

Research Paper

Think tanks as civil society organisations in Ukraine

What challenges are Ukrainian think tanks facing and how can they be supported during the war?

Laura Christoph, Ljudmyla Melnyk and Serhii Shapovalov



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This study was commissioned by the Policy Planning Staff of the Federal Foreign Office and reflects the views of the authors only.

List of abbreviations

CMU	Capital Markets Union
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
MP	Member of Parliament
VAT	Value Added Tax

Policy recommendations

- ▶ Provide think tanks with specialist equipment to enable them to carry out their work under the threat of Russian missile attacks (e.g. power banks, high-capacity mobile batteries, uninterruptible power supplies, and the means to enhance mobile communication). Grants should be more flexible in order to enable those who use such financial resources to cope with burnout, or to facilitate use of such funds for humanitarian aid, which is clearly a powerful motivation for those working in think tanks under the present conditions of war.
- ▶ Provide Ukrainian think tanks with resources that allow them to retain or expand their teams. This can be done by investing in the professional development of younger generations of Ukrainian policy analysts, particularly by offering the organisation flexible resources for training in research methodology and communication skills, by facilitating internship programmes at foreign think tanks, by providing employee benefits and bonuses for employees and enabling recruitment of new team members.
- ▶ Strengthen the communication capabilities of think tanks by training their staff in the effective use of various media platforms, improving public speaking skills and providing resources to enable the hiring of communication/social media managers, which would reduce the workload of existing staff.
- ▶ Provide financial resources to enable staff to learn additional foreign languages, especially English because of its relevance for international advocacy and communication with foreign audiences.
- ▶ Provide financial resources that enable think tanks to hire permanent employees, pay the associated taxes and offer them employee benefits, instead of working with freelance entrepreneurs. In this way, civil society institutions can be strengthened over the long term.
- ▶ Support think tank coalitions, including on an operational level, by providing grants for management of projects that complement the work by the teams belonging to coalition member organisations. This would promote networking within Ukraine and across international organisations, as well as increasing the effectiveness of communication, advocacy and fundraising efforts, and reducing administrative burdens.
- ▶ Promote international partnerships through joint research projects, exchange programmes and concrete partnerships between individual Ukrainian and foreign think tanks. This would help the adoption of best practices in research, communication and advocacy and strengthen the transference of knowledge from Ukraine to other countries.
- ▶ Support research projects that are a part of the programme of activities already being carried out by individual Ukrainian think tanks, particularly those that are not driven by donors interests. This would help to strengthen existing and create new cooperation between think tanks and Ukrainian authorities. It would also contribute to the sustainable institutional development of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine and strengthen their role as changemakers.

Introduction

Civil society organisations in Ukraine that operate at the interface between academia and politics are important actors, as they exert a direct influence on the country's politics as well as contributing to the strengthening of democracy. The invasion of 24 February 2022 marked a sudden break for these organisations, including think tanks. According to Thanet (2003), “think tanks are research institutions funded by private or public sources that conduct research on policy-related practical issues using a science-based approach, and ideally provide recommendations to decision-makers.” Due to the full-scale war of aggression, many of these organisations in Ukraine are facing the challenges of losing staff due to evacuation and mobilisation, of having to adapt their projects and of taking on new functions such as humanitarian work or documenting war crimes. Many Ukrainian think tanks are providing analytical support to the government and at the same time are trying to make sure that political-civil liberties are guaranteed even in times of war. The greatly increased interest from international media means opportunities, but also creates additional challenges for policy analysts.

This study aims to give an overview of think tanks in Ukraine, to assess their needs under the conditions of the Russian war of aggression and to explore the ways in which the ability to function as civil society organisations can be preserved, in order to effectively influence policymaking in the country. The research paper is based on already existing studies on Ukrainian civil society¹ and mappings.² However, some of these studies have to an extent lost relevance due to the changed conditions under the full-scale war. In addition, already existing organisations are in a state of flux and are confronted with myriad new challenges.

The Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP, Berlin), together with the Kyiv-based think tank Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Foundation (DIF, Kyiv), has therefore conducted a study commissioned by the Planning Staff of the German Federal Foreign Office on the current civil society landscape in Ukraine in order to provide an overview of recent changes in the work of Ukrainian think tanks and to develop recommendations on how to both support them as civil society organisations under the conditions of Russian aggression and strengthen their analytical impact.

The study is structured as follows. The first part comprises the mapping, which looks at the existing, relevant think tanks, where they are currently located and what research areas they are focused on. The second part presents the findings about the changes that have arisen in the operational logic and activities of think tanks – in their relations with Ukrainian political stakeholders, in their networking behaviour and in the use of communication channels and general interaction with the media. The final part presents the conclusions and the implications of these findings for a broader understanding of the work of civil society organisations under the conditions of war.

¹ Melnyk, L., Patalong, M., & Sydorchuk, O. (2016). *Denkfabriken in Deutschland und der Ukraine: Unterschiede und Perspektiven für die Zusammenarbeit*. Institut für Europäische Politik. bit.ly/3YIF7AS;

Axyonova, V. & Schöppner, F. (2018). *Ukrainian Think Tanks in the Post-Euromaidan Period: Exploring the Field*. In: Shapovalova, N. & Burluk, O. (eds.), *Civil Society in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: From Revolution to Consolidation*. Stuttgart: ibidem/Columbia University Press, pp. 215–240.

Keudel, O., & Carbou, O. (2021). *Think Tanks in a Limited Access Order: The Case of Ukraine*. *East European Politics and Societies*, 35(3), 790–811

Rachok, A., & Yakymenko, Y. (2021). *Think tanks today and tomorrow: A view from Ukraine*. In: McGann, J. G. (ed.), *The future of think tanks and policy advice around the world*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 131–139.

² *Landscape of Ukrainian think tanks*. (2020). Think Tanks Development and Research Initiative “Think Twice UA.” <https://thinktwiceua.org/en/ttua-content-en/information-capacity-of-think-tanks/>

Analytical framework and methodological approach

Civil society in Ukraine is highly developed and includes for example charitable organisations, professional unions, business associations, human rights organisations, associations of certain social groups, activist organisations and think tanks. The exact number of think tanks is difficult to determine due to the following reasons: *firstly*, there is no separate legal form in Ukraine that differentiates think tanks from other types of organisation. *Secondly*, a single organisation often performs functions that are inherent to several types of organisation. For example, a charitable foundation might raise funds to help a specific social group, while at the same time conduct research and advocate for changes in public policy to improve the situation of the organisation's target group in the long run. *Thirdly*, civil society in Ukraine is a very dynamic environment. Some organisations cease to exist, while new ones emerge. *Finally*, think tanks operate at different levels – from the national level down to small rural or urban communities. Accordingly, some of them are widely known in the media, and others are less so, though they still fulfil the definition of think tanks, and might indeed be very influential at the local level. This leads to highly varying estimates of how many think tanks exist in Ukraine at any one time.³

The following definition is used for the purposes of this study: “Think tanks are research institutions funded by private or public sources that conduct research on policy-related practical issues using a science-based approach, and ideally provide recommendations to decision-makers.”⁴

This definition implies two inherent features of think tanks that need further clarification:

- ▶ conducting policy-related research;
- ▶ operating as an institution.

Within the framework of our research, we will consider organisations that conduct research both in the field of *public policies* in various spheres of public life and in the field of *politics*, which covers the interaction between different actors who are participants in the political process.

The Global Go To Think Tank index report defines think tanks as “public policy research and engagement organisations that generate policy-oriented research and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy”.⁵

This definition emphasises other activities that think tanks are often involved in: engagement with target audiences and advocacy for certain policy decisions. However, all these activities should be based on the results of think tank research. Therefore, conducting policy research remains the primary criterion for defining a think tank.

³ Keudel, O., & Carbou, O. (2021). *Think Tanks in a Limited Access Order: The Case of Ukraine*. *East European Politics and Societies*, 35(3), 790–811

⁴ Thunert, M. (2003). *Think Tanks in Deutschland – Berater der Politik?* *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 51/2003, 30–38.

⁵ McGann, J. G. (2018). 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report. https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=think_tanks

Operating as an institution implies the following components:

- ▶ Formal legal registration of the organisation;
- ▶ The ability to conduct research on a regular basis, which demonstrates the capacity of the organisation. In Ukraine, some think tanks temporarily suffered a loss of capacity after the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, but they may recover over time. Therefore, organisations that were active in 2021 were also considered.

A final important note on the subject of the study. Axyonova and Schöppner propose a classification of think tanks based on their institutional affiliation:

- ▶ Independent think tanks
- ▶ University based
- ▶ Government affiliated
- ▶ Political party affiliated
- ▶ Corporate/business affiliated.

These types of think tanks differ significantly in their operational logic, and it would be extremely difficult to cover them all in one study. Therefore, in this study, we will be primarily interested in independent think tanks, since, firstly, they make up the overwhelming majority in the landscape of think tanks in general, and secondly, they work primarily in the interests of the public good and are less dependent on the resources and interests of their clients, as in the case of political party-affiliated or corporate/business-affiliated think tanks.

Government-affiliated think tanks in Ukraine operate as organisations that assist certain government agencies in designing, implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of reforms. There is not much information about the activities of such organisations in the public space due to their client-oriented nature. The largest state-affiliated think tank is the National Institute for Strategic Studies, which operates as a “university without students”. There are also numerous state research institutions⁶ that belong to the structure of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. The issues their activities focus on deserve a separate study, and some of these institutions were included in the mapping⁷ of think tanks that has been done in previous years. However, it is reasonable to separate such organisations from independent think tanks.

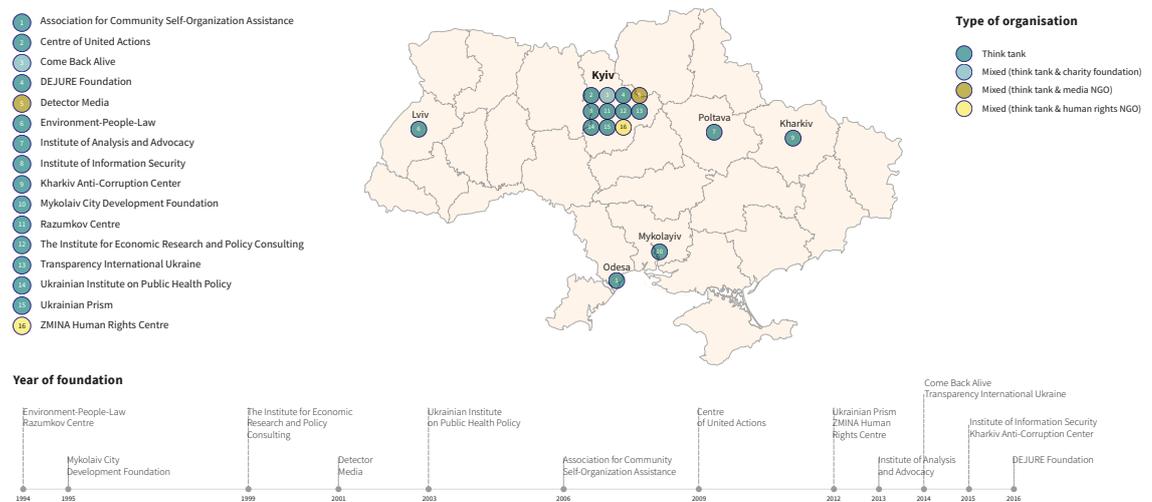
University-based think tanks are included in this study because they are the most similar to independent think tanks in terms of their operational logic. These include the School for Policy Analysis and the Anti-Corruption Research & Education Centre based at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, the Analytical Center UCU, the KSE Institute, FrankoLytics at Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, the Centre for Social Research at Sumy State University and OsvitaAnalytics (EducationAnalytics) at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, to name a few.

⁶ Scientific institutions in the structure of NAS of Ukraine. (n.d.). <https://www.nas.gov.ua/EN/Structure/Pages/default.aspx>

⁷ Landscape of Ukrainian think tanks (2020). Think Tanks Development and Research Initiative “Think Twice UA.” <https://think-twiceua.org/en/ttua-content-en/information-capacity-of-think-tanks/>

The findings of this study rely on a survey of Ukrainian think tanks operating between August 2022 and January 2023. As a first step, 16 qualitative and guideline-based expert interviews were conducted via Zoom with representatives of Ukrainian think tanks. The selected organisations had to meet three criteria: (1) be engaged in conducting policy/politics-related research (which can become the basis for further educational, communication and advocacy activities of the organisation); (2) more than one employee had to be involved in the production of analytical content; and (3) at least one policy-related research project had to have been conducted by the organisation in 2021.

Infographic 1: 16 think tanks that took part in the qualitative expert interviews



Based on the responses in the qualitative interviews, a comprehensive online questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire is structured according to Thomas Medvetz’s framework.⁸ Medvetz describes think tanks as “frontier organisations” that operate according to the different logics of institutional spheres, including academia, politics, media and the market. Hence, the survey was structured in such a way as to enable the collection of data on the economic, media, political and academic capital of Ukrainian think tanks. Academic potential refers to the level of education and research competencies of the staff. Economic capital is composed of the financial resources and capacities for acquiring funds for projects and research activities. Political capital means that think tanks can communicate their analytical publications so effectively that they have an impact on political decision-makers and media capital is created when think tanks disseminate their findings through various media channels.⁹ The questionnaire was sent to Kyiv-based and regional think tanks and completed by a total of 36 of them. The complete list of identified think tanks and respondents to the online survey can be found in annex 1.

⁸ Medvetz, T. (2012). *Think tanks in America*. University of Chicago Press.

⁹ Keudel, O., & Carbou, O. (2021). *Think Tanks in a Limited Access Order: The Case of Ukraine*. *East European Politics and Societies*, 35(3), 790–811

Overview: Mapping of think tanks in Ukraine

In the scope of the study, around 90 think tanks working on research and advocacy of public policies in various fields were identified in Ukraine. All infographics and tables in the text refer to the entirety of the 36 respondents to the online survey, with the exception of infographics 2, 3 and 4 as well as the overview of all identified organisations (see annex 1). It should also be mentioned here that some of them identify themselves as “think and act tanks”.

“We consider research and advocacy as inseparable processes. Without advocacy, research is meaningless.” – Respondent 3

Some think tanks are hybrid organisations that combine the functions of think tanks and other types of organisation.

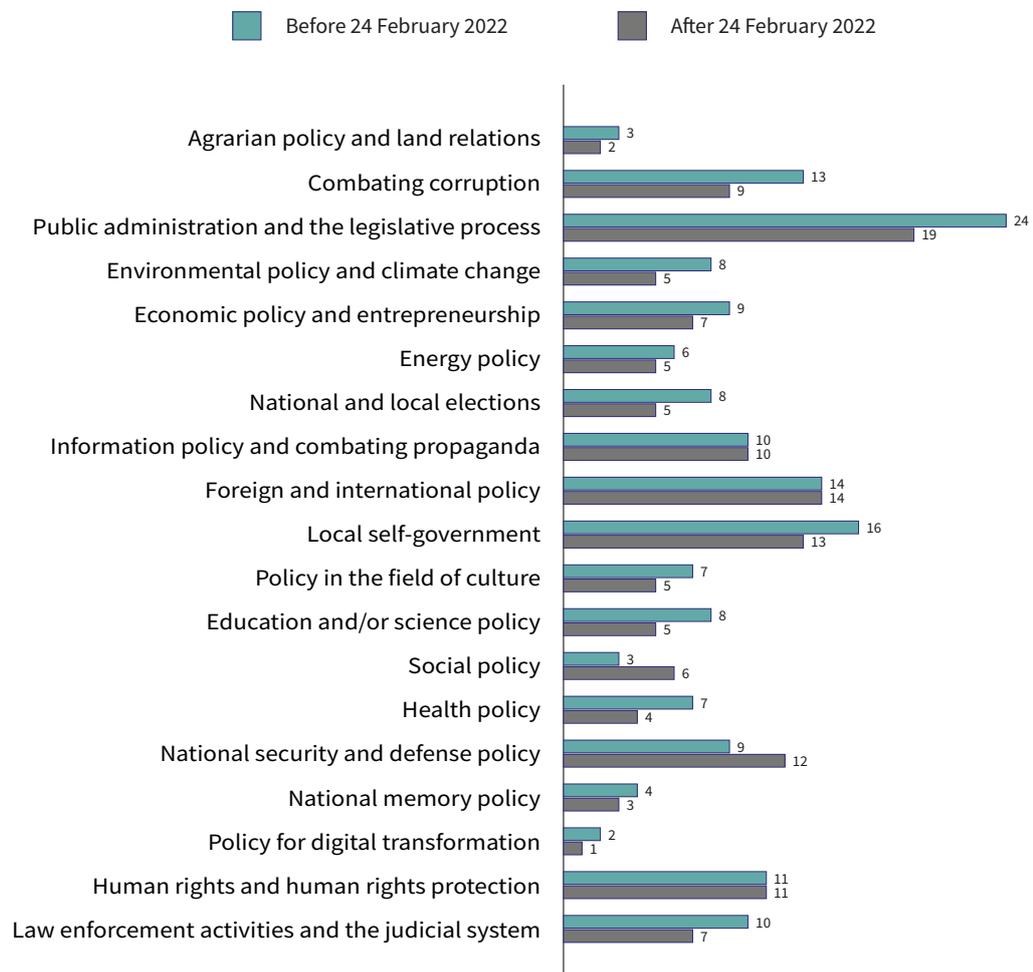
“I always describe us as an organisation in which there are two equally important components. The first one is the media and the other one is the think tank.” – Respondent 5

Some think tanks emphasise the academic component of their activities. Nevertheless, such organisations also see their goal as influencing public policies.

“Our employees have dozens of articles in international publications. For us, this is one of the criteria of success. We can say quite confidently that the results of our work had an impact on the public policy.” – Respondent 14

Ukrainian think tanks currently work in different research areas, such as anti-corruption policy, rule of law, economic and social policy, media and information policy and foreign policy.

Infographic 2: The activity of Ukrainian think tanks according to thematic priorities

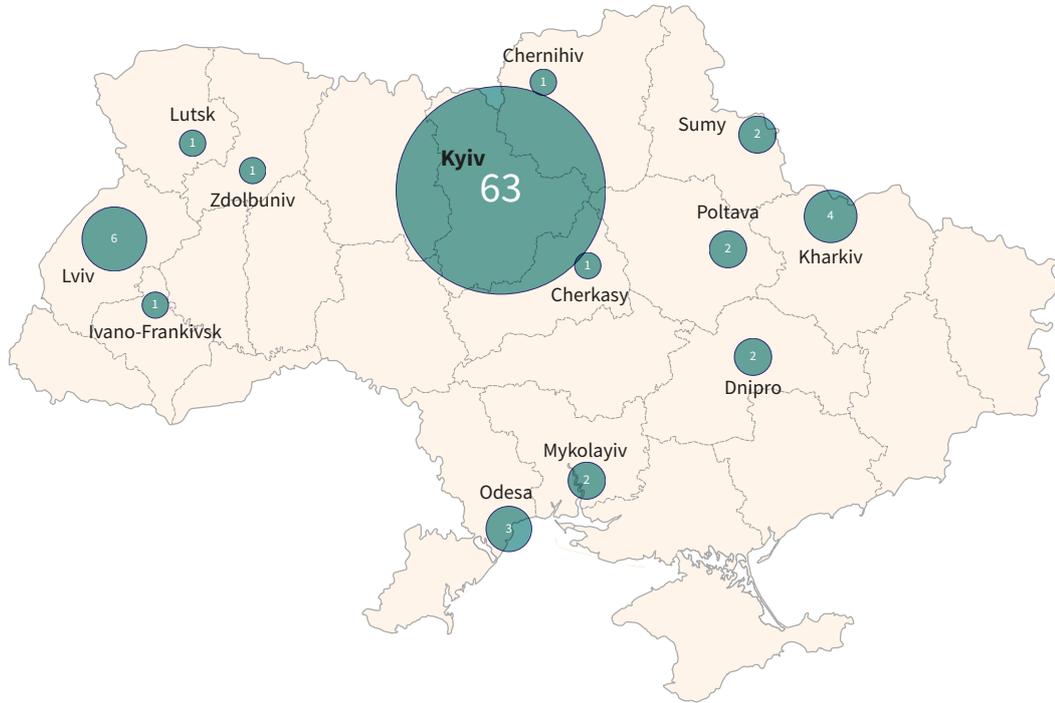


Note: It was possible to select all that apply.

Most of the think tanks (63) are Kyiv-based organisations with a national scope to their research and advocacy activities. 26 think tanks have their main offices located in different parts of Ukraine: six are located in central regions of the country (Sumy, Poltava, Chernihiv), six are located in eastern regions (Kharkiv, Dnipro), five are based in southern regions (Odesa, Mykolaiv) and nine are based in western regions (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lutsk, Rivne region). It should be noted that while some of regional-based think tanks address primarily the issues relevant to their regions and local communities, the others have a national geographical scope to their activities (for example, the Institute for Analysis and Advocacy implemented a project about the international experience of reconstruction after armed conflict, and the results of this project have national significance despite the fact that the think tank itself is located in Poltava).¹⁰

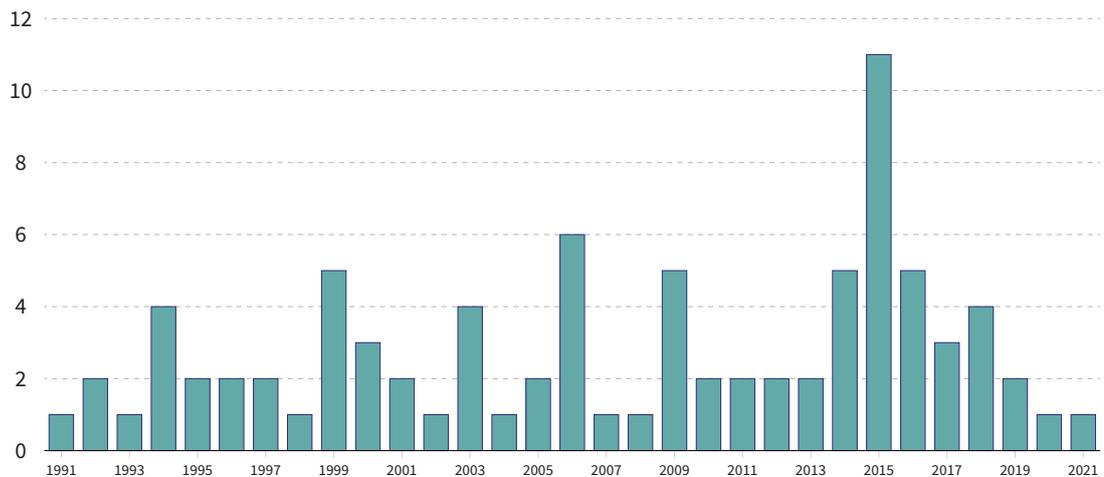
¹⁰ Institute for Analysis and Advocacy (2023). *Rebuilding the twenty countries: Good practices for Ukraine*. <https://iaa.org.ua/portfolio/vidbudova20/>

Infographic 3: Central office location



The mapping includes 24 think tanks founded between 1991 and 1999, 27 between 2000 and 2011, and 37 founded in 2012 and later.

Infographic 4: Foundation year



As noted at the beginning of the report, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine often perform the functions of several organisations simultaneously. Therefore, some of those included in the mapping are hybrid organisations for whom other types of activities form a significant component, in addition to their research activities. For example, the Come Back Alive Foundation is the largest charitable foundation in Ukraine that helps the Armed Forces of Ukraine, but at the same time, the Foundation has an analytical department that conducts research and advocacy in the field of national security policy. Detector Media is both a media outlet and a think tank that conducts research in the field of information security. ZMINA Human Rights Center carries out activities in the field of human rights protection, has its own media covering events related to human rights in Ukraine, and also conducts research in the field of human rights.

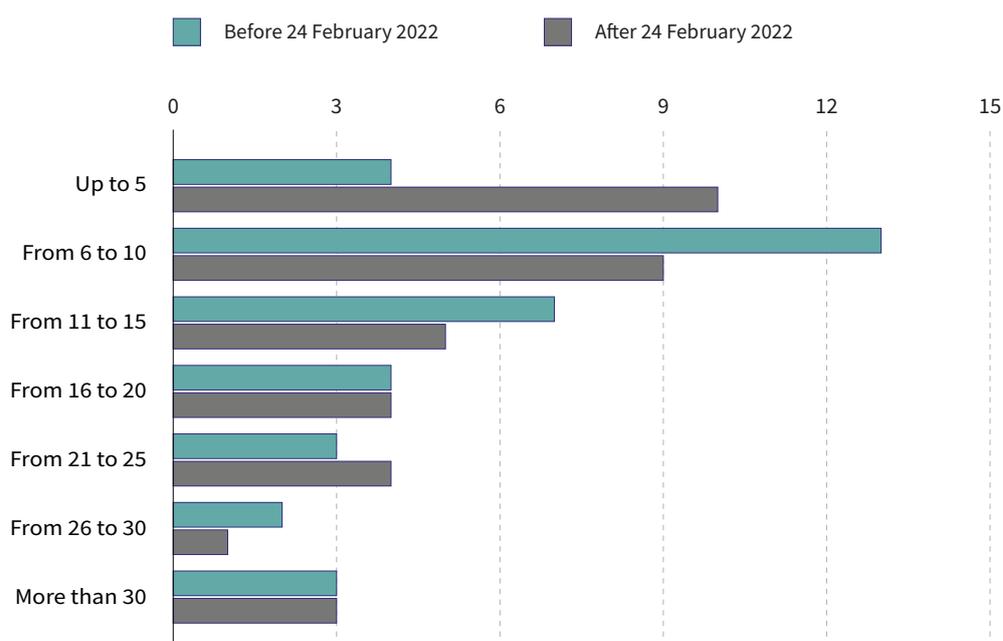
The results of the survey of think tanks also show that they often combine the functions of various different types of organisation. Half of the surveyed organisations perceive themselves as think tanks, and half reported that they see themselves as think tanks while also performing functions typical of other types of organisation.

Table 1: Does your organisation perceive itself as a think tank?

Yes, we consider ourselves a think tank	19
We consider ourselves a think tank, but we also perform functions that are typical of other types of organisation	17
No, we perceive ourselves as a different type of organisation	0

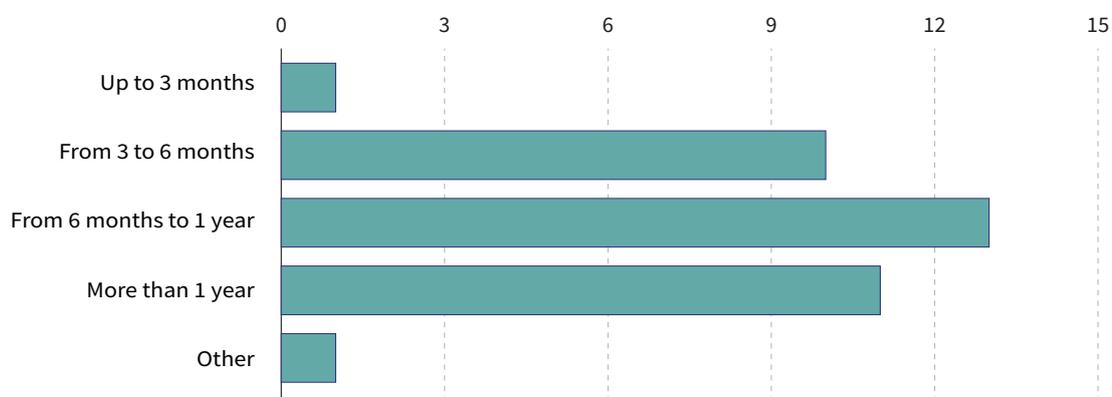
Note: Total sample n=36

Infographic 5: Number of employees employed by the organisation before 24 February 2022 and at the time the study was conducted



Note: Total sample n=36

Infographic 6: Project duration of most projects currently implemented by the think tank



Note: Total sample n=36

A changed landscape: the main changes and ongoing challenges during the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022

Changes in operational logic and activities

The Russian full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022 posed an unprecedented threat to Ukraine's existence as an independent state. This has affected all areas of public life, including the functioning of think tanks and civil society actors in general. As our expert interviews show, the first four to five weeks after the invasion were a period of extreme uncertainty.

“There was a period of uncertainty at the beginning. We returned to relatively stable operations around the end of March and the beginning of April. During this period, the research work was temporarily suspended. However, we were engaged in humanitarian aid for IDPs, and giving assistance to the military.” – Respondent 7

However, some organisations, even in the regions where active combat actions were taking place, continued to work and planned new projects on relevant topics even during the first few weeks of the invasion.

“Since March, we have been planning projects aimed at the reconstruction of Ukraine. I remember the application deadline was March 7. Mykolaiv was under siege, but we submitted a project proposal. We are still working according to the plans we formed back in March. We understood the risks and threats that Ukraine faced, and based on this, we came up with ideas for projects relevant to Ukraine.” – Respondent 10

As of January 2023, most of the surveyed think tanks have either fully resumed their work or have an even higher workload than before the Russian invasion. Almost half of the respondents (16 out of 36) noted that the volume of their research work is roughly equal to the volume they had before the Russian invasion. Another nine noted that they have even more research work than before. Ten survey participants noted a decrease in the amount of research work (five of them are regional organisations; however, we cannot conclude that this is typical for the majority of regional organisations). Also important, and mentioned by 21 respondents, was that volunteer and humanitarian activities have significantly/somewhat increased.

Table 2: Extent of change in activities compared to the period before 24 February 2022

	We do not engage in this type of activity	Significantly/somewhat increased	Has not changed significantly	Significantly/somewhat decreased
Research and analysis of public policies	1	9	16	10
Academic activities (lecturing at universities, publishing scientific articles, participating in scientific conferences)	8	3	13	10
Volunteer and humanitarian activities	11	21	2	1
Advocacy activities targeted at Ukrainian authorities	3	11	11	11
Advocacy activities targeting foreign audiences	6	16	8	4
Communication with Ukrainian media	1	12	13	10
Communication with foreign media	3	16	8	6
Educational and training work (with citizens, certain target groups)	3	12	11	10
Activism in local communities	13	6	7	7

A significant change in the operational logic of Ukrainian think tanks has been the increase of work aimed at foreign audiences. Most think tanks reported a significant increase in both communication with international media and advocacy efforts aimed at international audiences. This is driven by the objective growth of international interest in events in Ukraine as well as the need to promote Ukraine's interests abroad, since Ukraine critically needs military and financial assistance from partner countries in the context of the full-scale war with Russia.

Such work is unpaid and at the same time puts a heavy burden on the think tank team which must simultaneously continue to implement the main programmatic activities. There is a great demand for a strengthening of the communication capabilities of think tanks, via training in the effective use of various media platforms, and the hiring of new staff, which would reduce the workload of the existing team.

“After February 24, the attention to the situation in Ukraine and to war crimes increased dramatically. The number of requests from both Ukrainian and international journalists directed to us has increased dramatically. We have five to seven broadcasts, comments, and media requests every day, which is very exhausting. It is a huge burden on the staff, because we also have to do our main programmatic work. However, we try to respond to all journalists.” – Respondent 16

Another issue think tanks have faced since the Russian invasion is that some of their projects have lost their relevance.

“How are you going to continue your research on cross-border cargo transportation, which you started before the Russian invasion? It has become irrelevant. [...] Or research on debt policy. When the war suddenly broke out, it became irrelevant. However, we have adapted this project to the current realities.” – Respondent 7

The think tanks responded to this challenge by adapting the topics of the projects that were already underway as at 24 February 2022. At the same time, think tanks positively noted the flexibility of donors in adapting project topics. Some donors also permitted project funds to be used to support the institutional capacity of the organisation, which allowed think tanks to retain their team.

“The donors responded very well, as they allowed us to reorient part of the funds from project activities to institutional support. We changed the projects so that more funds could be used for salaries and this helped us to keep our team.” – Respondent 11

Despite the need to adapt the topics of their projects at the beginning of the war, in the long run, think tanks in the vast majority of cases have continued to work in the areas in which they had previously been operating. This is reflected by the fact that in the ranking of issues faced by think tanks since the Russian invasion, the loss of relevance is rarely mentioned:

Table 3: The issues that have had the greatest impact on the organisation’s work in the first two to three months following the Russian invasion and which are still relevant today

	This affected the organisation’s work in the first two to three months after the invasion	This problem is still relevant today
Physical danger as a result of hostilities	35	17
A sharp increase in psychological stress and exhaustion (burnout) of employees	26	22
Suspension or significant slowdown/postponement of planned work or research activities	21	14
There is a significant lack of funds to pay salaries to employees	14	12
Increased uncertainty, particularly about business prospects and the near term (next 6–18 months)	24	15
Loss of relevance of the topic(s) addressed by the organisation	15	6
Loss of some team members (due to dismissal, joining the Ukrainian Defence Forces, going abroad, etc.)	24	21
Internal communication between team members is difficult	17	12
Lack of resources (human, material) for effective communication about think tank products to target audiences	17	18

According to the survey results, the most common problems that *remain* relevant for think tanks include:

- ▶ sharp increase in psychological stress and exhaustion (burnout) of employees;
- ▶ lack of resources (human, material) for effective communication about think tank products to target audiences;
- ▶ loss of team members (due to dismissal, joining the Ukrainian Defence Forces, going abroad, etc.).

Another problem related to donor practices is that they tend to structure their funding in such a way that most think tanks are not able to recruit permanent employees. As a result, to avoid competitive disadvantage, some think tanks choose to build their teams using freelance entrepreneurs, who pay much lower tax rates. However, as freelancers, they are not entitled to any employment benefits, paid leave or maternity/parental leave. This contradicts the logic of promoting civil society, in which institutions, not individual teams, are at the centre, to which international donor institutions commit. In addition, donors should be aware that think tanks must continue to pay salaries to any permanent employees who are called up to the army, which is a financial burden in addition to the loss of staff.

Table 4: Percentage of staff who are freelance entrepreneurs

Yes, up to 20% of our staff work on this basis	3
Yes, between 20% and 40% of our staff work on this basis	8
Yes, between 40% and 60% of our staff work on this basis	5
Yes, more than 60% of our staff work on this basis	12
No, our organisation uses only permanent employees under labour agreements	6

The loss of staff members is perhaps the most sensitive issue for the institutional capacity of think tanks, as people, with their skills and experience, are the main “asset” of think tanks. This problem was one of the most frequently mentioned in the survey. The majority of interviewees reported that some of their employees had left the organisation – in one case the director of the organisation could no longer perform his duties due to joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Nevertheless, in most cases, this has not led to a critical decline in the ability of think tanks to carry out programmatic activities.

The most extreme example of this situation was observed in several organisations in the east of the country, in particular Kharkiv. Before the liberation of the Kharkiv region in September 2022, Russian troops shelled the city of Kharkiv on a daily basis. As a result, some employees of Kharkiv-based think tanks were forced to leave for safer regions, and some joined the Ukrainian armed forces. This led to a significant decrease in the think tanks’ capacities.

“Some of my colleagues went abroad, some moved to other regions of Ukraine. Two of my colleagues joined the Armed Forces, and I am going to join as well. We have retained the ability to carry out programmatic activities, but the volume of work has now significantly decreased.” – Respondent 9

To sum up, all of these problems can be mitigated by providing organisations with the resources to recruit new team members, which would reduce the workload of existing employees and also help maintain the organisation’s capacity in the event of the loss of an employee. Creating

opportunities for think tanks to provide social bonuses and guarantees for their employees, such as health insurance or additional financial rewards, is also a reasonable step towards answering those challenges. Currently, think tanks assess their ability to provide such bonuses to employees as extremely low (16 out of 36 respondents) or rather low (10 out of 36).

Table 5: The organisation's current ability to meet the following needs of the organisation

	There is no such need	Extremely low	Rather low	Sufficient	High	Very high	Hard to say
Salary of employees	0	3	6	20	5	2	0
Funding of research expenses (travel, per diem, accommodation, subscription to e-libraries, payment of special software, etc.)	2	6	9	12	5	1	0
Payment for rented premises	8	5	2	14	4	3	0
Payment of utilities and communication	5	4	2	18	5	2	0
Payment for ordered services (translation, accounting)	3	0	7	20	4	2	0
Support of the organisation's own research programmes/projects	0	3	11	19	3	0	0
Payment for training/professional development of analysts (courses on research methodology)	6	5	15	9	0	0	0
Provision of benefits and bonuses for employees (insurance, provision of bonuses and additional incentive material remuneration, etc.)	4	16	10	5	0	0	0
Recruiting new team members	3	8	13	9	1	1	1
Availability of funds in the organisation for unforeseen and other needs	1	15	8	9	0	1	1
Ensuring the salaries of employees who joined the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	9	12	4	9	0	0	0

Note: It was possible to select all that apply.

Equipment to assist when working under the threat of Russian missile attacks is also needed, to enable the think tanks to function uninterrupted. This requires resources to help equip shelters and to create proper working conditions in them, as well as to purchase equipment to enable continued operation during power outages.

Relations with Ukrainian authorities

Advocacy and influencing policy decisions is one of the most important activities of Ukrainian think tanks. The significant role they play in the policymaking process is undeniable and has already been discussed in previous studies.¹¹ In the context of the full-scale war that Russia has unleashed against Ukraine, Ukrainian think tanks are trying to further influence government decisions and change the country for the better.

“We see research and advocacy as inseparable processes. Doing research without advocacy makes no sense. There are organisations that simply write a study to report to donors, “throw it under the table” and then do new research. This is not how we work. Whenever we start some research, we always ask ourselves why we are doing it and what we want to achieve in the end. Accordingly, we set ourselves the goal of influencing decision-making.” – Respondent 3

Under the conditions of war, martial law was introduced. This meant that there are certain peculiarities that adhere to the functioning of the government agencies in Ukraine, which affects the research and advocacy activities of think tanks.

First, access to certain types of public information often needed by think tanks has been limited for security reasons since 24 February 2022,¹² although the situation differs depending on the type of data. Access to some open data sources has not been restricted (e.g. Unified Register of Powers of Attorney¹³ and the Unified State Register of Legal Acts¹⁴).

Access to some open data registers was reinstated a few months after the start of the Russian invasion, albeit with limitations. In late April, access to the State Register of Real Property Rights¹⁵ was partially restored in regions where no active combat was taking place. However, only a limited group of civil servants was able to use it. Use of the State Land Cadastre has also been significantly restricted. However, the situation has changed over time and access to the public cadastral map¹⁶ has been reinstated (although it is still not possible to download from the register online).

Some registers lost a large part of their data after reopening. In particular, think tanks conducting research in the areas of rule of law and human rights have noted that information on almost all criminal cases for 2019–2021 disappeared from the Unified State Register of Court Decisions once it reopened in August 2022. In particular, information on criminal cases of public interest, such as cases of corruption, attacks on activists and collaboration, is not available.

¹¹ Melnyk, L., Patalong, M., & Sydorchuk, O. (2016). *Denkfabriken in Deutschland und der Ukraine: Unterschiede und Perspektiven für die Zusammenarbeit*. Institut für Europäische Politik. bit.ly/3YlF7AS;

Axyonova, V. & Schöppner, F. (2018). *Ukrainian Think Tanks in the Post-Euromaidan Period: Exploring the Field*. In: Shapovalova, N. & Burlyuk, O. (eds.), *Civil Society in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: From Revolution to Consolidation*. Stuttgart: ibidem/Columbia University Press, pp. 215–240.

Keudel, O., & Carbou, O. (2021). *Think Tanks in a Limited Access Order: The Case of Ukraine*. *East European Politics and Societies*, 35(3), 790–811

Yesmukhanova Y. (2019). *Assessment of policy relevant research in Ukraine*. International Renaissance Foundation. https://www.irf.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ttdi_zvit8_eng.pdf

¹² Hryshko, A. (2022). Open data registries and war: finding a balance between transparency and security. VoxUkraine. <https://voxukraine.org/vidkryti-dani-i-vijna-poshuk-balansu-mizh-prozoristyu-ta-bezpekoyu/>

¹³ Unified Register of Powers of Attorney. (n.d.). State Enterprise «National Information Systems». <https://nais.gov.ua/p/ediniy-reestr-dovirenostey>

¹⁴ Unified State Register of Legal Acts. <https://www.reestrnpa.gov.ua/REESTR/RNAweb.nsf/wpage/RnaAbout?OpenDocument>

¹⁵ State Register of Real Property Rights (n.d.). State Enterprise «National Information Systems». <https://nais.gov.ua/p/derjavniy-reestr-rechovih-prav-na-neruhome-mayno>

¹⁶ Public Cadastre Map. (n.d.). Open data of State Land Cadastre. <https://kadastr.live/>

The digitalisation of public services and open data is actively developing in Ukraine, and in 2021, the country was ranked 6th in the Open Data Maturity table among European countries.¹⁷ However, in the context of the war, Ukraine is facing a transparency and security dilemma, given that Russia could use open data to harm the state or individual citizens. Nevertheless, think tanks emphasise¹⁸ the need to preserve the openness of public data in Ukraine, as there is currently no evidence that any Ukrainian citizen has suffered from the actions of the aggressor as a result of the Open Data being available.

Secondly, information about the operations of government agencies has become increasingly suppressed. In particular, respondents reported that data on the websites of some local self-government bodies had been deleted.

“The local authorities have done a lot of strange things out of fear. For example, they removed all the decisions and their projects from the website over the whole period of the website’s existence. Someone must have called them and told them to remove everything. As a think tank, we cannot assess this, because we are not military people. I assume that these people know more than we do. Therefore, this is a separate issue for research and discussion: how can democracy function in times of war?” – Respondent 1

Moreover, Ukrainian parliamentary sessions are held in a closed mode¹⁹ – they are not broadcast on television, and journalists inform the public about the results of parliamentary sessions and adoption of legislation after the event. The activities of parliamentary committees are also only partially covered.²⁰ Such steps are being taken for obvious security reasons: if the Russian occupiers were in possession of information about the time of the parliamentary session, they could launch a missile attack on the parliament building, causing casualties among MPs and making the work of the legislature impossible. At the same time, this situation creates opportunities for abuse. Taking advantage of the opportunity to hold closed sessions without the participation of civil society representatives, MPs have sometimes lobbied for low-quality draft laws or draft laws motivated by corrupt interests, which have caused controversy in society after their adoption.

“In April, we discovered not just draft laws, but a whole package of lobbying laws that had already been passed. These laws led to the legalisation of certain corruption schemes and a significant deterioration of environmental legislation. That is, big business and its lobbyists were not discouraged. What we prevented them from doing in peacetime, they are doing now, using the opportunity of closed meetings.” – Respondent 6

Nevertheless, the survey results showed that martial law restrictions did not critically reduce the ability of think tanks to carry out research and advocacy work. While around a third of the respondents indicated that institutional restrictions during martial law have indeed significantly reduced their ability to conduct analytical and advocacy work, the majority of the survey participants still noted that although the restrictions do affect their work, the organisation retains the ability to effectively conduct policy research and advocate its results.

¹⁷ *Open data in Europe 2021*. (2021). The official portal for European data. <https://data.europa.eu/en/publications/open-data-maturity/2021>

¹⁸ *CSOs call on the Ministry of Digital Transformation not to ruin open data in Ukraine*. (2022). Anti-Corruption Headquarters. bit.ly/40AL8fc

¹⁹ *How does the Verkhovna Rada work during the war? Interview with Olena Kondratiuk*. (2022). Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/verkhovna-rada-viyna/31883461.html>

²⁰ Salizhenko, O. (2022). *CHESNO Movement names the most closed committees of the Verkhovna Rada*. CHESNO Movement. <https://www.chesno.org/post/5407/>

Table 6: The impact of martial law restrictions (closure of some registers and other sources of public information, the ability of the authorities to hold closed meetings, etc.) on the work of think tank on the work of think tanks

Yes, these restrictions have significantly limited the think tank’s ability to carry out research and advocacy activities	10
Yes, these restrictions have somewhat limited the organisation’s capabilities, but it retains the ability to effectively carry out research and advocacy activities	19
No, these restrictions did not significantly affect the organisation’s ability to effectively carry out research and advocacy activities	7

The demand for think tank expertise from the government remains one of the factors that keeps the government open to cooperation with think tanks. Respondents reported many success stories of continued effective cooperation with the government agencies they had worked with before the full-scale Russian invasion.

“We continue to cooperate with the authorities. Our experts work in the Civic Council at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and cooperate with the Ministry of Defence; they are invited to sessions of parliamentary committees and temporary investigative commissions. We receive requests for information from security agencies, such as the Security Service of Ukraine. We took part in parliamentary hearings at the Social Policy Committee, and a significant part of our recommendations were taken into account. When we are approached by the authorities, we try to satisfy their requests. And generally speaking, cooperation now has certain restrictions due to martial law. However, these restrictions are related to the formats of interaction rather than the essence of cooperation.” – Respondent 11

Moreover, given the uncertainty and lack of resources, the authorities themselves have approached think tanks to engage their human and intellectual resources to perform certain tasks.

“The Ministry of Economy approached to us in a panic. [...] There is a lack of reliable statistical data in Ukraine at the moment. This is especially true for the first months of the full-scale invasion. The essence of the request [concerned how] business opinion surveys reflect macroeconomic trends, and we are conducting such surveys among entrepreneurs in Ukraine. We had a request from the Ministry of Economy to estimate GDP, and we had the tools to help them. Our donors supported us in this, and our work with the authorities intensified.” – Respondent 12

In the survey, seven think tanks indicated that the number of government agencies they have cooperated with since 24 February 2022 has in fact increased compared to the previous period. In 13 cases, think tanks indicated that the number of government agencies they worked with before and after the beginning of the full-scale war remained the same (sometimes these were the same government agencies, and sometimes the think tank suspended work with one or more previous partners but established cooperation with new ones). In 16 cases (out of 36 in total), think tanks noted that the number of government agencies they cooperate with has decreased since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion.

Table 7: The extent to which the ability of an organisation to cooperate with and/or influence the decisions of the authorities changed after 24 February 2022

There are significantly more opportunities to cooperate with and/or influence the decisions of the authorities	3
There are a few more opportunities to cooperate with and/or influence the decisions of the authorities	4
There have been no significant changes	13
There are slightly fewer opportunities to cooperate with and/or influence the decisions of the authorities	9
There are significantly fewer opportunities to cooperate with and/or influence the decisions of the authorities	7

However, these 14 organisations also indicated at least one to two (and sometimes more) government agencies with which they have cooperated since 24 February 2022. Among them different ministries, local authorities, Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, Cabinet of Ministers etc.

At the same time, in most cases, think tanks cited quite specific successful examples of cooperation with, and influence over the decisions of, the Ukrainian authorities since the start of Russia’s full-scale aggression. To name a few: proposing amendments to the CMU Resolution No. 590²¹ to unblock the use of grant funds by territorial communities, participation²² in the work of the Ministry of Energy on the effective redistribution of assistance to energy sector enterprises, participation of think tanks in completing different parts of the questionnaire for Ukraine’s EU candidate status, contribution to the Latin American Strategy of Ukraine,²³ contribution²⁴ to the drafting of the law on media, drafting a law²⁵ to abolish the act of completion and abolition²⁶ of VAT exemption on imports.

Ukrainian think tanks have been using a wide range of advocacy methods to influence the decisions taken by the authorities. The most common of them are:

- Coverage of think tank research findings in the media (TV and radio shows, articles in popular publications). Even under martial law, Ukraine remains a democratic country with freedom of speech. The media is an effective tool for shaping public discourse around a particular policy issue, which in turn influences the decisions of the authorities to address this issue.

²¹ *On Amendments to the Procedure for Exercising Powers by the State Treasury Service in a Special Regime under Martial Law.* (2022). Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-vnesennia-zmin-do-poriadku-vykonannia-povnovazhen-derzhavnoiu-kaznacheiskoiu-sluzhboiu-v-t231222>

²² *It is important to demonstrate to Ukraine’s partners the proper organisation of the process of distributing aid to energy companies.* (2022). DiXi Group. <https://dixigroup.org/vazhlyvo-pokazaty-partneram-ukrayiny-nalezhnu-organizacziyu-proczesu-rozpodilu-dopomogy-energopidpryemstvam-dixi-group/>

²³ *Kuleba announces the adoption of the Latin American Strategy.* (2023). Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3646338-kuleba-anonsuvav-uhvalenna-latinoamerikanskoi-strategii.html>

²⁴ *The law on media: How the reform bill is being prepared for the second reading.* (2022). Center for Democracy and Rule of Law. <https://cedem.org.ua/news/zakon-pro-media/>

²⁵ *Draft law on the use of invoices in operations for the completion of works (provision of services).* (2022). Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/40646>

²⁶ *The Law of Ukraine «On amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine and other legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the revision of certain tax exemptions».* (2022). Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2325-20#Text>

- ▶ Inviting government officials to participate in public events held by the think tank. Inviting a representative of a particular government agency to a research presentation is an effective way to draw his/her attention to the research. This format is very effective, because during the event, personal contact can be established with a representative of the government agency, who will in turn be informed about the research results during the presentation and can immediately give feedback. Moreover, such personal contact creates potential for further informal dialogue, which is extremely important, as relations between think tanks and government agencies in Ukraine are often personal.
- ▶ Participation of experts in working groups established by the authorities. As described above, security measures create the risk of abuse of power where authorities hold closed meetings without involving other stakeholders. However, the existence of such risk does not necessarily mean it is realised. In practice, the institutional mechanisms for engaging civil society in discussions of government decisions are working, as there is a demand from the authorities for the expertise of think tanks.

Providing expert advice, including closed consultations, to the authorities. This method of interaction partially overlaps with the previous point, but does not completely duplicate it. In addition to formal working groups that include representatives of the state and civil society, consultations with the authorities can also take place during informal communication or closed meetings with a limited number of participants. Such contact often takes place on the basis of personal acquaintance, trust and acknowledgement of expertise.

Table 8: Forms of interaction with the authorities that were most important for the organisation before 24 February 2022 and after the full-scale Russian invasion

	Used up to 24 February 2022	Used as of January 2023
Participating in TV/radio shows, publishing articles in the media to attract the attention of the authorities	30	26
Providing expert advice, including closed consultations, to the authorities	26	30
Preparation of policy papers that may be of interest to the authorities on the initiative of the think tank	33	19
Preparation of policy papers at the request of the authorities	23	17
Sending requests for information from public authorities	22	15
Development of draft regulations and bills at the request of the authorities	23	20
Participation of government representatives in the think tank's public/communication events	32	24
Participation of the think tank's experts in working groups established by the authorities	29	26
Direct action (organising or participating in public demonstrations, protests)	11	0

Note: It was possible to select all that apply.

As expected, in the context of martial law, none of the organisations surveyed indicated that they use direct action in their advocacy, as this is directly prohibited by the Law of Ukraine “On Martial Law”. Overall, as can be seen, the use of all advocacy methods has decreased. This is partly due to the restrictions imposed by martial law, and partly due to the reduced capacities of think tanks.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian think tanks remain a significant actor in the decision-making process and will play a role in future reforms and the revival of Ukraine after its devastation by Russia. That is why it is important to invest in improving think tanks’ institutional capacities, in order to help them overcome temporary challenges and develop as effective civil society actors and changemakers.

A final important point is that human capital is particularly important for the success of think tank advocacy. Relationships between think tanks and government agencies in Ukraine are often personal, built on individual acquaintance, trust and previous experience of cooperation. To a certain extent, this has contributed to the preservation of think tank ties with the government agencies since the full-scale Russian invasion.

Those authorities that remain open to cooperation with independent think tanks under martial law have created working groups, to which think tank experts have been invited. Who is invited to participate in such working groups depends on the reputation of the think tank, the previous experience of cooperation between the governmental agency and think tanks, and mutual trust.

Personal connections with decision-makers also allow think tanks to obtain non-public information and calibrate advocacy activities. For example, having personal contacts with the managers of a specific government agency helps a think tank to quickly organise a closed consultation between representatives of the think tank and this specific government agency. This would require much more effort and resources without such personalised contacts.

“A lot of things are built on personal communications. Our organisation works with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Digital Transformation. Initially, the cooperation was based on individual communications. The ministry had a request for a study on one of their initiatives. They were looking for a researcher to carry out this study, and we were selected. It happened because our organisation was recommended to the ministry by a mutual friend who knew both me and the ministry’s leaders. Of course, an organisation needs its respectable brand, quality of materials, etc. to be accepted, even on the advice of mutual friends. But still, everything is initially based on personal communications.” – Respondent 7

However, this pattern of interaction has significant drawbacks. Obviously, if personal ties are interrupted, it leads to a breakdown in institutional interaction between the government and the think tank. That is why it is extremely important for think tanks to develop human capital and to foster skilful staff and engage them in advocacy work. This will promote trust in the think tank as an institution, not just trust in individual think tank representatives. To do this, a think tank should have the institutional capacity to hire new staff, invest in their development and mentoring from experienced colleagues, and create attractive conditions for working at the organisation, including a competitive level of financial support and social benefits.

To sum up, martial law has indeed caused some changes in the functioning of the government, which in turn has affected the advocacy opportunities of think tanks. However, most think tanks retain the ability to cooperate with the authorities and participate in policymaking. In particular, this is due to the demand from the authorities for the expertise of think tanks, which is why these authorities remain open to cooperation.

Changes in networking behaviour among think tanks after February 2022

The networking of Ukrainian think tanks since 2014 was mostly driven by the European political agenda and matters important to Ukrainian citizens. After the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, there was an impetus in Ukraine to implement European reforms. This created a window of opportunity for Ukrainian think tanks to contribute to the design and implementation of such reforms. Ukrainian think tanks have been actively establishing networks both inside Ukraine for more efficient advocacy of reforms in relations with the Ukrainian authorities and outside the country to promote Ukraine's European integration.²⁷

The full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022 only reinforced this pattern. Ukrainian think tanks and CSOs have joined their efforts to respond to the most urgent challenges that Ukraine is currently facing:

“The war unites Ukrainians, and think tanks in particular. In many aspects, think tanks are in competition with each other: we compete for the audience, for attention, for funds from donors, etc. However, we have become more united. For example, we are partners of the international Atlas Network. Now we have started communicating with other Ukrainian think tanks who are partners of this network. Previously, we communicated with them only while attending foreign conferences.” – Respondent 12

Within the framework of the study, the following additional thematic topics with which Ukrainian think tanks are actively involved were identified: 1) response to numerous war crimes committed by the Russian army; and 2) engaging in a recovery process that will require innovative approaches and reforms based on the values of transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness.

1. The Russian invasion has been accompanied by numerous war crimes committed by the Russian army against Ukrainians: indiscriminate shelling of civilian infrastructure and residential buildings, abductions, torture and executions of Ukrainians in the occupied territories etc. As a result, the **Ukraine 5AM** coalition was founded, which includes human rights organisations and think tanks working in the field of the rule of law. The purpose of the coalition is to document Russian war crimes, inform Ukrainian and international audiences about these crimes, provide legal assistance to victims of Russian aggression, and advocate for the creation of effective international mechanisms to bring Russian elites to justice for the crime of military aggression against Ukraine.

²⁷ In order to coordinate the efforts of think tanks and make their position in communication with the authorities even more influential, the Reanimation Package of Reforms coalition (RPR) was created. In 2018, the coalition included 83 NGOs working in various policy areas. Over the course of several years, the coalition members have contributed to the drafting and adoption of dozens of laws important for reforming the country. At the same time, to ensure closer links with EU policy-makers, the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office was established in Brussels. Another example is the UPLAN (Ukrainian Public Law and Administration Network) network, founded in 2017 under the auspices of the Center of Policy and Legal Reform (CPLR). The network aims to unite the efforts of think tanks and civil society organisations from different regions of Ukraine to promote reforms in the areas of public administration, rule of law, corruption prevention and regional development. In order to promote Ukraine's interests on European discussion platforms, the Ukrainian National Platform within the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was created, which brings together about 150 Ukrainian think tanks and CSOs. See also Axyonova, V. & Schöppner, F. (2018). *Ukrainian Think Tanks in the Post-Euromaidan Period: Exploring the Field*. In: Shapovalova, N. & Burlyuk, O. (eds.), *Civil Society in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: From Revolution to Consolidation*. Stuttgart: ibidem/Columbia University Press, pp. 215–240.

2. The Russian invasion not only led to significant physical destruction, but also had many negative social and economic effects, including the shutdown of businesses and the relocation and emigration of millions of people. Ukraine's recovery from the devastation caused by Russian aggression will require innovative approaches and reforms based on the values of transparency, efficiency and inclusiveness. To develop such solutions for Ukraine's future recovery, the **RISE Ukraine** coalition was founded, uniting around 30 Ukrainian and international think tanks. In 2022, the coalition, together with the Ministry of Infrastructure, agreed on the implementation of the Electronic Reconstruction Management System and launched a pilot project, the Digital Transport Infrastructure Reconstruction Management System.²⁸

In addition, public platforms that bring together experts from various fields of public policies have continued their research and advocacy activities in the spheres of economic recovery (e.g. the Centre for Economic Recovery²⁹) and advocacy of Ukraine's interests in the international arena (e.g. "ANTS" (National Interests Advocacy Network)³⁰). There has also been bilateral or multilateral cooperation between think tanks, that has not been based on the creation of formal associations.

The expert interviews show there are indications that think tanks can also identify other drivers to promote networking in the new coalitions, particularly to: 1) pursue a common goal; 2) promote intellectual exchange; 3) facilitate fundraising; and 4) strengthen personal networking.

- Networking and cooperation enable the aggregation of the organisations' respective functions, as well as attracting the intellectual resources of partner organisations in the pursuit of a common goal, and the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and adopt best practices. This creates a synergy effect, as it allows several organisations to accumulate academic, media and economic capital and convert it into policy impact (in Ukraine or internationally) more effectively than if several organisations worked separately.

"We have a project on countering disinformation, where our role is to coordinate partner organisations, who find and debunk disinformation, and aggregate their findings. We decided to do this jointly, and this was attractive to donors as well, because they did not want to duplicate each other. Donors were also interested in CSOs coordinating with each other and performing different parts of the same task (combating disinformation) [...] We respect all of our colleagues and have friendly relations, but in peacetime we competed with them. Of course, it was a healthy competition, but back then we could not imagine such a large project with so many CSOs working together on a common task. Of course, the competition has not completely disappeared, but people are now really willing to lend a hand to each other." – Respondent 5

One of the recent examples of the united advocacy efforts of think tanks is the campaign to preserve access to open data. Think tanks have issued joint statements,³¹ signed by many organisations, to make the voice of civil society more powerful in communication with the authorities.

²⁸ RISE Ukraine Coalition: the results of the year. (2023). RISE Ukraine. <https://www.rise.org.ua/blog/rise-ukraine-coalition-the-results-of-the-year>

²⁹ Center for Economic Recovery. <https://recovery.org.ua/>

³⁰ ANTS - National Interests Advocacy Network. (2022). ANTS. <https://ants.org.ua/en>

³¹ CSOs call on the Ministry of Digital Transformation not to ruin open data in Ukraine. (2022). Anti-Corruption Headquarters. bit.ly/40AL8fc

3. Coalitions create opportunities for intellectual exchange between think tanks.

“There is an informal network of anti-corruption think tanks from Zaporizhzhia, Lviv, Odesa, Kropyvnytskyi, etc. We often compare what is happening in different regions in terms of transparency and integrity of local governments. This allows us to share experience and best practices. Besides, it is communication with people who share your values.” – Respondent 9

4. In addition, formal coalitions make fundraising easier, as a coalition of organisations has a greater capacity to implement larger projects than individual organisations. This makes it easier for a coalition to find donor support for a large project. The greater capacity of coalitions also inspires the authorities to trust CSOs and increases government agencies’ willingness to cooperate.
5. Coalitions also create an opportunity for the exchange of personal contacts. Personal connections play an important role in the relations between think tanks and the government in Ukraine. Individual members of a coalition who do not have personal contacts with a particular government agency can gain such connections with the help of their coalition colleagues.

“Coalitions create opportunities for communication, exchange of ideas and acquaintances. After joining RISE Ukraine, I have come to know a lot of new people whom I hadn’t known before. It is especially useful for joint research, peer review and to increase the reputation of your organisation. It is easier for a coalition to raise money because there are more organisations involved. And if the coalition has a strategy and articulates it well, then such a coalition is trusted. And since it is trusted, such coalition is able to find support and funds to realise its goals.” – Respondent 7

Thus, donor support for think tank coalitions makes an effective contribution to the preservation and strengthening of the institutional and research capabilities of Ukrainian think tanks and their role as participants in the policymaking process.

Most Ukrainian think tanks have experience of cooperation with foreign think tanks, CSOs and universities. During the survey, 25 out of 36 think tanks provided specific examples of foreign think tanks with which they cooperated. These are research institutions, mostly from European and North American countries.

Foreign organisations/think tanks with which Ukrainian think tanks have cooperated:

- ▶ Poland (Jerzy Regulski Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, TechSoup Europe, Wyższa Szkoła Administracji Publicznej w Szczecinie, OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, Center for Social and Economic Research, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych)
- ▶ Germany (German Economic Team, Institut für Europäische Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, European Research Centre on Anti-Corruption and State-Building, European Stability Initiative)
- ▶ United Kingdom (Defence IQ, Chatham House)
- ▶ Italy (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Torino World Affairs Institute, Eurac Research)
- ▶ Belgium (Promote Ukraine, European Ecological Bureau, The European Partnership for Democracy, Centre for European Policy Studies)

- ▶ USA (Indiana University, Atlantic Council, NDI, ICNL The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law)

The geography of foreign partnerships of Ukrainian think tanks is not limited to these countries. In the survey, think tanks from other regions were also mentioned, in particular:

- ▶ Georgia (Geocase, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information)
- ▶ Armenia (Transparency International Armenia)
- ▶ Kyrgyzstan (Central Asian Research Institute on Corruption and Money Laundering)
- ▶ Azerbaijan (Center for Economic and Social Development)
- ▶ Argentina (Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales)

Despite the extensive range of partnerships, most Ukrainian think tanks note that such cooperation is mostly occasional and based on specific projects.

Table 9: Experience of cooperation with foreign think tanks

Yes, we have experience in systematic partnerships and an established network of foreign partners	10
Yes, we have experience of cooperation, but it is not systematic: it is on a project basis	20
No, we have no experience of partnerships between organisations, but we do involve foreign experts in our projects	1
No, we have no experience of partnerships between organisations, but foreign think tanks involve our experts in their projects	4
Neither our organisation nor our experts have any experience of cooperation with foreign think tanks	1

To sum up, Russian aggression has strengthened networking and coalition building among think tanks in Ukraine. Such interaction allows think tanks to strengthen their research and media capabilities, facilitates fundraising and creates a synergy effect in advocacy. Thus, donor support for coalitions of think tanks is an effective contribution towards developing the role of Ukrainian think tanks as participants in the policymaking process. Ukrainian think tanks also have extensive experience of cooperation with foreign think tanks, CSOs and universities. However, this experience is often unsystematic. Thus, it seems reasonable for donors to establish projects implemented jointly by Ukrainian and foreign think tanks.

The role of media and communication in the work of Ukrainian think tanks

Cooperation with the media has always been an important focus of the activities carried out by Ukrainian think tanks³² – on the one hand, to educate Ukrainian citizens about certain social and political issues, and on the other hand, to exert an indirect influence on politics by mobilising the public. Since 24 February 2022, this work has become even more important. Working with the media allows think tanks to convey information about events in Ukraine to foreign audiences, strengthening their fundraising capabilities and promoting Ukraine’s interests abroad.

“We have a series of podcasts where we have been telling people what is happening since the beginning of the invasion. There was a lot of information and people were confused [about] how to interpret it. We tried to explain without propaganda what was happening. [...] Usually, the minimum coverage of one broadcast is about 100,000 people. And this is a very important communication tool for us. First, we communicate with people who donate money to the Armed Forces. These are mostly young people aged 16 to 35. Secondly, each broadcast is read by our government. [...] we are listened to by representatives of the military-industrial complex, politicians, BBC editors, and all news outlets. [...] And this is also a kind of influence on decision-making. Plus media, plus money for the foundation, trust, etc.” – Respondent 3

Since 24 February 2022, the media work of Ukrainian think tanks has changed, as demonstrated by the expert interviews and the survey. This primarily concerns both the intensity and the thematic, geographical breadth of journalistic enquiries.

Table 10: The primary target audiences of organisations’ communication efforts in 2021 and after the Russian invasion

Ukrainian mass media	29
Ukrainian civil society organisations	22
Central authorities of Ukraine	31
Local authorities in Ukraine	15
Ukrainian business structures	7
Foreign business	2
Ukrainian parties, political forces	5
Ukrainian educational institutions	9
Authorities of foreign countries	11
Expert circles and civil society in foreign countries	20
Foreign mass media	15

Note: It was possible to select no more than five target audiences that were the most important for the organisation.

³² Melnyk, L., Patalong, M., & Sydorchuk, O. (2016). *Denkfabriken in Deutschland und der Ukraine: Unterschiede und Perspektiven für die Zusammenarbeit*. Institut für Europäische Politik. bit.ly/3YIF7AS

Table 11: Communication efforts aimed at international audiences after 24 February 2022

Significantly increased	11
Somewhat increased	10
Remained at the same level as it used to be	8
Somewhat decreased	2
Significantly decreased	4
International audiences are not a priority for our organisation	1

The expert interviews indicate that the geographical spectrum of journalistic enquiries has changed. While earlier requests came mainly from EU countries and the US, the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has increased the interest of media from Asia, Latin America, India, etc.

“Me and our experts were constantly on air. It was five to seven broadcasts a day, and different media from all over the world – from the Chinese to the USA, from the British to the Polish ones.” – Respondent 15

“Before the invasion, we mostly produced media materials for Ukrainian media. [...] This influence through foreign media is working. Foreign experts, having read our materials, started writing to their Ukrainian colleagues and convincing them to make certain decisions. Therefore, this is one of the ways of influence decision-making.” – Respondent 3

The survey also shows that the dissemination of information to foreign audiences is highly relevant for Ukrainian think tanks. Various communication channels are used for this purpose. In addition to handling journalistic enquiries, participation in discussion formats organised by foreign organisations is also considered a high priority.

Table 12: Methods of communication with international audiences

Publication of translations into foreign languages of the organisation’s analytical materials on the organisation’s website	24
Writing analytical materials for foreign journalistic or scientific publications	21
Providing comments on current events in Ukraine for foreign media	26
Coverage of the organisation’s activities and dissemination of messages on social networking sites that are actively used in foreign countries (for example, Twitter)	16
Participation in public events organised by foreign think tanks, non-governmental organisations or foreign governments	26
Invitation of foreign experts to participate in public events held by your organisation	20
Conducting closed consultations for ambassadors, representatives of the governments of foreign countries in Ukraine	14

Note: It was possible to select all the options that apply.

The increased media work puts a strain on think tank staff and takes away time that could be spent on programmatic and research activities.

“We have always been very open to working with the media. [...] After February 24, the attention to the situation in Ukraine and to war crimes related to human rights increased dramatically. And accordingly, the number of requests from journalists to us has increased dramatically. Not only within the country, but also a huge wave of international requests. For the past six months, we have been dealing with five, six or seven broadcasts, comments, and media requests every day, which is very exhausting. It is a huge burden on the staff, because we also have to do our main programmatic work. However, we try to respond to all journalists, because we understand them. First, they cannot wait, they have a deadline, they have to get the story out quickly. Second, we understand that such attention will not always be there, so we need to respond to this request now.” – Respondent 16

It has been observed that since 24 February 2022, the interest of journalists in certain topics has changed. Topics such as security, international relations, and to some extent energy and the economy are now more in the spotlight, while in comparison other topics such as the democratic development of Ukraine or the reform process seem to have lost journalistic importance.

“The topics that are requested by the media are very dependent on the situation. And it was clear when the war started, our military experts were in demand. There were dozens, perhaps hundreds of interviews and comments for various media. Then they were joined by other topics and other problems, such as social and humanitarian, energy, which are now in greatest demand.” – Respondent 11

“Our media communication has become less intense, because the topics of democracy, transparency and accountability of the authorities... are not so interesting to the audience in wartime. Writing something like, ‘Oh my God, local councils have removed all information from their websites’ is somewhat irrelevant now. Our public communications have become somewhat less than they used to be. [...]” – Respondent 1

In addition, it appears that new communication channels play an increased role. This particularly concerns the use of Twitter and Telegram. While Telegram, alongside Facebook, is primarily used as an internal channel for political communication within Ukraine, Twitter is used for communication with foreign audiences.

Table 13: Use of social media and platforms for communication after the Russian invasion

	We have not used and do not use this platform	We began to use it significantly less	We began to use it a little less	We use it as before	We began to use it a little more	We began to use it significantly more
Facebook	0	5	2	24	5	2
Twitter	9	1	1	6	10	3
Telegram	12	0	1	7	8	4
TikTok	27	1	0	0	1	0
Instagram	15	1	1	5	6	1
LinkedIn	17	0	1	8	3	0
YouTube	5	2	2	17	6	2
Organisation website	0	0	3	25	3	4

On the one hand, this creates new opportunities to communicate content more effectively to the general public. On the other hand, problems that existed before the widespread Russian invasion were compounded, including, for example, the need for professional maintenance of websites.

“After 2014, our main communication channel was our website. This is our pain. The fashion has changed so many times, and we still have an outdated design of the website. Probably because we want to do big changes, but we do not have the money for it, so we use what we have. [...] We have Facebook, which we paid a lot of attention to developing in 2015–2016. We have 14,000 subscribers. We want more, but this is the audience we have so far.” – Respondent 12

Think tanks also have to make additional efforts to meet the requirements of audiences and develop communications on such platforms. Think tanks involved in research and monitoring of media need to learn new research methods in order to analyse the content disseminated on such platforms.

“We have always been involved in monitoring television content. There is a National Marathon on television and we are monitoring it. The use of Telegram has grown a lot, and now we need to monitor Telegram as well. However, it needs completely different tools and we need to form a team for this task.” – Respondent 5

However, there are a number of limitations when working with media. Firstly, the public’s interest is currently focused on war-related topics, secondly, the reputation and personal popularity of the authors of the media product is important, and thirdly, the quality of the format of communication must be taken into account.

In summary, the increased media work represents a “window of opportunity” for Ukrainian think tanks to communicate their policy research findings to the general public. However, it also poses a major challenge since it requires additional competencies.

Conclusion

Despite the full-scale Russian aggression since 24 February 2022, Ukrainian think tanks did not collapse; on the contrary, they proved to be resilient civil society organisations. Their work was interrupted during the first few weeks, but over time most resumed their activities. The loss of staff members is perhaps the most sensitive issue for the operational capacity of think tanks, since people, with their skills and experience, are the main asset of think tanks. The trend of such staff attrition in these organisations is likely to continue.

Another problem faced by think tanks is the high workload placed on the team, in particular due to a significant increase in communication activities, psychological stress and employee burnout. In addition, a great challenge lies in operating within the context of the threat of Russian missile attacks, which requires the creation of equipped shelters and proper working conditions within them, as well as the purchase of equipment to enable continued work during power outages (e.g. power banks, high-capacity mobile batteries, uninterruptible power supplies, and means to enhance mobile and internet communications).

Despite the introduction of martial law, Ukrainian think tanks have managed to maintain cooperation with Ukrainian authorities. However, restrictions can be observed in the area of open data, as some registers and databases remain suspended, which in turn has an ongoing impact on the analytical work of think tanks.

One of the biggest changes in the operational logic of Ukrainian think tanks following the full-scale Russian invasion was the significant increase in demand from Ukrainian and international media for think tank expertise, as well as in communication and advocacy efforts aimed at foreign audiences. This has created a considerable additional burden on think tank staff, who at the same time need to carry out the organisation's main programmatic activities.

The Russian invasion has contributed to unprecedented networking and coalition-building among Ukrainian think tanks. Coalitions provide very important benefits for think tanks: they create opportunities for intellectual exchange, simplify fundraising and promote more effective advocacy with the Ukrainian government. Nevertheless, cooperation between Ukrainian and foreign think tanks is mostly unsystematic, which prevents them from adopting best practices in research, communication and advocacy.

Annexes

Annex 1: Complete list of identified think tanks and the 36 organisations that took part in the online survey

	Central office location	36 think tanks that completed the online survey
Cherkasy City Institute	Cherkasy	
Polissya Foundation for International and Regional Studies	Chernihiv	
Dniprovsky Center for Social Research	Dnipro	
Institute of Public Expertise	Dnipro	✓
Carpathian Institute for Analysis “FrankoLytics”	Ivano-Frankivsk	✓
Kharkiv Institute for Social Research	Kharkiv	
Kharkiv regional civic organization “Local Democracy Foundation”	Kharkiv	✓
Observatory of Democracy	Kharkiv	✓
Kharkiv Anti-Corruption Center	Kharkiv	
CEDOS	Kyiv	
DiXi Group	Kyiv	✓
Association of Ukrainian Cities	Kyiv	
Ukrainian Institute on Public Health Policy	Kyiv	
Easybusiness	Kyiv	
Texty.org.ua	Kyiv	
Civil Network “OPORA”	Kyiv	✓
Strategic and Security Studies Group	Kyiv	✓
Detector Media	Kyiv	
Center for Policy Studies and Analysis “Eidos”	Kyiv	
Europe Without Barriers	Kyiv	✓
Civil Society Institute	Kyiv	✓
The Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting	Kyiv	
Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation	Kyiv	
Institute of Mass Information	Kyiv	
KSE Institute at the Kyiv School of Economics	Kyiv	
Committee of Voters of Ukraine	Kyiv	✓
Agency for Legislative Initiatives	Kyiv	
International Centre for Policy Studies	Kyiv	
National Ecological Center of Ukraine	Kyiv	✓
Ukraine Economic Outlook	Kyiv	

“Ukrainian Prism” Foreign Policy Council	Kyiv	✓
Transparency International Ukraine	Kyiv	
Ukrainian Security Studies Foundation	Kyiv	
Ukrainian Institute for the Future	Kyiv	
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research	Kyiv	✓
Ukrainian Centre for European Policy	Kyiv	✓
Regional Center for Human Rights	Kyiv	✓
Ilko Kucheriv «Democratic Initiatives» Foundation	Kyiv	
New Europe Center	Kyiv	✓
Center for Middle East Studies (AMES)	Kyiv	✓
Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI”	Kyiv	
Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law	Kyiv	✓
Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies	Kyiv	
Centre for Economic Strategy	Kyiv	✓
ZMINA Human Rights Center	Kyiv	
Pylyp Orlyk Institute of Democracy	Kyiv	✓
Centre for Policy and Legal Reform	Kyiv	✓
AntAC	Kyiv	
Razumkov Centre	Kyiv	✓
Case Ukraine - Center for Social and Economic Research	Kyiv	✓
Centre for Transport Strategies	Kyiv	
Center of United Actions	Kyiv	✓
School for Policy Analysis NaUKMA	Kyiv	✓
VoxUkraine	Kyiv	✓
Anti-Corruption Research & Education Centre (ACREC)	Kyiv	✓
DEJURE Foundation	Kyiv	✓
Institute of Legislative Ideas	Kyiv	
Come Back Alive	Kyiv	
Center for Defence Strategies	Kyiv	
StateWatch	Kyiv	✓
Ecoaction	Kyiv	
ADASTRA	Kyiv	
Center of Tax Reforms	Kyiv	
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND FORECASTING «FINANCIAL PULSE»	Kyiv	✓
Institute of Social and Economic Transformation (ISET)	Kyiv	
OsvitAnalytyka (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University based think tank)	Kyiv	

Institute for Information Security	Kyiv	
Ukrainian Center for Law and Crime Research	Kyiv	
CHESNO Movement	Kyiv	
Center for Innovations Development	Kyiv	
Center Life	Kyiv	
Anti-Corruption Headquarters	Kyiv	
Center for Political Analysis and Electoral Consulting	Lutsk	
NGO “European Dialogue”	Lviv	
Institute of International Economic Research	Lviv	
Environment. People. Law	Lviv	✓
Resource and Analysis Center “Society and Environment”	Lviv	✓
UCU Analytical Center	Lviv	
Center for Liberation Movement Studies	Lviv	
Agency for Economic Development	Mykolaiv	
Mykolaiv City Development Foundation	Mykolaiv	
Association for Community Self-Organisation Assistance	Odesa	✓
Odesa Institute of Social Technologies	Odesa	
Black Sea Center for Political and Social Research	Odesa	
Bureau for Economic and Social Research	Poltava	✓
Institute of Analysis and Advocacy	Poltava	
Bureau of Policy Analysis	Sumy	✓
Center of Social Research at Sumy State University	Sumy	
Think Tank for City Development “ZEON”	Zdolbuniv (Rivne region)	

The following selection of tables provides additional insights into the financial stability of think tanks and their relationship with donors.

Table 14: Confidence in the financial stability of the organisation when planning future activities

I am confident in the financial stability of the organisation only within the next 2–3 months	4
I am confident in the financial stability of the organisation in the next 6 months	5
I am confident in the financial stability of the organisation over the coming year	16
I am confident in the financial stability of the organisation over the next few years	6
There is no certainty even in the short-term	5

Table 15: Share of the organisation's total funding from non-donor sources (voluntary contributions from citizens and businesses, income from the provision of paid services by the organisation, etc.) in 2021 and after the full-scale invasion in 2022

	2021	2022
up to about 10%	22	25
about 11–20%	3	2
about 21–30%	2	2
about 31–40%	1	1
about 41–50%	0	0
more than 50%	6	4
No answer	2	2

Table 16: Changes in the work of the donors in the following aspects after 24 February 2022

	Significantly increased	Increased to some extent	No significant changes	Decreased to some extent	Significantly decreased	Hard to say
Flexibility in planning and implementation of project activities	5	23	7	0	0	0
Willingness to simplify bureaucratic processes and reporting in the interaction between the donor and think tanks	4	12	17	1	1	0
Willingness to support an increase in employee wages	2	11	19	2	1	0
Willingness to support the professional development of analysts	1	5	25	2	1	0
Willingness to support payments for office space rent, utilities, communication services	0	3	26	3	1	1
Willingness to support payments for outsourced services (translation, accountant)	0	4	26	3	1	0
Willingness to support the payment of taxes from the wages of employees working under labour agreements	0	1	27	2	1	2
Willingness to support the purchase of equipment necessary to work under the conditions of Russian attacks on infrastructure (generators, uninterruptible power supply and charging stations, equipment for arranging shelters in the office)	7	15	11	0	2	0
Willingness to support the study of foreign languages by employees	1	5	26	0	2	1

About the authors

Serhii Shapovalov is an associate lecturer at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and a political analyst at the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. His analytical work centres on public opinion research and influenceability. He is also responsible for the coordination of research programmes on political issues, especially language policy and memory policy.

Laura Christoph is a research associate and project manager at the Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin. She holds a master's degree in East European Studies from the Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich and the University of Warsaw's Political Science and International Relations Faculty. Her research expertise includes European integration and civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Ljudmyla Melnyk is a senior project manager and research associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin. Her academic background includes a Master of Arts in German Studies from the Lessja Ukrainka University Volhynia and a master's degree in Translation-, Inter- and Transcultural studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. Her research expertise includes civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine and German–Ukrainian relations. She is responsible for IEP's Ukraine projects.

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© Institut für Europäische Politik, 2023
Bundesallee 23
10717 Berlin
+49 (0)30 8891340
info@iep-berlin.de
www.iep-berlin.de

© Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2023
Olesya Honchara Street 33,
Kyiv 01001
+38 (044) 331-67-61
dif@dif.org.ua
www.dif.org.ua

iep Institut für
Europäische Politik

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