open to contacts, compared with hromadas in other parts of Ukraine that are more severely affected by the invasion and military activities.

Method

The analyses of this report are made based on the data collected during interviews with the selected hromadas. The head of ASC or ASC staff was primarily interviewed, but when this was not possible, interviews were held with representatives of the hromada. The interviews were made over telephone or sometimes Zoom. In addition, this analysis was informed by available reports and news articles about the current situation and interviews were also held with the PROSTO project experts (who conducted the interviews) and a local deputy in the city of Lutsk.

Local self-government under foreign aggression and martial law

The Russian invasion affects the Ukrainian national and local authorities' ability to function. On the one hand, large territories, including several cities and local communities face direct hostile military activities, which cause great human suffering and disruption of infrastructure and the provision of basic services. On the other hand, Ukraine immediately after the invasion started, on the morning of 24 February, imposed martial law across the entire country. This meant that the civil rule was temporarily substituted by military authority. For the regional administrations, the Kyiv city state administration, and the local self-government bodies (hromadas), this implied that they had to establish defence councils, (military administration councils) to help the military command and implement measures of the martial law regime. [3]

The local self-governments are unevenly affected by the Russian invasion and the military activity. Their ability to serve the residents and the demand for public services, including the provision of administrative services in the ASCs, vary greatly. To understand the current and changing conditions for the Ukrainian local self-governments (hromadas) one can speak of five situations, or five categories:

1. Hromadas and cities in the “rearward” - behind the frontline

The situation for the hromadas behind the frontline is that their infrastructure is generally intact and the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, gas,

¹ The U-LEAD with Europe Programme is an EU funded cooperation programme in support to Ukraine's decentralisation reform. During its first phase 2016-2021 one of its focus areas was to support the establishment of ASCs in Ukraine's new hromadas and as a result of the cooperation ASCs were established in close to 500 hromadas.

² Odesa was not included, simply because none of the available project experts that conducted the interviews had worked with any ASC in Odesa oblast.



health care services and communication services (internet and telephone) is functioning. Many hromadas behind the frontline have taken on huge numbers of people from other regions that have had to flee combat zones – IDPs and face difficulties in providing sufficient housing and sufficient food supplies and work opportunities for the temporary newcomer. Most of the ASCs in these hromadas are functioning and have taken on the additional role as hubs for collection and distribution of humanitarian aid.

The oblast administration centres behind the frontline are responsible for aid distribution to other oblasts that need humanitarian aid and for other forms of support, such as arranging evacuation of citizens.

Although far from the frontline, these hromadas risk rocket attacks from the Russian military forces, that often aim their arms at not only at military objects but also civilian objects and infrastructure such as apartment blocks and food storage, food production centres and railway stations.

2. Hromadas and cities on the frontline

The hromadas closer to the frontline face direct human suffering with disruption of basic public services. And in some instances, food and medicine provision is insufficient. The local authorities function to the extent that the security situation allows. The local authorities of the hromadas and cities on the frontline are often short of staff, as residents and employees of the local authorities have fled to safer parts of the country or abroad. The lion part of officials in the local councils are women.

3. Hromadas that were previously occupied, now liberated by Ukraine and undergoing rehabilitation

The humanitarian situation in the hromadas and cities liberated by the Ukrainian armed forces after temporary occupation of Russian troops is often severe, with great damage to civilian housing and civilian infrastructure. Here the local authorities face challenges on many levels: resources, premises, and staff. The functions of the local authorities are gradually restored with support from other national and local authorities and from voluntary forces. Residents that have fled these areas are now carefully moving back, although it is difficult to estimate the extent of this. The humanitarian needs are great and the security risks are significant as the invaders have mined the land and buildings.

4. Besieged hromadas and cities

These hromadas and cities are under very hard pressure with severe security situations and difficult humanitarian situations with severe disruption of basic public services, food and medicine shortages. The local authorities function to the extent that the security situation allows, primarily focusing on security, defence, and rescue measures. Also, in the case with these hromadas, many residents and employees of the local authorities have fled to safer parts of the country or abroad and the activities of the local authorities to a large extent rely on voluntary actions.



5. Temporarily occupied hromadas and cities

The situation for the local authorities in the temporarily occupied hromadas and cities is little known, but there is all the reason to believe that they have severe difficulties to fulfil their work and there are reports of local Ukrainian authorities being replaced by “marionette” leadership structures. The ministry for Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories states in a report about the situation on Kherson oblast [4] that the humanitarian situation is severe and particularly poor in the settlements and communities bordering with neighbouring oblasts. At least 100 teachers and have fled the temporarily occupied territories to non-occupied territories. The statistics about other similar professions are scarce. In addition, there are several reports about Ukrainian citizens being deported from Ukraine to Russia, the current estimation by the Ukrainian Parliament’s humanitarian committee is that close to 500 000 Ukrainians were deported [5,6] although that number is difficult to confirm and contact with the deported people is not possible.

The table below shows how the hromadas and cities of can be categorised as of 25 April 2022. A few oblasts fall under more than one category.

	Category	Oblasts of this category 28 April 2022*	No.
1	Hromadas and cities behind the frontline	L’viv, Volyn, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsy, Zakarpattia, Vinnytsia, Khmelnytsky, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kirovograd, Cherkasy, Poltava, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts	13
2	Hromadas and cities on the frontline	Odesa, Sumy, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolayiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts	11
3	Hromadas that were previously occupied, now liberated by Ukraine and undergoing rehabilitation	Kyiv, Chernihiv and Kharkiv oblasts	3
4	Besieged hromadas and cities	Donetsk and Kharkiv, oblasts	2
5	Temporarily occupied hromadas and cities	Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolayiv and Zaporizhzhia oblasts	5

*This categorisation will change, as the war activities change. This table shows the situation as of 28 April 2022 according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

Data overview, maps, and general analyses

For the monitoring conducted in April, 36 indicators were used, covering seven themes:

1. Security situation
2. The humanitarian situation/basic needs fulfilment
3. Inclusiveness and gender aspects of the service provision
4. IDPs: services, reception, and aid
5. ASC operations
6. ASC staffing
7. Mobile service provision, mobile ASCs



The 36 monitoring indicators and a full list of the monitored hromadas can be found in **Annexes 1 and 2**.

The monitoring conducted in March used a smaller number of indicators, reached out to fewer hromadas and did not include gender aspects, but in principle the approach was similar, which is why some trends can be observed over the time that passed between the first and second monitoring.

Maps

In addition to this report, ten geographical maps were prepared by the project team, which illustrate the hromadas' responses to the indicators by location and proximity to combat zones. An overview of the ten maps can be found in **Annex 3** and the maps are also referred to in the below data overview.

The monitoring included 140 hromadas (communities) in 23 of Ukraine's 24 oblasts. 122 of those were interviewed by phone. Before the full-scale invasion, these hromadas had a total population of 2.6 million people [Map 1]. Here follows an overview of the hromadas' responses, organised under the seven overall areas.

1. Security situation

A majority of the monitored hromadas are located on Ukraine-controlled territories. Nine hromadas were at the time of the interviews in April on temporarily occupied territories. [Map 1]. The project managed to establish contact with seven of the occupied hromadas. Two of the occupied hromadas stated that the ASC was still functioning, but it is not clear which services they can provide or how they can operate.

The residents of at least one occupied hromada (Lozova in Kharkiv oblast) had, at the time for the interviews, been ordered to evacuate and this situation of course overshadows all other activities of the local authorities.

Next after the **human security risks** for the ASCs that operate on occupied territories or near the frontline, the most severe security risk for ASC is **data security**. Many hromadas still keep local paper registers and records that contain sensitive personal data or data about ownership of land or property, or information about the hromada's sensitive infrastructure. These data are at risk from two perspectives: they risk being eliminated in a fire or similar, or they risk being misused in the hand of the occupiers. This monitoring cannot present a full overview of the situation in the ASCs of temporarily occupied hromadas, but we have collected anecdotal reports about ASC staff hiding sensitive documents of the ASCs in places secure from the occupiers. The martial law allows representatives of the local authorities to evacuate significant and sensitive documents and stamps to protect them. And if it not possible to evacuate them, they shall be eliminated.

One hromada on the temporarily occupied territories told us the following story of how they prepared the ASC for an invasion:



During the first weeks of the war, the hromada's ASC continued working in its ordinary mode. But then the threat of an occupation appeared and the hromada leadership, together with the ASC management, decided to secure the ASC's equipment. All valuable assets were taken out of the ASC: the workstation for passport and driver's licence issuance, all the computers and IT-equipment. The only things left behind in the ASC premises were the metal safes. After that, all documents together with the archiving files were also taken out and hidden, and the ASC premises were locked.

The hromada's territory is now temporarily occupied and the legally elected Ukrainian hromada leadership does no longer have access to the premises of the local council. Those premises were taken over by the Russian occupiers. The hromada leadership meet occasionally on different addresses to exchange information. The overall situation is very difficult. This hromada that has found itself under temporarily occupation and is left to itself. The possibilities to have contact with the oblast administration are scarce and the hromada must make all the decisions by itself. The humanitarian situation in the hromada deteriorates day by day.

One occupied Ukrainian hromada, interviewed on 11 April 2022

2. The humanitarian situation/basic needs fulfilment

The monitoring indicators included access to basic services such as water, food, electricity, public transport, and communication.

13 of the interviewed hromadas reported a severe humanitarian situation. These are hromadas that are located close to combat areas or hromadas that were recently liberated from the Russian occupiers. Among these 13 hromadas one lacked access to water and electricity and the food provision was irregular in five hromadas. [Map 9]. 8 hromadas reported full or periodical absence of internet, 7 reported interruptions of the mobile phone connection. [Map 2]

The monitoring was conducted on two occasions, mid-March and mid-April. In April the hromadas were asked to rate the humanitarian situation on a five-grade scale. 18 stated that the humanitarian situation was similar to the one before the war, rating the situation as "5". 82 reported that the humanitarian situation has slightly worsened compared to before the war and rated it as "4". 22 rated the situation as "3" – acceptable. Only one hromada rated "2" and no one rated "1". These responses only reflect the 122 hromadas that the monitoring could establish contact with, we do not know how the remaining 18 would assess their situation.

The hromadas were also asked to assess the dynamics of the humanitarian situation over the period between the two interviews (March and April). 41 reported a positive dynamic, 65 unchanged situation and 6 hromadas reported that the situation had worsened (two of those in eastern Ukraine and 4 in the west and central parts, far from the frontline and combat).

3. Inclusiveness and gender aspects of the service provision

An overall reflection is that the war has deepened the vulnerability of certain population groups. 14 hromadas, 12%, report a deterioration of the humanitarian situation for



vulnerable groups of the population related to sex, age, and health situation. 11 hromadas, 9%, report that they cannot provide the same accessible and comfortable conditions for service provision as they used to. This is either due to them having to move premises or due to that they must store humanitarian aid items in the centre's premises, which affects the access to ramps, waiting area, children's corner and such assets. [Map 8]

Only 28 of the monitored hromadas, 24%, gather gender-oriented statistics about the visitors and only 20 hromadas, 17%, have compared the gender and age statistics now and before the war. However, even without statistics, the hromadas estimate that women are in a majority of those that turn to the ASCs for service, and this has not changed since before the war. The IDPs are predominantly women and children. The men more often stay in or near their home communities. More men than women tend to join the army or the territorial defence organisations. Besides men of the ages 18-60 are not allowed to leave Ukraine under the rule of martial law.

Some hromadas have reported that marginalised groups among the local residents sometimes have to wait longer for service or help, as the more urgent needs of newly arrived IDPs, require immediate attendance.

This indicator is analysed more in dept in a separate report.

4. IDPs: services, reception, and aid

More and more hromadas are using their ASCs for registration of IDPs. Primarily because it is convenient and in many cases the ASC is the first point where newly arrived persons go to receive information and support. Larger hromadas also authorise their starostas for registration of IDPs. [Map 6]

95 of the interviewed hromadas, or 81%, report that their ASCs register IDPs and 84 have also authorised their starostas to register IDPs.

93 of the interviewed hromadas, 79%, have announced their readiness to receive IDPs, and some of them have announced that "we can receive even more". Some hromadas have reported that their possibilities to receive more IDPs are shrinking. [Map 5]

Some hromadas are better prepared than others to take in new temporary residents. Yasinia hromada in Zakarpattia oblast is one example of a hromada with the necessary infrastructure:

Yasinia, with a population of 19 500, has received close to 7 000 IDPs. The hromada is tourist resort in peace time and therefore has the infrastructure to host so many refugees. The hromada officials have by themselves created a unique system for registration of IDPs, which includes information not only about the IDP's age, sex, and civic social status, but also about the IDP's professions and skills. The ASC provides social services, including all special services for IDPs, permit services (regarding forestry, driver's licence, fire security approval, food handling permits and more), construction permits, civic registration services and local services.

Yasinia hromada in Zakarpattia oblast, interviewed on the 7 April 2022



5. ASC operations

The access to administrative services is vital for all citizens. 12 hromadas reported that their ASCs currently are not functioning which means that 160 000 of the citizens in the interviewed hromadas lack access to administrative service through the ASCs.

Some of the ASCs have reoriented their activities and have become hubs for coordination of humanitarian aid distribution in their hromada, which in modern Ukrainian language, that is adapting to wartime vocabulary, are called “Turbota Centres”. In some instances, the ASC staff are engaged as volunteers: they help IDPs finding housing and food and provide other forms of support.

The most demanded services provided by ASCs are currently: registration of the status Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), social services of administrative character, registration matters of civic status and local services³.

6. ASC staffing

Almost half of the monitored ASCs reported that their staff has decreased. This is mainly due to members of staff fleeing to safer parts of the country or abroad, but also because co-workers have left their work to join the army or work with voluntary defence tasks. The ASC have primarily lost female members of staff. But before drawing conclusions about gender inequalities one should remember that most ASCs before the war had predominantly female staff (around 80%). [Map 7]

13 of the hromadas, or 11%, reported that their number of ASC staff had decreased by 50 to 100%. These were hromadas in Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Sumy, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, and even Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts. Hence the Eastern oblasts seem to be more affected, but the challenge concerns many oblasts all over the country.

Despite the decrease in staff, 85 (73%) of the monitored hromadas reported that they have enough staff and can handle the workload. Some explained that the workload has decreased as many of the national registers and data bases were still not available at the time for the interview and therefore not all types of services could be provided.

At the same time, the project’s experts in meetings with ASCs have received different reports. Many ASCs state that their staff suffer from burn-out and work less efficiently. The uncertainty and the stress created by the war has made its mark. Another stressing factor for ASC staff is that their incomes have decreased due to the loss of the additional salary payment “premiya”, which sometimes make a significant part of the salary.

19 of the hromadas, 16%, reported that they are short of staff and have vacancies for one or more new member of staff. All those 19 are in the western oblasts.

³ Local services are services that are handled locally and do not require access to national registers or data bases, such as receiving certificate for proof of residence, proof of ownership of property or land.



It is difficult to predict the further developments of the staffing situation, as we do not know how the military activities will develop and to what extent those who initially fled their homes will return, and which areas will be considered as safer than other. But staffing, and the provision of professionals with suitable competences which used to be a bottle neck for ASCs even before the war, remains a matter of concern. The example of Sumy ASC illustrates what happened with the ASC staff:

Sumy, the oblast capital, with 220 000 residents, is located only 25 km off the border with Russia and the situation here has been difficult from the first days of the war and combat took place in the outskirts of the city.

The ASC, which is one of the largest in Ukraine and one of the first established, stopped all its activities as it became too dangerous for the staff to get to work and for the visitors to come to the centre.

- Almost 30% of the ASC staff fled the city during the first days of war. Most of them have taken unpaid leave and kept their employment in the centre.
- All technical equipment of the ASC was initially moved to safer places.
- 1-2 staff and the head of the ASC have taken turns attending the ASC.
- From the 12 April the ASC resumed its service provision with 20% of the staff working.
- Gradually all work is being resumed and the ASC equipment has been moved back and they are awaiting access to national register and data bases.

Sumy, Sumy oblast, interviewed on the 11 April 2022

7. Mobile service provision, mobile ASCs

The aim was to monitor the situation for all mobile ASCs that were provided to 11 hromadas within the framework of the U-LEAD with Europe Programme⁴. PROSTO Project team managed to get in contact with ten of them: Ustyluh, Volyn oblast; Pidvolochiysk, Ternopil oblast; Dunayivtsi, Khmelnytskyi oblast; Mohyliv-Podilskyi, Vinnytsia oblast; Lozova, Kharkiv oblast (besieged); Mezhova, Dnipropetrovsk oblast; Slavuta, Khmelnytskyi oblast, Nemyriv, Vinnytsia oblast; Hulyaipole, Zaporizhzhia oblast; and Olevsk, Zhytomyr oblast. [Map 10]

Of those ten, three hromadas reported that after the 24 February, they have occasionally used the vehicles for humanitarian purposes, i.e., distribution of food, transport of IDPs and people with disabilities. One hromada reported that they had not had time to send out the mobile ASC, because of the general workload in the main ASC and the additional work providing services to IDPs. One hromada reported that they have had to evacuate its vehicle to another location outside of the hromada, due to the security situation. Another hromada reported that they plan to resume the mobile service provision soon. One hromada, located on the frontline, found a different purpose:

⁴ The U-LEAD with Europe Programme is an EU funded cooperation programme in support to Ukraine's decentralisation reform. During its first phase 2016-2021 one of its focus areas was to support the establishment of ASCs in Ukraine's new hromadas and as a result of the cooperation ASCs were established in close to 500 hromadas.



“After the 24 February, we have not sent out our mobile ASC on its usual route to provide administrative services, but we have used the vehicle to go out and inspect and document damages to housing and infrastructure after shelling from the Russian forces had taken place.”

Lozova hromada, Kharkiv oblast, interviewed on the 12 April 2022

The price and access to fuel for the Mobile ASC are also obstacles for the hromadas to provide mobile services.

It is worth to also mention that the Ministry of Digital Transformation has requested hromadas with access to a mobile ASC, to lend those to newly liberated hromadas for service provision, as their ASC premises were damaged or ruined. A few hromadas have responded positively. It has been difficult to find a reasonable legal solution or safety guarantees for the temporary transfer of the vehicles, but the PROSTO Project experts have elaborated model for lending a mobile ASC from one hromada to another and this will be tested in May, when **Slavuta hromada in Khmelnytskyi oblast** will lend its mobile ASC to **Borodyanka hromada in Kyiv oblast**.

How do the ASCs manage to provide services under war conditions and martial law?

Many of the interviewed hromadas that are **located behind the frontline**, describe a similar chain of developments for their ASCs after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion on the 24 of February 2022. It can be summarised as a three-phase development:

- a) For the first days (in some cases only for the first hours) all activities were put on hold.
- b) After the first days, and with the fast inflow of people fleeing from the eastern, northern, and southern regions, the local authorities and ASCs started finding their feet and orient themselves in the new unpredictable circumstances. The ASCs in many cases emerged to meet humanitarian needs and took on the collection and distribution of humanitarian aid to the own hromada residents, to people on the run, IDPs and started organising humanitarian aid to hromadas in oblasts affected by the military activities - the combatting, bombing, shelling and, in some cases occupation.
- c) In the third phase, the ASCs started resuming provision of administrative services, primarily those services demanded by IDPs, depending on the availability of national registers. During the first weeks after the start of the invasion the access to several national registers that is necessary for service provision, were blocked by the government to ensure the protection of sensitive data in case of deterioration of the invasion. The service provision is now reoriented and focuses mostly on services that are requested by IDPs, on social services, civic registration, and passport services.

The ASCs continue to offer other services than administrative services, in many cases they organise or provide meal services and function as a hub for mediation of accommodation for IDPs.



The project's experts estimate that a vast majority of all services provided, more than 90 %, are targeted the IDPs.

It should, finally, be noted that it has not been possible to provide all types of services since the Russian invasion started. Many services provided in an ASC require access to national registers or data bases and many of them were closed for the first weeks, before the government had ensured the data security measures and the possibility to distinguish authorisation for access to the registers by geography, so that Russian occupiers would not be able to access sensitive data about Ukrainians from temporarily occupied territories.

What is the role of ASCs in provision of services for IDPs?

Since the Russian annexation of Crimea and the hostilities in Luhansk and Donetsk regions started in 2014, many Ukrainian citizens have had to flee their homes and special support and services have been introduced for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) [7]. To access these services, individuals need to apply to obtain the status of IDP and be officially registered. Since 2014 approximately 1.4 million Ukrainians were officially registered as IDPs. And now, since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Affairs, the number of officially registered IDP has increased by 2 million since the start of and now totals 3.4 million. These are the official numbers, but as mentioned earlier, IOM estimates the current number of displaced persons in Ukraine is 7.7 million [1].

Previously, the IDPs were registered by the social protection services only, either in the social protection services' local offices or in the ASCs, if representatives of the social services were represented in the ASCs.

However, since the invasion started and with the increasing numbers of people having to flee their homes, more options for registration were introduced (thanks to a change of the law on the 13 of March 2022) and the role of the ASC in this procedure is now more significant. Now three institutions can register IDPs in the unified register: Social Protection Services, the ASCs and anyone authorised either by the Social Services or the ASC (for instance a starosta). In addition, citizens also have the possibility to complete their registration in the smartphone application Diia. [8,9]

Apart from the IDP registration procedure, the ASCs have played an important role for people fleeing their homes as they provide other administrative services that are in demand among IDPs, such as social services of administrative character, civic registrations services, and passport services.

And as mentioned before, the ASCs have in many hromadas become centres for humanitarian support, tending not only to the administrative needs of IDPs. The ASC in Mukachevo hromada is one of the most active:



Mukachevo hromada in Zakarpattia oblast, with its 85 000 residents, is situated close to the Ukrainian borders with Slovakia and Hungary and has been on the route for many Ukrainians that seek refuge in the EU or other countries. It is also a railway hub.

The Mukachevo ASC is open around the clock and receives between 450 and 1 100 visitors every day. The range of services provided during wartime is relatively broad in the ASC of Mukachevo hromada. They provide services like registration of IDP status, social services of administrative character, passport services, business registration services and certain local services.

In addition to its traditional work the Mukachevo ASC:

- coordinates the distribution of humanitarian aid
- engages caretakers and teachers that normally are employed by the local kindergartens and school. They work with the children of IDP families that turn to the ASC for service
- provides tea, coffee, water, and biscuits for the ASC visitors
- organises transport to the railway station and to the borders (for those IDPs who wish to leave Ukraine)

Mukachevo hromada, Zakarpattia oblast, interviewed in April 2022

What is the humanitarian situation like in the monitored hromadas?

The monitoring indicates that the humanitarian situation is worse in the hromadas located close to the frontline, the temporarily occupied hromadas or those besieged, but the monitoring shows that the need for food provision and other essential basic humanitarian items grows also in the hromadas that receive and host large numbers of IDPs. The pressure on the “receiving” hromadas is growing and it seems as if some of them are starting to run out of resources and accommodation possibilities.

When asked the open question “What are your most urgent needs?” 32 hromadas, 27% responded that they need supplies of food and medicines for the IDPs. Three of those 32 are located on the frontline or close to combat zones. The rest are in the western and central parts with populations ranging from 4 000 to 74 000.

The hromadas report that they receive humanitarian aid from international organisations and their twin cities in other countries, directly or via the oblast administrations. However, the main bulk of humanitarian aid, such as food, water, medicines, and hygiene items, is raised and donated from Ukrainian sources: the civil society, local businesses, churches, and individuals. Ukrainians have shown an amazing will and ability to support each other and have so far managed to look after their own hromadas mainly “by themselves”.

However, because of the war, the Ukrainian economy is deteriorating and there are obstacles to maintain the supply chains. Therefore, if the Russian hostilities will continue for much longer, the local resources and abilities to help risk being exhausted and Ukrainian hromadas and citizens will need more support from international partners. This will require efficient coordination to ensure that the aid continues to be provided and that it reaches all the way to the local levels.

The international community almost since the very beginning of the Russian invasion recognises the situation in Ukraine as a humanitarian crisis and impressive amounts of humanitarian support has been rapidly provided by numerous countries and organisations



[10]. At the same time, the efficiency of the coordination of the received aid within Ukraine has been questioned. Ukrainian NGOs have observed that a lot of the international aid is delivered to the west and to big cities and stays there. Reports indicate that smaller remote and rural hromadas do not receive any support at all, although they need it too, especially those close to the frontline. Many organisations and regional and local coordinators of humanitarian aid call for a better coordination and propose a higher level of involvement of the local levels, of the local self-governments. [11]

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has initiated a platform for direct exchange for support to Ukrainian hromadas, called “Cities4cities” (cities4cities.eu) as one instrument to directly support the local levels in Ukraine.

Illustrative cases

This section intends to illustrate the various situations in the monitored hromadas, providing short presentations of the situation in eleven hromadas plus six hromadas that have access to a mobile ASC. The illustrative cases were selected either because they showcase a common situation, or because they show a particularly interesting example. Please note that some cases were used earlier in the report to illustrate the findings of the monitoring.

	Hromada	Oblast	Category	Quoted earlier in this report
1	Mukachevo	Zakarpattia oblast	Behind the frontline	x
2	Lutsk	Volyn oblast	Behind the frontline	
3	Pererisl'	Ivano-Frankivsk oblast	Behind the frontline	
4	Yasinia	Zakarpattia oblast	Behind the frontline	x
5	Chortkiv	Ternopil oblast	Behind the frontline	
6	Ivano-Frankivsk	Ivano-Frankivsk oblast	Behind the frontline	
7	Veselynove	Mykolayiv oblast	On the frontline	
8	Occupied hromada*	Occupied oblast	Occupied	x
9	Sumy	Sumy oblast	On the frontline	x
10	Kipti	Chernihiv oblast	On the frontline	

* for security reasons we will not reveal its name, as this hromada is still occupied

1. Mukachevo hromada, Zakarpattia oblast

Mukachevo hromada, with its 85 000 residents, is situated close to the Ukrainian borders with Slovakia and Hungary and has been on the route for many Ukrainians that seek refuge in the EU or other countries. It is also a railway hub.

The Mukachevo ASC is open around the clock and receives between 450 and 1 100 visitors every day. The range of services provided during wartime is relatively broad in the ASC of Mukachevo hromada. They provide services like registration of IDP status, social services of administrative character, passport services, business registration services and certain local services. In addition to its traditional work the Mukachevo ASC:

- coordinates the distribution of humanitarian aid



- engages caretakers and teachers that normally are employed by the local kindergartens and school. They work with the children of IDP families that turn to the ASC for service
- provides tea, coffee, water, and biscuits for the ASC visitors
- organises transport to the railway station and to the borders (for those IDPs who want to leave Ukraine)

2. Lutsk city, Volyn oblast

Lutsk is the capital of Volyn oblast and hence the city of the region that receives humanitarian aid from voluntary and humanitarian organisations in Ukraine and abroad. Lutsk is located only 130 km from the Polish border and has a population of 216 000. The city has established a special centre for the reception, repacking, and further distribution of the aid to other hromadas and to the military, depending on where the biggest needs are. Practically all staff members of the city's ASC serve as volunteers in this centre. But the ASC staff alone is not enough and other hromada officials and ordinary residents work as volunteers in the centre.

The city has also organised meal services for IDPs and other people in need in the schools' canteens. This is common practice in many other hromadas as well.

3. Pererisl hromada, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast

Pererisl hromada is one of the smallest in Ukraine with only 2 400 inhabitants. When project PROSTO first contacted the hromada on the 16 March and asked about the hromada's needs, they answered that all they needed were sewing machines to sew for the army. On the second round of monitoring, 8 of April 2022, they reported that they had found sewing machines and has started a sewing production line for the Ukrainian military forces.

4. Yasinia hromada, Zakarpattia oblast

Yasinia with its population of 19 500 has received close to 7 000 IDPs. The hromada is tourist resort in peace time and therefore has the infrastructure to host so many refugees.

The hromada officials have by themselves created a unique system for registration of IDPs, which includes information not only about the IDP's age, sex, and civic social status, but also about the IDP's professions and skills

The ASC provides social services, including all special services for IDPs, permit services (regarding forestry, driver's licence, fire security approval, food handling permits and more), construction permits, civic registration services and local services.

5. Chortkiv hromada, Ternopil oblast

Chortkiv is a mid-sized hromada with 29 000 residents, situated in the west of Ukraine but not close to any border. The ASC in Chortkiv never closed, not even on the first day of war and its functions has broadened. On the second day of war, the ASC started to gather humanitarian aid for IDPs. Until the 11 April, close to 3 600 people had sought refuge in Chortkiv, 1 200 of them were children. Chortkiv ASC was quick to start registration IDPs in order for them to receive humanitarian aid.

Today the staff of the ASC is not enough, and they have also engaged other hromada officials to work in the ASC, which has become a hub for humanitarian aid. In addition, the ASC



became a sort of information hub as residents turned to the ASC to learn about what the war laws imply and how other vital local and state organisations work in times of war, how to renew a passport that was lost or what is required for travel with pets abroad.

This hromada has a telephone hotline, which is manned around the clock, and there is a chatbot. The ASC staff have been very active raising all available means for the hromada and IDPs:

- collected information from local enterprises, private persons and foreign organisations about available help and informed about the hromada's needs
- registered which households in the hromada were able to offer accommodation for IDPs
- organised collection of necessary items for IDPs among the hromada's residents
- informed the residents and the IDPs about what the ASC can offer them as a humanitarian hub
- helped matching IDPs in need of a job with local employers
- taught residents and IDPs how to use the mobile app Diia and other applications

6. Ivano-Frankivsk city, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast

This hromada was not included in the monitoring but it must be mentioned here as its ASC became one of the first “Turbot Centre”, a humanitarian hub, from the very first day of the war, serving IDPs and military servicemen and servicewomen. Residents of the city brought various aid items to ASC, items that were then distributed to IDPs or sent further to the army. Already on the second day of war the ASC had written a programme on how to register and receive IDPs. By the time for the monitoring, mid-April 2022, the ASC had resumed its “normal work” and is providing almost all services that it used to provide before the war.

- The ASC has established a psychological support centre that residents and IDPs can call around the clock
- The work of all the ASC's 22 territorial units, or local “branches” of the ASC was synchronised with the main ASC, i.e, they also started working as “Turbot Centres” and now provide services like normal and register IDPs
- A special Telegram-channel was set up together with the Ministry for Digital Transformation, with the name “Turbotnik”.
- The ASC has helped organise meal services in the city schools, where people who come can eat and also register themselves as IDPs.

7. Veselyнове hromada, Mykolayiv oblast

Veselyнове is a small hromada, north-west of Mykolayiv, that before the war had 6 200 residents. The ASC has been closed for a period of time due to combat nearby, but by the time for the interview, 12 April 2022, the centre had renewed its work. The main registers are not accessible, but the ASC can provide several services without them, primarily social and local services, and of course also registration of IDPs and registrations of applications to receive the cash subsidy for IDPs.

Because of the hromada's geographical location, close to the combat zones, the ASC receives a large number of IDPs and all staff in the ASC and the staff of the centre's local branches, are primarily occupied with such cases.



This hromada has not involved the ASC in the distribution of humanitarian aid but has set up a hub by the local council to which IDPs and local residents can turn for food packages and for residents in more remote settlements, such food packages are distributed by the starostas.

8. Occupied hromada, Occupied Zaporizhzhia oblast

During the first weeks of the war, the hromada's ASC continued working in its ordinary mode, serving the residents. But then the threat of an occupation appeared and the hromada leadership, together with the ASC management, decided to secure the ASC's equipment. All valuable assets were taken out of the ASC: the workstation for passport and driver's licence issuance, all the computers and IT-equipment. The only things left behind in the ASC premises were the metal safes. After that, all documents together with the archiving files were also taken out and hidden, and the ASC premises were locked.

The hromada's territory is now temporarily occupied and the legally elected Ukrainian hromada leadership does no longer have access to the premises of the local council. Those premises were taken over by the Russian occupiers. The hromada leadership meet occasionally on different addresses to exchange information. The overall situation is very difficult. This hromada that has found itself under temporarily occupation and is left to itself. The possibilities to have contact with the oblast administration are scarce and the hromada must make all the decisions by itself. The humanitarian situation in the hromada deteriorates day by day.

9. Sumy city, Sumy oblast

Sumy, the oblast capital, with 220 000 residents, is located only 25 km off the border with Russia and the situation here has been difficult from the first days of the war and combat took place in the outskirts of the city.

The ASC, which is one of the largest in Ukraine and one of the first established, stopped all its activities as it became too dangerous for the staff to get to work and for the visitors to come to the centre.

- Almost 30 % of the ASC staff fled the city during the first days of war. Most of them have taken unpaid leave and kept their employment in the centre.
- All technical equipment of the ASC was initially moved to safer places.
- 1-2 staff and the head of the ASC have taken turns attending the ASC.
- From the 12 April the ASC resumed its service provision with 20 % of the staff working.
- Gradually all work is being resumed and the ASC equipment has been moved back and they are awaiting access to national register and data bases

10. Kipti hromada, Chernihiv oblast

Kipti is a small rural hromada, located straight off the highway between Kyiv and Chernihiv. It has a population of 6 200. It has been kept safe from shelling and heavy military activities despite its location.

From the start of the war, Kipti ASC has been open, although not working full hours. They have received numerous visitors on all kinds of matters. As for all other ASCs, the access to



national registers and data bases was cut off for a while, but it has always been possible to provide civic registration services, local services and humanitarian aid.

No one from the hromada leadership or the ASC staff has left Kipti. They have stayed on and supported one another and supported the residents of Kipti.

Conclusions and further steps

This monitoring has grown organically, springing from a need to understand the situation for the hromadas and their possibilities to provide administrative services and their humanitarian situation in an acute trying situation of invasion, hostile military activities and millions of people fleeing their homes. The selection of hromadas for the monitoring does not necessarily represent the situation in all kinds of Ukrainian hromadas and the situation is constantly changing. However, the monitoring covers almost 14 % of all hromadas that have established an ASC (1 030) and almost 10 % of all Ukrainian hromadas (1 470), which makes it a significant testimony of the life of hromadas during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The monitoring indicates that:

The activities of the ASCs and local authorities are overshadowed by the military activities and developments and the national priority to defend the country. Ukraine imposed martial law on the 24 of February, which has changed the dynamic of decision-making and affected local self-government. At the same time, the hromadas that have found themselves under temporarily occupation have been left to themselves. Their possibilities to have contact with the oblast administration is scarce and the hromadas therefore must make all the decisions by themselves. The residents of at least one monitored hromada had been ordered to evacuate and such situations of course overshadow all other activities for the local authorities.

Many hromadas struggle with the uncertain situation and the threats to human security and sometimes food security but prioritise to keep their service centres open and provide services and support to residents and IDPs.

The war has had its effect also on the provision of administrative services **Many services provided in an ASC require access to national registers or data bases and most of them were closed for the first weeks**, some for even longer time, until the government had ensured the data security measures and the possibility to distinguish authorisation for access to the registers by geography, so that Russian occupiers would not be able to access sensitive data about Ukrainians in the temporarily occupied territories.

With the increasing demand for support to IDPs, **the ASCs have been authorised by national authorities to play a more active role for the IDPs** in terms of their registration and access to state social benefits. This is a vast improvement in terms of accessibility of services, as the ASC often is the first institution to which people turn, having arrived in a new place, and makes a natural reception point in a hromada. In addition, the ASCs in many hromadas have become the main coordination centre for humanitarian aid and its distribution to IDPs and local residents in need. Hence the role of the ASCs has stretched beyond its administrative



function and became a motor for civil mobilisation of support at a time when this is much needed.

Staffing is an even bigger challenge for ASCs in time of war: It is difficult to predict the further developments of the staffing situation, as we do not know how the military activities will develop and to what extent those who initially fled their homes will return, and which areas will be considered as safer than other. But staffing, and the provision of professionals with suitable competences which used to be a bottle neck for ASCs even before the war, remains a matter of concern for the hromadas.

The humanitarian situation deteriorates not only in the hromadas directly affected by military activities. At least 32 of the monitored hromadas reported that they have troubles with food and medicine supplies.

The Ukrainian economy is deteriorating and there are obstacles to maintain the supply chains and humanitarian aid. The local resources and abilities to help, risk being exhausted and Ukrainian hromadas and citizens will need more support from international partners. **This will require efficient coordination to ensure that the aid continues to be provided and that it reaches all the way to the local levels.**

The international community recognises the situation in Ukraine as a humanitarian crisis and impressive amounts of humanitarian support has been rapidly provided by numerous countries and organisations [10]. At the same time, **the efficiency of the coordination of the received aid within Ukraine is questioned and many organisations and regional and local coordinators of humanitarian aid call for a better coordination.** [11]

For future monitoring exercises some indicators may require adjustment, suggestions for tuning of the indicators can be found in **Annex 5.**

Annexes

- 1: Monitoring questions
- 2: List of monitored hromadas
- 3: List of maps
- 4: Maps
- 5: Suggested changes to indicators for future monitoring

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