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Characteristics of Volunteering in Ukraine after Euromaidan

ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to show the characteristics of volunteering in Ukraine after Euromaidan. The article presents its specifics and the socio-political conditions which allowed to define voluntary work in Ukrainian legislature. It also discusses the main forms of social engagement in volunteering, inaugurated at the onset of the anti-terrorist operation in the eastern part of the country. The level of public trust towards voluntary organisations has also been examined in the article. Voluntary work has also been analysed from the perspective of social research conducted in Ukraine since 2014. In the conclusions of this text it is claimed that development of social self-organisation is one of the results of Euromaidan. Voluntary work after Euromaidan has become a form of self-organisation and self-mobilisation of the society, preventing a collapse of the Ukrainian state as a result of the political crisis and armed conflict in Donbass.

Key words: Ukraine, Euromaidan, volunteering, voluntary work, voluntary organisations

INTRODUCTION

Social and political protests in 2013–2014 against the rule of President Viktor Yanukovych (Euromaidan, Revolution of Dignity) initiated a number of changes in Ukraine. They became an impulse to develop volunteering. The increase in the engagement of the Ukrainians in voluntary work is also linked to annexing The Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation in March 2014, and the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in the east of the country.¹ According to data

¹ On 14 April 2014, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine decided to start the operation on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, engaging Armed Forces of Ukraine. The objective

gathered by Davyd Arachamiia (the coordinator of the Volunteers' Council at the Defence Ministry in Ukraine), only in 2014–2015, around 14,500 people and 2,500 social organisations were involved in voluntary work, and at least 1.5 million people at least once helped the army [*W Ukrajini 14,5 tysiacz...* 2015].

In Ukraine after Euromaidan, volunteering has become a widespread social movement. In scholarship, a social movement is defined as intentional, collective action (which most often aims at social change) [Sztompka 2002: 157–173; Sztompka 2005: 225–230]. Thus, actors belonging to a given social movement have the same objective [della Porta, Diani 2009: 24–25]. The following article approaches the phenomenon of the Ukrainian voluntary work as a group action of social organisations and individuals aiming at: a) reinforcing defence and security of the Ukrainian state; b) supporting the army and those people who were affected by the conflict in Donbass; c) improving the functioning of the state structures. Among the key factors which had an impact on the emergence of voluntary work in Ukraine in 2014 are the following: a) the internal political crisis which disabled realization of some state functions (security, defence, mobilization, social functions, etc.); b) armed aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine [Kornijew'skyj, Horielów 2015: 98].

The objective of this article is to show the characteristics of volunteering in Ukraine which started after Euromaidan. To meet this objective, the following hypothesis is formulated: A wide movement for voluntary work has impacted the development of civil society in Ukraine after Euromaidan. To verify this hypothesis, systems theory, data analysis and case study are used as methodology.

In this article, the author draws upon the definition of civil society formulated by Jeffrey C. Alexander. He understands “civil society as a civil *sphere*, a world of values and institutions that generates the capacity for social criticism and democratic integration at the same time” [Alexander 2006: 4, 6]. It is “created by social actors at a particular time and in a particular place” [Alexander 2006: 6]. Civil society is a sphere of social action and cooperation, based on the principle of solidarity [Alexander 2006: 7]. Social movements are the driving force of civil society [Alexander 2006: 7]. As Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato have rightly noted, contemporary civil society is created, in particular, through forms of self-determination and self-mobilisation [Cohen, Arato 1992: 9]. In the Universal Declaration on Volunteering, proclaimed by the International Association for Volunteer Effort in 2001, it has been stated that “volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society” [Universal Declaration on Volunteering].

of ATO is to free these provinces of armed formations supported by Russia, which occupied these territories in spring 2014 and proclaimed the so-called Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic [Piechal 2015].

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTARY WORK IN UKRAINIAN LEGISLATION

The concept of a “volunteer” appeared in legislation only in the second decade of the existence of the Ukrainian state. In legal acts from the 1990s, no such term is to be found [Polarusz 2015: 152]. Citizens undertaking voluntary work were understood by the state to be social assistance in the social sphere [Polarusz 2015: 152]. As it has been rightly noted by Andrej Matijczyk, until the 2012 UEFA European Championship in Ukraine (Euro 2012), volunteers would mainly focus on social work [Matijczyk 2016: 102]. Since 1992, volunteers were engaged in the activities of the public social services for the youth (now, the social services for family, children and the youth) [*Istorija wolonters'koho...*]. These services, based on the principle of social work, were performed mainly by students of schools and universities. Thus, volunteers supported educators and social workers in their duties.

The term “volunteer” appeared for the first time in the Social Services Act of 19 June 2003. The legislator stated then that a volunteer is “a legal person who undertakes justified charitable activity on a voluntary basis, not for income, but for the benefit of the society” [Zakon Ukrainy No. 966-IV, 19.06.2003]. In turn, the term “voluntary work” appeared for the first time in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Ukraine of 10 December 2003 on Ratification of Regulations Concerning Voluntary Work in the Field of Social Services. This document describes voluntary work from the perspective of social work [Matijczyk 2016: 102].

Yet the first attempt to define voluntary work on a legislative level was undertaken by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 23 February 2006, when the Parliament proclaimed The Voluntary Work Act. However, the act was vetoed by President Viktor Yushchenko, who claimed that this legal document would not ensure a steady development of volunteering in Ukraine [*Prezydent Ukrainy powernuw...* 2006]. The Voluntary Work Act was proclaimed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 19 April 2011, which was necessitated by the engagement of volunteers in the preparations for Euro 2012. According to this regulation, voluntary work is defined as voluntary, socially-oriented non-profit activity, undertaken by volunteers and voluntary organisations in order to provide voluntary support (in the form of free work and services). Voluntary work has been considered a form of charity work, founded on the principles of lawfulness, humanism, equality, voluntariness, non-payment and non-profit. Work within the bounds of relationships such as families, friendships or neighbourhoods is excluded from this definition (Act 1, Clause 1, 2) [Zakon Ukrainy No. 3236-VI, 19.04.2011]. However, this act also introduced a number of limitations in volunteering, introducing a concept of “voluntary organization”, defined as “a legal person undertaking a non-profit activity, which has a status of voluntary work according to the Ukrainian legislation” [Zakon Ukrainy No. 3236-VI, 19.04.2011]. According to the act, registration of voluntary organisations is done by the Ministry of Social Policy, which may also deny such a status to an organisation. However, the act did

not predict a possibility for the volunteers to support wide socio-political protests or the army [Gutgarć 2014].

The engagement of many volunteers in helping the army and the displaced from the territories where the ATO is taking place led to legislative changes concerning voluntary work. The Voluntary Work Act was amended by proclaiming The Act of Amendment of Regulations Concerning Voluntary Work in Ukraine on 5 March 2015. This act has brought about a new direction in voluntary work: providing voluntary support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other uniformed services, state institutions responsible for lawfulness, state authorities during the state of exception, martial law, or an anti-terrorist operation [Zakon Ukrainy No. 246-VIII, 05.03.2015]. It also extended the category of people who might be helped by volunteers, by including the victims of the ATO or the displaced from the territories affected by the armed conflict [Zakon Ukrainy No. 246-VIII, 05.03.2015]. What is more, “a volunteer” has been defined with more precision, as “a legal person who undertakes a social non-profit service on a voluntary basis by voluntary help” (Act 7, Clause 1) [Zakon Ukrainy No. 246-VIII, 05.03.2015]. The term “voluntary organisation” included in the act of 2011 was removed from its latest version and replaced by the following term: “organisations and institutions which engage volunteers in their operations” [Zakon Ukrainy No. 246-VIII, 05.03.2015]. Thus, the number of organisations which involved volunteering was extended not only *de facto*, but also *de jure*, as the obligation to achieve the status of a voluntary organization has been abolished. The amended Voluntary Work Act has normalised voluntary work in the aspect of the anti-terrorist operation.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONTEMPORARY VOLUNTARY WORK IN UKRAINE

Another important impulse for the widening of the scope of the volunteering in Ukraine was given by Euromaidan. The participants in anti-government protests were indebted to volunteers, who had provided food, clothing and medicine, and offered medical, legal and other kinds of help [Matijczyk 2016: 102]. Volunteers created groups in social media in order to facilitate communication among protesters and spread information quickly, for instance, about missing persons, etc. [Matijczyk 2016: 102]. In other words, during Euromaidan many voluntary initiatives were born. For example, a Psychological Service of Maidan was established [Krawec’ et al. 2016]. After Euromaidan, it was transformed into the Psychological Crisis Service, which now consists of about 500 specialists volunteering in 20 Ukrainian cities [Krawec’ et al. 2016]. Another organisation established at the time is Euromaidan SOS (on the basis of a non-governmental organisation, the Centre for Civil Liberties, active since 2007), which offered the protesters free legal consultations [Krawec’ et al. 2016]. Another popular initiative was AutoMaidan, whose members undertook nightly patrols of the territory of the protests and drove their cars to the houses of government members, demanding from them to stop breaking the law, etc. IT specialists were

also actively engaged in voluntary work during Euromaidan. They put up tents in the streets where the protesters could receive free consultations and Internet access, or charge their devices (mobile phones and tablets, etc.) [Holub 2016: 154]. Free medical help for the protesters was provided by the doctors united in the Medical Service for the Maidan Self-Defence (Medical Sotnia). Many other popular initiatives appeared and developed during that period: Babylon'13, Open Maidan University, E+ Initiative, Diana Makarovoia Foundation, etc. [Krawec' et al. 2016].

The onset of ATO increased social engagement in volunteering, which became one of the main channels of mobilization of society to defend integrity of the state [Pan'kowa et al. 2016: 30]. Most effort in consolidating state defence was made by the volunteers at the onset of the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, when state institutions could not quickly and fully supply the army and other armed formations fighting pro-Russian militants [Kornijews'kyj, Horielow 2015: 98]. In the first stage of the conflict in the eastern part of the country, volunteers provided the army with all necessary items, from food to ammunition and military equipment. The main aspects of voluntary work included: 1) collecting and providing into the ATO zone all necessary items for the army and the citizens inhabiting the territory affected by the conflict; 2) medical help to the injured; 3) help to the displaced, forced to move away from the areas affected by the armed conflict and those under control of the pro-Russian militants; 4) search for the persons gone missing in the ATO zone and freeing the captives [Horielow, Kornijews'kyj 2015: 19].

Originally, voluntary help for the army was spontaneous and disorganized. Later, individual initiatives transformed into organized voluntary groups. Among the largest social organisations undertaking voluntary work are included the following: "People's Project", "People's Base", "Come Back Alive", "Army SOS", "The Wings of Phoenix", "Combat-USA", "Voluntary Sotnia", "Ukraine – the World", "The Sisters of Victory", "Roman Donik's Voluntary Group". At the beginning of November 2014, voluntary organisations supporting the army and the public in the ATO zone established "The Association of People's Volunteers".

The level of public trust towards volunteers reflects their high social position. According to poll data gathered between 6 and 11 October 2017 by the Alexander Razumkov Ukrainian Centre of Economic and Political Research (The Razumkov Centre), voluntary organisations enjoy the highest level of public trust when it comes to Ukrainian social institutions (see: Table 1).

Table 1. The level of public trust towards social institutions in 2017 (%)

Institution	Not trustworthy at all	Rather untrustworthy	Rather trustworthy	Completely trustworthy	Difficult to say	Total balance of trust and lack of trust (difference)
Voluntary organisations	7.6	12.4	46.9	19.8	13.3	46.7
The Church	11.3	11.2	42.7	21.7	13.1	41.9
Armed Forces of Ukraine	15.9	17.4	43.1	14.2	9.3	24.0

Institution	Not trustworthy at all	Rather untrustworthy	Rather trustworthy	Completely trustworthy	Difficult to say	Total balance of trust and lack of trust (difference)
Voluntary Battalions	15.6	15.6	39.8	14.1	14.9	22.7
National Guard of Ukraine	16.4	17.8	40.1	12.5	13.2	18.4
National Service for Exceptional Situations	17.3	15.3	37.0	13.5	16.9	17.9
Social organisations	16.0	21.0	41.0	7.0	15.1	11.0
National Border Guard	17.9	22.7	36.3	10.1	13.0	5.8
Ukrainian mass-media	19.3	23.4	41.9	6.4	9.0	5.6
The President of Ukraine	37.7	30.5	20.4	4.4	7.0	-43.4
The government	39.1	34.0	18.0	1.8	7.1	-53.3
National Bank	44.7	30.5	13.2	2.1	9.5	-59.9
Parliament	44.8	35.9	12.5	1.3	5.6	-66.9
National administration (officials)	44.8	35.9	10.1	1.1	8.1	-69.5

Source: *Stawлення hromadian Ukrainy do suspilnych institutiv, elektoralni orijantacii. Rezultaty sociolohicznoho doslidzennia*, <http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/socio/Press1017.pdf> (access: 23.03.2018).

During the ATO, the efforts and the state authorities and entities undertaking voluntary work for the purpose of state defence were consolidated [Kornijews'kyj, Horielów 2015: 98]. The increase of the public trust towards volunteers was conducive for this move [Kornijews'kyj, Horielów 2015: 98]. Procedures for the cooperation between volunteering organisations and state institutions were established. In autumn 2014, the Volunteers' Council was created as part of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. It gathered information about problems concerning the Armed Forces of Ukraine and looked for ways to solve those problems. The key figures in the voluntary work were being employed in state institutions in order to make the work of these institutions more efficient, and to prepare and implement reform. Volunteers found jobs in ministries, state administration of districts and regions, etc. [Puglisi 2015].

VOLUNTEERING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

An increase in the engagement of the Ukrainians in voluntary work after Euro-maidan is signalled by social studies. On commission from the United Nations, in November 2014, the sociological and market research agency GfK Ukraine (which belongs to the GfK Group network) made a study of voluntary work in Ukraine. Its findings show that 23% of the Ukrainians have experience with volunteering (in 2011 only 3–4% of respondents admitted that), and 9% of those undertook voluntary work for the first time in 2014. The main focus of voluntary work in 2014 was helping the army and the injured (70%) [*Wolonters'kyj ruch...* 2015]. In this poll, 62% of the respondents stated that volunteering has become one of the important factors in political change in

2014, and 81% said that voluntary work is part of civil society [*Wolonters'kyj ruch...* 2015]. It has been also established that most volunteers did not engage in organised projects but was helping on individual basis [*Wolonters'kyj ruch...* 2015].

In November 2015, the Ilek Kucheriv Foundation “Democratic Initiatives” conducted a poll titled “Charity after Maidan and Volunteering – 2015”. According to its results, in 2015, 13% of respondents undertook volunteering, while in 2012 (the year of Euro 2012), it was 10%. Most active in this respect were the Ukrainians from the west of the country (8%) and the south (8%). The study shows that in 2015, volunteers started to spend more time volunteering in comparison to 2012 [*Postmajdanna blahodijnist' i...* 2015]. In 2012, 6% of volunteers devoted several hours a week to volunteering, while in 2015, 5% of respondents did voluntary work every day, and 23% – several hours a week [*Postmajdanna blahodijnist' i...* 2015]. The majority of voluntary work (65%) was focused on supporting the army, while the second goal was to help the sick and disabled (21%) [*Postmajdanna blahodijnist' i...* 2015]. Moreover, in the research conducted by “Democratic Initiatives” in December 2016, voluntary work that year was undertaken by 14% of the Ukrainians. The largest number of volunteers in 2016 was in Donbass (24%), central (17%) and western (12%) Ukraine; much smaller number of volunteers was to be found in the east (with the exception of Donbass) (6%) and south (5.5%) of the country [*Blahodijnist' i wolonterstwo-2016...* 2016]. In 2016, 5% did voluntary work every day, while 11% did it several hours a week (which is a decline by 12% in comparison to 2015) [*Blahodijnist' i wolonterstwo-2016...* 2016]. The majority of voluntary work (62%) was still focused on supporting the army. Yet, help for the sick and disabled increased and constituted 35% [*Blahodijnist' i wolonterstwo-2016...* 2016]. “Democratic Initiatives” conducted another poll in December 2017. According to this study, 12% of responding Ukrainians volunteered in 2017 [*Hromadians'ke suspilstwo w...* 2018]. The largest number of volunteers is to be found in the west and centre of Ukraine (about 15%), and in Donbass (10.7%), and, as in previous polls, the smallest numbers are to be found in the east (6.9%) and south (7%) of the country [*Hromadians'ke suspilstwo w...* 2018].

CONCLUSIONS

Ukrainians have actively started engaging in voluntary work during the Euro 2012 organization. However, only after Euromaidan, volunteering has become a mass all-Ukrainian phenomenon. The increase of self-organisation of society is usually perceived as one of the main effects of Euromaidan [Suszko, Prystajko 2015]. On the other hand, as a result of the armed conflict in east Ukraine, the process of creating social organisations which undertake voluntary work has accelerated throughout the country. Society started to perceive voluntary organisations as “an alternative for the ineffective state institutions” [Suszko, Prystajko 2015]. As the experts from Freedom House, Alexandr Suszko and Olena Prystajko, have rightly noted, volunteers have

started to fulfil the roles which belong to the state: consolidating the security and defence of the state, information policy, helping the displaced from the conflict zone, etc. [Suszko, Prystajko 2015].

The study fully confirms the hypothesis stated in the introduction, according to which volunteering contributes to the development of civil society in Ukraine. Volunteering has become a form of self-organisation and self-mobilisation of society to strengthen the state defence. At first, voluntary aid to the army was mostly spontaneous. Step by step, voluntary groups managed to organize it significantly. High level of public trust towards voluntary organizations allowed them to involve wide sections of the population in helping the army, the victims of the armed conflict, the internally displaced. Thanks to the high level of trust voluntary groups also influence the political sphere. Some groups of volunteers became special interest groups, lobbying in the government for the army and the refugees from Donbass and Crimea. Leaders of volunteer organizations are even employed by governmental institutions (for example, Davyd Arachamiiia, Yuriy Biryukov at the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine) for the purpose of improving their functioning [Žuža 2016: 83]. Volunteering in Ukraine after Euromaidan has been focused mainly on supporting the army, therefore, it has a clear “military” character.

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