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Youth Resolution of Myropolis

June 2022

Myropolis, launched as a forum of youth from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts back in 2019, has been changing its format year after year to follow the needs and priorities of young women and men. It's a YPS-inspired initiative with a youth community of more than 500 people: those who were, are, and will be drivers of change in their communities and among their peers. The war ruined their dreams and aspirations, yet they are not stopped by it and remain active citizens.

During the unprecedented times of 2022, Myropolis happened again and following the successful cases of previous years – it was fully led and coordinated by young people. An initiative that became “displaced” itself was co-organised by Donetsk regional youth council and “Youth East” NGO. Myropolis united displaced youth and those young women and men living in the recipient community – the historical city of Kamianets-Podilskyi in Khmelnytskyi Oblast. Among the participants were representatives of youth councils, students of the universities in exile, leaders of civil society organisations, and volunteers.

United by Myropolis, together with alumni of the previous years and representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, 60 participants of this youth meet-up offered their view on the most pressing challenges faced by young people during the war and listed the possible solutions as seen by Myropolis community.

Youth Resolution Of Myropolis – What Young People Think

As of early February 2022, Ukraine was a home to 10 million 263 thousand young people. The ongoing war has impacted the lives of each and everyone from this number: those who decided to stay in their home communities; those who moved within or beyond the borders of Ukraine; those living in the recipient communities now welcoming citizens of other regions. Yet the worst possible consequence of the military invasion of the Russian Federation to Ukraine is the loss of people's lives, including those of adolescents and youth.

According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, after 24 February 2022 nearly 40% of young people were forced to move from their home settlements. In particular, around 2 million young people became internally displaced while nearly the same number left the country.

At the same time, since the onset of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, Ukrainian youth demonstrated an exceptional level of cohesion and readiness to active actions. For instance, 93 youth centers (every third youth center within the country) have been engaged in helping civilians, coordinating from 150 to 500 young volunteers every single day.

People aged 14 to 35 now represent the next generations of those who sooner or later will be in charge of Ukraine's recovery after the war. Therefore, now it is very important to ensure that the voice of young people is heard and their agency is recognised in the decision making on various levels of state authorities and among civil society. Youth Resolution of Myropolis, this year's meeting of active young people, community of activists and volunteers, represents the case when young women and men publicly express their views on current issues for young people as well as possible solutions.

Myropolis Calls For Attention To Current Challenges Of Youth

-  **Security.** Personal safety, as well as safety and security of their closest ones, is an essential need of youth. Young people see an absence of a clear action plan in case of an emergency as a major threat. Even those young people, who lived in the conflict-affected areas during 2014-2022, had no experience of surviving humanitarian crises prior to the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. Youth of Myropolis pays attention to the human rights violations in the non-governmental controlled areas (NGCA). In particular, their peers still living in NGCA are deprived of their right for freedom of expression.
-  **Adaptation to a new community.** Youth people that were forced to leave their homes and move both within and beyond the borders of Ukraine, experience difficulties in adaptation to their new communities. Those difficulties are related to the loss of property, urgent necessity to find alternative accommodation, new linguistic environment, bureaucratic procedures to enroll for IDP assistance programmes, peculiarities of the infrastructure arrangements in the new community, etc. Young people call for attention to the problem of insufficient communication between public authorities, civil society organisations and charity foundations that work in the recipient communities providing help to the displaced population.
-  **Awareness on rights and opportunities.** Young people recognise the low level of awareness among young women and men as regards competencies of public authorities on the local, regional and national levels. Youth stresses the importance of access to regular legal counseling adapted to the requests and needs of young people. Another challenge is caused by the absence of an online platform that unifies the verified information for young people in Ukraine in times of war.
-  **State of mental health.** Currently, youth mentions the number of factors putting young people under severe psychological pressure, among them are forced separation with family, loss of friends and closest ones, loneliness caused by the breakage of prior social contacts and change of place and area of living, unavailable opportunity to “switch” from the hard reality of war and turn to the usual ways of resting.
-  **Education and employment.** Young people evidence the deterioration of the quality of education since the start of a full-scale war. Some of the fresh university graduates experience the lack of relevance of their newly-gained profession, many need a retraining and a new job as soon as possible.
-  **Participation in decision making processes.** A low level of involvement of activists, members of youth councils among displaced youth to public discussions and decision making processes in their new communities remains a major challenge.

Youth Of Myropolis Offers The Following Solutions:

-  **Security.** Young people reiterate the importance of timely evacuation of civilians, educational institutions and enterprises from the territories of active military fighting. Youth call on their peers to adhere to the basic safety rules, as well as to participate in the courses on personal safety and provision of first aid. Every community of Ukraine has to pay special attention to the preparedness of bomb shelters, which should have electricity, necessary supplies of water, basic food, and warm clothes.
-  **Adaptation to a new community.** All relevant measures taken to ensure smooth adaptation of displaced youth in the recipient communities should be based first and foremost on the needs of such young people. Such needs could be gathered via dedicated chat bots created by local centers of IDP assistance and/or centers of administrative services both in Ukraine and abroad. Youth welcome creation of temporary housing for IDPs, yet recognizing that the latter represent a rather emergent and not sustainable solution. Adaptation to the new linguistic environment should take place in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere, e.g. learning and practicing Ukrainian and/or English (or other languages used in the community) in youth centers or other spaces popular among young people. In case there are no such places in the community for the time being, such centers/spaces should be created as important platforms for interactive meetings, active leisure time, and youth dialogue with representatives of authorities and civil society. Support of such youth-friendly spaces could be also an opportunity for local businesses adapting to the social challenges of war.
-  **Awareness on rights and opportunities.** Young people proposed an idea of setting up a network of legal advisors/special legal units in youth centers that would work on a peer-to-peer basis, explaining legal issues to young people in easy-to-grasp, youth-friendly way. The role of such legal advisors could be assigned to the motivated students of law departments, newly graduated from Ukrainian universities. Comprehensive communication support of such legal units/advisors is important – it is essential that the target audience knows about the availability of such consultations.
-  **State of mental health.** Young people emphasize the need for high-quality and affordable psychological consultations, master classes, art therapy workshops: all creating conditions for «switching» from pressing thoughts and supporting their psychosocial resistance. Youth confirms the importance of a single all-national electronic database for the consolidation of opportunities for rehabilitation – restoration of both mental and physical health of young people.
-  **Education and employment.** Young women and men welcome the variety of programmes and projects, including donor-supported initiatives, which equip young professionals with competences and skills needed to change their professional path or start a career in a completely new field. Youth also state the importance of SME support, as small and medium businesses not only provide young people with an opportunity of professional development, but also give a chance to create new employment possibilities for others.
-  **Participation in decision making processes.** Young people call on local youth-led civil society organisations in the recipient communities to be engaged into integration processes of their peers – displaced youth. Such integration could be facilitated through joint-work on youth-focused initiatives or projects on recovery after the consequences of war. In addition, youth could participate in the development of action plans regarding transparency of humanitarian aid distribution and implementation of the respective anti-corruption programmes at the community level.

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