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Build Back Better for Everyone

A Feminist Perspective on Reconstruction
and Recovery of Ukraine

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Build Back Better for Everyone – a Feminist Perspective on Reconstruction and Recovery of Ukraine

Introduction

It is now almost two years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, still, Ukrainian society continues to show astonishing resilience. At the same time, Ukrainians are suffering from the devastating consequences of the war. At least 10,000 civilians have been killed and over 18,500 have been injured¹. More than 26,000 Ukrainians, soldiers, and civilians have been considered missing since February 2022². An estimated 5.1 million remain internally displaced in Ukraine³ and 6.2 million abroad;⁴ with women and children constituting approximately 90 per cent of those fleeing the war according to UNHCR⁵. As of June 2023, the total amount of direct documented damage to Ukraine's infrastructure had reached over 150.5 billion US dollars, with housing stock, transport and energy infrastructure, and industry as a whole being the most affected sectors⁶.

Despite there being no end to the conflict in sight, international discussions on recovery responses have been ongoing since 2022. During a first recovery conference in Lugano, Switzerland in July 2022, the Government of Ukraine presented its National Recovery Plan⁷, which outlined Ukraine's initial vision for recovery until 2032. The plan provided the foundation for adopting the »Lugano Declaration«⁸ and subsequent »Lugano principles«, and intended to provide a framework and common benchmarks for the international political processes that will guide Ukraine's reconstruction. The central idea, which was re-emphasised during a second recovery conference in London in October 2023, was a shared conviction to »build back bet-

ter« – by prioritising resilience, sustainability, private sector solutions, and inclusivity. The latter principle was substantiated in the Lugano Declaration with a guiding principle on gender equality that underscored the need for a recovery process that ensures respect for gender equality, human rights, economic, social, and cultural rights. »No part of society«, it argued, »should be left behind«. Yet, despite this rhetorical commitment and the disproportionate impact the conflict is having on women and other marginalised groups, feminist actors have contended that little attention is being paid to gendered or social concerns in practice.

With this in mind, this policy brief will analyse the dominant recovery agenda elaborated by the Government of Ukraine and supported by international actors through the lens of intersectional feminism. It is sensitive to the various inequalities existing both within Ukrainian society and between states, recognising that these inequalities have been exacerbated by the war; be it in terms of growing poverty, material deprivation, and dependence on humanitarian assistance at individual level, or in terms of the growing dependence on international assistance and loans and the Ukrainian state's⁹ indebtedness at international level as well as on remittances¹⁰. The policy brief will then extend beyond standardised recovery and reconstruction models that prioritise reconstruction through liberalisation in order to envision a post-war economy and social policy capable of serving, flourishing, and securing the livelihoods of all people.

Feminist peace and security studies argue that sustainable peace and post-war reconstruction rely on the active engagement of women and marginalised groups when designing and implementing the country's post-war policies, as well as on transformative politics that focus on eradicating structural inequalities caused or exacerbated by war (Sapiano & True, 2020). Feminist approaches to these areas are thus crucial for guaranteeing sus-

¹ As of 21 November, 2023, according to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU). <https://ukraine.un.org/en/253322-civilian-deaths-ukraine-war-top-10000-un-says>

² <https://minre.gov.ua/en/2023/10/09/more-than-26000-ukrainians-are-missing-under-mysterious-circumstances/>

³ As of May 2023.

⁴ As of July 2023.

⁵ <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/>

⁶ <https://kse.ua/about-the-school/news/the-total-amount-of-direct-damage-to-ukraine-s-infrastructure-caused-due-to-the-war-as-of-june-2023-exceeded-150-billion/>

⁷ https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/621f88db25fbf24758792dd8/62c166751fcf41105380a733_NRC%20Ukraine%27s%20Recovery%20Plan%20blueprint_ENG.pdf

⁸ https://decentralization.gov.ua/uploads/attachment/document/1060/Lugano_Declaration_URC2022-1.pdf

⁹ Ukraine National Government Debt reached 124.7 billion US dollars in September 2023 <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/ukraine/national-government-debt>. Prior to the full-scale war, in 2022, it was an estimated 97.759 billion US dollars <https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/ukraine>. According to the IMF, in 2021 general government gross debt constituted 48.9 per cent of Ukraine's GDP, in 2023 it was 88.1 per cent. https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/GGXWDG_NGDP@WEO/UKR?zoom=UKR&highlight=UKR

¹⁰ In 2021, prior to the full-scale invasion, remittance flows to Ukraine were twice as much as the size of foreign direct investment in the same year. https://finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-09/220927-joint-statement-remittance-ukraine_en.pdf

tainable peace and inclusive security. This paper outlines the essential conditions that need to be considered in the reconstruction process to ensure the economic recovery of Ukraine is planned and implemented in a feminist way, and to therefore create a foundation for peace that is sustainable and just.

This policy brief is rooted in discussions and developments from two expert workshops organised by the Centre for the Feminist Foreign Policy and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Berlin in 2023. These workshops united feminists representing civil society and academia both from Ukraine and other countries.

Feminist Recovery and Reconstruction for Ukraine: Outlining the Shortcomings of Current Approaches from a Feminist Perspective

A focus on reconstruction through economic liberalisation

The current approach to the recovery of Ukraine – presented both by the Government of Ukraine and international partners – aims at reconstruction through economic liberalisation. It assumes that inward investment and economic growth will lead to peace and development by generating employment opportunities and government revenue. In this way, the described approach presents itself as a »natural« way of thinking, a »common sense« vision, without any political implications: as a set of objective questions to be resolved rather than a value-driven process. With the »objective language« on and the prioritisation of »efficiency«, it obscures the fundamentally political nature of decision-making about the commons and a formulation of what the policy problem is, how it should be answered, implemented, and evaluated. It further obscures the fact that such »efficiency« is deeply ideological¹¹. The reproduction of the »build back better« slogan obscures the fact that every society consists of different, often conflicting, groups of interests with different levels of power and resources. An inclusive recovery process should therefore clearly define what will be rebuilt and how and especially for whom. Otherwise, we risk leaving behind many population groups that currently do not have access to or influence on the recovery process, but which will be severely impacted by it. These are precisely the questions that would need to be discussed in an inclusive manner when deciding how the country will be structured in future.

¹¹ As Mattei points out in her recent book »The Capital Order« (2022) efficiency and austerity could be seen as a political project of what she defines as »class warfare«. Mattei describes these measures as a form of social order built around private property, wage labour and class relations.

Exclusive and untransparent national and international processes

However, with the rapid speed of draft recovery plans created by the invitation-only thematic working groups (covering topics such as European integration, healthcare, anti-corruption) in April to June 2022¹², which eventually led to the Ukrainian Recovery Plan, and further exclusive international recovery conferences in Lugano and London with substantial representation of the private sector yet not of (feminist) civil society and trade unions, there is a danger that the actual needs and interests of many Ukrainians will be overlooked; especially those from underprivileged groups which, in fact, were and continue to be disproportionately influenced by the war. For example, a Rapid Damage & Needs Assessment (RDNA2) published in March 2023 by the Government of Ukraine, the EU, the UN, and the World Bank, outlined implementation priorities for the estimated 411 billion-US-dollar recovery and reconstruction process. The assessment quantifies direct physical damage to infrastructure and buildings and quantifies the needs as the costs for recovery and reconstruction – yet the human dimension is lacking in the assessment. As UN Women (2023) have noted, the goal of gender equality was not adequately incorporated into the assessment and no details are given on how the specific needs of women and other marginalised groups will be met in the five priority areas, such as critical and social infrastructure; energy infrastructure; housing; private sector and humanitarian demining. Having said that, the social infrastructure or housing stock, for instance, cannot be rebuilt without considering the particular and different needs of the people. Hope-

¹² As it is stated on the Governmental Portal of Ukraine, the working groups could have included members of the Council and other representatives, including representatives of central and local executive bodies, local self-government, enterprises, institutions and organisations, leading domestic and foreign experts, experts in relevant fields. The composition of each working group was to be approved by the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine on the proposal of its Co-Chair. The draft plans which cover all possible thematic sections from European integration and anti-corruption policy to economic recovery and development, social policy and healthcare, were developed in the short period from the end of April, when the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine was established, until the beginning of July when the draft plans had already been presented in Lugano. The rapid speed with which the 23 draft recovery plans were established (with some being more than 100 pages) just two months after the full-scale war, poses a question as to whether policies presented there did in fact comprehensively address the harm caused by the war and whether the needs of the people have been assessed. Indeed, the content of the many draft plans mostly presents the reform and measures that had been taken into account prior to the war (such as a pension reform, further deregulation and liberalisation of the labour market or transformation of the welfare model into one that is more means-tested) as priority actions for recovery. Some of the measures, such as the introduction of the zero-hour contract were already implemented in summer 2022, at a point when any union mobilisation against it was impossible due to martial law. And this can hardly be seen as a rapid response to the impact of the war. Moreover, although it was announced that one could have sent their comments and suggestions on the draft sections by September 2022, it is scarcely possible to know whether those suggestions have been taken into account. As only the original first version of the thematic draft plans presented in Lugano are available to the public. No further elaboration of the draft plans could be easily tracked.

fully, the next RDNA3 to be published in early 2024 would take that into account.

When talking about the mechanisms of participation in conversations and decisions about the recovery, it is imperative that meaningful inclusion of all communities in the reconstruction process extends beyond providing women and other vulnerable groups with an opportunity to hold a side event during recovery conferences. Instead, it must give all groups a voice in regard to the commons. Moreover, recovery and reconstruction for Ukraine must be a transparent process. Currently, however, the 23 original thematic recovery draft plans presented in Lugano in 2022 are not easy to find on the Ukrainian government portal¹³. What is available on the official website of the Ukrainian recovery are the 17 national recovery programmes (just their names with no detailed description of each programme) with a list of hundreds of projects to be implemented under each of the programmes¹⁴. So far, there is no detailed recovery plan with clearly stated goals, milestones, or rationale. Firstly, this limits general society's opportunity to engage with any sort of discussion about the recovery needs and priorities. Secondly, it prevents civil society from tracking the implementation of the recovery plan. It therefore limits the accountability of the Government of Ukraine to reporting the successful implementation of concrete projects, but not the overall recovery plan. This creates a deficient overall vision of recovery that should be held collectively by different social actors.

Focus on untransparent loan driven process

Additionally, there is a lack of transparency with regard to funds to be used for implementing each of these projects and the recovery and to conditions under which the money will be granted by international actors. This poses a serious danger as the vast amount of funds will come in the form of international loans, mainly granted by the International Financial Institutions, which will add to the already enormous amount of foreign debt on Ukraine. For example, the EU has committed a total of 50 billion US dollars to the recovery process for the period of 2024 to 2027 via its Ukraine Facility¹⁵. Of this total amount, 18 billion US dollars will be granted in the form of loans. Against the backdrop of the country's already deteriorating economic situation (with an inflation rate of 26.6 per cent, interest rates of 25 per cent and a one-third decline in GDP in 2022¹⁶), the EU's strategy has been described as a recipe for a »future Ukrainian sovereign debt crisis« (Drea, 2023). Together with a 15.6 billion-US-dollar loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which, as a condition, requires significant reductions on social expenditure (Cohn & Duncanson, forthcoming), Ukraine's potential for an equal and inclusive recovery process appears increasingly bleak; especially given the great probab-

ity that the loan's preconditions will be designed to solely benefit the loans-givers and not the loans-receivers. Labour deregulation attempts, an upcoming reduction of social spending, the potential decrease in the already low corporate income tax – all these measures that have been discussed in Ukraine over the last two years and which we have also seen in the 23 drafts of thematic plans, cannot be viewed as measures to address the harm created by the war and the needs of the people. Instead, many of these measures embody a further development of the austerity policies that had already been implemented in Ukraine prior to the full-scale invasion¹⁷. On a discursive level, it further reflects a belief that the free market will fix it all (despite there being no evidence for such a fix – austerity shrinks growth)¹⁸.

Consequences of the current recovery approaches for Ukraine

As the dominant approach to economic recovery revolves around recovering the business and industries, it views Ukrainians solely in terms of the »human capital«¹⁹ and the labour force. This gives rise to two consequences:

Firstly, the »reconstruction through economic liberalisation« model adopts the dominating austerity approach which implies an individualisation of the social risks and the idea that the worker is responsible for his/her own social reproduction. It assumes that, once jobs are there, the remaining social reproduction needs will be covered by families, communities or individuals themselves: the people will take care of their own health, security, education and other needs, at their own cost and expense. In light of such an approach, the achievement of gender equality is seen as naturally arising from the emphasis on increased investment, exports, and economic growth, and women's subsequent access to the labour market. However, historically speaking, this model has not enabled post-conflict societies to properly recover from war, nor has it automatically led to women's increased participation in political life or the labour market. Indeed, as Mila O'Sullivan (2023) argues, »these imposed ideas of peace, reconstruction, and recovery« not only disregard local women's voices and delay the pursuit of equality for marginalised groups, they actually »deepen intersectional inequalities«. This is because this dominant approach to recovery »tends to undermine the delivery of the very things that people

¹³ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/national-council-recovery-ukraine-war/working-groups>

¹⁴ <https://recovery.gov.ua/en>

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3355

¹⁶ According to the National Bank of Ukraine <https://bank.gov.ua/en/news/all/komentar-natsionalnogo-banku-schodo-rivnya-inflyatsiyi-u-2022-rotsi>

¹⁷ See O. Dutchak (2018) Crisis, war and austerity: devaluation of female labour and retreating of the state. Available at: <https://rosalux.org.ua/de/themen/94-inequality-and-social-struggle/188-crisis-war-and-austerity-devaluation-of-female-labor-and-retreating-of-the-state>

¹⁸ See https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2016/06/ostry.htm&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1702738855993042&usg=AOvVaw2AhhrGIONI4J2_O3LSHdcM. For more, proceed to the sources list at the end of this brief.

¹⁹ For instance, there was no specific panel on the needs of vulnerable groups in the recovery in the official part of the URC in London, 2023; there was merely a side event on this topic. There were more CSOs representatives than the state officials attending it. Instead, a panel dedicated to the people and social policy with the Minister of Social Affairs of Ukraine in the official part of the URC was called »Investment in Ukraine's Human Capital Recovery«. Later in October, a large national conference Human Capital UA was held in Kyiv, in which ministers and top officials in social affairs, education, health and economy took part.

need to recover», such as food security, energy, and housing, inclusive education, health services, social care, fulfilling livelihoods, and the infrastructure and institutions to support them (Cohn & Duncanson, forthcoming). Gendered impact assessment of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine already confirms the stark rise of poverty levels, increased female unemployment, and the disproportionate care burden placed on women – many of whom have also become single heads of households with multiple caretaking responsibilities²⁰.

This model also entails diminishing the state's responsibilities and inviting the private sectors to provide services that are supposed to be public goods. This will also lead to civil society needing to play a bigger role in the provision of services, as opposed to focusing on driving change that benefits everyone.

The »reconstruction through economic liberalisation« is also problematic because Ukraine will lack people to participate in the reconstruction. However, the current approach of incentivising those Ukrainians who are displaced abroad to return is strongly based on the idea of creating jobs; while it overlooks the importance of available public services and social guarantees. This particularly holds true as women with children are the largest group among the refugees²¹.

Secondly, the model »reconstruction through economic liberalisation« is further problematic because it is based on an understanding of economics with a limited recognition of productive labour. Most importantly, it excludes the needs of those engaged in reproductive labour, be it underpaid public health-care workers, social care services and education, or women engaged in unpaid care work at home. Reproductive work is unpaid yet produces immeasurable »positive externalities«. This also reflects how much impact there could be on the resilience of Ukrainians during the war if reproductive labour were valued and/or priced. And this is despite the fact that women face an increased volume of care work: both unpaid due to destroyed infrastructure and complicated access to childcare, and the paid work of those who provide care services as public workers due to the increasing amount of elderly left alone by their close ones who evacuated²².

Moreover, such an understanding of productive labour tends to see all those no longer participating in the labour market (for various reasons) as a burden for society and the state budget. The needs of those who are among the most disadvantaged groups in society and are largely dependent on their informal care networks, and, in many cases, unable to cope with the consequences of the war, such as the elderly and especially elderly

²⁰ Care (2023). Rapid Gender Analysis, Ukraine

²¹ A survey conducted by the Centre of Economic Research shows that the main incentives for returning are those connected to safety such as the absence of fighting and air strikes in the region or a final end of the war. But the economic factors such as an opportunity of finding a high-paying job in Ukraine and a higher standard of living are also important. See more: <https://ces.org.ua/shcho-stymulyuvatyme-ukrayins%CA%B9kykh-bizhentsiv-povernutysya-dodomu/>

²² Ibid.

women, are seen as the responsibility of international humanitarian actors or local civil society organisations. Instead, if the Government of Ukraine and its international partners are committed to an inclusive recovery that leaves no one behind, what is needed are structural changes including the creation of social housing, an introduction of state regulations into the private rental market (such as rent caps, anti-price gouging laws and measures to ensure the tenants' rights). What is also needed is strengthening the community's ability to provide social services. Yet, such expenditure is seen as a drain on the national budget²³, although investment in social infrastructure and the care economy indeed could potentially lead to economic growth²⁴.

Feminist Perspective on the Priority Needs to be Addressed as Part of Recovery and Reconstruction.

All of the current recovery agenda's fundamental shortcomings may lead to implementation of an economic recovery plan that is unjust in nature and will merely deepen existing inequalities, as feminist researcher Yulia Yurchenko also warned (2023). Instead, what is now required is a more transformative approach that is particularly sensitive to growing inequalities caused and exacerbated by war, and to the social realities of marginalised groups in Ukraine²⁵. Indeed, recognising that these groups are most impacted by crisis, a feminist approach to recovery and reconstruction would offer tailored solutions based on their specific needs, experiences, and demands. A feminist approach would understand that peace, if it is to be sustainable and just, requires more than just the absence of violent conflict. A feminist approach would challenge dominant models of recovery to invoke a process of structural change capable of overcoming societal patterns of inequality and exclusion. It would transcend rhetorical commitments to equality, and ensure mechanisms and conditions for meaningful participation of women, LGBTQI* individuals and other minority groups at all stages of

²³ For instance, a few years ago the Head of the Committee on Social Affairs and Veterans in the parliament of Ukraine, Halyna Tretiakova, stated that there are certain social groups that raise children only to get the child benefits, and, as a result, society »receives bad quality children«. She also quoted the initiative by Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, to sterilise women who did not have higher education as a method to »uproot elements in the nation that are not defenders and breadwinners«. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-53175923>

In 2023, at the International Forum for Sustainable Development the Minister of Social Policy Oksana Zholnovych said that Ukrainians abuse social assistance and are unwilling to take responsibility for their lives. »We need to break everything that is social today« she stated. <https://www.unian.ua/economics/finance/nam-treba-zlamati-vse-shcho-ye-sogodni-socialnogo-ukrajina-ne-mozhe-shche-bilshe-rozduvati-socviplati-ministr-socpolitiki-12399186.html>

²⁴ Özlem Onaran, Cem Oyvat. The employment effects of public spending in infrastructure, the care economy and the green economy: The case of emerging economies. https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/public_spending_infrastructure_en_v2.pdf

²⁵ The data of the recent survey by the National Bank of Ukraine shows that the number of Ukrainians living under the poverty line has doubled in 2022 to 2023, every fourth person saves on food. https://bank.gov.ua/admin_uploads/article/IR_2023-Q4.pdf?v=5

the recovery and reconstruction process so as to guarantee that responses are locally driven, equitable, and fair.

In terms of economic reconstruction, we recommend applying the following guiding principles:

- basing efforts for recovery on the principle of social solidarity which recognises the mutual interdependence of members of society and aims at enabling the meaningful participation of everyone in the post-war economy, and especially those currently excluded from the process;
- recognising the crucial importance of human and social security for an enduring peace, and the state's responsibility to provide it – in line with its commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and other policy commitments;
- recognising the importance of just recovery and a just post-war economy for ensuring sustainable peace;
- identifying that a thriving society and economy are impossible without deep sustainability – economic, social, and ecological;
- avoiding a model of social services provision that predominantly makes civil society actors responsible for the provision of these services. Fully outsourcing the social welfare system to civil society makes it less sustainable and less accessible in the long run. A combined model, with a stronger role of the state in social welfare and social service provision, is needed.
- exploring more sustainable ways of financing social recovery and social spending, potentially through changes in taxation policy and combating tax avoidance. Resorting to loans to cover these expenses will lead to increasing demands of IFIs and consequent austerity measures and cuts in the social sphere;
- providing mechanisms for monitoring a possible progress in social and economic reconstruction beyond the macro-economic estimates, such a GDP value.

Linking a Fair and Just Reconstruction Process to Sustainable Peace and Democracy in a Post-War Ukraine.

- Further military support to allow Ukraine to defend itself and exercise its right to resist is a precondition for recovery. But beyond this, there will be a need to invest in a stable socio-economic foundation for sustainable peace in the aftermath of war. This implies the achievement of economic and social justice for all, and committing resources to overcome structural inequalities.
- Although the whole of Ukrainian society faces enormous challenges and suffers from the Russian invasion, the burden of the war and its repercussions are distributed unequally. In a fragile (post)-war society, the risk of social tensions turning into violent conflict within the communities owing to the demand for justice, continues to be high. As is the possibility of re-militarisation of a post-war society, especially if steps towards demilitarisation are not embedded into the recovery process.

- It is therefore crucial to support the macroeconomic changes needed for greater social justice and redistribution of the resources for overcoming the consequences of the war. Physical infrastructure is costly but easy to reconstruct, whereas sustaining the social fabric requires effort and a more sensible approach. This approach should be embedded not only in the non-governmental programs on preserving and renewing social cohesion in communities, but first and foremost in at the very heart of the economic recovery and financing of social policy and social services

Recommendations for the International Community and the Government of Ukraine

Facilitate an Inclusive Recovery Dialogue

- Underline the value and importance of more participative and inclusive discussions within the wider population in Ukraine about the recovery priorities and desirable welfare and economic models in post-war Ukraine and guarantee it; including through work with local communities. Politically and financially support initiatives that aim to foster such dialogue.
- Create and implement the means for a meaningful and equal participation of Ukrainian civil society representatives (in particular, activists, NGOs and labour associations) in the planning and discussion of the economic and social recovery agenda, including the process of defining its goals and vision.
- In light of the rather exclusive character of the previous two URCs, ensure engagement in the work of and equal access for (feminist) civil society to the international recovery conferences, including the next one in Germany in 2024, without arbitrarily separating them into thematic side events.
- Recognise and value the expertise of Ukrainian civil society in providing input for the recovery process, rather than implementing models designed by international experts only. Compensate feminist activists for providing their expertise.

Realign the Economic Recovery Agenda

Loans, grants and investments

- Give more financial support in the form of grants and less in loans. Ensure transparency of the loan's preconditions to the Ukrainian population.
- Ensure engagement of the feminist experts in consultations about any structural reforms which could be a condition of the loans.
- Facilitate decreasing Ukrainian debt dependence and support writing off Ukrainian national debt and the household debt of vulnerable households.
- Exclude »decreasing of the corporate tax« from investments preconditions. Instead, include tax avoidance prevention and combating measures in the precondition of the grant

support. Support the introduction of progressive taxation in Ukraine.

- Invest in creating jobs in the public, care, and green sectors.
- Dedicate some of the funding for recovery activities to the direct support of local organisations in Ukraine, including those run by women, without involvement of intermediary international organisations. Establish systems of funding accessible to smaller, local organisations with regard to diligence requirements and eligibility criteria.
- Ensure that local Ukrainian business and producers to be contracted for the reconstruction projects are favoured and that their involvement is maximised whenever possible.
- Advocate for timely and just reparation payments by Russia which should be used for the purpose of the social and economic recovery.

Labour rights and social guarantees

- In terms of job creation, focus on supporting dignified work and ensuring labour rights. Add developing concrete measures to combat precarious employment and tackling success to the preconditions of financial support for job creation.
- Preservation of Ukrainians' labour rights and social guarantees, aligning the wages with the cost of living, and ensuring concrete steps for fighting the feminisation of poverty,²⁶ should be made a precondition both for Ukraine's accession to the EU and for receiving any EU grant support for the recovery process.
- Oppose and adopt measures to prevent privatisation of public goods, such as higher education, childcare and social services and advocate for more government spending instead.
- Prioritise reconstruction of homes rather than private property and promote the rooting of a post-war Ukraine's housing policy post-war on the right to have a home.
- When developing humanitarian assistance programmes, ensure that they are designed to be useful for disadvantaged groups such as low-income families, women with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, LGBTQI* individuals, and are sensitive to all sorts of inequalities including the digital, and that they recognise heterogeneity and specific needs among vulnerable groups.

Summary

This policy brief presented a critical review of the current approach in planning the future economic recovery of Ukraine following the war. What is more, it proposed a set of guiding principles and recommendations to ensure that Ukraine's recovery will be based on the value of justice and will serve sustainable peace. It outlines the fundamental importance of maintaining the inclusion of all groups of Ukrainian society in discussing and planning the potential routes of recovery and preserving the agency of Ukrainians over defining their own future.

With the upcoming 2024 Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in Berlin, it is important to avoid the exclusion of feminist civil society and ensure their fair participation at the heart of the conference. Thus, ahead of the URC 2024, the German Government should consider the significance of the above-mentioned recommendations in line with its commitment to the Feminist Foreign Policy²⁷ principles. This should therefore apply to both the preparatory phase of the upcoming conference as well as to the longer-term assistance programme to Ukraine's recovery process, ensuring a meaningful intersectional approach as outlined in this policy brief.

²⁶ Feminisation of poverty is a societal phenomenon in which a share of women among those below the poverty line are disproportionately larger due to (but not only) the structural barriers they face on the labour market, including the gender pay gap, discrimination based on gender and the tendency of underpaid sectors, which are usually connected with social reproduction, such as education and nursing, healthcare, care services, to be primarily associated with »female jobs«. An excess of women among those struggling with poverty and material deprivation is also connected to the unequal distribution of resources in societies and households as well as disproportionate involvement of women and girls in unpaid care work; this limits their participation in paid employment, thus reducing their pensions, and self-realisation in other spheres.

²⁷ Amt, Auswärtiges. n.d. »Guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy: A Foreign Policy for All«. German Federal Foreign Office. Accessed on 17 December 2023. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/ffp-guidelines/2585074>.

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Focus Project Zeitenwende

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's focus project *Zeitenwende* (turning point) deals with the radical process of change currently occurring in Germany and Europe. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine represents both a *Zeitenwende* (turning point) and a test of endurance. New answers must be found that adapt to the changed realities. This makes necessary a reorientation of Germany's foreign policy. The project aims to play its part by accompanying and contributing to debates, opinions and controversies about Germany's role in a changing world. We offer a space for discussion and provide information for a deeper understanding of the issues.

Based on our fundamental convictions and values, we ask how can peace, freedom, and prosperity be ensured in the future? What adjustments in German and European politics are necessary? And what could a broad consensus on the future international role of the Federal Republic of Germany look like? We offer experts a platform while remaining open to new perspectives at all times. We want to promote the exchange of opinions and strengthen social participation. In short, it's about bringing the *Zeitenwende* to life.

We are delighted to have you join us!

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