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Citizens and Elites in Post-Maidan Ukraine
Emerging of New Actors and Political Strategies**

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**Veterans of Donbas War in Ukraine: Attitudes of the Ukrainian Society
and Success Stories of Their Reintegration**
(Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Author)

The last 7 years of war in the East of Ukraine, led to an increase in the number of demobilized servicepersons and actualized the concept and status of a "war veteran." This large group of citizens faces various challenges related to the lack of efficient and systemic rehabilitation and numerous political manipulations after demobilization.

The legal framework for regulation of the status of veterans in Ukraine was established in the early 1990s, thanks to the movement of Afghanistan veterans. In particular, the Law of Ukraine «On status of War Veterans, Guarantees of their Social Protection» was adopted as early as in 1993. Based on Article 4 of this Law (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1993), war veterans include: combat participants, people with disabilities caused by war, and war participants. But new legislation is needed to include specificities of the current situation with veterans in Ukraine.

Some of the men and women veterans want to be an active part of the public and political life as they were either involved in this area before the war or would like to try this new experience. During 2020, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Ukraine and the State Employment Service, more than 21,000 veterans were provided with career guidance services, more than 6,000 combatants were employed, of which 900 started their own businesses.

This article is based on the sociological study "Involvement of veterans in social and political life: the path from military victories to personal (sociological research)" (2019)

conducted by the author and Anna Kvit, in collaboration with NGO "Studena" (Martsenyuk & Kvit, 2019). The field study was done in spring-summer 2019.

The empirical part of the research is conducted using qualitative methods (in-depth interviews with men and women veterans, expert interviews and focus groups) and quantitative sociological methods (public polls). There were 22 in-depth interviews with 7 female veterans and 15 male veterans engaged in civic and / or political activities, as well as 4 focus groups in 4 cities: Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernivtsi and Kramatorsk. 36 veterans took part in the focus groups. A total of 20 expert interviews were conducted (10 women and 10 men) with people who have experience working with veterans (educators, civil servants, community activists, etc.) or are themselves veterans' activists.

Moreover, the statistical data obtained from the Ministry for Veteran Affairs of Ukraine, as of July 01, 2019, is analyzed.

Statistical information on ATO/JFO veterans

According to statistical data obtained from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, as of July 1, 2019, there are almost 370,000 persons who received the status of a veteran who defended the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Among them, women make up 15,000 people (4.1%).

Among the departments, the largest percentage of veterans is in the Ministry of Defense (68%), the National Guard (10%), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (9%), and the State Border Guard Service Administration (5%). The largest percentage of female veterans is in the National Police (18%), the Security Service of Ukraine (7%), and the State Emergency Service (6%). It is expected that the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine has the largest number of female veterans – 9910 (3.9%).

Regionally, the largest number of veterans were registered in such oblasts as Dnipropetrovsk (about 30,000), Kyiv (about 24.5 thousand), and Lviv (23.5 thousand). Next are Vinnytsia region (about 19 thousand), Kyiv region (almost 19 thousand), Zhytomyr region (about 18.5 thousand), Donetsk region (18 thousand).

Most women are registered in such oblasts as Donetsk (more than 3,000), Luhansk (1,600), and Dnipropetrovsk (almost 1,000). The percentage of female veterans is highest in the frontline Donetsk (17.4%) and Luhansk (13.8%) oblasts.

As of July 1, 2019, almost 11,000 veterans have the status of a person with a disability due to the war. It is worth noting that this number has increased significantly during the year, because in 2018 there were about 3 thousand people. Regionally, most people with disabilities due to the war are in Chernihiv region (1.7 thousand), Zhytomyr (about 1 thousand), Kyiv (almost 1 thousand people).

Veterans organisations in Ukraine

As of 2019, 55 associations of ATO and war veterans are listed, including the Organization of Veterans of Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Association of Veterans, the All-Ukrainian Union of War Veterans, the Citizen Group “All-Ukrainian Association of ATO Combat Participants and Volunteers”, the All-Ukrainian NGO “Ukrainian Association of ATO Veterans with Disabilities” and others. While the official number of ATO veterans NGOs and informal groups is unknown, respondents say about at least 1000–1200 of such NGOs, with diverse activities and geographical coverage in Ukraine. Geographic distribution of veteran organizations also depends on the level of militarization of the region. The problem with ATO veterans’ movement and self-identification of veterans is connected with the fact that war in Donbas still continues.

In addition to All-Ukrainian citizen's associations like the Association of ATO Participants of Ukraine¹ or the Association of Wives and Mothers of fighters who participated in ATO², there are also regional organizations – for instance, the Kyiv city association of ATO veterans³. There are also numerous initiatives for supporting male and female ATO veterans: the National Campaign of Gratitude to the military, women and men veterans «Thanks you»⁴, Free clothes store for families of ATO participants who perished or got wounded in ATO⁵ (Dnipro city),

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/uaatoua/>

² <https://www.facebook.com/familyato/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/veteranato>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/zavdyakytobi/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/pidtrimati/>

engagement of veterans to public service (supporting their education in the public administration Master's program in NaUKMA⁶), and many others.

The project «Veterans to Power!»⁷ ("For VDV!") has a goal of training veterans for public service and integrating them into the bodies of the executive power. With this goal, in the cities of Kyiv and Kramatorsk, training centers for veterans are established; these centers act as recruitment agencies. When a veteran enters the training program, a career guidance specialist is assigned to him or her and, after examining the candidate's experience and interests, provides an analytical report about the candidate's optimal specialization. In addition, women veterans can join the project coordinated by the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF), "Equality for security"⁸, which is financed by the European Union. In early fall 2018, UWF, answering the questions in Facebook about presence of women veterans in the project, answered: *«Right now, we form coalitions that will work on updating local action plans for 1325, and we want women veterans to be part of these coalitions. Yet as of now, we do not have such women participants yet».*

"Bez Broni" («Without armor») is an All-Ukrainian project focused on psychological and social support services for service personnel after ATO, as well as providing skilled legal and psychological informational support. They run the only database for verified centers that support ATO participants⁹.

On February 14, 2018, the government adopted a decision about a new mechanism for using funds to provide financial support to citizens' associations of veterans – on a competitive basis (Legal Hundred, 2018). As the Legal Hundred pointed out, a national contest for identifying best projects is conducted and administered by the State Service for War Veterans and Participants of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, and the results are approved by the Ministry of Social Policy. Only All-Ukrainian citizen's associations of war veterans, victims of Nazi persecutions and victims of political repressions can be beneficiaries of public funds in the

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<https://www.ukma.edu.ua/index.php/news/3382-stypendii-dlia-navchannia-za-magisterskoii-prohramoiu-public-hne-upravlinnia-ta-administruvannia-u-kma>

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/za.veteraniv.do.vlady>

⁸ https://www.uwf.org.ua/project_activities/EU1325

⁹ <http://bezbroni.net/>

national contest. Local contests (municipal, rayon, oblasts ones) are conducted and administrated by territorial administrations for social protection of the population.

In summer of 2018, near Kyiv, a founding meeting of the women's veteran movement took place. The women at the meeting explained the need to organize a separate veteran "block" for women, along with the shared one with men, as follows: «women in the army are a minority, and at the meetings of men veterans, those few women in attendance have hard time voicing all their problems and needs, and getting them resolved». The event co-organizer, Oksana Ivantsiv, pointed out, *«In Canada, as well as in the States, there is a very strong women's veteran movement. It inspired us – we found their FB pages, missions, and what they do – it is pretty much in harmony with what our girls have expressed»*.

Attitudes towards Veterans and their Political Activism

The attitudes towards veterans were collected via the all-Ukrainian survey “Opinions and Views of the Population of Ukraine” (Omnibus) conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in May 2019. In general, the study included 2,021 interviews with respondents residing in 110 settlements of Ukraine. 719 respondents were interviewed in the rural area. The results obtained can be analyzed by gender, age groups, macroregions (Western, Central, Southern, Eastern), settlement type (urban and rural), and education level.

A stratified four-stage sample random at each stage was used in the survey. The sample is representative for the adult population (including respondents' sex, age and residence) permanently residing in the territory of Ukraine, not in military service, imprisoned or held in medical institutions (hospitals or medical boarding facilities). First, the Ukrainian population was stratified by regions (24 oblasts and the City of Kyiv), then the population of each region was additionally stratified by urban (cities and urban-type settlements) and rural population (except for the City of Kyiv where the population is all urban). In Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts, the survey was held only in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government. Population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was not covered by the poll.

The 4 macroregions analyzed in this research include the following oblasts: West: Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi and Chernivtsi; Centre: City of Kyiv, Kyiv Oblast, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kirovograd, Poltava, Sumy and Cherkasy; South: Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolayiv, Odesa and Kherson; East: Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv.

The respondents were asked five questions about their attitude towards veterans:

1. What is your attitude towards men and women veterans of ATO/JFO?
2. Should ATO/JFO veterans be involved in politics?
3. Should ATO/JFO veterans engaged in politics in Ukraine be trusted?
4. How would the engagement of veterans in the social and political life affect those spheres?
5. What are the main sources of information you formed your attitude towards ATO/JFO veterans on?

Below there is an analysis of some questions¹⁰. As seen in *Table 1*, 42% of respondents believe that the ATO/JFO veterans should be involved in politics. Opinions of women and men are not much different statistically. 19% of respondents think veterans should be involved in national and local level politics and only 7% suggest veterans should be involved only in local level politics. 31% of respondents spoke against veterans in politics. There is also a large share of those who could not give a definite answer – almost quarter of respondents. This may mean lack of public discussion on the role of veterans in politics and lack of positive role models of veterans in politics.

Table 1. Should ATO/JFO veterans be involved in politics? (2019, N=2021)

Answers (sorted by popularity among all)	All %	Women %	Men %
No, they should not	30,7	30,0	31,4
Yes, in politics both at the state and local levels	19,2	18,7	19,7
Yes, in particular, in state level politics	16,3	15,1	17,8
Yes, local level politics	6,8	6,4	7,4

¹⁰ For more information, see Martsenyuk & Kvit, 2020.

Hard to say	24,9	27,5	21,8
Refused to answer	2,1	2,3*	1,9
Total	100	100	100

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

As for the attitude towards veterans in politics among the population of different age groups (*Table 2*), adult population of 30–69 years old tend to support the idea of veterans in politics at both state and local levels, whereas support rates among youth (18 and 29) is lower (app. 20% vs. 11%, respectively). Instead, the youngest age group respondents mostly were not certain about their opinion (31%) or refused to answer at all (5%).

Table 2. Should ATO/JFO veterans be involved in politics? (2019, N=2021, by age groups)

Answers (sorted by popularity among all)	All %	18-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60-69 years old	70+ years old
No, they should not	30,7	35,3	32,7	30,3	30,0	26,0	27,8
Yes, in politics both at the state and local levels	19,2	11,2	20,4*	19,8*	23,3*	22,0*	18,8
Yes, in particular, in state level politics	16,3	11,4	18,4	13,3	16,9	20,1	19,1
Yes, local level politics	6,8	6,3	5,6	9,0	6,4	8,5	5,5
Hard to say	24,9	31,1*	22,1	25,6	21,1	22,9	26,7
Refused to answer	2,1	4,8*	0,8	2,1	2,4	0,5	2,1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

As seen in *Table 3*, almost half of respondents (44%) believe that ATO/JFO veterans involved in politics in Ukraine are credible. In terms of gender-based specifics, men tend to trust veterans in politics more (47%) than women do (43%). This tendency is similar to the gender division of attitudes towards veterans – men tend to have more positive attitudes towards

veterans than women. Almost one third of women does not have an opinion regarding trust to veterans engaged in politics.

Table 3. What is your attitude to the statement: ATO/JFO veterans engaged in politics in Ukraine should be trusted? (2019, N=2021)

Answers	All %	Women %	Men %
Strongly agree	17,4	15,0	20,3*
Somewhat agree	27,0	27,5	26,4
Somewhat disagree	10,4	10,7	10,0
Strongly disagree	15,4	14,5	16,6
Hard to say	27,1	29,2*	24,6
Refused to answer	2,6	3,2	2,0
Total	100	100	100

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

As seen in *Table 4*, Western region of Ukraine tends to support the idea of credibility of veterans engaging in politics more than other regions (64%). This could be related to the fact that, according to the results of this survey, citizens of this region demonstrate the most positive attitudes towards veterans in general, compared to the other regions (56%). Population of Western Ukraine also demonstrates higher support for joining NATO (Kyiv Post, 2019). Population of Central Ukraine (45%) trust veterans in politics more than the population of Southern (37%) and Eastern Ukraine (19%). Over 1/3 of the Eastern region's respondents has not decided whether veterans in politics should be trusted. Rural area residents demonstrated higher level of trust to veterans in politics more (53%) than the urban population.

Table 4. What is your attitude to the statement: ATO/JFO veterans engaged in politics in Ukraine should be trusted? (2019, N=2021, by geographic location and type of settlement)

Answers	All %	Macroregions				Urban population	Rural population
		West	Centre	South	East		

Strongly agree	17,4	24,7*	20,2*	12,1*	5,9	15,8	20,6*
Somewhat agree	27,0	39,2*	25,1*	24,4*	12,8	24,4	32,4*
Somewhat disagree	10,4	6,2	9,7	15,2*	11,5*	11,2	8,8
Strongly disagree	15,4	7,1	12,2*	18,6*	34,2*	18,7*	8,9
Hard to say	27,1	20,1	29,0*	27,6*	35,3*	27,8	25,8
Refused to answer	2,6	2,7	3,9*	2,2	0,3	2,2	3,5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

Only one fifth of respondents (21%) believe that nothing will change after ATO/JFO veterans engage in social and political life. *Table 5* also demonstrates that 23% of respondents are convinced that veterans’ needs will be met to a greater extent, 20% believe that more effort will be made to end the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Men tend to believe significantly more than women that with veterans’ engagement in the social and political life needs of all population categories, including veterans will be satisfied. One fourth of the respondents (more women than men) cannot answer this question. Women are significantly more indecisive. Veterans’ engagement in politics is hardly associated with improvements in the state’s defensive capacity and corruption reduction in the country as these answers were not very popular among respondents. Besides, veterans in politics are not associated with more violent or radical approaches to decision making. No significant age differences between respondent groups concerning answers to this question have been noted.

Table 5. How would the engagement of veterans in the social and political life affect those spheres? (2019, N=2021, multiple choice question)

Answers (sorted by popularity among all)	All %	Women %	Men %
Veterans’ needs will be more satisfied	22,6	21,5	24,0
Nothing will change	20,4	20,7	20,1

More effort will be put to solve the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine	20,0	20,6	19,2
Needs of all population categories, including veterans, will be satisfied	14,5	11,9	17,7*
The defence capacity of the state will improve	12,9	12,7	13,1
Level of corruption will decrease in the country	12,8	11,9	13,9
Violence will be more used in problem solving by civil society activists and politicians	6,5	5,9	7,2
Hard to say	24,5	27,1*	21,4

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

The respondents' opinion on the effect of involvement of ATO/JFO veterans in the public and political life differs among regions (*Table 6*). Respondents from Eastern Ukraine often choose the answer "nothing will change" (38%) against only 11% respondents from the Western region who believe in positive changes for veterans and society in case veterans engage in politics. The Central region is also rather hopeful about veterans' engagement in politics. Respondents from Southern Ukraine believe that more veterans in politics will contribute to more efforts in solving the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine and to improve the defence capacity of the state. 40% of Eastern Ukraine respondents find it hard to answer this question.

Table 10. How would the engagement of veterans in the social and political life affect those spheres? (2019, N=2021, by geographic location and type of settlement)

Answers	All %	Macroregions				Urban population	Rural population
		West	Centre	South	East		
Veterans' needs will be more satisfied	22,6	25,7*	26,6*	22,4*	7,2	20,8	26,5*
Nothing will change	20,4	10,6	17,5*	25,5*	37,5*	22,0*	17,1
More effort will be put to solve the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine	20,0	29,2*	19,8*	18,0*	6,0	18,9	22,2

Needs of all population categories, including veterans, will be satisfied	14,5	16,6*	15,9*	13,3	9,3	15,5	12,6
The defence capacity of the state will improve	12,9	19,6*	12,9*	10,2*	4,5	11,8	15,1*
Level of corruption will decrease in the country	12,8	19,3*	11,9	10,7	6,2	12,2	14,1
Violence will be more used in problem solving by civil society activists and politicians	6,5	4,2	8,2*	8,2*	3,4	6,5	6,3
Hard to say	24,5	21,8	20,6	24,1	40,3*	25,1	23,3

* The difference between groups is statistically significant at the level of $p = 0,05$ with 95% confidence interval.

So, attitudes towards veterans and their political activity varies among different population categories. Quarter of the population does not have an opinion about their attitudes towards veterans, trust to them and expectations from veterans in politics. Young population aged 18-29 is the least knowledgeable and most undecided about ATO/JFO veterans in Ukraine. Male and rural population demonstrate slightly higher support towards veterans then female and urban population respectively. Population of Western region is more supportive towards veterans. Support, expectations and trust to veterans in politics tends to decrease from the Western region to the Central and Southern regions reaching its lowest rates in Eastern Ukraine.

Engagement of Veterans in the Social and Political Life

Respondents identify two types of ATO veterans: those who participated in the beginning of ATO till September 2014 (in volunteer battalions), and those who were conscripted into the army. Some believe that the first category is more “conscious patriots” (even despite

the fact that they have problems with recognizing from the state). At the same time, there are two major motivations of veterans to participate in the veteran movements: personal and group or civic.

In general, respondents believe that before participating in veteran movement, former combatants should have psychological rehabilitation and solve economic problems. Finding proper employment is one of the major issues for veterans that may course involvement into paid political protests. In Ukraine there is no monitoring of the employment level of women and men veterans. Due to the negative image of ATO veterans in the media, employers are afraid of hiring veterans. According to political scholar Dr. Maksym Yakovlev, in the Ukrainian society *“there is a fear of those who have combat experience”*.

As for **successful examples** of integration of veterans in the social and political life in Ukraine, respondents mentioned those that are connected with diverse types of activities: civic and political activism, business, education, arts and literature, travel and leisure, religious practices, social and psychological aid. There are examples of activities that respondents and experts mentioned in their interviews.

Civic and political activism. The project «Veterans to Power!»¹¹ ("For VDV!") has a goal of training veterans for public service and integrating them into the bodies of the executive power. Ukrainian Women Veteran Movement¹², “Ambassadors: Veteran Diplomacy” are among other examples. Involving the veteran community to the issues of security (“Municipal guard”) and protection of the rights of veterans at the local level¹³ – one of the examples of activist in Cherkasy region (NGO "Veterans of War “Defenders of Ukraine”). Veteran Yulia Kirilova¹⁴ was participating in the “New Leaders” project.

Employment and business. Project “The warrior – decent work” (Employment Center for Free People), “Business Incubator” aims to support veterans employment. At the same time,

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/za.veteraniv.do.vlady>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/UkrainianWomenVeteranMovement/>

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https://www.facebook.com/VeteranHubUa/videos/390710351538270/UzpfSTU3MTk4MzgyOTk3NDY2ODo2MTE1OTQ5NTkzNDY4ODg/?eid=ARDsTxZ4QXLbNeWMMmwAchEFV7i1eHDEoaovtg8K4kb3_F_0eEjoasTOTv3-oFnE6Ide1r6YfbSeV-FPC

¹⁴ https://novilidery.com/lider/2-season/Kirilova_YULiya_Sergiivna

veterans are developing their own social business initiatives that could be found at <https://veterano-service.com>.

Education. Supporting education of veterans by different educational institutions: the public administration Master's program in NaUKMA¹⁵, Kyiv School of Economics, Ukrainian Catholic University etc. ATO Museum of Heroes and Coordination Center for ATO Participants and their Family Members of the Kryvyi Rih Economic Institute as part of the University education process.

Arts and literature. Book and movies on war help veterans to rethink their experience (the first all-Ukrainian forum of military writers¹⁶, Veteran's Tent on the Book Arsenal; documentaries "Invisible Battalion", "No Obvious Sign" etc.)

Religious practices. Military Chaplains are providing support for veterans. In Kherson, for example, priest Andriy Kalita created the spiritual and psychological center of rehabilitation "Source"¹⁷.

Social and psychological aid. "Bez Broni" («Without armor») is an All-Ukrainian project focused on psychological and social support services for service personnel after ATO, as well as providing skilled legal and psychological informational support. They run the database for verified centers that support ATO participants¹⁸.

Veteran Hub brought together eight nonprofits including "Pobratymy", "Vilnyi Vybir", which offers psychological help, "Dobrovoltsi", which assists with the preparation of documentation for the registration of social statuses and Employment Center for Free People that focuses on professional orientation and employment¹⁹. They all help veterans with disabilities (according to state statistics, there are around 7,000 of them in Ukraine as a result of 2014-2018 war in Donbas).

¹⁵

<https://www.ukma.edu.ua/index.php/news/3382-stypendii-dlia-navchannia-za-magisterskoii-prohramoiu-public-hne-upravlinnia-ta-administruvannia-u-kma>

¹⁶ <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/29924677.html>

¹⁷ Information from Tetyana Kalenychenko, researcher of Military Chaplaincy: Religious-Spiritual Counseling and Care in Ukraine

¹⁸ <http://bezbroni.net/>

¹⁹ <https://www.kyivpost.com/lifestyle/former-soldiers-get-help-at-new-veteran-hub.html>

Veterans recognize the following **obstacles** for the development of veterans' organizations:

1. Lack/absence of finance. This is the largest and the most mentioned obstacle. Civil society work is unpaid. *"The reason is very simple – there is no money, no salary. Any activist of veteran movement has to understand... he understands it immediately that (in civic activism) there is no money to feed children"* (A. Kolumbet, head of the veterans' union of Kyiv). Organizations and unions of WW2 and Afghanistan war veterans are financed from the national budget, whereas ATO/JFO lack access to this finance. Majority of interviewed veterans and experts believe that international organizations and foreign governments do not finance veteran organizations and movements in Ukraine in order not to support any of the conflicting parties in the country.
2. Lack of skills in advocacy, fundraising and project management among veterans. Without these skills and knowledge veteran organizations and movement can hardly be efficient, self-sufficient, organized and consistent.
3. Lack of cooperation. High demand for leadership within organization and insufficient readiness to contribute to the day-to-day activity of organization regularly creates obstacles for the veterans' organizations establishment and development. Lack of cooperation between veteran organizations and differences in the vision of veteran movement is also an obstacle for the veteran movement development and promotion of the veteran agenda.
4. Emotional burnout, despondency. Civic activism is time and energy consuming. Without finance and fast visible progress, it can be draining for veterans.

Conclusions

The attitude towards veterans engaged in politics is worse than the attitude towards veterans in general. This could be explained by the fact that the Ukrainian society is distrustful in whole and has a negative attitude towards politics and politicians. A quarter of the respondents failed to provide a clear answer on a number of questions concerning veterans, which proves lack of public discussion, in the mass media in particular, concerning the role of

men and women veterans. The Western region stands out as the one with a more positive attitude to veterans and their social role, while the Eastern region is noted as the one that mostly failed to define its attitude clearly, and has more experience of communication with veterans and less optimistic views upon the role of veterans in the social and political life.

During the years of ATO/JFO, around 1,000 veteran organizations have been established across Ukraine, about 50 of them being all-Ukrainian. Some organizations terminate their operation, while other veteran initiatives – for instance, the Women Veterans Movement, Ambassadors (Veteran Diplomacy), Veterano Group etc. – gain momentum. Men and women veterans undergo training to start their businesses or work in the government.

New initiatives appear – educational, business, political, cultural etc., aimed to actively engage veterans in the public area. Social entrepreneurship is considered an instrument of social and economic adaptation of ATO veterans. It is important to highlight these initiatives by showing the diversity of so-called “success stories” of men and women veterans in Ukraine, as, according to respondents, the image of a veteran portrayed by the mass media is not always positive.

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