



15th meeting of the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform
Brussels, June 14, 2024

HARMONISATION OF AGRARIAN AGENDA: how to deepen it?

Keynote

The task of the EU-UA CSP members is delivering their opinion on the achievement of the goals of the EU-UA Association Agreement. The agrarian sphere was, is and will be the key issue of UA-EU integration. So, the aim of this intervention at the current meeting of the EU-UA CSP is to attract attention to some problematic moments of agrarian agenda and to show their potential for deepening the EU integration process at the stage of accession of Ukraine to the EU.

Solidarity Lanes

The Solidarity Lanes initiative was launched by the European Commission in May 2022 with the aim to support export of Ukrainian agricultural products through the EU's transport infrastructure. The initiative is operated by [the Enterprise Europe Network](#), its task is to bring EU and Ukrainian businesses together quickly so that they may find pragmatic solutions to the export of agricultural products from Ukraine immediately. As well [the special digital platform](#) was launched to support matchmaking. But in practice, we heard these years much about blocking Ukrainian exports and just nothing about activity of Solidarity Lanes. Last matchmaking event is dated April 25, 2024 in view that since July 2022 events have taken place on a monthly basis. From the Ukrainian side, the Solidarity Lanes are managed by the [Consortium EEN-Ukraine](#) composed of 7 members that are still unknown among agrarian business and its associations. No attempt to involve domestic agrarian business into activity of the Solidarity Lanes at sustainable basis has been taken.

However, as far as efforts, time and money have been invested into this initiative and the problem is still not solved, there is a need to review the effectiveness of this instrument and to revitalize it from the perspective of the EU-UA accession. As revised and reforming, it may contribute much to implementation of the peer-to-peer cooperation in investments and innovations. As well, it may play as a tool for implementation of the joint Ukrainian and EU world food security policy (we mentioned it in our report to the 14th EU-UA CSP meeting in December 2023).

Advisory Group on Sustainable Development

The Advisory Group on Sustainable Development is established in the article 299 of the EU-UA Association Agreement and supposes ensuring that economic development, environmental and social policies are mutually supportive. Members of the Advisory Group should conduct a dialogue encompassing sustainable development aspects of mutual trade relations. During the war, the EU Commission every time supported the economic aspects of mutual trade with relevant measures. But business associations and other organisations of civil society of member countries and at the EU level



resorted to actions just opposite to the aim of sustainable development. This is once more about blocking Ukrainian agrarian export and the fact that the key EU agrarian NGO ‘Copa&Cogeca’ added objection against Ukrainian honey to their traditional opposition for wheat, sunflower and other common goods. No one among current trade problems was mentioned at the last SD AG meeting on June,13 2024. It marks that the potential of this powerful instrument is not used at a full scale.

So, this instrument for development of fair mutual trade needs to be activated too. By now it is not supported with a digital platform that would be able to address any problems influencing sustainable mutual trade quickly. In future this instrument may be transformed into the quick-response system for SSG and EU GD implementation and work in the same manner as the RASFF system works now for food safety issues.

Financing

At the early stages of Russian aggression, the Ukraine Facility instrument was announced in the EU Communication ‘Ukraine Relief and Reconstruction’. Since that time Ukrainian state and civil society has been struggling for ways of using announced resources. The first package of reconstruction projects presented in Lugano in July 2022 by the state officials attracted huge criticism from representatives of civil society for its non-transparent nature. Since that time civil society organisations have been monitoring the situation tightly. During preparation for the last Berlin Recovery Conference of June 11-12, 2024 the role of the civil society was strictly underlined. But as a result, we see the usual situation as the next package of financially supported projects is developed by state officials and organisations close to state agencies in non-transparent manner.

At the 13th meeting of the EU-UA CSP on July 3, 2023 we attracted attention to the basic four principles of reconstruction and recovery: inclusiveness (no artificial barriers from anybody), innovations (to build back better), direct communication with donors and investors (no corruption) and professional support (free market of assisting services). As well, we suggested compliance with EU politics and rules at the level of every reconstruction project. Next to this we developed the [Rebuild Business Joint Platform](#) concept. But in practice it appeared difficult not only to find resources for development of such an approach but even to communicate it, including during preparation to the Berlin Recovery Conference.

We are sure that the fair, inclusive, efficient and effective post-war reconstruction will be based on the principles mentioned above. In Ukraine, we ugly need the same financial market and the same financial services as in EU countries. We have experience of Ukraine-Germany Fund activity in Ukraine since the late 90s through the domestic banking system as intermediary. In 2015 we refused to work with it as it delivered support for banks and not agrarian producers. And we do not want to repeat this experience. One more remark concerning the agrarian sector: a paying agency serving financing of farmers as it is in EU countries and planned to be established in Ukraine is not sufficient for full scale sustainable development of the agrarian sphere. We need a well-balanced market of financial services, including assurance and investment services.

Quality Infrastructure

As the war started, the tariff barriers for Ukrainian export were removed in the EU. But the role and influence of non-tariff barriers have become only more evident. Objections of EU farmers concerned not so prices as compliance of Ukrainian agrarian export with EU demands. During several years four EU countries (Germany, Austria, Romania, Spain) assisted in reforming the national standardization



body of Ukraine. Success of the project was evident but now the reforming is stopped and things look poor. But it is not too big a problem as according to the TBT WTO and DCFTA agreements standards are voluntary and may be reached directly at the EU and international level. The problem is that Ukrainian agrarian producers are not acquainted with the quality infrastructure paradigm.

Digital umbrella is a good decision in this context as well. Due to the financial support of the Netherlands, we received an opportunity to create a digital tool for implementation of international standards - cluster of fair food business operators [FairFood-Ukraine](#). In future, it would be good to incorporate this instrument into the EU CAP network activities.

General Umbrella

At the 14th meeting of the EU-UA CSP on December 15, 2023 we mentioned two dimensions of the potential common EU-UA agrarian policy: matching UN world food security policy for agroholdings and middle agrarian enterprises and development of well-harmonized Ukrainian CAP strategic plan for domestic farmers.

It would be reasonable to achieve close cooperation in developing and implementing a common UA-EU agrarian policy in Europe and world-wide and to supply it with working tools, including mentioned above.