



УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ФРОНТИР:

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для Закарпаття
та Причорномор'я

UKRAINIAN FRONTIER:

challenges for
Transcarpathia and
Black Sea Coast region

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Research Materials

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project “Ukrainian frontier: challenges for Transcarpathia and Black Sea Coast region” is the initiative launched by NGO “Centre for International Security” (CIS) and the National Institute for Strategic Studies with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Ukraine, in partnership with the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine.

The aim of the project is to identify imminent threats and challenges in multicultural, multinational Ukrainian Black Sea Coast region and Transcarpathia, where are risks of increasing conflictogenicity due to internal and external factors; developing recommendations for reducing the identified destructive impacts and ensuring good governance at the level of districts (communities), local and central authorities.

During April-May 2019, representatives of the Centre for International Security and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Ukraine studied the problems of the regional centres of Transcarpathia (Mukachevo, Berehove, Khust), Mykolaiv oblast (Pervomaisk, Yuzhnoukrainsk, Ochakiv), and Odesa oblast (Podilsk, Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, Bolhrad).

The fieldwork stage included quantitative and qualitative sociological research (employing a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and focus groups in the format of thematic round table discussions). The sampling quota was based upon sex, age, and representative of the population of the region in which the research was conducted; for experts - targeted (representatives of civil society organizations, business associations, central and local authorities, local self-government, education and culture sectors). In total, 1500 questionnaires were processed (500 respondents from each region). The organization that implemented the study is the Centre for Applied Sciences.

As a result, problem mapping for each studied region and their respective districts was performed.

The data was organized by the following categories:

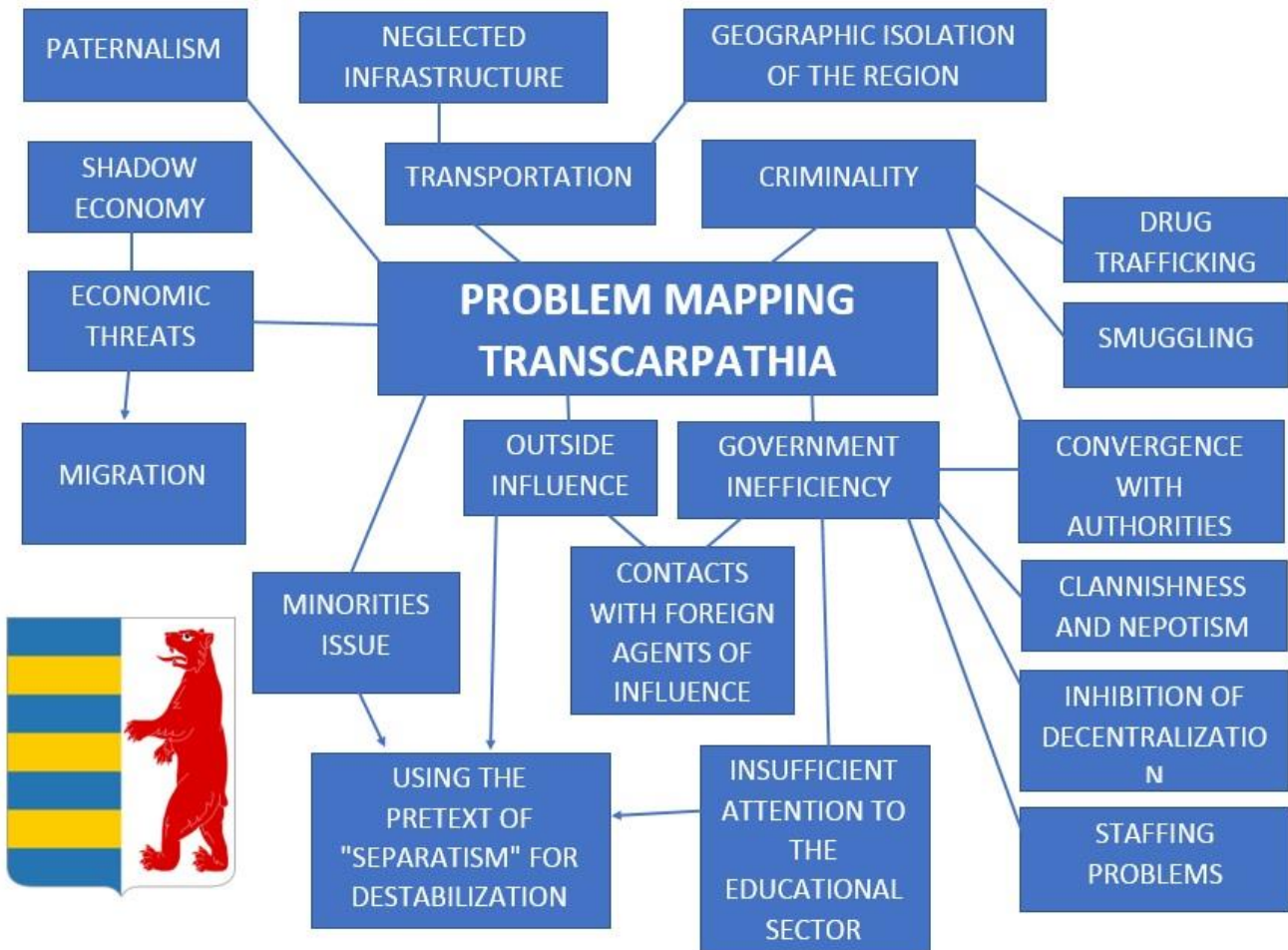
- Regional threats;
- Local threats;
- External influences;
- Internal problems.

The methodology of the research was based on "Methodological Recommendations for Risk Assessment in Communities, Adversely Affected by Armed Conflict", developed by the Ministry for Temporary Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine, as well as on the "Security Passport of Ukraine" developed by the CIS².

² “Security Passport of Ukraine: Results and Recommendations” – web-site of the NGO “Centre for International Security”, https://intsecurity.org/security_passport_of_Ukraine.pdf; Security Passport of Ukraine 2018: Results and Recommendations – web-site of the NGO “Centre for International Security”, http://intsecurity.org/Security %20passport_of_Ukraine_2018.pdf

UKRAINIAN FRONTIER: CHALLENGES FOR TRANSCARPATHIA

Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia oblast) is characterized by isolation and independent lifestyle relatively to the whole country. Yet, exactly this part of Ukraine is an example of a cohesive, peaceful coexistence of people of different ethnic groups and religious denominations in one territory. Therefore, the local problems is a unifying factor, and ways of solving these problems bring this region to another level of relations between public and state. As a result, the trends of the region's development open up new challenges and threats for both Transcarpathia and Ukraine.



Regional Threats

Transcarpathia has not escaped such statewide problems as unsatisfactory state of transport infrastructure, unemployment, low wages, and lack of waste processing plants. At the same time, Transcarpathia is characterized by the widespread labour migration, mostly triggered by economic factors, rather than ethnic ones. This is the most pressing issue because it provokes migration of the intellectual elites abroad, which respectively generates a shortage of skilled workers. It should be noted that according to the survey results, only 27.4% of respondents gave a negative answer to the question "Are you planning to take an opportunity to go work abroad?" While the largest share of the respondents - 31% - could not give a clear answer to this question, which can be explained by the region's residents uncertainty in their future

and situational decision making. In the following, we can observe the interdependence of problematic issues that concern residents of Transcarpathia.

Another region-wide problem is education in Ukrainian language. Besides the caused by migration lack of teaching staff, there is a noticeable inaction of the central government, which ignores the situation, and lack of an adequate resource base. Nevertheless, according to the results of the survey, more than 70% of the respondents indicated that they support the article on language in the education law and the draft law on the status of the state language. Taking into account the contradiction between these two facts, we can assume that further demands of the central government, in particular, on this issue, will lose legitimacy. Above all, the greater danger is that due to the internal influence and investment, foreign language schools will be more prestigious, comfortable, and in demand. The result may be that teaching in Ukrainian in educational institutions in the region will be suppressed.

Equally problematic is the economic situation in the region, negative trends are observed. Ten years ago, 54% of the regional budget was subsidized. Presently, this percentage has grown to 78%. Herewith, some districts are subsidized by over 90%. In these districts, only teachers and other public officials pay taxes. The reason for this situation is mass labour migration and failure to pay taxes. Only 450 000 people out of the 1.2 million people in the oblast pay taxes. At the same time, 12.9% of respondents' answers to the question "What does your income consist of?" were "private business", 9.4% - "earnings abroad" and 7.1% - "other unofficial income". Accordingly, we can assume that a large proportion of taxes from the private sector is not paid or paid to budgets of other oblasts. Regarding the distribution of salaries in the region, it is hypertrophied and unfair. Low salaries for educators and healthcare workers instigate even more corruption, which in turn causes questionable personnel appointments by top executives. This is especially noticeable in the results of the survey: to the question "Have you encountered corruption?" 58% of respondents answered "yes, in medical institutions" and 32.7% - "yes, in educational institutions".

The decentralization reform has become a problem for the region as well. Survey results showed that about 52% of respondents did not feel changes in their locality after the decentralization reform, and 7.3% of respondents believe that the situation has deteriorated. In Zakarpattia oblast, there is the lowest number of UTCs in the country: only six (Baranynska, Polianska, Perechynska, Irshavska, Vilkhovetska, and Tiachivska). Transcarpathia also remains the only region in the country where there is no long-term plan for the formation of united territorial communities. Such structures operate only under the patronage of the heads of the Regional State Administration (RSA) and their political allies from the "Opposition Bloc". For example, in Mukachevo, UTC was established in October 2018 but its work is blocked by the RSA. People are trying to form communities, but the regional authorities are reluctant to share funds and mandate.

In Transcarpathia, a noticeable problem is the transport infrastructure that connects the region with other parts of the country. A positive sign is the reopening of

the airport in Uzhhorod. However, the airport functions are extremely simplified and it does not really connect Transcarpathia with other regions in Ukraine. Only one flight per week departs from Uzhhorod in this direction. From year to year, the situation with the railway connection deteriorates. Even on holidays, no additional trains are sent to Transcarpathia, as is the case in other directions. The opening of new railway connections to the region in practice is a profanation. All three, introduced recently, depart to Rahiv. These trains are transiting Bukovel and this town is the main purpose of this intensification of railway communication, not the strengthening of transport links with Transcarpathia. All these new trains do not even stop in the tourist centres of the region. In such conditions, it is very difficult to leave this oblast for other Ukrainian territories. Constant underfunding and neglect of the need for repair contribute to the destruction of highways. Particularly poor road conditions on the roads of state importance "Mukachevo - Rohatyn" (the second most important transportation route of Transcarpathia), "Uzhhorod - Sambir", "Khust - Dolyna", "Nyzhni Vorota - Volovets - Mizhhiria", "Synevyr – Synevyrska Poliana", "Khust - Shaiany - Vyshkovo - Bushtyno".

Summing up the regional-level threats, it is worth noting that the low level of public awareness, lack of communication between citizens and government representatives are equally important. As a result, local communities slow down the implementation of certain infrastructure projects. For example, construction of the wind power stations is considered a promising endeavour, but the population protests against such projects. Above all, the biggest threat to the uninformed society is misinformation and propaganda.

Local threats

Mukachevo. The quality of the healthcare services has improved in Mukachevo, because of the medical reform. Certain services are provided free of charge in the district. As part of the survey, 15.6% of respondents noted that the quality of medical services has improved, while 48% believe that services remained on the same level, and 17.6% of respondents could not give a clear answer. We can hypothesize that the respondents' assessment of the results of medical reform depends on citizens' awareness and negative propaganda, which became widespread especially during the pre-election period.

Mukachevo has the potential to turn into a tourist hub, but there is a lack of funds, especially on the restoration of transport infrastructure. Neither Kyiv nor the regional authorities are interested in the development of the region. At the same time, local educators said there were some issues with the employment of students from the University of Mukachevo. However, these challenges do not apply to all professions; graduates of this higher educational institution (HEI) with qualification in some fields are highly valued. This issue is related to regional problems such as migration, corruption during recruitment, and lack of trained staff.

At the same time, banditry and racketeering became characteristic features of the city of Mukachevo. Entrepreneurs are forced to accept the conditions of racketeers,

trying to keep their lives and peace of mind. In general, racketeering “chokes” small and medium businesses. Sometimes there are clashes between representatives of various criminal groups, e.g. notorious shooting with the participation of the "Right sector" in 2015 is an example of such events. The fact that nobody was punishment shows that both parties to the conflict had the support of influential forces.

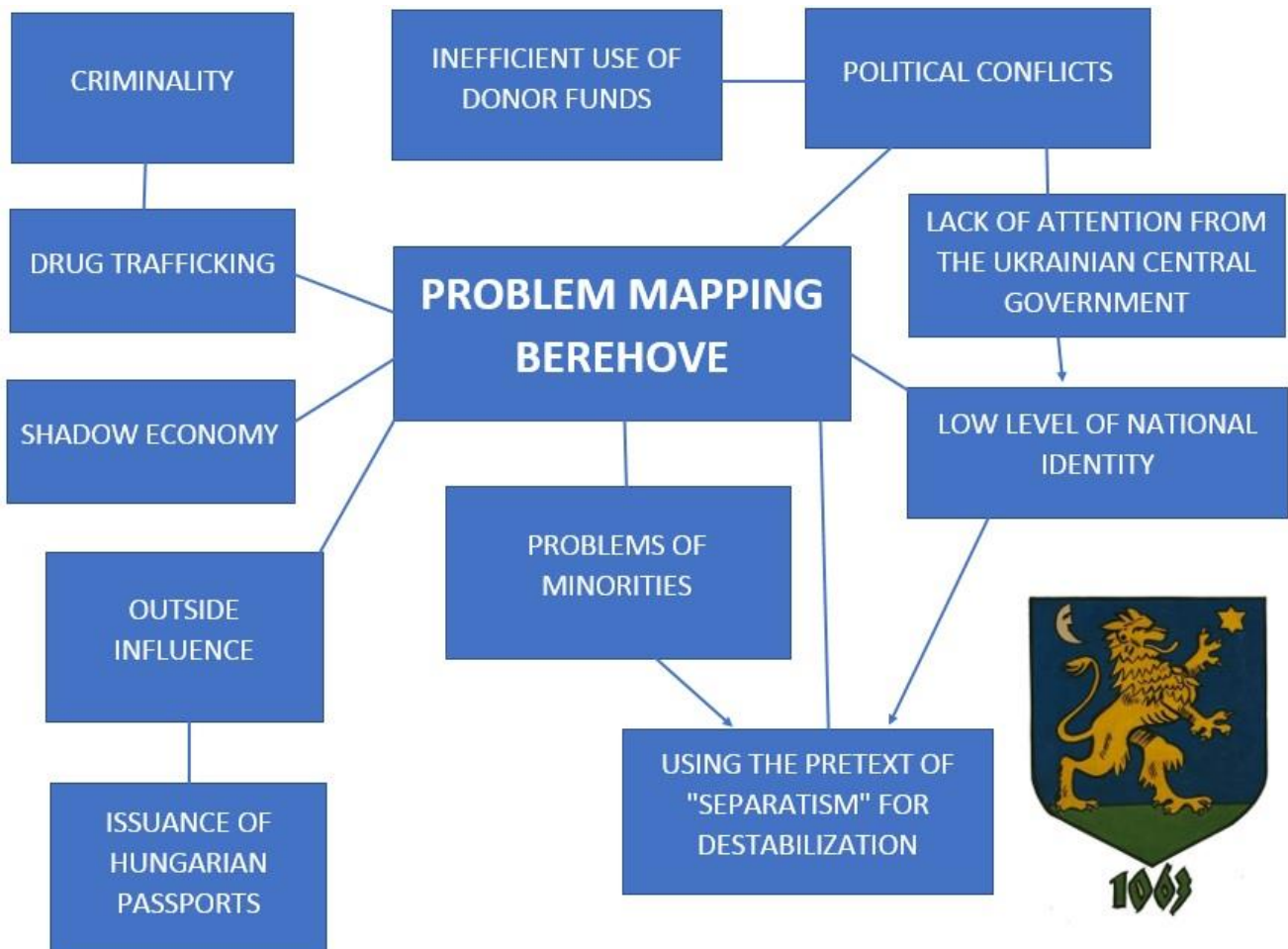


Berehove. In Berehove, a particularly prominent problem is the state of manufacturing industry. If in case of Mukachevo a certain industrial potential is still preserved, then in this area it has completely disappeared. Those enterprises that had opportunity for development moved to Mukachevo, increasing the potential of the centre and leaving this area without industry. It is worth paying special attention to the survey results separately in each district. In Berehove, 24% of respondents noted as one of the problems of their city is economic conflicts (raiding). One can assume that this is one of the hidden causes of the outflow of both industry and labour. In such conditions, young people do not see prospects in the homeland and leave; consequently, the region loses not only labour but also intellectual, promising capital. Thus, due to the labour migration, Berehove is already facing a shortage of labour power. Many local residents do not even move, they simply live in the Ukrainian territory and commute for work abroad every day, which is 10 km away. Simultaneously, on the question "Are you planning to take on the opportunity to work abroad?" 23% of the Berehove residents indicated that they already have such experience, 10% - plan to go in the near future, 8% - want to leave Ukraine permanently, and 38% - did not provide a clear answer. The results for this region are significantly different from the results of Mukachevo, as only 21% of respondents from

Berehove indicated that they did not plan to work abroad and were satisfied with the situation on the ground, while in Mukachevo 34.2% of respondents gave this answer. One can conclude that the greatest threat to Berehove today is labour migration: outflow of labour, capital, and skilled personnel. This problem is particularly noticeable in the educational and medical sphere. For with the departure of young specialists, there is an increasing aging of the personnel in these spheres.

At the same time, subventions for the so-called "Hungarian" district - settlements with a compactly settled Hungarian minority in the Berepivsky and Vynohradivsky districts - are not allocated from the state budget. As to the reasons for this, different points of view are being put forward: either the Ukrainian authorities save money by shifting responsibility for this territory to Hungary or officials are reluctant to provide funds to the territories under the influence of V. Baloha due to the internal political confrontation. The result of the survey confirm this reason, as more than 15% of respondents indicated that the key local problems and contradictions are political conflicts and power struggle. These factors, together with the classical for Ukraine "telephone law", hinders the development of the region.

The issue with transport is gaining particular importance in Berehove, which requires a quick solution. All-Ukrainian tendencies are maintained: while European partners are ready to invest in remedying the situation in the region, finance certain projects, they are stopped by distrust of Ukrainian contractors and reluctance to work with them.



For decades, in Transcarpathia, a system has been formed in which society is characterized by a high level of religious, linguistic, and ethnic tolerance. There were no conflicts on this basis in the region. Therefore, the recent problem of separatism, according to local representatives, is artificially created. The national Ukrainian media played an important role in fuelling this controversial topic. Their representatives at a certain time actively visited the region but not for the truthful and unbiased coverage of the situation, their purpose was to "find separatists." Thus, their position was based on their previous preconceptions, and not on the real state of affairs. They did not find manifestations of separatism; however, their activities and publications fuelled and formed a negative image of Transcarpathia in the Ukrainian perception. Among the concrete manifestations of this media approach that the residents of Berehove noted was polarization of various national minorities (journalists in their stories de facto compared the "good" for Ukraine Romanians living in Chernivtsi region, with "bad" Hungarians in Transcarpathia). The Hungarian community is naturally outraged by this. Local representatives emphasize that in Transcarpathia separatism exists only in journalistic materials that arbitrarily cast a shadow on a minority and have all the signs of incitement to ethnic hatred.

Khust. A specific problem for the region is the process of decentralization and united territorial community building. The situation is illustrated by the example of the urban type settlement Vyshkovo. At present, there are 12 000 people in the community formed around this settlement, which unites five villages, including Shaian resort. However, local tax revenues give only 7 million UAH to its budget and this is not enough to ensure normal functioning. For comparison, the budget of the city of Khust with subventions and grants amounts to 400 million UAH. Consequently, the economic and tax policies of the state are unsatisfactory for local communities. In fact, the funds provided are only sufficient to support the critical infrastructure for servicing the population (salaries for educators, healthcare workers, etc.).

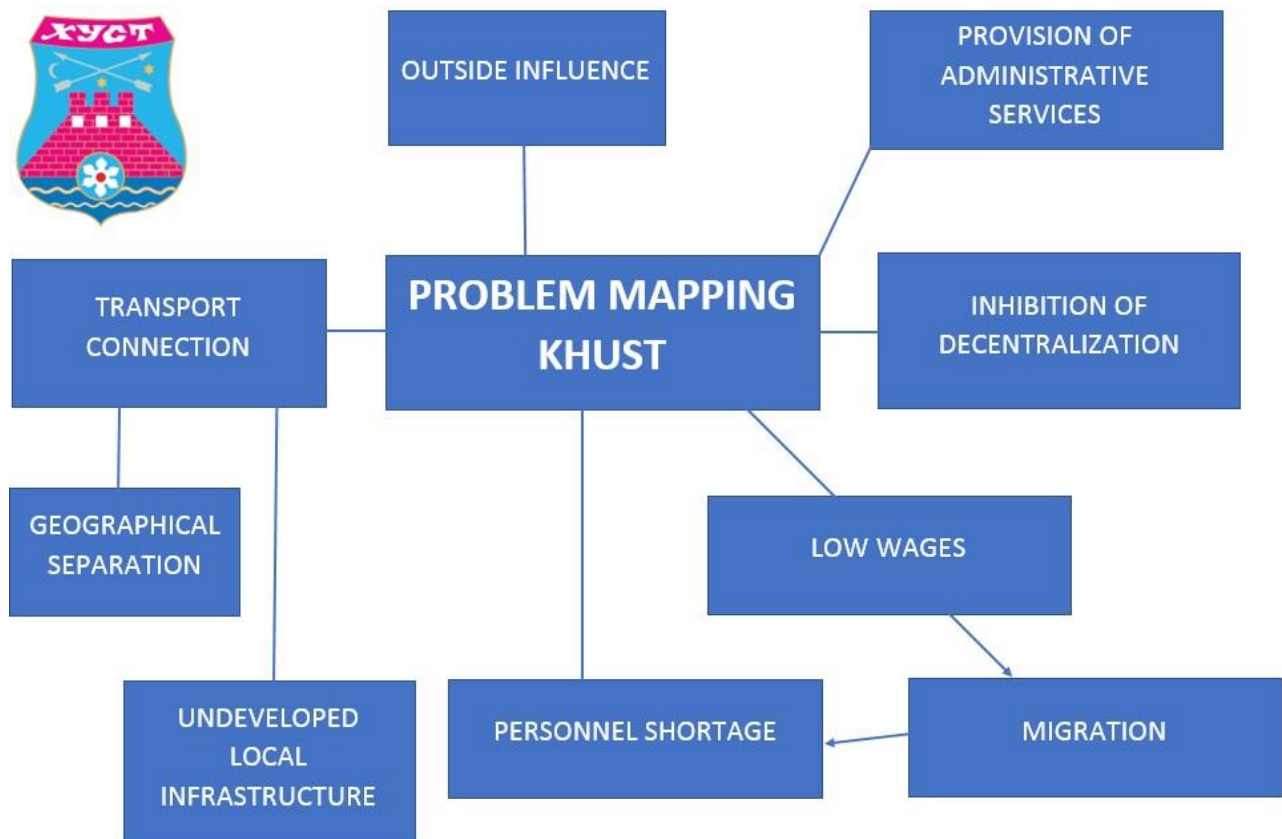
Another important problem is migration. People are leaving the area for Hungary (for example, in 2017, 120 families from Vyshkovo lived and worked in Budapest alone). Herewith, the participants of this processes of irreversible migration is the most active group of the population. Ethnic factor in this case has no influence on migration activity; both Hungarians and Ukrainians are leaving Transcarpathia. The prevalent phenomenon is temporary migration for work. Local residents even use holidays to go abroad and earn money. They work mainly in a different field than their specialization doing low skilled work. The cause of migration is, above all, the economic factor: lack of money and low wages.

Interdependent economic issues of citizens directly affect the local budget. Thus, individuals provide 92% of budget revenues at the expense of their income tax. Industrial enterprises avoid paying taxes by registering elsewhere and other similar tricks. For instance, around Vyshkovo there are four mineral water plants, but they pay nothing to the local budget. There are also enterprises of manufacturing, mining and processing industries; asphalt plants are built. Tourism is a promising sector of the economy. However,

its development is hampered by poor road conditions, which is characteristic for the whole oblast. The existing railway connection with the main part of Ukraine does not aid the situation.

There are no controversies based on ethnic, linguistic or religious differences in the area. The survey of the residents also did not confirm the existence of separatist sentiment. Instead, the current situation surrounding educational legislation is a source of lively interest from local educators. They emphasize that the main problem is ensuring teaching in Ukrainian language. The same programmes are used for teaching Russian-speaking Ukrainians as when educating Hungarian minority. Yet, there is a great difference between them; therefore, it is necessary to develop special programme for working with Hungarian national minorities. As a foundation, the format of teaching that is used in the education of foreigners could be applied. The textbooks and workload must be changed. Nevertheless, this is obstructed by an important problem inherent in the Ukrainian education system: education policy is formed without proper attention to the suggestions and recommendations of practitioners.

At the same time, the main wish of ordinary people, the problem that concerns them the most, becomes access to quality services. There is a number of grassroots initiatives working in this direction; for example, a state registrar's cabinet was opened in Vyshkovo, which simplifies service to citizens. However, in this administrative sphere there is a personnel shortage as there are no skilled staff to fill the vacancies. Extra money for their training and support is needed. The same problem is present in the field of education: lack of staff among preschool educators. The lack of human resources reserve provokes corruption during the teachers' recruitment.



External influence

The characteristic of external influence in this region is an economic component. Europe allocates large amounts of money to various areas of life in Zakarpattia oblast: repairing roads, equipping the checkpoint at the border, and introducing the waste recycling industry. For instance, Hungary, through the EU programmes, provided funds for the construction of a waste processing plant. The first part of the plant is already built near village Yanoshi of Berehove district. However, Kyiv for a year and a half drags the project's paper work, which impedes its implementation. Thus, European funds are allocated for the infrastructure sector, while Hungary also separately sponsors the cultural sector, and these funds disappear somewhere in the depths of the Ukrainian bureaucratic and corrupt apparatus, and in practice little is done. The Ukrainian authorities are preventing the efficient use of these funds.

Important in this case is the promptness of providing the region with aid. Since Transcarpathia is an area remote from the center, and infrastructure is one of the most problematic spheres in the region, Hungarian support has become noticeable. For example, in 2018 there was a problem with the supply of medicines for people connected to the artificial kidney; the medication was absent for six months. As a result, four people died in the oblast. In order to prevent further deaths, the RSA chairperson has contacted the Hungarian side. Hungarians promptly transferred the necessary medicines to the region. This is practiced not only by the regional authorities, but also by mayors who are trying to solve existing problems. Thus, according to one such request, Hungary transferred the chlorine needed for water purification to the region, when there was none in Ukraine, and Kyiv could not help in this matter.

At the same time, Hungary invests in the development of local businesses. For instance, last year the Ed Egan Foundation provided support to local entrepreneurs. The funds under this programme are given to business projects within Transcarpathia. This sponsorship project is for 5 years, which makes it impossible to withdraw money beyond its borders.

In the educational sphere, the Hungarian government finances the reconstruction of dozens of kindergartens in Transcarpathia and ensures the functioning of Hungarian schools. Hungary opens its own educational institutions of varying status in Ukrainian villages as well, because the country has the means and desires. Children are sent to study there because they have better conditions for their education in these schools. In addition, Hungarian school graduates can access higher educational institutions abroad through the simplified procedures, for example, in Slovakia, where it is possible to enter the HEI without the results of Ukrainian external testing. At the same time, the Hungarians are accepting to their educational institutions all those who are willing to apply, no matter what their ethnic origin is. The direct assistance to educators provided by Hungary is also important. After inflation, the Hungarian authorities increased payments to all teachers who teach children in Hungarian schools, disrespectful of the subject they are teaching. If an educator teaches in Hungarian language, he or she receives some kind of help once a year. In

2017, the amount was 300 EUR; in 2018, it increased to 700 EUR. The amount of funds provided under this state programme is about 5 million EUR a year. Healthcare professionals, librarians and journalists also receive payments from Hungary. In addition, guides receive extra pay as well. Since there is a shortage of such specialists, Hungary finances special training courses for them, both Hungarian and Ukrainian. Hungary has made a major contribution to the provision of preschool education; however, these institutions are Hungarian. Funds are also allocated for teaching in Ukrainian language but, for example, in Berehove these funds are insufficient. At the same time, representatives of local communities agree that from 2014 there is a significant improvement in funding for educational institutions in the district from the budget. It is not about salaries of teachers, but about the general support of educational institutions. In this case, the budget reform had positive effects. This - in combination with the Hungarian help, which during the last year was directed also to schools with Ukrainian language - improves the situation in the education sector.

Another good example is Vyshkovo, where a hospital was renovated with financial support from Hungary. Hungary also provided the region with fire trucks. However, the residents understand that the main burden in supporting the region is still on the Ukrainian budget. Foreign funds only help to preserve it and implement more initiatives. In this context, the approach of the chairperson of the Regional State Administration H. Moskal deserves attention. He does not shy away from attracting funds for the development of the region from all sources that can be reached, including funds from abroad.

If you look at the results of the survey, the attitude of local residents to the most influential and tangent to the region countries and institutions is interesting. Thus, the highest scored were - Germany, Slovakia, EU, NATO, the USA, and Hungary. We assume that such ranking depends more on the preferences of migrant workers and content of the local media.

Internal problems

It is indicative that the internal problems were revealed by the decentralization. The expert group has noted that it cannot be guided from above, inculcated by violent means. It should not be a simple redistribution of powers or revision of the existing boundaries between territorial and administrative units. For its successful implementation, it is necessary to introduce a new philosophy of life in the society, to educate the community and its leaders about the new format. It is necessary to create such a climate in which all members of the community will work for change and reform. Today, the reform represents a simple redistribution of funds, yet first, it must focus on changing local people's mind so that they more structurally dispose of the powers and finances they allocate.

The decentralization reform has a disputed reputation. There is a disproportion across the region. Rich villages form the united territorial communities (UTC) without any problems, and as a result turn into a locomotive of the reform, receiving at their

disposal the appropriate budget funds from the district. In return, poor depressed settlements, which existing UTCs do not want to incorporate, are left behind and have no resources to support themselves. In this situation, the district needs to be divided by the order "from above". It is noted, that the implementation of this reform cannot be fully given to the discretion of local communities; the district authorities have to have assent in this matter, although they must undoubtedly take into account the opinion of the population and seek compromises.

Regarding the system of allocation of the subventions and subsidies from the state budget, local experts have noted that the practice of redistribution of funds based on the distribution of population is wrong because the number of residents does not affect the depth of existing problems in one region or another. As a result, Transcarpathia can count on 2% of the total budget subsidies but it needs more, as it faces a large number of problems and threats that are not typical to other parts of the state. There is an urgent need to revise the Budget Code in this regard.

The weak human resources policy of the central government on appointments in Transcarpathia draws attention as well. First, it is about the head of the RSA, since he is the main representative of Kyiv in the region, a liaison between the region and the capital. However, the region's executives perform these functions poorly. For example, the acting Chairman of the Regional State Administration, H. Moskal, may have an activity that even brings positive results; however, the main problem is that he does not fulfil the main task of representation of state policy in the oblast. It is believed that the main purpose of the appointment of Moskal as the Head of the RSA was to create a counterbalance to the Baloha clan. Moskal has fulfilled this function, depriving Baloha of influence. However, reforms in the region are not implemented; there is a stagnation. He actively criticizes certain ministers and the actions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine; as a result, it seems as he acts separately from the central authorities. Consequently, in the population's public perception, there is a formed image of insufficient attention of the central government to the region and absence of their representation in it.

A specific issue is the problem of dual citizenship. Locals are asking a logical question: why cannot they do the same as (which raises accusations of separatism and lack of patriotism) senior officials living in Kyiv have passports of different states, and nobody condemns them? It is noted that for the local population, dual citizenship is not a political but an economic issue. It simplifies employment abroad, eliminates the need for a lot of paperwork. In a situation, where the region suffers from the unemployment, it becomes important for the migrant workers. Yet, they do not cease to identify themselves with Ukraine, because of Hungarian passports; they do not become less patriotic. Attention is also drawn to the fact that the practice of dual citizenship is recognized by certain EU countries. Consequently, it does not contradict the European values that Ukraine must recognize in realizing its integration strategy aimed at gaining membership in the Union.

The conditions for business are unsatisfactory. Initiative entrepreneurs do not feel confident about their future. At any moment, new legislative restrictions can put an end to their profits. The tax policy of the state is criticized. At the same time, it is noted that entrepreneurial activities, initiatives and tendencies of the population to enter business are higher than in other regions of Ukraine. As a result, there is a large number of enterprises in the oblast. However, many of them remain "in the shadow," and because of this, they do not fill the budget.

Sensitive for the region is the problem of criminalization. Due to the ineffectiveness of the police in combating ordinary crimes, there is no confidence in it among the residents. The assassination of entrepreneurs is a pervasive and widespread practice (incl. using grenades, grenade launchers, etc.). In general, the participants of the expert discussion confirmed that there is a convergence of authorities with criminality at all levels in the region. It is emphasized that local law enforcement officers are involved in criminal schemes; they directly control the criminal activities of the region. In this case, it is worth to stress on the general level of local residents' trust in law enforcement structures. According to the results of the survey, the highest level of distrust among the citizens of the region is in courts, the prosecutor's office, anti-corruption bodies, and the SSU. We assume that public opinion in the region is shaped according to the situation on the ground. An important detail is the route of drug trafficking to Europe through the region. However, such trafficking could be stopped by the local law enforcement agencies and intercepted at the border, but these activities usually have a small effect. The main route of drug trafficking is by transit of heavy aviation transportation through Uzhhorod airport. It is virtually impossible to seize such flights. After all, they are checked and sealed at other places. The same situation is with smuggling. The image of the problem is formed by the local manifestations of the phenomena that get into the media. However, there is a real threat of large cargo transit traffic, to which local law enforcement and customs officials have no access.

The solution to the problems of the region is hampered by the political struggle between the responsible structures. The power vertical does not co-operate in favour of society but has plunged into contradiction and conflict. For example, Mukachevo authorities are in conflict with the Head of the Regional State Administration H. Moskal. At the central level, there is no one to lobby for the interests of the region; civil servants who would perform such function do their jobs badly. Insufficient attention of the Ukrainian authorities to the problems of the region is manifested at all levels. For example, there is a complete disregard for various regional events, where the perspective directions of the region's development are discussed. In the bilateral Ukrainian-Hungarian conference on tourism, Hungary was represented by a powerful delegation of professors, academics, and employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Ukraine was represented only by one senior teacher of local HEI, despite the fact that the invitations to the event were sent to central authorities. Kyiv's indifference sometimes disappears but unfortunately, it can also have negative consequences. For

example, now there was a problem with documentary provision of cargo air transportation through Transcarpathia. Most aircrafts are heading to Slovakia with which there was an agreement signed a long time ago, that has been automatically prolonged year after year. Recently, questions about the need to understand its terms and agree on its provisions was raised in Kyiv and it turned out that it was concluded before Slovakia has joined the EU. So now, it is necessary to have a full audit.

Unlike the all-Ukrainian situation, for Transcarpathia there are no religious contradictions. Neither the Greek Catholic nor the Roman Catholic communities have issues with the Orthodox community, and there are Protestant churches in the region as well. At the same time, the region is one of the most religious in Ukraine; the population in general is apolitical, but religious. The region has the highest level of confidence in the church; people are ready to invest their own funds in it (for renovation and reconstruction). Conflicts on religious grounds are practically non-existent. In those that sometimes do occur, it is often the fault of the church itself and related to the unlawful activity and bad reputation of some its ministers. Such tolerant and moral relationships of local residents are confirmed by the results of the survey. For instance, to the question "Have you recently encountered intolerance towards minorities?", more than 70% of the respondents answered "No".

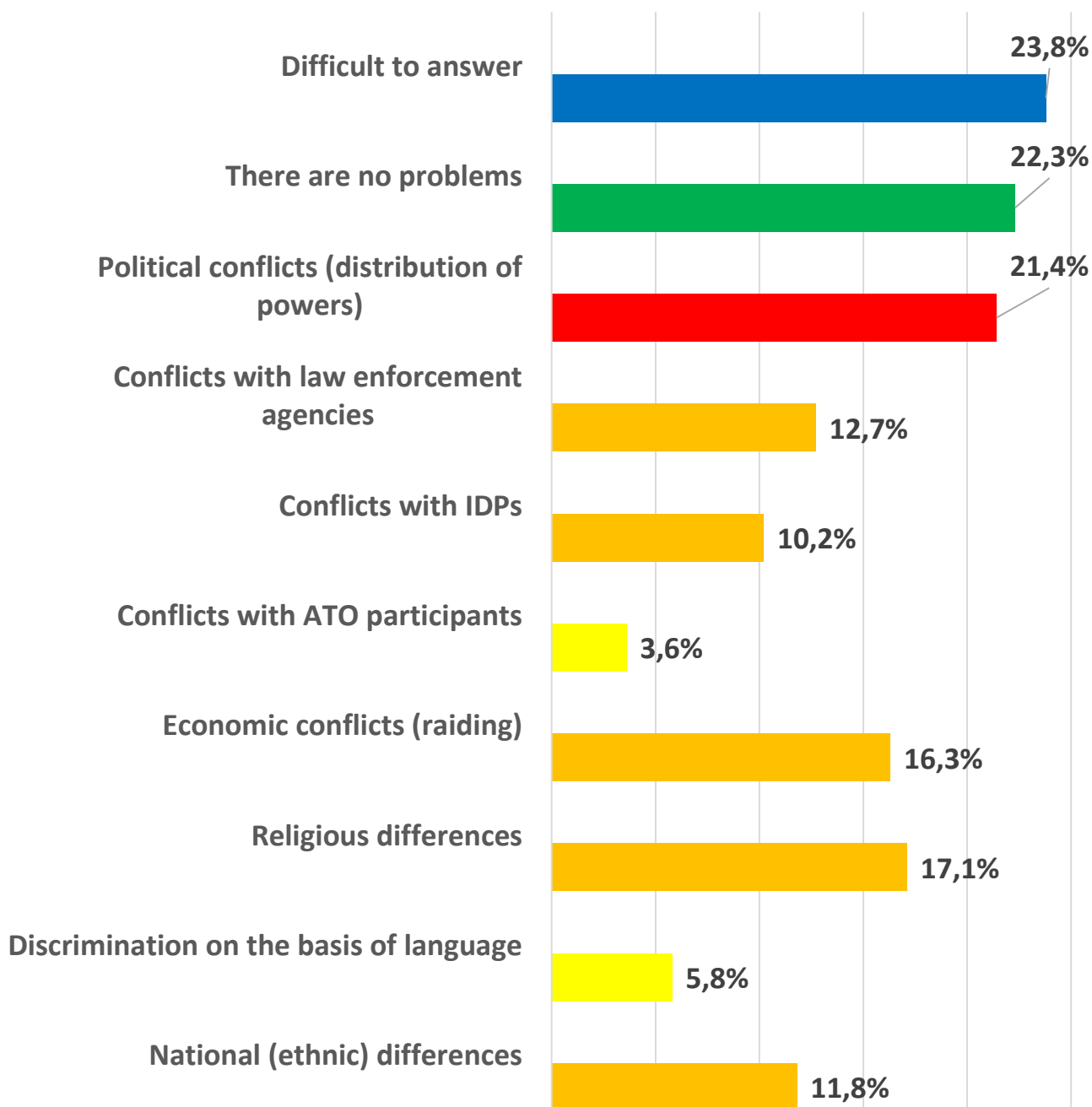
Recommendations

In order to establish a stable system of development of the region and reduce the influence of negative factors that have been formed in Zakarpattia oblast, the following is proposed:

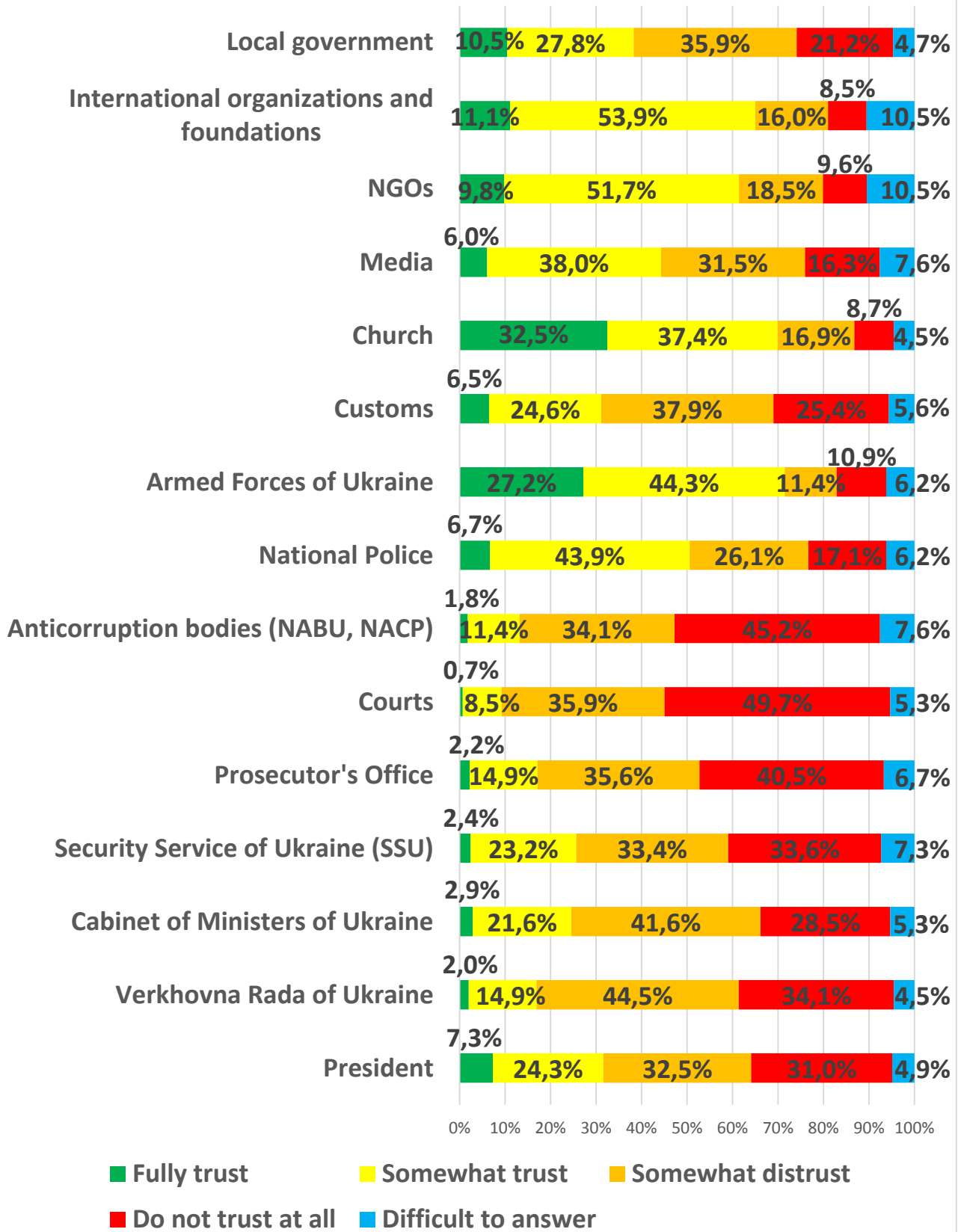
- To increase the budget financing of the social sphere in the region in accordance with its strategic importance and problematic issues inherent to this region.
- To create a system of benefits and incentives (tax reductions) for entrepreneurs (according to their level) and to facilitate business registration in the region, instead of beyond its borders, for taxes to stay in local budgets.
- To implement the process of personnel's circulation, particularly in the fields of education and healthcare. Introduce programmes for practice placement in the tourist region for educators and healthcare workers from other parts of Ukraine, for example, from the South and the Centre, where there is no personnel shortage. Encourage the arrival of skilled workers with temporary housing and promotions in health and tourism complexes in the region.
- To create a separate system of expert bodies in city councils that would specialize in the use of grant programmes to raise funds for problem areas of the region, for example, roads, educational resources for language learning, development of educational and entertainment centres for youth in the regions.
- To establish of a separate bonus, material incentive, for organizations, institutions or enterprises for activities in favour of the eco-system of the region (for example, for planting trees, recycling).

Annex 1.
TRANSCARPATIA – SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

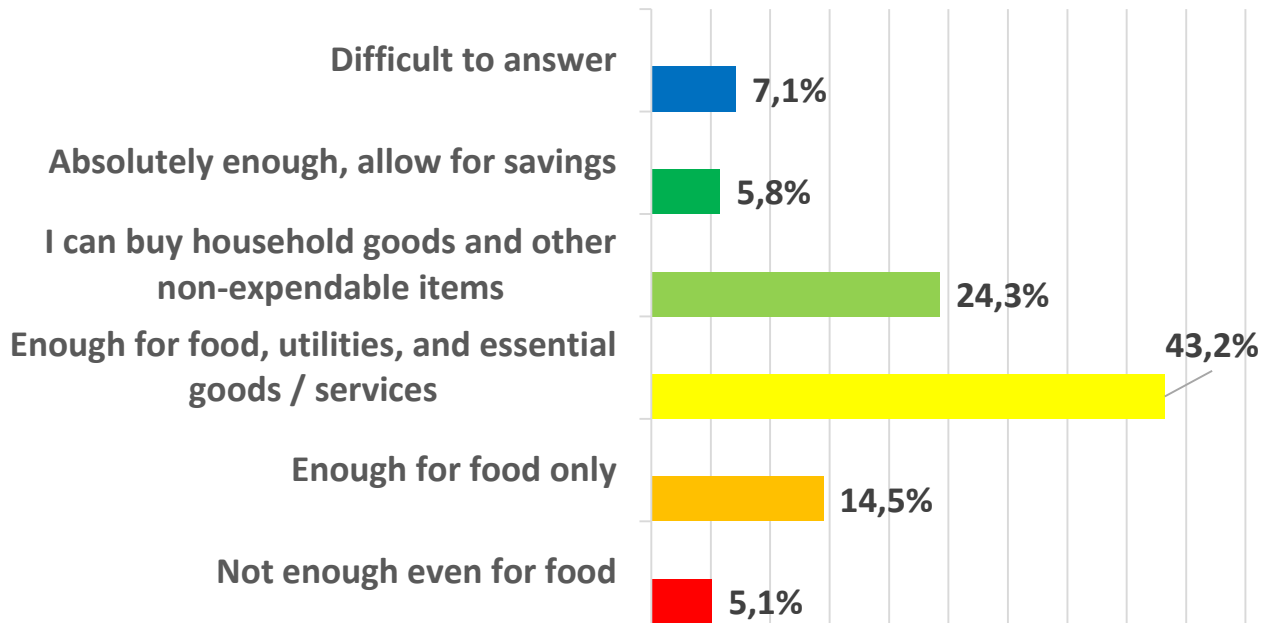
What problems and differences can be observed in your city?



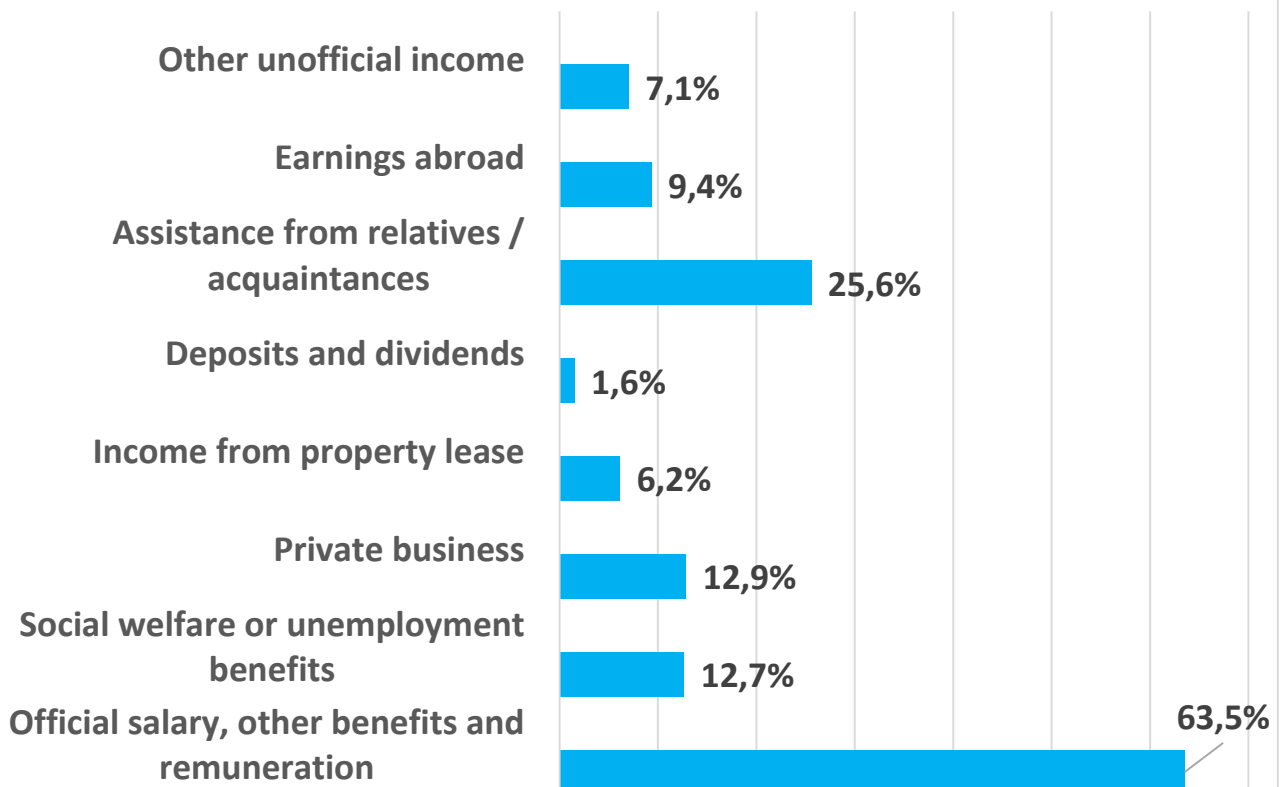
Evaluate the level of confidence in these institutions



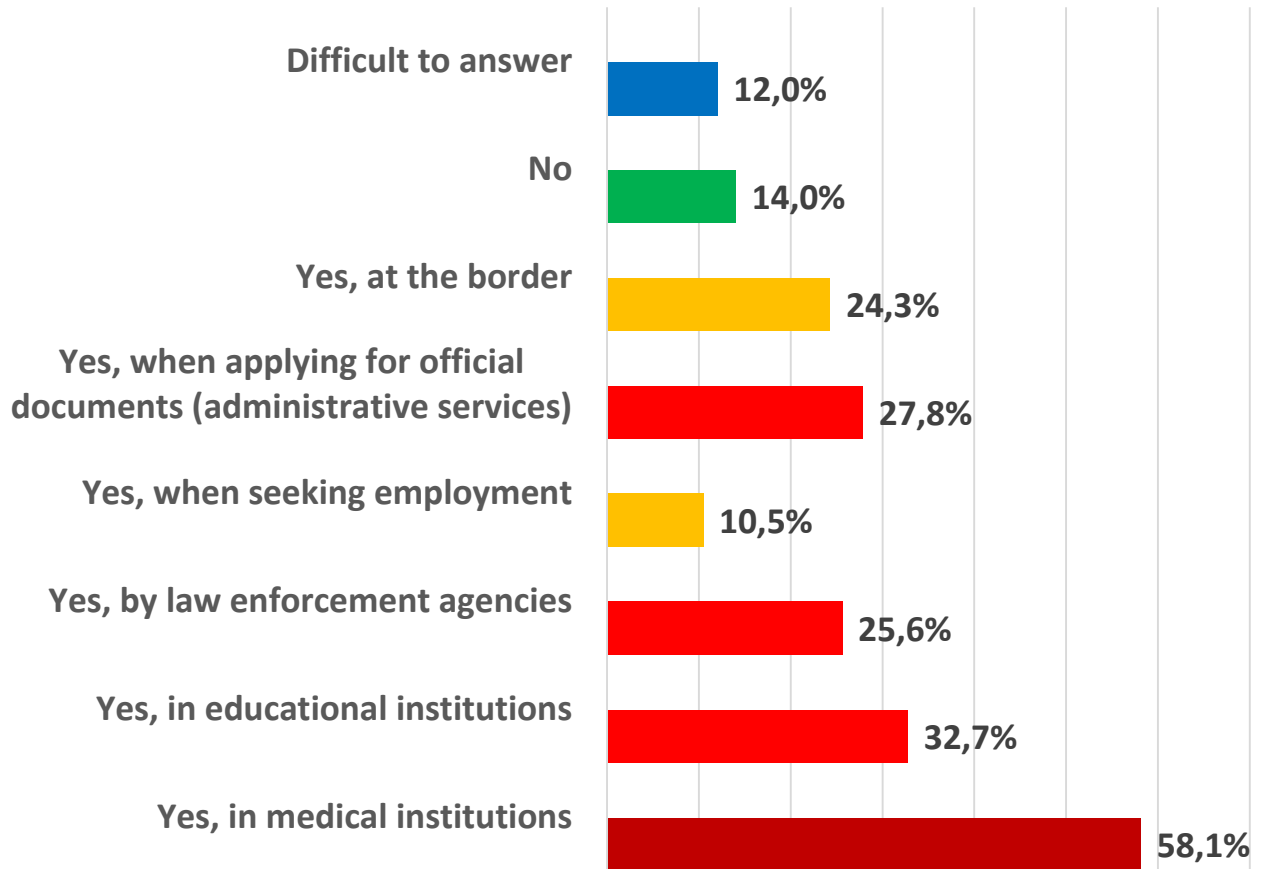
How would you rate your level of income?



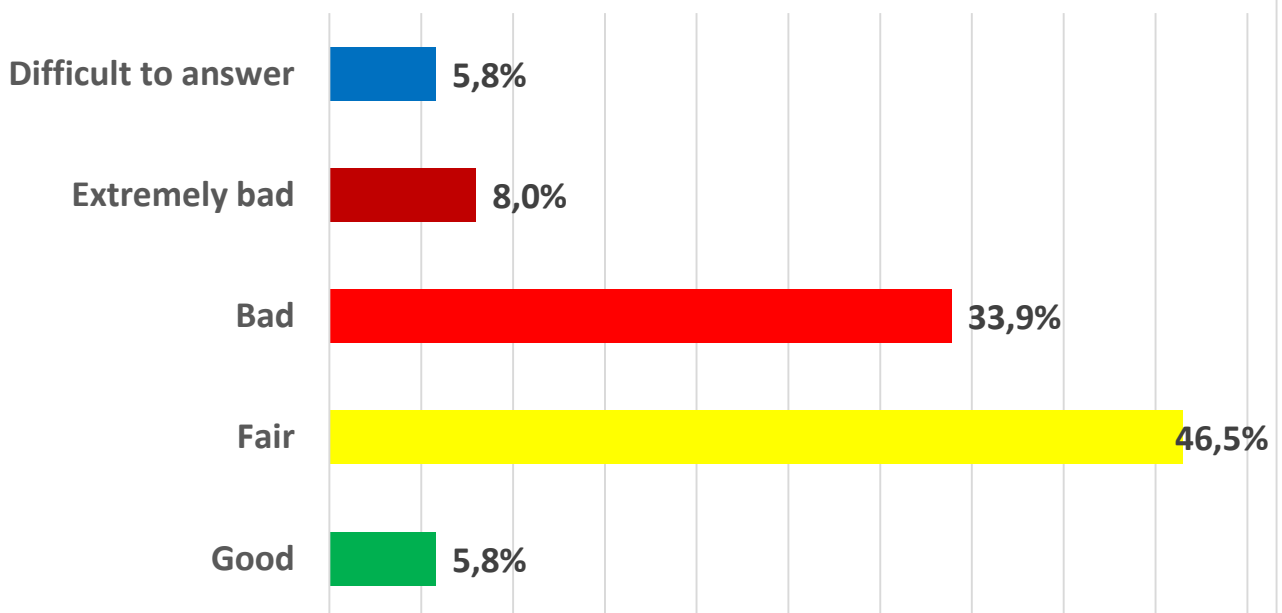
What does your income consist of?



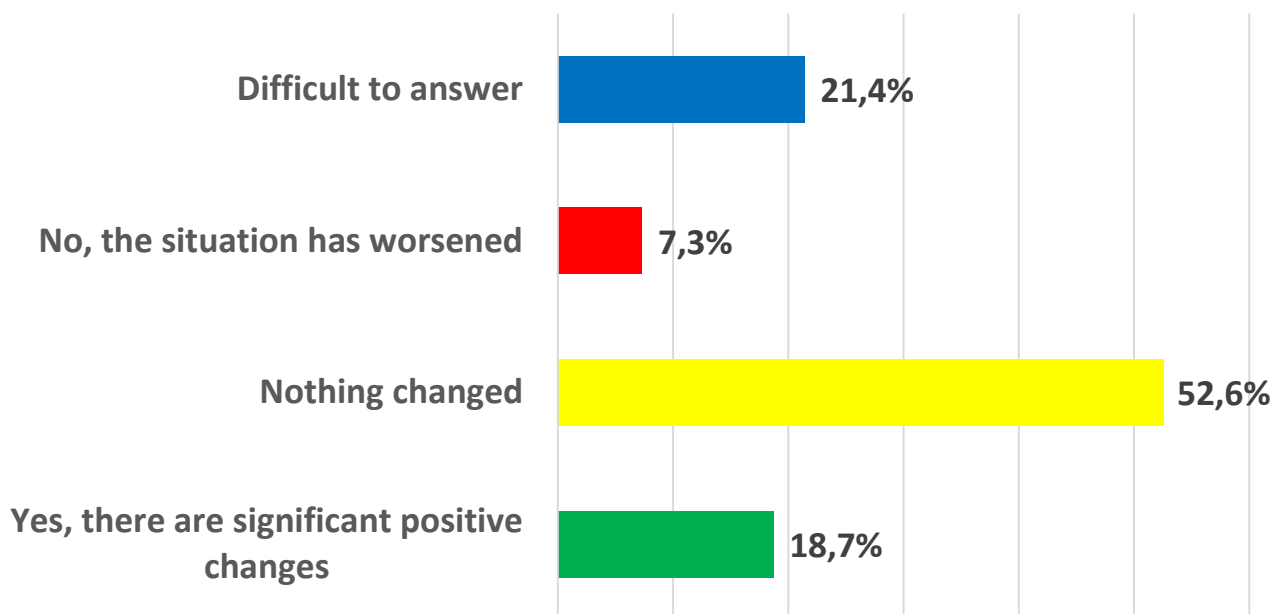
Have you encountered corruption?



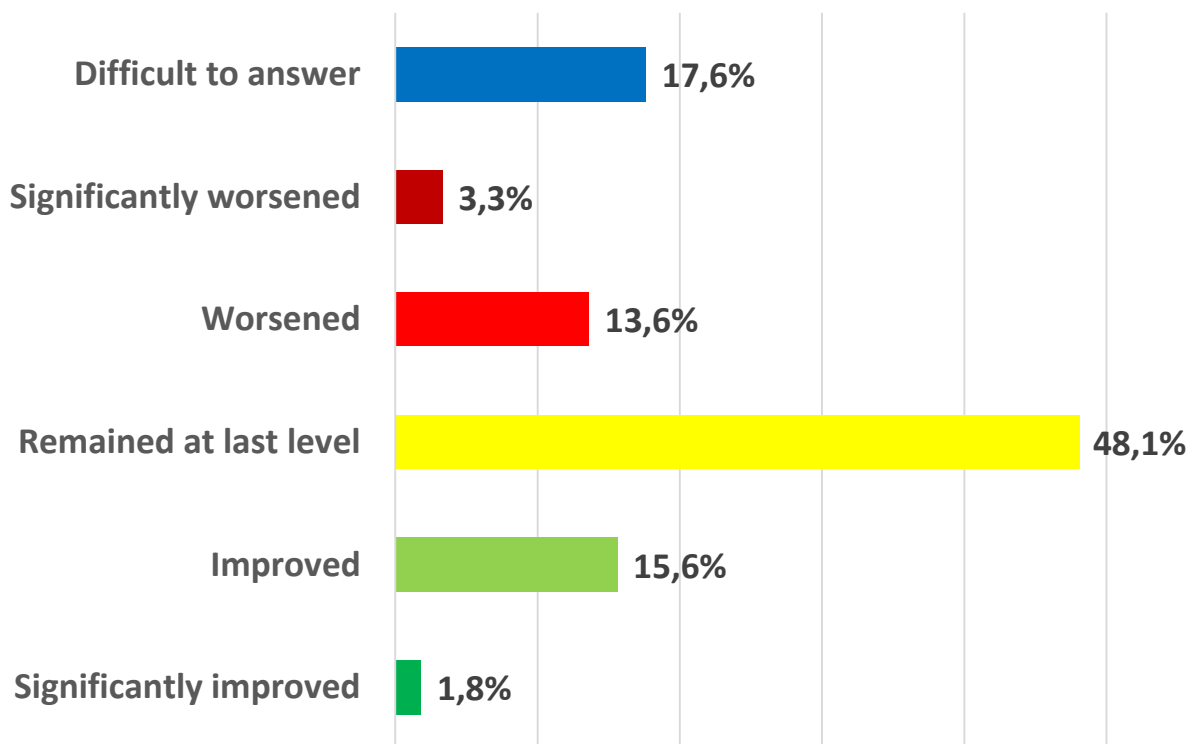
How do you assess the environmental situation in your area?



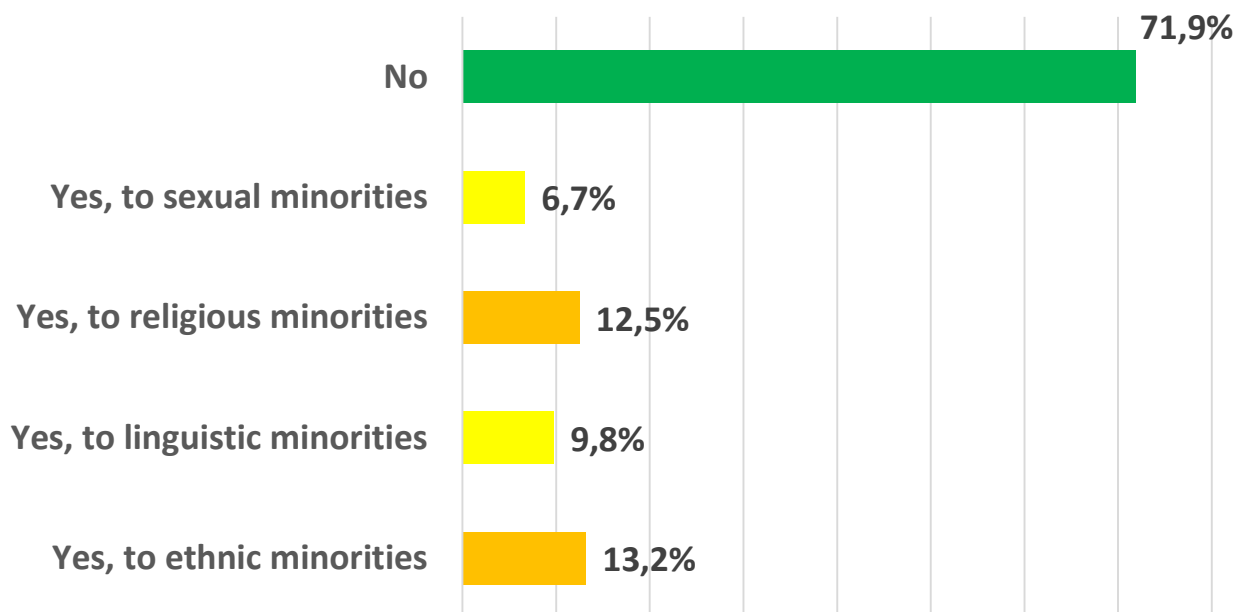
Do you feel a change in your locality after the decentralization reform?



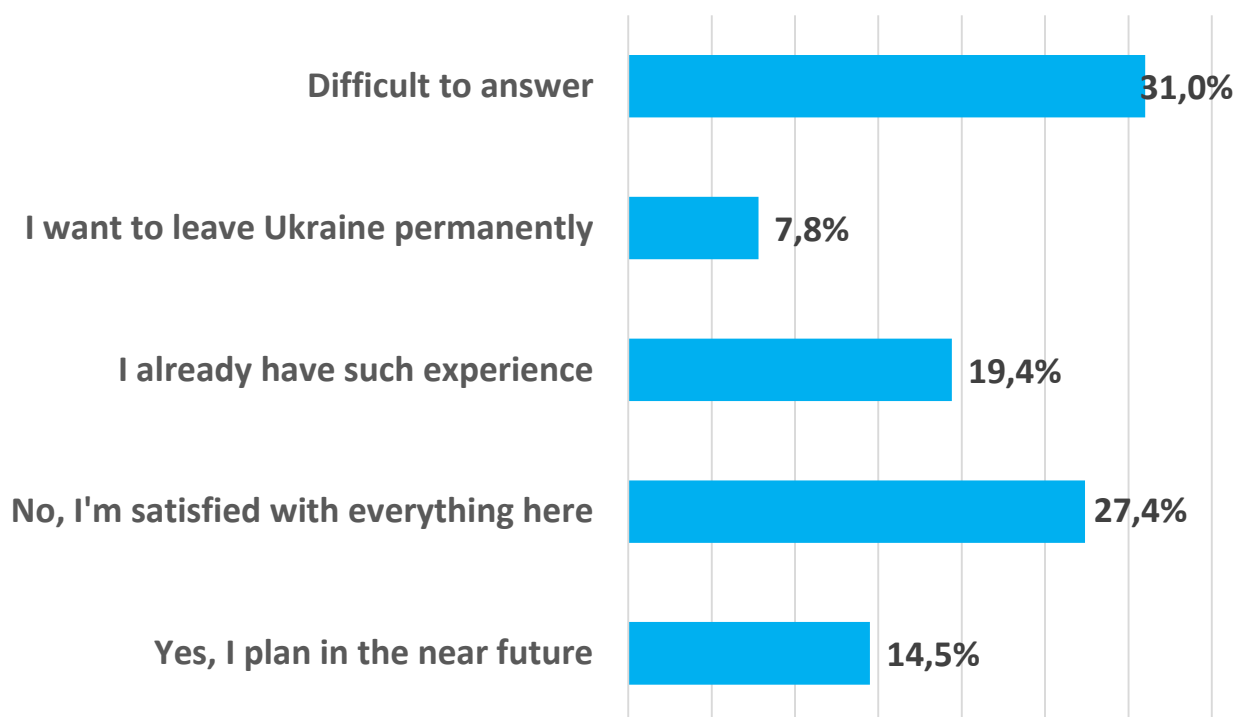
How has the quality of healthcare services changed after the 2018 reform (provision of primary care)?



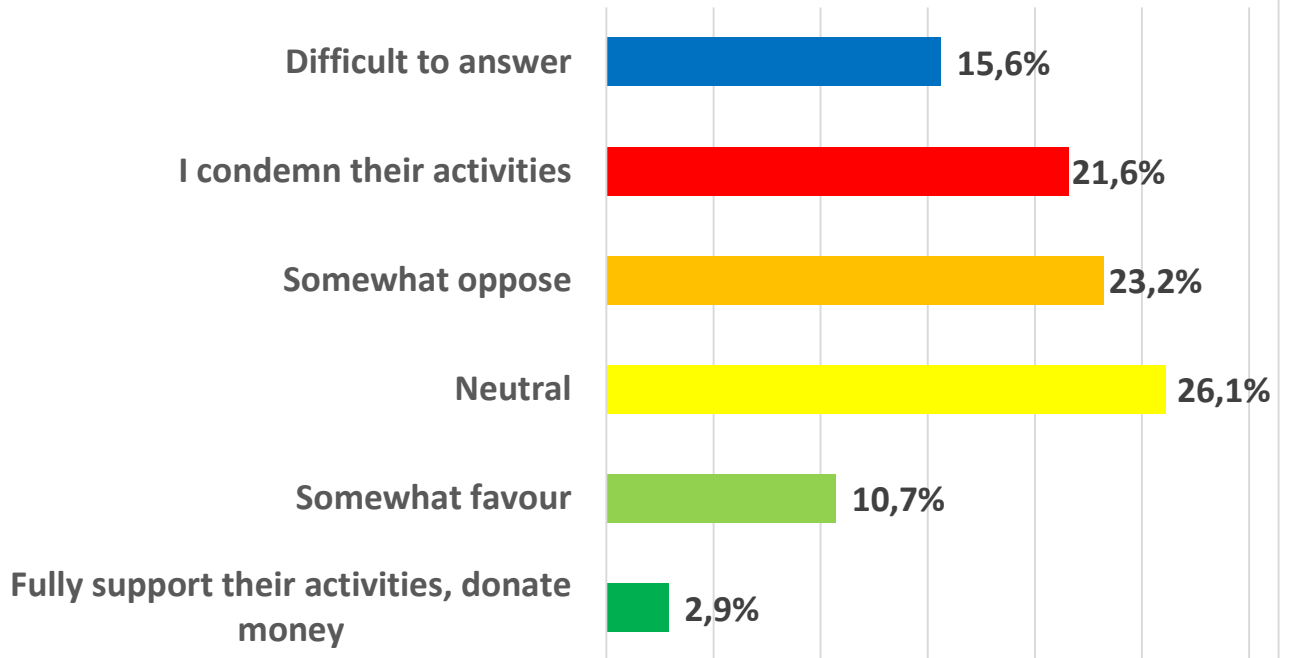
Have you recently encountered intolerance towards minorities?



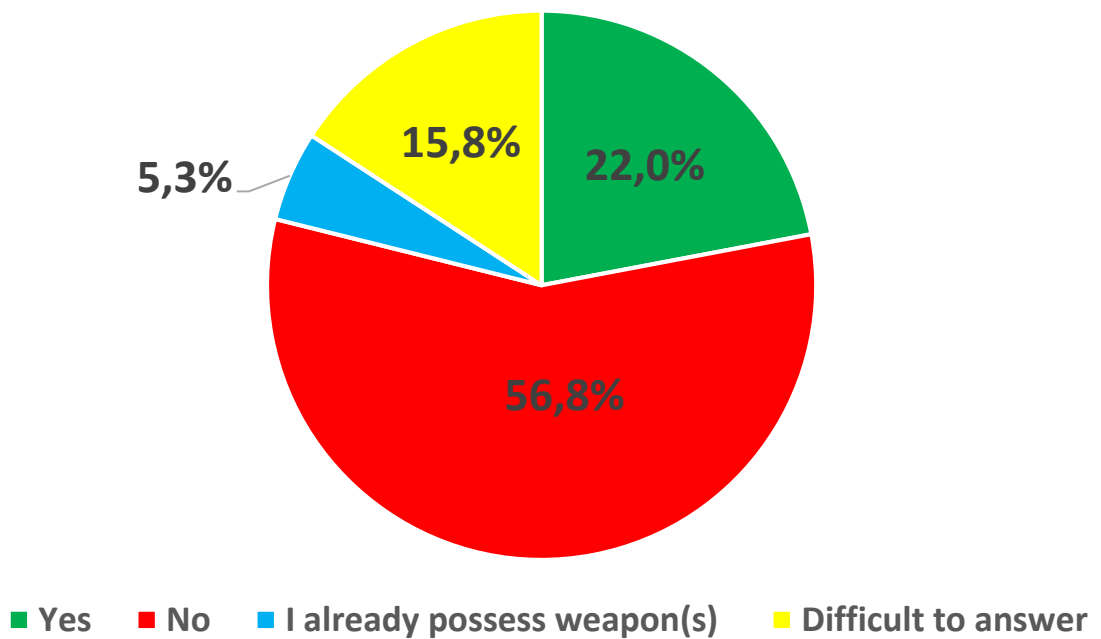
Have you thought about the possibility of work abroad?



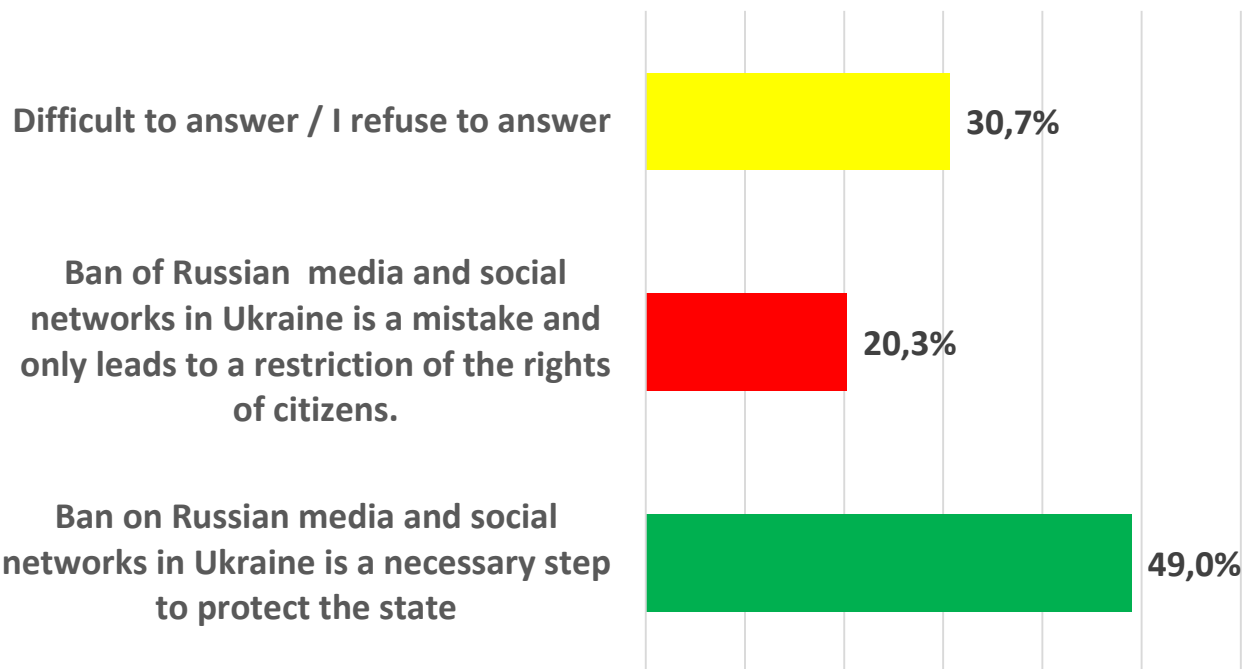
What is your attitude to the activities of non-state armed groups in Ukraine? (National Druzhyny, C14, Right Sector, etc.)?



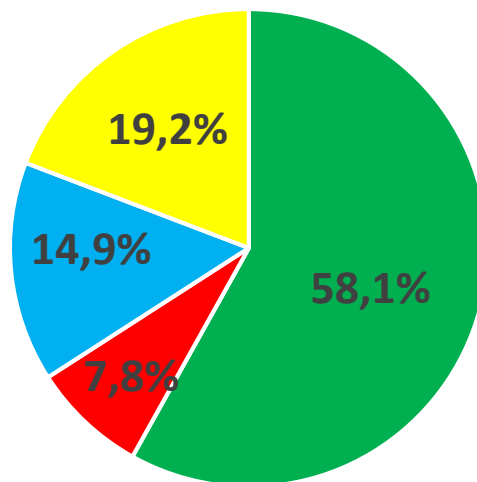
Do you support the legalization of guns in Ukraine?



What is your attitude towards the ban of Russian media and social networks in Ukraine?

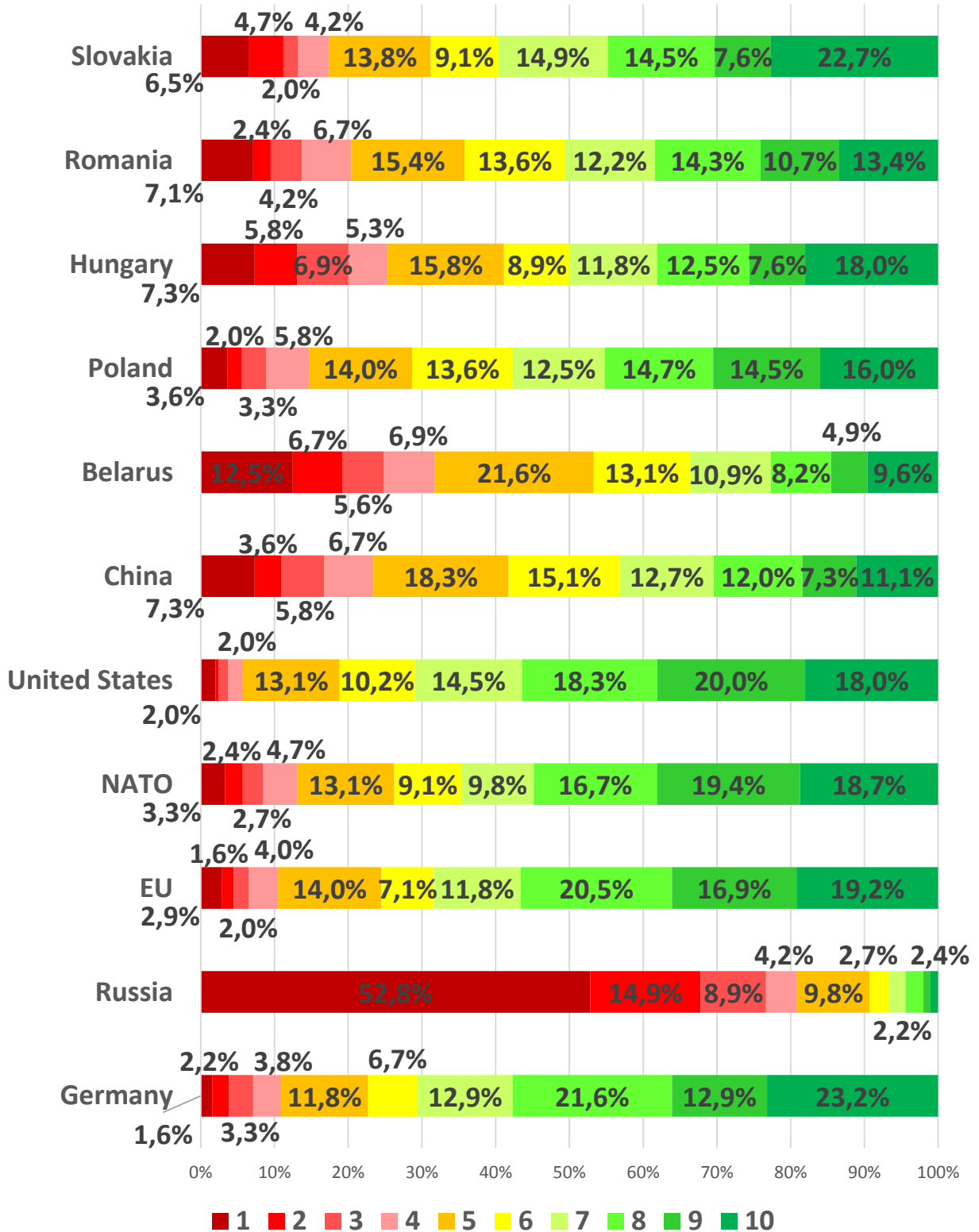


If a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO was held in the near future, how would you vote?

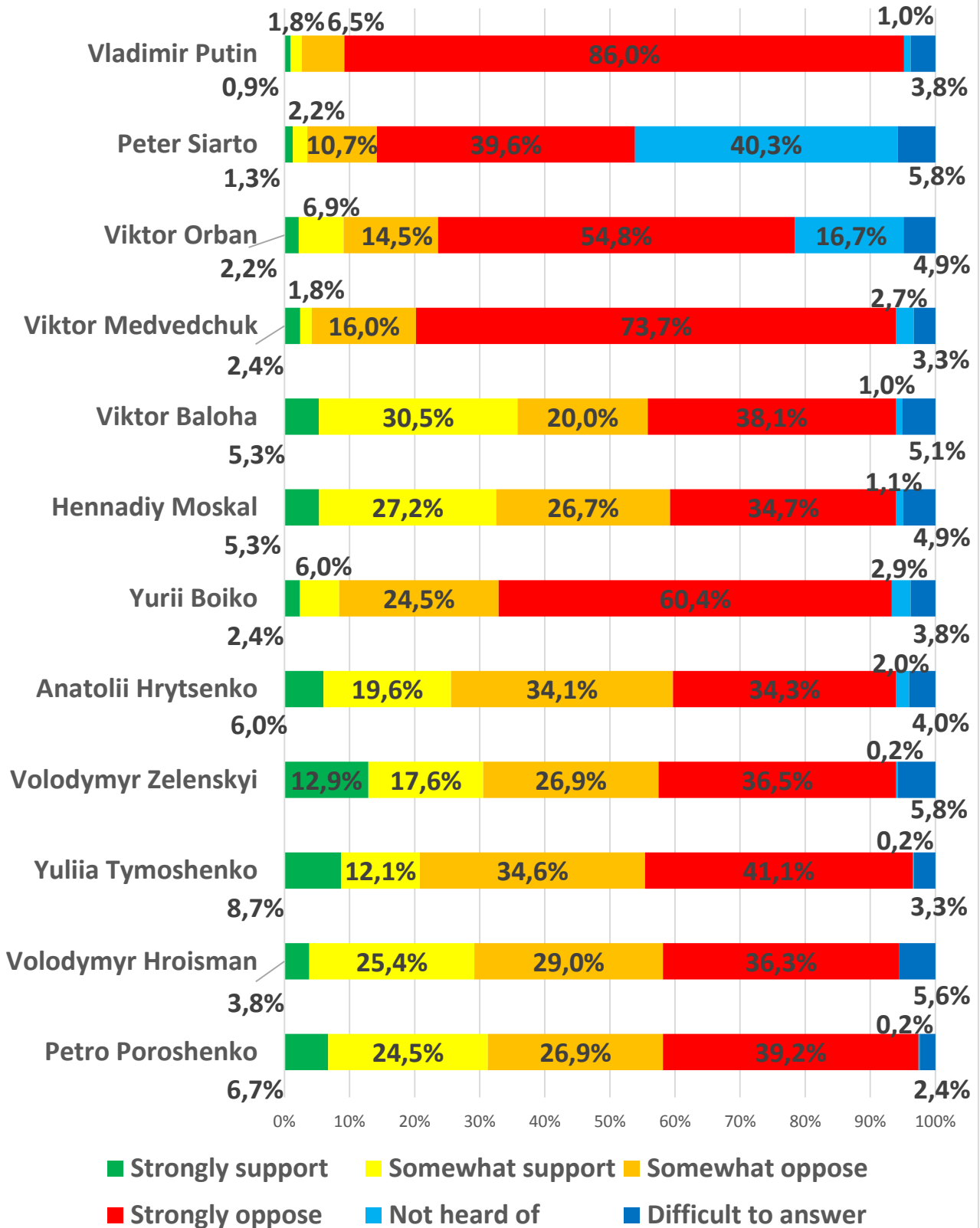


- For Ukraine's accession to NATO
- Against Ukraine's accession to NATO
- I will not vote
- Difficult to answer

Attitude to the following countries and international organizations (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest)

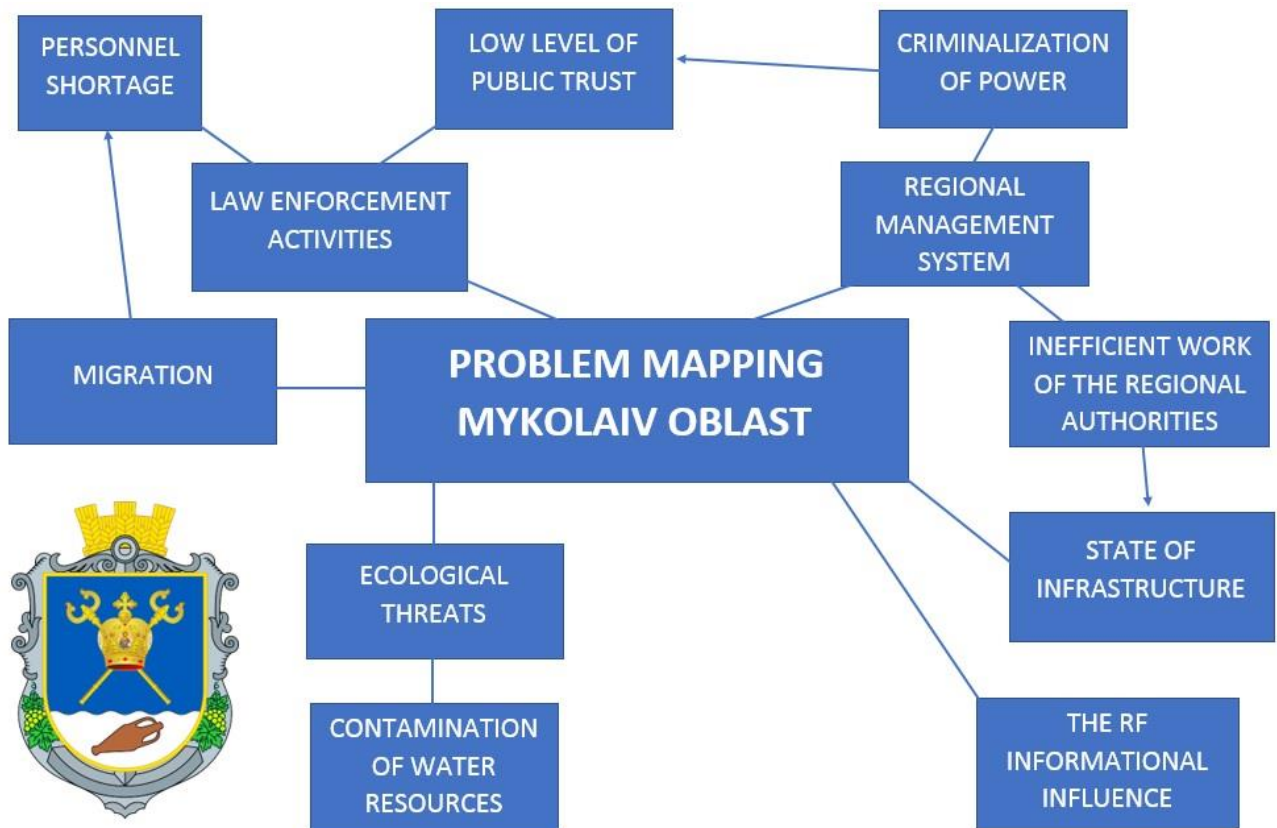


Attitude to the following politicians and public figures



UKRAINIAN FRONTIER: CHALLENGES FOR MYKOLAIV OBLAST

Mykolaiv oblast is located in the south of our country. This region has traditionally been characterized by the relative popularity of the pro-Russian views, Soviet mentality, and weak Ukrainian national identity. For almost entire period of Ukraine's independence, Mykolaiv oblast was not considered a part of the state frontier; it was more likely to be considered a typical administrative entity of the Ukrainian South, and as a result was devoid of special attention. However, today the security challenges in this region are actualized by the proximity to occupied by Russia Crimean peninsula and potential expanding of Russian aggression. Consequently, the oblast is influenced by both the general tendencies of the state's development and the specificity of the geographical position.



Regional threats

The most urgent threat that destabilize the situation in the Mykolaiv oblast, while hampering its development, generally coincide with the problems of the nationwide level. Above all, we are talking about the economic crisis, unsatisfactory ecological situation, state of the transport infrastructure, increase in migration processes, which exhaust the human potential of the region.

Mykolaiv oblast is mainly an agrarian region. Although certain cities have a different focus (Yuzhnoukrainsk is built around the nuclear power plant, Ochakiv is focused on military installations), this does not change the overall picture. In fact, individual farms play a key role in the lives of entire settlements (they are city forming). Economic conflicts (redistribution of property, raiding) are not a characteristic feature of the region: only 10.4% of respondents encountered it. Big companies play a major role in the market, for instance,

the “Nibulon” owned by O.O. Vadaturskyi. There are also smaller farms but their activities are associated with a number of systemic problems. They suffer from the lack of standardization of prices for their own products and as a result, they are forced to sell their products at low prices. In such circumstances, they have virtually no profit; their income only allow keeping companies “afloat”. In addition, the development of small and medium-agrarian business is hampered by the lack of understanding between actual manufacturers of products and potential investors or donors. People who decide on whether to provide financial assistance (grants) do not understand the specific issues that agrarians face, focusing mainly on paperwork and the correctly filled in grant proposals. While farmers do not have the experience of proposals writing. In this paradoxical situation, when a properly executed application is more important than a promising idea, entrepreneurs are forced to seek people who can present their projects for them.

The presence of economic problems acts as a push-factor for migration among the population of the region. People actively move for work abroad in search of better conditions and higher wages. Representatives of diverse groups in the population are working abroad: manual labour workers, which are in demand abroad (as truck drivers), as well as representatives of other sectors (law enforcement, managers) who can work in positions outside their qualifications. The idea of migration is quite popular even among the representatives of the nuclear power plant in Yuzhnoukrainsk. Even though the power plant has a programme for retention of the specialists, this did not stop many workers from going to Europe. Migration takes place in external and internal formats. The main recipient countries of the migrants from the region are Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, and the Russian Federation. Internal migration is mainly directed to Kyiv and Odesa, to a lesser extent. The most urgent issue is the migration of young people, who see no opportunities for them in Mykolaiv oblast. Even people who went to study elsewhere do not want to go back to their region. Parents often push youth to migrate abroad, thinking that they will be better able to fulfil their potential there. The result of the migration is a personnel shortage and further decline in number of settlements.

One of the key problems of the Mykolaiv oblast is the transport infrastructure. Both in the main cities and in the countryside the quality of roads is quite low. This is especially noticeable on the borders of the region; the difference in the quality of roads between Mykolaiv oblast and, for example, Kropyvnytsk oblast is striking. The reason is the non-compliance with the standards of load carrying capacity of the transport. For example, some enterprises that manufacture products for export overload their trucks, which has negative affects the road. At the same time, the restoration of the roads is hindered not only by the lack of funds, but also by bureaucratic and organizational problems. For example, in 2018, 800 million UAH was allocated for road repairs in the Mykolaiv oblast. Yet, only 75 mil UAH was actually used, the rest, due to undermined tender procedures, eventually were transferred for other expenditures. The problem is primarily caused by the contractors’ absence of readiness to comply with the terms of tender offers. Requirements imposed by the ProZorro system do not help finding contractors. According to the requirements of the system, the contractor shall carry on repair work in case of any

problems on the restored section of the road in the future. This should provide a guarantee of the quality of their work (which without this point will be neglected). However, contractors do not agree on these conditions, so the number of willing companies to participate in the tender is significantly reduced.

Ecological threats are of extreme urgency for the Mykolaiv oblast: less than 5% of the population indicated that they consider the ecological situation in the region as good; 43.5% consider it fair, 39.9% - bad, and 9.4% - extremely bad. Above all, it is about water supply. The territory of the region has access to the lower currents of the largest Ukrainian rivers: the Dnipro and the Southern Buh, which are connecting into a single estuary. However, the poor quality of water waste treatment facilities throughout their lengths leads to the fact that the Mykolaiv oblast suffers from pollution that falls into the water in other regions. In the case of the Dnipro, it collects pollution in general from three countries: the Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, and Ukraine. Another problem for Southern Ukraine is dry wind. Its threat is exacerbated by the deforestation of forest belts that would protect the fields and infrastructure objects from the wind.

Local threats

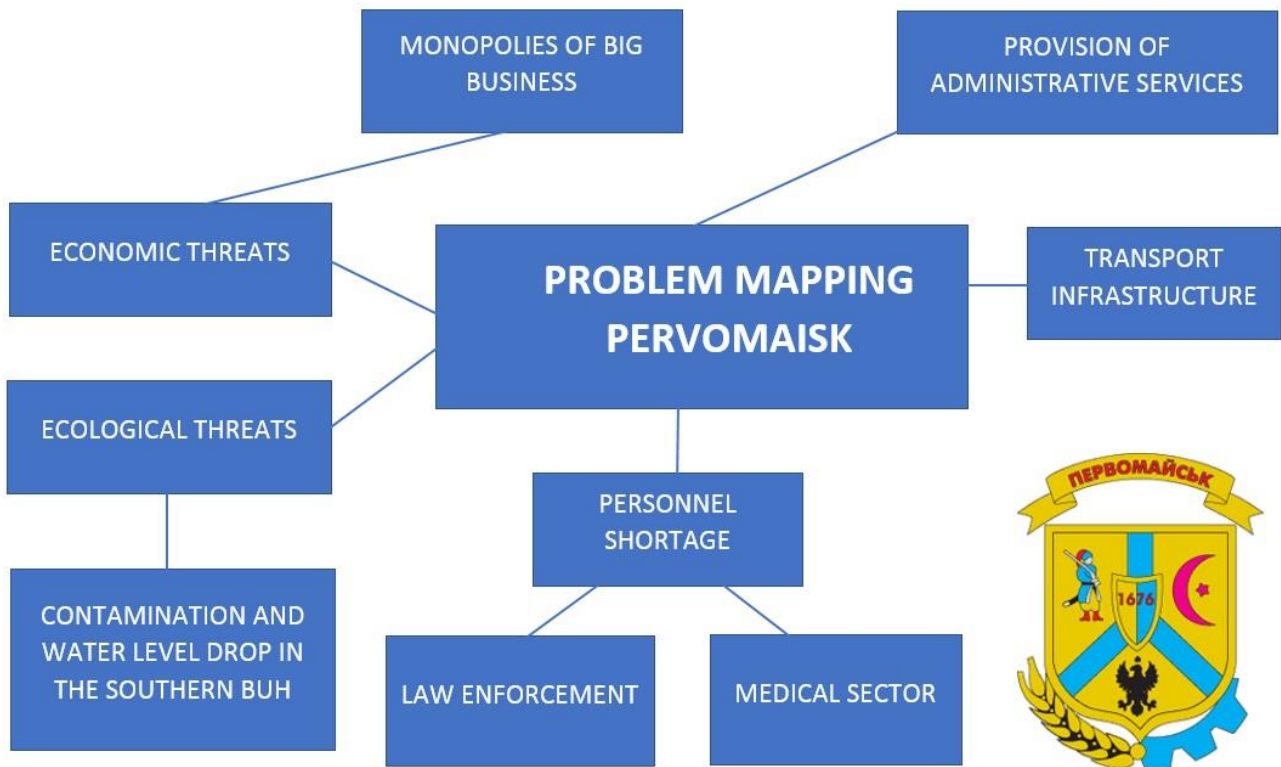
Pervomaisk. Difficult economic situation remains a key threat to stability in the district. The population's income level is low, the average salary is no more than 6 000 UAH. The economy of Pervomaisk and the district is largely dependent on the agricultural sector. The major role in the agrarian sector (agriculture, stockbreeding, and poultry breeding) is played by large monopolies. Small farms are there as well but have a much smaller impact on the market. The industrial sphere of the district is represented by processing enterprises serving the agricultural sector. Their products are manufactured for export. The district, in which they are located, gains virtually nothing from their work, they only damage the transport infrastructure with their freight transport.

The environmental threat is also relevant to the city. There are no water waste treatment facilities in Pervomaisk, as these require large spending for the repairs. As a result, the Southern Buh is polluted. Recently, there has been a drop in water levels; the reason for this is the irrational use of the water resources upstream. Above all, it is the issue of Aleksandrivska NPP, which was built based on imperfect construction plan, and it is directly affecting the water resources of the district, resulting in the drying up of the Southern Buh and loss of ship access to the river.

The security situation in the city is generally well managed. However, the population criticizes the work of law enforcement agencies. Residents give examples of lack of police and fire department response to calls. In order to improve the situation, it is proposed to increase the number of law enforcement officers who would patrol the streets in the city.

The centralization of the system for providing administrative services in Pervomaisk ignites acute criticism. It manifests itself in the elimination of local centres of some services. The Centre for Administrative Services (CAS) in Pervomaisk was created but it deals only with the simplest tasks (such as the issuance of passports). As a result, certain issues can be resolved solely in a single administrative centre in Mykolaiv. This creates

additional inconvenience for the residents who now have to travel to the centre of the oblast to solve various issues, such as car registration, registration of rights to land, etc. The provision of administrative services is ineffective and bureaucratized. The main problem concerns the low processing speed of the queries.



The public sector in Pervomaisk is well developed. It is represented by nationalist (the "Right Sector" branch operates in the city), volunteer and veteran organizations, associations taking care of people with disability. They work closely together on joint projects related to the information environment, patriotic education of youth, and volunteering. The local government provides support for these activities; however, there is still a lack of funds for its spread.

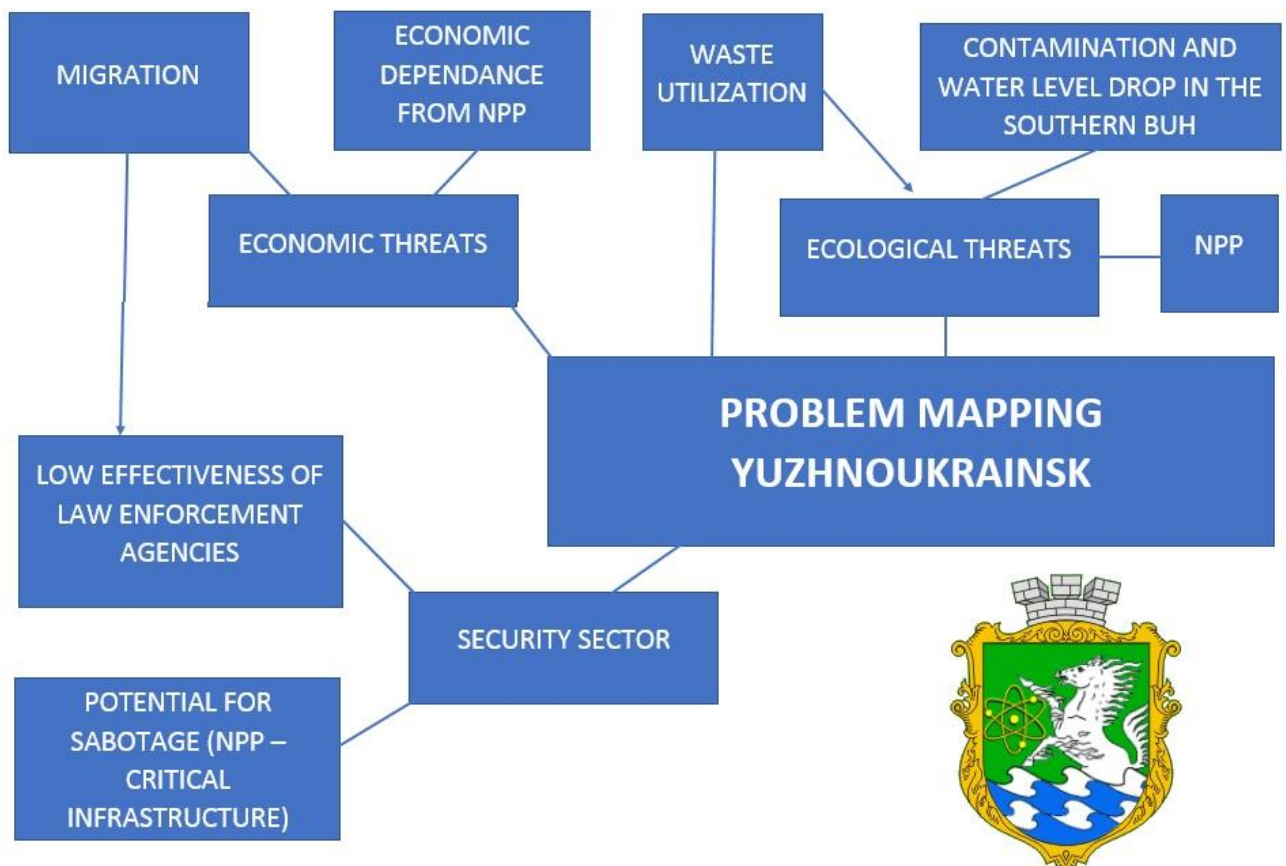
Yuzhnoukrainsk. The city is multinational, for it is built around the NPP. The station was built and serviced by specialists from all over the USSR (including up to 70% of Russians), which formed a special kind of ethnic composition of the population.

The economy of Yuzhnoukrainsk is based on the work of NPPs and utility companies. The plant provides 7 500 residents of the city with workplaces; several thousand people are indirectly serving its work. Thus, 70% of the population depends on the power plant. Therefore, Yuzhnoukrainsk is not a typical settlement in terms of volume and sources of income. Among the residents, the legal income from work at the plant is dominant; the average salary is relatively high.

The recent reforms are implemented differently. The reform of decentralization is welcomed in theory but in practice, it is undermined. In Yuzhnoukrainsk (city in subordination to the oblast) everything is ready for the creation of UTC, hearings have been held, etc. Yet the UTC is not formed because of the conflict between different local forces that cannot reach a compromise. Within the framework of the medical reform, there are not

enough skilled personnel: the city needs additional 5-8 doctors to provide all the population with general healthcare workers. Instead, there is a high level of administrative services. The CAS in Yuzhnoukrainsk is the best in the region. It allows to solve the main issues in one place (incl. the registration of right to land). The centre is constantly expanding, and the number of services provided in it is increasing (the issuance of drivers' licenses is in plans).

In general, the city is safe. A specific feature of Yuzhnoukrainsk is the implementation of the "Safe City" project. Within it, cameras are installed on the streets for video surveillance, monitored online by a police officer. The first phase of the project has already been implemented: cameras are installed on the outskirts of the city and in places of potential congestion of population. In the near future, it is planned to increase the number of cameras. In addition, a project on connecting cameras, which are privately installed in the front of the apartment buildings, to this surveillance network is considered.



The ecological situation remains threatening. The city suffers from the drop in the water level in Southern Buh, caused by the construction of a large number of dams for fishing ponds and small hydroelectric plants (the latter operate solely for the purpose of obtaining certain economic and tax preferences without any impact on the energy market, which is mainly provided by the nuclear power plant). The quality of the water is also poor, due to the lack of water treatment facilities upstream, in Pervomaisk.

There is a problem with garbage in the city. The landfill is filled; there is a need in the construction of a new one. At the same time, Yuzhnoukrainsk is the only city in the oblast where the garbage-recycling programme has started. It occurs in micro districts, and covers up to 30% of the population. The project is financed from the local budget, and is accompanied by an appropriate information campaign.

Ochakiv. The specificity of Ochakiv lies in the special significance of the military sector. Within the city, there is a large number of military retirees. Today, the city depends on the military infrastructure, which plays an important role in the development of the city. There are more than 2 thousand servicepersons in Ochakiv and their tax deductions fill the city budget. The military is a source of income for the city, especially thanks to the decision to leave VAT to the local communities. Consequently, the city budget receives surplus funds and at its expense, certain initiatives are funded. At the same time, this situation can have some negative consequences. The city authorities, getting used to these extra-profits, do not pay due attention to the structural modernization of the city, the creation of additional jobs and opening of new businesses.

The economy of the district suffers from certain crisis trends. The average salary is about 7 000 UAH. However, representatives of some professions in the agricultural sector receive up to 16 000 - 18 000 UAH. It is supposed to keep them from growing migration.

Ochakiv district is reportedly developing alternative energy sources. Several private parks with windmills have already been built, with prospects and development plans. In the village of Chornomorka it is planned to build a solar power station. There is also a tourism industry around Ochakiv. However, the industry has mainly a seasonal nature, and local residents work informally, without paying taxes. There is not enough investment in this area.



The development of tourism is hampered by the catastrophic state of ecology in the Ochakiv district. The area is polluted as emissions from enterprises in the city of Mykolaiv, as well as the results of industrial activities of people upstream the Dnipro River. In Ochakiv, there is also a problem with water waste treatment plants. With the support of European partners, experts have developed a project to optimize the water supply and

drainage in Ochakiv. It was approved by the Ministry of Regional Development. It can be submitted for funding under state and international grants; however, it has not been of interest to local authorities so far. The actual problem of the Ochakiv district is garbage. A special landfill exists only in the village of Chornomorka. At the same time, its exploitation period has already expired but nobody plans to build a new one. Separate issue is that there is no recycling. There is a separate emphasis on the lack of garbage bins in the city.

The presence of military installations actualizes a security threat to the district. Now it is not as obvious as in 2014; however, it has not disappeared. For example, in 2018 several cases were recorded when the locals tried to put fire to ammunition depots with fireworks.

External influence

The influence of external factors on the situation in the Mykolaiv oblast is insignificant. It has no land borders with other states. Its economic potential is not of interest to foreign investors. In fact, foreign investments are rare in the Mykolaiv oblast. Among those that are worth mentioning, there is a plan for building a cargo port at Chinese expense in the village of Chornomorka, Ochakiv district. The project could threaten the environmental situation but in public hearings people agreed to it, because they are more concerned with creating new jobs. However, the project is only on paper. In practice, its implementation is frozen.

The foreign policy priorities of the population demonstrate the presence of supporters of both the Western and Eastern directions of Ukraine's development. Germany and Belarus are among the top countries with the highest ratings among the local public. The first country represents the image of a rich, successful European country; the pro-Western residents of the region see it as a model to follow referring to the level and living standards. Instead, the image of Belarus is described as a country with high level of order. It is logical to assume that it embodies the hopes of people who are still somehow in captivity of Soviet stereotypes and mentality.

The attitude towards Russia in the region is ambiguous. The data from the sociological survey shows a high level of its negative perception: more than a third of respondents gave it the lowest ratings, answering questions about the personal attitude to certain countries and international organizations. At the same time, the population has differences in the assessment of political processes and policies of the Russian Federation, and more global issues of Ukrainian-Russian coexistence (historical, cultural, etc.). There is a tendency for a division of personal attitude toward the Russian authorities and ordinary people. If the Kremlin becomes the object of widespread criticism (since people see Putin's guilt in igniting the conflict), the attitude towards the Russian people in general remains quite positive.

The degree of threat of separatism and pro-Russian addresses in the region is gradually decreasing. In 2014, the region was restless; there was a threat of Russian invasion. Local Ukrainian patriots received threats. The responsible authorities did not react to it; the SSU sabotaged the work, and some local law enforcement officers directly

said that they would not defend Mykolaiv in case of escalation. In fact, the local patriotic asset managed the threat. Now the situation is much calmer. A pro-Russian collaborate position is taken by a small part of the population. However, more people are in favour of peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation with the Russian Federation.

The position of the population of the region in relation to Russia is affected by its national composition. The specificity of Mykolaiv is a large number of ethnic Russians living on its territory. This is the result of the historical development of the region. This territory was initially developed in the XVIII-XIX centuries and involved human resources from all over the territory of the USSR under the Soviet industrial projects. It would be a mistake to assume that these people and their descendants profess Russian identity; they mostly associate themselves with Ukraine, participated in a voluntary movement, and so on. However, many have relatives in Russia; they have a close connection with the Russian information and cultural sphere, etc. Thus, many do not support sanctions against Ukrainian pop music figures who work in Russia, and the ban of Russian broadcasting and social networks. A quarter of the population is in favour of the latter, yet more than 50% of respondents are against it. Opponents of the ban perceive this as violation of their rights, as this includes closing channels for communication with their relatives (especially stressed by the residents of Yuzhnoukrainsk).

At the same time, we emphasize that the influence of the Russian information space on the region is still felt. Practical implementation of the prohibition of Russian broadcasting and social networks was not successful. Internet cannot be blocked; people have figured out how to bypass the ban and have access to banned content. There is also no problem viewing Russian channels over the Internet. In the South of Ukraine, there are problems with the broadcast of Ukrainian radio, while the signal from the territory of the occupied Crimea is accessed quite easily.

The opposite direction of foreign policy also has its supporters and opponents. From influential foreign policy players and structures, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has the largest - after Russia - level of rejection. The attitude towards Ukraine's membership in NATO in Mykolaiv remains controversial. The survey shows that 30% of the population supports this policy; 32% - opposes; 38% have not decided. At the same time, local activists doubt such results, proving that the real support of the Alliance is lower in the whole oblast.

In principle, both positive and negative attitudes towards NATO have a clear foundation. On the one hand, the region experienced a manifestation of Russian hybrid aggression in 2014, when attempts were made on its territory to destabilize the situation and implement the Donetsk-Luhansk scenario. This and proximity to the occupied Crimea clearly demonstrates to people the urgency of a security threat and the need to use all the tools to enhance the state's defence capability. Membership in the Euro-Atlantic system of collective security can be seen as one of the most effective methods of protecting Ukraine from aggression. Part of the population understands that cooperation and membership in this organization will promote the development of defence industry, political cooperation with developed countries, and certain social and economic

transformations by the Western model. In addition, the positive impact on the popularity of this idea of a military partnership with the West has the practical initiatives of NATO and its individual member states (first of all, the United States) implemented on the territory of the oblast. It is a question of modernizing the "Shyrokyi Lan" range and conducting multinational exercises on its territory; the development of the Operational Centre for the Ukrainian Navy near Ochakiv by the Americans; implementation of the programme of providing second education to servicepersons. Thus, the population sees positive effects from cooperation with NATO for the Ukrainian armed forces.

At the same time, a negative attitude towards the Alliance remains popular in the society. In general, it comes from the lack of the population's awareness and presence of stereotypes. People who have full understanding of NATO's activities in the region have a positive perception of the organization. However, those who are not well educated about this matter, are usually guided by the old stereotypes and misinformation presented by the Russian information environment. As a result, they have a distorted perception of the Euro-Atlantic course. Another negative trend that characterizes the implementation of the latter is frustration of the patriots. Local activists have shown that in recent years, NATO's popularity has been declining among patriotic circles. Some were disappointed in the organization in 2014, believing that it did not give a proper response to Russian aggression against Ukraine. Others believe that the peak of the popularity of the idea of Euro-Atlantic integration was in 2015, when the military threat from the RF was seen as the most urgent. In the meantime, however, the undermined reform process and economic stagnation led to a decrease in the level of patriotic upsurge, which also reflected on the assessment of foreign policy priorities and prospects of the state.

Internal problems

The process of reforms implementation in Mykolaiv oblast is accompanied by some difficulties. The decentralization reform is being implemented gradually. There are 29 UTCs in the region (in places where local elections took place, 41 UTCs were formed). However, the problem with its practical implementation was underlined. So far, it has not brought improvement to the people of the region. Almost 62% of respondents answered that they did not notice any changes as a result of their formations. In fact, the situation has changed little in comparison with the previous period: the villages that were promising continue to evolve, while depressed settlements continue to decline. Decentralization did not lead to equalization of the situation. In addition, people who live in formed UTCs, complain about the complication in the document circulation: some of certificates that were previously issued by each village council, now available only in the centre of the community.

Another problem of the decentralization is the low level of professional training, readiness to make independent decisions in the community, which, as a result of reforms, received significant powers and the ability to dispose of local funds. De jure, they have all the necessary tools for implementing promising changes but they do not have experience, do not use the opportunities they have as self-government, waiting for their problems to

be solved by the central authorities of the district or oblast level. In fact, communities lack the trained and skilled specialists who would normally organize their activities. It is also about the specifics of the execution of grant proposals, which could become an effective tool for implementing innovative changes on the local level.

Medical reform causes restricted feelings in the population. On the one hand, residents of the oblast understand the need for modernization of the medical sphere. Yet, at the same time, there are no positive results from the implemented reforms. Only 11.8% of respondents noticed them. Instead, 36.5% indicated that the service remained at the old level and in opinion of 43.9% - it has deteriorated.

In general, this sphere suffers from a number of systemic problems. The main one is the low level of service provision, which practically did not change after of the reform. The reform had to start with re-certification of personnel. In fact, the unqualified healthcare workers remains the main problem for the region. The introduction of the family doctor's institution did not affect this aspect of the work of healthcare workers because the format of their work, the number of registered clients, cannot change the quality of their work if they have no real qualifications and knowledge. Some physicians, pediatricians and therapists, who do not have the necessary knowledge about a wide range of medical healthcare issues, are re-qualified in offices of local family doctors. Especially low level of service provision is observed in villages. In fact, you can only get a sick note on the spot but for normal treatment, you must go either to the regional or private hospital. There is a problem of rejection of innovation by the old staff; doctors who will retire soon do not want to re-qualify by the new standards. At the same time, they have a negative impact on young doctors, forcing them to old patterns of behaviour and organization of work. For a real improvement of the situation, it is necessary that the generation of doctors has been changed, and the "old" medical traditions have been forgotten.

The rejuvenation of the workforce could be a solution to the situation. However, it will not happen because the next systematic problem of the medical sector is a personnel shortage. On the one hand, the crisis deepens due to the active participation of doctors in migration processes. As a result, mostly old staff of the retirement or pre-retirement age are left in places. On the other hand, there is a reluctance of young doctors to work on the periphery of the region, not only villages, but also district centres and cities of regional subordination. Low salaries scare medical staff away.

Finally, the reform is not supported with the necessary material and technical base, updating of which becomes an important issue for hospitals. There are no printers or laptops in the healthcare facilities. Physicians cannot equip a cabinet to provide qualified services. Such sector problems are caused, above all, by the lack of funds and blurred division of powers within the decentralization processes. For example, recently the Ochakiv hospital was registered as a non-profit public utility. Nevertheless, it is not clear how it will function in the future because the hospital has a debt for electricity of about 0.5 million UAH. For the financial provision of the city hospital, it was decided at a joint meeting to raise funds from the budgets of all the structures it serves (the city of Ochakiv, UTC and

district) in proportion to the number of people living in them. Yet, in practice, the co-financing process is slowed down.

Police reform in the region has been implemented but it is difficult to call it a success. Law enforcement agencies also experience personnel shortage. Many experienced employees left the service. One of the reasons was the reluctance to undergo a re-certification. People believed that it undermined their dignity. As a result, although the crime situation in the region is generally controlled, though it is noted that after the reform it tend to deteriorate.

The problem is the format for determining the statistics and reporting of cases by law enforcement officers. These are now calculated not by a court decision, but by the number of directions of the cases to the court. As a result, law enforcement officers can sue for anything and as a result, the latter, based on the available data, is forced to close the case or take an acquittal.

The level of trust in force and law enforcement structures is different. The most objectionable is the work of courts (50.9% do not trust them) and the SSU (42.1% do not trust them). Police and armed forces have a much higher degree of trust, using a certain authority in society.

Corruption remains a global problem of a criminal nature. It concerns various spheres of life and functioning of the state. Most often, it is encountered at the medical institutions and administrative services. Anticorruption fight is only imitated and in practice, none of the established central anti-corruption structures works as it should. 56.1% of respondents do not trust it at all, 15.9% rather do not trust. Police in these cases are also of little use. Law enforcers do not respond to local government corruption cases because the latter have influence over them (they can have a vote of no confidence in the police chief).

In general, the political attitudes of the population is characterized by disbelief in the possibility of improving the situation. For the population, the problem of exacerbating the political struggle is important: 31.2% indicate that they are affected by the confrontation between different political forces and politicians. There is total lack of confidence in the central authorities: the President (51.2% do not trust him at all), the Verkhovna Rada (61.9% - do not trust it at all), the Cabinet of Ministers (53.9% do not trust it at all). The residents of Mykolaiv oblast are concerned with the crisis of political power, the lack of tools for control, influence and feedback from elected representatives of the central authorities. Exception is the majoritarian MP from Ochakiv - B. Y. Kozyr (Petro Poroshenko Block). He actively participates in the life of his district, assists local authorities and organizations.

Residents of the region in general have a neutral and critical assessment of the successes of the current oblast authorities. Activities of Governor O.Y. Savchenko does not causes a sharp negative reaction; however, there is disappointment among the population due to the lack of real action, lack of communication with local authorities. There is an inability to solve the actual problem of restoring transport infrastructure. His predecessor – V.I. Merikov - has a better image of a tolerant and efficient manager who

defended Mykolaiv oblast at a critical moment from the threat of pro-Russian separatism in 2014. Marikov's effectiveness in recruiting staff members is well noted. Even the incident with his resignation (the politician has left the post after it was discovered that his first deputy was involved in corruption schemes) does not cast a shadow over his reputation. It is said that Merikov himself was unrelated to these unlawful actions, and is the most worthy representative among the local politicians.

A characteristic feature of the region is the total media bias, which in some cases takes on a completely unprofessional form. Mykolaiv oblast media are privately owned by certain political forces or specific individuals. Therefore, their publications are aimed at serving owners, rather than giving objective coverage of events. In this case, it concerns both traditional and electronic media. From the format and the tone of publications, it is clearly visible whom the publication "serves", to which camp it belongs. However, people notice such bias. This reduces the level of general trust in the media (48.9% completely distrust and 28.9% somewhat distrust). Poor journalism leads to fragmentation of the information space and the destabilization in the society.

In addition to a subjective approach to the coverage of information, local media suffers from lack of correspondents and money. Consequently, they mostly reprint content from the Internet. There is a lack of not only analytical materials, but also works in the field. The correspondents do not cover the actual events in the region (neither problems nor specific areas of activity, successes in them; what was the main theme of local Soviet media, and what ordinary people used to in the countryside).

In cities, there is an increasing popularity of electronic media in comparison with printed ones. Young people pay special attention to social networks (Facebook) and to messengers (Viber). Communities and groups created on these platforms are used for discussing current events that are taking place in the city and are exciting for the population. They de facto replace traditional media and mostly apolitical. Attempts to turn the discussion into a political one or to publish political news are moderated. At the same time, in the settlements where mostly live people in retirement and pre-retirement age, the access to the Internet is complicated, thus, they prefer traditional newspapers.

Mykolaiv oblast is mostly Russian-speaking. A part of the population recognizes that it is communicating in "surzhyk". It is emphasized that there were never any problems on the linguistic grounds of the region. Only 12% of respondents indicated that they have encountered language oppression. Most of the population grew up in the Russian-speaking environment, was educated within the Soviet mentality. At the same time, until recently, Ukraine did nothing to correct the situation; there was no systemic national policy. Therefore, today people are more comfortable talking in Russian. Residents of the region see nothing bad in bilingualism, noting that the more languages one knows the better. Actualization of the linguistic issue in political discourse is considered artificial.

Regarding the modern policy of Ukrainization, the attitude is cautiously critical (especially in the regional centre, where there were even certain protest actions). In practice, state policy in the region regarding the language of education is not implemented. Formally, teaching is conducted in Ukrainian; however, children answer during lessons

and communicate in Russian. Representatives of the older generation are only beginning to gain the knowledge of Ukrainian. In fact, in the USSR it was not taught. It is noted that local officials mostly understand it, can read and write documents in Ukrainian. However, due to lack of practice, there is a problem with communication in the state language.

The religious sphere of life of Mykolaiv oblast is calm. Only 9% of the population has encountered issues connected to religious differences. On the territory of the oblast, there are churches of different denominations. They tolerantly coexistence. Exceptions are the manifestations of a nation-wide conflict between the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the structures of the Moscow Patriarchate. It is stressed that the precedents of the transition of communities to the newly created Ukrainian Orthodox Church are quite rare. In general, the population of the region is not very religious. People visit the church massively only on big holidays. The attendance of Sunday services is low.

According to the results of the survey, the population of Mykolaiv oblast in general has a negative attitude towards the idea of legalization of guns. 72.5% are against it and 18.6% support the idea. At the same time, the opinion of the representatives of local expert groups is that such an initiative will ensure the citizen's confidence in their own safety. Adoption of the relevant legislation will help to stabilize the public situation and enable people to protect their interests, property and life in conditions where the weapon (including unregistered) in the region is already widely distributed among entrepreneurs and criminals.

The activity of paramilitary formations in the Mykolaiv oblast is present; however, it is not very active. Their branches fragmentarily cover the territory of the region. In general, they cause a negative reaction of public. They are supported by just over 10%; 28.1% rather do not support them; and 27.2% condemn their activities. On the one hand, patriotic organizations and movements have a certain positive reputation because of their achievements at the front, their role in suppressing pro-Russian appearances on the territory of the region in 2014. At the same time it is considered that whatever their merits in protecting the state, they are now become a source of aggression and a cause of destabilization in the domestic political situation. It is noted that there cannot be dual power in the country; the state must ensure its monopoly on the use of force.

Part of the population, in the conditions of society's existence where they are unsatisfied with the request for social justice, are seeking formations like the National Corps and the National Druzhyny for assistance and protection. In some cases, their activity in the Mykolaiv oblast is beneficial, such as the establishment of oversight of fishing in the district of Pervomaisk by the local "Right Sector". At the same time, supporters of the paramilitary organizations suggest that their negative image is associated with a special discrediting campaign that is being implemented by the media. Ordinary people just do not get information about the real goals, deeds and successes of patriot activists.

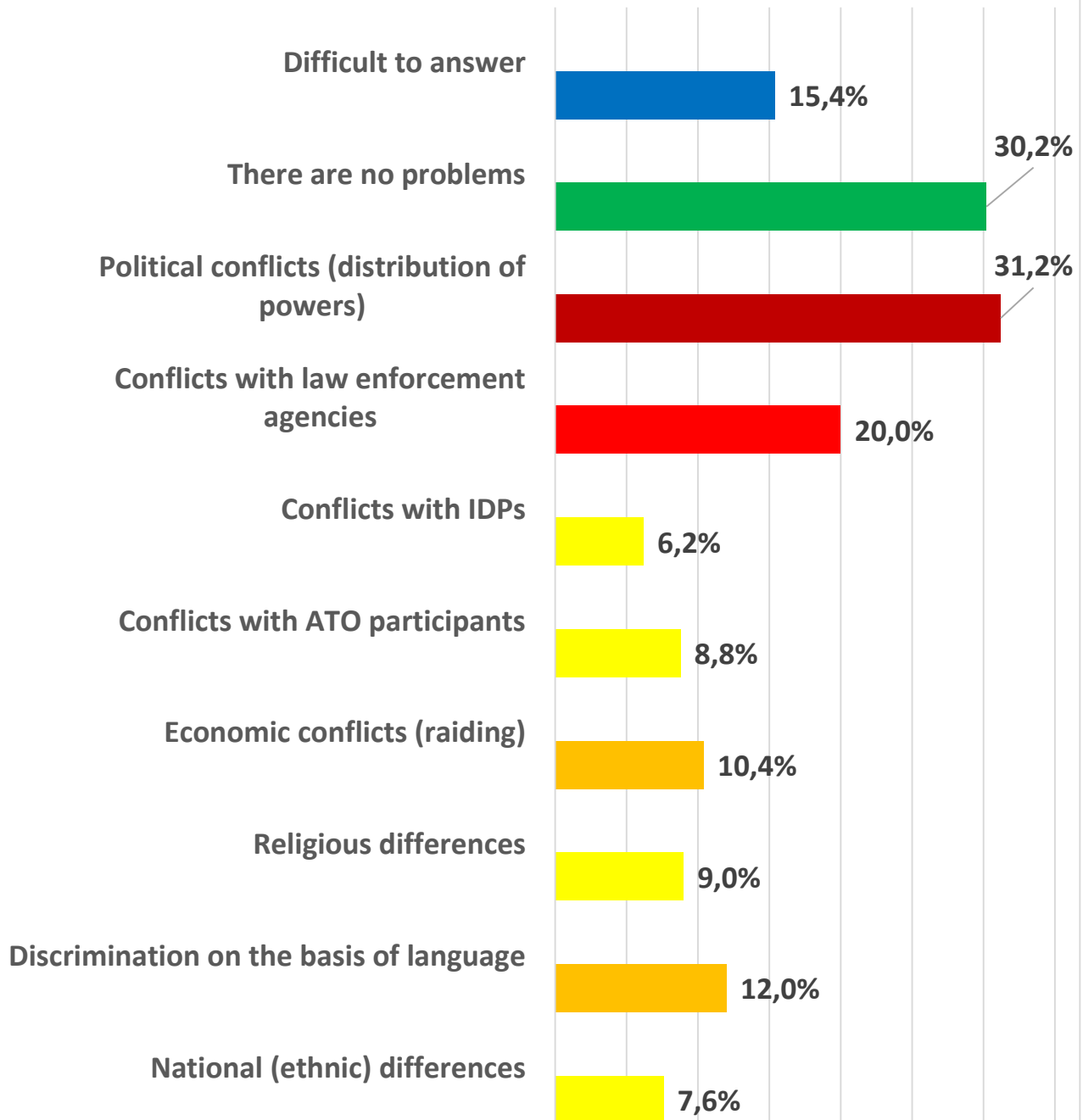
Recommendations

In order to establish the stable system of development of the region and reduce the influence of negative factors that have been formed in Mykolaiv oblast, the following is proposed:

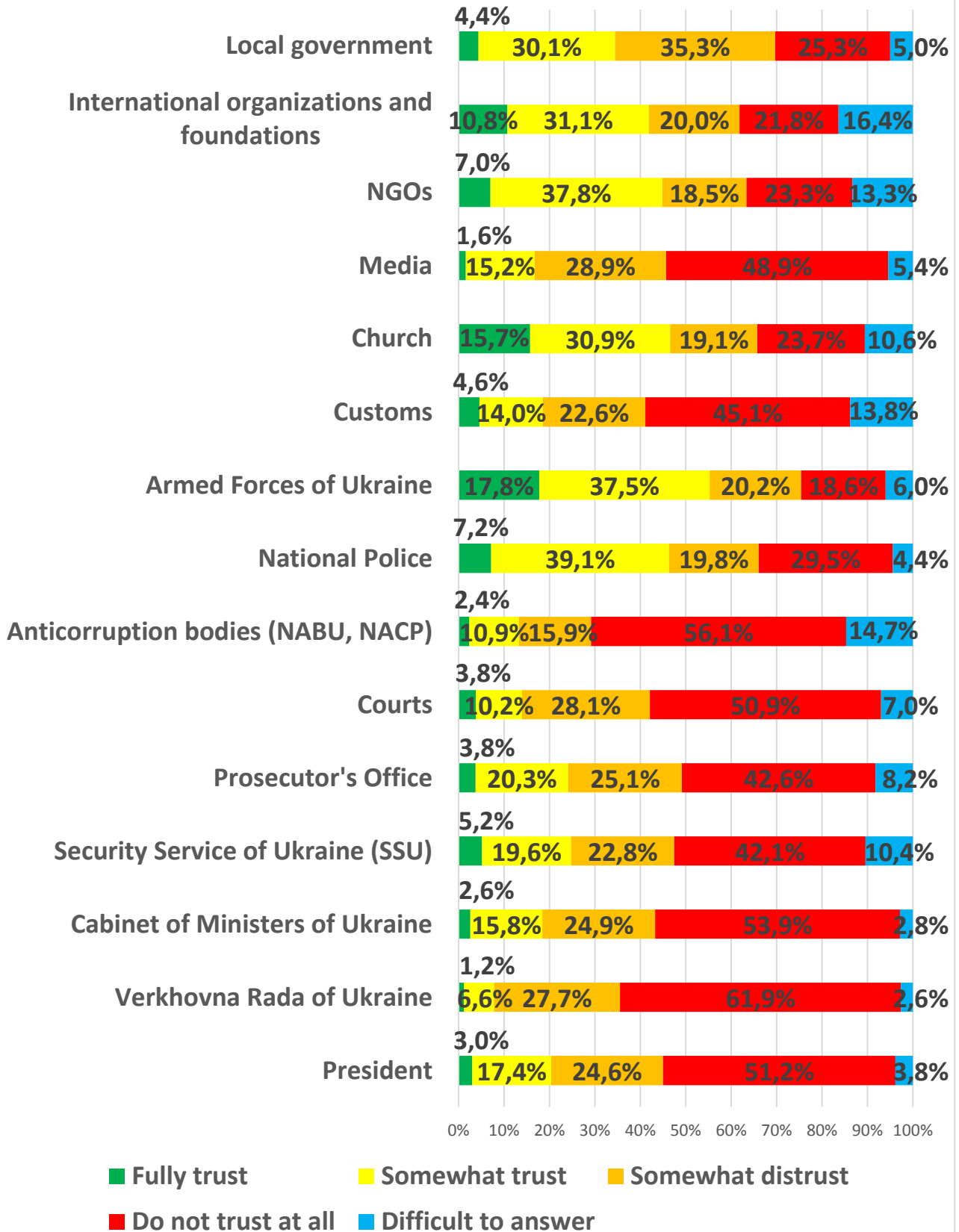
- To implement an information and training campaign aimed at improving the quality of functioning of united territorial communities, to raise their representatives' awareness about the powers and tools that they have and can use to solve local problems;
- To implement a state programme of Ukrainian language courses for local officials of the region, especially those working on the periphery of the oblast (in areas where a significant part of the state apparatus is composed of representatives of the older generation who were raised in the Russian-speaking environment and until recently had no urgent need to study Ukrainian; however, they want to work for the good of the state);
- To create a network of consultancy offices to assist small and medium-sized business representatives in writing grant applications, which may also be involved in drafting of the applications;
- To take steps to improve the regional information environment, through the implementation and further support (in the format of grant assistance) of the independent media. They should, on the one hand, cover the actual issues in the region, its specific parts (this is the demand of the target audience), and on the other hand, to promote the state policy (this is the interest of the central authorities). It might be promising to turn to the experience of the civil society (attempts by activists to launch a newspaper in the city of Ochakiv);
- To enable state policy in the field of counteraction to environmental threats, paying particular attention to the issue of restoring water waste treatment plants. It is a national level effort. In fact, solving the problem of water contamination in the Mykolaiv oblast can only be achieved by improving the situation throughout the latitude and length of the basins of the Southern Buh and the Dnipro;
- To introduce a programme for encouraging medical personnel to work in rural areas: additional financing and development of a system of effective preferences (for example, the provision of housing under a simplified system) at the expense of local budgets.

Annex 2.
MYKOLAIV OBLAST – SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

**What problems and differences can be observed
in your city?**



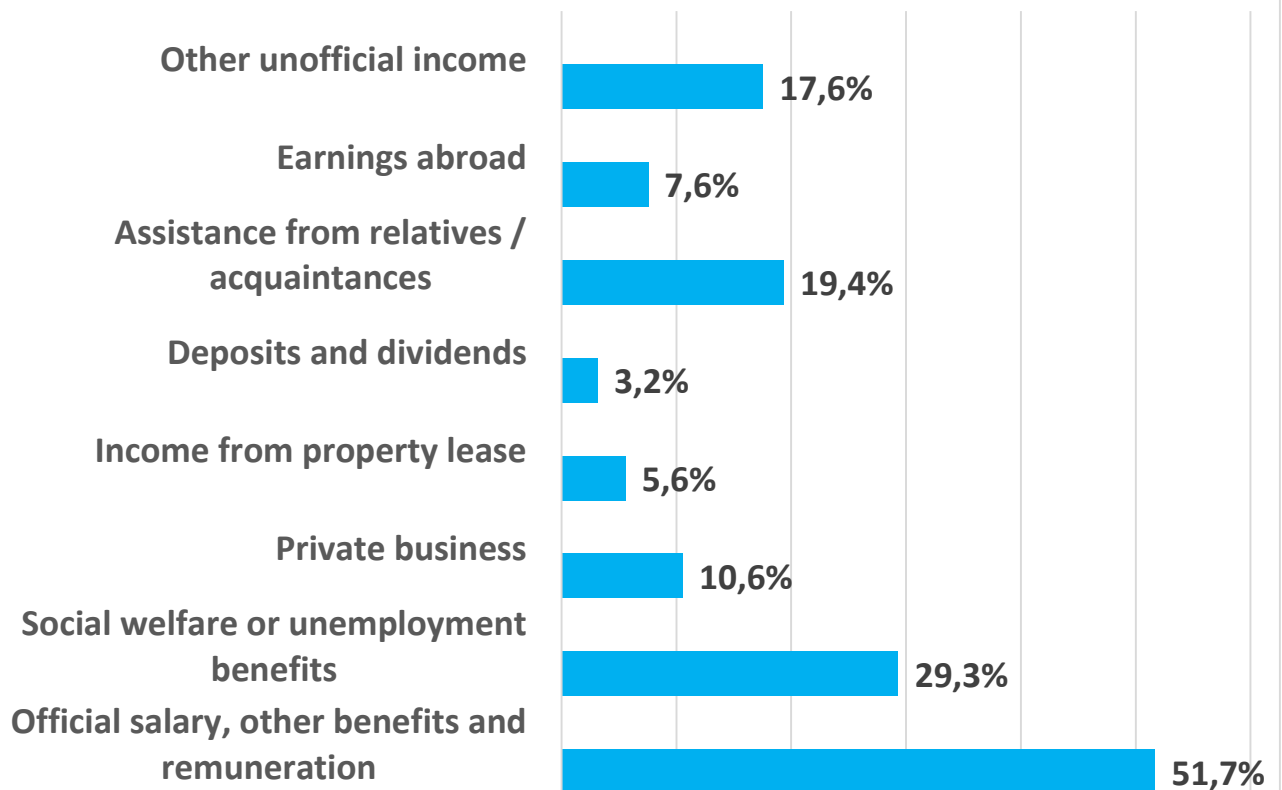
Evaluate the level of confidence in these institutions



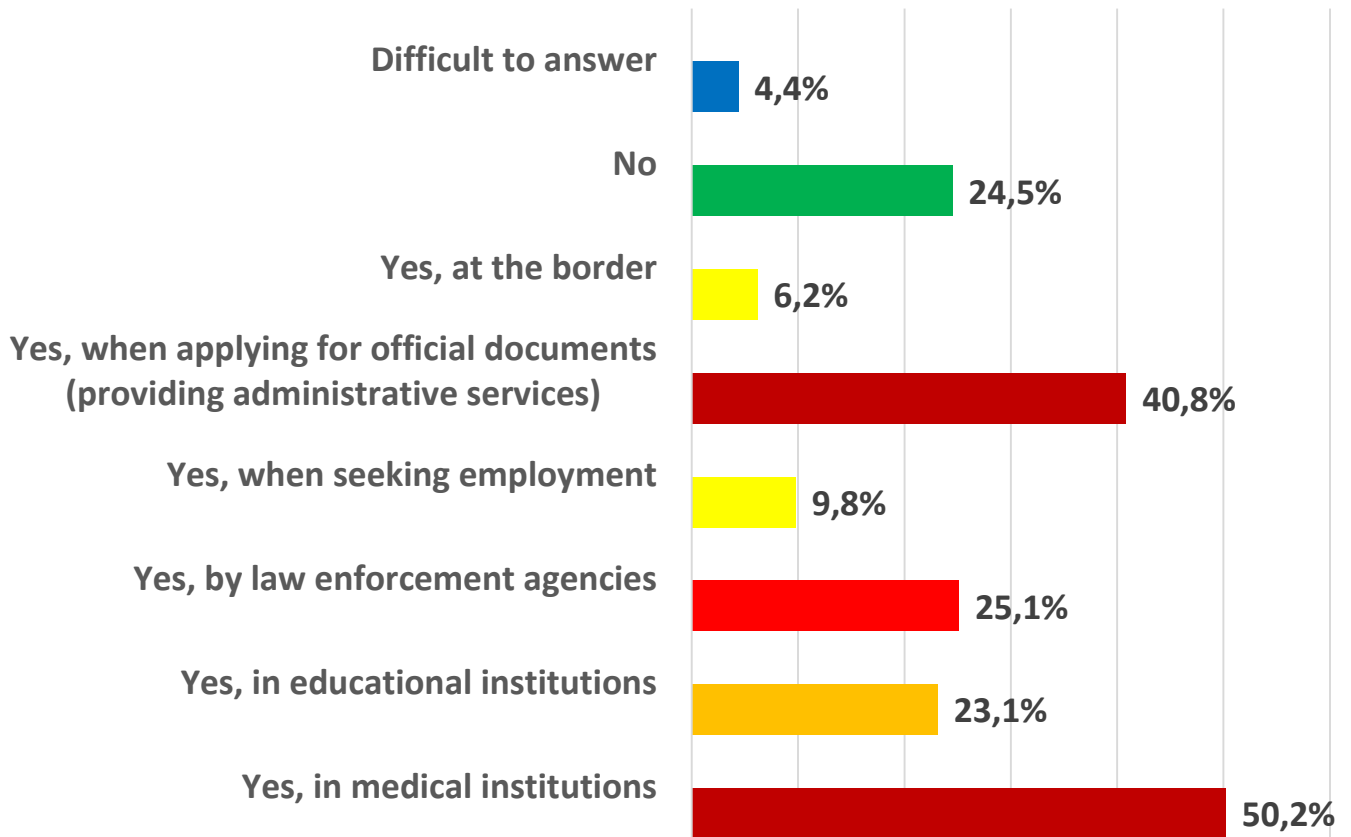
How would you rate your level of income?



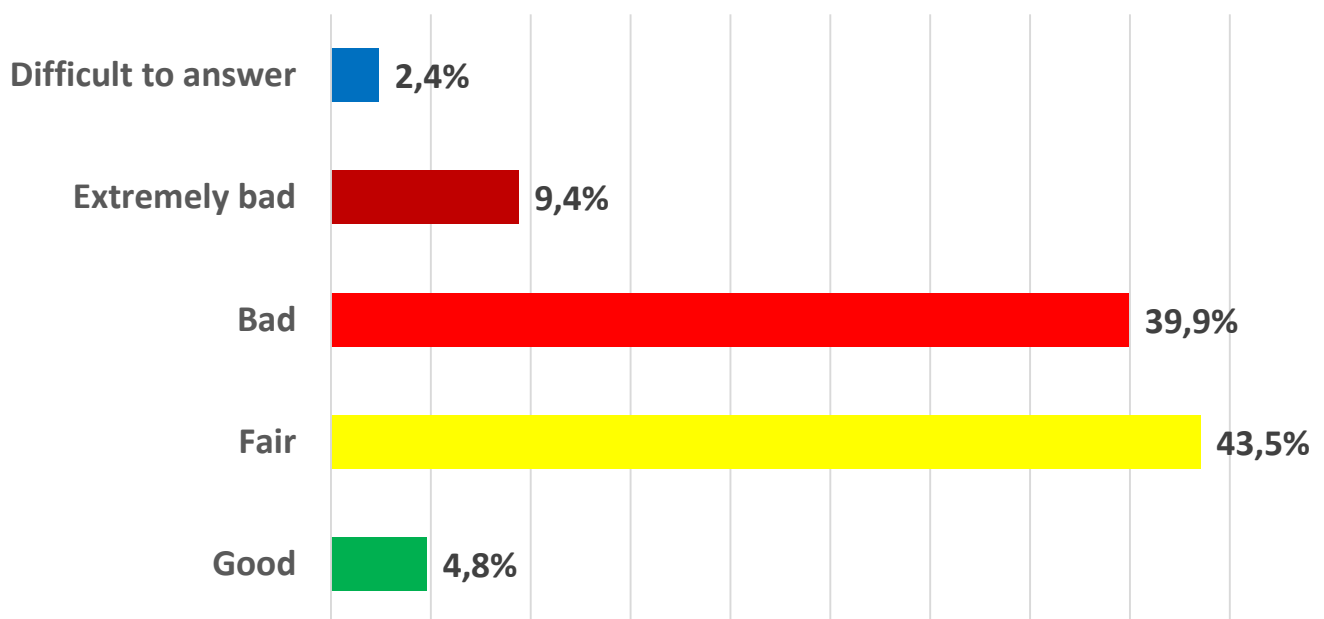
What does your income consist of?



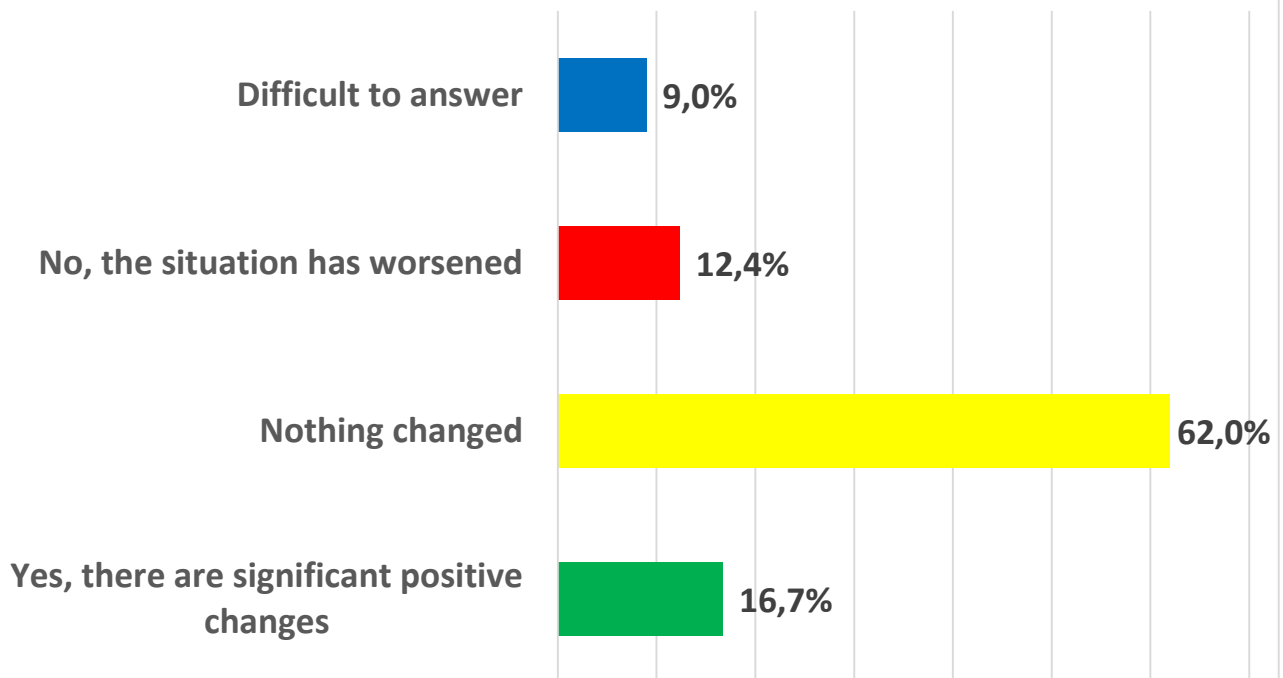
Have you encountered corruption?



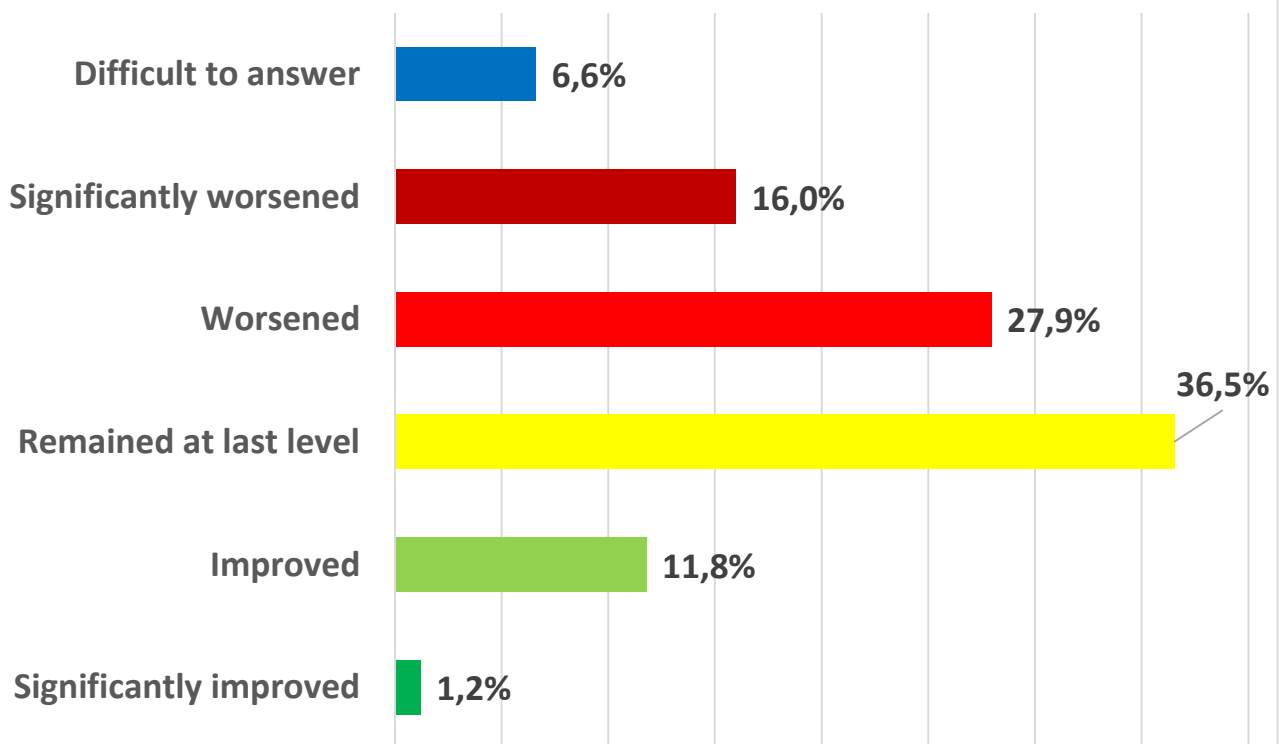
How do you assess the environmental situation in your area?



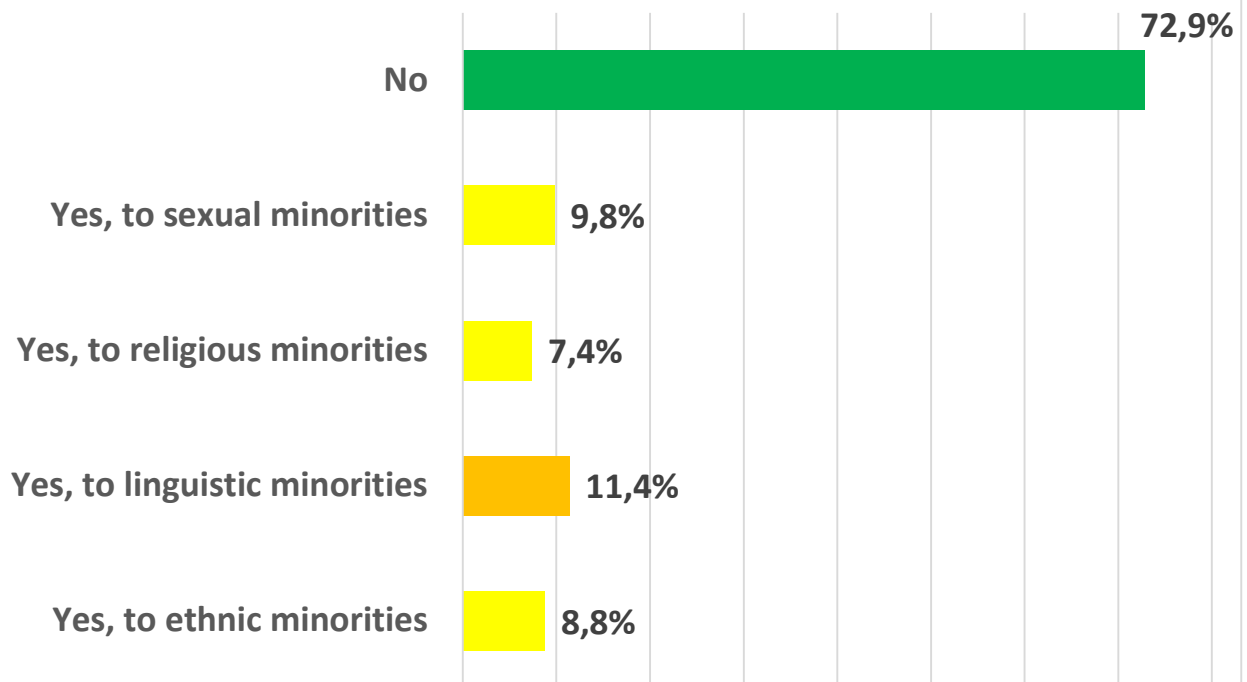
Do you feel a change in your locality after the decentralization reform?



How has the quality of healthcare services changed after the 2018 reform (provision of primary care)?



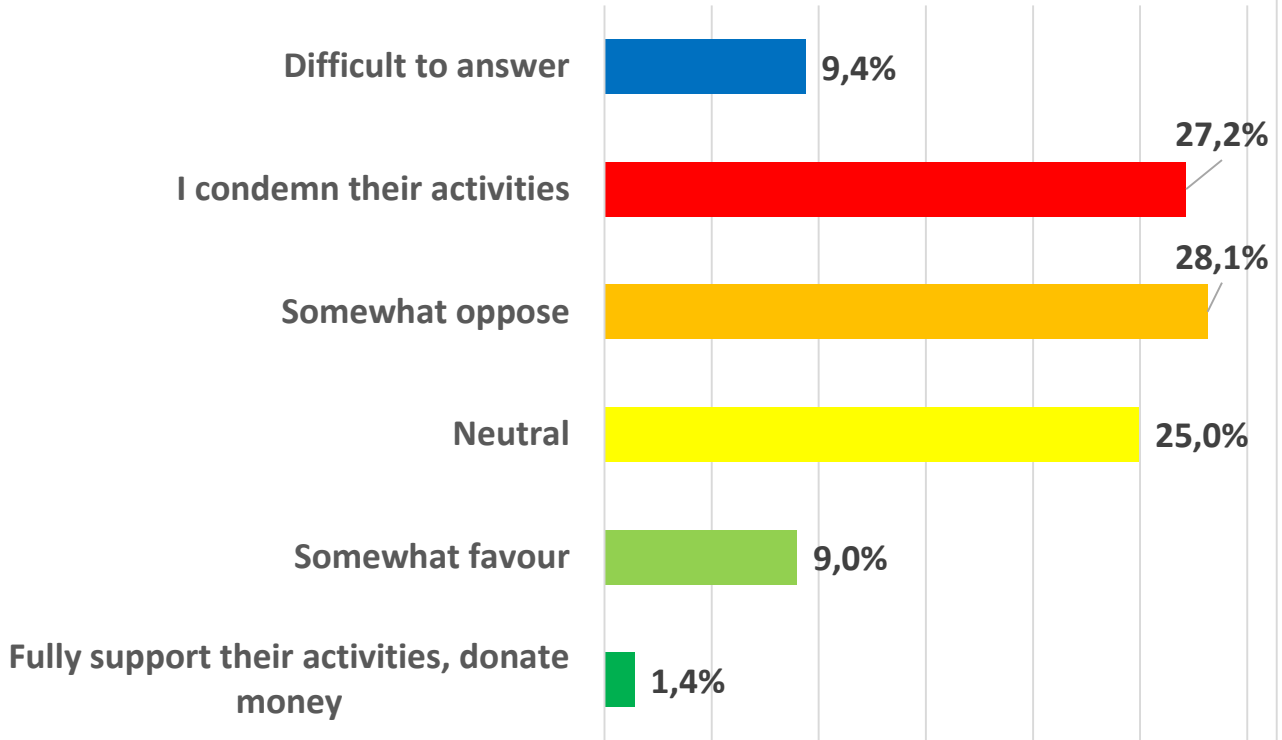
Have you recently encountered intolerance towards minorities?



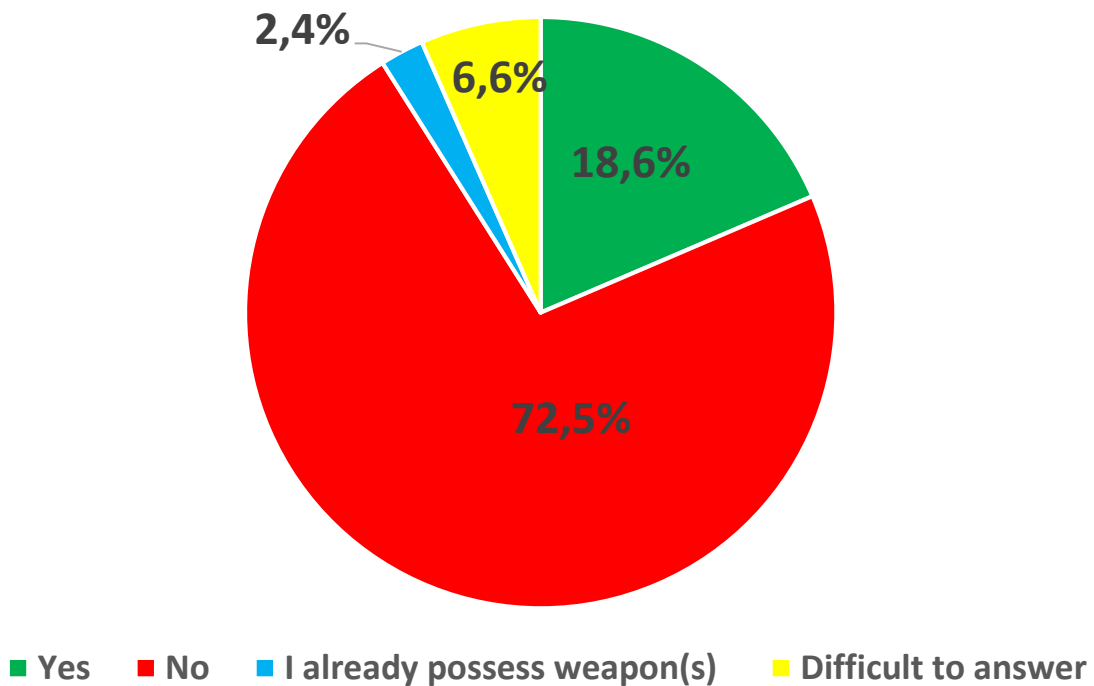
Have you thought about the possibility of work abroad?



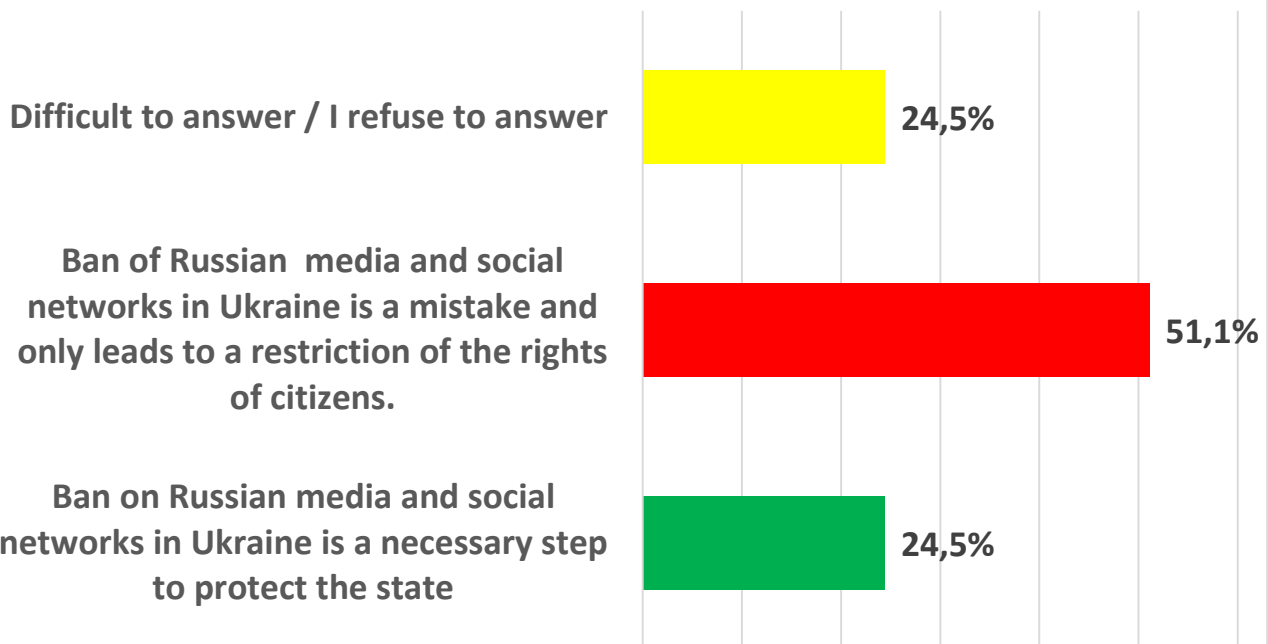
What is your attitude to the activities of non-state armed groups in Ukraine? (National Druzhyyny, C14, Right Sector, etc.)?



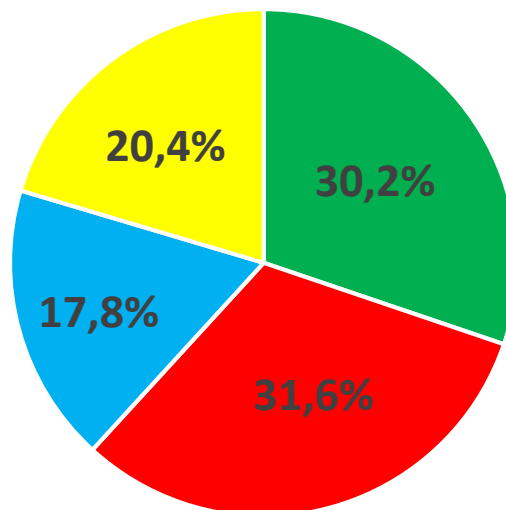
Do you support the legalization of guns in Ukraine?



What is your attitude towards the ban of Russian media and social networks in Ukraine?

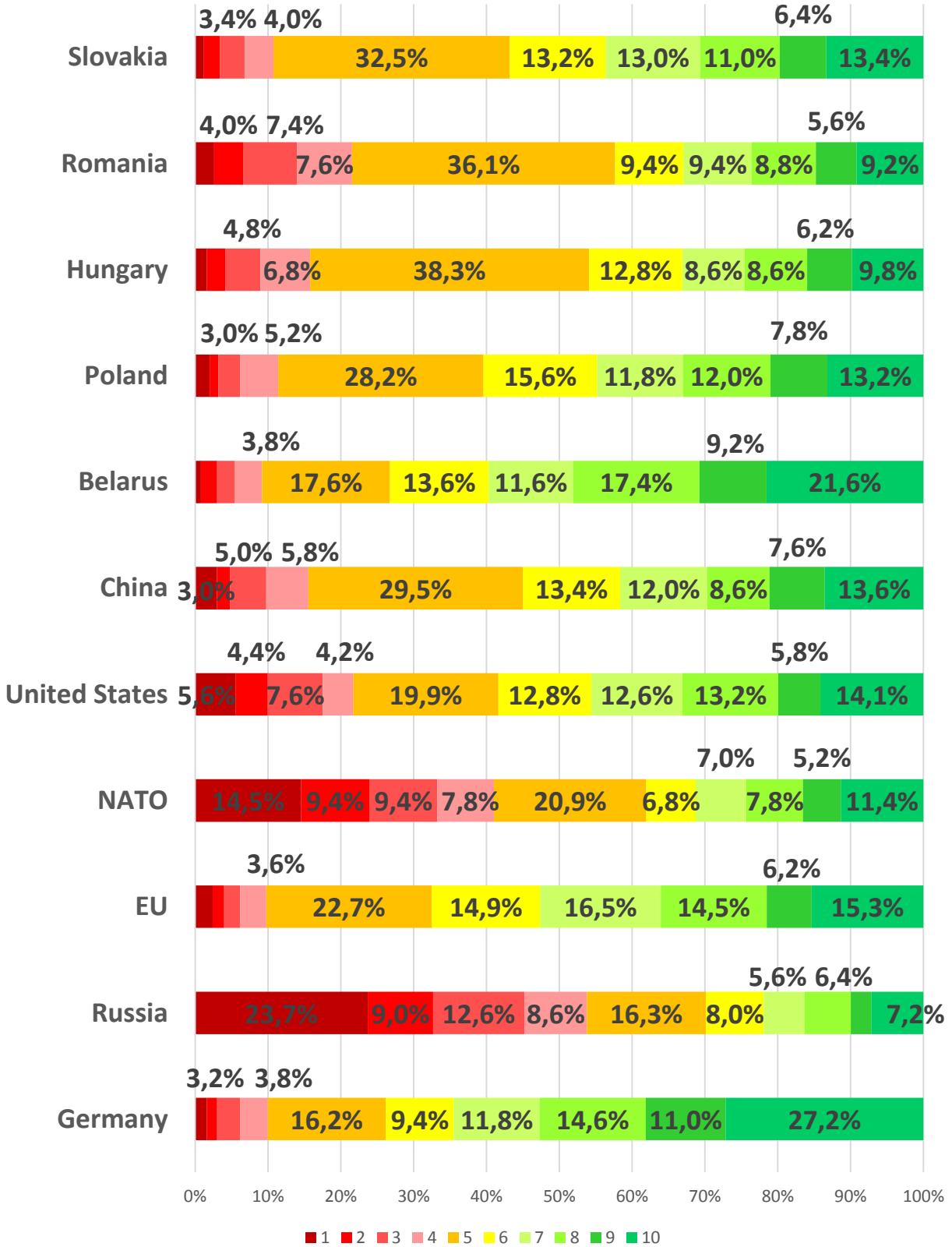


If a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO was held in the near future, how would you vote?

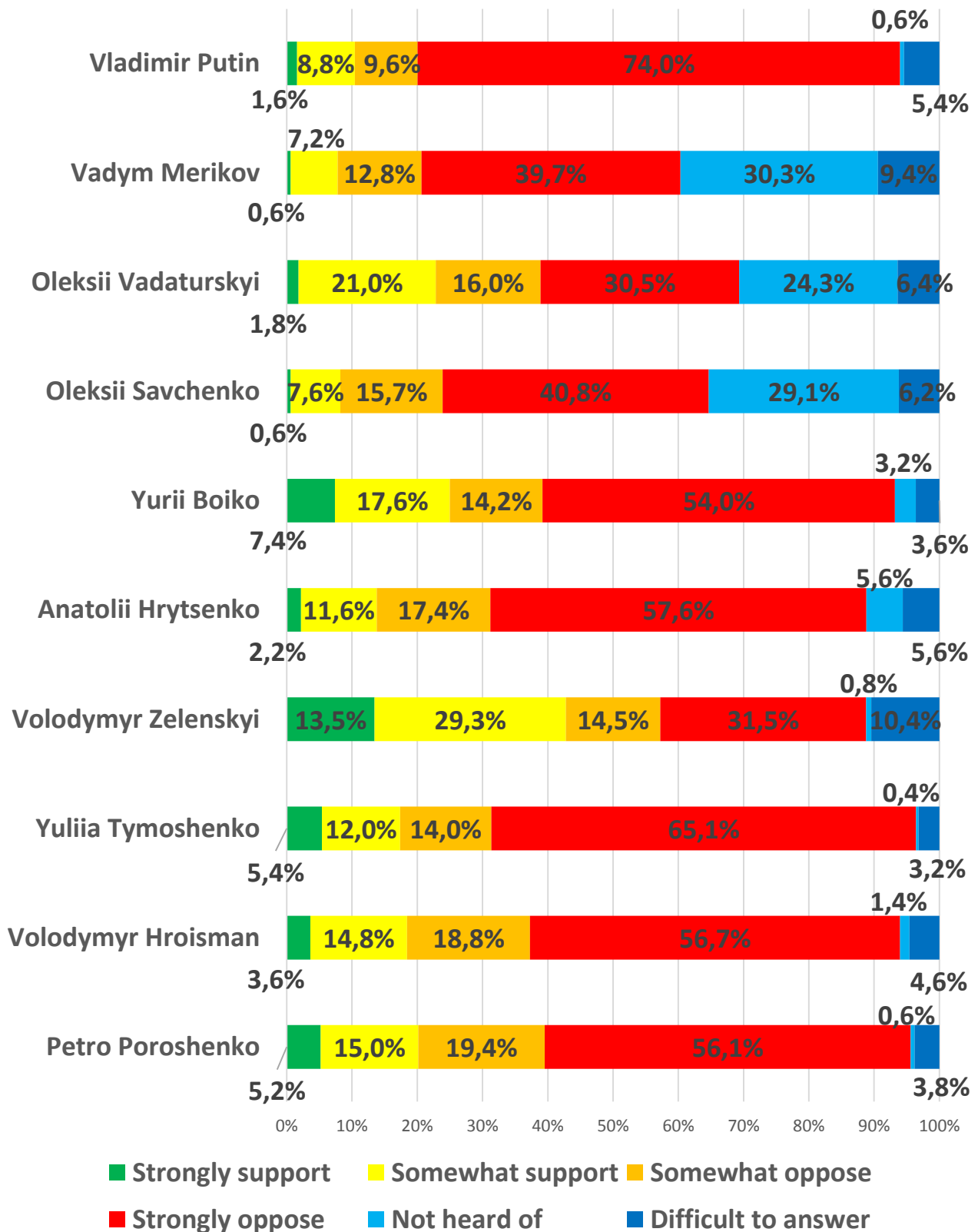


- For Ukraine's accession to NATO
- Against Ukraine's accession to NATO
- I will not vote
- Difficult to answer

Attitude to the following countries and international organizations (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest)



Attitude to the following politicians and public figures



UKRAINIAN FRONTIER: CHALLENGES FOR ODESA OBLAST

Odesa oblast is a southern region of Ukraine and has an exclusive economic value for the country due to the development of trade and tourism. The presence of a large number of national minorities that live compactly on the territory is specific to the oblast. The geographical proximity of the Odesa oblast to the self-proclaimed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic and the Crimea Peninsula annexed by the Russian Federation requires monitoring and timely responses to existing and potential challenges and threats to regional and national security.



Regional Threats

One of the most topical issues for the Odesa oblast is the question of the national policy of the state (in particular, concerning the "language" law and de-communization). Taking into account the multinational population of the region, the law "On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language" raises certain reservations in public discussions. A significant part of the population, especially the elderly, does not speak the state language at the needed level. A similar attitude among older people is caused by the introduction of the de-communization, especially due to the actions of some nationalist organizations, which may lead to an aggravation of the situation in the socio-political sphere. Among the representatives of national minorities, the lack of regional and inter-confessional conflicts in the region and the importance of the Russian language, which is most often used for communication among the multinational residents of the region, is highlighted.

Socio-economic problems in the region are connected to the lack of industrial development: modernization of the old and opening of new enterprises, and creation of new jobs for the population. In some districts of the oblast, there is a lack of financial investment in the development of tourism potential of the region. The society feels a decline in living standards due to the growth of utility tariffs and product prices, while the wages are staying low (above all, in the public sphere). The results of the survey on the Odesa oblast residents' assessment of their income level have demonstrated the following: more than half of the respondents (55%) indicated that their income is enough to cover food expenses, utilities and basic necessities; 25% of the respondents are able buy non-expendable items and make savings; about 20% of the respondents said that they have barely enough / not enough money for food.

Due to low purchasing power, a large part of the population uses subsidies, which creates a burden on local budgets and leads to "artificial" unemployment. Another problem is the shadow economy due to the spreading informal employment. This situation raises the problem of mass labour migration of citizens to neighbouring countries (according to the results of the survey, the most appealing destinations were Germany, Poland, Belarus, Slovakia, and Bulgaria). In addition, young people move abroad to study and often do not return to Ukraine because of the more favourable conditions of employment in Europe.

The lack of modernization and development of transport infrastructure in the region is a problem. There are some improvements to the situation but only with respect to routes of national and international importance. Transport infrastructure in districts far from the regional centre is in a terrible state. The neglect of cargo airports, roads of international importance in the south of the oblast, lack of proper rail connections raises problems with the transportation of agricultural products from Odesa oblast to other regions of Ukraine and abroad, which slows down the development of the economy and trade in the region.

The population of the region has rather contradictory attitudes to the decentralization reform, the implementation of which in different districts is perceived critically. According to the results of the survey, about 54% of the respondents observed the lack of changes after the reform, while 36% have noticed positive changes. The negative perception of decentralization can be explained by the inhibition of the reform in some parts of the oblast, as well as unsustainability of some of the UTCs formed in remote districts. This is explained by the way these were formed: not accordingly to the economic conditions and potential, but based on agreement between the local authorities and nepotism.

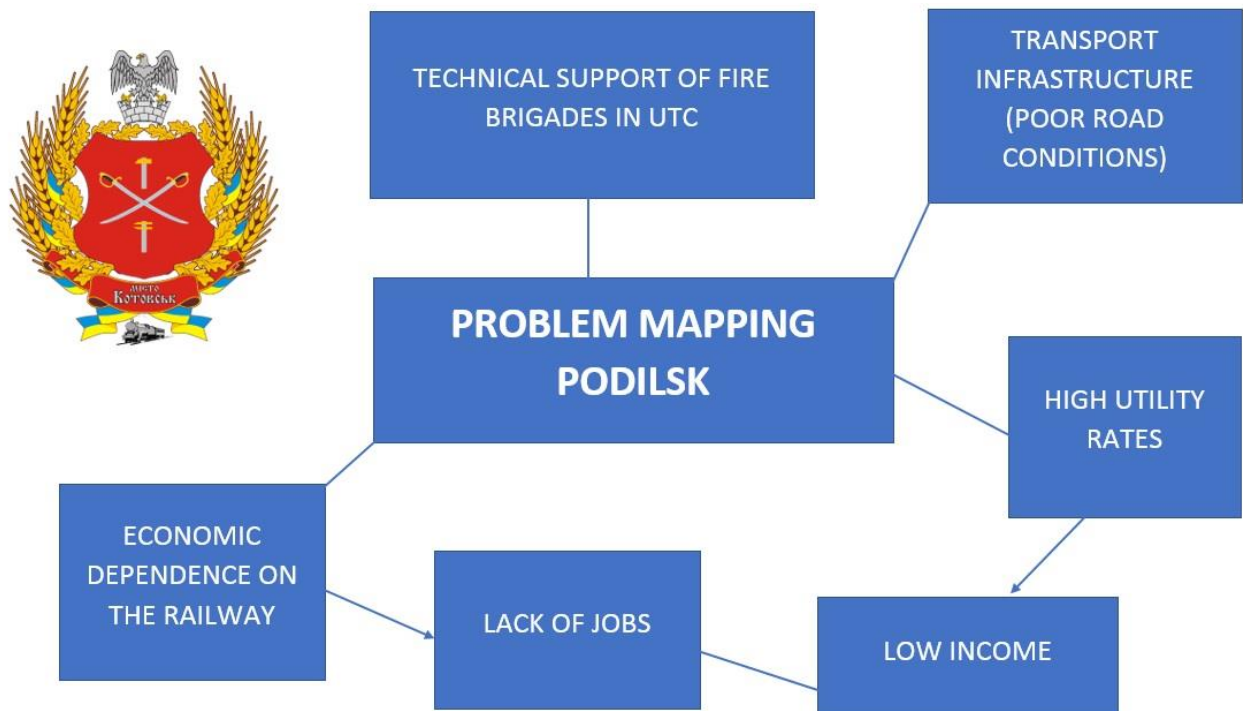
The majority of public has a negative perception of the medical reform: 47% of the respondents see no changes and believe that the quality of medical services has remained at the same level (and about 28% of the respondents has noticed decline after the reform). The local residents highlighted the lack of access to quality healthcare (in particular, in the framework of inpatient treatment). Another problem is the shortage of personnel who could take jobs in rural areas. The doctors from the

cities in the oblast are moving away due to the lack of adequate pay and decent conditions for self-realization. On a separate note, residents mentioned corruption in medical institutions (52% of the respondents also confirmed this information); corruption is present at the recruitment to medical institutions. In addition, there are complaints about nepotism (doctors serve relatives and friends ahead of the line).

As for the security situation, for the most part, there are problems with settlements and traffic patrolling. Residents noticed a loss of professional and experienced staff (shortage skilled staff) in the police force, lack effectiveness in crimes clearance and in public order maintenance.

Local threats

Podilsk. In Podilsk, the problems of economic nature are connected with the lack of the city's industrial development. The only enterprise that provides employment now is the furniture factory, which employs about 50 people (despite the fact that meatpacking plant, poultry processing plants, and asphalt plant functioned in the city previously). A significant part of the population is involved in services and trade (in the city there are about 1 400 officially registered individual entrepreneurs), but a certain number of residents has unofficial employment due to lack of employment opportunities and low income. In addition, the economy is founded on servicing military bases, utilities, and railway. The latter faces challenges in reducing freight traffic. The city is economically oriented on Odesa (even though it is far from it) and Zatoka. That is, in spite of it being located near the border, there is a clear identification with the Odesa oblast.



In the process of implementing the decentralization reform in the region in 2017, only one UTC was formed, which is currently the largest in the oblast: it consists of 61 settlements (26 thousand inhabitants). On the one hand, as a result of its

functioning, provision of public welfare was improved: the objects of social infrastructure (medical and educational institutions), utility infrastructure (water supply) are being repaired. On the other hand, the district faces the problem of lack of funds for the creation of local fire brigades and their proper equipment. In order to form and support one fire brigade, from 3 to 5 million UAH is required. Currently, the UTC allocates approximately 800 000 UAH. In addition, there is a shortage of funds for the creation of integrated Centres of Citizens' Security in the UTC.

The social welfare in the society in general is unsatisfactory: residents note the deterioration in the quality of life over the last five years. This tendency is associated with rising prices (in particular, utility costs, which are among the highest in the oblast) and low wages (the official average salary in the city is 8 000 UAH). However, in calculations of this average were taken into account high wages of railway and military personnel. The railway is considered financially separate from the district. In general, half of the resident of the district have salaries at the level of 4 000 – 6 000 UAH. In general, with the unemployment problem, the situation is paradoxical: there are a large number of vacancies in the employment centre, but people are reluctant to take them because of low pay.

Medical reform in the area continues to present difficulties: residents complain on a lack of money to pay for medical treatment. At the same time, innovations are being implemented rather broadly and quickly: in Podilsk and the district, 68% of the population has chosen a family doctor. Additional help in the medical sphere is provided by the Governor's programme "Affordable Medicine", where specialists from Odesa come to the area to serve its residents.

Police reform yields positive results (although the problem of the loss of professional and experienced staff remains). However, the crime situation remains unchanged; some residents noticed its deterioration due to the difficult economic situation and low living standards of the population, which encourages people to get involved in crime.

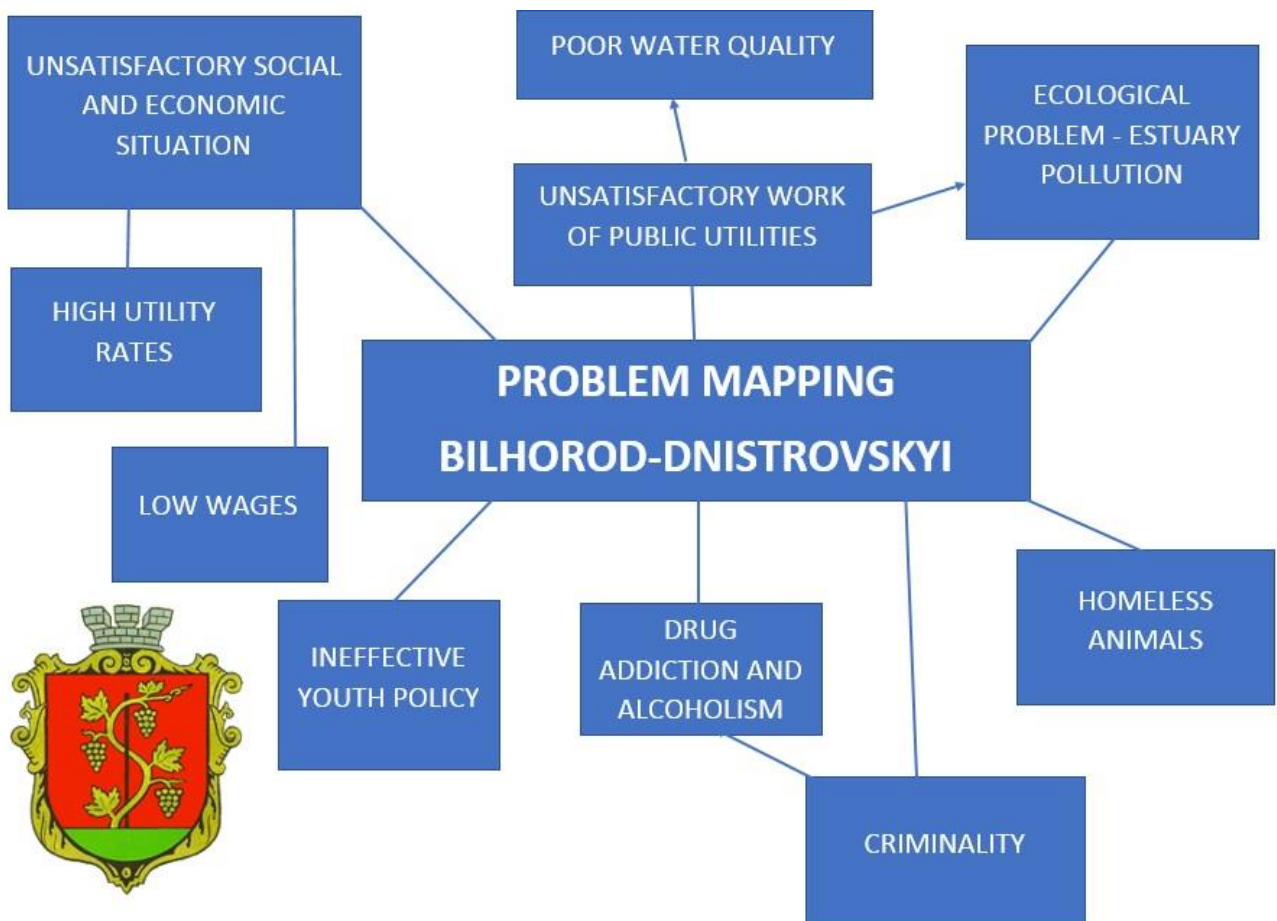
Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyyi. In the process of decentralization reform, four UTCs have been formed in the district. However, the very course of reform causes some criticism among residents who regard some of the formed UTCs as unsustainable and formed based on agreements between representatives of local authorities. In addition, communication is complicated by the geographical distribution of territories under the control of the UTCs and district authorities. The former wedged between the district centre and Zatoka, which is still a subordinate to the district.

There are significant problems in the socio-economic sphere. The local population is concerned about high tariffs for utility services that do not meet the level of their income. As a result, the public dept for heating is 2 million UAH. The total debt of the city of Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyyi to the oblast has recently increased from 19 million to 28 million UAH.

The problem with water quality, as well as sewage and sanitation, is relevant to the city and the district. In some areas, sewage flows directly through the streets into the Estuary, which leads to its contamination. In some areas, it is difficult to breathe in the streets and in the rooms due to the sewage smell. The reason is the poor condition of the water treatment facilities, which cannot cope with the amount of work, resulting in an emergency water discharge. At the same time, funds allocated by the local authorities for the repair of water treatment facilities were redirected to other budget lines.

The average salary in the district is from 3 500 to 5 500 UAH (the latter figure is only due to employees in the public sphere), that is why a large part of the district's population is subsidised. In rural areas, the only source of livelihood is agriculture. According to local residents, the quality of life in the area is worse than in neighbouring Moldova (according to some evidence, it is even worse than in the PMR).

Other social problems concern the absence of system work on implementation of the youth policy in the city of Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy. Youth leave the district for the external (abroad) and internal (to Odesa or Kyiv) migration. There is also an issue with unmet needs of people with disabilities. For example, there are no special ramps in the city nor in transport.



An important problem is the city's water supply. The water quality is bad; there is a secondary water pollution. Due to the tourist direction of city development, significant investments in urban water supply and sewage systems are required.

In general, one of the most urgent problems in the district is the lack of feeling of personal security and protection in local residents. The situation is complicated by the presence of problems with drug and alcohol addictions. The population is concerned about the lack of infrastructure for youth development (such as sports and play grounds, etc.) Another reason for people's insecurity is also ineffectiveness of the local police. According to some residents, law enforcement officers today do not show true statistics, refusing to register statements about administrative offenses (thus ensuring a lower level of registered offenses). Other residents note that statements are registered, but in practice, nothing is being investigated.

In addition, the city still does not have a patrol police, which complicates the maintenance of order in the streets. This concern, above all, traffic control: residents notice an increase in the number of road accidents due to the lack of established road signs and road marking. At the same time, it is difficult to understand who should be responsible for these activities because the areas of authority are blurred. While the patrol police in the city have not yet been formed, de facto, everything is handled by ordinary police officers, who still have the duty to investigate serious offenses and crimes. In addition, the police lack qualified personnel (old experienced staff have retired in recent years). At present, the staffing of the police remains at 60%.

Regarding the detecting of serious crimes, the situation in the district is positive. However, the dissatisfaction of local residents is caused by the lack of investigation of political cases. For example, there were cases of violations in the city during the establishment of utility tariffs, but there was no investigation into the case, indicating a certain convergence between the law enforcement and local authorities (which in some cases represents a criminal offense).

In addition, the residents are anxious because of the radicalized provocateurs, who exacerbate the situation in the socio-political sphere. Furthermore, there is a potentially dangerous situation in the district with the Roma minority, which can become aggravated at any time.

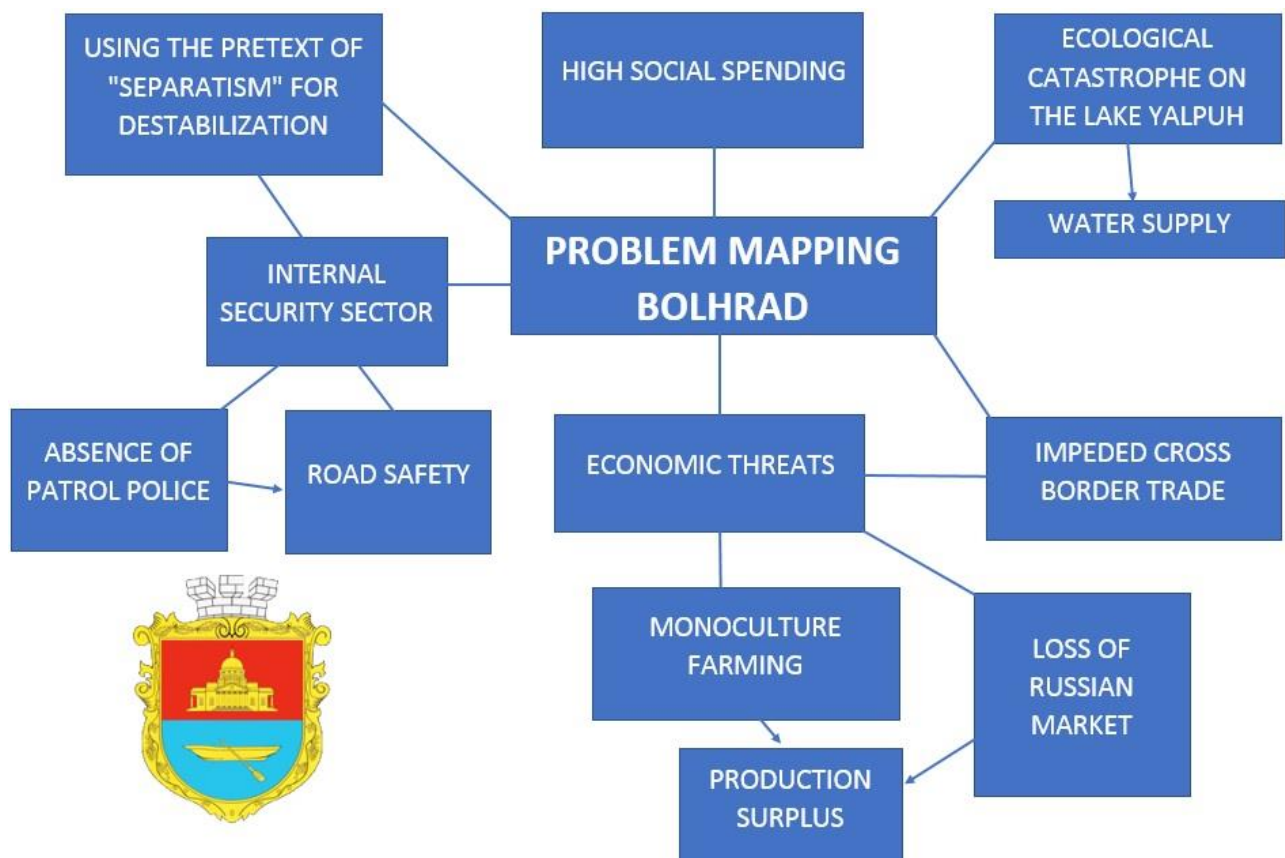
Bolhrad. A large number of nationalities (about 20) represents Bolhrad district, among which the main groups are Bulgarians, Gagauzes, and Albanians. Communication is conducted in 4-6 languages, among which Russian acts as one of the most convenient languages for inter-ethnic communication. There are no problems in this sphere in the district. According to the survey, 78% of respondents said that they did not encounter intolerant attitudes towards minorities (including ethnic ones). At the same time, the language question (in particular, in the context of the "language law") is perceived by the locals rather sensitive. Some see it as artificially created problem "from above". While the others reject any imposed

language because of the oppression and forced use of different languages during the Soviet or Romanian era in the region's history.

There are problems of an economic nature in the district, which are related to the need to reorient the economy to service provision. At present, wineries and factories that process grain represent the industrial potential of the district. These serve the agricultural sector. The decentralization reform left the area without jobs, which are now under the control of Izmail and Odesa. Although Izmail has its own problems, the Etalon plant and military towns around the city are also closed and are losing their importance as employment cities.

The elimination of military towns during the 1990-2000s greatly affected the area in which everything was previously concentrated around the military. Near Bolhar, the airborne division was deployed, which is currently dismantled. The new investments that were previously unavailable due to the closed area and deployment of military never came.

Currently, the main industry in the region is agriculture, the development of which faces a number of problems. For example, after the closure of the Port Plant in Odesa, prices for fertilizers have increased. However, the cost of grain remained at the same level, which makes it unprofitable. The industry suffers from a lack of sales markets. There is no centralized procurement of products. After closing the main market (the Russian market), the industry failed to reorient to the European countries. Local business blame quotas for this. The Ukrainian market (above all, Kyiv) is far, so it is difficult for local businesses to sale out.



A significant part of jobs is created by winemaking enterprises, which produce goods known at the national and international level. The development of this industry is complicated by the problem of the markets' oversaturation with grapes. There is no one to dispose it of (especially after the breakdown of trade ties with the Crimean peninsula). Large Ukrainian agricultural holdings enter the area only for exploiting the grain industry, while other sectors of agriculture are not interesting to them (because of the moratorium on land sales). For example, livestock breeding also suffers from the lack of sales markets and subsidies.

The economic situation is exacerbated by the logistical problem in the region. In general, the region is in isolation from the "big" Ukraine. There are only two bridges connecting the district. The route of international importance to Europe has lost its profitability after the collapse of the USSR as new borders appeared on it. Territorial wedge of Moldova (for 50 km) hinders effective cooperation with Romania. In the absence of a satisfactory railway connection, there is a problem with the transportation of agricultural products. The logistical problem could be solved by the development of a ferry crossing to Romania, which, however, remains unrealized.

In the social sphere, the burden on local budgets is created due to a significant number of social assistance recipients (single mothers, unemployed, etc.). The main problem remains the "shadow" employment, which does not give money to the budget. As a result, the latter feels extraordinary pressure. For one officially employed person there are up to five unemployed.

The ecological situation in the region is unsatisfactory. The problems concern, above all, drop in the water level, which affects the Danube and lakes (for example, Yalpuh). Because of this, the gateways do not work properly; they do not take the necessary water. Pumping stations on the channel to Moldova do not work, which led to its silting. In the villages of the district there is a big problem with water supply (water is mainly imported). Water-purifying systems are outdated. Because of their use, water has dangerous chlorine compounds. Now the city of Bolhrad receives water from the lake Yalpuh, so any pollution to it is a threat to the residents of the city. Due to pollution and poaching, the population of certain species of cancers and fish has disappeared in the lake in the last years. Dams constructed on the rivers supplying Yalpuh interfere with the transfer of water. An additional threat to the environment creates a burial site of chemical waste, located near the border on the territory of Moldova.

External influence

Given the geographical location of the Odesa oblast and the variability of the ethnic composition of the population, local residents still have stable ties with neighbouring European countries. One of the most popular destinations for the population of the Odessa oblast is Bulgaria and Romania. The youth usually go to work and study there, but many stay for permanent residence. Bulgaria is actively

supporting such migration, especially given that some parts of the Odesa oblast (above all, Bolhrad) are places of compact residence of Bulgarians. Sofia pours funds into the area, supporting the cultural heritage of the Bulgarian national minority in Ukraine. Turkey also supports its presence in the region in a certain way.

The Russian Federation continues to consider this region as a bridgehead for destabilization of the south of Ukraine. Above all, because of the significant role of the Black Sea ports in the foreign trade of our country. Relations with Moscow are primarily referenced while discussing economy and trade, given that Russia was the main market for the sale of products for the representatives of local business circles before the war. This is also observed in the assessment Russia in the survey, with about half of respondents rating the Russian Federation from 5 to 10 points on the scale of the country's attractiveness. In addition, in the region, the population continues to have access to Russian television channels and has negative attitude towards their blocking (according to the survey, almost 60% of citizens in the oblast negatively evaluate the prohibition of Russian mass media and social networks in Ukraine, 27% of the respondents support the idea).

Romania allocate almost no funds to support its policy in the region, in comparison with its activities in Bukovyna. Romania's actions can be seen only in words, in the rhetoric of the politicians. During the 1990s, Romania financed some projects, but then the situation changed. Now funds are directed only in support of national branches. Educational and business grants exist but these are not very common. At the same time, Romanian politicians allow rhetoric on the return of Bessarabia under Romanian jurisdiction.

In the perception of local residents, the proximity of Odesa oblast to self-proclaimed Transnistria has no influence on the security situation in the region. The population does not feel the threat of separatism from that territory. Moreover, the widespread view is that the PMR is not a threat to Ukraine. On the contrary, a significant part of the population indicates that the standard of living there is higher (for example, pensions at the level of 190 USD, plus extra pay from Russia), and therefore residents of Transnistria come shopping to Odesa oblast. Nevertheless, there are practically no reverse migration links (from Ukraine to Transnistria); those that do exist are connected to family reunification. At the same time, it is possible to watch Transnistrian television and listen to Transnistrian radio from some districts of Odesa oblast. In addition, Russian TV channels that residents of the region are watching through satellites continue to have a significant influence on people.

Among the older generation, there is mostly a negative perception of NATO. Although a general survey of experts showed that about 40% support of the Euro-Atlantic course, which is in line with the discovered public opinion.

Internal problems

The main systemic problem for the population of the Odessa oblast remains the low level of trust in the central executive authorities, which is explained by the separation of the region from the centre and the specifics of its economic and socio-political development. According to the results of the survey of confidence in the institutions, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine is leading in the anti-rating among the residents of the oblast: about 85% of the respondents do not trust / more likely not to trust it. Local residents explain it by the parliament's lack of attention to the problems of remote districts in the oblast.

The imposed administrative boundaries are considered problematic in the region since long ago. For example, the city of Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi was joined with Zatoka and other distant districts, which are difficult to control. Thus, the residents do not connect any positive development in the socio-economic sphere of the region to the structural reforms (decentralization, revision of the tax code). Instead, they believe that the city authorities are responsible for the improvements. This, in its turn, forms the positive attitude of the residents towards the latter.

The pressing problem of public administration is the fact that the main economic issues are solved in the centre, and the local authorities have no influence on them. The local authorities have no constructive dialogue and stable communication with the district authorities, instead the orders are sent down for execution. The local authorities artificially politicize the local activities, although under normal conditions, the local authorities, on the contrary, should concentrate on solving practical issues and ensuring economic well-being. Representatives of village councils have problems even to just get a meeting with regional authorities; everything needs to be agreed in writing.

The systemic phenomenon of the Odessa oblast remains the problem of corruption, which is widespread. Survey results show that most respondents encountered corruption in medical institutions (52%), administrative services (33%), educational institutions (30%), and from law enforcement officers (21%). At the same time, there are contradictions between different groups of people in perceptions of corruption in everyday life.

Recommendations

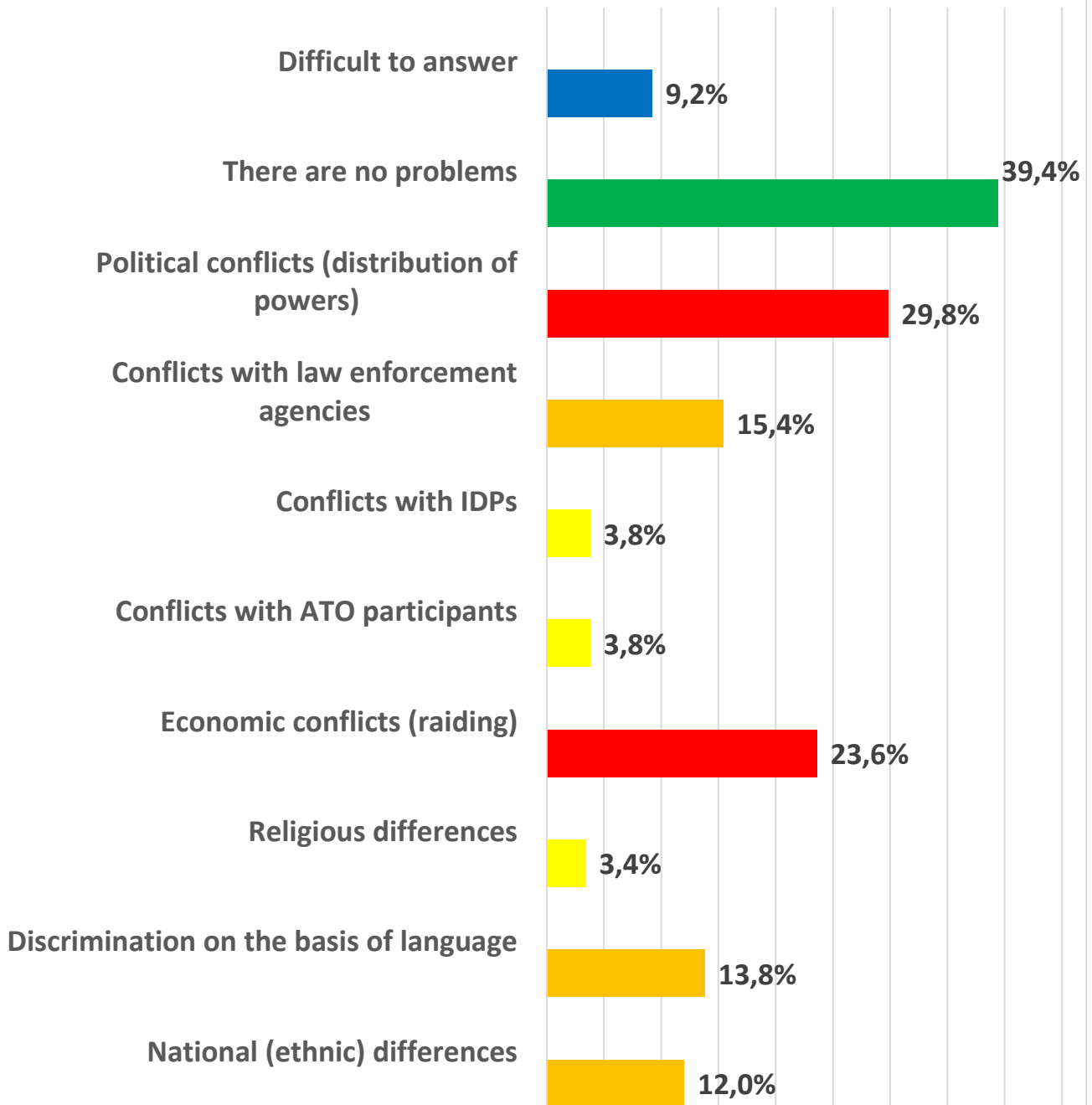
In order to improve the security, economic, socio-political climate in the Odesa oblast and minimize the negative impact of certain factors of its development, the following is proposed.

- To continue processes of decentralization and rejection of the vertical decision-making practice (maximum involvement of local population in decision-making, infrastructure development, financial planning of development of the territories).
- To improve local transport system by upgrading existing infrastructure (above all, start with areas with the worst roads) and to implement projects for construction of new infrastructure objects.

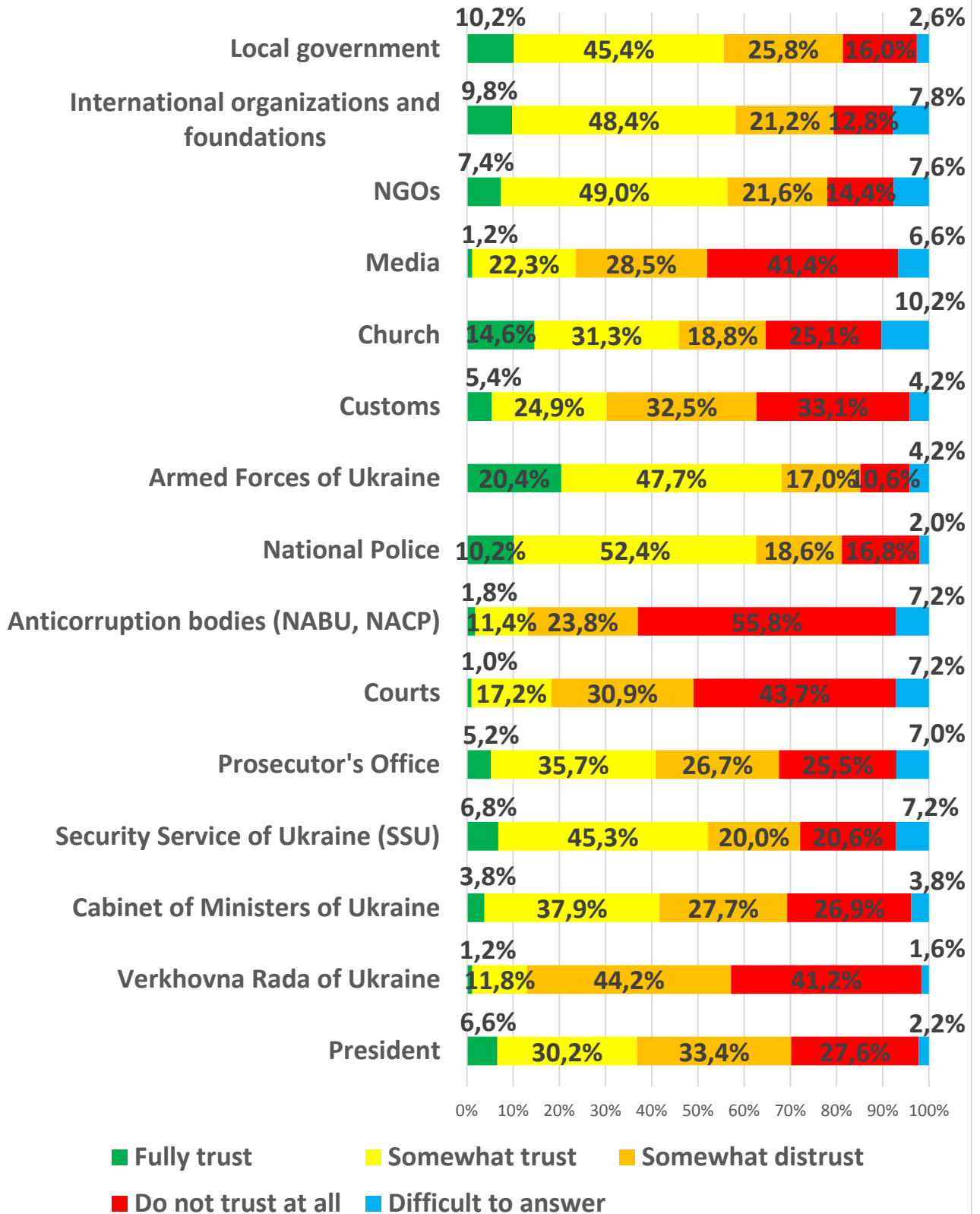
- To facilitate the promotion of the region's population business initiatives within the small-medium enterprise support programme, introduction of innovations. In the sectoral format, the preference must be given to those initiatives that offer promising projects, alternative in their essence to the dominant sectors of the economic development of the district.
- To pay particular attention to the training of the local fire brigades and voluntary fire brigades, particularly through the development of a system of tax incentives (for example, for the purchase of fire trucks).
- To use the historical, cultural and natural potential of remote areas of the oblast to attract tourists from other regions of Ukraine, as well as from abroad. To contribute to the creation of the National Natural Park and the tourist route - "Danube Bessarabia"
- To establish a separate system of experts in the city councils that would specialize in using grant programmes to raise funds for solving issues in the oblast, such as roads, water pollution, etc.
- To launching a separate prize, material incentive, for organizations, institutions or enterprises for activities in favour of eco-system in the region.

Annex 3.
ODESA OBLAST – SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

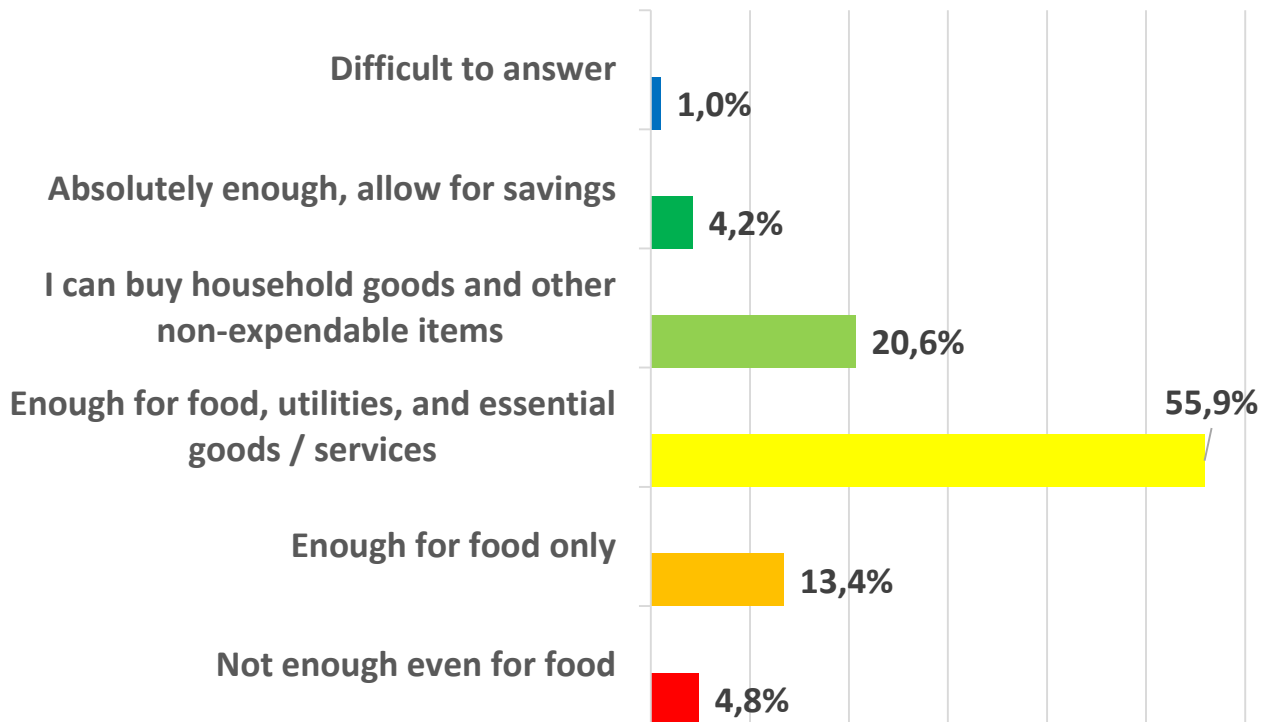
What problems and differences can be observed in your city?



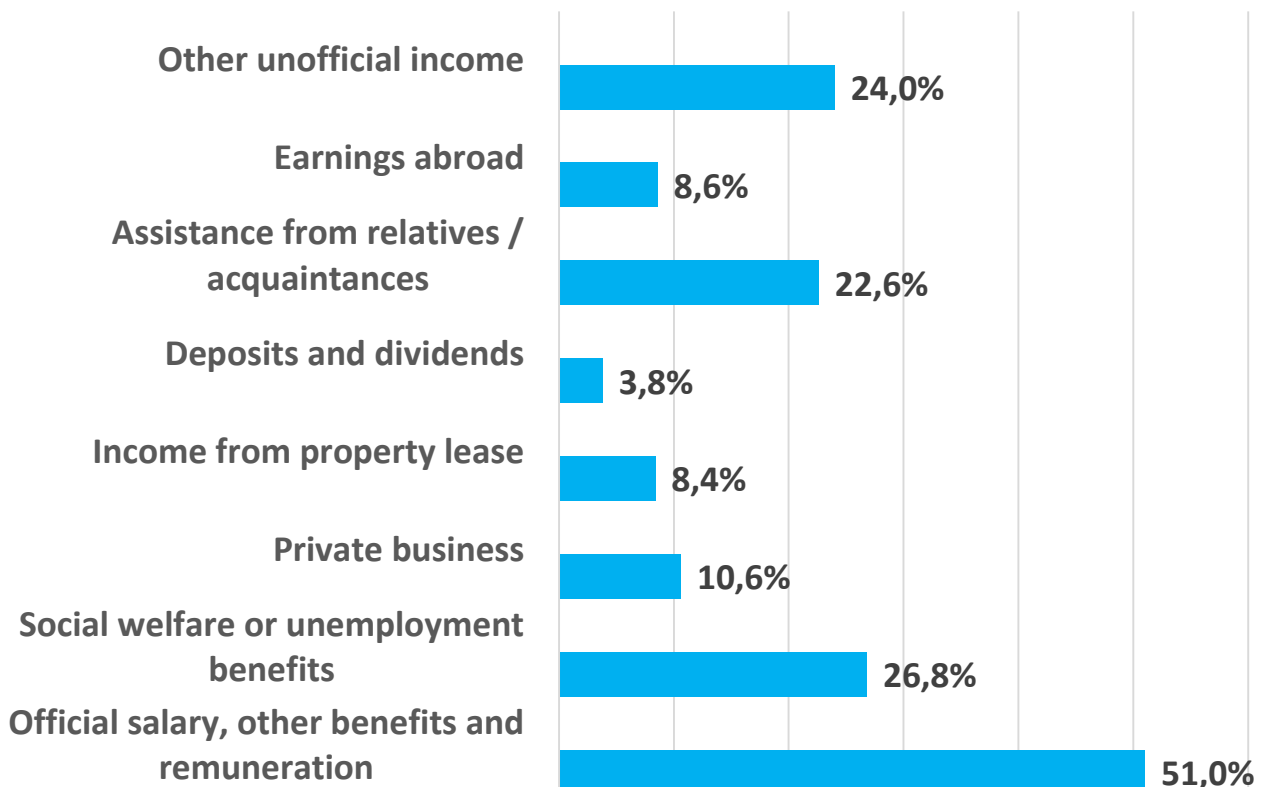
Evaluate the level of confidence in these institutions



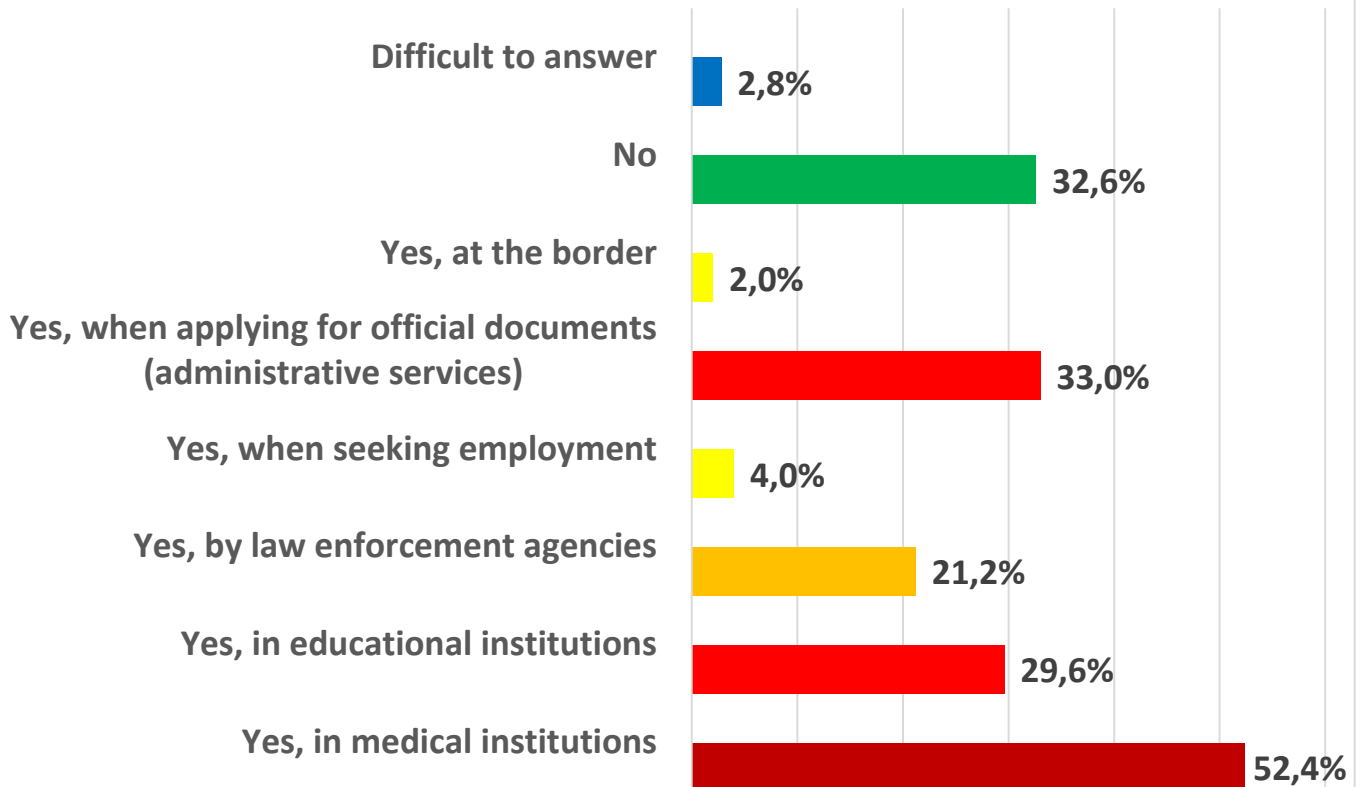
How would you rate your level of income?



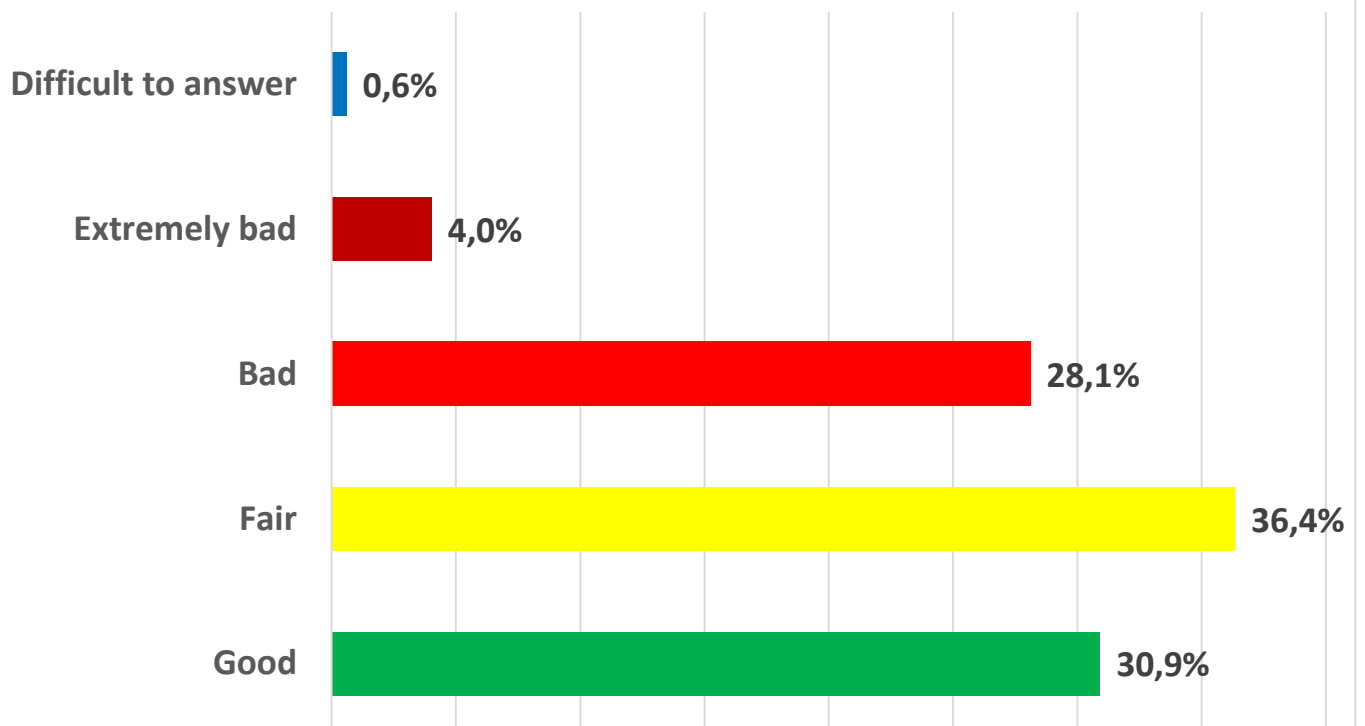
What does your income consist of?



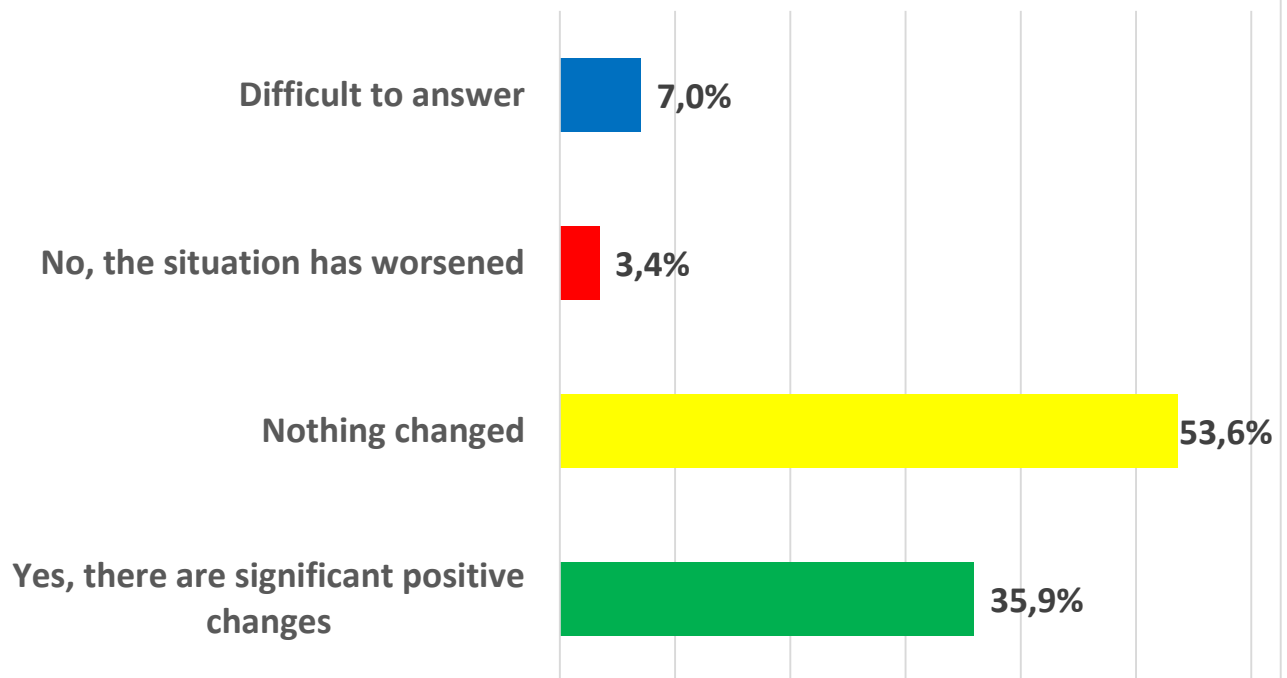
Have you encountered corruption?



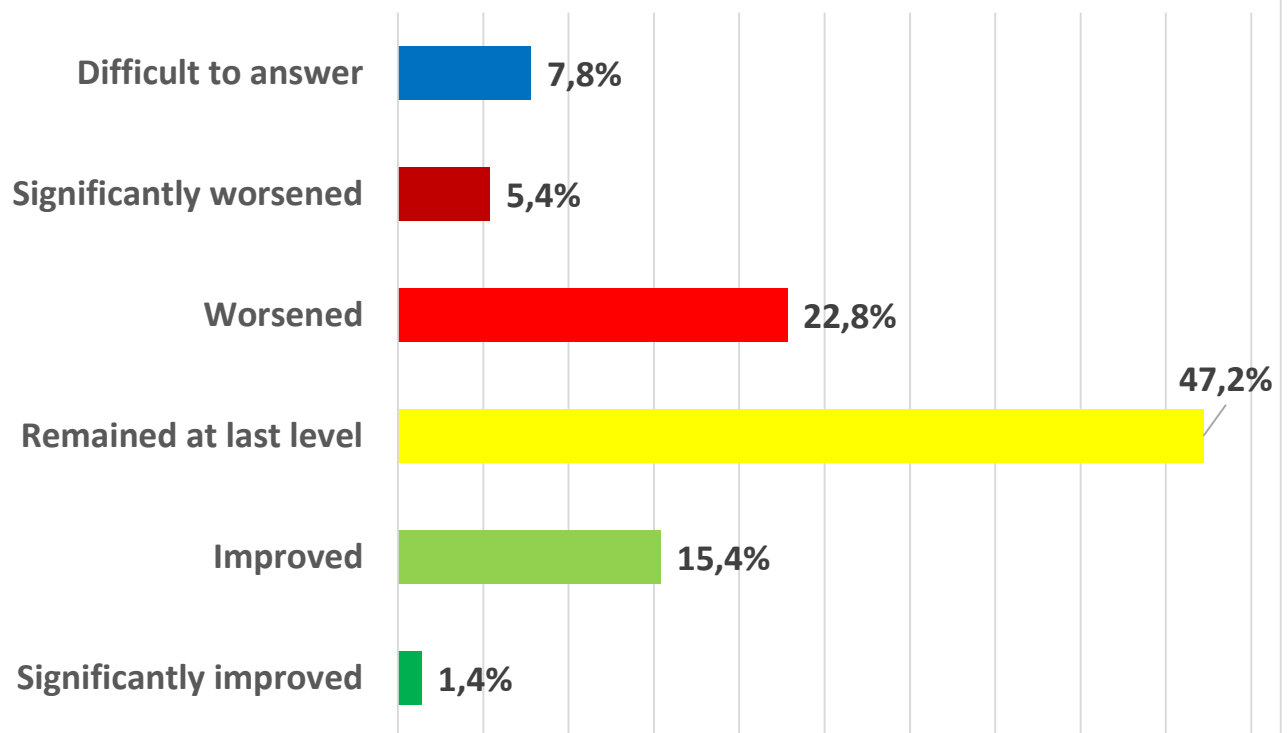
How do you assess the environmental situation in your area?



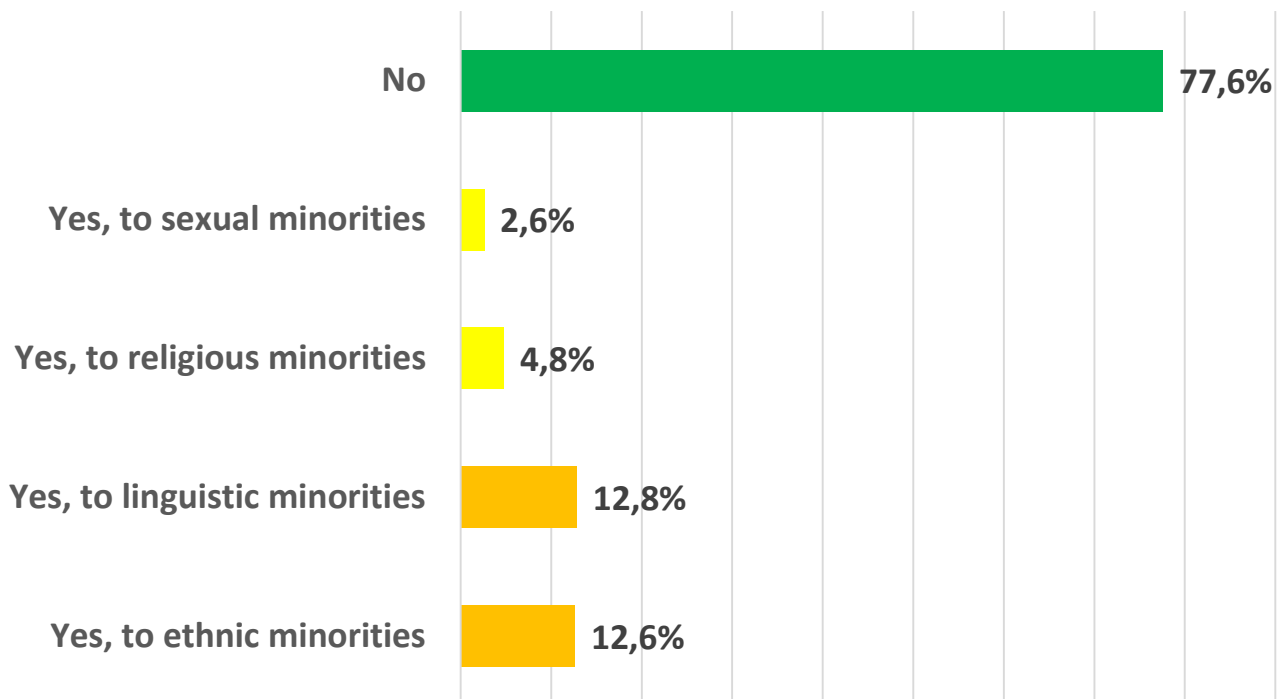
Do you feel a change in your locality after the decentralization reform?



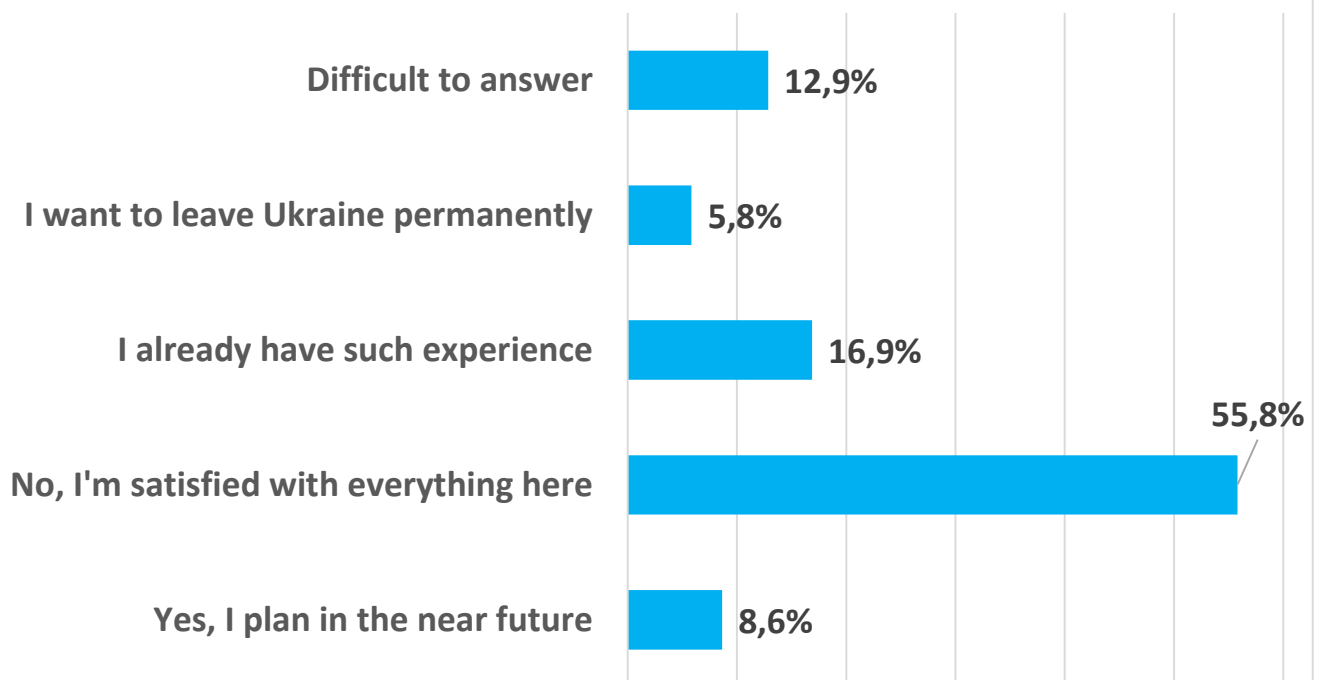
How has the quality of healthcare services changed after the 2018 reform (provision of primary care)?



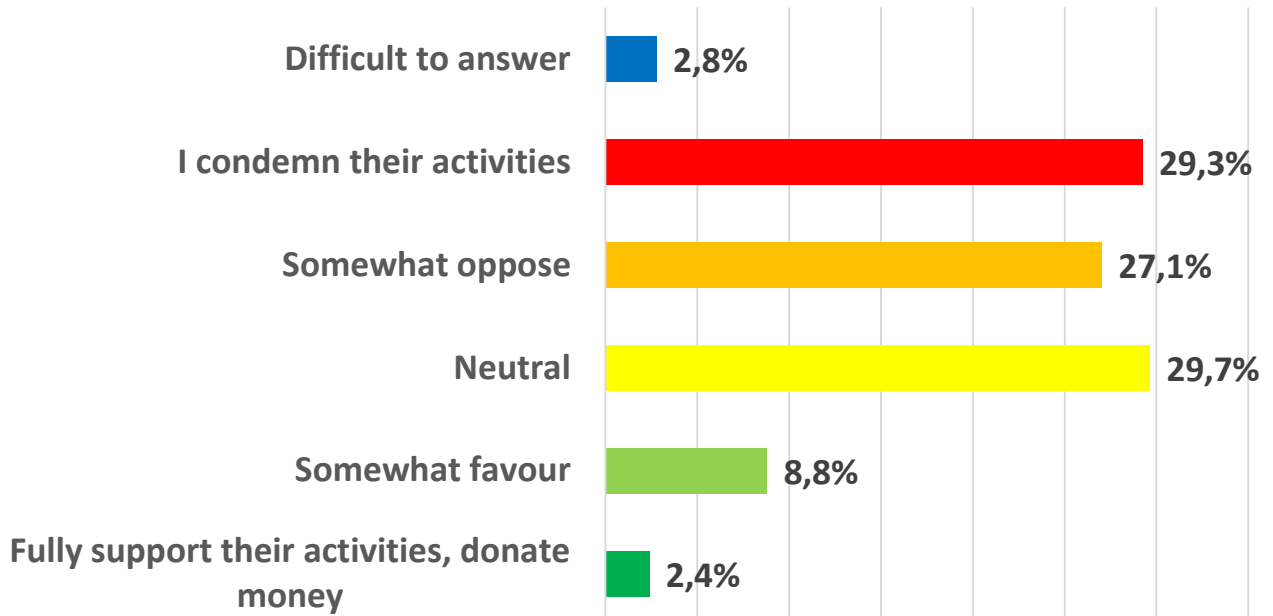
Have you recently encountered intolerance towards minorities?



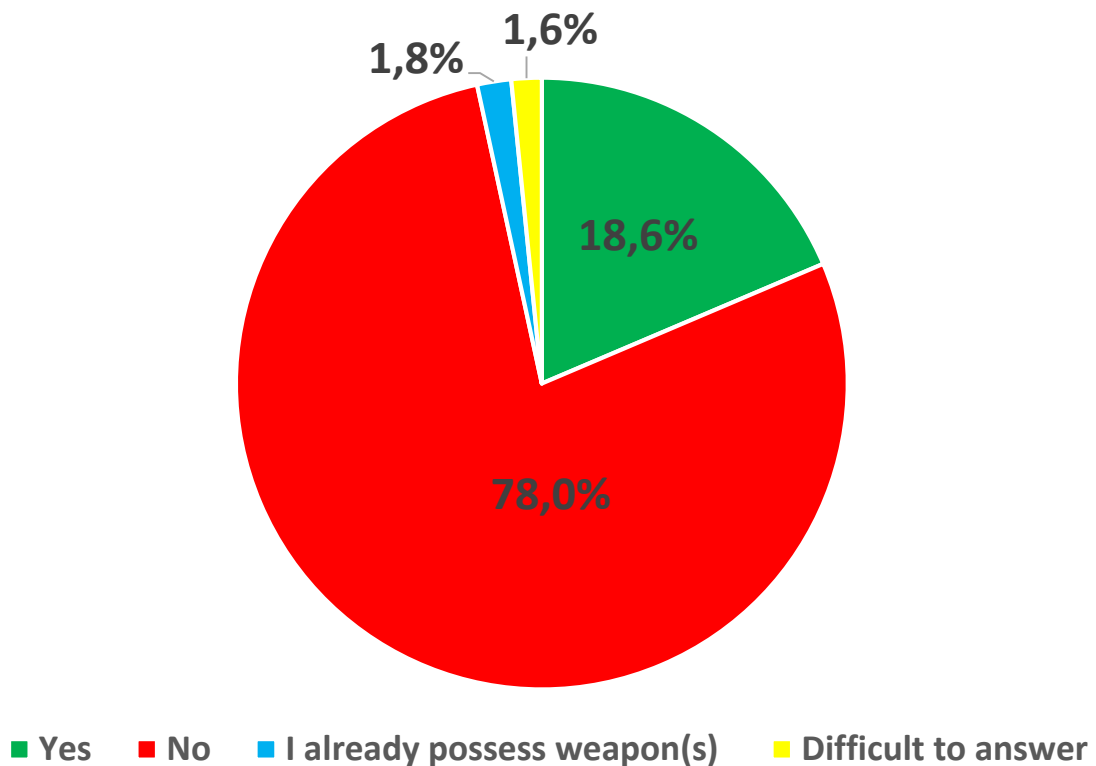
Have you thought about the possibility of work abroad?



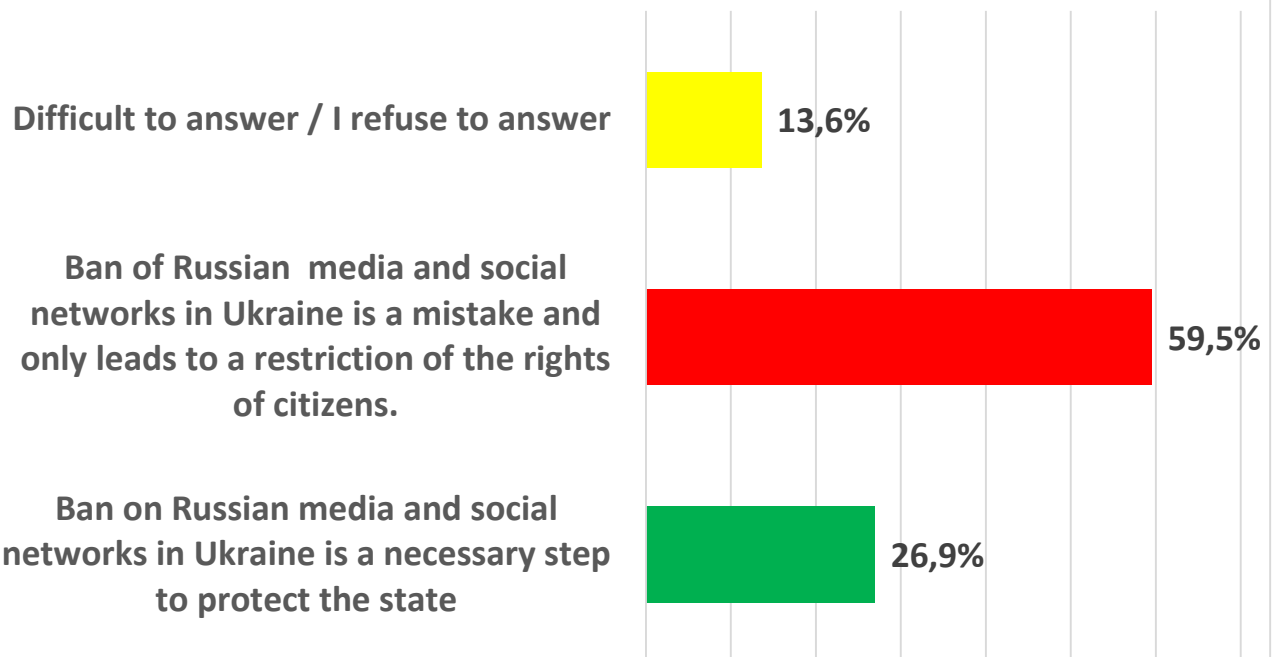
What is your attitude to the activities of non-state armed groups in Ukraine? (National Druzhyyny, C14, Right Sector, etc.)?



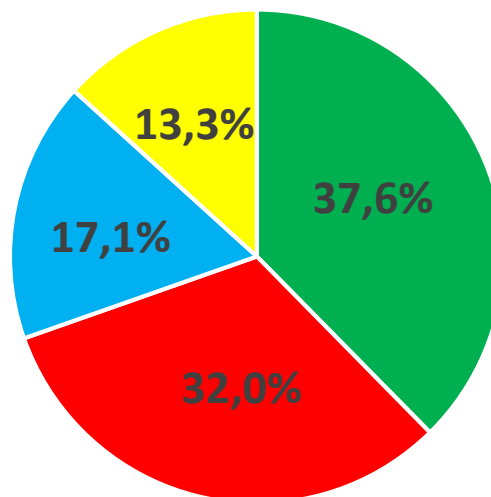
Do you support the legalization of guns in Ukraine?



What is your attitude towards the ban of Russian media and social networks in Ukraine?

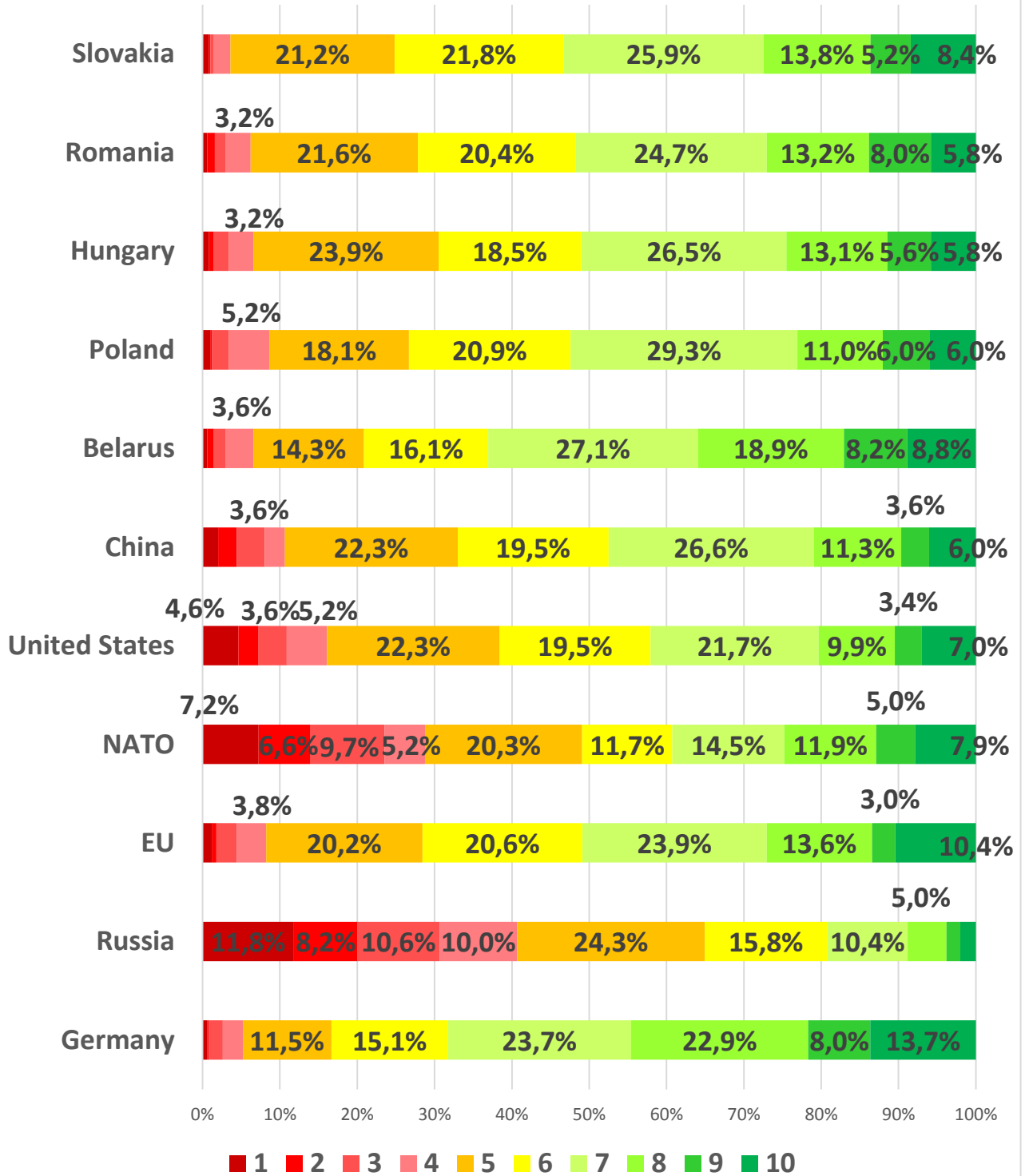


If a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO was held in the near future, how would you vote?



- For Ukraine's accession to NATO
- Against Ukraine's accession to NATO
- I will not vote
- Difficult to answer

Attitude to the following countries and international organizations (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest, 10 is the highest)



Attitude to the following politicians and public figures

