

2018

UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Eastern Ukraine

## Migration tendency in eastern Ukraine: negative trends in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts

### About USE

The UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Eastern Ukraine (USE) is an analytical tool designed to improve the understanding of societal dynamics in government-controlled areas (GCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and neighboring Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. This helps to identify strategic entry points for policies and programs that contribute to strengthening social cohesion.

USE is based on the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index methodology, which was originally developed in Cyprus by the Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development and UNDP. The initiative in Ukraine is jointly implemented by three UN entities, UNDP, UNICEF and IOM, under the overall direction of the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and is one of the UN's evidence-based knowledge products for joint analysis and programming in Ukraine.

USE is implemented on an annual basis and consists of two components: one component captures the views of 6,000 adults residing in the five oblasts in eastern Ukraine, including along the GCA side of the contact line; the other component captures the views of adolescents in Donetsk and Luhansk GCAs. The USE conceptual model comprises more than 70 indicators, each measured through multiple questionnaire items.

Conceptualization and analysis of the data has been done in consultations with government and civil society representatives in Kyiv and in each of the five oblasts. For more information on USE and to see the results of the first (2017) and second (2018) waves please visit [use.scoreforpeace.org](http://use.scoreforpeace.org).

# Introduction

Migration reflects the mobility of a population and freedom of movement, and is thus a neutral or even a positive phenomenon. One of the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 10 is the reduction of inequality within and among countries by facilitating “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.<sup>1</sup> Large-scale migration, however, may have adverse effects on the local economy, causing brain-drain in a region, disrupting social dynamics, and leading to an overall negative impact on social cohesion. Understanding the drivers and scope of migration tendency is thus important in order to distinguish between normal or healthy patterns, and those that reflect more negative trends.

There are various reasons why people may want to leave their place of residence, including financial, social, security, political, and environmental ones. Strong outward migration from Ukraine has been debated and reported over the past two decades, and has been named one of the factors behind the rapid decline of the population.<sup>2</sup> Internal migration and labor mobility are less visible, but are contributing to re-shaping the population profile of the country. While eastern Ukraine has long faced the reality of its residents leaving the area due to the weak economic performance of its backbone industries, this trend intensified following the start of the armed conflict in 2014, with millions of people leaving the region.

Understanding the drivers of migration is crucial for designing policies and interventions to incentivize people to continue building their future in eastern Ukraine. This brief focuses on migration tendency in eastern Ukraine by analyzing the reasons why people want to leave their place of residence, and outlines steps that can be taken to prevent further large-scale migration from the region.

## Summary of key findings

- Overall migration tendency in eastern Ukraine remained unchanged from 2017 to 2018, with just under half of the population expressing a desire to leave their place of residence. There was, however, a noticeable increase in both Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts;
- Migration tendency is more pronounced among younger people, aged 18-35, than among older people, aged 36-60. There is no difference between men and women when it comes to migration tendency;
- The main reasons for why people want to migrate are civic disempowerment and locality dissatisfaction;
- Experience of a traumatic event, whether conflict related or not, is also a significant driver of migration tendency;
- Additional drivers for the younger population include poor public services and infrastructure. For the older population, additional drivers include low trust in central institutions and having skills in white-collar professions; and
- Interventions aimed at mitigating negative population trends must include a combination of traditional income-generating support, together with activities that enhance civic engagement and a sense of agency, and improve locality satisfaction and the availability of leisure activities.

<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>

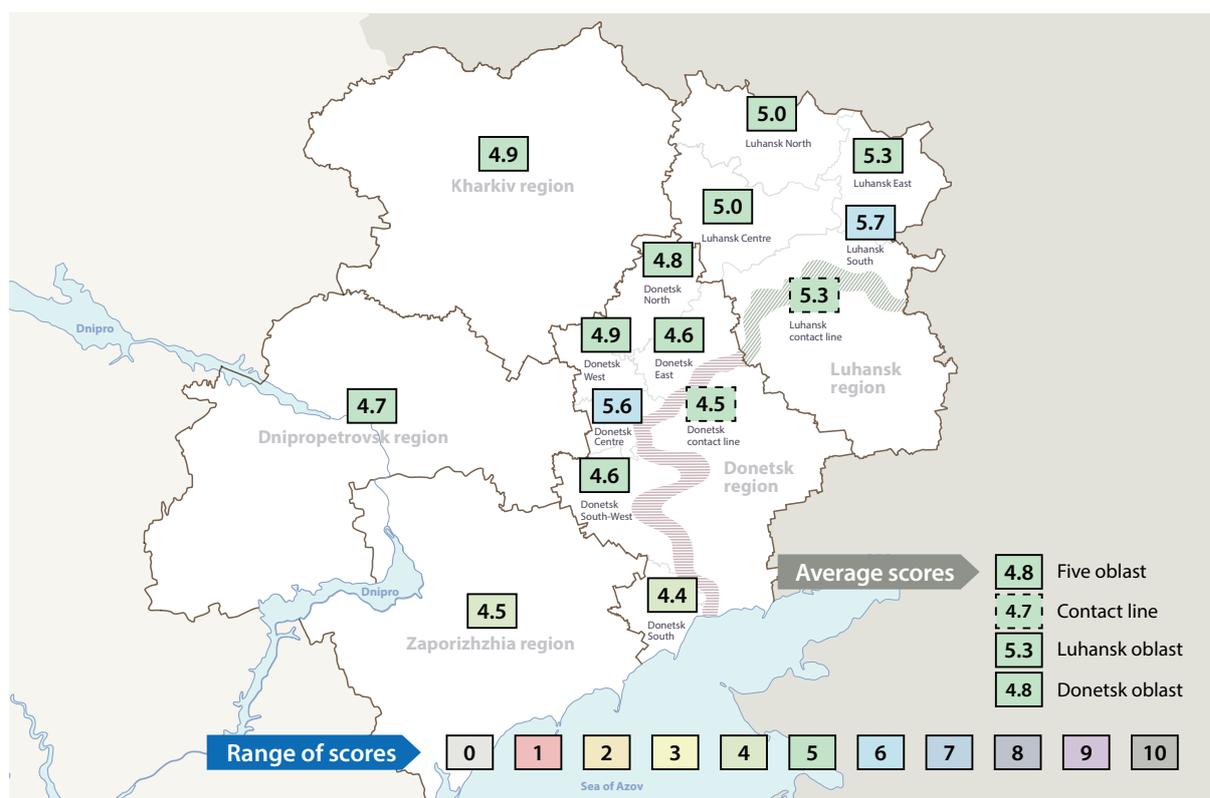
<sup>2</sup> [http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff\\_eng\\_10\\_10\\_press.pdf](http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff_eng_10_10_press.pdf)

# Which residents of eastern Ukraine want to leave their homes?

## Geographical comparisons

The average score for migration tendency in eastern Ukraine is 4.8 (see Figure 1), where 0 indicates that no one is thinking about leaving, and 10 indicates that everyone wishes to leave.<sup>3</sup> At the oblast level, the highest migration tendency is in Luhansk oblast (5.3) and the lowest in Zaporizhzhia oblast (4.5). There are also noteworthy differences within Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts: migration tendency is highest in central Donetsk oblast and in southern Luhansk oblast, while the lowest is in southern Donetsk oblast, where the large city of Mariupol is located. People living along the contact line do not have a much higher inclination toward migration, although they report much lower locality satisfaction (see USE brief *Frontier communities of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts: a neglected resource*).

■ **Figure 1. Migration tendency**



## Migration tendency 2017–2018

The overall regional score for migration tendency remained unchanged from 2017 to 2018, with slightly less than half of the population in eastern Ukraine indicating a desire to leave their place of residence. Migration tendency is, however, increasing in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

## Demographic comparisons

Age is the only demographic factor that has a significant impact on migration tendency. People aged 18–35 have a stronger wish to leave their place of residence than people of older age (see Table 1). There are, however, no significant differences between men and women, nor are there any significant differences between urban and rural residents.

■ **Table 1. Migration tendency by demographic group<sup>4</sup>**

Age group			Sex		Settlement type	
18 – 35	36 – 60	61+	Women	Men	Urban	Rural
5.6	4.7	3.8	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.8

<sup>3</sup> Migration tendency is not a measure of actual migration flows, but refers to the extent to which people are inclined to leave their place of residence in search of more or better opportunities. The USE migration tendency indicator also does not explore the locations where people want to move to (within the country or abroad).

<sup>4</sup> A 0.5 difference in scores indicates a notable difference.

# What drives migration in eastern Ukraine?

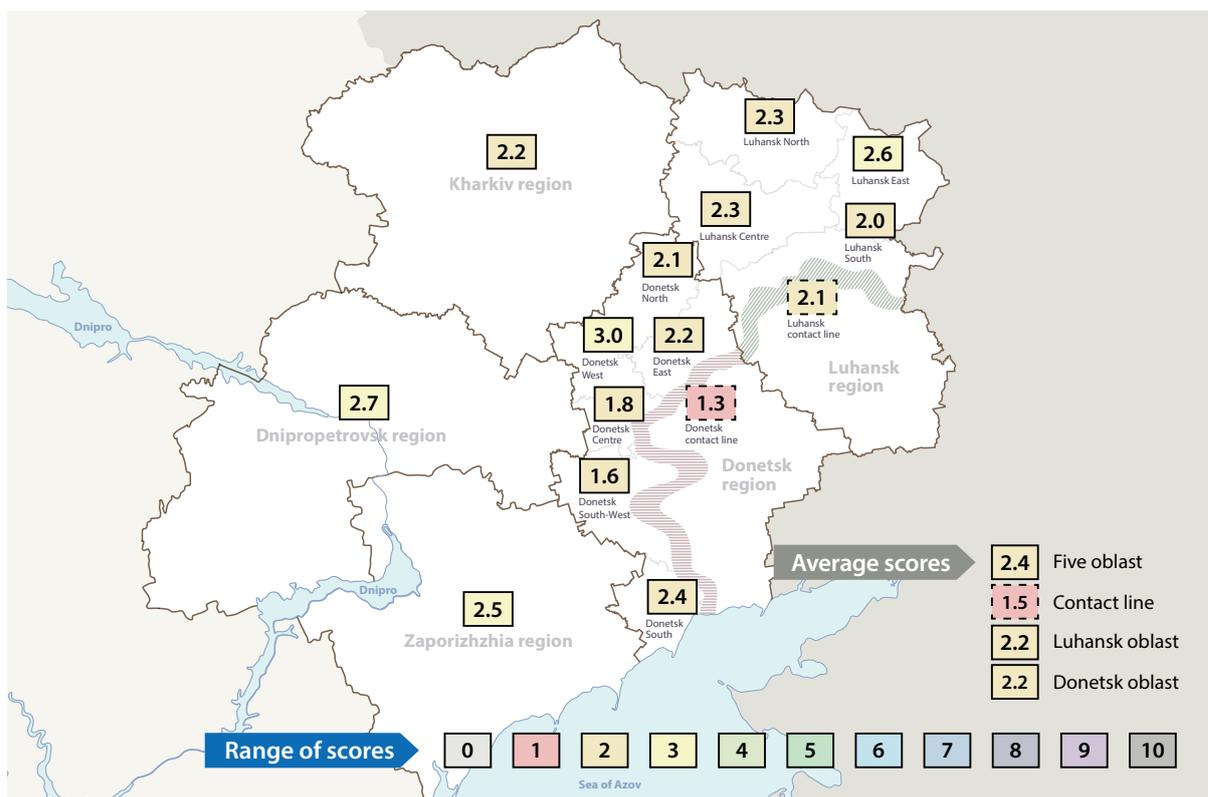
The next sections present the reasons why people want to leave their place of residence in eastern Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> All age groups want to leave their place of residence for very similar reasons, although there are additional specific reasons within each age group (see Annex A for a full list of scores for these drivers).

## Civic empowerment

Low levels of civic empowerment is a major driver of migration for both younger and older people.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to a general belief that the main push factor for migration is unemployment, the USE analysis shows that the strongest link with migration tendency is people's level of civic engagement, the availability of opportunities for civic engagement, and a sense of agency (the extent to which people feel they can make a difference in their communities). In short, the less a person is participating in community life, the fewer opportunities are available, and the less people feel that they can affect the development of their community, the more likely they are to want to leave.

Overall, the level of civic engagement in the region is low, especially among young men (see Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> More than half of the population in eastern Ukraine does not think they can make a real difference if they remain in their community. This is particularly true for women over the age of 35. Younger people have a higher sense of agency, but lower levels of civic engagement compared to older people.

■ Figure 2. Civic engagement

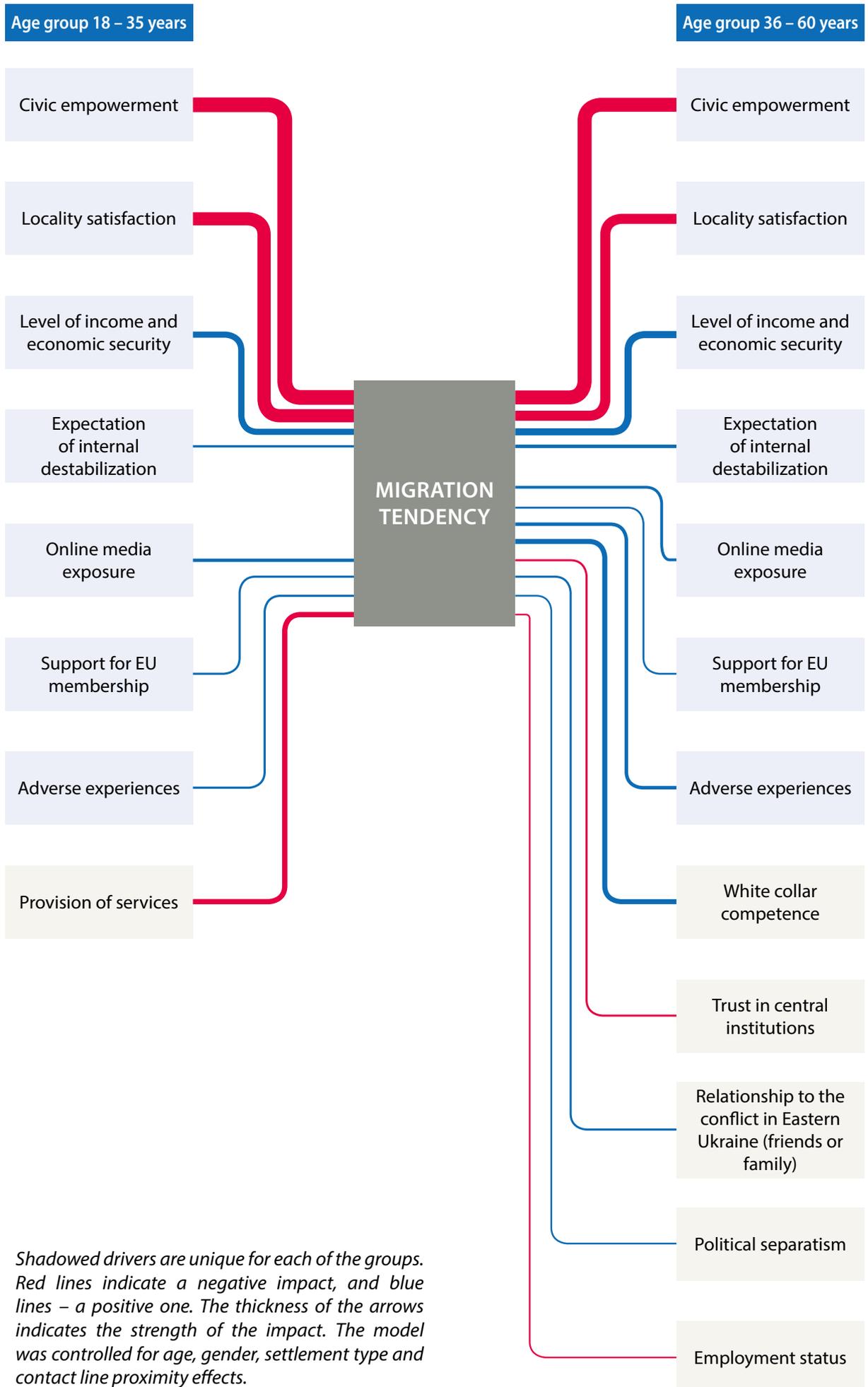


<sup>5</sup> As USE focuses on the current residents of eastern Ukraine, an analysis of migration tendency cannot be automatically extrapolated to explain the reasons for why people who already left eastern Ukraine decided to do so.

<sup>6</sup> Young people refers to those 18–35 years old. Those aged 61 and older have been excluded from the analysis as this group exhibits a much lower inclination to migrate.

<sup>7</sup> Civic engagement refers to engagement in various social and political activities, such as participating in local council meetings, improving common residential territory, or voting in elections.

■ Figure 3. Main drivers of migration tendency by age group



## Locality satisfaction

Locality satisfaction is the second strongest driver for migration tendency, shared by both age groups. Unsurprisingly, the less satisfied a person is with their place of residence, the more likely they are to want to leave. Unpacking locality satisfaction shows that, overall, people tend to be satisfied with their locality but think that leisure and recreational opportunities are lacking in their area: as much as 40 percent report lack or absence of such activities. Locality satisfaction is lowest in Luhansk oblast, in particular in rural areas. The SCORE Moldova analysis also demonstrates that having options for spending your spare time is essential for a person's satisfaction with their community and their decision to leave their place of residence or stay.<sup>8</sup>

## Level of income and economic security

The third strongest driver of migration is level of income, which applies equally to both age groups. The higher the level of income that people report, the more likely they are to want to move. One possible explanation is that those who do not have the financial resources to leave their place of residence, such as due to low income, are not even expressing a wish to do so as there are few viable options for relocation. This group of people also seems to negatively assess their chances to successfully settle in a new place and are afraid to lose what they already have, such as a place to live. This could explain why people along the contact line do not report significantly higher inclinations to migrate compared to residents of other parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, since reported income and economic security are lower at the contact line. On the other hand, unemployed people aged 36-60 who are actively looking for work but cannot find it in their place of residence demonstrate more readiness to risk moving and believe that they will have better chances elsewhere.

## Other factors

Other, albeit less influential, drivers of migration tendency common to both age groups are:

- **Political preferences:** Those who support Ukraine joining the EU have a stronger wish to migrate than those who do not support Ukraine's accession to the EU. Aside from the political aspect, this driver may reflect the comparatively stronger job incentives—availability and remuneration—that EU countries provide;
- **Fear of destabilization:** Those who believe that internal factors, such as rising crime, unemployment and political rivalries, are likely to destabilize the country in the future are more likely to consider leaving than those who do not fear such developments;
- **Adverse experiences:** A person who has personally experienced, or whose close friend or family member has experienced, a traumatic event such as robbery, physical assault or eviction from their home is more likely to want to leave than those who have not had such direct/indirect experiences; and
- **Online media exposure:** The more a person uses online media, the more likely they are to want to leave.<sup>9</sup> This may be explained by greater exposure to a variety of information available on online media, compared to traditional media, which may bring greater awareness of attractive pull factors present outside the immediate place of residence.

<sup>8</sup> <https://use.scoreforpeace.org/en/moldova/2018-General%20population-0>

<sup>9</sup> Online media consumption as well as other indicators have been controlled for age, sex and type of settlement.

## Migration drivers specific to younger and older residents

Despite the fact that most drivers of migration tendency are common to both age groups, there are important differences. The first is that only the younger population, specifically young men, is driven to move because of the low quality of services; the less satisfied members of this group are with infrastructure and public services, the more likely they are to want to move. Healthcare services and justice are rated particularly low among young people.

Only the 36–60 age group is likely to have incentives to leave the region due to an additional mix of economic, political and conflict-related factors, namely:

- **Employment:** Those who have assessed themselves as competent in white collar professions such as management, engineering and IT want to leave to a larger extent than those who do not have such skills. This driver is valid for men only. Being unemployed also predicts a higher inclination to migrate;
- **Political views:** People who have lower trust in central institutions such as the president, the Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the courts are more likely to report a higher inclination to migrate. Those who support a political settlement of the conflict leaving the non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) outside of Ukraine, as opposed to being reintegrated, are also more likely to want to migrate; and
- **Relationship to the conflict:** People, especially women, who have a family member or a close friend who has participated in the armed conflict are more prone to want to leave than those who do not have such connections to the conflict.

### What factors do not affect migration tendency?

The USE analysis shows that several factors that underpin migration tendency in other contexts have proved not to be of major significance for eastern Ukraine. These include personal security, that is, a person's feeling of physical security does not seem to affect their desire to stay or leave. Trust in local institutions also makes no real difference, while trust in central institutions and the feeling that a person cannot make a difference in their community strongly contribute to the wish to migrate.

# Conclusions and recommendations

Migration tendency in eastern Ukraine remains above a level that can be considered positive for economic growth and development, especially in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where people have had, and continue to have, the highest levels of both direct and indirect exposure to the conflict. People who consider leaving eastern Ukraine are driven by a mix of traditional factors, such as locality dissatisfaction, and more context-specific factors, such as low levels of civic empowerment or trauma from the armed conflict.

A continued trend of migration will inevitably have long-term implications for the sustainability, growth and social cohesion of eastern Ukraine. It will add to the loss of human capital in the region, as residents with higher incomes, that is, with resources to invest in small and medium businesses, and white-collar skills have the strongest inclination to migrate. Migration will also have negative effects on the demographic composition of eastern Ukraine, as the population is already aging and young people are showing the highest inclination to leave.

Given the significance of civic empowerment as an explanatory factor for migration tendency, focusing on establishing mechanisms that allow for individual input into the local development processes is essential. As young men are under-represented in civic activities, it is crucial to identify activities and issues that could motivate this group to become more active civically. These mechanisms can be formalized through local government agencies and civil society, or informal processes through loose community or neighborhood initiatives. Since the majority of people in eastern Ukraine feel that they cannot make a difference in their communities, such mechanisms must include a feedback element, where the authorities report back on how they have taken into consideration the voices of their constituents. The sense of agency, that is, the belief that ordinary individuals can bring about positive change in their communities, can also be nurtured through sharing and disseminating civic success stories, where proposals and initiatives from ordinary individuals resulted in a positive change.

To increase locality satisfaction, investment must be made into bringing cultural and community activities outside of main population centers. Given that parts of eastern Ukraine are rural, with poor road quality and weak transportation networks (see e.g., USE brief *Key changes from 2017 to 2018*), it is important to prioritize local mobility so that oblast or raion centers become more reachable, and access to leisure activities for young people from rural areas improves. In addition to ensuring access to such services as Internet for small and rural communities, it is important to improve service delivery, and especially healthcare and justice, the two services rated the lowest by young people in the region.

Unemployment should be addressed through income-generating activities for SMEs. It is also crucial to retain white-collar professionals by providing them with prospects for high-skilled employment opportunities in the region. Equally important, access to quality vocational training and education must be ensured, so that people can match their skills with the demands of the regional labor market.

As both younger and older residents are driven to leave eastern Ukraine because of high perception of internal threats, local dialogue and open discussions around these topics should be encouraged. Notably, residents in eastern Ukraine are not driven to leave because of a fear of external threats, such as Russian intervention, but by issues such as growing unemployment, crime, corruption and the status and presence of former combatants, which are of more importance for the local population.

As the USE analysis has demonstrated, designing interventions that will contribute to mitigating migration tendency in eastern Ukraine and to building sustainable and attractive communities must entail a combination of different activities tailored to contextual and demographic needs.

## Annex A

### Scores for major migration drivers by age group

Indicator	Average (five oblasts)		Donetsk oblast		Luhansk oblast	
	18-35	36-60	18-35	36-60	18-35	36-60
Locality satisfaction	6.4	6.4	5.6	5.6	4.9	5.0
Civic empowerment	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.1
Level of income	4.5	3.7	3.9	3.5	4.0	3.0
Support of the EU membership	5.2	4.6	4.9	3.9	4.0	3.3
Fear of internal destabilization	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.8	6.9
Online media exposure	6.5	4.9	6.9	5.1	6.2	4.8
Adverse experiences	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9