

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND WAR

How Russia's full-scale war influenced the environmental movement in Ukraine





ABSTRACT: The study analyzes the impact of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine on the environmental and climate movement, focusing on the transformation of organizational capacity, roles, and narratives in 2022–2026. Based on in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of secondary data, the study identified key challenges, positive changes, and trends in the development of the movement in times of crisis and recovery.

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Gender sensitivity disclaimer: *The authors of the study equally respect women, non-binary persons and men, adhere to a non-discriminatory approach and declare that in this document the use of generalized forms of nouns is equivalent to the use of forms of nouns with a gendered ending.*

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INTRODUCTION

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was a systemic shock to Ukrainian society and institutions. The war radically changed the conditions for the functioning of the state, economy, and civil society, and also caused a significant shift in national priorities towards security, defense, and the survival of the state.

In such conditions, the role of civil society underwent a significant transformation. A big part of the resources and public attention was directed to supporting the defense sector, humanitarian aid, and the restoration of critical infrastructure. At the same time, certain areas of public activity, in particular environmental and climate, were faced with the challenge of proving their relevance during the war period. There was also a change in the structure of international aid and funding, which generally affected the state of the sector, and from which civil society continues to recover in 2026.

Despite this, the environmental movement in Ukraine continued to function and gradually transformed its role. Environmental organizations have become important actors in areas such as documenting environmental crimes of war, advocating for green recovery issues, analyzing public policy, and international communication on the environmental consequences of Russian aggression. At the same time, a number of organizations and networks, experiencing a lack of human and financial resources, have limited or reduced their activities.

That is why the issue of studying the movement since the beginning of the full-scale Russian war in Ukraine, comparing the challenges and identifying new trends in its transformation and adaptation to new realities has become urgent. This study aims to create a better understanding of how civil society adapts to systemic crises, as well as how the role of environmental organizations as governance actors changes in wartime.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Russian aggression affected the organizational capacity, areas and priorities of work, and the role of the environmental movement in Ukraine in the period 2022-2025.

The main objectives of the study are:

- to analyze changes in the organizational resilience of environmental organizations;
- to identify new roles and functions of the environmental movement during the war period;
- to investigate the transformation of the interaction of environmental organizations with the state and international partners;
- to identify structural changes in the environmental movement and distinguish them from temporary reactions to the war;
- to record decolonization shifts in the connections and narratives of the movement within the country and in the international arena.

The research was conducted based on the following hypotheses:

- ***hypothesis 1*** – the full-scale war increased the international visibility and expert role of the environmental movement in Ukraine, while creating personnel and organizational challenges for its functioning;
- ***hypothesis 2*** – changes in the donor architecture of the war period increased the dependence of Ukrainian environmental organizations on short-term project funding, which created risks for their long-term institutional sustainability.

The research was conducted in a mixed method, in particular, it is built on a qualitative approach using elements of source triangulation. The basis of the research is a desk analysis, supplemented by online data collection methods. The main sources of information are:

- ***semi-structured interviews:*** used to obtain detailed information about the experience of organizations, their adaptation strategies and assessment of changes in the sector;
- ***online focus groups:*** used to verify previous analytical conclusions and discuss key trends in a collective format;
- ***analysis of documents and public materials.***

The study does not use quantitative methods - the focus is on identifying structural changes

and mechanisms for the transformation of the environmental movement.

The respondent sampling was formed using the method of purposeful selection, which allowed for coverage of different segments of the environmental movement, and consisted of two categories:

- **activists:** members of national environmental organizations, regional and local organizations, informal environmental initiatives, expert centers and coalitions;
- **specialists of related professions interacting with activists:** representatives of international donor partner organizations, journalists, scientists.

Scope of the study:

- **47 semi-structured interviews** lasting about 60 minutes each;
- **2 online focus groups** of 4-6 participants..

The theoretical basis of the study is the framework of the **social movement theory**, supplemented by approaches from the **theory of new social movements**, through which we will consider the activities of environmental Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as such, as well as the development and transformation of the Ukrainian environmental movement as a whole.

I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN UKRAINE



I.I. MASS ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT BORN FROM RADIOACTIVE ASHES

The great upheavals that befell our state at different times in its development, shaped in one way or another the civil society of Ukraine, including the environmental movement. Now a full-scale war, the occupation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the Kakhovka disaster, and once the human-caused accident at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant – all this left a destructive mark on nature and the environment. At the same time, the listed events contributed to the formation of the environmental movement in Ukraine in its current form. A separate, especially tragic place in the history of the development of the Ukrainian environmental movement is given to the Chornobyl disaster and the activities of the KGB, the intelligence and secret police of the Soviet Union.

In the territories of modern Ukraine, environmental protection was given attention long before the Chornobyl disaster. In particular, one of the oldest steppe reserves in Europe, Askania-Nova, which is currently occupied by Russia, was founded at the end of the 19th century¹.

The origins of the civil environmental movement date back to 1946, when the Ukrainian Society for Nature Conservation was founded at the initiative of the Soviet authorities in agreement with the party structures. «The largest and oldest» is how this organization describes itself today². However, it should be understood that

2 million members in the Soviet system demonstrate only membership, not activism at all. Today, the Society is one of many Ukrainian environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

In the 1970s and 1980s, a civil environmental discourse began to emerge. Environmental problems became more noticeable: pollution of the Dnipro River, the influence of industry in the Donbas, deforestation in the Carpathian Mountains, and construction processes in historical landscapes. Perestroika (*a political and economic reform program launched in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985*) and Gorbachev's glasnost (*the political reform policy implemented in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, which reduced state censorship and encouraged freedom of speech, public debate, and government accountability*) opened up these problems and made them less taboo – the general atmosphere in the then USSR contributed to the development of the environmental movement³.

And then the catalyst came – the explosion at the fourth power unit of the Chornobyl nuclear power plant, which occurred on April 26, 1986. The most known human caused disaster in the history of humanity today, combined with the Soviet policy of concealing information, led to an unprecedented activation of civil society in the USSR:



«A chain reaction of public sentiment began with the Chornobyl explosion. Radiation was more terrible than fear of the KGB and the Central Committee. Environmental problems gave rise to political demands. The first rallies began with environmental slogans, but ended with the establishment of new political movements»⁴

1. Askania-Nova: the First Steppe Reserve. Ukrainer. URL: <https://www.ukrainer.net/askaniya-nova/>

2. The Ukrainian Society for Nature Conservation Turns 73. Ukraine Nature Conservation Society. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/ukrpryroda/posts/2639597736060312/>

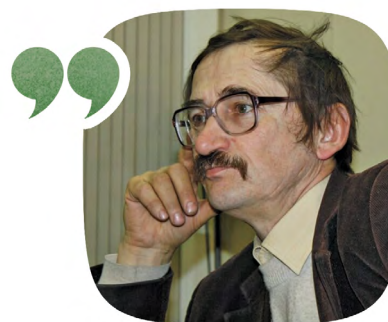
3. Eco-protests after Chornobyl. Documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». | OUR 30. Suspilne News. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44DHNA5Ndo>

4. Zinchenko O. How Ukrainians Destroyed the Evil Empire. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2024. P. 308.

Ukrainian writers played an important role at this stage of the environmental movement's development. It was with the active support of the famous writer and head of the Ukrainian Committee for the Protection of Peace Oles Honchar that the reaction to the

Chornobyl disaster in 1987 was the creation of the Ukrainian Ecological Association «Green World» – the first independent ecological organization in Ukraine⁵. At the foundation of the association was another famous Ukrainian writer – Serhiy Plachynda.

«27 people came together and founded this organization. Mostly they were writers, ordinary people, artists, architects, a few scientists and spontaneous public activists... Quite quickly, in particular through the press, information spread that a similar organization had been created in Kyiv. Later it turned out that similar organizations were formed on an initiative basis in other cities», – Serhiy Fedorynchuk, NGO «Ukrainian Ecological Association (UEA) "Green World"»⁶ (he joined the organization's activities 3 months after its establishment and is still an active representative today)



Earth Day commemoration (22 April 1990, Kyiv). At the head of the column, marchers carry the flag of the NGO «UEA "Green World"». Source: Radio Liberty



Still from the documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». Source: Suspilne News

The Chornobyl disaster subsequently caused an unprecedented public reaction and accusations of environmental irresponsibility against the Soviet government, which

occurred because of the background of concealing the truth about the tragedy's consequences and impact from the public. The period of transition from a «quiet

5. Stehni O. H. The Environmental Movement in Ukraine: A Sociological Analysis. Kyiv: «KM Akademia» Publishing House, 2001. P. 65. URL: https://pryroda.in.ua/lystopad/files/2011/01/St_knigaed.pdf

6. As of the beginning of 2026, the NGO «UEA "Green World"» continues its work and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network.

tragedy» to active public resistance lasted two years. People finally stopped believing that «the state knows best» and on the second anniversary of the Chornobyl tragedy – April 26, 1988, on the central street of the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), Khreshchatyk, the first unauthorized rally organized by the Ukrainian Cultural Club took place. The demonstration was brutally dispersed, according to the recollections of the participants, at least 50 people were detained, and according to other sources: «By the end of the demonstration, 4 women remained, all the others were tied up». The KGB called the event «an anti-social action by a group of nationalistic individuals carrying out negative activities under the guise of the «Ukrainian Cultural Club»»⁷.

Soon after, on November 13, 1988, a truly significant event in the history of not only the environmental movement, but also the entire civil society of Ukraine, took place – the mass environmental demonstration «Ecology and us». It was the first opposition rally officially sanctioned by the authorities, at which political demands and criticism of the authorities were publicly voiced: «...

from demands to ban the construction of new nuclear reactors to resistance to russification...»⁸.

The streets of Kyiv were filled, according to various estimates⁹, with from 10,000 to 80,000 people with slogans: «Nuclear energy? No, thank you», «Chornobyl is the last warning to humanity», «A clean planet for children, not radiation!» and even «No to the Soviet Empire».

Further large-scale protests took place in all settlements of Ukraine where nuclear power plants were located, as an expression of the local population's concern about preventing a repeat of the Chernobyl disaster. The largest of these was the protest against the completion of the 5th and 6th power units of the Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant, which took place on August 27, 1989 under the slogan «We will not allow Volyn and Podillia to be turned into a nuclear testing ground», six thousand people gathered at the stadium in Netishyn, in the Khmelnytskyi region¹⁰. The formation of an anti-nuclear movement continued in the public sector of Ukraine.



Still from a protest in Kyiv (1989), from the documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». Source: Suspilne News



Still from a protest in Netishyn (1989), from the documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». Source: Suspilne News

7. Eco-protests after Chornobyl. Documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». | OUR 30. Suspilne News. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44DHNA5Ndo>

8. Zinchenko O. How Ukrainians Destroyed the Evil Empire. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2024. P. 257.

9. Oleksandr Mosiuk: «Back then we saved Kyiv from bloodshed. When blood is spilled, the authorities become harsher, more repressive». Ukrainskyi Tyzhden. URL: <https://tyzhden.ua/oleksandr-mosiuk-my-todi-vriatuvaly-kyiv-vid-krovoprolyttia-koly-prolyvaietsia-krov-vlada-staie-zhorstkishoiu-bilsh-represyvnoiu>

10. The Fight against «Atomic Death»: What Anti-Nuclear Activism in Ukraine Was Like after the Chornobyl NPP Accident. Kunsht. URL: <https://www.kunsht.com.ua/articles/borotba-z-atomnoiu-smertiu-iakym-buv-antyiadernyy-aktyvizm-v-ukrayini-pislia-avariyi-na-chaes>



«We, in Rivne, have a Palace of Children and Youth, where in the 90s there was a sharp increase in public attention to nature conservation issues, environmental pollution issues and information about Chernobyl. There, in the evenings, mainly students and young people gathered... It was at that time that the government planned the construction of two new nuclear power units located near Rivne - at the Rivne and Khmelnytsky Nuclear Power Plants. In this regard, we established cooperation with Greenpeace Germany and the National Ecological Center of Ukraine (NECU). At that time, the understanding of the scale of pollution from the Chernobyl accident was gradually growing, and a lot of publications about the consequences appeared in the 90s (previously, all this was mostly hidden). And that is why it became an impetus for us to speak up against the development of nuclear energy», – Andriy Martyniuk, executive director of the NGO «Ecoclub»¹¹

As a result, under public pressure and against the backdrop of economic problems, the authorities began to revise the program for the development of nuclear energy in Ukraine¹²: in 1990, funding for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Chyhyryn (Cherkasy region), as well as nuclear heating plants near Kharkiv and Odessa, were suspended.

In 1989, the project «Greenpeace for the Children of Chernobyl» was launched. Subsequently, Greenpeace in Ukraine, together with other environmental organizations, created an independent environmental laboratory to study radioactive contamination of soil, food, and water in the Chernobyl zone.

A feature of the Ukrainian environmental movement of this period was its close connection with the national and human rights movement. After all, both political and environmental demands put forward by participants in protests and rallies were aimed at changing the existing political regime. «The Chernobyl (and, accordingly, the ecological) theme became one of the key ones in the formation of the national liberation movement in Ukraine, which aimed to gain Ukraine's independence», historians note¹³.



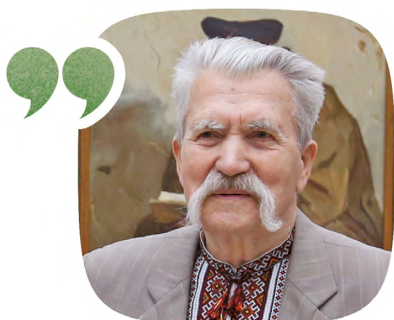
«Greenpeace for the Children of Chernobyl» project. Source: Greenpeace Ukraine

Therefore, one cannot underestimate the impact of the Chernobyl disaster and other environmental problems on the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, at a session of the Verkhovna Rada of the USSR on June 27, 1991, which was crucial for the declaration of Ukraine's independence, Levko Lukyanenko pronounced in his speech:

11. The NGO «Ecoclub» was founded in 1998, as of the beginning of 2026, it actively continues its work and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network.

12. Stehniy O. H. The Environmental Movement in Ukraine: A Sociological Analysis. Kyiv: «KM Akademia» Publishing House, 2001. P. 64. URL: https://pryroda.in.ua/lystopad/files/2011/01/St_knigaed.pdf

13. Perha T. Yu. The Role of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union in the Development of the Environmental Movement in Ukraine. Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance. URL: <https://uinp.gov.ua/informaciyni-materialy/dopovidi/konferenciya-ugs/rol-ukrayinskoyi-gelsinskoyi-spilky-v-rozvytku-ekologichnogo-ruhu-v-ukrayini>



«For 336 years, Ukraine was a colony of the Russian and Soviet empires. During this time, it was brought to economic, ecological and spiritual ruin. Poisoned soil, water and air, total Russification, the decline of Ukrainian culture and the cultures of other national minorities. Chornobyl, the mutilated Kryvyi Rih region and Donbas, the Dnipro and Carpathians, the gene pool of the people was undermined. These are the consequences of our joint existence in the USSR under the conditions of a senseless Marxist-Leninist experiment»¹⁴

This session is also symbolic because it was accompanied by sharp discussions between the opposition and the communist majority with the unofficial name «Group 239», which was a kind of black post-Chornobyl humor, because 239 is the atomic mass of radioactive plutonium, which after the disaster abundantly scattered the outskirts of the Ukrainian capital. The comparison with the

plutonium isotope became a symbol of the «toxic» influence of the communist faction on the process of gaining independence¹⁵.

The Chornobyl tragedy demonstrated that the USSR as a system had outlived its usefulness and contributed to the democratization of Ukrainian society. As Ukrainian writer and public figure Oksana Zabuzhko noted:

«The fate of Ukraine was decided by the Chornobyl disaster. Because after it, Ukrainian society began to recover from decades of fear, which was freezing for the nation. We stopped being afraid»¹⁶



40 years after the Chornobyl disaster, about 300 environmental NGOs¹⁷ have been registered in Ukraine, some of whose employees were interviewed as part of this study. Representatives of organizations partially (35% of the surveyed respondents) confirm the direct or indirect impact of the Chornobyl disaster on their professional

development in the environmental movement. Some became disillusioned with science after the Chornobyl tragedy and took a turn into activism; for others, the disaster was a blow to their own health and/or the health of family members and contributed to working for a clean environment; others began working towards anti-nuclear projects.

14. Zinchenko O. How Ukrainians Destroyed the Evil Empire. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2024. P. 154.

15. Zinchenko O. How Ukrainians Destroyed the Evil Empire. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2024. P. 291.

16. Zinchenko O. How Ukrainians Destroyed the Evil Empire. Kharkiv: Vivat, 2024. P. 249.

17. Matus S. A., Levina H. M., Karpiuk T. S., Denyshchuk O. Yu. A Baseline Study of the State and Directions of Development of Ukraine's Environmental Policy and the Prospects for Strengthening the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in the Development and Implementation of Environmentally Friendly Policies (period: 2018 – January 2019): analytical report. URL: <https://www.irf.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/baseline-research-report-publishing-dec-2019.pdf>



«...I often flew from Zhulyany on the An-24 plane to Minsk, and the route always passed over the Kyiv Sea and the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. And I was bursting with pride. I worked in cybernetics at the time, I was associated with scientific and technological progress. The plane is also a product of progress. That is, I worked in the direction that humanity needed. And when I realized that the Chernobyl disaster had happened, I was greatly disappointed in science, and plunged into the environmental movement, in which I am still present», – Serhiy Fedorynchyk, NGO «UEA "Green World"»

At the same time, for the younger generation of today's environmental movement, the topic of the Chernobyl disaster acquired importance only after the occupation of the

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant by Russia due to fears about the likelihood of repeating such a tragedy.

I.II. UKRAINIAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE OCCUPATION OF CRIMEA AND DONBAS

After the country gained independence, the environmental movement of Ukraine gradually began to move from a protest phase to the institutional one. A legal basis for the establishment of public organizations appeared, and a state environmental policy began to take shape. At the same time, the country was experiencing a deep economic crisis, which pushed environmental issues to the periphery of public attention. The environmental movement of Ukraine in the 1990s gradually became professionalized, but

remained fragmented and weakly influential in a political sense. During this period, the activities of a number of organizations emerged and strengthened, becoming important actors within the Ukrainian ecomovement. In August 1991, one of the first national environmental NGOs was founded - the National Ecological Centre of Ukraine (NECU)¹⁸. NECU developed quite actively and after 8 years of its existence already had a network of 22 registered local branches¹⁹.



«It was the first registered national environmental public organization immediately after the proclamation of Independence of Ukraine. This is undoubtedly an interesting fact... From the very beginning, NECU was founded by scientists and specialists in order to provide scientific advisory support to the government and propose solutions for the formation of the right environmental policy in Ukraine. This was its main task. That is, the creation of nature reserves, ecological networks, protection of biodiversity, overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, uniting the efforts of the public for the preservation and protection of nature», – Heorhiy Veremiychyk, member of the Council and head of the NECU Climate Change Department²⁰

18. About Us. National Ecological Centre of Ukraine. URL: <https://necu.org.ua/pro-nas/>

19. Stehniy O. H. The Environmental Movement in Ukraine: A Sociological Analysis. Kyiv: «KM Akademia» Publishing House, 2001. P. 70. URL: https://pryroda.in.ua/lystopad/files/2011/01/St_knigaed.pdf

20. As of the beginning of 2026, NECU actively continues its work and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

Also in 1991, the Kyiv city public organization «MAMA-86-KYIV» was registered, which actually began its activities in 1990 as a group of young mothers of Kyiv whose children were born after Chernobyl. Later, this initiative grew into the All-Ukrainian Ecological Public Organization «MAMA-86», which united 17 regional branches and for a long time played an important role in the development of the Ukrainian environmental movement. The organization's priority was to create ecological safety for children, ensure access to clean water and sanitation, and

protect the health of the population in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster²¹.

Some of the activists of «MAMA-86» remain important participants in the movement. For example, the leader of «MAMA-86-Odesa»²², Svitlana Slesarenok, currently heads the NGO «Black Sea Women's Club»²³, founded in 2005 on the basis of a local Odesa organization, in order to be able to act at the regional and national levels.

«We went to the rally of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Parliament of Ukraine. And after that I found the address of this organization «MAMA-86». The second day after the rally, I came to them, and they had just read about our rally in the press... and literally a month later five women from our neighborhood went to the summer camp «MAMA-86» in the Carpathians, where we underwent a two-week training. Therefore, our first serious contact with public organizations of the environmental movement took place with the organization that was formed after the Chernobyl disaster. «86» in the name does not need comments, and there is «MAMA» in all languages of the world. It so happened that the initiative group included 50 women and no men», – Svitlana Slesarenok, leader of the NGO «Black Sea Women's Club» (an eco-feminist with 30 years of experience in the movement)



In the field of environmental law and human rights protection, in 1994 the organization «Ecopravo-Lviv» was established in the city of Lviv, which eventually grew into the International charitable organization

«Environment-People-Law» (EPL)²⁴. EPL became a pioneer in protecting the environmental rights of citizens through courts, providing legal support to activists and communities.

«Problems with illegal logging in the Carpathians began. This was one of the cases. Another was the children of Sosnivka, infected with radiation. There was a great desire to help both families and children. From these two big problems, theory went into practice. Thus, in 1994 the organization called «Ecopravo-Lviv» was established», – Olena Kravchenko, executive director and board member of the ICO «Environment-People-Law»

21. About the Organization. AUEPO «MAMA-86». URL: https://mama-86.org.ua/main/about_u.htm

22. MAMA-86-Odesa. NGO «Black Sea Women's Club». URL: <https://bswc.org.ua/partnery/pro-mama-86-odesa/>

23. As of early 2026, the NGO «Black Sea Women's Club» is actively continuing its work and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

24. As of the beginning of 2026, EPL actively continues its work and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

During 1990-2000, a number of environmental CSOs were founded in Ukraine, and began to influence state environmental policy, raising issues of adoption of environmental bills, safety of nuclear power plants, protection of forests, etc. Already in the 1990s, the establishment of ties between Ukrainian environmental CSOs, international partners and networks was noted. A 1995 study²⁵ shows that by that time more than half of Ukrainian public organizations in this sector had contacts with international and foreign organizations, and a quarter of those surveyed indicated close cooperation with them.

For example, NECU became a member organization of the CEE Bankwatch Network²⁶ in 1996, starting coordination work on improving the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) policy and implementing a project to support organizations in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition, it joined the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Also during the specified period, the Greenpeace representative office in Ukraine²⁷ continued its activities: protests against the import of toxic waste to Ukraine

from Germany, campaigning against the construction of new nuclear power plants in Ukraine, and the fight for clean and safe water in the Ukrainian capital. However, in 1999, the representative office in Ukraine ceased its activities, as Greenpeace International changed the focus of support from Eastern Europe to Asia, and instead of anti-nuclear issues, reoriented itself to work with climate change.

WWF - the World Wide Fund for Nature (1998) and the Regional Ecological Center - an international organization in the field of environmental protection and approximation of environmental legislation to EU standards (2000) - also started their activities in Ukraine, which indicates the growth of international ties and the active presence of international environmental organizations in the country in the early 2000s.

A repeat study²⁸ in 2000 showed that the Ukrainian environmental movement had closer contacts with international environmental organizations and representatives of the «green» movement from far abroad than with post-Soviet environmental CSOs.



«Perhaps there were also older environmental mailing lists where older generations from Soviet nature conservation societies communicated. But in our community, Ukraine was more oriented towards international organizations, coordination, and cooperation. It seems to me that this is because those organizations that were established in the 90s were created in cooperation with international organizations... When I joined in 2006, NECU was part of the Bankwatch network. We had many partners from different European countries. We went to meetings of the Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, CAN International», - Iryna Stavchuk, acting director, Central Europe and Ukraine Program, European Climate Foundation, former executive director of NGO «Ecoaction» and former Deputy Minister of Energy and Environmental Protection (2019-2022)

25. Stehni O. H. The Environmental Movement in Ukraine: A Sociological Analysis. Kyiv: «KM Akademia» Publishing House, 2001. P. 166. URL: https://pryroda.in.ua/lystopad/files/2011/01/St_knigaed.pdf

26. National Ecological Centre of Ukraine. Wikipedia. URL: https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Національний_екологічний_центр_України

27. Who Are the Activists of the Greenpeace Network? Greenpeace Ukraine. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/ukraine/pro-nas/>

28. Stehni O. H. The Environmental Movement in Ukraine: A Sociological Analysis. Kyiv: «KM Akademia» Publishing House, 2001. URL: https://pryroda.in.ua/lystopad/files/2011/01/St_knigaed.pdf



Greenpeace activists staging a protest at the entrance to the German Embassy in Kyiv against the import of toxic waste. Source: Greenpeace

After signing the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and its ratification in 2004, Ukraine undertook to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This stimulated the formation of an expert circle for climate change related issues in the public sector. The pro-climate movement of Ukraine decided to join forces, on the basis of which the NGO Working Group on Climate Change was founded on March 24, 2000, which since 2016 has been called the Ukrainian Climate Network (hereinafter – UCN). At the time of the Network’s establishment, 17 public organizations joined²⁹. As of early 2026, Ukrainian Climate Network unites 41 organizations and has been performing an «umbrella» function for the environmental and pro-climate movement in Ukraine for over 25 years³⁰.



«UCN has existed for 25 years and unites many organizations and people who are concerned about overcoming the climate crisis... In general, networking in itself is already a very great value. UCN creates an important platform for organizations: from small to large, so that they can cooperate and strengthen each other», – Svitlana Romanko, founder and executive director of the NGO «Razom we Stand»³¹



Meeting of representatives of UCN member organizations in Lviv (November 2025). Source: Ukrainian Climate Network

Environmental CSOs provided ongoing support for the implementation of the norms of international conventions and monitoring their implementation. After the adoption of the Aarhus Convention, public and international organizations began to systematically monitor how effectively citizens’ right to access environmental information and their participation in decision-making has a significant impact on the environment. In the mid-2000s, the direction of nature conservation and biodiversity was also revived. Ukraine joined international conventions – Bonn (on the protection of migratory species), Ramsar (on wetlands) and others. Environmental CSOs continued to monitor the implementation of these obligations.

29. The Ukrainian Climate Network: History and Directions of Development until 2020. Ukrainian Climate Network. URL: https://climategroup.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/UCN_brochure21-02c.pdf

30. Ukrainian Climate Network. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/climategroup>

31. NGO «Razom We Stand» was founded in 2022 in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The organization is actively engaged in advocacy against Russian fossil fuel and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

I.III. THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN UKRAINE: FROM THE REVOLUTION OF DIGNITY TO THE BEGINNING OF A FULL-SCALE WAR

Starting in the 2010s, the public environmental movement in Ukraine had entered a period of rapid growth. This was facilitated by both internal factors, in particular strengthening of civil society after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, and global trends: the actualization of climate change problems, the emergence of global youth movements, etc.

In the 2010s, a **new generation of strong professional environmental organizations** was formed in Ukraine. One of the striking examples was the NGO «Center for Environmental Initiatives "Ecoaction"» (NGO «Ecoaction»)³², which emerged on the basis of the youth wing of the already mentioned NECU. The organization united experts and activists around a common goal – environmental protection by influencing state policy and educational work with citizens. NGO «Ecoaction» quickly became influential: for example, in 2019, Executive Director Iryna Stavchuk became Deputy Minister of Energy and Environmental Protection, which

indicates the recognition of the expertise of CSOs at the state level at that time.

Local initiatives that actively promote environmental knowledge and sustainable practices at the local level were also starting to emerge: NGO «Ekoltava» (2013, Poltava), NGO «Eko Misto Chernihiv» (2016, Chernihiv), NGO «Ecosense» (2016, Zaporizhzhia), NGO «Plato» (2019, Lviv) and others. In parallel, **support for sustainable entrepreneurship and eco-startups is also increasing** through, in particular, the activities of NGO Greencubator – a public organization that has been implementing projects to support young businesses and startups in the field of renewable energy, energy efficiency and eco-innovation for many years.

At this time, there was also a **growth of the youth wing of the climate movement**, the most striking manifestation of which was the Ukrainian Youth Climate Association.

«Sometime after 2010, a new generation of young people appeared, who did not join existing organizations, but began to organize their own. First there was UYCA (Ukrainian Youth Climate Association), then «350.org» appeared. During this period, preparations for the Paris Agreement began, where Ukraine's role is no longer one of leading as much, but there was a constant discussion about what goals we should take», – Oleksiy Pasyuk, executive director of the NGO «Ecoaction»



Since 2015, the **phase of street activism** has been noticeably intensifying. On November 29, 2015, the first large-scale Climate March was held in Kyiv, organized by NECU, NGO «Ecoaction» and other initiatives. The event was significant, as it took place on the eve of the United Nations climate conference

in Paris – COP21, and demonstrated the readiness of Ukrainian civil society to actively participate in the global discussion on climate change. Similar advocacy actions before the COP conferences, as well as marches as part of global days of action, regularly took place throughout 2016-2018.

32. NGO «Ecoaction» was founded in 2017 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

Later, Ukrainian schoolchildren and students, inspired by the example of Greta Thunberg, joined the Fridays for Future actions. On March 15, 2019, a strike under the slogan «There is no planet B»³³ took place for the first time in Kyiv as part of the Global Climate Strike for Future, where activists demanded that the Ministry of Energy abandon fossil

fuels. Similar climate strikes were held in Kharkiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Ternopil and other cities in Ukraine. The decline in street activism began during the COVID-19 outbreak and eventually stopped altogether due to the prolonged pandemic and later the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.



Climate march in Kyiv (November 2015).
Source: NGO «Ecoaction»



International climate march in Kyiv (September 2019). Source: 350.org



«It all started in 2019, on March 15, when the first Global Climate Strike took place. Ukraine also joined. But it was decentralized. Two actions were held in Kyiv and in several other cities in Ukraine. In May 2019, the second Global Climate Strike took place, which became even larger than the previous one. We continued to do climate actions, holding them every Friday in Kyiv. This movement began to unite more around common ideas so that we would have some kind of separate Fridays for Future group in Ukraine. But in 2020, Covid began, and because of this, many of our offline activities did not take place. But still, we did not think of stopping, and organized the first Global Climate Strike online in Ukraine... In 2020, 8 Ukrainian cities joined us. And in March 2021, there were already 15 of them, and in another six months – 18 cities in total», – Ihor Sumlienny, coordinator of the youth climate movement «Fridays for Future» in Ukraine

33. There Is No Planet «B»: Ukrainian Youth Held a Climate Strike. Rubryka. URL: <https://rubryka.com/2019/03/15/planety-b-ne-isnuye-ukrayinska-molod-vlashtuvala-strajk-za-klimat/>

During the same period, there is an increase in the subjectivity of the Ukrainian environmental movement in international politics. Ukrainian environmental CSOs were joining platforms that promoted **Ukraine's integration into the European Union**. A striking example of this is the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, established in 2009 to promote European integration and the development of democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus (until its participation ended in 2021). The Ukrainian national platform of this Forum as of early 2026 includes 23 organizations in the working group on environment, climate change, and energy security³⁴. Also, 43 representatives of the Ukrainian environmental movement are included in the fifth working group («Energy, transport, environment, and climate change») on the Ukrainian side of the Ukraine-European Union Civil Society Platform (UCSP), which was established in 2014 under the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union³⁵.

The strengthening of the expertise of Ukrainian environmental CSOs in the period before the full-scale invasion also contributed to **noticeable shifts in legislation and state environmental policy**. After the Revolution of Dignity, a number of specialized environmental organizations (some immediately, some later) joined the coalition of reformist forces – the Reanimation Package of Reforms

Looking at the history of the environmental movement in Ukraine – from its birth in the radioactive ashes of the Chornobyl tragedy and the beginning of street activism, to its first steps on the international arena and its influence on national politics – it can be stated that the **environmental movement has developed simultaneously with the development of society throughout the years of independence. Its transformation can be considered an indicator of the development of democracy from the ruins**

(RPR)³⁶. Within the framework of the RPR, the «Environmental Reform» group was created, which was joined, in particular, by experts from EPL, NGO «Ecoaction», NECU, NGO «Bureau of Environmental Investigations» and others. Through joint efforts, in 2017, the extremely important law «On Environmental Impact Assessment» (EIA) was developed and adopted. This was a huge victory for the environmental community: the old system of state environmental expertise, which had been in operation since the times of the USSR, was finally replaced by a modern European approach (largely due to public pressure). Later, in 2018, the law «On Strategic Environmental Assessment» was passed, requiring an environmental assessment for state plans and programs. This was a striking result of CSO advocacy (EPL coordinated the working group).

From there, the Ukrainian environmental movement actively worked on the topic of European «green» integration. Specialized organizations monitored the implementation of the «Environment» chapter of the Association Agreement with the European Union, prepared alternative reports, and performed a supervisory function for the promotion of environmental reforms on the path to European integration. These activities from the Ukrainian environmental movement continued until February 24, 2022, when the beginning of full-scale Russian war forced everyone to face new terrible challenges.

of the Soviet legacy: the emergence of mass public protests, the institutionalization of civil society organizations, the development of international cooperation outside the post-Soviet space, and even its influence on the establishment of legislation and state policy. Traditionally less visible and less supported in post-Soviet society, the environmental movement is an integral part of the democratic European development vector of today's Ukraine.

34. Register of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. URL: <http://eap-csf.org.ua/nashi-uchasnyky/baza-uchasnykiv-unp/>

35. Working Groups of the Ukrainian Side of the Ukraine–EU Civil Society Platform. Ukraine–EU Civil Society Platform. URL: <https://eu-ua-csp.org.ua/work-groups/>

36. About Us. Reanimation Package of Reforms. URL: <https://rpr.org.ua/about-us/>



II. ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IN 2022-2025

The full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 significantly transformed the civil activism sector in Ukraine.

As of April 1, 2025, **106,720 civil society organizations and 32,974 charitable organizations (COs)** were registered in the country. At the same time, a significant number of them existed only on paper: according to financial reporting, **89% of NGOs and 77% of COs did not submit annual reports for 2024**. This indicates that the real active core of the sector is limited. The full-scale war caused a sharp growth in charitable organizations and the volunteer movement, while the registration of new civil society organizations in 2022 sharply decreased, but began to recover in 2023-2024. The priorities of CSO activities have shifted towards supporting the army, humanitarian aid and responding to the consequences of the war, while some of the pre-war areas of public activity have lost their intensity. Despite these transformations, the level of public trust in civic organizations remains high (about 60%), and in volunteer initiatives - consistently exceeds 80%, which indicates the key role of civil society in ensuring the stability of the Ukrainian state in war conditions³⁷.

How many of these public associations have an environmental focus? **Official state statistics by thematic areas (environment, human rights, culture, etc.) are not kept in Ukraine**. However, according to the results of an analysis of the register of public associations³⁸, it was possible to establish that there are **about 1800-1900 organizations that execute activities in the field of environmental protection in their charter**. However, there are **only about 250-300 truly active environmental organizations**³⁹. This is explained, in particular, by the fact that some organizations exist only formally, and many CSOs have a broader profile (for example, community rights, urban planning, energy), but also work on environmental issues. Accordingly, the share of the environmental sector in Ukraine is approximately 1.5-2% of the total number of public organizations.

The full-scale invasion was a kind of shock for Ukrainian environmental public organizations, which simultaneously:

- sharply increased the public priority of defense;
- changed the available methods of collective action;
- rebuilt resource flows;
- transformed the principles of legitimization of the environmental agenda as a whole.



*Distribution of humanitarian aid kits.
Source: NGO «Eko Misto Chernihiv»*

At the same time, activists on the ground continued to face the inertia of the authorities, pressure from unscrupulous businesses, working in the absence of basic conditions to ensure morale and a stable physical state..

Therefore, it is appropriate to start with a review and assessment of the key challenges that have arisen or intensified in the activities of environmental NGOs since February 2022, and which affect their ability to ensure the sustainability of their work and the implementation of their statutory activities. These challenges were identified by representatives of organizations during in-depth interviews and focus groups, as well as

37. Civil Society of Ukraine in the Conditions of War 2022–2025. Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Study. ISAR Ednannia. URL: <https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/25/10/29/zvit-UA-Hromadianske-suspilstvo-v%20umovakh-viyny-2022-2025.pdf>

38. Register of Public Associations. Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. URL: <https://rgo.minjust.gov.ua/>

39. Matus S. A., Levina H. M., Karpiuk T. S., Denyshchuk O. Yu. A Baseline Study of the State and Directions of Development of Ukraine's Environmental Policy and the Prospects for Strengthening the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in the Development and Implementation of Environmentally Friendly Policies (period: 2018 – January 2019): analytical report. URL: <https://www.irf.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/baseline-research-report-publishing-dec-2019.pdf>

verified by further analysis of thematic studies and publications. The listed challenges can be combined into 2 groups: new and those

that existed before and intensified as a result of the full-scale war.

THOSE THAT INTENSIFIED AS A RESULT OF THE FULL-SCALE INVASION:

- *lack of funds;*
- *lack of people;*
- *closedness of the authorities;*
- *misunderstanding of the topic by the population;*
- *loss/deepening of gender imbalance;*
- *complexity of sustainable and strategic programming;*
- *lack of quality education;*
- *low level of prestige to work in the sector;*
- *difficulties or lack of cooperation with scientists/experts outside the sector.*

NEW CHALLENGES:

- *doubts about the feasibility of the environmental agenda;*
- *threat to physical safety;*
- *complex psycho-emotional state of the team;*
- *everyday difficulties (lack of electricity, heat, water supply, Internet, etc.).*

Analyzing this set of challenges more deeply, we also see that war has become a **meta-context** determining both daily operational

activities and strategic opportunities for the development of the environmental movement.



«Because we all live in the context of war. There, anything is a main challenge, starting with the war itself», – Bohdan Popov, director of the NGO «Ukrainian Ecostations Network»⁴⁰

On the one hand, the war led to a sharp redistribution of state and donor resources to the needs of security and humanitarian aid, which partially pushed environmental issues to the background on the public and political

agenda⁴¹. On the other hand, the large-scale environmental consequences of hostilities – soil and water pollution, destruction of natural areas, mining of landscapes and destruction of infrastructure – have actually

40 .The NGO «Ukrainian Ecostations Network» was founded in 2021 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

41. Consolidating Ukraine's Recovery Architecture: Current State of Affairs and Next Steps. OECD Global Relations Policy Papers. URL: <https://www.oecd.org/uk/publications/7477067c-uk.html>

created a new direction for activities related to the recording of environmental crimes and advocacy of «green reconstruction» principles⁴². In these conditions, war acts not only as an external factor of influence, but also as a truly structural meta-context, which simultaneously limits the capacity of environmental organizations and shapes new directions for their activities.

Among the **new challenges** that have arisen directly in connection with the war,

respondents primarily name a change in social priorities. In conditions of military aggression, a significant part of the states, donors and society's attention is focused on issues of security, humanitarian aid and reconstruction. In this context, the environmental agenda is perceived as secondary or untimely, which forces organizations to additionally justify its importance, in particular, through the connection with security, public health and the principles of sustainable reconstruction.



«The full-scale invasion changed everything. Environmental policy, which was already somewhere in the backyard, is now ignored», – Andriy Andrusevych, member of the board of the NGO «Resource and Analysis Center (RAC) "Society and Environment"»

During the first months of the full-scale invasion, the **organizations' focus** was on ensuring the physical safety of their team,

helping other organizations and institutions relocate, or providing humanitarian assistance to the local population.



«What we definitely had to do during the full-scale invasion was to very actively respond to the need to leave the most dangerous places, because most of our members worked, and some still work, either in frontline cities or, unfortunately, in temporarily occupied ones. For example, we helped some members from Mariupol to leave the city as quickly as possible», – Sofia-Julia Sydorenko, head of the CSO «Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine»

«For some time, we existed simply as volunteers and were engaged in supporting vulnerable populations. That is, we delivered and transported medicines, food, and hygiene products for people in vulnerable categories by bicycle», – Serhiy Bezborodko, executive director of the NGO «Eko Misto Chernihiv»⁴³



42. The Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine: A Preliminary Review. United Nations Environment Programme. URL: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/environmental-impact-conflict-ukraine-preliminary-review>

43. NGO «Eko Misto Chernihiv» was founded in 2016 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

«And then it was clear: some members of our organization were forced to leave not because of shelling or bombing, but because we knew and guessed perfectly well... Our organization... In addition to being environmental, very active in general, we are also sincere pro-Ukrainian activists. So it was clear: we were on the filtration lists (a violent and unregulated screening process used by occupying authorities to inspect detained people's personal data, social contacts, political views, and perceived loyalty, including pressure to cooperate with the occupying regime) that were compiled for all cities and towns in Ukraine. And we were in personal confrontations with those who left Odesa back in 2014», – Svitlana Slesarenok, NGO «Black Sea Women's Club»

Another new factor has been the threat to the **safety of activists and teams while carrying out their work**. Activities related to field research, monitoring the environmental consequences of war, or working in frontline regions are accompanied by increased risks, including mine danger or shelling. At the same time, persecution is also recorded in relatively safe regions: the case of **opposition to the construction work of the Runa mountain meadow** in the Zakarpattia region, where there have been repeated cases of pressure, persecution, and discrediting of activists and journalists who covered or opposed the development. This included information attacks, legal pressure, and attempts to delegitimize the civic position through the story of a «russian trace». In response to the pressure, environmental organizations in cooperation with human rights initiatives have formed practices of solidarity and mutual support, in particular, through public statements, campaigns to protect activists, legal assistance, and

drawing attention to cases of persecution at the national and international levels. This case will be discussed in more detail in one of the following sections.



Protest at Polonyna Runa against the construction of wind power plants (July 2025). Source: NGO «Ecoaction»

«One of the problems is that now activists in the regions are virtually defenseless. And, relatively speaking, if any of the activists raise the topic of environmental problems on the regional level, they risk coming under strong political pressure. And it was during the full-scale invasion that it became very difficult for activists in the regions to conduct their activities... It is now really dangerous to be an activist. For example there is the situation in Zakarpattia, where an entire pressure campaign has been launched against Olena Mudra and Oksana Stankevych-Volosyanchuk, this is a clear indicator», – Petro Tiestov, head of the analytical department of the NGO «Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group» (UNCG)



44. The NGO «Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group» was founded in 2014 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network



«In fact, they have a significant resource for discrediting activists... And this is another problem: attacks on activists have begun again, attempts to marginalize the environmental movement, to present environmental organizations as so-called «eco-terrorists». For example, hunting organizations call animal rights activists «zoo-terrorists». And well-known business associations launch numerous campaigns aimed at calling us «eco-terrorists». There have even been attempts to promote such initiatives through parliament. In fact, this is a serious challenge, perhaps even at the international level», – Dmytro Skrylnikov, head of the NGO «Bureau of Environmental Investigations»⁴⁵

Simultaneously, many organizations are facing a **difficult psycho-emotional state of their teams**: prolonged uncertainty, personal losses, mobilization of colleagues or loved

ones, as well as a high level of workload which causes emotional exhaustion and an increased risk of professional burnout.



«Of course, I am very worried about the psychological state of activists and my colleagues. Many devote themselves completely to their work. Here, the support of other people becomes extremely important, as well as the understanding that their work has meaning for them and this helps to find support in life. Through professional activity, it is worth creating a sense of value and significance – doing what seems important and useful, which gives strength to continue moving forward», – Anna Ackermann, climate and energy expert, board member of the NGO «Ecoaction»

A separate group of challenges has become **domestic and infrastructural restrictions** caused by the war. Power outages, unstable internet or transportation difficulties make it difficult to organize work, hold events, and maintain communication with partners. Although the sector has gradually adapted to such conditions, they continue to negatively affect the effectiveness of its activities.

Along with new challenges, the war has **significantly exacerbated a number of structural problems** that were present in the environmental sector even before 2022. One of the key issues is the **lack of financial resources**. Despite significant amounts of international assistance to Ukraine, some donor programs have reoriented to humanitarian aid or defense support, which creates additional competition to

fund environmental initiatives. Without stable resources, it is more difficult for organizations to maintain a strategic line and invest in communities and institutional memory. At the same time, analysis of the sector after the start of the full-scale war shows the emergence of new types of donor organizations and the growth of their portfolios, as well as unprecedented speed and flexibility in issuing grants in the first months/year of the war (reducing reporting requirements, simplifying applications). Although respondents note that from late 2024 - early 2025 this trend has changed: teams have returned to short project planning cycles, which occur against the background of a low level of institutional support. Simultaneously, the active continuation of support during the war period for the animal protection organization

45. The NGO «Bureau of Environmental Investigations» was founded in 2005 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

«UAnimals» (founded in 2016)⁴⁶ indicates that the role of individual fundraising can be viewed as a potential key source of resources for environmentally focused initiatives. The high level of citizens' willingness to finance animal protection projects also indicates a deeper rooting of environmental sensitivity in society and an expansion of the social base of the environmental movement, despite the presence of other, more pressing challenges.

In parallel, the **lack of human resources** has become more acute. Some activists

become part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, others have gone abroad or changed their field of activity. This has led to a reduction in teams and increased the burden on those who continue to work in the sector. In the context of working with staff, most respondents indicate that the composition of the organization itself continues to remain unchanged, and those structural adjustments that they have made or are working on now were evolutionary in nature - the war only accelerated this process.



«We will now change the institutional structure, but this is more likely related to our strategic planning and analysis of the current situation. Is it a consequence of the war? I think not entirely. It's just that time passes, many things change and new conditions appear. We should have done it a little earlier, but we have only now reached the point. We are now actively working on these issues», – Oksana Stankevych-Volosyanchuk, Candidate of Biological Sciences, expert at the NGO «Ecosphera»⁴⁷

A team is not only the number of its members, but also **their qualifications, deep understanding of the topic and context**. According to the study «Civil Society of Ukraine in War Conditions 2022-2025»⁴⁸ by the Initiative Center to Support Social Action «Ednannia» (ISAR Ednannia) and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), in 2023, 58% of organizations experienced financial difficulties (compared to 52% in

2022), and problems related to the state of teams (burnout/overload/lack of personnel) increased to 34% (compared to 29% in 2022). Despite the influx of new people, they do not compensate for the shortage of qualifications and require additional training. The pace of this training does not always correspond to the rapid rhythm of current work, so the problem lies not only in the quantitative, but also in the qualitative deficit.



«Of course, there is also a negative point: we lost a lot of people. Personally, for me, this means a loss of professional personnel, because in our organization people usually work for a long time and accumulate significant experience... I support the fact that people mobilized to the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine - there they show themselves very worthy and work as proactively as they did in our organization. At the same time, we suffered significant losses in expertise, because our team is small, and each direction was tied to a specific person. I had to figure out a lot on my own, and when we tried to onboard new people to very fast projects, it didn't work», – Anastasiia Makarenko, executive director of the NGO «U-Cycle»⁴⁹

46. UAnimals Reporting. UAnimals. URL: <https://uanimals.org/about/>

47. NGO «Ecosphera» was founded in 1999 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

48. Civil Society in Ukraine in the Context of War: Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Research. ISAR Ednannia. URL: https://ednannia.ua/images/Procurements/Civil_Society_in_Ukraine_in_the_Context_of_War_Report_on_a_Comprehensive_Sociological_Research.pdf

49. NGO «U-Cycle» was founded in 2007 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

Therefore, as a systemic consequence, we see **team burnout**: psycho-emotional pressure and strategic uncertainty only exacerbate it. This is not only an individual problem, but an indicator of a systemic mismatch between the demands of the field and available resources, and between moral pressure

and organizational support infrastructure. A mechanism to counteract burnout can be quick tangible results that increase team motivation and help keep staff in the «marathon», as well as internal procedures to support resilience.

«We support the team by providing proper working conditions: access to electricity, and we also provide mental support along with physical support. We have a flexible work schedule, trying not to schedule calls for the first half of the day, especially when people have just experienced shelling. This helps to take into account their condition and create more comfortable working conditions. We support technologically, we try to help operationally», – Svitlana Romanko, founder and executive director of the NGO «Razom we Stand»



A kind of **transformation of «entrances» to the sector** has also taken place: a decrease in the institutional capacity to support volunteer programs, involve youth and communities, as well as coordinate protest initiatives. This complicates opportunities for entry through volunteer activities, participation in direct actions, and development of communities in order to attract potential valuable personnel. We also see a **gender imbalance** due to the

mobilization of men into the army, as a result of which the already dominant female sphere of activism continues to be replenished mainly with women, who need to be actively trained and integrated. Along with this, there is a **«contextual gap» of the diaspora**: respondents note that remote work from abroad may over time reduce the «contextual sensitivity» to local realities.



«In particular, we have always emphasized that traditionally the environmental sphere is perceived as «female». We even calculated that more than 80% of public organizations engaged in environmental activities are women. And they think more about security, and therefore this sphere is really theirs. But what do we see now? A lot of industries that directly affect the environment and our security and health are facing an acute shortage of personnel due to the war... And it is obvious that it is worth thinking about professional orientation for women and for young people... It is in these industries that women can apply their engineering and creative thinking, bring new environmental solutions that will simultaneously contribute to security and benefit nature», – Tetiana Kukharenko, manager of the «Democracy and Good Governance» program of the International Renaissance Foundation

Respondents also draw attention to the **limited openness of government agencies** in the processes of environmental policy formation. Martial law conditions contribute

to the centralization of decision-making, which sometimes complicates the access of public organizations to consultation processes and the needed information.

particular, accessing certain data sets via information requests requires diverting additional, already limited, resources. Many open registers and sources of analytical data (cadastre, data on deposits, forest maps, etc.) were also lost, which temporarily stopped their regular work.

The war strengthens the orientation towards applied results and measurability, which creates a **donor demand for «results here and now»**. This has two sides: quick results increase team motivation (as a countermeasure to burnout), but reduces investments in long-term processes (coalitions, strategic campaigns, institutional reforms). This reinforces the structural problems of sector's development noted by respondents, which are particularly acute in war conditions. Among them are the **complexity of strategic**

planning in conditions of high uncertainty, the insufficient number of specialized educational programs in the field of environmental policy and management, as well as the low prestige of working in the public sector.

Limited cooperation with the academic environment should be mentioned too. Despite the presence of individual successful partnership examples, systemic interaction between public organizations and scientists remains underdeveloped, which limits the use of scientific research in the formation of environmental policy and advocacy activities. An outdated approach to preparing evidence bases often leads to the fact that scientists work not for the sake of the truth, but for the sake of the result.



«They are good people, but for years they have become accustomed to the fact that scientists have to adjust their research to already defined results, and this is catastrophically wrong», – Andriy Khrutba, eco-activist, former acting director of the Holosivskyi National Park (now in the Armed Forces of Ukraine)

Together, these factors create a complex operational context for environmental organizations during wartime, where they are forced to balance responding to current crisis challenges with maintaining long-term environmental goals. Comparing the data with public sector-wide measurements⁵⁰ shows similar trends: financial and staffing constraints dominated. The share of organizations reporting financial difficulties increased from 52% in 2022 to 58% in 2023. At the same time, problems related to the «state of the team» (burnout, overload, staff shortages) increased from 29% to 34%. Along with this, providing infrastructure for work remains a big struggle: in 2023, 26% of organizations continued to indicate difficulties with accommodation and communications (electricity/internet), while in 2022, this was already 43%.

Analysis of interviews and surveys shows that Ukrainian environmental NGOs often operate according to a logic close to the **startup model**. They are characterized by small teams, high personal involvement of founders, project-based work logic, and dependence on grant funding. Such a model involves a constant search for resources, rapid testing of new activity formats, and a willingness to change priorities in accordance with external conditions. In the context of the war, this model turned out to be an important advantage of the sector.

In the practice of respondents, the most effective and convenient format of organizations in Ukrainian conditions is considered to be a **small network format**. It combines the core permanent team with a wider range of partners, volunteers

50. Civil Society in Ukraine in the Context of War: Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Research. ISAR Ednannia. URL: https://ednannia.ua/images/Procurements/Civil_Society_in_Ukraine_in_the_Context_of_War_Report_on_a_Comprehensive_Sociological_Research.pdf

and experts. Such a structure allows for rapid scaling of activities in case of new opportunities or needs, and also reduces institutional costs. At the same time, informal horizontal ties between organizations play a significant role, allowing for coordination of actions and exchange of expertise.

One of the key characteristics of the environmental organization's work during the war is **flexible adaptation**. Most respondents noted that with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, their basic mission and main areas of activity did not change radically. Instead, rapid adaptation to new conditions took place: new components related to the military context were added to existing programs - documenting the environmental consequences of war, participating in discussions on green reconstruction or strengthening work with communities, as well as developing a humanitarian direction. In some cases, the pace of program implementation temporarily slowed down due to security or staffing constraints.



*The Greenpeace Ukraine team (2024).
Source: Greenpeace Ukraine*

The return of Greenpeace to Ukraine was one of the markers of a new institutionalization phase of the environmental movement, which unfolded in response to the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. Their «Green

recovery of Ukraine» initiative combined humanitarian, technical and advocacy tools - from the reconstruction of energy-efficient infrastructure in affected communities to radiation safety monitoring and an international campaign for sanctions against the Russian nuclear industry⁵¹. The official launch of Greenpeace Ukraine in September 2024 solidified this transition from remote support to a sustainable institutional representation.

An important feature of the war period is a partial expansion of the thematic activity areas of environmental organizations. Some of them began implementing projects **aimed at humanitarian assistance or support for communities affected by the war**. Such initiatives include:

- assistance to internally displaced persons, and in particular, the relocation of their teams;
- support for communities in frontline regions;
- volunteer assistance to the military;
- restoration of local infrastructure.

The emergence of such areas of activity is largely due to the expansion of humanitarian programs of international donors and the general emergence of new humanitarian donors who began to work with environmental CSOs. Even so, results of the interviews show that for most organizations, this did not mean abandoning the main environmental areas of work. Rather, it is about **adapting activities to new social needs**.

A separate new actor of civil society, which is rapidly gaining importance, are the **military, veterans and their families**. According to the Razumkov Center⁵², as of 2024-2025, the level of trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine stably exceeds 90%, which is the highest indicator among all public institutions. This creates the prerequisites for the growth of political subjectivity of veterans and the military, in particular their participation in policy-making, public initiatives and new institutions. In the future, this group may become one of the key ones in rethinking the social contract, including in the field of environmental policy and reconstruction.

51. Who Are the Activists of the Greenpeace Network? Greenpeace Ukraine. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/ukraine/pro-nas/>

52. Assessment of the Situation in the Country, Trust in Social Institutions, Assessment of Problems Existing in Ukrainian Society (November 2025). Razumkov Centre. URL: <https://razumkov.org.ua/napiamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/otsinka-sytuatsii-v-krajini-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-instytutiv-otsinka-problem-shcho-isnuiut-v-ukrainskomu-suspilstvi-lystopad-2025r>

At the same time, **this transformation is ambivalent** for the environmental movement. On the one hand, some activists who worked in the environmental field before the war are now in the military, which creates a gap in the continuity of expertise and knowledge. A long absence from the professional field, a change in the focus of activity, and the psychological experience of war can complicate their return to the sector and reduce their competitiveness in

the labor market. On the other hand, it is this group that is potentially capable of bringing new legitimacy, security experience, and understanding of the relationship between the environment and defense capability to the environmental movement. Thus, the issue of reintegration of veterans into the sector, preserving and updating their expertise becomes an important challenge and an opportunity for the transformation of the environmental movement in Ukraine.



«A couple of times in 2022, I even complained to myself that some activists had gone to the front. Accordingly, as an environmentalist, I felt that I was not developing professionally, because my growth had stopped due to a lack of opportunities. And those who did not go to the front have the opportunity to grow professionally. So in those areas where we could compete before, for example in finding vacancies, I am no longer an eligible competitor», – Andriy Khrutba, eco-activist, former acting director of the Hosiivskiy National Park (now in the Armed Forces of Ukraine)

Also, the majority of respondents declare the **development of new expertise**. The war not only «complicated the work», but also gave rise to or strengthened the need for profiling in new or very niche expert sub-fields that directly strengthen international advocacy: environmental crimes and data collection, green reconstruction and «build back better», energy sustainability and energy independence.

Some organizations began to work at the intersection of environmental and humanitarian challenges at the local, national and international levels, thus occupying or creating new niches.

Examples include:

- methodology for accounting for greenhouse gas emissions caused by war, developed by the Initiative for Accounting for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from War with the support of NGO «Ecoaction» and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine⁵³;
- missions to Chernobyl by the Greenpeace Ukraine team to monitor nuclear safety⁵⁴;
- energy independence for communal institutions through the installation of solar power plants with the support of NGO «Ecoclub»⁵⁵;
- research and advocacy on the topic of ecocide by EPL⁵⁶.

53. Methodological Guidance to Estimate Conflict-Related GHG Emissions. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/conflict-related-emissions-guidance.html>

54. Missions to Chernobyl. Greenpeace Ukraine. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/ukraine/nasha-robota/protydiia-yadernym-zahrozam/misi-v-chornobyl/>

55. Just Transition: How Solar Energy at Water Utilities Helps Ukraine in the Energy Transformation. Ecoclub. URL: https://ecoclubrivne.org/just_transition_ecoclub/

56. Ecocide in Ukrainian and International Law: Concept, Features and Criteria. ICO «Environment-People-Law». URL: <https://epl.org.ua/human-posts/ekotsyd-v-ukrayinskomu-ta-mizhnarodnomu-zakonodavstvi-ponyattya-oznaky-ta-kryteriyyi/>

In summary, we can say that the **full-scale invasion transformed the environmental sector, forming a new meta-context in which organizations are forced to combine crisis response with long-term environmental goals.** And also combine the achievement of long-term environmental goals with highly tactical flexibility in the face of an uncertain future and a decrease in the prioritization of the environmental agenda. The sector remains relatively small and resource-constrained,

with a narrow active core, increased personnel and financial challenges, and difficult access to political processes and public support. But alongside this, it is the flexibility, networking, and «startup logic» of work that has allowed environmental organizations to adapt to wartime conditions, develop new expertise, and maintain their role in shaping policy and promoting the principles of a sustainable and green reconstruction of Ukraine.



III. THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AS A COLLECTIVE ACTOR DURING THE FULL-SCALE INVASION

The previous section analyzed specifics of the activities and key challenges faced by environmental CSOs. This section will focus on the environmental movement as an important social actor and a driving force in the establishment and transformation of the environmental agenda in Ukraine. In general, the military context significantly changed both the conditions of the activities of CSOs and the ways in which they participated

in the establishment of the social and political agenda. The full-scale war created a new configuration of challenges in which environmental organizations were forced to combine a response to security and humanitarian needs with executing their core activities. This, in particular, encouraged organizations to unite more actively to achieve their goals.



«It seems to me that after the full-scale invasion, organizations became more open to associations and joint actions. They realized that this is their strength. Previously, organizations were aware of the importance of collective action, but now they clearly understand: the establishment of a powerful majority can significantly influence the decision-making processes - both at the legislative level and at the level of public policy in general», - Nataliia Cholovska, president of the LCPO «Ecoterra»⁵⁷

The environmental movement is a collective activity of citizens and organizations aimed at protecting the environment, reducing environmental risks and institutionalizing environmental actions. Formed as part of new social movements, it evolved from an environmental approach to a systematic criticism of extensive industrial development and consumerism. The modern environmental movement is global, diverse, and combines reformist and radical approaches to transforming the interaction between society and nature⁵⁸.

It was also discussed whether it is possible to speak of the existence of the movement as such. The vast majority of respondents (95%) confirm the existence of the environmental movement, but segment it depending on the topic of work, while at the same time reflecting on its influence and activity. An interesting observation within the framework of the study was that the animal protection movement does not associate itself with the environmental movement as such. During the requests to join in-depth interviews, refusals were mostly received. At the same time, one of the respondents, who is a member of an animal protection organization, understands the desire to distance, but notes that the basis of everyone's activities should be the same in terms of values.

During the interviews, respondents repeatedly tried to classify organizations by topics of work, to **draw a line between environmental, climate, and animal protection movements.**



«Yes, we held a big climate march in Kyiv in 2021, and now there is also an understanding of this topic among young people, but a public movement exists when it mobilizes for some critical, relevant things...», - Oleh Savytskyi, expert on climate and energy policy, strategic advisor to NGO «Razom We Stand»

57. LCPO «Ecoterra» was founded in 2001 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

58. The Environmental Movement. Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine. URL: <https://esu.com.ua/>

«Yes, I think that we can speak positively and affirmatively about the existence of an environmental movement. The movement exists, there is already a fairly significant number of Ukrainian organizations that implement various initiatives and projects in this direction», – Nataliia Cholovska, president of the LCPO «Ecoterra»



Within the framework of this study, the environmental movement is considered to be a non-institutionalized association of environmentally oriented CSOs and initiatives that, at a minimum, situationally unite around countering certain negative changes at the national level, and, at a maximum, strive for systematic work using their own and attracted other resources to promote common narratives.

The environmental movement in Ukraine, as well as a significant part of the activities of Ukrainian civil society organizations in general, should be analyzed through the framework of **contentious politics**⁵⁹, which is formed and evolves through recurring «critical nodes» of political history. For example, the study by I. Gomza and N. Koval⁶⁰, which examines the mobilization of the population during the Euromaidan, shows that it is precisely in moments of crisis that Ukrainian society is able to quickly switch to mass forms of contentious politics, where **moral narratives and emotional cohesion** play a decisive role, and not only institutional structures.

We also clearly see this when we **return to the historical aspects of the movement's development**: after the Chernobyl disaster, environmental demands resonated with national cohesion and the issue of dignity and self-determination. Media and oral histories emphasize that environmental activism often preceded political activism,

and the environmental movement could be one of the early forms of national cohesion. In the 1990s, with weak state institutions and economic crises, environmental activism developed on symbolic motivation and the desire to implement qualitative changes. In the military contexts of 2014 and 2022, environmental activism was integrated with the framework of survival, the common good, and care for future generations. The war, in turn, gave environmental problems a more visible social context, placing them at the center of the need for life support: free access to energy and drinking water, air and soil pollution, loss of ecosystems, etc.

During the full-scale war, the environmental movement in Ukraine showed **contradictory dynamics as a collective actor**: on the one hand, it strengthened due to the accumulation of expertise, professionalization (more active participation in policy formation, recovery planning, evidence-based analytics, international advocacy, etc.); on the other hand, it weakened in the classical dimension of mass solidarity and direct action, which became risky and often practically inaccessible. This generally corresponds to the military transformation of collective action forms⁶¹. In 2023, despite the existence of the formal possibility of peaceful assembly, in practice they are almost never held for security reasons. And martial law created additional local restrictions.

59. Tarrow S. Contentious Politics // The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements / eds. D. A. Snow, D. Porta, B. Klandermans, D. McAdam. Wiley-Blackwell, 2022. URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9780470674871.wbepm051.pub2>

60. Gomza I., Koval N. The Winter of Our Discontent: Emotions and Contentious Politics in Ukraine during Euromaidan // Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal. 2015. Vol. 1. P. 39–62. URL: <https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/52673-Article-Text-106429-1-10-20151103.pdf>

61. CSO Meter: A Benchmark for Capacity and Enabling Environment. Country Report: Ukraine 2023. ECNL; Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Research. URL: https://csometer.info/sites/default/files/2024-02/CSO%20Meter%20Country%20Report%20Ukraine%202023_UKR.pdf



«I can say that among all civil movements, it is the environmental movement that managed to turn into a professional one. This is very pleasing. After all, not every sector, for example culture, has people who live by this so much and work at a professional level. I see that we have this vein of mutual assistance, and we know how to get together. That makes me very happy. Because that was the point. I remember how it all began. The end of the 90s, the beginning of the millenium. And I am glad that in the 26th year we are really constituting something significant», – Oksana Stankevych-Volosyanchuk, Candidate of Biological Sciences, expert at the NGO «Ecosphera»

A common feature of the civil society institution's work now is reactivity – that is, that they mainly respond to external stimuli and changes here and now, rather than do strategic work and form a systemic agenda. Therefore, often the capacity at this level primarily determines how environmental organizations and associations processed opportunities, resources and frameworks in war conditions, and how they were able to convert expertise into political and social influence. A significant part of the initiatives continues to emerge as a response to specific events or political decisions, such as new draft laws or the environmental consequences of military actions. At the same time, the opportunities for forming a long-term strategic agenda remain limited due to the instability of the political and security environment. It is fundamentally important that the problem of reactivity is not only felt, but also recorded by other researchers in the sector. Thus, the study⁶² indicates that part of the public sector seeks to go beyond the response to urgent defense and humanitarian challenges and develop promising areas of institutional development and strengthening human capital. The British think tank Chatham House emphasizes⁶³ that the involvement of civil society in post-war reconstruction planning in Ukraine has been largely ad hoc and around «high-profile events» (conferences, forums, etc.), and the systemic approach to broad civil society engagement in Ukraine is still weak.

One of the challenges that continues to characterize the environmental movement

is the difficulty of forming a coordinated common position between different organizations. Some respondents to the study noted the existence of competition between organizations, in particular regarding financial resources, thematic competition, and the presence of interpersonal conflicts. This can also complicate the promotion of a common agenda while coordinating common activities.

The military context has also led to a decrease in the number of offline meetings and networking events within the environmental movement. This negatively affects horizontal connections between organizations and reduces the level of coordination between them. Especially against the background of personnel changes and the emergence of new organizations since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, a situation is observed where representatives of different organizations do not know each other, which weakens internal trust. Previously, the community had opportunities to meet several times a year through professional thematic conferences, network meetings, camping events, and infotours. However, this continuity was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, then the full-scale war, and in-person meetings only started to resume in 2024. In particular, through the mediation of the Ukrainian Climate Network. It is difficult to predict at the moment how much time it will take and whether it will be possible to restore this dynamic of meetings in the context of continuing military operations in Ukraine.

62. Civil Society of Ukraine in the Conditions of War 2022–2025. Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Study. ISAR Ednannia. URL: https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/25/10/29/zvit_UA_Hromadianske_suspilstvo_v%20umovakh_vivny_2022-2025.pdf

63. Giving Civil Society a Stake in Ukraine's Recovery. Chatham House. URL: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023-06-15-ukraine-recovery-civil-society-lutsevych.pdf>



«Obviously, young organizations are emerging, but we are each in our own bubble. We don't really see them, and they don't really see us. And sometimes we don't even know about each other. What used to happen only once a year in the format of an Environmental Forum of the ecological movement lasted two or three days. But even then it was extremely cool. You got to know different people. Sometimes these acquaintances did not yield any results, you just knew that they existed. Sometimes you were simply inspired by them. Sometimes some ideas were initiated... This should happen in person, because only then the real power of the movement can be felt. And for me, this is a huge challenge - to organize, find finances for this, convince donors of the importance of our work. And this is a whole direction», - Olena Kravchenko, executive director and board member of the ICO «Environment-Law»

Direct actions, camps and conferences were also an important element in attracting supporters and volunteers to the movement, who later formed a community or even became part of CSO teams and initiative groups. The full-scale war significantly **changed the focus of volunteering**, redirecting most of the resources, energy and human involvement to support the Armed Forces and meet humanitarian needs. This is socially justified and necessary, but it creates additional difficulties for the environmental movement, which loses one of the key mechanisms for

its reproduction - attracting new participants through volunteering and community building. In addition, limited resources force organizations to prioritize operational activities, **leaving fewer opportunities for community development**, so a number of organizations do not even begin to develop this direction. This leads to a weakening of the movement's internal cohesion and a decrease in its social base. In the long term, such dynamics can affect the movement's ability to mobilize and scale up its activities.

«If we strive for development, we must set ourselves the goal of influencing society within our subject area. Even if this influence starts at the community level, it is worth making a strategic decision: to involve people in forming a community that shares our values and is ready to act together. And then it will have a result, even if you have few resources», - Denys Tsutsayev, co-founder of Greenpeace Ukraine and the Initiative for the Development of Qualitative Engagement «Makitra» (currently in the Armed Forces of Ukraine)



«We are not working with volunteers and interns right now because we don't have the capacity to manage anyone else», - Oleh Savytskyi, climate and energy policy expert, strategic advisor to NGO «Razom We Stand»



«Involving volunteers is definitely a necessary step. This is one of the ways to overcome the crisis we are observing. Although it is difficult to say whether this is really a new crisis or rather a permanent problem, that there is a lack of environmental protection efforts on the side of Ukrainians. It is definitely worth involving everyone we can. This is a separate big task, and unfortunately, for some reason we are unable to implement it effectively», – Andriy Martyniuk, executive director of the NGO «Ecoclub»

Some respondents note the emergence of **elements of self-censorship or softening of the messages** in organizational public communications. This is manifested in more cautious criticism of state policy and the desire to avoid conflict topics in public discourse, especially in the international

arena, so as not to become a source of discrediting the authorities, which often make extraordinary efforts to provide for the basic needs of citizens and depend on foreign support. This phenomenon was especially noticeable at the beginning of 2022, but is gradually decreasing.



«But it seems to me that we have such a double self-censorship during the war that they are not in a hurry (to criticize). This is an extreme case when they openly criticize the authorities in order not to undermine their trust in them in any way», – Mariana Verbovska-Tuziak, freelance journalist

One of the most noticeable transformations of the environmental movement has been the **strengthening of their role as expert actors** in the field of environmental and climate policy. The results of surveys conducted as part of this study show that in the pre-war period, most of the organizations' activities were related to public campaigns, information work and mobilization of public support. In wartime, these forms of activity partially gave way to analytical, research, political and expert work. This has manifested in several key areas, in particular, the preparation of analytical materials on the environmental consequences of the war and involvement in international discussions on Russia's environmental responsibility and the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, etc.

of expert mediators between the state, international partners and civil society.



Thus, environmental organizations are increasingly **performing the function**

Public panel held as part of COP30 (November 2025, Brazil). Source: Ukrainian Climate Network

Despite the fact that cooperation with the academic environment remains difficult and requires further development, the Ukrainian environmental movement **demonstrates a tendency to involve scientists and researchers in teams**. Many of them consciously join the public sector, as they see in it more opportunities for influence,

access to resources and freedom in shaping the research and advocacy agenda outside the framework of traditional institutions. This forms a specific feature of the Ukrainian environmental movement, which at the same time strengthens its expertise, but is not always obvious or understandable to international partners.



«Science in Ukraine has been in a stagnant state for a very long time, and in order to work effectively and see the results of the implementation of my ideas, I chose the public sector. This makes it possible to combine scientific activity with social work and receive much broader opportunities for the implementation of social tasks in environmental conservation», – Bohdan Prots, Ph.D. in Biology. Sciences, founder and head of the board of the NGO «Danube-Carpathian Program», laureate of the global Whitley Award (the green «Oscar» in the field of nature conservation) and the National Geographic Society

«In Ukraine, there are organizations that combine different roles: a person is simultaneously a scientist and a researcher, but at the same time he is also an activist who is a member of an NGO and promotes the topic of his own research in society. This approach allows science to go beyond the academic environment and influence public opinion... For example, in the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group, a large part of their members work in the Askania-Nova Biosphere Reserve, which was relocated. Who are they? Are they scientists? Are they rangers? Are they activists? Who are these people? They are everything at once. By the way, it is sometimes very difficult for Europeans to understand, but how is this one person? And what, an advisor to some minister? Seriously?», – Viktoriia Hubareva, environmental journalist of the Rubryka media, leading journalist of «Ecorubryka»



Given the transformational features of the movement described above, we can form a kind of **«role matrix»** (at the level of a

collective actor). At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that during war, roles become hybrid.

ACTIVIST:

- *citizen engagement*
- *publicity*
- *symbolic action*

Currently receding as a «street» form, but continues to exist as a symbolic action. Digital and information campaigns, local initiatives, participation in public hearings, communication activities, etc.

CHANGE-MAKER:

- *participation in commenting*
- *planning*
- *procedures*
- *development of expert documents*

This is the movement's ability to be a co-creator of policies: to form recommendations and proposals for national policies, laws, to cooperate with profile ministries and parliamentary committees.

Participate in planning, support communities by developing documents, expertise, etc.

Influence on changing legislation.

WATCHDOG:

- *control*
- *data analysis*
- *integrity*

Monitoring of public sector spending, anti-corruption safeguards, requirement of openness and access to data, procedural guarantees.

CSO Meter⁶⁴ links increased monitoring and control with improved CSO tools. At the same time, this function is often implemented in a more restrained form than in the pre-war period, including due to reduced data openness.

ADVOCATE:

- *promotion of common narratives at the national and international levels*

Influence on law enforcement. This is a directed influence on the agenda and decision-making, in particular, through coalitions and writing joint positions.

Already in 2022, a number of Ukrainian NGOs publicly raised the issue of military damage to the environment⁶⁵. An important factor is holding Russia accountable for environmental damage.

In the advocacy bloc, «green recovery» is gradually becoming a unifying framework for the entire movement.

Impact on the emergence of political will for change.


64. CSO Meter: A Benchmark for Capacity and Enabling Environment. Country Report: Ukraine 2023. ECNL; Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Research. URL: https://csometer.info/sites/default/files/2024-02/CSO%20Meter%20Country%20Report%20Ukraine%202023_UKR.pdf

65. Ukrainian NGOs Raise Alarm over Shocking Environmental Crimes Caused by Russian Aggression. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/alarm-environmental-crimes-by-russians.html>


It is significant that in most interviews, respondents **almost did not mention business** as a separate actor or partner in interaction on environmental issues. If business did appear in conversations, it was mainly in a critical context – because business associations masquerading as public organizations, or working as an actor with a disproportionately strong influence on decision-making processes at the government level. Such an approach may indicate a low level of trust in business on the part of the environmental sector, as well as a **perception of it as a source of risks rather than as a potential partner**. At the same time, this may be a consequence of the environmental movement's **conscious distancing** from business as a way to maintain independence and avoid conflicts of interest.

Communication issues remain one of the key barriers to the environmental movements' effective work, as the complexity of climate

and environmental issues makes them difficult for a wide audience to understand. A significant part of the ecological agenda needs to be translated from expert language into categories understandable to society, in particular, due to its connection with everyday needs - energy independence, resource conservation, health and quality of life. In times of war, this problem is exacerbated, as public priorities shift towards security and survival, which reinforces the perception of environmental issues as «secondary». Accordingly, effective communication requires not only simplification of content, but also integration of the environmental agenda into broader socio-economic and security narratives. And this requires, according to respondents, a change in communication strategies and the development of appropriate capacities of communication officers in the public sector.



«Yes, it is the educational component, and it is with ordinary people on the street... Because the educational component with people who are involved in decision-making, that is, with employees of local government bodies, is very developed in our country. We pay a lot of attention to it, and in fact there is no direction of our work where it would not be present. That is, we work on it constantly. We work little with ordinary people. Probably less than it was necessary», – Olha Lyashchuk, project coordinator of the NGO «Ecoclub», former Council member of the UCN



«After all, it will be impossible to achieve success without support of the population for measures that are not necessarily named as climate-related, but which relate to energy efficiency, development of renewable energy sources, development of infrastructure in a sustainable way, as well as sustainable urban and intercity mobility. No matter what people call it, it does not change the action. This action is important for us, and in the future we will be able to explain to them that it is also useful for the climate. But now the main thing is to show concrete examples», – Oksana Aliyeva, Senior Advisor, Central Europe and Ukraine Program, European Climate Foundation

Most respondents also said that it is important for the movement to **have a common agenda, or at least common narratives**. And even if the organization does not deal with a particular topic, by joining in signing common positions or appeals, it feels like being involved in the movement. If we talk about the unifying topics that the movement communicates

most actively and successfully both inside and outside the country, respondents mainly highlight the following areas:

- **green recovery and reconstruction;**
- **European integration;**
- **environmental damage from war and ecocide.**

«The fact that in the conditions of a full-scale invasion, ecocide, i.e. environmental crimes and crimes against nature, began to be recorded at all, was simply «wow». No one probably thought much about it at the beginning, because it is not on the surface. However, when we talk about war and the fact that we want to win and stay in our country, we also want this country to be truly stable and remain livable... I would say that the climate environmental movement has adapted to these military needs quite quickly. Therefore, my personal assessment is that it is difficult for me to even imagine whether it could have been done better, to be honest», -

Svitlana Krakovska, leading meteorologist, head of the Applied Climatology Laboratory at the Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine's delegate to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and foreign associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences



Despite their potential significance, the topics of **decolonization and the phase-out of Russian fossil fuels** have not yet become unifying messages for the environmental movement in Ukraine. They rarely appear in spontaneous narratives of the movement's actors and, as a rule, are actualized by respondents of this study only in response

to targeted questions, which indicates their insufficient integration into the common discourse. In addition, for many representatives of the sector, these topics require additional reflection, which indicates their insufficiently formed conceptual and strategic status.

In conclusion, it can be said that **the environmental movement in Ukraine during the full-scale war transformed into a more professionalized and expert actor**, operating mainly in a narrow niche and with limited public representation. It lost some of its potential for citizen engagement, opportunities for public activism and communication capabilities. The movement's activities have significantly strengthened its reactive nature

(i.e., responding to environmental crisis events), but have retained their influence through participation in policy formation, advocacy and the creation and promotion of unifying narratives. Despite internal challenges - fragmentation and weakening of community-building - the movement demonstrates the ability to quickly adapt and actively consolidate efforts around key topics and crisis cases.

IV. INTERACTION WITH THE AUTHORITIES AND THE ROLE IN GOVERNANCE



Public opinion polls⁶⁷ show that the country's defense capability and European integration remain key priorities for the Ukrainian population in the fifth year of full-scale war.

At the same time, a study by the NGO «Ecoaction»⁶⁸ demonstrates that four years of full-scale war have already caused **environmental damage** estimated at about **57 billion USD**. And the volume of greenhouse gas emissions associated with military operations has reached **311 million tons of CO₂ equivalent**, which is comparable to the annual emissions of France or half of the annual emissions of Germany. This data confirm that Russia's war against Ukraine significantly deepens the climate crisis itself on top of all the additional war related emissions.

The survey within the study's framework confirms, that the generally accepted understanding of the primary task of the

environmental movement in the fifth year of the full-scale invasion is to not let the state forget about its obligation to guarantee the right of citizens to a healthy and safe environment and future in view of the deepening consequences of climate change as a result of military actions.

Regarding the implementation of this function, respondents primarily emphasize the complexity and fragmentation of the political field in general. Despite the fact that we see a quantitative increase in the number of adopted individual thematic laws or the approximation of individual European Union directives, this does not mean the presence of a systematic state policy in the field of environmental protection. Simultaneously, with the beginning of the full-scale war, many negative trends are observed at the legislative level: disruption of political cycles, institutional continuity and fragmentation of reforms.



«In short, the war destroyed even that policy that, albeit imperfect, still existed. It completely interrupted what we call the policy cycle. Any existing instruments in the field of environmental or climate...», – Andriy Andrushevych, member of the board of the NGO «RAC "Society and Environment"»

«I would say that today Ukraine lacks a systemic state environmental policy. State policy in any area primarily involves systematicity and integration of its components into related policies. Do we observe this now? Definitely not. The state works fragmentarily and cluster-wise, focusing only on those areas that it considers priority... In view of this, we are also forced to act within the same fragmented logic, and many of our steps become just as cluster-wise, because this is the framework set by the state. Therefore, I believe that a holistic system of state environmental policy does not exist today. There are only individual situational decisions without a common vision, strategy and understanding of where and why we are moving», – Yaroslav Teleshun, head of the Policy and advocacy department of CSO «WWF-Ukraine»⁶⁹, Candidate of sciences, ass. prof. of the Department of political science of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv



67. Results of 2025: Will Ukrainians Accept the «Peace» Agreements? Ilko Kucheriv «Democratic Initiatives» Foundation. URL: <https://dif.org.ua/article/pidsumki-2025-roku-chi-priymut-ukraintsi-domovlenosti-pro-mir>

68. How War Affects the Climate: New Calculations over Four Years of the Full-Scale Invasion. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://ecoaction.org.ua/vijna-klimat-pidrakhunky-4roky-povnomassh-vtorh.html>

69. The CSO «WWF-Ukraine» was founded in 2019 and is a member organization of the Ukrainian Climate Network

As respondents note, one of the key characteristics of state policy in Ukraine remains the **short-term logic of decision-making, focused on electoral cycles**. This forms the «from one election to another» mindset of the decision makers, within which priority is given to quick, visible results, rather than long-term structural changes. Environmental and climate policy, which requires strategic planning for years ahead, often falls outside the focus of such approaches. This also explains the limited sustainability of environmental reforms in state policy.

If we talk about those topics that are still on the government's agenda, then there is a **change in the focus areas in the state's environmental agenda**. Combating climate change is taking a back seat. Instead, seen as a priority is the **environment as a component of security policy**, and decarbonization is increasingly seen as an important component of **energy security**⁷⁰. In particular, this is influenced by Russia's war crimes: the seizure of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the undermining of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station, the destruction of the country's energy infrastructure, and constant attacks on industrial facilities, which entails correspondingly large greenhouse gas emissions. Monitoring of online sources and public communication by government bodies showed that a significant role in

strengthening the environmental component in the state's security policy is played by public organizations working on the topics of **ecocide, accounting for greenhouse gas emissions from war, and promoting the phase-out of Russian fossil fuels**⁷¹.

It is in these issues that the greatest symbiosis and many points of contact between the public and the government have been observed in recent years. In particular, **accountability for environmental damage** is reflected as one of the requirements of paragraph 8 of President Zelenskyy's peace formula (Ukraine's Peace Formula)⁷². Ukraine may also become the first state to seek compensation for climate emissions caused by the war. In November 2025, it was announced⁷³ that Ukraine plans to submit an application to the Register for damage caused by the Russian federation's aggression against Ukraine. The NGO «Ecoaction» is actively involved in the Greenhouse Gases of War Accounting Initiative, which is engaged in calculating such emissions. **Research and analytical work** is generally identified by a number of respondents as one of the fruitful formats for cooperation between CSOs and the authorities. This approach simultaneously satisfies the activist community's demand to deliver its own messages and helps to compensate for institutional gaps associated with the lack of specialists in the relevant state structures.



«The period of our program coincided with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, when together we not only resisted, but also tried to promote all environmental narratives, especially those related to ecocide and generally causing harm to the environment of Ukraine. And then there were powerful waves of this environmental information and environmental inquiries, including to our organizations with which we worked... This research was aimed specifically at studying the impact of war and military actions on the climate globally. Then this data was used by the Ministry of Defense, the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, in particular, in matters of ecocide. This data, of course, was also used by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Energy. In short, the government considered these studies to be high-ranking and authoritative», – Tetiana Kukharenko, manager of the «Democracy and Good Governance» Program of the International Renaissance Foundation (about the international study «Climate Damage Caused by Russia's War in Ukraine»)

70. Ukraine's Environmental Policy: Between War and the EU. Resource and Analysis Center «Society and Environment». URL: <https://rac.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/racse-environmental-policy-2026-ukr.pdf>

71. Documenting Environmental Crimes, the Energy Ban on Russia and Participation in Recovery: A Conversation on the Role of Ukrainian Environmental NGOs with the Head of the Eco-Initiative Tetiana Kukharenko. International Renaissance Foundation. URL: <https://www.irf.ua/epau-the-role-of-ukrainian-eco-activists>

72. President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula. Official Website of the President of Ukraine. URL: https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/19/45/a0284f6fdc92f8e4bd595d4026734bba_1691475944.pdf

73. Ukraine May Become the First State to Seek Compensation for Climate Emissions Caused by the War. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://ecoaction.org.ua/ukraine-seeks-reparations-clim-damage-russian-invasion.html>

The topic of the **embargo on Russian fossil fuels** is another rare case where the interests of not only the Ukrainian government and civil society, but also the scientific community, coincide. Here, all parties have a common strategic goal: **to deprive the Russian military machine of the resources for its existence** by

conveying the narrative that every barrel of Russian oil or cubic meter of gas purchased is turned into missiles flying towards Ukrainian cities, and with the continuation of this funding, they can be directed towards other European cities.

«On the first day of the full-scale invasion, I was the head of the Ukrainian delegation at the online meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And since this organization is more of an expert than a political one, it is not customary to make political statements there, although I really wanted to. But I was able to outline Ukraine's position in the context of climate, that is, to compare the fact that climate change is the cause of an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases precisely due to the use of fossil fuels. And Russian aggression also became possible because humanity became dependent on burning coal, oil, and gas. And that is why Russia was able to accumulate finances in order to go to war with other countries. I am sure that not only I had similar considerations, but also others. But it turned out that way, since I was on such a high-level panel, that is why I voiced it. The expression «Fossil Fueled War» - the war of fossil fuels (for its dominance and survival in this world) has become quite viral», – Svitlana Krakovska, leading meteorologist, head of the Applied Climatology Laboratory at the Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine's delegate to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and foreign associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences

On this common path, the authorities, scientists and the public use **various tools**. Government officials conduct direct negotiations with the leaders of the European Union and G7, prepare sanctions lists for the shadow fleet and official appeals to international regulators. The public simultaneously creates public pressure on Western companies and states, using mass campaigns (for example, the NGO «Razom

We Stand» and Greenpeace actions in many European countries), analyzes the movement of tankers, exposes oil transshipment schemes on the high seas and identifies companies that help the Russian Federation circumvent the price ceiling, etc. The scientific community here acts as the «architect» of the evidence base, transforming the consequences of the war into the language of numbers and legal facts.



Demonstration against the World Gas Summit (December 2024, Germany).
Source: NGO «Razom We Stand»



Protest against the import of Russian oil next to an oil tanker (March 2022, Germany).
Source: Greenpeace

Regarding the challenges of interacting with the authorities during the war in Ukraine, there is a **significant complication of the work processes of environmentalists and the establishment of a dialogue between the public sector and government officials**, including a strengthening of data security related issues. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, access to geo- and cadastral data, the Environmental Impact Assessment Register (EIA), forest and nature protection registers has been closed⁷⁴. This complicates

the work of monitoring and real assessment of the state of the environment by the public sector, creates additional technical barriers, causes delays in updating data, and prevents the full implementation of public control and advocacy functions. Analytics⁷⁵ show that only 38% of environmental data sets of state bodies were available online in open access during 2023-2024. In addition, ministries and some national-level services publish significantly less information than local authorities.



«Another challenge is the restriction of public access to many registers due to martial law, which is extremely critical for our organization», – Petro Tiestov, head of the analytical department of UNCG

Respondents also note the **deterioration of communication between the environmental movement and the authorities at the national level**. Particular difficulties⁷⁶ are noted in the topic of nuclear energy from Energoatom and the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate of Ukraine (SNRIU), which the authorities argue

is due to a safety factor. This, in turn, leads to violations of environmental procedures. However, there is a bridge in the dialogue with the Exclusion Zone Administration and the SNRIU in the form of joint work on issues of military nuclear risks and environmental crimes in Russia.



«For example, the Public Council under the SNRIU was disbanded back in 2023 and has not yet been restored. When other bodies and ministries formed new public councils, despite martial law, the State Environmental Protection Agency refers to martial law... And there is also an absolute disregard for the need to conduct an environmental impact assessment during the completion of power units 3 and 4 at the Khmelnytskyi Nuclear Power Plant, when a change in the reactor was declared. That is, according to the law, if the reactor was changed, an environmental impact assessment should have been conducted, accordingly, public discussions and the entire set of actions included in this procedure should have been held. This was not done», – Olha Lyashchuk, project coordinator of the NGO «Ecoclub», former Council member of the UCN

74. Public Access to Decision-Making Regarding Ukraine's Recovery in the Context of Environmental Protection and Climate Change Mitigation. Heinrich Böll Foundation. URL: https://ua.boell.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/report_public-access-to-decision-making_2023.pdf

75. Access to Environmental Information in Ukraine during the War. International Renaissance Foundation. URL: <https://www.irf.ua/en/dostup-do-ekologichnoyi-informaciyi-v-ukrayini-pid-chas-vijny>

76. The Public Council at the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate Announced the Termination of Its Activities. Until the End of the War, the Nuclear Regulator Will Operate without Public Involvement or Oversight. InfoAtom. URL: <https://infoatom.news/2023/05/10/100520231511>

Instead, **the driver of establishing communication** between the Ukrainian environmental movement and the authorities at various levels remains the topic of **European integration**. The public notes⁷⁷ the importance of maintaining its participation

in promoting environmental reforms in the conditions of war, emphasizing that this is a key factor in achieving European standards and successful membership in the European Union.

«The common theme is establishing more systematic cooperation with the authorities, civil society organizations, and international partners. Theoretically, all parties are interested in this, but the situation is changing, a particularly noticeable decline occurred after the unification of ministries. The main direction of cooperation, which remains relevant and allows for a fairly constructive dialogue, is European integration», – Anna Ackermann, an expert on climate and energy issues, a member of the board of the NGO «Ecoaction»

«It is clear that the state is a little reluctant, on the one hand. On the other hand, I have observed some sporadic attempts to form some kind of state climate policy, eventually, the adoption of the Climate law and things like that. And this is a positive movement. I think this is due to Ukraine's accession to the European Union, and that our efforts as a state to do this happen as soon as possible and are as effective as possible», – Olha Lyashchuk, project coordinator of the NGO «Ecoclub», former Council member of the UCN



In parallel, some respondents drew attention to the **negative change in the political landscape in Europe**: a shift in focus from centrists and progressive groups to conservative right-wingers, whose agendas

give much less space to climate and environmental issues. All this cannot but affect us, as a country on the path to joining the European Union.

«The European Green Deal, which was a flagship a few years ago, no longer affects anyone so much, does not shape the economic agenda. Now economic development, the need to increase competitiveness, and localization of production dominate. And, on the one hand, this opens up certain opportunities for the localization of technologies and production necessary for the energy transition, as well as the development of innovations, which we also need for decarbonization. And, accordingly, in Ukraine, we are used to constantly referring to the EU as an example and as a requirement for European integration, but now we need to look for other economic arguments», – Oksana Aliyeva, senior advisor, Central Europe and Ukraine Program, European Climate Foundation

77. Environmental Reforms on the Path to the EU in Times of War: The Role, Participation and Responsibility of the Public. Ukrainian Media Center. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfqmMEhhUQ8>

Despite this, representatives of the authorities in Ukraine at all levels understand that the development of environmental and climate policy is still an important obligation of Ukraine to its partners and on the path

to the European Union. Therefore, **almost 100% of respondents note the European integration process as the main driver of Ukrainian state environmental policy during the war.**



«The European integration process played a very important role in the adoption of the Ukrainian climate law. No one would have adopted the climate law if it were purely an initiative of public organizations. The draft law, most likely, 99% of the time, did not make it to the Verkhovna Rada's agenda. That is, the European integration process is often the point that helps us move forward. Nevertheless, it is not a panacea», – Vasylyna Belo, head of the climate department of the NGO «Ecoaction»

The political orientation of our state towards the European Green Deal also means the implementation of post-war reconstruction based on the principles of sustainability and in accordance with such requirements as promoting decarbonization, increasing energy efficiency, promoting biodiversity protection, adhering to the environmental impact assessment procedure, etc. It is European integration that the Ukrainian eco-movement uses as an argument in its dialogue with the government regarding the importance of «green reconstruction». If we move towards the European Union, we cannot rebuild the country according to outdated, environmentally unfriendly standards.

According to the observations of the respondents, this thesis is perceived positively by the government. Therefore, the green component is currently present in state recovery programs. In particular, recovery and reconstruction with the transition to a green economy, in addition to its inclusion in paragraph 8 of the above-mentioned Ukrainian Peace Formula⁷⁸, was voiced in 2024 on the sidelines of the Ukraine Recovery

Conference⁷⁹, where the establishment of the International Platform for Action for the Green Recovery of Ukraine was announced.



Public action calling for green recovery during the Ukraine Recovery Conference (June 2023, United Kingdom). Source: NGO «Ecoaction»

The next stumbling block in the dialogue between the environmental movement

78. President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula. Official Website of the President of Ukraine. URL: https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/19/45/a0284f6fdc92f8e4bd595d4026734bba_1691475944.pdf

79. The International Platform for Action for the Green Recovery of Ukraine Was Launched on the Sidelines of the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024. Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. URL: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/mizhnarodna-platforma-dii-dlia-zelenoho-vidnovlennia-ukrainy-startuvala-na-poliakh-ukraine-recovery-conference-2024>

and the authorities is the deregulation and **simplification of environmental procedures for the so-called acceleration of the reconstruction processes**. This is currently one of the most tense points of discussion, because the climate community demands reconstruction in compliance with the principle of «build back better», and not simply recreating the Soviet legacy. At the same time, the authorities, especially the new unified Ministry of Economy, listen more to the business lobby and indicate that one

of their priority tasks is to deregulate the permitting system to «help» the development of the economy⁸⁰. Here we also have cases of delaying the adoption of laws and regulations to control industrial emissions, postponing or completely canceling the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures for facilities that were destroyed during martial law or recognized as key to ensuring the survival of the state. And the general tendency to produce precedents of support for «dirty» businesses at the level of the judiciary.

«Ukraine is currently viewed as an example of innovation in war. But we can also become an example of an ecological country that does not try to recreate the old in place of ruins, but uses this as a chance to build new sustainable systems of infrastructure, energy, and consumption in general, which for sustainability must move away from the use of fossil hydrocarbons, industrial livestock farming, etc. and move towards resource-saving, energy-saving technologies. Then we will positively integrate and capitalize on our unique experience, benefiting nature and civilization in general», – Artem Bilyk, Ph.D., assoc. prof., eco-activist (currently in the Armed Forces of Ukraine)



Such an inter-institutional conflict in the field of green renewal was clearly manifested in **the example of the development of wind energy in the Carpathian highlands**. In particular, the beginning of the construction of foundations for windmills without an environmental impact assessment procedure in the Runa mountain meadow. This case has caused considerable outrage among the activist community and is contributing to a significant deterioration in government-civil relations. The project, which is positioned as a step towards the region's energy independence, involves the destruction of unique nature

reserves for the construction of over 30 wind turbines. The entire period of 2024-2025 and the beginning of 2026 was accompanied not only by a purely administrative process, but also by a wave of public opposition⁸¹. As a result, on February 13, 2026, the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine, headed by Oleksiy Sobolev, issued a «positive» conclusion on the environmental impact assessment for case No. 8343, which allowed the construction of 30 wind turbines in the Runa meadow⁸². The activist community **called this day «truly black» for the environmental movement in Ukraine**.

80. The Government May Cancel Environmental Assessment for Large Projects. Why Will Economic Risks Increase? Holka. URL: <https://holka.org.ua/uryad-mozhe-skasuvaty-ekologichnu-oczinku-dlya-velykyh-proyektiv-chomu-zrostut-ekonomichni-ryzyky/>

81. A Wind Power Plant at Polonyna Runa: A Decision That Raises Questions. Ecoclub. URL: https://ecoclubrivne.org/wpp-polonuna_ryna_eia/

82. The Ministry of Economy Issued an Environmental Impact Assessment Conclusion on the Wind Power Plant Project in Zakarpattia Oblast. Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine. URL: <https://me.gov.ua/News/Detail/13fa758f-48fa-4b1a-b523-30233906acbf?lang=uk-UA>



«With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, even earlier, with the coming to power of a new team and a new president, everything changed very radically and every year it changes only for the worse. In this situation regarding the construction work of the mountain meadow, not a single state authority: neither local, nor regional, nor central, has come to the defense of the Carpathian Mountains, has not come to the defense of the law, and has not come to the defense of the people who suffer from this negative activity. The only ones who have started at least some kind of dialogue with us and some kind of cooperation are two deputies of two committees of the Verkhovna Rada. One on European integration, the other on Environmental policy. And that's it», –
Nataliia Vyshnevskya, head of the NGO «Save Pikuy»



Public protest at Polonyna Runa against the construction of a wind power plant (June 2025). Source: NGO «Save Pikuy»

This case has become a real **litmus test**: it demonstrates whether Ukraine will be able to comply with European standards for nature protection under the pressure of the energy crisis. The topic of development in the Carpathians **has also become a unifying one for the public and the population**, resulting in a petition⁸³ demanding the preservation of the nature and cultural heritage of the Ukrainian Carpathians, which collected⁸⁴ the required 25,000 signatures in just 6 days (it is indicative that it was possible to register the relevant petition on the website of the Office

of the President of Ukraine only after the fifth attempt⁸⁵).

Another significant obstacle to interaction with the authorities is the **rapid turnover of personnel in government bodies**. In particular, heads of specialized services, middle-level specialists, and the **liquidation of the specialized ministry**. During the 4 years of full-scale war, the specialized ministry responsible for environmental protection was headed by 3 different ministers, and in the 5th year of the war, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine was liquidated and merged with the Ministry of Economy and became part of the unified Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine with a new head.


The absolute majority of respondents call this step the «beginning of the end» for the state environmental policy of Ukraine, and a number of organizations continue to demand the return of a separate Ministry of Environment⁸⁶. The expert community notes that in a situation where the state suffers daily environmental damage from war, leads the ranking of the most mined countries in the world, has thousands of hectares of contaminated land, water resources and destroyed nature reserves, **reducing environmental institutional capacity is a particularly dangerous and unacceptable decision**.

83. Electronic Petition «On Urgent Measures to Preserve the Nature and Cultural Heritage of the Ukrainian Carpathians». Official Website of the President of Ukraine. URL: <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/262246>


84. A Petition to Zelensky on Protecting the Carpathians from Development Collected 25,000 Signatures. Ukrainska Pravda. URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2026/03/26/8027222/>

85. On the Fifth Attempt: The Petition to Protect the Carpathians Has Finally Been Published on the President's Website. Greenpeace Ukraine. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/ukraine/novyny/5567/z-piatoi-sproby-petytsiui-pro-zakhyst-karpat-nareshhti-opryliudneno-na-saiti-prezydenta/>

86. We Demand the Restoration of the Ministry of Environmental Protection as a Separate Institution. Holka. URL: <https://holka.org.ua/vymagayemo-vidnovyty-robotu-ministerstva-zahystu-dovkillya-yak-okremoyi-instytutczyi-zayava/>



«Now the Ministry has been completely liquidated. It has been transformed into an appendage to the Ministry of Economy. And this is the biggest environmental disaster after the Chernobyl tragedy... This is a political disaster that affects the possibility of joining the EU. And what does this mean? The same war, only invisible», – Serhiy Fedorynchuk, NGO «UEA "Green World"»



«And there is practically no cooperation with the Ministry now, because you cannot communicate with people who do not understand either environmental problems or environmental processes. That is, as we say in the public sector, «people from another dimension»... That is, the middle level of the ministry's employees, on whom all the functional work is based, was replaced by non-professional people ... mostly from the energy sector. It takes a very long time to educate a professional employee of the Ministry of Environment. In addition to high-quality professional higher education, they need to regularly travel abroad for training, communicate with the scientific and public sectors, and participate in environmental events. And such people are actually worth their weight in gold, but when they are forcibly dismissed, the level of the ministries drops very much. And now it is at its lowest point since the country's independence», – Bohdan Prots, Candidate of Biological Sciences, founder and head of the Board of the NGO «Danube-Carpathian Program»

Due to the loss of personnel and documents, the work of their predecessors was often not passed on to their successors, which **further deepens the institutional disconnect**. The study⁸⁷ by ISAR Ednannia and KIIS records that new government teams «do not want to continue the work of their predecessors», even if these are «good initiatives», which causes a «loss of continuity and resources». This also slows down the implementation of the European integration agenda and, accordingly, the receipt of donor funds. CSOs are trying to compensate for this by building up the evidence base so that new leaders perceive their work as ready-made solutions. The only problem is that these works by CSOs are not always taken into account.

Respondents also note that the level of understanding of climate issues in the bureaucratic apparatus at both the national and state levels remains **quite low and fragmented**. At the level of central government bodies, especially in the context of European integration, there is a gradual increase in competencies and attention to

climate issues. At the middle and lower levels of the bureaucratic apparatus, in particular in local governments, there is often a lack of basic understanding of climate policy and its practical significance⁸⁸. This leads to difficulties in implementing even already adopted decisions and strategies.

In such conditions, environmental NGOs are increasingly **taking over functions that formally belong to the governmental bodies**. This includes not only advocacy, but also policy development, expert support, project implementation and educational activities. In a number of cases, CSOs act as actual implementers of decisions at the local level, in particular in the areas of energy, waste management or climate change adaptation. This gives rise to the phenomenon of distorted delegated management, when the scope of responsibility and functions is not consistent with the available resources and powers. This situation strengthens the role of CSOs, but at the same time creates risks of overloading and blurring of responsibility.

87. Civil Society of Ukraine in the Conditions of War 2022–2025. Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Study. ISAR Ednannia. URL: https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/25/10/29/zvit-UA_Hromadianske_suspilstvo_v%20umovakh_vivny_2022-2025.pdf

88. The Climate Compass of Communities: From Challenges to Opportunities / auth. D. Popfalushi / eds. A. Zozulia, M. Riabyka. – Lviv: Plato, 2024. URL: <https://plato.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/kompas.pdf>

«Our environmental protection measures are not always special or unique. Often these are ordinary activities that should be carried out by the Ministry or other state environmental protection bodies. However, they are often implemented by the public sector at the expense of international organizations that are not indifferent to the fate of our nature. And after the work has already been done by public organizations, state structures often attribute it to themselves, without even mentioning the real performers», – Bohdan Prots, Candidate of Biological Sciences, founder and head of the Board of the NGO «Danube-Carpathian Program»



At the same time, **the work of environmental organizations at the community level has noticeably intensified** during the war period. According to a Socioinform study⁸⁹, the dynamics of cooperation between public organizations and local governments in 2022-2023 is characterized by a noticeable increase in the intensity of interaction, primarily due to the challenges of the war and the needs of reconstruction. In 2023, the interest of communities in cooperation with NGOs increased significantly, which was associated both with a lack of resources and expertise, and with the desire to attract international funding. For example, for the development of solar energy at the community level. At the same time, the initiative for cooperation has mainly remained on the side of the civil sector, which acts as a moderator of processes and an intermediary between donors and the authorities. The growth of openness of local authorities is explained by their limited institutional capacity and the need for quick solutions, in particular, in the areas of energy, strategic planning and climate policy. Despite

this, cooperation remains uneven and is often dependent on specific personalities thus not always institutionalized, which creates instability risks in the long term.



Solar power plant installed by NGO «Ecoclub» to serve one of the water utilities in Odesa region (March 2026). Source: NGO «Ecoclub»



«On the other hand, if you look at «Ecoaction», the type of work with local councils has changed. Previously, we often demanded something, supporting local activists, and now local authorities in small cities are interested in cooperating, because it is easier to attract international funding with «Ecoaction». We are often perceived as a source of funding for local authorities' initiatives», – Oleksiy Pasyuk, executive director of the NGO «Ecoaction»

89. Changes in the Cooperation between the Civic Climate Movement and the Authorities in 2023. Heinrich Böll Foundation, Kyiv Office – Ukraine. URL: <https://ua.boell.org/uk/2024/04/12/zminy-u-spivpratsi-hromadskoho-klimatychnoho-rukhu-ta-orhaniv-vlady-u-2023-rotsi>

In response to the limitations of formal mechanisms of influence, environmental organizations are increasingly **using the strategy of integrating their representatives into state structures**. Respondents note that the promotion of experts and activists to government bodies or advisory bodies allows them to influence decisions from within. This approach partially compensates for the shortcomings of formal participation procedures and limited access to decision-making. At the same time, it increases the dependence of results on specific personalities, rather than institutional mechanisms. This, according to respondents, makes the system less stable in the event of personnel changes.

For a part of the environmental movement, **participation in politics becomes a logical stage of development**. After accumulating expertise and forming an agenda, there is a need to influence decisions not only through advocacy, but also through formal political mechanisms. Such a transition

The main conclusion of this section is that currently it is **environmental and climate CSOs that are one of the main sources of expertise in the environmental sector, and the environmental movement of Ukraine is a permanent carrier of institutional memory in Ukraine**. Environmental CSOs are increasingly integrated into the institutional system. At the community level, they provide specific technical expertise and support on

corresponds to the classic trajectory of the development of social movements, when they transform into political representation. This allows for the institutionalization of developed ideas and their integration into state policy. The environmental movement in Ukraine demonstrates the evolutionary logic of the development of political demands: first, public organizations shape the agenda, and later there is a demand for its political representation. This can lead to the emergence of new political actors or the inclusion of environmental issues in the programs of existing parties. At the same time, it is important to maintain a clear line between the activities of public organizations and political campaigns. Experience shows that the use of CSOs as a tool for building a political platform⁹⁰ can lead to a loss of trust and discrediting the sector. Therefore, respondents in the study note that **maintaining autonomy and reputation remains critically important for the long-term viability of the environmental movement**.

energy conservation, energy independence, soil remediation, and ecosystem restoration, often covering the lack of expertise and resources on the ground. At the level of central government bodies, CSOs actively comment on draft laws, conduct analytical research, advocate for changes to state policy, and in some cases even become its direct co-creators due to the lack of expertise in the central government bodies themselves.

90. Financing of «Samopomich» and Andriy Sadovyi's Campaign: Bypassing the Rules Transparently. Civic Movement «Chesno». URL: <https://www.chesno.org/post/4032/>



**V. INTERNATIONAL ROLE
AND DECOLONIZATION
DEVELOPMENTS**

The beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, according to respondents, contributed to a change in the relationships of the Ukrainian environmental movement with international communities and partners. Moreover, this change was not a one-off; **relations continue to change as the war continues.**

Thus, at the very beginning of the major invasion in 2022, there was a change in the focus of international partners **towards humanitarian support**, which was noted by the absolute majority of respondents. A significant part of donors (among those who did not pause or cancel funding for Ukrainian projects) were granted permission

to repurpose grant funds and use them for priority needs for the **protection and survival of teams**, and the number of humanitarian projects increased significantly. For example, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) notes⁹¹ that «humanitarian aid has increased many times after the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, and since then support for development cooperation has increased».

There have also been a large number of new international organizations and foundations of a purely **humanitarian profile** that have begun cooperation, including with the Ukrainian environmental movement.

«A rather new phenomenon after 2022 is the emergence of humanitarian organizations that have become both partners and donors for Ukrainian environmental organizations. Partners in promoting certain elements of a more sustainable recovery, because for some of them this is also important to improve the effectiveness of their own work given the usually short-term period of humanitarian operations. And donors that support various projects, such as the installation of solar power plants on critical infrastructure», – Anna Ackermann, climate and energy expert, board member of the NGO «Ecoaction»



After the first so-called «humanitarian shock», there has been an increase in support for such areas of work as recording environmental

crimes, work on promoting green sustainable recovery, energy independence, etc.



«Donors have also focused their attention, especially since 2022, on humanitarian issues. However, a reorientation and rethinking of approaches are already underway. Why? Because, currently, a significant part of humanitarian projects is beginning to take into account sustainability elements even in operational actions. For example, all issues related to water resource management and providing communities with high-quality drinking water - especially in the Kherson and Mykolaiv regions. Large humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross or Caritas, are now actively looking for points of contact with sustainability. After all, drilling a well is good, but if the water disappears in a year, the question arises: what is the point of such a decision then?», – Yaroslav Teleshun, head of the Policy and Advocacy Department of CSO «WWF-Ukraine», Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. Department of Political Science, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

91. Sida's Work in Ukraine. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). URL: <https://www.sida.se/en/sidas-international-work/countries-and-regions/ukraine>

In general, respondents note a **trend towards a significant increase in the number of projects and volume of international support**, and an expansion of areas of support, after a short pause at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. This is also confirmed by studies⁹² that demonstrate the emergence of a large number of new donor organizations that had not previously worked with our state, as well

as a significant expansion of their programs by existing donors.

At the same time, **this support continues to be project-based**, which does not allow working on a long-term strategy for the development of organizations. More about the challenges associated with project-oriented planning in detail can be found in the previous sections.



«If we compare 2022 and now, of course, the situation is better, but it is more focused on projects, not on co-support, not on institutional support, but actually on narrow projects. Some of the large organizations in Ukraine have now become co-donors. They do regranting, that is, they receive large amounts of money and do regranting. But some of them do regranting for small amounts and for a short time. At the same time, in the environmental movement, we have such problems that it is unrealistic to solve them in a few months», – Olena Kravchenko, executive director and board member of the ICO «Environment-People-Law»

Respondents also note a gradual change in the **structure of interaction**: from vertical to horizontal. If earlier the Ukrainian environmental movement was perceived by international partners purely as a «grant recipient», now this interaction is moving **towards an equal partnership**, where CSOs inform donors about both the state of civil society and its needs in general, and provide expert data on the impact of war on the global climate, which no other country can provide. Such a change in international communication is facilitated, in particular, by an increase in the level of expertise of Ukrainian environmental activists, the

development of unique areas of work, such as studying the phenomenon of ecocide, collecting evidence of environmental crimes, measuring greenhouse gas emissions from war, etc. This allows us **to speak on the same level with international partners and share our own experiences with the international community**. For example, the Ukrainian methodology⁹³ for assessing greenhouse gas emissions related to armed conflicts, developed jointly with the NGO «Ecoaction» and GHG Accounting of War, is used to calculate greenhouse gas emissions from the conflict in the Gaza Strip.



«I have the impression that before the full-scale invasion we were just somewhere on the radar, but now we have become more visible partners, because we receive significantly more requests for partnership. For me, this is a good sign», – Sofia-Julia Sydorenko, head of the CSO «Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine»

92. Expectations and Challenges of Grant-Makers in Ukraine. Philanthropy in Ukraine. URL: <https://api.philanthropyinukraine.org/upload/publication/-680f7523cf834413887301.pdf>

93. Methodological Guidance to Estimate Conflict-Related GHG Emissions. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/conflict-related-emissions-guidance.html>

«We now have more partnership relations, even with foundations. We freely discuss everything, they can come and tell us what would be interesting, could we do this? And we say: «No, we are not interested in this right now», or we can say: «Let's do it». It is clear that they are looking for money, but often the money does not go to them until they cooperate with us. That is, there is a nuance here that we help each other. I think the atmosphere itself has become more partnership-like», – Andriy Andrusyevych, a member of the board of the NGO «RAC "Society and Environment"»



At the same time, some respondents **note the limited topics** supported by donors, and sometimes even the **imposition of the agenda** by international partners. In search of institutional support, this encourages organizations to quickly master new topics for themselves, thereby increasing the pressure on the team and putting on hold or significantly modifying their current work.

In particular, among the topics primarily proposed by donors for work, support for internally displaced persons, work with the military, and energy efficiency are mentioned. We also see **an increase in regional imbalance** in the context of receiving funding, which was already observed in 2014-2017: support is provided to a greater extent to relocated organizations or CSOs in frontline regions.



«The challenge is that some topical subjects and priority areas during the war may be postponed by donors as not timely. But Ukraine is in the process of active transformation, and its existence as an independent state depends on the speed and effectiveness of transformation processes within the country», – Nataliia Cholovska, president of the LCPO «Ecoterra»

Another obstacle to the development of partnerships with international donors is the **lack of a clear state strategy**, in particular, for example, in the field of green recovery. A study of post-war recovery initiatives for 2023 shows⁹⁴ that the inconsistency of state environmental policy significantly complicates the planning of work and setting priorities for international donors, and also

adds work to the public sector, which is forced to take on some tasks that should be performed by the relevant ministry. Another obstacle when working with donors is the **lack of program and topic mapping** showing what is already supported by partners. This leads to the fact that some areas of work are overfunded, others are underfunded.



«Now, in fact, the Ukrainian public sector performs the role of not only the public sector, but also the work of governmental bodies is often being supported. In fact, Europeans trust public organizations more than the governmental sector in Ukraine. Although it cannot be accomplished, it (the public sector) is not so large in our country to pull out the entire volume of work that should be performed in Ukraine. Therefore, in fact, this is a very significant burden for the Ukrainian sector, because there is no trust in the state», – an anonymous respondent

94. A Study of Initiatives in the Field of Post-War Recovery. ISAR Ednannia. URL: https://ednannia.ua/images/Master_version_UKR_Rebuilding.pdf



«Another issue, in my opinion, is that there is a lack of synchronization between donors. That is, they often do not have a full understanding of who finances what, who works with what topic and which areas are already covered... Accordingly, this creates situations when certain areas, even within the framework of environmental policy, turn out to be excessively overfunded, while others are underfunded. I really see a huge «gap», a deep chasm in communication between local, regional and national organizations», – Yaroslav Teleshun, head of the Policy and Advocacy Department of CSO «WWF-Ukraine», Candidate of Sciences, Ass. Prof. of the Department of Political Science of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

Despite all the existing obstacles and difficulties, in the first years of the full-scale war, the environmental movement in Ukraine felt constant effective support from international partners. However, in

speaking about 2025 and the present, a significant number of respondents **note the existing fatigue with the Ukrainian agenda internationally.**

«In the first years, 22-23, there was a sense of increased cooperation: joint actions, joint information campaigns on ecocide. And now, especially after '25, there is a sense of fatigue. But what will we do if Russia does not retreat, and the world cannot stop this monster? It turns out that the world is getting tired and even those partners who were very active, they also sometimes forget that this is a matter of common security, especially nuclear safety, when it comes to nuclear power plants», – Tetiana Kukharenko, manager of the «Democracy and Good Governance» program of the International Renaissance Foundation



According to the respondents, this is due both to the long duration of military operations and to significant changes on the geopolitical map of the world. Indeed, the **geopolitical backdrop** for environmental policy has recently become less stable due to the intensification of protectionist and pro-fossil rhetoric, primarily related to the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. The review and reduction of international aid programs, in particular the **termination of USAID**, also played a

significant role, which, according to the observation of the majority of respondents, had a negative impact on the development of the environmental movement in Ukraine. In addition, the European Union is also changing its policy priorities and plans to reduce the budget for climate programs.

All this creates **risks of reduced support for climate and environmental initiatives** both at the global level and in Ukraine.



«What also has a very strong impact is the general availability of climate financing in the world today due to prioritization of the economic agenda both in Europe, in the United States, and in general geopolitically. Now the climate, compared to what it was, for example, a few years ago, also receives less funding. And therefore this also affects the ability of Ukrainian organizations to attract funding for their work. And now, in connection with the revision of the multi-annual budget of the European Union, a new budget cycle will begin in 2028. And already from the discussions that are taking place within the framework of this process, it is clear that funding for public organizations and scientific research in the field of climate and the environment will be even less. This, in turn, will have a negative impact», – Oksana Aliyeva, senior advisor, Central Europe and Ukraine Program, European Climate Foundation

Speaking of international cooperation, one cannot fail to touch upon the topic of **expanding the ties of the Ukrainian environmental movement with international organizations and coalitions** starting from 2022. Ukrainian environmental organizations are increasingly integrating into European and global networks (climate coalitions, human rights platforms, anti-fossil fuel alliances, etc.), transferring the topic of the environmental consequences of war into the international political discourse.


A vivid example of the strengthening of such ties is the inclusion⁹⁵ of a number of Ukrainian environmental CSOs in 2023 in the membership of the European branch of the

Climate Action Network - the world's largest network of pro-climate organizations. In 2023, the CSOs «Ecoaction», «Green Wave», «Khmelnyskyi Energy Cluster», the National Ecological Centre of Ukraine and «Ecoclub» joined CAN Europe. This merger took place against the backdrop of the simultaneous departure of Ukrainian organizations from another wing of the global Climate Action Network – CAN EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia), which was caused by the **frequent misunderstanding of the real causes of the war in Ukraine** and the lack of consolidation of efforts by representatives of the post-Soviet space against Russian aggression.


«It is important to talk about the role of Ukraine, because this division between the EU and, as if in a common context, the post-Soviet, became even stronger after the full-scale invasion. For Ukrainian civil society, everything was divided into «before» and «after», and the region and the countries, most of them, were unable to adopt a sufficiently radical position that would suit Ukrainians. And for us, it was some kind of a bare minimum... It was a very turbulent period. And as a result of my consultations with members from Ukraine, a decision was made, in which the organizations said that they no longer see their participation in the region at all, they do not understand what to look for there, or at least are not ready to prioritize it, when there is a lot of work with the EU that needs to be done», – Olha Boiko, former CAN EECCA coordinator



95. Ecoaction joined the largest European climate network CAN Europe. NGO «Ecoaction». URL: <https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/ecoaction-joined-can-europe.html>



«If we talk about participation in certain networks, well, for example, CAN, which we have not yet left, where the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia. We did not leave to follow the narratives that are there. They have not switched from Russian language, they have not switched from Russian thinking. Most members still have Soviet and post-Soviet thinking. New organizations that have joined there, for example, over the past year, with similar thinking, with great pleasure they are ready to write an appeal in defense of Gaza, but an appeal in defense of Ukraine somehow does not fit into their heads. And it is impossible to make a revolution there. We thought we would stay and bring order to the situation a little. It's impossible. We talked to the board, things like this network, you just have to leave them and ignore them, live your life, prove yourself and make yourself successful in other areas», - Olena Kravchenko, executive director and board member of ICO «Environment-People-Law»



«If we talk about development in general, in recent years, it seems to me that our climate movement has begun to reach the European or global level, because some organizations have joined CAN Europe, and some organizations have joined the European Environmental Bureau. And although it seems to me that we are not fully using the opportunities that participation in these networks provides, and we do not always understand what to do with it, but at least this is a good start that we are learning to interact at the international level», - Olha Lyashchuk, project coordinator of the NGO «Ecoclub», former Council member of the UCN

Having touched upon the regional and post-Soviet vector in the activities of the environmental and climate movements above, one cannot fail to pay attention to the issue of **decolonization of the topic of environmental protection**. It is at the same time new, but in itself multi-layered, so we will highlight only the key issues that were noted by the respondents of the study.

In **national policy**, «**decolonization**» has acquired a normative and procedural dimension in recent years through packages of decisions condemning totalitarian regimes⁹⁶, as well as through institutional approaches of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance to removing markers of imperial policy from the public space. However, for the environmental movement, **this concept is broader**⁹⁷. It concerns, first of all, economic-resource and institutional

decolonization. That is, an exit from the model where regions and natural landscapes function as «raw material appendages» for metropolitan centers, and environmental damage is either silenced or normalized as necessary.

In the context of decolonization in Ukraine, we are primarily talking about **de-Sovietization** – that is, rethinking or completely rejecting the Soviet legacy. It is this legacy that influences today's organizational cultures and policies through deep distrust of institutions and a sense of «government closedness» and fragmentation, which, in particular, has shaped the sector's tendency to work reactively (anti-crisis) rather than strategically. In this perspective, Soviet technologies and infrastructure (the cascade of hydroelectric power plants on the Dnipro River, large reservoirs, industrial complexes

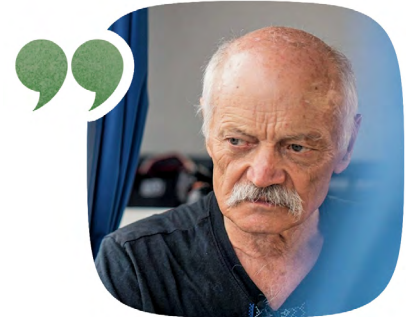
96. On Condemnation of the Communist and National Socialist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes in Ukraine and the Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols: Law of Ukraine of April 9, 2015 No. 317-VIII. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/317-19>

97. Soviet Economic Integration or Industrial Colonialism? Heinrich Böll Foundation, Kyiv Office – Ukraine. URL: <https://ua.boell.org/uk/2022/09/01/radyanska-ekonomichna-intehratsiya-chy-industrialnyy-kolonializm>

and mining regions) are viewed not as a neutral legacy, but as a materialized policy that consolidated center-periphery relations and formed a special management style:

«plan», «norm», «secret», «execution», which at the same time depleted resources and harmed the environment.

«We have the Soviet legacy, unfortunately. We are still struggling with it in the environmental sphere. This is, first of all, hydropower, for example. The leadership there is the most conservative, because it intends to continue implementing Soviet projects, for example, to build the Kaniv hydro power plant... In the end, it turned out that it is hydropower and nuclear power that are still under the influence of Russia», – Heorhiy Veremiychyk, member of the Council and head of the climate change department of NECU



«Talks about decolonizing the topic of the environment have already begun. Maybe they are not called that, but they began with the issue of reviewing those grandiose industrial projects that were imposed on us during the Soviet era. These are, first of all, the cascades of the seas, which are directly related (now we can see) to the issue of security. This is the issue of huge industrial monsters, especially in the East, in industrial regions, and what to do with them is an open question. Initiatives to revitalize spaces partially respond to it», – Tetiana Kukharenko, manager of the «Democracy and Good Governance» program of the International Renaissance Foundation

The key areas where, according to respondents, the Soviet legacy is most evident are:

- **institutions and law** (a number of norms and procedures have not been changed since Soviet times);
- **discourse on the role of the environment** (the environment was viewed through a resource paradigm and was simply a subsystem of the planned economy);
- **resource and infrastructure practices** (large-scale projects that radically transformed landscapes and made the population dependent);
- **the education and science system** (research to get a certain «result» and a dissertation for a title);
- **misunderstanding the role of the public** (civil society in Ukraine is quite young, and the bureaucratic and parliamentary corps, which partly go back to Soviet times, do not always understand how to

react and cooperate with CSOs, so they often choose to ignore them).

The main consequence of the Soviet times remains **mental models of fear of punishment, being inside the system, and distrust of the state institutions from the outside**. The Soviet culture of «closed decisions» and weak accountability has bequeathed to us systemic corruption, weak institutions, and unstable rules of the game, which complicates long-term partnerships between civil society and the government. But at the same time, distrust of institutions promotes horizontal cooperation, unification, and self-organization in critical moments of crisis, which Ukrainian society has repeatedly demonstrated (especially in 2004, 2014, and 2022).

The first systemic break with the post-Soviet trajectory occurred after 2014 due to the

course of integration with the European Union, in particular, as a result of the signing of the Association Agreement. And since 2022, the full-scale war has transformed decolonization from a «development policy» into a «survival policy». Actually, environmental damage from war becomes part of the global security conversation, and environmental activism is a tool for the struggle for the subjectivity of the state (sanctions against fossil fuels, «green reconstruction», accounting for damage, qualification of crimes against the environment).

At the same time, respondents emphasized that even before the full-scale invasion, **Ukraine was significantly ahead of most countries of the post-Soviet space** in the context of democratic practices and integrating European approaches. That is why the current decolonization processes are not only a break with the past, but also a continuation of a previously set trajectory.

One of the manifestations of this is the transformation of the energy discourse - from the abstract development of renewable energy to an emphasis on its decentralized form, as a tool for avoiding dependencies inherent in colonial and totalitarian systems.

Decolonization processes reveal **new contradictions** associated with the risk of reproducing neocolonial dependencies in the Western dimension. Respondents draw attention to the tendency of returning to resource-based thinking, in particular, through international agreements on the extraction of critical minerals, electricity exports, or phantom hydrogen projects. Such initiatives, despite their economic feasibility, may reproduce the logic of using Ukraine as a raw material base, without ensuring full added value and environmental safety. In this sense, decolonization acquires an economic dimension and implies increased strategic autonomy.



«It seems to me that we are now returning to the 70s. In environmental law, for example, we are now again seeing resource-based thinking, even the establishment of a new ministry, in which the environmental component is currently reduced mainly to the maximum extraction of natural resources, rather than sustainable development and environmental preservation, and so on», - Dmytro Skrylnikov, head of the NGO «Bureau of Environmental Investigations»

In the international dimension, decolonization opens up new opportunities for the Ukrainian environmental movement to position itself, in particular, while interacting with the countries of the Global South. Ukraine, which itself is experiencing an active phase of decolonization, can act as a relevant partner for states that have

similar historical experience or continue to encounter neocolonial practices. At the same time, there are communication difficulties - in particular, the difficulty of explaining to foreign audiences the specifics of Soviet colonialism and the need to balance between criticism of global resource approaches and maintaining international support.



«This can really help us in cooperation with the Global South, because it is this audience that is the MOST DIFFICULT. It is difficult to simultaneously present ourselves as part of the European Union, that is, the «rich North», and as a colony of Russia at the same time. Unfortunately, Russia is often not perceived as an empire in the context of global confrontation. Therefore, on the global stage, we are trying to show that the war with Russia is an attempt to get rid of colonial status», - Oleksiy Pasyuk, executive director of the NGO «Ecoaction»

Therefore, the decolonization optics for the ecological movement is a potentially fruitful thematic field both for the analysis of our own practices and for interaction with power and international structures. The topic, of course, requires in-depth research and reflection, but it must necessarily consist of work on:

- **changing the language and discourse:** considering nature as a subject, not a resource;

Thus, **the full-scale war has catalyzed a profound transformation of the international role of the Ukrainian environmental movement – from a grantee to a partner with unique expertise.** Despite the initial humanitarianization of support, there has been a gradual return to long-term environmental and climate priorities, although the project-based nature of funding continues to limit the strategic sustainability of the sector. At the same

- **changing the tools:** searching for new formats, topics and approaches to work in the international arena (for example, uniting around the issue of neocolonialism);
- **changing the narrative about the economy:** decentralization of energy and the development of complete technological production chains as a way to decolonize the economy.

time, deepening integration into European networks and a departure from post-Soviet structures reflect broader processes of decolonization and the reorientation of the movement to the European and global levels. Growing geopolitical instability and fatigue of international partners create new risks for long-term support, which requires rethinking models of cooperation and strengthening the subjectivity of the movement.

VI. TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS OF MOVEMENT TRANSFORMATION

The study found that Russia's war against Ukraine caused a number of transformational changes in the environmental movement. They include both temporary adaptations related to crisis conditions and deeper changes at the structural level that transform the role of the environmental movement in society. Some of these changes – in particular, the humanitarianization of activities and the redistribution of volunteer resources – are situational in nature. Instead, professionalization, integration into the security discourse, international reorientation and deeper integration into society may indicate a long-term shift.

Based on the interviews and focus groups, three main blocks of transformations can be distinguished, based on a number of trends:

I. GREATER MATURITY OF THE MOVEMENT ITSELF. Systemic and structural shifts that have already become the new «norm» and are likely to remain after the war. These trends form the basis for greater support for the eco-movement by society, as well as for more effective representation of social needs by the eco-movement itself. However, they will require systematic development of the capacity of CSOs to communicate and involve wider segments of society accordingly.

Professionalization and expertise of the movement. The environmental movement has established itself as an analytical and advocacy actor that works with data, politicians and international processes. This corresponds to the general trend of civil society development and is not situational. The movement is also becoming less of a mass-movement, but more specialized – and this is unlikely to completely reverse.

Rethinking the role of civil society within the state. CSOs are now acting not only as «advocates for change», but also becoming co-creators of policies and decisions – primarily due to their expertise.

Networking and horizontal interaction. Despite fragmentation, the format of work through coalitions, networks and informal associations has established itself as the baseline, especially for crisis and emergency situations. This trend potentially leads to an

increase in the impact of the environmental movement on achieving systemic changes in society.

The presence of shared narratives. This is an important factor in consolidating the environmental movement, as it allows organizations to feel a sense of belonging even beyond their own thematic priorities. The unifying themes currently include green recovery, European integration, and the environmental consequences of war, while other potential messages – in particular, decolonization and the phase-out of Russian fossil fuels – remain less integrated into the common discourse of the environmental movement.

Equal partnerships. Ukrainian environmental CSOs are transforming from grant recipients to partners of international funds and organizations. The subjectivity of the environmental movement is increasing.

II. BETTER INTEGRATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT INTO GENERAL SOCIAL PROCESSES. This phenomenon arose or intensified due to the war, but is already changing the sector from within – towards better integration into the broader needs of society and strengthening the legitimacy of the eco-movement as such. But these trends may disappear if there is no awareness of their importance on the part of CSOs.

Integration of environmental issues into the security and economic discourse. Framing through energy security, consistency and sustainable reconstruction has become a new language of the movement, more understandable to society, which will remain relevant after the war. The tendency towards better compliance with the current needs and priorities of society can become the basis for wider support and recognition of the eco-movement.

Europeanization and international integration of the movement. Reorientation towards European networks, policies and standards is an irreversible process associated with Ukraine's integration into the European Union. This also indicates a greater relevance of the eco-movement to important

social changes and is the basis for further development of support and effectiveness.

The emergence of new actors and social groups in the sector (veterans, military, internally displaced persons). This factor changes the social base of the movement and its future political role, while giving it legitimacy and strengthening its social role.

Strengthening volunteer and local initiatives. Due to the complexity of systemic planning and work, self-organization on the ground, the creation of local communities and everyday activism come to the fore. It does not require large resource expenditures from people, but gives them a sense of involvement in something larger.

Cross-sectoral approaches in project planning and the search for funding. Organizations work intensively at the intersection of two or more topics in order to better respond to current demands and be able to secure funding for their activities.

Decolonization optics. Currently appears in a limited way and is not widely recognized in eco-movement. But it has significant potential in international work, securing legitimacy in society, and in cementing the importance of decolonization among broader environmental movement support groups.

III. REACTIVE ADAPTATIONS. This phenomenon is caused by the war and may partially disappear or change after its end, but currently it is key to the survival of the movement.

Based on the above trends, we observe that the **environmental movement in Ukraine is showing signs of maturity** through systemic shifts that are likely to persist after the war: integration of environmental issues into security and economic discourse, «Europeanization» of work tools, professionalization and better networking among the organizations. These transformations strengthen the movement's ability to respond to current social needs and lay the foundation for its growing legitimacy and support. At the same time, some of the changes are reactive in nature – in particular, the humanitarianization of activities, the loss of human capital and self-

«Startupization» of NGOs as a dominant model. Flexibility, short planning and financing cycles, short-term project logic provide more opportunities to respond to current challenges in the conditions of an uncertain future, although at the same time they complicate the achievement of long-term systemic changes.

Involvement in humanitarian support, partial duplication of state functions. A number of organizations perform functions that are not inherent to them in peacetime - assistance to the army, internally displaced persons, creation of critical infrastructure.

Shift of volunteer resources to the military sphere. Environmental volunteering and community building have significantly weakened, since human resources are mainly directed to supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Work in conditions of constant energy and security crises (blackouts, shelling and destruction). Some operational difficulties are situational, although their impact on organizations can have long-term consequences – in cases of relocation or closure of organizations, departure or military service of employees.

Loss and reformatting of human capital. Mobilization, emigration and burnout are changing the structure of the sector. At the same time, there is a predominance of women and their development of new directions and professions.

– and may partially transform after the end of the war, although they have already affected the structure of the sector. In general, the environmental movement is becoming more integrated into social processes, strengthening its role as a co-creator of policies and decisions, as well as as a full-fledged partner at the national and international levels. It is important not to lose this positive dynamic, working on its institutionalization, while counteracting negative trends and external factors of influence, which can significantly weaken the ability of CSOs to plan their activities and respond to current challenges.

**Law of Ukraine
«On Environmental Protection»
of 25.06.1991 No. 1264-XII**

environmental protection, use of natural resources, ensuring ecological safety

1991

**Law of Ukraine «On the Zone of Emergency
Environmental Situation» of 13.07.2000
No. 1908-III**

implementation of emergency measures aimed at protecting people's lives and health and normalizing the environmental state in the territories of emergency ecological situation

2000

**Law of Ukraine «On the Environmental
Network of Ukraine» of 24.06.2004 No. 1864-IV**

formation, preservation and rational, non-exhaustive use of the environmental network of Ukraine

2004

**Law of Ukraine «On Strategic
Environmental Assessment»
of 20.03.2018 No. 2354-VIII**

assessment of environmental impacts, implementation of state planning documents

2018

**Law of Ukraine «On Waste Management»
of 20.06.2022 No. 2320-IX**

enforces EU standards on the waste management hierarchy, extended producer responsibility, etc.

2022

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

1992

Law of Ukraine «On the Nature Reserve Fund of Ukraine» of 16.06.1992 No. 2456-XII

organization, protection, use of the nature reserve fund of Ukraine, restoration of its natural complexes and objects

2002

Law of Ukraine «On the Red Book of Ukraine» of 07.02.2002 No. 3055-III

maintenance of the Red Book of Ukraine, protection, use and reproduction of rare and endangered species of fauna and flora listed in the Red Book of Ukraine

2017

Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Impact Assessment» of 23.05.2017 No. 2059-VIII

assessment of the environmental consequences of planned economic activity

2019

Law of Ukraine «On the Basic Principles (Strategy) of the State Environmental Policy of Ukraine for the Period until 2030» of 28.02.2019 No. 2697-VIII

approves the purpose, principles, concepts and instruments of the state environmental policy, strategic goals and objectives, stages of implementation of the state environmental policy, monitoring and assessment of implementation

2024

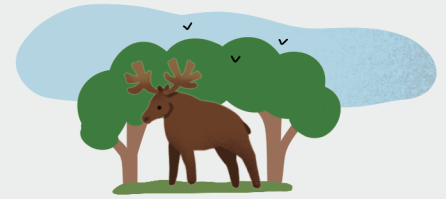
Law of Ukraine «On Integrated Prevention and Control of Industrial Pollution» of 16.07.2024 No. 3855-IX

prevention, reduction and control of pollution arising from the implementation of activities, in particular in the field of energy, production and processing of metals, waste management, etc.

VIII. INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and their Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) of 19.09.1979 (accession to the Convention by the Law of 29.10.1996 No. 436/96-VR)

protection of wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those requiring cooperation between several states, as well as promotion of such cooperation; Ukraine is obliged to implement the Emerald Network, designed to preserve species and habitats requiring protection at the pan-European level



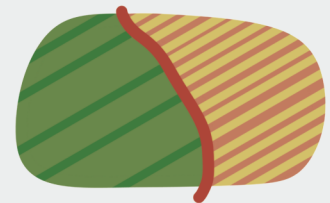
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) of 23.06.1979 (accession to the Convention by the Law of 19.03.1999 No. 535-XIV)

conservation of migratory species by range states, with particular attention paid to migratory species whose conservation status is unfavourable



Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espo Convention) of 25.02.1991 (ratified by the Law of 19.03.1999 No. 534-XIV)

prevention of significant adverse transboundary impacts as a result of planned activities, as well as their reduction and control



Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents of 17.03.1992 (accession to the Convention by the Law of 03.05.2022 No. 2232-IX)

prevention of industrial accidents, ensuring preparedness for them and liquidation of the consequences of accidents that may lead to transboundary effects, including the effects of accidents caused by natural disasters



Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) of 21.04.1992 (ratified by Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of 04.02.1994 No. 3939-XII)

reduction and keeping under control pollution of the marine environment of the Black Sea, its prevention, as well as protection and preservation of the environment



Convention on Biological Diversity of 05.06.1992 (ratified by the Law of 29.11.1994 No. 257/94-BP)

conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components; a fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources



Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) of 25.06.1998 (ratified by the Law of 06.07.1999 No. 832-XIV)

protects the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment favorable to his or her health and well-being by guaranteeing the rights to access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants of 22.05.2001 (ratified by the Law of 18.04.2007 No. 949-V)

protection of human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants



Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) of 22.05.2003 (ratified by the Law No. 1672-IV of 07.04.2004)

implementation of a comprehensive national policy and international cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians: improvement of the quality of life, strengthening of local economies and communities, preservation of natural values and cultural heritage

Association Agreement between Ukraine, of the one part, and the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part (ratified with a declaration by the Law No. 1678-VII of 16.09.2014)

gradual approximation of Ukrainian legislation to EU law and policies. The Parties shall develop and strengthen cooperation on environmental protection issues (Chapter 6 «Environment», Section V «Economic and sectoral cooperation»)



IX. CLIMATE POLICY

2021

Law of Ukraine «On Energy Efficiency» of 21.10.2021 No. 1818-IX

strengthening energy security, sustainable economic development, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

2019

Law of Ukraine «On Regulation of Economic Activities with Ozone-Depleting Substances and Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases» of 12.12.2019 No. 376-IX

production, import, export, storage, use, placing on the market and handling of ozone-depleting substances, fluorinated greenhouse gases, goods and equipment containing or using them

2015

Paris Agreement of 12.12.2015 (ratified by the Law of 14.07.2016 No. 1469-VIII)

strengthening the implementation of the UNFCCC, including its goal of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development

2000

Law of Ukraine «On Alternative Fuels» of 14.01.2000 No. 1391-XIV

principles of production (extraction) and use of alternative fuels, as well as stimulation of an increase in the share of their use

1992

Law of Ukraine «On Protection of Atmospheric Air» of 16.10.1992 No. 2707-XII

general rules for regulating activities that affect the climate, oblige business entities to reduce, and subsequently stop the production and use of substances that have a harmful effect on the ozone layer, to reduce emissions of substances whose accumulation in the atmospheric air can potentially lead to climate change.

Law of Ukraine «On the Basic Principles of State Climate Policy» of 08.10.2024 No. 3991-IX

2024

principles of state climate policy aimed at ensuring low-carbon and sustainable development of Ukraine, achieving climate neutrality, ensuring mitigation of the consequences of climate change and adaptation to it, fulfilling Ukraine's international obligations in the field of climate change, improving the national inventory system of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions from sources and absorption by sinks of greenhouse gases, etc.

Law of Ukraine «On Principles of Monitoring, Reporting and Verification of Greenhouse Gas Emissions» dated 12.12.2019 No. 377-IX

2019

fulfillment of Ukraine's obligations under international treaties, in particular, the Association Agreement between Ukraine, on the one hand, and the EU, the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, on the other hand, as well as fulfillment of the requirements of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement

Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Impact Assessment» of 23.05.2017 No. 2059-VIII

2017

the environmental impact assessment procedure provides for the preparation of a report that includes a description of environmental factors likely to be affected by the planned activity and its alternatives

Law of Ukraine «On Alternative Energy Sources» of 20.02.2003 No. 555-IV

2003

principles of use of alternative energy sources and promotion of their expansion in the fuel and energy complex; transition to renewable energy sources contributes to decarbonization; formation of a share to Ukraine's nationally determined contribution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 09.05.1992 (UNFCCC, ratified by the Law of 29.10.1996 No. 435/96-BP)

1996

stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic impact on the climate system

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 11.12.1997 (ratified by the Law of 04.02.2004 No. 1430-IV)

X. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Protection» of 25.06.1991 No. 1264-XII

defined the environmental rights of citizens of Ukraine, guarantees of environmental rights of citizens, as well as the rights of public environmental organizations



Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Expertise» of 09.02.1995 No. 45/95-BP (repealed)

defined possible ways of public participation in the environmental expertise process, in particular, appearance in the media, submission of written comments, proposals and recommendations, inclusion of public representatives in expert commissions, groups for conducting public environmental expertise

Convention on Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention) of 25.06.1998 (ratified by the Law of 06.07.1999 No. 832-XIV), entry into force for Ukraine – 30.10.2001

the obligation of the Parties to the Convention to ensure conditions for the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention, expanded the possibilities and emphasized the important role of the public in environmental protection



Law of Ukraine «On High-Hazard Facilities» of 18.01.2001 No. 2245-III

enshrined among the powers of state authorities - ensuring constant public access to information resources on the state of safety of high-hazard facilities, informing the population about environmentally hazardous accidents and emergencies, measures taken to overcome and eliminate their consequences

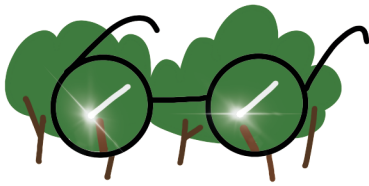
Law of Ukraine «On Drinking Water and Drinking Water Supply» of 10.01.2002 No. 2918-III

the right of free access to information on the quality of drinking water is guaranteed by the state; provision of information on cases and causes of drinking water pollution; the right to public discussion in the decision-making process



Law of Ukraine «On Regulation of Urban Development Activities» of 17.02.2011 No. 3038-VI

civic involvement in public discussion of draft programs for the comprehensive restoration of the region, areas of a territorial community (its part), draft urban development documentation at the local level; submission of proposals, participation in public hearings at the local level



Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Impact Assessment» of 23.05.2017 No. 2059-VIII

enshrines the principle of transparency of environmental impact assessment; public discussion of planned activities is carried out in the form of public hearings and in the form of providing written comments and proposals

Law of Ukraine «On Strategic Environmental Assessment» of 20.03.2018 No. 2354-VIII

determines broad and effective opportunities for public participation in the strategic environmental assessment of a draft state planning document

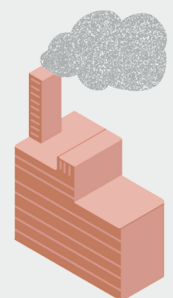


The Law of Ukraine «On Waste Management» of 20.06.2022 No. 2320-IX

establishes the rights to obtain information in the field of waste management, participate in discussing issues related to the location, design, construction and operation of waste treatment facilities, participate in the development of waste management plans and waste prevention programs

The Law of Ukraine «On Integrated Prevention and Control of Industrial Pollution» of 16.07.2024 No. 3855-IX

establishes public access to information related to the issuance of an integrated environmental permit (amendments to it), participation in the process of issuing an integrated environmental permit (amendments to it), in particular through public discussion



CONCLUSIONS

The full-scale Russian invasion became not only a security challenge, but also a systemic challenge for the environmental movement in Ukraine, which led to its significant transformation, changing its priorities, tools and role in society. The conditions of war shifted the focus of organizations' activities from classic environmental and climate work to the integration of environmental issues into security and international priorities relevant to society (documentation of environmental crimes, promotion of the «green recovery» agenda, energy independence, sanctions, etc.). At the same time, the sector faced a number of personnel, financial and psychological constraints, but demonstrated high adaptability, flexibility and ability to network.

A review of the history of the environmental movement in Ukraine shows that traditionally less visible and less supported by society, the environmental movement over the years of independence has gone from the first protests in the wake of the Chernobyl tragedy to influencing the formation of legislation and state policy, which is an integral part of a democratic European future.

The full-scale invasion significantly transformed the environmental public sector. It remains relatively small and resource-limited, with a narrow active core, personnel and financial challenges. Access to political processes and public support has become even more difficult. The movement has lost some of its potential for citizen engagement, opportunities for public activism and communication capabilities. Its activities have transformed from a long-term logic to a more reactive response. At the same time, it is the flexibility, networking and «startup logic» of work that have allowed environmental organizations to adapt to the conditions of war, develop new expertise and maintain their role in policy formation, advocacy and promotion of unifying narratives. The movement is now demonstrating the ability to quickly adapt and actively consolidate efforts around key topics and crisis cases.

Considering the interaction with the authorities, it can be argued that currently

it is environmental and climate NGOs that are one of the main carriers of expertise and institutional memory in the environmental sphere, where there is no systemic state policy. At the community level, they provide specific technical expertise and resource support, at the level of central state authorities - they actively comment on draft laws, conduct analytical research, sometimes become direct co-creators of state policy, even against the background of the curtailment of the state's environmental priorities.

In terms of international interaction, the role of the Ukrainian environmental movement has also undergone a transformation - from a grant recipient to a partner with unique expertise, although the predominance of project-based financing continues to limit the strategic sustainability of the sector. The strengthening of integration into European networks and the break with post-Soviet structures reflect broader decolonization shifts and the reorientation of the movement to the European and global levels, where it remains important to strengthen the subjectivity of the environmental movement as such.

Trends in the environmental movement indicate signs of greater maturity of the movement - stronger integration into the broader context of national security, European integration, economic discourse, strengthening its expert and advocacy role both domestically and internationally. Despite the fragmentation of the sector and the lack of systematic state environmental policy, better network cooperation is visible in important or crisis moments for the environment. Often, it is civil society organizations that act as drivers of change, forming new narratives and filling institutional gaps. These transformations strengthen the movement's ability to respond to current social needs and lay the foundation for its growing recognition and support, but will require systematic development of the CSO's capacity to communicate and engage with broader segments of society accordingly.

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P. 12. Earth Day commemoration (22 April 1990, Kyiv). At the head of the column, marchers carry the flag of the NGO «Ukrainian Ecological Association "Green World"». Source: Radio Liberty. URL: radiosvoboda.org

P. 12. Still from the documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». Source: Suspilne News. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44DHNA5Ndo>

P. 13. Still from a protest in Kyiv (1989), from the documentary film «It Wasn't the Reactor That Burned». Source: Suspilne News. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D44DHNA5Ndo>

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