

# **HOW THE WAR DOES CHANGE UKRAINIANS:**

public opinion poll about  
the war, the environment,  
post-war reconstruction  
and EU accession

**Summary**  
Policy brief

February 2023



This policy brief contains a comparative and generalized analysis of public opinion poll on the post-war recovery, attitude to environmental issues and climate change as well as the EU accession. The document defines the main trends in comparison with 2018 and the situation in the EU.

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The public opinion on the post-war recovery and development of Ukraine, citizens' attitudes to environmental protection, understanding of environmental problems and the daily environmental habits are important for the process of post-war recovery of Ukraine and the implementation of reforms in the areas of the European Green Deal which are necessary to fulfill the conditions for EU accession. In addition, it is important to monitor trends in the attitudes of Ukrainians towards the environment, to compare their opinion and behaviour with previous years and with EU member states as well as in the context of the pre-war and post-war period.

In order to find out about Ukrainians' opinions towards the environment, the priorities of post-war recovery and future membership in the EU, Fama - Custom Research Agency conducted an all-Ukrainian sociological poll<sup>1</sup> on our behalf. The survey was conducted by the method of face to face interviews in the period from December 17, 2022, to January 2, 2023. In total, 2,000 residents of Ukraine over the age of 18 were interviewed. For security reasons, the poll was not conducted in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The survey was conducted as part of the the project «Mainstreaming sustainable development in Ukraine in line with the European Green Deal» implementation with the financial support of the European Union as well as in pursuance of the project «Ukraine in Europe» implemented by DiXi Group in partnership with the Center for Liberal Modernity (Zentrum Liberale Moderne) with the financial support of the German Federal Foreign Office.

The purpose of this policy brief is to investigate the main trends in the public opinion of Ukrainians towards the issues of environmental protection and their environmental habits, to understand the relationship between the war and environmental awareness, to analyze the vision of Ukrainians for the post-war recovery and the understanding of the process of EU accession, to compare the environmental values and attitudes of Ukrainians with the 2018 poll results<sup>2</sup>, as well as with the results of the Eurobarometer on a number of important issues.

1. [www.rac.org.ua](http://www.rac.org.ua)

2. <https://www.rac.org.ua/uploads/content/485/files/envprotraitandeu2018.pdf>

## Main trends (Summary)

### **Ukrainians have quite clear idea about the directions and principles of post-war recovery.**

The main principles of post-war recovery, according to Ukrainians, should be a decisive fight against corruption when using funds for reconstruction (43.1% of respondents), building back better (41.6%) and taking into account the opinions of communities and public (41.1%). The reconstruction of cities and housing should, first of all, ensure safety (in particular, shelters): 73.3% of respondents think so.

Reconstruction on a green basis is not one of the top priorities of Ukrainians but they support the reconstruction of housing, cities and enterprises based on the principles of environmental friendliness and energy efficiency. 95.2% of respondents believe that the restoration of nature is important in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

### **Ukrainians are not ready to pay for the transition to an environmentally friendly lifestyle.**

Ukrainians are not ready to pay for the environmental friendliness of basic services (access to pure drinking water, sustainable public transport and proper waste management): only half are willing to pay more, and almost half are not willing at all. Similarly, Ukrainians do not have a great desire to participate in the government programs to increase energy efficiency of buildings, if this involves an increase in maintenance bills: 54% are not ready to participate in such programs at all.

### **Energy independence and affordable prices are the priority areas of energy policy for Ukrainians.**

According to Ukrainians opinion, the two most important priorities of Ukraine's energy policy are energy independence (54.2%) and affordable prices (54.4%). Respondents consider increasing own production of energy resources (64.5%) and green energy (66.7%) to be the main ways to achieve energy independence. Ukrainians are not ready to rely on nuclear power to get rid of the dependence on energy imports: only 26.2% expressed support for the industry.

### **Russia's aggression in 2022 had harmful effects on the environmental consciousness and habits but did not change the basic values.**

Despite the war, environmental protection continues to be important for 95% of Ukrainians (this figure was 93% in 2018). The share of Ukrainians who believe that environmental problems have a direct impact on their everyday life and health remains high (87.4%).

The three most important environmental problems according to Ukrainians: pollution of rivers, lakes and groundwater (68%); air pollution (52%); increase in the amount of waste (42%). At the same time, public opinions on environmental problems in the context of war demonstrate concern about the impact of military actions on the environment.

At the same time, there is a sharp reduction in the share of citizens who believe they can change something in this area: in 2023, only 65.9% of respondents agree they can play a role in protecting the environment (as compared to 86.6% in 2018).

With the beginning of the aggression, 76.4% of citizens reduced energy consumption, 38.7% reduced water consumption (as compared to 19.9% before the war), only 2.5% participated in environmental measures (as compared to 8.7% before the war), while the share of those sorting waste fell by 8% (44.5% during the war compared to 52.5% before the war). At the same time, the share of respondents who sorted waste before the war increased significantly: from 35.7% in 2018 to 52.5% in the pre-war period.

### **91.1% of respondents consider climate change a serious problem.**

In other words, Ukrainians realize that climate change is a serious and real problem. This is a very high number, which indicates the effectiveness of informational (educational) measures regarding the problem of climate change in previous years.

### **In 2023, regional differences on many issues disappeared.**

As compared to 2018, we observe the absence of regional differences among respondents on most issues. This is probably due to the significant internal displacement as a result of Russia's aggression.

### **Citizens of the EU and Ukraine share common environmental values.**

Environmental protection is important for both Ukrainians (95%) and EU citizens (94%). 87% of Ukrainians and 78% of Europeans agree that environmental problems affect their everyday life and health. Climate change is considered a serious problem by both Ukrainians and EU citizens – 91% and 93%, respectively.

Air pollution and the increase in the amount of waste are considered among the three most important environmental problems in both Ukraine and the EU - at 52% and 42% of respondents in Ukraine and twice 46% in the EU, respectively. At the same time, as the most important problem, 53% of Europeans identified climate change, and 68% of Ukrainians – pollution of rivers, lakes and groundwater.

### **Ukrainians are not sufficiently informed about the main processes in the EU and the consequences of the EU accession for them personally.**

Improving the quality of life, ending the war and achieving peace, fighting corruption and the economic development are the main expectations of Ukrainians they associate with the European Union membership. However, approximately 17% of Ukrainians do not know what to expect from the EU accession.

Although the majority of respondents believe they receive enough information about the process of Ukraine's accession to the EU (60%), only 38.9% have an idea of the impact European integration reforms will have on them personally. Less than half of respondents believe they are sufficiently informed about the benefits they will get from Ukraine's accession to the EU (46.2%).

Only 27.7% of Ukrainians know what the European Green Deal is. The overwhelming majority of respondents (72%) believe this is an internal programme document of Ukraine.