



## Background

This memo is the first in the series of analytical pieces based on the results of a [public opinion poll](#) commissioned by Pact and conducted by GfK Ukraine in September 2014. Aiming to inform the UNITER project's strategy, the poll focused on public attitude towards civil society, citizens' engagement, participation, activism, and general characteristics of the Ukrainian political culture. The poll suggests that despite increased mobilization of citizens as witnessed by the Euromaidan movement and the ensuing revolution, Ukrainian citizens have limited engagement with, contribution to and understanding of the role of civil society. Ukrainians are very concerned with and thus supportive of initiatives that address the present military crisis. However, the mobilization of citizens beyond emergency relief is not likely to be sustained unless civil society organizations exert additional focused efforts. Civil society organizations should build upon Ukrainians' interest towards civic education and provide them with practical information to more effectively engage in governance to ultimately help galvanize the active citizenry in participatory governance. The success of Ukrainian reforms hinges not only on political will and effective administration, but on an active and responsible citizenry that exhibits the change its want to see.

### The political culture of pessimism and passivism

To become a sustainable democracy Ukrainian political culture should be based on active citizenry<sup>1</sup> that is ready to take responsibility for holding governance accountable. While during Euromaidan many Ukrainians were mobilized to stand up for human rights and fight with injustice, the level of political culture and understanding remains low.

*Disjointed political attitudes towards the new transition process:* the majority of Ukrainians support (61%) the new political transition that began in February, but regional differences in opinions are significant. While support in the Western, Central and Northern Ukraine research is above 70%, in the East support for this transition only constitutes 30% of the population.

### Political culture of Ukraine

- Disjointed political attitudes towards the new transition process.
- Ukrainians consider parliament ineffective and many doubt that change through election is possible.
- Ukrainians have limited understanding of civil society.
- *Ukrainians want more accountable governance but not ready to be responsible for it.*

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<sup>1</sup> Since Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's seminal work on civic culture (*The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes in Five Western Democracies*), their subsequent research and a range of researchers study the traits of citizen behavior that embrace democratic norms and has the potential to leave an imprint on democratic processes. Several of the most recent body of literature on the active citizenry increasingly notes the changing attitudes of youth engagement and participation. For an authoritative exploration of political culture, see for example the works of Ronald F. Inglehart, Pippa Norris, Christian Welzer or Russell J. Dalton.

*Ukrainians consider parliament ineffective and many doubt that change through election is possible:* Almost half (47%) of Ukrainians supported the decision for a pre-term election. As almost everyone recognized that the parliament did not work normally (98%), many (22%) did not believe that elections of October 26<sup>th</sup> would change anything.

*Ukrainians have limited understanding of civil society:* They have troubles differentiating its functions from the government. When asked to provide examples of the civic initiatives that tackle specific issues they often name the work of the President or government agencies.

*Ukrainians want more accountable governance but not ready to be responsible for it:* Many Ukrainians are in support of greater transparency and accountability but not ready to take steps to achieve it. Majority of Ukrainians want the candidates to open the data on the sources of funding (79%) and report that this information will influence their choice (67%). Ukrainians do not want to see parliamentarians who have a history of power abuse and corruption (84%) or hide their sources of income (83%). At the same time, very few think that voters should fund the parties they vote for (15%) and many are fine with the rich people funding the parties (41%). They also think that rich people (51%), businesses (33%) and Ukrainian government (31%) should fund civil society organizations. Very few Ukrainians are planning to engage in fighting corruption (8%) or monitoring of the government work (5%). Less than 1% of Ukrainians actually reported corrupt practices to relevant law enforcement or anti-corruption institution.

### **The crisis led to greater engagement of citizens but only in limited ways**

While many Ukrainians were engaged in protests and emergency relief activities, they became more aware with the notion of volunteerism. The question remains whether this temporarily engagement would increase participation in the long run.

*Awareness is slowly growing, but participation rates are still low:* Among various forms of civil society initiatives, Ukrainians are mostly aware of volunteer opportunities (42%) and charity funds (32%), and the awareness about volunteerism has increased considerably in 2014. Those who are aware of any kind of civic initiatives consider those to be targeting crucial issues facing the society (37%). The same Ukrainians also believe that albeit civic initiatives are not systematic, they are beneficial for groups of citizens (36%). Despite such positive assessment, only 1% of Ukrainians were engaged as volunteers for civic movements this past year. Although another minuscular part of population (2%) responds that they were ready to volunteer to rebuild the East after the conflict is over. And some 5% say that they plan to volunteer for civic initiatives in their community in the future. Ukrainians often say that they do not have time and motivation to participate in such activities (26%) and believe that government should take care of the issues that civic initiatives are targeting (22%).

### **Influence of crisis on citizens' engagement**

- Awareness is slowly growing, but participation rates are still low.
- Ukrainians prefer to fund the causes rather than engage as volunteers.
- Engagement beyond emergency relief is not expected to increase without further mobilization.

*Ukrainians prefer to fund the causes rather than engage as volunteers:* In reaction to the political crisis and conflict in the East many new volunteer groups were born. Over last 12 months, many citizens contributed funds to volunteers who are supporting army (24%), gave material donation to civic movements related to Euromaidan (15%), or assisted people who suffered from anti-terrorist operations (9%). To resolve the crisis in the East, Ukrainians further willing to contribute funds for those who suffered from military operation (33%), help volunteer battalions (31%) and

Ukrainian army (28%) with funds, food or purchase of equipment. But as noted, the readiness of citizens to volunteer themselves in civic volunteering initiatives is very low (1-5%).

*Engagement beyond emergency relief is not expected to increase without further mobilization:* After the crisis is resolved in the East, many respondents claim that they will (18%) or may (51%) support those who have suffered from anti-terrorist operation. At the same time, the majority is not planning to volunteer for civic movements (55%) or monitor the activity of the government (55%) or put up a fight with corruption (48%).

### **Demand for change is growing but needs to be shaped**

In developed democracies civil society usually demands high quality public services, transparency and accountability. The ability of citizens, civil society, and other non-state actors to demand better governance, among other factors, depends on their access to information, and the degree to which they can act effectively on this information.<sup>2</sup> Ukrainians nowadays able to articulate their demands but they yet to learn how to effectively express their claims.

### **Growing demand for change**

- Ukrainians are mentally prepared for painful reforms.
- Access to information, an indicator of the policy demand side is restricted.
- Other mechanisms for demanding improved governance are also underutilized.
- Public demand for learning more about participation tools has increased.

*Ukrainians are mentally prepared for painful reforms:* Majority of Ukrainians would like to see the new Rada be realistic and open about Ukraine's economy, and ready to implement radical, sometimes painful reforms (81%). They want to see MPs actively address anti-corruption (79%), cooperate with civil society (74%), and create a regulatory framework conducive for business operations and growth (68%).

*Access to information, an indicator of the policy demand side is restricted:* In 2010, the Rada of Ukraine has approved the Law on Access to Public Information, which if utilized effectively, could serve as a key tool for demanding greater transparency from the government. However, only about one third (34%) of Ukrainians heard of this legislation and just a mere 5% actually pursued a request. Out of those who endeavored to submit an information plea, about half either have not received any reply (19%) or have received a formal answer that did not provide substantial information specific to the query (28%).

*Other mechanisms for demanding improved governance are also underutilized:* While some mechanisms for structured demand from the government exist, citizens do not actively use these tools. Only 2% of citizens have inquired with local administration on a bad road, and only 4% participated in public hearings. Less than 1% of Ukrainians felt responsible to report on a corruption to law enforcement, and another meager 1% participated in discussion of draft legislation.

*Public demand for learning more about participation tools has increased:*

In comparison with the last year data, citizens are now more interested on how they can use available tools. When asked if they were to find out more about available methods to report on corruption to prosecutor office or police, how they can use online tools, or directly with local administration, how they can submit information request, anonymously report on corruption or participate in formal advisory body, between

8 to 13% of citizens are eager to learn. Citizens also report that after the conflict in East of Ukraine resolved they are more likely to be interested to learn more about organizations that are promoting changes in Ukraine (44%) and learn more on how they can support changes in Ukraine (43%).

