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## Article

# Developing civil society in Ukraine: What is the role of the mechanisms for implementing the association agreement with the EU?

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## **Developing civil society in Ukraine. What is the role of the mechanisms for implementing the association agreement with the EU?**

Andrii KRUPNYK\*

### **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to assess the implementation of the principles of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (hereinafter - the Agreement) in Ukraine in the field of civil society development, in particular in the implementation of the National Strategy for Civil Society Development for 2016-2020 (hereinafter - the National Strategy - 2020). A comparative analysis of ensuring in Ukraine the principles of stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as agreed by the Parties to the agreement in the field of domestic policy. The analysis revealed certain deviations from the provision of these democratic principles. Requirements for the content of the new National Strategy, which is being formed for 2021-2026 (hereinafter - the National Strategy - 2026) by joint efforts of the Ukrainian government and civil society organizations (CSOs) have been formulated. Based on the study, specific recommendations were made on the implementation of the principles of the Agreement in the draft of the new National Strategy - 2026 and on the further development of civil society in Ukraine.*

**Keywords:** civil society, democratic principles, National Strategy, implementation mechanisms, intersectoral cooperation

### **Introduction**

On September 16, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law on Ratification of the Agreement (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014). This Agreement recognizes that Ukraine, as a European country, shares a common history and common values with the Member States of the European Union (EU) and is committed to upholding those values.

On the other hand, the EU has recognized Ukraine's European aspirations and supports its European choice, including its commitment to building a developed and sustainable democracy and market economy.

Based on the recent difficult situation in Ukraine due to the pandemic, external aggression and

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economic crisis, in order to adequately respond to these and other challenges, the leading CSOs of Ukraine offered their leadership and government their analytical support to analyze the situation in civil society and making recommendations on the effective implementation of the objectives of the Agreement in this sphere.

As part of civil society, in addition to active citizens, we consider the following CSOs: NGOs and public unions, religious organizations, trade unions and their associations, creative unions, charities and self-organization bodies.

As of April 1, 2021, there were 171,477 such CSOs in Ukraine. It is important to note that during the last year the number of CSOs in Ukraine increased by 3.0%, and the number of public organizations increased from 89,896 to 92,479, or 4.1% (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021). All these organizations affect the state of Ukrainian society and its development.

The aim of this study is, first, to assess the degree of implementation in Ukraine of the principles of this Agreement in the field of civil society development, in particular, in the implementation of the National Strategy - 2020 (President of Ukraine, 2016) and, second, to reflect the principles of this Agreement in the draft of the new National Strategy - 2026, which is formed by the joint efforts of the Ukrainian government and CSOs.

In the course of this study, we sought to answer the following questions:

1) What are the principles and objectives of the Agreement and to what extent they relate to the sphere of civil society development and what mechanisms are provided in the agreement for the successful implementation of these principles and the implementation of tasks in this area.

2) What are the reasons for the improper organization of the tasks of the state policy to promote the development of civil society, which were clearly formulated in the National Strategy - 2020.

3) What measures and at what level of governance should be taken by the Ukrainian government to properly implement the objectives of the Agreement and the development of civil society in Ukraine.

The research was based on a systematic approach and was carried out by combining general scientific and special methods, including comparative, methodological and functional-structural analysis and relied on the use of a significant array of empirical data obtained in monitoring the National Strategy - 2020 by state institutions and non-governmental think tanks.

## **1. The main objectives of the Agreement for the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine**

The agreement marked the desire of the parties to achieve closer rapprochement of positions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, in order to advance the reform process

and adapt Ukrainian legislation to European norms.

There is also a commitment to strengthen people-to-people contacts and to strengthen dialogue based on common values, fundamental principles of solidarity, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, mutual trust, shared responsibility and partnership (preamble, Article 2 of the Agreement).

The Parties shall cooperate to ensure that their domestic policies are based on principles common to the Parties, such as the stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 6).

In order to properly implement the Agreement, certain institutions are established to support this process - the Association Council, the Association Committee, the Parliamentary Committee of the Association, as well as the Advisory Groups of each of the Parties on Sustainable Development. These Advisory Groups consist of independent NGOs and other stakeholders that meet in open Civil Society Forums, which are usually held once a year (Article 299).

The Parties shall promote the involvement of all stakeholders, in particular the social partners and civil society organizations, in the context of the implementation of reforms in Ukraine and cooperation between the Parties under this Agreement (Article 420).

The Parties encourage intercultural dialogue between individuals and organizations representing the interests of civil society and cultural institutions of Ukraine and the EU (Article 438).

The parties promote dialogue and cooperation between civil society actors on both sides as an integral part of relations between Ukraine and the EU, by:

- strengthening contacts and mutual exchange of experience between civil society organizations in Ukraine and EU Member States, in particular holding professional seminars, professional development, etc.;
- promoting the process of institution building and consolidation of civil society organizations, including, inter alia, lobbying, informal communication, visits and seminars, etc.;
- ensuring that Ukrainian representatives are informed about the organization of consultations and dialogue between the social and public partners within the EU in order to involve civil society in the political process in Ukraine (Article 444).

The parties agreed to intensify the exchange of information between national, regional and local authorities, socio-economic entities and representatives of civil society (Article 446).

The Parties also facilitate the holding of regular meetings of civil society representatives in order to inform them on the implementation of this Agreement and to take into account their contribution to its implementation (Article 469).

To this end, a Civil Society Platform is being set up, consisting of representatives of Ukrainian civil society, on the one hand, and members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), on the other, as a forum for meetings and exchanges.

The meetings of the Civil Society Platform are held on a regular basis, which it determines independently. The civil society platform sets its own rules.

The chairmanship of the Civil Society Platform is carried out alternately by representatives of civil society on the Ukrainian side and a representative of the European Economic and Social Committee in accordance with the provisions set out in its regulations.

The Association Council informs the Civil Society Platform about its decisions and recommendations. The Civil Society Platform may make recommendations to the Association Council.

The Association Committee and the Parliamentary Association Committee should liaise regularly with representatives of the Civil Society Platform in order to obtain their views on the achievement of the objectives of the Agreement (Article 469).

Thus, the Civil Society Platform, which in cooperation with other institutions ensures compliance with the terms of the Agreement, is one of the influential mechanisms for implementing in Ukraine the principles of stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## **2. Disadvantages of the current National Strategy**

In the course of the research a comparative analysis was made of the extent to which the implementation of the current National Strategy for 2016-2020 meets the above principles. This analysis revealed many deviations in the field of ensuring these democratic principles. In particular, the main tools for implementing the National Strategy - the annual government Action Plans - usually cover only part of the tasks of the National Strategy and do not contain criteria and indicators for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy.

Regional programs on promoting the development of civil society are in no way related to the government's Action Plans and only partially cover the tasks of the National Strategy. Thus, the analysis of regional programs that were approved and operated in 2017, together with the draft Programs of Odessa and Mykolaiv regions, which were published for that period, aiming to reflect the main objectives of the National Strategy for the regional level, showed that in these programs to some extent, only a little more than half of these tasks of the National Strategy are reflected (Krupnyk, 2018).

Regional Action Plans, which are developed and approved annually by oblast state administrations and the Kyiv City State Administration, have not been linked to either the annual government Action Plans or the regional programs.

The National Coordination Council, which was formed from representatives of the government and NGOs to coordinate and monitor the process of implementation of the National Strategy, has not been working for a long time and has not been performing its functions.

This situation arose after the 2019 presidential election and the change in the status of the Presidential Administration (which was transformed into the Office of the President and limited its direct influence on political processes). Besides, the change of the Government and, accordingly, the change of the personnel of the central executive bodies led to the loss of legitimacy of the majority of the representatives of these bodies in the Coordination Council.

The regional coordination councils which were established under the oblast state administrations and the Kyiv city state administration have not yet found themselves accompanied by the implementation of the National Strategy in the regions and have not built their relations with other actors in civil society development. In particular, they competed to some extent with public councils established under these administrations.

There was also the inadequate information support for the implementation of the current National Strategy. In particular, there is no information support plan for the implementation of the National Strategy. On the Unified web portal of executive bodies in Ukraine, in the section "Promoting the development of civil society" there are some materials on this topic, but there is no systematic coverage of the implementation of the National Strategy regarding its main areas and specific tasks.

At the same time, the level of information support for the implementation of the current National Strategy in different regions and in different central executive bodies differs significantly. In particular, the analysis of the sites of oblast state administrations and Kyiv city state administration showed that these sites meet only 63% of the regulatory requirements for openness and accessibility of public participation (Krupnyk, 2018, pp. 25-29).

And the analysis of the sites of regional councils and the site of the Kyiv City Council showed that these sites meet 65% of the above requirements (Krupnyk, 2018, pp. 29-32).

There is no stable source of resources for state support of CSO activities and development. At present, at the national, regional and local levels there is a mechanism for competitive determination of programs (projects, activities) developed by civil society institutions, for the implementation (realization) of which financial support is provided at the expense of budget funds (Cabinet of

Ministers of Ukraine, 2011). But, according to experts, this mechanism is imperfect and does not encourage CSOs to participate in these competitions.

National CSO Forums are held sporadically, and they have not yet become effective factors in the implementation of the National Strategy, as they are mainly devoted to the presentation of CSO opportunities and donor projects. In addition, these Forums are held mainly at the initiative of NGOs and mostly at the expense of donors.

At the regional level, CSO forums have not been held for several years - due to lack of resources for their preparation and conducting. As a result, regional public authorities know little about CSOs operating in the regions, let alone CSOs operating in local communities, and cannot establish partnerships with them.

Systematic cooperation of the participants of the National Strategy implementation with international organizations has not been established. One of the mechanisms of such cooperation could be the Civil Society Platform, which was established in Ukraine in accordance with Art. 469 of the Agreement. But it is not yet systematically included in the process of implementing the National Strategy.

The procedure for monitoring the implementation of the tasks of the National Strategy is not standardized, the criteria and indicators of their implementation are not defined through governmental and regional action plans, through regional programs. At the same time, the possibilities of modern information technologies are almost not used. Without them it is impossible to plan the process of implementation of the National Strategy and assess the degree and effectiveness of its tasks.

The vertical of subdivisions of public authorities, which should ensure communication with the public in the process of implementation of the National Strategy, has practically disintegrated, and its specialists have actually "dissolved" in the system of PR support of governmental activities.

Civil society organizations in Ukraine currently do not have an organized influence on the implementation of state policy to promote the development of civil society. In addition, systematic cooperation of responsible participants in the implementation of the National Strategy with international organizations for the purpose of exchanging experience and conducting external monitoring of the processes of civil society development in Ukraine has not been established.

Educational institutions of the system of the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine and institutions of higher education do not systematically study issues of government-public interaction and measures to promote the development of civil society. Although now, under conditions of greater independence of higher education institutions, some of them have introduced training courses "Civil Society and Power" on their own initiative.



There is currently a lack of scientific research in Ukraine, including of applied nature, devoted to civil society and public relations. And research on the implementation of the National Strategy is carried out mainly by non-governmental think tanks: the All-Ukrainian Association for the Promotion of Self-Organization of the Population, Odessa Institute of Social Technologies, Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Studies, Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives and others.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is in fact removed from the processes of systemic development of civil society in Ukraine and does not deal comprehensively with this issue. The Verkhovna Rada does not have a single committee or even a subcommittee whose responsibilities would include the development of civil society. This topic is also absent in the Verkhovna Rada's program of interparliamentary relations.

Most of the efforts of the central executive bodies involved in the implementation of the National Strategy are focused on creating legislative conditions at the national level for the formation and operation of CSOs. Regional (oblast) executive bodies work mainly with regional CSOs and are engaged in the implementation of regional civil society development programs, which only briefly relate to the local level - the level of local communities, which is essentially the basic level for civil society development.

At this level of local communities, in particular, in rural areas today there is almost no systematic work on the development of civil society. In the process of reforming local self-government and creating amalgamated local communities, the issues of promoting the development of civil society have been pushed to the background.

With regard to the normative regulation of local democracy development at the local level, currently only a quarter of local communities have their own statutes, which should set requirements for openness and transparency of government, mechanisms for public participation.

The law on general meetings (conferences) of members of local communities at the place of residence has not been adopted yet, which significantly limits the opportunities of local communities to resolve issues of local significance.

The current law "On bodies of self-organization of the population" (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2001) is imperfect and inhibits the creation of such bodies at the level of houses, neighbourhoods and separate villages that are part of the amalgamated local communities. These bodies should become instruments of representation and protection of interests, in particular, of peripheral territories within the united territorial communities, of which almost 1500 are now formed in Ukraine and in which peripheral territories occupy almost 90% of the area of these communities.



### 3. Suggestions for solving the existing problems

To eliminate these shortcomings and significantly improve the situation in the study area, it is proposed to pay special attention to the implementation of democratic principles provided by the Agreement in the practice of public authorities and CSOs, in particular, through detailed elaboration and implementation of National Strategy mechanisms.

These mechanisms should ensure the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Agreement in the field of democracy development and human rights protection, as well as the creation of a strong civil society in Ukraine as a guarantor of democracy and building a democratic, social and legal state in Ukraine.

In particular, it is proposed to entrust the main work of the National Strategy to the government, namely its Secretariat, which should work in close cooperation with non-governmental think tanks and other CSOs.

In addition, it is proposed to introduce a set of mechanisms by which it is possible to systematically and effectively address these issues. These mechanisms include:

#### *Government Action Plans for the Implementation of the National Strategy.*

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine must ensure the development of annual or biennial Action Plans for the implementation of the National Strategy no later than January of this year, organize their public discussion and submit them to the Government for approval. This Government Action Plans should provide for the implementation of the priority tasks of the National Strategy at the national, regional and local levels by public authorities with the participation of coordination councils, public councils and CSOs.

The Action Plans should provide for quarterly and annual reporting on the implementation of the National Strategy of public authorities at all levels - in accordance with the Guidelines developed by the National Coordinating Council with the participation of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and CSOs. The Government, with the direct participation of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, with the involvement of national and regional coordinating councils and CSOs, organizes the implementation of government Action Plans.

*The Regional programs on promoting the development of civil society* are developed by oblast and Kyiv city state administrations for 2021-2026 with the participation of regional coordinating councils and CSOs and approved by regional councils and Kyiv city council, respectively.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine on behalf of the Government develops together with the National Coordinating Council and approves Guidelines for the development of regional and local programs to promote civil society, including indicators of regional programs developed with the National Coordinating Council and CSOs, on the basis of which the rating of regions is carried out.

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers summarizes the best practices in the development of regional and local programs and organizes, with the help of the National Coordinating Council and CSOs, the dissemination of this experience in the regions.

*Regional and local action plans for civil society development.*

Oblast and Kyiv city state administrations with the participation of regional councils, public councils and CSOs develop and approve of the planning year Annual action plans for civil society development in the region, combining measures to implement regional government action plans to implement the National Strategy and measures to implement regional civil society development programs.

Oblast and Kyiv city state administrations with the participation of regional councils, public councils and CSOs prepare quarterly and annual reports on the implementation of civil society development action plans in the region.

Executive bodies of city, village, settlement councils can develop with the participation of CSOs and approve Annual action plans for the development of civil society in local communities and post information on their implementation on their official websites at the same time as oblast and Kyiv city state administrations.

An important link in the mechanism of implementation of the National Strategy are the *communication units of the executive authorities and local governments*. The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should be such a unit responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy within the Government.

The government should amend the relevant regulations concerning the staffing structure of the executive branch, aimed at strengthening the structural units for public relations. Central executive bodies, oblast and Kyiv city state administrations, by their orders and instructions, should bring in accordance with governmental tasks to form specialized units for communications, as well as appoint commissioners for public relations in other structural units.

City, village, township councils are recommended to create divisions (to appoint separate experts) on communications and to form a network of the authorized persons on communications with the public in the executive bodies.

*The National Coordination Council for Civil Society Development* is established and operates under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with the participation of CSOs has to develop an updated version of the Regulation on the National Coordinating Council for Civil Society Development, which is approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The National Coordinating Council is formed from the representatives of state and executive bodies (at the level of heads or their deputies) and representatives of authoritative CSOs consisting of 50/50.

The National Coordination Council serves as a platform for communication between government and the public, is a link between national, regional and local levels of civil society development, provides control over the implementation of the National Strategy and methodological assistance in this process, using both face-to-face and remote forms. The Coordinating Council has two co-chairs - from the government and the public, and its working groups are formed in the areas determined by it.

*The Regional coordinates for promoting the development of civil society* are created by orders of the heads of regional and Kyiv city state administrations consisting of representatives (ex officio) of executive authorities, local governments and half of the members from reputable CSOs in the region.

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with the participation of CSOs should develop, and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should approve the model Regulation on the regional coordinating council for the development of civil society. The National Coordination Council together with the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers develops and adopts Methodological recommendations on the organization of work of regional coordinating councils and delimitation of their functions with public councils and other subjects of civil society development.

*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine should be more systematically* involved in the development of civil society in Ukraine. To this end, a subcommittee on civil society development should be established under one of the committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (or the functions of one of the existing subcommittees should be supplemented with civil society development issues).

The said subcommittee with the participation of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers together with the National Coordinating Council and with the support of the relevant subcommittee of the Verkhovna Rada shall organize parliamentary hearings on the topic "Civil Society in Ukraine: Achievements and Problems". The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, with the active participation of the relevant subcommittee, establishes inter-parliamentary relations with foreign parliamentary

structures, promotes the establishment of a relevant parliamentary group, and includes the development of civil society into the Action plan of the Verkhovna Rada and its bodies.

The key to the successful implementation of the National Strategy should be a *system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Strategy*. This monitoring is carried out quarterly by the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with the participation of the National Coordinating Council and CSOs. The implementation of the Government Action Plans for the implementation of the National Strategy is being assessed. The results of monitoring are presented at the annual Civil Society Forums of Ukraine in the form of annual Reports on the implementation of the National Strategy and the state of civil society in Ukraine, prepared with the participation of the National Institute for Strategic Studies.

Central executive bodies involved in the implementation of the National Strategy, quarterly and annually prepare and submit reports to the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. And at the regional level, quarterly monitoring of the implementation of the tasks of regional programs to promote civil society development and regional action plans for civil society development is carried out by oblast and Kyiv city state administrations with the participation of regional councils, public councils and CSOs.

Oblast and Kyiv city state administrations prepare annual reports on these issues, which are considered at the boards of these administrations and at meetings of regional coordinating councils, after which they are submitted to the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and publicly presented at regional civil society forums.

At the level of local communities, their executive bodies carry out current monitoring of the implementation of local programs to promote the development of civil society, the results of which are reviewed annually at sessions of local councils and local civil society forums; reports and information on the results of the review are published on the official websites of these bodies.

The National Coordinating Council together with the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with the participation of CSOs develop and approve Methodological recommendations on reporting and on the reporting forms themselves; it is necessary to use the system of criteria and indicators developed with the participation of the author of this article (Krupnyk and Orlova, 2020).

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with the participation of the National Coordinating Council and CSOs summarizes and analyses the results of monitoring and annual reporting of central, regional and local authorities using modern IT technologies and ranks them according to their level of achievements in civil society development.

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, the National Coordinating Council promote the creation, testing and implementation of a comprehensive automated system of multilevel monitoring and evaluation of action plans, regional and local programs, the National Strategy as a whole using modern IT and integrated within the Ministry of Transport online platform for interaction between executive authorities and CSOs "VzaemoDiya".

We propose to continue the tradition of including a special section on the state of development of civil society in the annual address of the President to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine within the monitoring system.

*Information support for the implementation of the National Strategy* should be based on the "Information Support Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Civil Society Development", developed by the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers together with the National Coordinating Council with the participation of CSOs. Regional and Kyiv city state administrations, executive bodies of local self-government develop and approve action plans for information support of the National Strategy implementation, including as part of regional and local civil society development programs.

The following should be posted on government websites: interactive resources for the survey; platforms for online communication of citizens and CSO representatives; interactive maps of the best experience and platforms for their exchange; information on ongoing national projects and grants offered; information on international and national conferences, forums and other useful information on civil society development.

It is advisable to resume the monthly issue of the socio-political almanac "Civil Society"- in paper and electronic forms published for several years by the Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Studies, as an analytical and scientific-applied publication of the "third sector" - for the "third sector" and others stakeholders.

It is proposed *to include the issue of civil society development in the priority areas of development of domestic science*, with state funding of academic and sectoral research in this area. Scientific, applied and analytical research, as well as conferences, round tables, seminars on relevant topics, publications in special and general scientific publications, published topical collections on civil society development should be conducted, the ranking of publications in scientific journals on this topic is to be evaluated.

For state support of CSO development, the law of Ukraine (or an amendment to the current Law "On Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy") proposes to create a State Fund for Civil Society Development. This Fund has accumulated financial resources from various sources and

directed them on a competitive basis to the organizational development of CSOs at the national, regional and local levels, CSO forums and conferences, information support for civil society development, as well as funding research, publications and other activities in this area.

It is necessary to organize *training of public authorities and CSO leaders*.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, institutes of the system of the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine, humanitarian institutions of higher education, regional centres of advanced training should introduce standard (model) training courses on "Civil Society and Government" within educational programs and short-term training programs for civil servants, local self-government officials and CSO leaders.

The regional and local programs to promote the development of civil society should provide funds for the study of the same short-term course by public authorities and civil society activists.

It is proposed to establish a *Coalition of CSOs* to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy, which should monitor the implementation of the National Strategy at the national, regional and local levels, representing civil society in relations with the government, the Verkhovna Rada, central executive bodies, and provide methodological assistance to public authorities. and CSOs in fulfilling the tasks of the National Strategy.

The CSO coalition should be formed on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement from among professional public analytical organizations representing all regions of Ukraine. This CSO Coalition should work closely with the National Coordinating Council and other actors involved in the implementation of the National Strategy and the development of civil society in Ukraine.

An important condition for the successful implementation of the National Strategy is the establishment of interaction between CSOs and other actors in the development of civil society. It is proposed to create and promote offline and online *platforms for intersectoral interaction* of CSOs with the population, authorities and businesses to jointly identify problems and solve them at all levels of government - local, regional and national.

An example of such interaction is the activity of a consortium of CSOs consisting of "Youth Community" and "Youth Corporation" to implement the system architecture "Smart Interaction", which has been successfully tested in a number of local communities of Vinnytsia, Volyn, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Odessa and Khmelnytsky regions (Smart interaction).

The National Strategy for 2021-2026 should provide a guaranteed "green light" to the social order with the involvement of CSOs in the implementation of local projects and programs in the field of providing all types of services, not just social services, as is the case now.

In order to *legislate mechanisms for involving local self-government in the implementation of the National Strategy* at the regional and local levels, the Coordinating Council, together with the relevant committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with the participation of CSOs, should develop amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government in Ukraine. opportunities for local self-government to participate in the implementation of the National Strategy, on the other hand - to increase its responsibility for the proper implementation of the tasks of the National Strategy.

It is proposed to initiate *the inclusion of the task of promoting the development of civil society in Ukraine in the priority tasks of the EU Delegation to Ukraine*. Partnerships should be further developed with the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, the OSCE Office in Ukraine, and other international and donor organizations for the exchange of experience, external monitoring, methodological and analytical assistance, and technical support for the implementation of the National Strategy.

It is proposed that the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers together with the National Coordinating Council, with the support of donor organizations, organize *annual national Civil Society Forums* with the participation of CSOs and international organizations in December this year - January next year. These Forums should consider the Government Report on the State of Civil Society, the co-report of the CSO Coalition, make proposals to improve the implementation of the National Strategy and, if necessary, changes to the National Strategy itself, present new initiatives in civil society development.

At the regional and local levels, regional and local CSO forums provided by regional civil society development programs should be held annually, organized by oblast and Kyiv city state administrations with the participation of regional councils and community councils, local council executive bodies, and CSOs. These CSO forums are organized to publicly summarize the implementation of the National Strategy and the implementation of local programs, presentation of new initiatives, coordination of the “third sector” movement.

#### **4. "Accompanying wind" of civil society development in Ukraine**

In October 2020, the 22nd EU Summit was held in Brussels, at which a joint statement was adopted by the President of the European Council, the President of Ukraine and the Vice-President of the European Commission (European Council, 2020, 6 October).

In this Statement, the parties testify that they share the common values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for international law and human rights.



Commitment on strengthening Ukraine's political association and economic integration with the EU in order to strengthen the rule of law and promote reforms towards the realization of Ukraine's European aspirations and its European choice was reaffirmed. It was emphasized that further support for Ukraine by the EU will depend on the continuation and further acceleration of Ukraine's implementation of its reform commitments.

The EU underlined the important role played by civil society, youth and independent media in all spheres of public and political life and announced new programs to support civil society. The EU also supported the financing agreements between Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership on civil society.

The parties agreed to improve relations between Ukraine, the EU and other Eastern Partnership countries and to conduct a comprehensive review of the achievement of the Agreement's goals in 2021.

Therefore, it is hoped that the EU's position and Ukraine's readiness to follow these principles will be an additional incentive for the entire system of public authorities in Ukraine to intensify support for the development of civil society as a reliable partner in overcoming existing challenges and solving urgent problems of the Ukrainian state.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the process of implementation of the current National Strategy in 2016-2020 for compliance with the principles enshrined in the Agreement of stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms revealed many deviations in ensuring these democratic principles.

The main reason for these deviations is the improper organization of the implementation of the National Strategy in the relevant planning and program documents of national, regional and local levels, as well as inadequate executive discipline in the system of public authorities together with the lack of effective monitoring mechanism.

The way out is seen in more detailed tasks of the National Strategy to prevent the possibility of their distortion, introduction of a comprehensive set of mechanisms for its implementation with the development of a system of criteria and indicators for regular evaluation of the National Strategy with ranking of regions of Ukraine.

An active position and effective participation of CSOs at all stages of formation and implementation of the National Strategy at the national, regional and local levels is a prerequisite for proper implementation of the principles of stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the implementation of the National Strategy.

Building a strong civil society in Ukraine is certainly impossible without socially active citizens who directly or through CSOs defend public interests, are capable of consolidation and are responsible for their actions. Therefore, the main goal of all those who are interested in the development of civil society in Ukraine should be to promote the transformation of residents into such citizens.

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