



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1290 Vienna, 19 November 2020**

#### **EU Statement on the Report by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine**

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Henrik Villadsen to the Permanent Council. We thank you for your report and for all the work that your mission has carried out since you last visited the Permanent Council in June. We highly value your persistent contribution to the reform process in Ukraine and we regret that your efforts are at times overshadowed by the ongoing conflict in Donbas, which is a consequence of acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the programme activities across all dimensions. However, the PCU reacted immediately, establishing a dedicated Task force and adopting various mitigation measures. We are glad to hear that this enabled you to carry on with most of your planned activities, achieving an outstanding implementation rate of 74%. We thank you for doing the utmost to protect the staff and event participants and we commend you and your team for effectively adapting a number of projects to the new online format.

The EU welcomes the PCU's continued engagement in the field of democratisation and good governance. In particular, we would like to thank the PCU for the assistance provided to the Central Election Commission in preparing for the local elections which took place last month. The online training for election commissioners and other IT resources, including the awareness sessions on the

new legislation on local elections, were instrumental in increasing understanding of the election process and transparency.

Equally, we highly appreciate the dialogue events on the postponement of local elections in 18 communities of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Building bridges between citizens, civil society organisations and the government authorities is of vital importance in conflict-affected communities. We commend the PCU for their contribution in exploring ways to increase the involvement of these communities in decision-making processes, and possibilities of applying methods of direct democracy. We wish to stress once more that participatory decision-making is a core element of an open and democratic state.

The EU is pleased to hear about how you support constitutional and judicial reforms and how you conduct trainings on rule of law and human rights in Ukraine. We welcome the PCU's work on access to justice in conflict-affected areas and, in particular, efforts to protect children's rights in court proceedings.

The EU welcomes your actions to combat domestic violence, including your training of police officers, social workers and psychologists. In this context, we congratulate you on the successful completion of the three-year project on gender-related training for emergency-call police operators that was also aimed at properly identifying domestic violence cases.

Equally, the EU highly appreciates the PCU's initiatives to inform Ukrainian citizens on the risks related to trafficking in human beings and its support to the Ukrainian government in preventing and combating this phenomenon.

It is a troublesome fact that eastern Ukraine remains one of the most heavily mined regions in the world. Therefore, we welcome the technical support that the PCU has been providing to the Ukrainian legislative authorities in order to amend the Law of Ukraine on Mine Action on the basis of international best practices.

Countering illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is another important endeavour in the context of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In this regard we encourage PCU to continue its activities with Ukrainian authorities which are of high importance. We regret that the project for the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine is still pending approval by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We encourage the Ukrainian government to fully draw on the PCU's expertise and potential. We underline again the importance of continued close coordination between the PCU, the SMM and the OSCE autonomous institutions including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, as well as civil society representatives and other actors, to achieve the greatest possible impact on the ground.

The EU thanks Ambassador Villadsen once again for his report. We underline that the PCU's continued efforts to ensure coherence between its programme activities and the OSCE's principles and commitments are highly appreciated. We wish the Project Coordinator and his team all the best in their future work.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.