

Report 2022





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Election observation mission

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– basic information

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Ukraine

Human and property losses, a multi-million wave of refugees, thousands of internally displaced persons, broken supply chains, regularly destroyed critical infrastructure – the list of humanitarian, social and economic consequences of the full-blown invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation is shockingly long and heartbreaking. The Ukrainian state had to quickly reorganise to continue functioning under war conditions. At the same time, Ukraine did not abandon its pro-European aspirations and on 23 June 2022, at the European Council summit, it received the status of an EU candidate country.

Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL), which had been cooperating with Ukrainian partners for more than 10 years, started organising support for the stricken neighbour immediately after the Russian invasion started. In order to cope with the new tasks, particularly the organisation of humanitarian aid, among other things it expanded its team of workers and created a humanitarian mission in Lviv.

Despite the difficult wartime conditions, SFPL conducted developmental activities. As Paweł Kost, head of SFPL's branch office in Kyiv, stressed: It is fundamentally important for us not to interrupt the developmental cooperation with Ukrainian and international partners during the war because this constitutes a guarantee of Ukraine's and the entire civilised world's victory in the confrontation with the Russian military aggression. SFPL continued its activities connected with the civil protection reform and vocational education reform, implemented pilot projects concerning the provision of psychological services and building of management competences of Ukrainian local governments. It also adapted the social service sector reform programme to the wartime conditions and prepared a platform for managing Ukraine's museum resources. Additionally, SFPL supported its Ukrainian partner in acquiring a grant and commenced advocacy-type activities to ensure safety of journalists in Ukraine.

All measures in aid of Ukraine contributed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals No. 3 and 16.



Humanitarian activities

Project Aid for civilian population under wartime conditions

Partners in Poland: Bank Mleka Kobiecego (Human Milk Bank), Rządowa Agencja Rezerw Strategicznych (Government Agency for Strategic Reserves), PPHU Kolba, Gmina Przasnysz (Przasnysz Council)

Foreign partners: AmeriCares Foundation, Shigeru Ban Architects, UNIQLO, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Techtronic Industries Eastern Europe Sp. z o.o., Farset Hotel (North Ireland), RefPower

Funding: European Commission, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK), Polish Aid (Polska pomoc), in-kind aid

Value of the award: >EUR 10.8 million

The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine led to Solidarity Fund PL becoming strongly involved in humanitarian activities. Their aim was first and foremost to meet the basic human needs of civilians and to offer support in the provision of medical care.

During the first weeks of the war, SFPL focused mainly on immediate actions. It acquired material donations which were then delivered to Ukrainian entities. SFPL facilitated logistically the delivery of humanitarian aid to Ukraine for businesses from Poland and other countries that lacked knowledge about how to get the goods across the border. It also provided support to organisations operating in Ukraine by searching for the required goods on the market. The experiences gained this way helped create a comprehensive humanitarian aid provision system encompassing the analysis of needs, procurement process, logistics (storage and transport), and distribution within Ukraine.

Humanitarian aid, besides the assistance received from its short-term partners – donors, was based on funds from BGK/EC and Polish Aid (Polska pomoc). Its value exceeded EUR 10.8 million and covered provision of food, hygiene products, medical equipment, rescue and firefighting equipment, as well as equipment connected with winter conditions and the energy crisis. The main recipients of the aid were Ukrainian local governments, hospitals and fire brigades.

Survey and analysis of needs

SFPL examined the needs for humanitarian aid and identified its recipients in two rounds (in April and in August). On this basis, procurement plans were created – lists of goods which SFPL intended to purchase.

Large-scale purchases from BGK/EC resources would not be possible without the funds received from Polish Aid, which enabled SFPL to build and test the humanitarian aid organisation system, covering the costs of necessary services (transport, customs duties, forwarding, renting of warehouse space, insurance) as well as remuneration for SFPL's Humanitarian Team.



Goods purchased and delivered

- **food:**
282.5 tons (groats, pasta, flour, sugar, yeast, tinned meat, baby formula milk);
- **hygiene products:**
350 tons (soap, shampoo, detergents),
170,260 units (toilet paper, nappies and incontinence pads);
- **medical and sanitary equipment:**
197,130 units of disposable medical devices (tourniquets, body bags, syringes, syringe needles, **25,000** fully-equipped first aid kits IFAK, **10,000** tactical stases, IV drips, IV drip stands), **1,000** maternity delivery packs;
- **advanced medical equipment:**
25 new ambulances, **400** AED defibrillators, **32** advanced clinical defibrillators, **30** ventilators, **10** cardiac monitors, **20** ultrasound scanners, **20** ECG monitors, a computer tomography scanner;
- **firefighting equipment:**
4,750 units, including protective clothing, helmets, boots, balaclavas, gloves, belts, masks, firefighting medical rescue kits, fire ladders, petrol chainsaws and motor pumps, a set of suction and delivery hoses together with a set of regulated nozzles, fire flappers for extinguishing grass, spades, SOFT tactical stases (1,000 units);
- **other, connected with winter conditions and the energy crisis:**
300 sets of thermal underwear, over **2,000** ceramic brick stoves (including 1,000 funded by Polish Aid), **3595** generators.

Logistics and distribution

SFPL rented warehouses in Pruszków near Warsaw and in Lviv in Western Ukraine. The goods purchased were stored in Pruszków and then transported to the Lviv warehouse managed by SFPL mission that was specially established in Lviv for that purpose – some of the staff employed in the Kyiv office was relocated to Lviv, and new people were also recruited.

In Lviv, the goods were sorted and distributed to end users who either came to collect them, or SFPL sent them to the final destinations. In May and June, this activity turned into a systemic logistic chain.

War interrupted the supply chains – more food had to be delivered to some places, more medicines to others, etc. SFPL's priority was to help frontline hromadas and those on de-occupied territories, as well as those with relatively high levels of internal migration and those which had not been covered by any aid projects.

Aid was also delivered to the occupied territories – broken down into smaller batches, transported by minibuses and private cars, divided among organisations connected with local Ukrainian governments. It was limited to food and hygiene products, so that in case of being seized by Russian forces it could not be used for military purposes. This aid was particularly important for residents of occupied territories – it showed solidarity from Poland and the West.

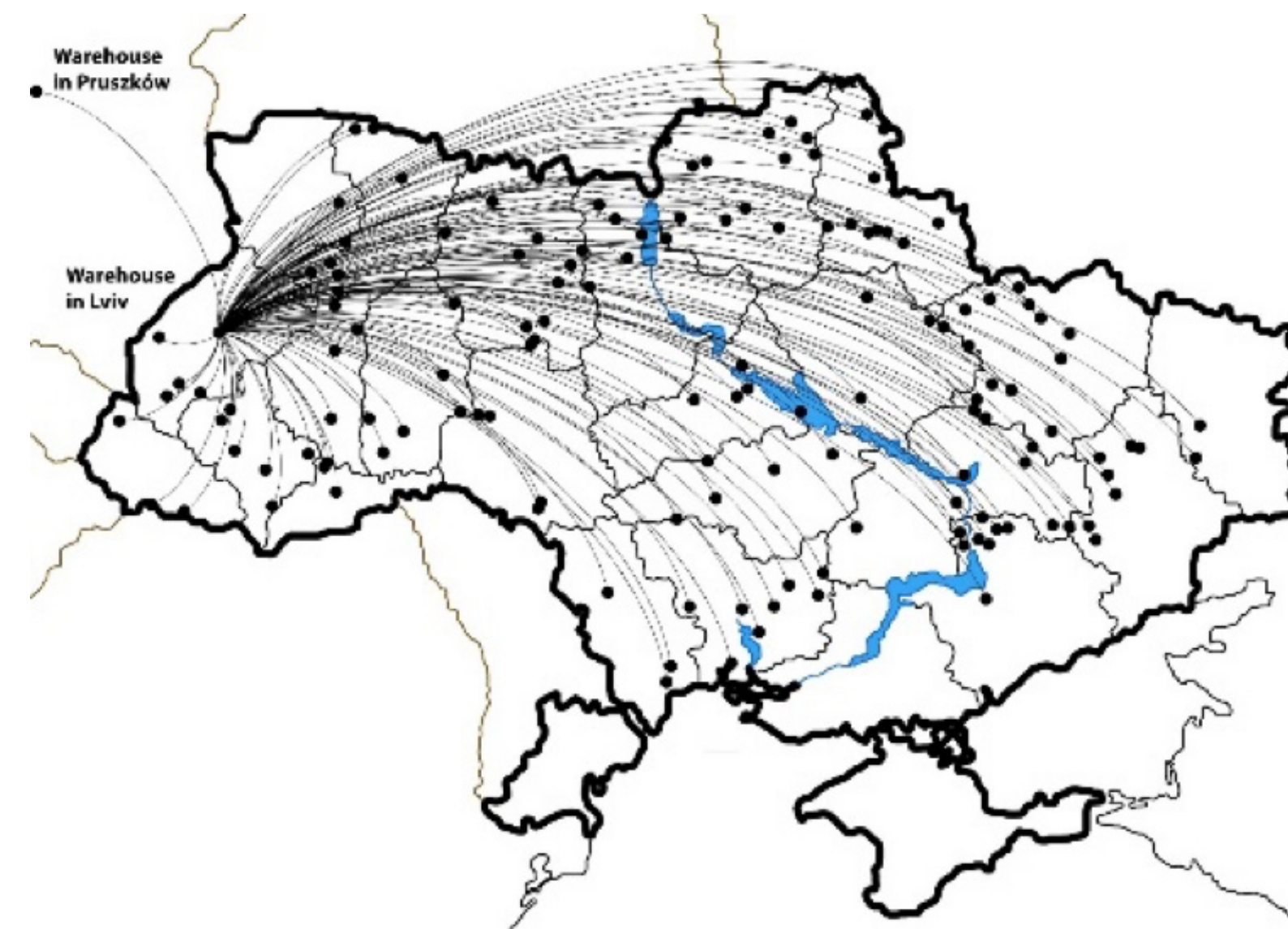
Who received the humanitarian aid

- **185** hromadas
- **2** state district administrations
- **50** local government hospitals
- non-governmental organisations

The Kyiv branch of SFPL published reports from the handover of goods at [its fb page](#). The reports were also published by hromadas, for example [Kremenchuk](#), [Zaporizhzhia](#) and [Dunaivtsi](#).

Distribution map:

supplier – Pruszków warehouse – Lviv warehouse – recipients (mainly hromadas)



Ukraine



25 ambulances. They went to the Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv oblasts, and one to the district hospital in Lviv. These are places in which local communities provide internally displaced and injured persons with shelter. The ambulances are equipped with the latest life-saving equipment used in difficult and dangerous conditions.



The international firm Shigeru Ban Architects became SFPL's partner in actions for Ukraine. Japanese architects provided residents of the Kharkiv region with lightweight, modern-design woodburning stoves. Shigeru Ban, the company founder and laureate of the Pritzker Prize – the Nobel of architecture, is known for modern architectural solutions, created also for Ukrainian refugees.



70 hromadas received aid in the form of firefighting equipment for the volunteer fire brigades operating there. SFPL was supported in the distribution of the equipment around Ukraine by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (DSNS).



SFPL's team contributed to the improvement of quality of medical care for mums and newborn babies by organising the delivery of **1,000 maternity delivery packs** provided by the Human Milk Bank Foundation (Fundacja Banku Mleka Kobiecego) to 11 hospitals in various regions of Ukraine. Such packs are necessary where the birth takes place in difficult conditions or outside a medical facility.

Project

Support for Ukrainian refugees arriving in Poland

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 364,300

As soon as on the day following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, SFPL announced a grant competition and co-funded six organisations which developed support programmes for refugees who were arriving in Poland in huge numbers. The outcome of these programmes is mainly the immediate aid to meet the basic living and health needs of people fleeing the war, but also informational, legal and psychological assistance.

Results of six grant programmes

160 refugees participated in language courses and integrational workshops

80 persons benefitted from cultural and recreational services

400 refugees received legal, psychological and educational aid

500 persons received in-kind support

300 persons benefitted from vocational guidance

60 persons received treatment for cancer

80 analytical materials were published on the economic situation in Ukraine

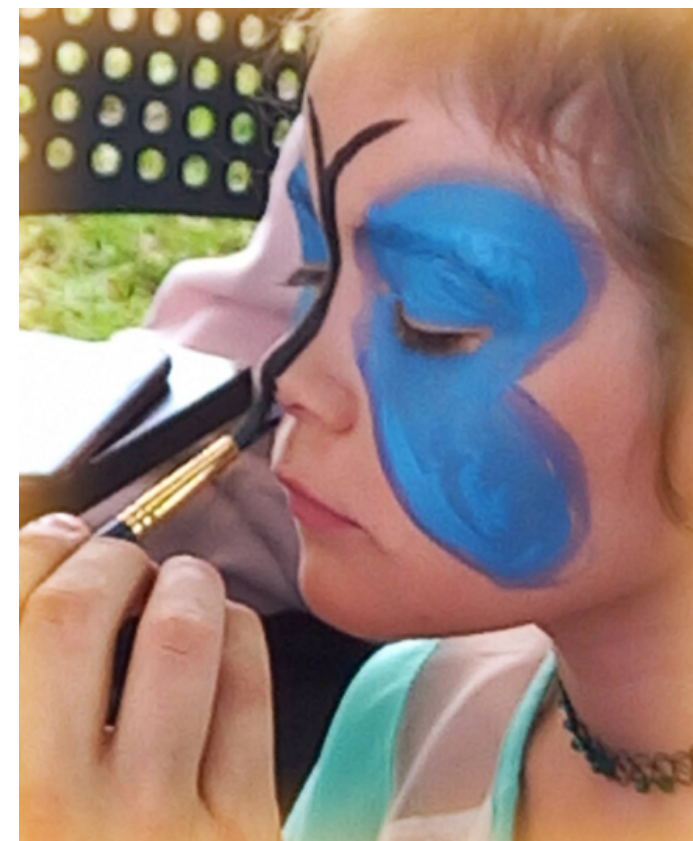
“Support for Ukrainian refugees in Krakow”

The Internationaler Bund Polska organisation created an assistance programme for refugees entitled “I’ll Go With You Everywhere”. People who came to the information desk could get help filling in documents, translation services, assistance in registration procedures in public offices or hospitals, and school enrolments.



“Aid Without Frontiers – a comprehensive support programme for persons arriving in Poland as a result of the military aggression in Ukraine”

Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Bliźniemu im. Brata Krystyna w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim (Brother Krystyn’s Help Thy Neighbour Association) in Gorzów Wielkopolski provided support for entire families. In the information centre, refugees received legal and psychological assistance, help in finding work, as well as in-kind aid: food, hygiene products, public transport tickets, clothes, toys, and school equipment. Activities for children were organised in day care centres.



“Road to independence – we support Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in connection with the war activities after 24 February 2022”

Fundacja Edukacji i Przedsiębiorczości (Foundation for Education and Entrepreneurship) from Warsaw organised an information desk that also provided translation of documents and specialist translations. Additionally, it offered adaptation courses, Polish language courses for adults and children, vocational guidance as well as psychological support and in-kind aid.

“RAZOM-TOGETHER we can do more – support for action in aid of Ukrainian diaspora in Poland”



Futurum the Foundation in aid of levelling children’s educational opportunities and social integration focused on a broad spectrum of educational and integrational activities, organising a number of meetings with Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish culture in Eastern Poland districts (Bielsko and Hajnowka), addressed to refugees and local communities (culinary, crafts, sports, musical workshops, open air cinema), Polish language courses, summer play centres. Numerous non-governmental organisations, libraries, schools, parishes, and museums were involved in the activities. But it was not just children that benefited from the foundation’s care; adults were offered legal aid, psychological help, and vocational guidance.

“Emergency exit”

Warsaw’s Rakiety Oncological Foundation ([Fundacja Onkologiczna Rakiety](#)) selected the right support path for Ukrainian cancer patients, organised transport to Poland, acted as an intermediary in finding the medical facility appropriate for the type of disease. The care they provided also covered the patients’ loved ones – they were given shelter as well as psychological or psychiatric support.

“Ukrainian economy – costs of the Russian aggression and road to reconstruction. Analytical and informational activities in Ukraine”

[CASE – Center for Social and Economic Research](#) analysed the impact of war on the Ukrainian economy and formulated recommendations for the rebuilding of the country. Commentaries, brief analyses and longer texts in Ukrainian, devoted to the socio-economic situation in Ukraine, were published on many websites and in social media. Ukrainian experts were involved in the activities conducted by the Center. Many of the publications may be found at [cost.ua](#).

Project

Blessed Klemens Szeptycki Fund – support programme for Ukrainian women and children in the face of war in Ukraine

Funding: Chancellery of the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland

Value of the award: EUR 185,500

The Fund was established by the decision of the President of SFPL of 21 July 2022. Its objective was to help Ukrainian children orphaned as a result of the war and women freed from Russian captivity. Financial support improved the difficult situation of both, and psychological assistance and rehabilitation offered – the women’s health.

The selection of the Fund’s patron – Klemens Szeptycki, the grandson of a Polish writer Aleksander Fredro and Ukrainian Studite monk who was tortured to death by the Soviets – was not accidental. One of the priorities in the activity of his order was taking care of children orphaned during the First World War, setting up orphanages and schools.

SFPL launched a bilingual (Polish and Ukrainian) [website](#) where it provided an application form and the necessary information about the Fund and about the terms on which supported was to be granted. The call for applications was announced on 17 August and continued without interruption until 30 November.

Applications were considered in cooperation with the Ukrainian Peace Development Centre subordinated to Ukraine’s Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories which among other things verified documents confirming the right to receive the support.

Award

1845 orphaned children received monthly financial support worth the equivalent of EUR 162 euro, whilst a one-off support payment worth the equivalent of EUR 2,300 was made to 180 women freed from captivity. These are usually policewomen, women soldiers, doctors and paramedics who have in most cases already returned to their service. The support helped them to a certain degree to minimise problems and social consequences of the forced break in service and the experience of being a prisoner in a Russian camp.

On 14 November, a meeting with recipients of the support was held with the participation of SFPL's management, representatives of the Government of the Republic of Poland, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Temporarily Occupied Territories, Iryna Vereschuk.



Psychological consultations

Support was provided by two female psychologists who had experience in the treatment of effects of the post-traumatic stress disorder as well as eliminating effects of the trauma experienced. Consultations were held online and during a rehabilitation stay in Poland. The main problems

which the psychologists helped the women cope with included: traumatic memories, trouble sleeping, anxiety, irritability, inability to control one's emotional state, loss, feeling of guilt, apathy, depression, attempted suicide, childcare, adaptation to a new workplace, self-care, building relationships with loved ones, etc.

Overall, 24 ladies received 200 hours of psychological consultations.

Recollections of captivity

Valentina Z., aged 29, was freed on 21 September. She comes from Cherkasy, she used to work in the Military Hospital as a nurse.

On 12 April, during the defence of Mariupol, she was taken captive. She was imprisoned for five and a half months.

It was night time, I remember a corridor, torches, guns being pointed at us. We stood with our arms in the air, the Russians were saying what they were going to do to us. We were scared of their touch, and they were saying that they would do "bad things". First, they took us to Olenivka, for 5 days. Then they moved us to Taganrog where I remained for one month and 5 days. The cell was 3 by 2.5 metres, the toilet was in the middle, the window was 50 by 60 cm, and from the street the window was welded with a sheet of metal with holes in it – this was the only source of fresh air. In the summer the temperature reached 30-35 degrees. There was no air to breathe, we had no appropriate clothes. They had taken our documents, hygiene products, they did not leave absolutely anything and they did not give us anything. The Russians tried to destroy our morale, they said: "What do you need the independence for, what do you need this Ukraine for? There is nothing there, Romania will take their bit, Poland will take theirs, only the centre will be left – we don't need it but maybe we will take it. And Kyiv will be ours!" In Ienivka they did not beat me, but in Sartana they did. They broke some of my ribs.

You can listen to the stories of other ladies that received the support from Klemens Szeptycki Fund on [SFPL's YouTube channel](#).

Rehabilitation and leisure

Rehabilitation stay was organised from 30 November to 8 December in Łądek-Zdrój – a resort town in the Sudety mountains, in the south-western part of Poland. The participants were 19 women freed from captivity and two female psychologists.

Each of the participants was provided with 14 rehabilitation treatments and exercises restoring their fitness. In the SPA zone, they had 24h access to a brine pool and gym. The holiday programme also included a singing bowl and gong concert as well as craft workshops – decoupage and watercolour painting. And, of course, walks on mountain trails.

Psychologist's observation

Olena Trehubenko, a project expert, cooperating with SFPL also in the project entitled “Psychological first aid at the hromada level”:

In order to understand how helpful this trip was, one has to compare the girls' faces when they were getting off a bus in Poland and then when they were getting on a bus to return to Ukraine. They were brighter, their facial expressions had changed. You could see with a naked eye that the women were rested, gained strength, recuperated both physically and mentally. They could live calmly, without fears and without air raids alerts, they could get treatments, enjoy jacuzzi, draw on the beautiful nature... But the most important and healing thing is communication. Being among your own. And the awareness that you are surrounded by people who care about you.



Developmental activities

I. Support for the civil protection system reform

As a result of decentralisation, for the last two years SFPL has been supporting Ukraine in the civil defence and safety improvement reform. The reform assumes the handover of civil protection tasks to hromadas (local councils). Ukraine, following the example of Poland and other European Union countries, is looking for support for state emergency services among volunteers. The benefit of such voluntary units is their cost-effectiveness and commitment. Often the nearest state fire brigade is 30 km from a town or village in which the fire starts. The close proximity, good orientation in the area, and fast response to callouts increase the chances that people and property will be saved.

As part of the support for the civil protection system reform, SFPL continued the implementation of the project entitled “Fire busters. Improvement of the civil protection system in Ukraine at the local level”, and in November, together with USAID, launched the project entitled “Civil protection with voluntary fire brigades for partnership communities of the USAID HOVERLA project”.

Project
Fire busters. Improvement of the civil protection system in Ukraine at the local level

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 121,600

The purpose of the project is to support the development of the civil safety protection system at the local level. Fire protection, removal of consequences and prevention of disasters and natural calamities, as well as rescue aid are to be organised in accordance with international standards.



Polish and Ukrainian specialists developed a concept of adapting to local conditions the Polish model of Volunteer Fire Brigades (OSP) implemented by hromadas. At the same time – together with the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (DSNS) – SFPL’s experts prepared proposals of changes in Ukrainian law regulating the activities of volunteer units. The institutional framework was bestowed on the mutual relationships by signing a cooperation memorandum between SFPL and DSNS, and the memorandum with (U-LEAD) with Europe included the project into the wider framework of support for Ukraine.

In 2022, when the full-scale Russian invasion started, civil protection became the priority development area for a large number of Ukrainian communities. Wanting to protect residents, also against the results of attacks at critical infrastructure, local councillors started to develop Volunteer Fire Brigades more actively.

Another key result of activities in 2022 was the improvement of the legal environment, making the creation and operation of Volunteer Fire Brigades easier. Moreover, the capacity for the volunteer units to operate was strengthened. These results were achieved by SFPL as a result of the following measures.

Volunteer training

Due to the fact that the majority of volunteers were men of conscription age, general mobilisation, internal migration and switching the economy to the wartime mode caused not only changes on list of volunteers but their continuous rotation. Hromadas which were in occupied territories could not participate in the project. In June, the composition of initiative groups had to be revised. 192 people in total made it to the lists. Together with DSNS and SFPL's experts, an outline of certified volunteer training courses was developed (theoretical training: 90 hours – online, practical training: 50 hours – at the nearest DSNS unit); it was published by DSNS as a standard for all Volunteer Fire Brigade training sessions in Ukraine.

Polish and Ukrainian experts also conducted supplementary online training for volunteers which focused on the unique features of working in a Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Creation of documentation packs

These concerned among other things the civil protection resource management, including with regard to a Volunteer Fire Brigade unit, in the case of various events, i.e. planning of the composition and actions of a local crisis centre, risk management, identification of threats and priorities with regard to investments in civil protection.

All local councils developed action plans and roadmaps for implementing necessary and recommended changes. Before it happened, SFPL's experts supported the formation of local work forces composed of specialists (from hromadas and DSNS), responsible for the civil protection in the given area.

The situation in hromadas continues to change. It is too early to formulate recommendations for the strengthening of the civil protection system. The quality of documentations prepared will be analysed in 2023.

Efficient lobbying

SFPL's experts collected and analysed a list of questions and doubts from hromadas – concerning organisational, financial and legal matters, on the basis of which proposed changes to the draft Act amending certain legal acts regulating the functioning of local and volunteer fire services were developed. On 18 October, the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada) adopted the draft in its entirety. The key effect of these measures was the expansion of the budgetary classification of public expenditure to include the financing of activity of Volunteer Fire Brigades (the local government may now directly finance Volunteer Fire Brigades). SFPL's team also participated in the development of proposals aimed at simplifying the establishment and operation of Volunteer Fire Brigades in hromadas.

Purchase of rescue and fire extinguishing equipment



From the European Commission's funds, in partnership with Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, SFPL purchased and delivered to hromadas: fire suit sets, boots, helmets, rescue loops, fireproof and technical gloves, fire ladders, chainsaws, shovels and fire flappers. 70 hromadas received equipment worth EUR 710,600. You can see how it looked in a [Youtube video](#).

W sprzęt o wartości 3,162 mln zł zostało wyposażonych 70 hromad.

Knowledge database and promotion of ideas

- An online database of knowledge about civil protection in Ukraine was created under SFPL's and U-LEAD with Europe's banner: www.vognebortsi.in.ua. Publications from U-LEAD with EU earlier projects concerning these topics were also used in it.

- Ceremonial launches of Volunteer Fire Brigades were held in two hromadas – in Horodenka (Ivano-Frankivsk oblast) and in Ternovo in Zakarpattia.

- SFPL conducted the monitoring of messages about the delivery of firefighting equipment. These are some examples from hromadas in [Mostyska](#) (Lviv oblast), [Horodenka](#) (obw. Ivano-Frankivsk oblast), [Bykivka](#) (Zhytomyr oblast) or [Loknytsia](#) (Rivne oblast).

- The Volunteer Fire Brigade ideas were also promoted in the media. The project coordinator gave an [interview on the Hromadske radio](#) on the topicality of the volunteer fire brigade movement and the project implementation. [A number of publications about the development of the Volunteer Fire Brigades](#) was published at www.decentralization.gov.ua.



Project
**Civil protection with volunteer fire
brigades for partnership communities
of the USAID HOVERLA project**

Funding: USAID

Value of the award: EUR 42,400



HOVERLA is one of the largest USAID projects supporting local governments and the decentralisation reform in Ukraine. The shared goal enabled USAID and SFPL to combine their resources and experience and to extend the range of activities aimed at protection and security of civilian population.

The shared project, which started in the autumn of 2022 and is also planned for 2023, is aimed at creating a system of volunteer firefighting and rescue units in 25 hromadas in the Lviv, Volyn and Poltava oblasts. An analysis of the state of civil protection in those communities was conducted and conditions were created to exchange experience and start cooperation with Volunteer Fire Brigades already operating in other regions.

At the end of November, volunteers from partner local governments under the USAID HOVERLA projects visited the Rivne oblast. Communities which had successfully implemented the civil protection system in their area shared their experiences in creating and operation of volunteer units. During the visit, guests learned the best practices of hromadas in ensuring civilian security and launched cooperation. Photo reports from training sessions in Volyn oblast in [Shatsk](#) and [Liubeshiv](#) hromadas, or in [Orzhytsia](#) in Poltava oblast may be found in these links.

In 2023, 300 volunteers will undergo specialist training under the State Emergency Service of Ukraine’s programme and will receive support in starting employment. Hromadas will receive recommendations concerning legal and organisational aspects of the civil protection development, including activities of Volunteer Fire Brigades, as well as necessary model solutions.

II Support for the social policy reform

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: personal costs

Since 2017, the area of social services has been one of the priority directions in SFPL’s activity in Ukraine. The objective of the “Social services” programme is to improve the quality of provision of these services by hromadas.

In the first half of 2022, SFPL did not conduct any activities in this area. Such decision was made based on the assessment of hromadas’ capacity to cooperate with it under the conditions of the ongoing war – hromadas were overwhelmed by their duties. In the autumn, SFPL conducted a survey of their needs and capabilities.

The survey was conducted in 20 hromadas from three oblasts: Cherkasy, Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr. The responses provided by hromadas’ representatives indicated that they were ready to cooperate with regard to strategic planning. They were aware of the need to implement systemic changes under the wartime conditions, the need to adapt the services to the needs of internally displaced persons, as well as allowing for psychological support and rehabilitation of military personnel and their families in hromadas’ activities. An important element is also the need for a change in the personnel policy and working conditions of social workers, including the prevention of professional burnout

Based on the results of the survey, analysis of open sources and interviews with representatives of Ukraine’s Ministry of Social Policy and hromadas, a new structure of the “Social services” programme was proposed, encompassing six directions:

- strategic planning,
- acquisition of funds,
- social services academy,
- outsourcing services to non-governmental organisations,
- development of specific social services,
- CAF (Common Assessment Framework), a tool used in the EU for assessing the work of local authorities and institutions providing social services.

III. Support for the vocational education system reform

EU4Skills programme: Better Skills for Modern Ukraine

Partners: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau KfW) and institutions from countries co-funding EU4Skills: Estonia, Finland, Germany and Poland

Value of the award: EUR 672,100

The aim of the programme is the reform of the Ukrainian vocational education and training (VET) system. It supports the creation of conditions for modern teaching and learning through the training of management personnel and teachers. It is also intended to improve the quality of vocational education and its importance for the labour market.

The Polish package of activities is implemented through SFPL. It encompasses among other things the creation and development of labour market information systems, creation of regional action plans concerning vocational education, creation and implementation of vocational guidance in Ukraine, creation of an optimised multi-channel mechanism for funding VAT that will ensure effectiveness of financial allocations and facilitate long-term planning of the VET budget and budget programming systems.

Most of the results were already achieved in 2021: regional vocational education system development plans and a local labour market information system (LMIS), as well as the vocational orientation and guidance system were created. A reform of the VET financing mechanism and the system of its long-term budgeting was also conducted. These are the milestones of the vocational education system reform to the extent for which SFPL was responsible.

The year 2022 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine forced new activities which respond to extreme challenges: evacuation of schools, relocation of students and teachers, and many changes in the labour market. SFPL became involved in four interventions connected with the aggression, creating conditions for the development of vocational education during wartime.

1. Thanks to the kindness of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science, SFPL received rights to translate and adapt 30 online courses for the purposes of Ukrainian education. After being elaborated by project experts, these are published at: <https://profosvita.online/>

2. On the basis of the methodology developed a year before by SFPL's experts, in the autumn of 2022 a survey of demand for qualified workers was conducted in three sectors – retail, agricultural and manufacturing, and an extended report was prepared for the construction sector. The surveys were conducted by the Ukrainian State Employment Service (Державна служба зайнятості) and the Federation of Ukraine's Employers (Федерація роботодавців України), with support from SFPL's experts.

3. The expert support for Ukrainian decision-makers in the preparation of the new vocational education system reform concept for the years 2023–2027: Ministry of Education, Supreme Council, State Employment Service and Federation of Ukraine's Employers. The reform concept adopted by the Ministry of Education as a strategic document was created during workshops and the study visit in Poland in September 2022. It is a comprehensive document used to develop human capital in technical sectors. It focuses on three priorities: modernisation of the contents of vocational education for youth and adults, improvement of institutional capacity with regard to the provision of vocational education and training, and wise reconstruction.

4. At the end of 2022, SFPL announced a tender for the acquisition of 800 computers for students and teachers in vocational schools. They will be handed out to those most in need in 2023.

Development of vocational orientation

SFPL also continued its work on the development of vocational orientation, among other things:

- 7 new vocational guidance manuals for pupils of primary schools were developed <https://kariera.in.ua/uk/>
- as were methodology materials for teachers,
- training for methodologists was conducted,
- 30 training sessions and seminars were conducted online for over 1,000 vocational orientation teachers, school headmasters, and representatives of educational authorities.



IV. Psychological support

Ukraine does not have a developed systemic model of psychological support for people harmed as a result of military activity. Meanwhile, the need for psychological assistance is growing at an alarming rate. Soldiers are battling symptoms of the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With each missile attack launched by the Russian aggressor, the number of frightened women and children is growing. Help is needed by people freed from captivity who have experienced abuse and torture, as well as internal displaced persons who have been forced to leave their homes. These are just some examples of groups of people who need the psychological support.

SFPL has already had experience in provision of psychological help after the implementation of the project entitled “Improvement of the psychological support system in hromadas providing social services for veterans of military activities in the ATO/OSP zone” in the Chernihiv oblast in 2021. Under the project, psychologists were trained to work with veterans and a number of integrational activities were conducted, aimed at veterans, their families and local communities. Two pilot projects implemented by SFPL in 2022 are further blocks in the construction of a systemic model of psychological support provided for people harmed by the war.



Pilot project
**Psychological first aid
at the hromada level**

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 6,700

The objective of the project was to develop and test the methodology of training in psychological first aid basics for social services specialists in Ukraininan local governments.



Vira Chernomaz, a psychologist from the hromada in Pryluky, participating in the project implemented by SFPL in the previous year, was selected as the trainer. A workshop was organised for her, conducted by two Ukrainian trainers. She received from them the necessary knowledge, examples of exercises, coaching materials and mentoring support for independent training in psychological first aid. Then, Vira Chernomaz trained 45 social services specialists who were not psychologists, from the following Chernihiv oblast hromadas: Nizhyn, Mena and Sosnytsia. These were social workers, managers of social assistance units, and volunteers providing humanitarian aid for civilians.

The training participants learned the principles of provision of psychological first aid, together they developed practical exercises stabilising the mental and emotional state and bringing mental relief, they consolidated the skills they had acquired during role-playing games for modelling situations.

During two months after the end of training, 550 residents received support in terms of psychological support.



Vira Chernomaz: *I have great sympathy for the specialists who work in their local communities and often have to play the role of a psychologist. (...) I wanted to help and share the knowledge and experience but I lacked practical coaching experience and I needed methodological support. The mentoring meeting was heaven-sent for me and it enabled me to start the work on training social workers.*



Pilot project
Improving qualifications of the medical personnel with regard to war trauma treatment

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 67,400

Testing the model of training for medics on war trauma and raising qualifications of the personnel in accordance with international standards of psychological and psychiatric aid are the most important objectives of this pilot measure.



The recruitment of participants was conducted by the Ukrainian partner – the Rivne District War Veteran Hospital in Klevan. On the basis of qualifications, professional experience, recommendations of employers, and participation in courses and training, 23 persons were selected who then underwent an eight-day training course in crisis intervention.

Trainers from the Military Medical Institute in Warsaw discussed standards of highly specialised psychological support, explained issues connected with work methods and effective psychotherapeutic impact in extreme situations.

The skills acquired as well as the method of their implementation in workplaces were verified during a four-day meeting for all project participants. Supervision of the cases reported by them was conducted, knowledge was shared and a test of the knowledge and skills acquired was conducted.

Network of contacts and support

The initiation of networking activities as a tool to reinforce the psychological care system was an important element of the project. The trained medics themselves agreed the principles of operation of the network and developed forms of contact in order to build local partnership between institutions and organisational units. Citing the participation in the project, they notified individual units about the creation of the partnership. They are also members of a moderated group thanks to which they are continuously in contact with one another, they can share information and teaching materials.

V. Building management competences in Ukrainian local government units

Pilot project

“Good management” internship programme

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 105,400

The purpose of the programme was the enhancement of competences of local governments in the process of Ukraine's integration with the European Union through the exchange of experiences between Polish and Ukrainian members of local governments. A internship programme was organised for them in Poland.



The project was an investment in personnel of local governments and public administration so that in future they can fulfil well the duties imposed on them by the Ukrainian administration decentralisation reform. It assumes that the operation of local governments and authorities in regions will be streamlined through the allocation of tasks for which central institutions have previously been responsible. This is to move the model of operation of Ukrainian institutions closer to western standards. But in order for this to happen, scores of local government members and officials must be trained. The training process was not stopped by the subsequent attacks by the Russian aggressor and even in these difficult conditions they seek further opportunities for professional development, and SFPL provided support in this respect by organising placements in Polish institutions.



The announcement of the enrolment for the programme was published on 5 April on SFPL's profile in Ukraine, and after a week already 121 applications were received. The applicants submitted their declarations of return to Ukraine after the war in order to continue their work in the executive branch units or in local governments. They also specified how they intended to use the knowledge gained during the placement.

Two-month placements in Poland were completed by 20 representatives of local governments and government administration from 13 Ukrainian oblasts, including those strongly affected by military activities, such as Kharkiv or Donetsk. The interns learned about the Polish local government model and how the work carried out by authorities is organised, they expanded their competences with regard to sectoral policies (education, youth cooperation, infrastructure, etc.). They also added to their knowledge about preparation and implementation of projects funded from EU resources.

The second edition of the internship programme will take place in 2023.

Placement pairs

The placement pair: Anastasiia Adamchuk (on the right) with her mentor Małgorzata Miśniakiewicz. Anastasiia works in the Executive Office of the Rivne Oblast Council as a consultant in the organisational department. She was most interested in activities from the area of culture and science, as well as the method of consultation between the local council and residents. Her placement was in the Municipal Office in Zawiercie.

Earlier, interns participated in a webinar on the local government model in Poland, in a training introducing them to the mentoring and internship process, and in a Polish language course. Mentors took part in a webinar about the structure of the Ukrainian local government and in mentoring workshops (online), introducing them to hosting the interns.



Interns' ideas for changes

Tetyana Shkurenko from Pryluky, Chernihiv oblast, placement in Słupsk: *After I got to know the work carried out in mutual aid homes, day care centres for elderly and disabled persons, social canteens, centres offering temporary accommodation for persons in a difficult situation, cultural and healthcare institutions, I have many different ideas –from the expansion of the list of social services to the launch of a library reader card which offers discounts for visits in other cultural institutions, cafes, shops, etc.*

Maria Zdrila, from the Horodenka hromada, Ivano-Frankivsk, oblast, placement in Kielce: *I am ready to work on the development of an effective development strategy for my local community and to continue project activities, to start the implementation of projects from European programmes. (...) I would also like to implement the practice of recycling household waste and the correct organisation of collection of waste, in accordance with EU standards.*

VI. Activities carried out in cooperation with the central administration of the Republic of Poland

Pilot project

Implementation of the electronic record system of Ukraine's Museum Fund – stage I

Partner in Poland: Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

Funding: Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

Value of the award: EUR 175,600



The purpose of the project is to create and implement an electronic data management system for data on museum resources by creating a platform supporting the digitisation and stocktaking of museum exhibits.

Ukraine's State Museum Fund holds over 12 million exhibits. However, it does not have one electronic system for their centralised recording. Documentation exists only in paper form and is stored together with the collections. Meanwhile, from the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, over 30 museums were destroyed as a result of the air raids and artillery shelling. Together with the museums, the records containing data on exhibits are destroyed. The purpose of the digitisation of Ukraine's museum resources is to collect knowledge about them. Another important problem which is to be solved by the electronic administration system is the prevention of robbery and removal of collections by the Russian Federation army in occupied territories. At the first stage of implementation of the project, the basic version of the platform was created.

It will allow the collection, storing of data and access to such data, and will facilitate the management of resources. Eventually, it will be integrated with international systems which follow the fate of works of art that are stored, restored, transported or lost. This will allow the detection of cases of trading exhibits obtained illegally.

The developed system was implemented as a pilot scheme in 12 museums indicated by Ukraine's Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and having different profiles: historical, natural history, archaeology, art, etc.

The final deliverable of the measure was the development of the instruction of how to use the platform. Additionally, a concept of a chatbot to support interactions between users and the system was developed.

The next stage is the analysis of the level of computerisation of museum institutions and existing local electronic records used in Ukraine.

Belarus



SFPL continued the implementation of assumptions of the “Solidarity with Belarus” programme announced in 2020. Belarus’s progressing dependence on Russia (economic, energy-related, political), its involvement in the war against Ukraine, international isolation and the growing repressions against citizens and opposition circles – these are the conditions in which Belarusians have to live and this is the context of SFPL’s activities. Thus, SFPL’s huge involvement in the area of human rights and democratic institutions: financial or in-kind support for repressed persons, development – together with partners – of analyses and reports on the breaking of such rights and about the destruction of democratic institutions, as well as advocacy activities.

First aid in organising life and adaptation in Poland remains unchangeably, since Belarusian peace protests in 2020, one of the priorities of SFPL’s activities.

Building strong civil society organisations and the development of their competences necessary to provide high-quality social services are the next objective of SFPL’s activities in aid of Belarusian women and men. SFPL has been supporting Belarusian organisations in effective resolution of social problems in such areas as education, social care, healthcare, development of Belarusian culture, support for pro-democratic activists.

The support for the Belarusian diaspora and social organisations, including those promoting Belarusian culture and language, implementation of projects that activate youth and leaders of local social life, and building a positive image of free Belarus, Belarusian men and women in Poland have been extremely important.

Repressions against independent journalists in Belarus continue to be stepped up. Many had to flee the country. Some of them joined their friends in Poland in order to talk about what really is happening in their motherland and to counteract the official Belarusian and Russian propaganda. SFPL, together with partners, provided support for them,

a quiet place for work, meetings and development, in order to enhance their independence and competences for operation under difficult conditions, among other things through the development of their skills.

73 projects

9,327 hours of consultations, advice, courses provided to Belarusian women and men

9 organisations received the training and mentoring support with regard to the development of managerial competences

14,345 articles, films and other journalistic forms on Belarus were published in Belarusian, Polish and Western media

26 events building a positive image of free Belarus as well as female and male Belarusians in Poland

Several examples of projects implemented together with SFPL for the benefit of Belarusian men and woman, have been described below.

The Belarus International Implementers Meeting (BIIM)

BIIM is a bottom-up initiative of organisers, donors and activists acting in aid of Belarus. Meetings are held cyclically, the winter session in Warsaw. Both sessions are thematically connected, specific discussion topics are continued and developed. The June conferences in Warsaw attracted over 200 activists from different countries. They discussed the directions of activity and strategies to finance them, as well as issues connected with civil activation, education, culture and local governments. It is also important that sessions were conducted in Belarusian and in English, which shows the direction in which Belarusians are going.

The most important conclusion of the conference – the environment needs such meetings in order to create methods of solving problems that plague the Belarusian society.

The next BIIM conference will be held in 2023.

“Białystok for Belarus and Ukraine III”

The Foundation Window to the East (Okno na Wschód) covered Belarusian and Ukrainian citizens with comprehensive support. Aid was granted to 675 persons in total and it was adapted to individual needs of recipients/families. It was provided by a team of consultants and specialists operating at the Foreigners Support Centre (www.belostok.pl) in the following areas: consultations and specialist advice in relocation and organisation of life in Poland, financial assistance, Polish language lessons, certified translations of documents, and psychological support. Each citizen of Belarus and Ukraine who has contacted the Foundation received a consultant's assistance. The consultant, on the basis of an individual diagnosis of needs, using comprehensive tools available under the project, provided the necessary support, or possibly referred the client to specialists.

Paweł Mickiewicz, President of the Foundation Window To The East

Ukrainian refugees, when escaping the war, usually treated Białystok as a temporary stopover, a transit location en route to other cities, therefore they needed short-term assistance from the Support Centre. Unlike Belarusians – many of those leaving their country choose Białystok as a final destination, at least for a while. It is close to home, there is a large Belarusian diaspora, so it is easy to organise your life from scratch.

In February and in March we had young men coming to us in fear of mobilisation. Belarusians who arrived in Białystok from Ukraine found themselves in a very difficult situation – we call them doubly repressed. They escaped Lukashenka's regime, did not manage to legalise their stay in Ukraine and had to flee again. Some left their documents with Ukrainian authorities. The aid for Ukrainian refugees was dealt with swiftly and systemically, whereas Belarusians were somewhat forgotten – the Act on aid for Ukrainian citizens in connection with the military conflict within the territory of that state did not take into account support for Belarusians fleeing Ukraine. If this was not enough, particularly for the first two, three months, Belarusian refugees encountered hate on social media and in the Ukrainian and Polish communities. People who are not aware of the political situation in Belarus, transferred the anger at Lukashenka's regime, at his collaboration with the Russian aggressor, to all Belarusians. They started having problems with renting a flat, opening a bank account, they lost jobs. They needed comprehensive assistance from consultants from our Support Centre.

In the autumn, the number of parents with children arriving in Poland increased. Almost all private schools in Belarus were closed. (...) In the second or third school month we gave them support in finding their place in the Polish educational system. (...)



Belarusians who previously escaped to Georgia or Lithuania often ask about the terms of legalisation of their stay in Poland. They have heard that regulations concerning immigration in Poland, although not perfect, are much more friendly and there is a greater chance they will receive some support. Some have already decided to settle in Białystok – they realised that this may be more than just a temporary stay.

“Free Belarusian University – support for Leaders and Reformers for New Belarus”

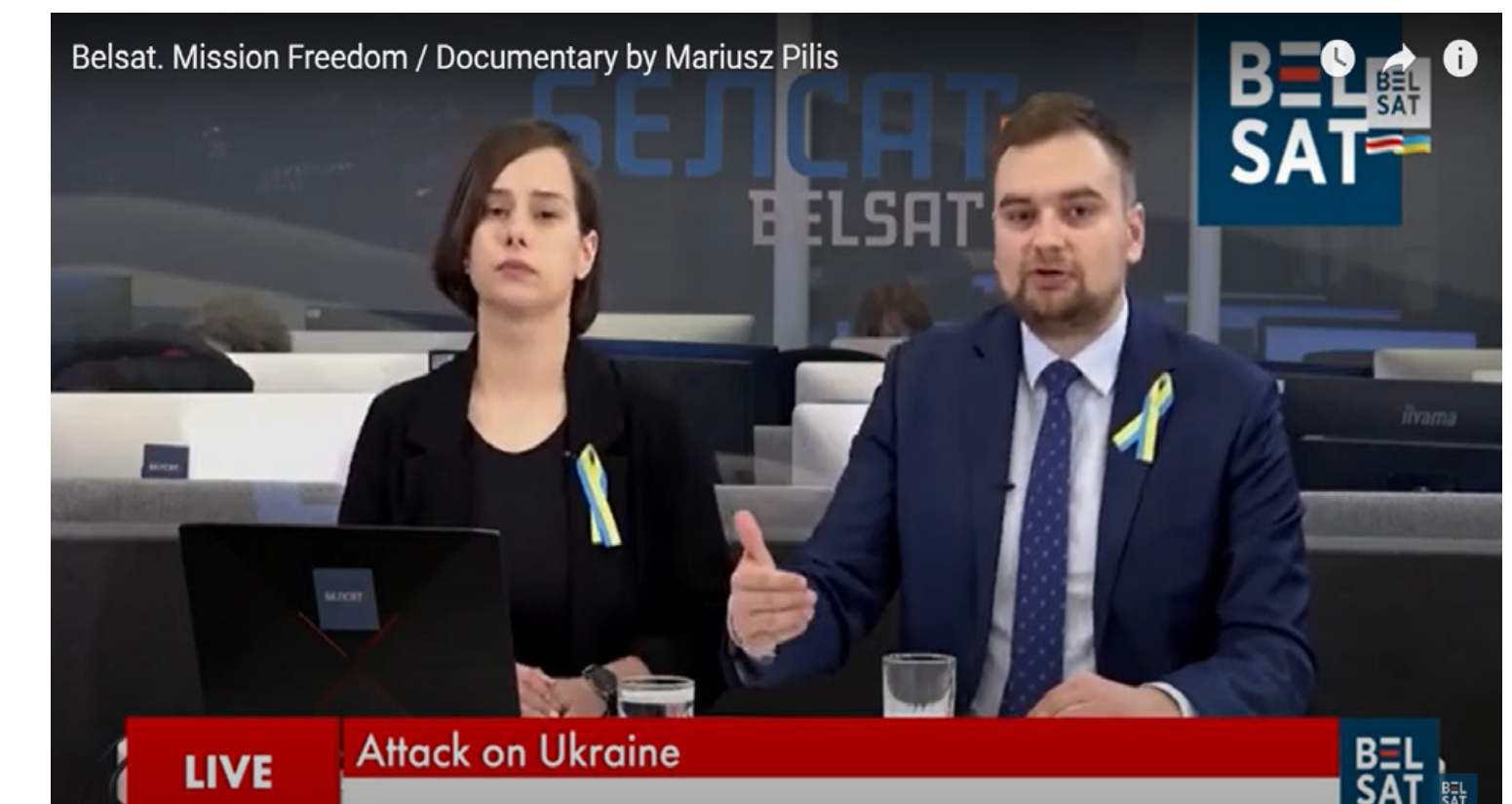
The purpose of the project implemented from September 2022 until August 2024 is to build or reinforce the ability of future officials, social activists, managers and other specialists who will implement and manage prodemocratic reforms and changes in Belarusian institutions and society in the future. The Central and Eastern European region is on the verge of important transformations, and only male and female leaders with appropriate knowledge and modern competences will be able to face up to these changes and lead whole communities through them.

The project assumes the launch of 13 online courses in cooperation with universities and other educational institutions, and the creation of free Belarusian university community (in imitation of student government), composed of graduates and current university students. Courses are free-of-charge and addressed to young and middle-aged people interested in becoming involved in transformation processes in Belarus – for 2,000 people in total over the period of two years. The partners in the implementation of the courses include Łódź University and Warsaw University. The project is funded by the EU and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

“Enhancement of operational capacity of the Bielsat Television in the face of the Russian invasion on Ukraine”

Production and promotion of Bielsat’s original content on social media, purchase of mobile journalism equipment and means of transport, and provision of financial and legal help for imprisoned Bielsat journalists and their families are the main activities under the Solidarity Zone Foundation’s project.

The production of the documentary entitled “[Bielsat. Source of freedom](#)” and advocacy activities in Berlin and in Brussels constituted an important element of the project.



“Belarusian Hub in Warsaw – a cultural adaptation and integration centre for Belarusian and diaspora and refugees from Ukraine”

The Belarusian Youth Hub Association organised 11 integrational, educational and cultural events, theatre and psychology workshops for children and adults, Belarusian language and Belarus history classes, as well as music classes on Belarusian traditional songs and folk dances.

Good address: Kryniczna 6

This is where the seat of independent Belarusian circles is located. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland which received the building under permanent administration from the State Treasury, handed it over to Solidarity Fund PL for use for 10 years. On 31 October 2022, SFPL concluded an agreement for the use of the building by the Belarusian House Foundation.



Moldova

SFPL promotes the idea of development based on local resources, managed by residents of the given area as more effective than top-down management. Providing residents of towns and villages with tools for their development through the involvement of local communities, authorities and organisations is to lead to the improvement of their living conditions, and further down the line – encourage them to remain in the country and prevent depopulation.

In 2022, SFPL continued the dissemination of the LEADER approach in the development of rural areas as well as the urban revitalisation and development programme. Both processes entered further stages – institutionalisation, at which state institutions and social partners take over the responsibility for the implementation of the given approach and the development tool. Besides these programmes, SFPL supported the development of the civil protection system, reinforcement of competences of the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Moldova.

The activities in aid of Moldova contribute to achieving the 16th Sustainable Development Goal.

Rural area development programme

Funding: Polish Aid, USAID, UE

Value of the award: EUR 2,217,000

Pilot scheme Streamlining Institutionalisation Rooting



The purpose of the programme is the development of rural areas through the establishment of new firms and services, adapted to the needs of rural inhabitants, as well as new jobs. SFPL has been implementing it for six years together with partners and activists from local communities by using the LEADER approach – the rural development methodology applied successfully in the European Union countries since 1990s.



Aleksander Casapu's enterprise uses the latest technological developments for a lot of the field work. Aleksander believes that they can replace tractors. You can find out more about his innovative project [here](#)!

European solutions adapted to the local context are to mobilise rural communities and stimulate their economic development. The basis for the LEADER approach is the assumption that sustainable development and modernisation of rural areas are possible thanks to the application of local residents' knowledge and potential. Decisions about what to use the development funds for are made in the local community when it organises itself into a form of partnership, i.e. the Local Action Group (LAG), it creates a strategy and an action plan. The share of private sector's representation in LAG is no lower than 50%.

Since 2017, SFPL has been activating local communities by supporting the creation, formalisation and operation of LAG. SFPL also participated in the preparation of Bills and other legal acts concerning the LEADER approach which have allowed the implementation of the LEADER National Programme since 2022 and financing LAG from the state budget. It is important because although the decentralisation reform has not been conducted in Moldova yet, possibilities have been created for local governments to decide what they will spend public money on. The LEADER approach has been accepted by the Moldovan government as a public policy instrument, and thus Moldova has become the first and so far the only one state outside the European Union to implement it as a rural area development policy instrument.

The pilot edition of the LEADER National Programme is implemented in the years 2022-2023. In 2022, 40 LAG were registered, minimum 55% of rural areas in Moldova is covered by LAG's activities, and the LEADER National Network under which LAG are associated is better prepared to fulfil the role of a guarantor of the development process. SFPL supported Moldovan partners in all work on the implementation of the Programme. Experts by SFPL also developed the initial concept of the MLIS software for administering the LEADER Programme.

Inauguration of the LEADER National Programme



It was held on 3 June in the village of Vorniceni, 40 km north of Chisinau. The location was not accidental: this is where one of the model businesses established as a result of the application of the LEADER approach is situated – Vatra Dumeniului’s agri-tourism business. The inauguration became an international event. It was honoured by the presence of three ambassadors based on Moldova: Tomasz Kobzdej, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Kent D. Logsdon, Ambassador of the United States of America, and Janis Mazeiks, Ambassador of the European Union. The [photo report](#) from the event may be found on SFPL’s website.

Implementation of the LEADER National Programme in 2022

- 40 LAG** have legal personality and hold necessary internal documents, have competences concerning the conducting of developmental and reporting activities
- 37 LAG** cooperate with the Agency of Interventions and Payments in Agriculture in the implementation of the LEADER National Programme; they received subsidies for 2022-2023
- 555** projects were submitted by LAG for subsidisation
- 482** (87%) projects approved for subsidisation by the Agency
- 58,7** million lei (12 million euro) of approved subsidies

Support for development and subsidisation of LAG

By organising grant competitions and profiling funds, SFPL is searching for the best methods of investing funds in entrepreneurship in rural areas, activating local communities.

- SFPL continued the implementation of the **Rural Development Fund 2 (RDF_2)** together with 26 LAG under two paths: activation projects (206 projects, subsidisation up to EUR 16,200, agreement between LAG and the applicant) and developmental projects (25 projects, subsidisation up to EUR 40,600, tripartite agreement between LAG, applicant and SFPL). The project deliverables include 68 jobs created, 24 startups supported, 36 restored landscape architecture facilities. Brief video summary may be found [here](#).
- Together with 15 newly established LAG, SFPL implemented the **Inception Fund (IF)**. In competitions announced by LAG, 342 applications were sent, and 108 of them were selected for subsidisation. They will be implemented in 2023.
- SFPL launched a sectoral support programme for LAG – **LEADER Innovators**, offering them mentoring and funding. The purpose of the projects is to test the mobilisation and institutional potential of 7 LAG as organisations stimulating local developmental processes. The following tools are tested: destination management organisation and creation of the tourist product, sectoral development and creation of manufacturer groups, and implementation of the principles of the closed-loop economy.

LEADER EU-Moldova Conference

Over 400 persons dealing with the development of rural areas met at the Conference, including 13 delegations from the EU countries and neighbouring countries which have been implementing the LEADER approach. The Conference were opened by the then Prime Minister of Moldova Natalia Gavrilita and Lawrence Meredith, Director of the DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations for Eastern Partnership and institutional strengthening in the European Commission. The exchange of experiences and presentation of achievements in the application of the LEADER approach in Moldova as a method of development of rural areas was the most important objective of the event. The report from the Conferences may be found at SFPL's website ([here](#)) and on the YouTube channel ([here](#)).



LEADER's new initiatives

Over 100 directors and members of LAG met up on 22 December at the closing conference of LEADER – EU Rural Development Fund 2.0 – exchange of experiences and the best practices with regard to the management and implementation of local development projects. Under the programme, 232 local development projects were implemented in such areas as agriculture, public infrastructure, education, public administration services, healthcare and social care, industry, tourism, retail and services. These are several projects implemented under the activation and developmental activities.

Sergiu Briceag from the Rîșcani Creation Centre teaches painting on glass. For his students to be able to improve their painting technique and participate in exhibitions, a larger quantity of materials had to be purchased: easels, projector, equipment for making wooden frames. Sergiu applied for a subsidy under RDF_2 to the local LAG. Now we can participate in exhibitions more often – says Sergiu.

With a view to her retirement, Victoria Culicova purchased a small house in the picturesque village of Naslavcea, on the right bank of the Dniester River. During the pandemic, friends came to say with her in order to have a rest. Victoria had an idea to set up a small family business to promote rural tourism. The Vaduri LAG supported her in the project. They gave me a lot of advice on how to write projects, how to implement them. I want to do a lot and succeed in life – she sums up.

“Sweet taste of honey” is a project implemented by Pavel Cretu, a bee-keeper from the village of Scumpia. Thanks to the financial support from the Movila Mîgura LAG, Pavel purchased a machine for uncapping honey frames in order to extract honey from them and increased the effectiveness of honey production in the family business. Previously the uncapping of a frame took 5-7 minutes, now I can uncap 4 frames a minute. We want to develop as a family firm. This will help me stay at home and avoid travelling abroad to earn my living – says Pavel.



Urban development programme

The Programme was initiated in Moldova in 2017. Its objective is to achieve the transformation of neglected urban areas which require architectural, economic and social changes. This is because the revitalisation of towns and cities does not only concern the public space, infrastructure or introduction of innovations, but also the organisation of the community around the change process.

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 534,300

Programme stages

- **Stage 1:** initiation of a dialogue between local authorities, residents and local entities; demarcating the revitalisation area and its complex diagnosis
- **Stage 2:** examining the local community’s needs and resources in order to develop the revitalisation programme
- **Stage 3:** implementation of the programme and creation of local and national partnerships

Pilot scheme
Streamlining
Institutionalisation
Rooting

The activities in aid of Moldova contribute to achieving the 16th Sustainable Development Goal.



SFPL supported programme participants at each of the stages, organising workshops and cooperating with representatives of towns and cities in the development of revitalisation plans. On the basis of experiences of the first towns and cities which in the years 2018–2019 implemented their initiatives, it prepared the methodology of creating plans for further towns/cities. SFPL also cooperated with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development on the cohesion of legal acts concerning the implementation of revitalisation programmes, and with the towns/cities – on the development of local operating plans, and it supported the National Network of Revitalisation and Urban Development in the preparation for registration.

In 2022, the Ministry and Moldovan towns/cities started to undertake pilot schemes utilising the revitalisation approach as an urban development policy instrument, and towns/cities that were most advanced in activities established Project Implementation Units (PIU) which can play the role of urban generators of developmental change.

Preparation of the implementation framework

Several documents of which the policy implementation framework is composed have been developed and adopted: Regulations of the National Regional and Local Development Fund, Regulation on the establishment of the National Office for Regional and Local Development and regulations of its operation, tender documentation concerning the funding of projects under the National Urban Development Programme. The regulations of the National Council for Regional and Local Development was also updated. Moreover, three programme documents were prepared: the Town of Balti Development Programme, Local Development Programme, and Mobility Programme. The implementation framework created allowed the launch of financing of revitalisation projects from the National Urban Development Programme and the National Regional Development Fund.



Preparations at the local level

The second deliverable of SFPL’s activities under the urban development programme was the preparation of a favourable institutional and operating environment at the local and regional level. Thanks to this it is possible to implement the National Urban Development Programme.

In the first quarter of 2022, the concept of actions supporting the Programme implementation was developed. Among other things, it assumed the creation and testing the mechanism of cooperation between Regional Development Agencies and towns/cities – growth poles, including the mentoring and measures in favour of competence building, institutionalisation of 6 PIU, updating of 8 municipal revitalisation programmes, and support in the preparation of 8 municipal revitalisation programmes. Teams were established between agencies and PIU and the proposed regulations of their operation were prepared and presented to the Ministry.

In June, four agreements on subsidisation of the Agencies’ activities were signed, including the support for towns/cities – growth poles in the institutionalisation of PIU. All towns/cities prepared applications for subsidisation of projects from the National Urban Development Programme. They also have institutionalised PIU.

For the PIU and Agency teams, SFPL conducted training on project management, strategic planning and technical expert appraisal. SFPL’s experts also conducted seven training sessions for ministerial staff.



Project
Civil protection system support

Funding: Polish Aid, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Chisinau

Value of the award: EUR 253,400

The purpose of the project is to support Moldovan authorities in the building of the civil security system at the local level (fire protection, aid and liquidation of effects of natural and other disasters, and rescue), in accordance with international standards.

In Moldova, similarly as in Ukraine, it is important for the civil protection system to create efficiently operating fire brigades in rural areas, based on volunteers. Solidarity Fund PL has been participating in the transfer of Polish long-term experience in the functioning of Volunteer Fire Brigades and experience in cooperation in this area with Ukrainian authorities and local governments.

The result of activities in 2022 was the creation of conditions promoting the consolidation of the civil protection system in Moldova based on volunteer units. The importance and competences of Volunteer Fire Brigades in Moldova is starting to change. Currently, 68 units are operating there, of which 22 employ firefighters-volunteers.

The second deliverable is the strengthening of competences of the Main Inspectorate for Emergencies with regard to specialist training for Moldovan firefighters, in accordance with the EU/UN standards. In cooperation with Polish experts, a training programme for employees has been developed. It has been agreed that technical training will constitute a priority – the USAR/INSARAG module.



Systemic support

1. Creation of a better regulatory environment. SFPL organised 5 working meetings with General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (GIES), presented the Polish Volunteer Fire Brigade (OSP) system. It also analysed activities of other development partners (United Nations Development Programme - UNDP, Austrian Development Agency - ADA) in order to learn their experiences in the area of support for volunteer units (Czechia's and Austria's experiences).

2. Pilot scheme concerning the operation of Volunteer Fire Brigades. A call for applications for the implementation of activities supporting the establishment or operation of Volunteer Fire Brigades was announced together with GISN. Of 16 applications to arrive, four were selected for subsidisation. These are infrastructural investments: construction of one model fire station and reconstruction of three existing ones. The standard of the technical design of the fire station was developed, adopted by GISN as the model. Documents necessary to commence construction and refurbishment work were prepared. The refurbishment of two fire stations also started.

3. Development of the training standard for volunteer firefighters. It was tested during the training visit in Poland for GISN instructors and representatives of Volunteer Fire Brigades. Next, after additional refinement, the standard was tested in Moldova with the support from Polish experts. 11 Volunteer Fire Brigade leaders were trained in accordance with the standard.

4. Promotion of volunteer firefighting. Study visits of Moldovan Volunteer Fire Brigades and district heads in Poland took place and the firefighter festival was held in Moldova.

As a result of these activities, GISN has the programme document determining priorities for building and consolidating the Volunteer Fire Brigade system at the local level. The support for the operation of Volunteer Fire Brigades was included in the Civil Protection System Development Programme for 2023–2025 and in the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Road Map for 2023–2025.

Technical training sessions were held together with the iHelp Foundation the members of which are Polish firefighters with experience and qualifications among other thing in conducting rescue operations.



Volunteer Firefighters' Festival

12 teams from all over Moldova came to the festival in the Sireti district (2/3 of all those that operate on the volunteering basis). Volunteer firefighters from Poland, invited to share their experience, and representatives of the Stawiszyn district (gmina) from the Wielkopolska province took part in the event. The teams competed in the tournament which tested their ability to respond quickly. Their skills in the area of risk and disaster management at the local level were also tested.

Project
**Strengthening of competences
of the Ministry of Internal Affairs**

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 97,500

SFPL together with the Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration has been supporting the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs in the development and strengthening of its institutional capabilities.



Training sessions and study visits

A visit and training in strategic communication were organised in Warsaw for 16 press officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subordinated services. The purpose of the visit was the exchange of experiences in coordination of communications between services, particularly in the context of the fight against disinformation and Russian invasion on Ukraine.

15 officers of the Moldovan police and border guards participated in the basic specialist training in bomb disposal conducted by the Institute of Specialist Training of the Police Training Centre in Legionowo.

A Polish expert contracted by SFPL conducted reconnaissance missions. Their effect was a report with an analysis of functionality of the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subordinated services (police, border guards, carabinieri, fire brigades, and immigration service). The report proposed priorities of SFPL’s involvement in the activities supporting the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs: building officials’ competences in social and strategic communication, and organisation of training for bomb disposal experts and forensic experts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

5 expert missions to Moldova were conducted, during which advisory services in the development of the strategy of modernisation and development of the department and the subordinated services were provided, training was organised for bomb disposal experts as was a study visit in the field of strategic communication, and the cooperation between the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration was supported on an ongoing basis.

SFPL also co-funded the organisation of the Regional Security Forum organised by the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs in December 2022 for representatives of border services and police from the countries of the eastern flank of NATO, as well as Czechia, Moldova and



Ukraine. The project is continued in 2023.

Humanitarian support for refugees from Ukraine

Although Moldova is the poorest country in Europe, at the beginning of the war it took in the largest number of refugees from Ukraine per capita. FSPL in Chisinau quickly joined in with the aid provided to refugees by creating a special crisis fund.

Funding: Polish Aid, individual donations

Value of the award: EUR 85,200

The most important undertaking was the establishment of the refugee aid centre in Chisinau which started operating already on 1 March 2022. It was set up in cooperation with the National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova and was the “first contact shelter”.

The centre was entered on the list of help points of the Moldovan Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Refugees were provided with temporary accommodation, food, personal hygiene packs, medicines, psychological and legal support, transport to other countries.

Summer play centres for over 100 children – Ukrainian, Moldovan and from the Polish community abroad – were organised in Chisinau also in cooperation with the National Congress of Ukrainians.

Under the crisis fund, SFPL also supported the Moldova for Peace organisation. Thanks to this, we managed to ensure distribution of 430 food packs, 100 hygiene packs and 75 packs for babies among refugees. The centre for refugees continues to operate, and SFPL continues to support it.

The centre for refugees continues to operate, and SFPL continues to support it.



Refugee aid centre

On the ground floor of a residential building places for 60 refugees were prepared. In total, around 5500 persons received help from the centre, of which over 3300 persons benefited from a stay in the centre itself. The centre issued 20 tons of humanitarian aid, including: 6.5 tons of medical aid, 8 tons of food sent to Ukraine, the remaining part was delivered to other localities in which refugees stayed: Soroca, Balti and Drochia.

Refugee Anna heard about the centre when she was still in her hometown of Chornomorsk (Odesa oblast): *I made the decision to leave in a day. When we got here, my sister fell ill – she had a high fever, and volunteers immediately called an ambulance and bought the necessary drugs. My three-year-old feels good here and plays with other children.*



Georgia

The process of decentralisation of power in Georgia formally started after the local government reform was introduced and when the new Local Government Code was developed (2014) and after changes were made in the Act on Local Government (2017). The new legal basis and institutional framework, and in particular Decentralisation Strategy for the years 2020–2025, theoretically allow residents to take greater part in the life of the local authorities and to make decisions about matters important for local communities. In practice it varies, and local authorities often do not know how to include local communities in their activity. The funding of their operation is also a problem – they receive funds from the central budget.

SFPL supports Georgian local governments in implementing the reform in its selected aspects, among other things in the building of trust between the authorities and residents. In 2022, SFPL's activities focused on the building of strong local institutions (4th edition of the Participation Academy) and development of energy efficient solutions for the local administration.

Activities in aid of Georgia contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals No. 13 and 16.

Area I. Building of strong local institutions

Project
Participation Academy – upgrade

Funding: Polish Aid, The New Democracy Fund, Denmark

Value of the award: EUR 165,400

This initiative of the Solidarity Fund in Georgia leads to professionalisation of local level officials and civil society that is open to a dialogue with the authorities.

The Participation Academy (PA) established in 2019 is the breeding ground for local human resources. It involves leaders of the public and civil sectors as well as local community through interactive forms of education, practical experience in local governments, and implementation of projects which improve the quality of residents' lives.

The PA programme is updated annually, so that it responds to the participants' needs and allows for recommendations arising from the government's Decentralisation Action Plan.

In 2022, besides the training by the Participation Academy, SFPL initiated the Fundraising Academy (FA). The participants in the PA workshops learned how to best respond to local problems, and the FA students – how to acquire and implement funds from outside the state budget for local government initiatives.



The most important achievements of the SFPL and its partners

- Initiation of the parliamentary debate on including the participatory budgeting (PB) in the Local Government Code and linking the quality of PB, measured by the results of certification of local governments by SFPL, to the amount of subsidies awarded to them from the state budget.
- Creating of the [Participatory Hub](#) platform – an electronic social dialogue tool providing knowledge and tools (Planer, Google forms, Zoom, LopiAsk, SMS gateway) for information exchange, creation of intersectoral local events, and providing information about them.
- Training of 104 persons in four editions of the Participation Academy. This is a group of human resources educated and tested in action, spread around local governments. The graduates work for the benefit of their local communities, using the knowledge gained in the PA, and are mentors for new PA students.

Participation Academy

The popularity and recognisability of the PA that have been growing each year are reflected in the number of people eager to take part. In 2022, SFPL received as many as 80 applications from all over Georgia, and it invited 18 people from 11 local governments to the programme.

“Take matters into your own hands” – this was the slogan under which training was held on effective communication between the municipal office and residents, inclusive decision-making, methods of real support for proactive attitudes among citizens, and efficient acquisition of funds for the implementation of local tasks from external sources. Practical training was conducted under the tutelage of mentors, graduates of previous editions of the PA, in the following local governments: Zestaponi, Tkibuli, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi, Tskaltubo and Chobi.

The test of knowledge was an exam composed of a theoretical and a practical part – creation of mini-projects aimed at solving a local problem. 11 were created and 4 of them used the knowledge from the PA training to the greatest degree. These were initiatives to create a football museum in Poti, introduction of a waste segregation system in the residential community in Rustawi, setting up a “Media Library” for the youth in Lagodechi, and equipping a room for disabled children in Tkibuli. The SFPL team awarded a subsidy (EUR 2,200) for the “Media Library”.

Fundraising Academy

SFTL in Tbilisi invited 18 employees of local governments from Zestaponi, Ozurgeti and Czochatauri to the Academy of acquisition of external financing sources “Obtain funds, change your town”. Students were trained in the analysis of resources in public administration units, effective communication with donors, writing project application and budgeting, as well as content-related and financial reporting. The result of the second part of the FA – writing and submitting grant applications – were the six applications prepared.

The subsidy of around EUR 755,000 was granted to the application submitted by the local government board from Chochatauri, prepared jointly with SFPL and the Progress House Innovation and Civic Development Centre which are the implementing partners in the project. As part of the subsidy, thermal modernisation of seven nurseries will be conducted, replacement of street lighting with energy efficient lights will be completed, and digital services for residents will be implemented.



Learning by doing

Activities under this element of the “Participation Academy – upgrade” encompassed trial runs for the acquisition of funds involving the writing and submission of grant applications as an element of the Fundraising Academy, support of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi for the implementation of the grant by Zestaponi (see “The new face of the town of Zestaponi”) and implementation of the Danish grant: The New Development Fund (NDF) in Ozurgeti, capital of the Guria region.

- Space for the youth, adapted to the needs of disabled persons, was modernised and opened in Ozurgeti.
- Upon the initiative of 16 young persons participating in the project, the Open Space non-governmental organisation was established; its goal is to develop the modernised space.
- 3 working versions of new youth space development projects in Ozurgeti were developed together with local officials. 50 excluded young persons were involved (NEET– not in education, employment or training) in solving local problems and expanding the youth system of “Euroclubs” in the Guria region as an effective youth activation method.
- The local government in Ozurgeti obtained EUR 14,000 from external sources for the development of space modernised by SFPL. The funds will be allocated to the opening of a social café adapted to the needs of disabled youth.
- The document entitled “The Happy Medium Methodology” was developed with the support from SFPL – its purpose is to facilitate the cooperation between local authorities and social partners in aid of youth initiatives.

Conference and its results

The summarising event which connected the activities in the area of strong local institutions with activities in aid of energy efficiency was the annual local government conference. The conference was ceremonially opened by the President of Georgia, Salome Zurbashvili, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi, Mariusz Maszkiewicz. It was attended by 257 persons: representatives of the local government, central authorities, international organisations operating in Georgia, and visitors from the USA, Poland and Switzerland.

A discussion on challenges and model examples of self-governing from Poland constituted part of the plenary session. A cycle of workshops on fundraising and public fund management was also conducted. The most frequently asked questions, together with answers, were edited and published as a brochure entitled “20 most frequently asked questions: all about grants for local government units in Georgia and the related procedures”, and delivered to local governments.

Moreover, during the conference, SFPL signed a memorandum with the Office for Georgia’s Civil Service and the Financiers’ Association on the commencement of the training programme entitled “Self-government academy: change – leadership and management in Georgian local government units” in 2023, addressed to political decision-makers and key heads of organisational units in local governments.



Project

Nowe oblicze miasta Zestaponi

Funding: Polish Aid, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi

Value of the award: EUR 55,600

The purpose of the project is to increase the tourist attractiveness of Zestaponi – an industrial town located in the region of Imeretia, located on the Tbilisi – Batumi route. The new multi-million investment – the motorway jointing the Georgian metropolises – will bypass the popular coffee break and the number of people visiting the town will drop, which may be detrimental for the local service sector. The project implemented by SFPL and the local government is to prevent this from happening.



Its idea is to use the cultural heritage of the town, i.e. the historic mosaics from the time of the cold war, in order to revive Zestaponi. The activities conducted – the renovation of three mosaics and creation of a mosaic trail – these are all to encourage travellers to leave the motorway and stop off in the town, visit its new tourist attractions, and have a coffee or a khachapuri.

The development of guidelines for the document that is strategic for the development of the town was a no less important objective of the project. SFPL, together with Polish experts, prepared “Guidelines for the creation of a local development plan for the town of Zestaponi" and the “Action plan for the development of the town based on the rehabilitation of mosaics in 2022” and handed it over to the town.

The project was implemented in the partnership with the Zestaponi local government with which SFLP signed a memorandum on cooperation and implementation of the mini-grant from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi for the renovation of mosaics (EUR 19,000). The Ribirabo Foundation which undertook to renovate the mosaics catalogued four of them and placed photographs together with QR codes on the Google map and in the [Georgian mosaics](#) portal.

SFLP will support the Zestaponi local government in the development of a new local development model. This is important because many post-industrial towns and cities in the Imeretii region, such as Chiatura and Tkibuli, are battling the problem of development of local tourism and the model developed may be very helpful for them.



Training for guides

It is worth talking in a captivating and competent manner about the town's new tourist attraction. This is why SFPL organised training for guides to the mosaic trail to which 15 persons with disabilities were invited. After the training, contacts of two [participant](#) who could speak English were added to the information leaflet about the mosaic trail. They are ready to lead tours around the industrial heritage of Zestaponi.

Promotion of the mosaic trail

The SFPL team in Tbilisi prepared 600 bilingual (in English and in Georgian) leaflets providing information about the mosaic trail, and sent them to tourist centres in the whole of Georgia, and to the nearby airport in Kutaisi. The mock-up of the leaflet was handed over to the PR unit of the Zestaponi municipal council by SFPL for printing and for the trail to be promoted by local entrepreneurs. In addition, 5 banners with the information about the project and a map to be installed in the town centre and in front of the mosaics were also printed. However, the social media campaign conducted by SFPL, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tbilisi and the Ribirabo Foundation encompassed among other things:

- publication of the [interview](#) with the mosaic author – Demur Basheleishvili;
- information about the [renovation works](#);
- [report](#) by Channel 1. of the public television (1TV), which constituted a response to the active campaign on social media;
- production of a [podcast](#) in Polish on Spotify, prepared by a Polish photographer and artist Jakub Rybicki and translated into Georgian;
- production of the virtual travel along the industrial trail (ferroalloys factory, renovation work, and mosaics) which is to encourage people to buy tickets and visit the town. The video was posted on [SFPL's channel](#) in Georgia.

Moreover, a trip to the ferroalloys factory, at the entrance of which one of the restored mosaics is situated, was organised for students of vocational schools from Rustawi. At the social entrepreneurship workshop they found out how mosaics and the industrial heritage of Zestaponi may be used for commercial purposes. After the trip, two participants contacted SFPL in Tbilisi and asked for additional information in order to use it in their business ideas. The Australian blogger Emily Lush also took part in the trip, and she wrote about the new tourist attraction in her blog ([here](#) and [here](#)).



Area II. Actions for climate and energy efficiency

Project
Ready for modern energy efficient technologies – stage II

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 118,900

Solutions aimed at saving heat and electricity are not widespread in Georgia, and if they are introduced, then usually in large and medium-size local government areas. Energy efficiency projects usually are not preceded by energy audits, therefore they are of interventional and not systemic nature. Activities conducted by SFPL for two years in this area are a response to challenges faced by Georgian partners. They are aimed at developing model solutions through the support in increasing energy efficiency of the local government in a small locality of Chokhatauri in the Guria region.

Chokhatauri is one of the poorer but active Georgian local governments that has been cooperating with SFPL under the Participation Academy. In 2021, the action methodology was developed (audit – recommendations, i.e. the selection of an optimum action package – thermal modernisation), a model thermal modernisation of two nurseries was carried out, and old energy-intensive lighting was replaced with energy-saving lighting in one of the streets, which showed real savings. In 2022, SFPL, together with the local government, increased the scale of activity, not restricting it to nurseries: a model method of operation was developed for local governments which want to manage their resources in an energy-efficient manner. The profitability ratio for the implementation of such solutions in around one third of public utility buildings in Chokhatauri was calculated.

Another important outcome is the reduction of the cost of energy consumption by the local government thanks to the replacement of old street lighting.

Moreover, SFPL, together with the local government, acquired EU funds for the multiplication of the optimum energy package for nurseries developed in 2021 to cover other nurseries, as well as modernisation of the remaining part of street lighting in Chokhatauri.

Individualised packages

The development of individualised energy packages was preceded by a series of audits and site inspections conducted in public utility buildings by the Polish expert and the Energy Efficiency Centre of Georgia (EECG). Six groups were formed and for each of them theoretical efficiency tests of different EE measures were conducted.

- 1. In the **town hall** type buildings activities aimed at improving energy efficiency and at renewable energy sources (RES) should be carried out together with the reduction of the energy consumption (mainly electricity) and utilisation of RES.
- 2. In the case of **small administrative buildings**, it would be beneficial to combine them in the given locality into one larger energy-efficient building.
- 3. In **health service** facilities, changes and adaptations are desirable, but should be made only in buildings that are in operation; it is necessary to carry out modernisation that goes beyond the framework of EE solutions.
- 4. In **educational** facilities, thermal comfort should be ensured, and pilot EE and RES solutions should be introduced for the purpose of ecological education.
- 5. In the case of **cultural** facilities, their thermal modernisation will reduce costs of maintenance and will improve the cultural offer, but it involves significant financial expenditures.
- 6. **Sports** facilities. The only sports hall in Chokhatauri has insufficient heating, low thermal comfort and poor air quality. It requires the improvement of energy properties. It is also recommended to provide hot water from a solar panel installation.

Individualised energy packages are ready-made thermal modernisation scenarios to be applied in individual categories of public utility buildings in the whole of the local government.

Roadmap to EE

Energy audits of individual types of buildings were translated into the Georgian language and presented to the local government in Chokhatauri and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, as well as the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Energy audits, the analysis of their results, and individualised packages became the basis for creation of the “Roadmap to energy efficiency” – a document which is to be a user manual for local governments in the introduction of EE measures in order to improve the living comfort of residents and to generate savings in local budgets. The “map” contains indications how to select buildings for thermal modernisation to bring the greatest savings, and exclude those in which it would not be cost effective, where to find an energy auditor and funds, for example for the modernisation of street lighting. Ministries have been invited to the consultation process on the “Map” in 2023, whereas the manuals will be handed over to Georgian local governments. .

Modernisation of street lighting

Simultaneously with public utility building audits, work continued on the replacement of old street lights and installation of new LED lamps. At the moment, modern LED bulbs have been installed on around 15% of all lamp posts in Chokhatauri, thanks to which the cost of energy consumption by the local government has reduced. Further lighting replacement will take place in 2023.

Information boards encouraging residents to take action (“Come on, let’s save electricity”) were installed on modernised posts.



Armenia

The Caucasus is one of the more important area of operation for the Solidarity Fund, which is evidenced by the long-term activity of the branch in Tbilisi. SFPL expanded its operation area in the Caucasus to include Armenia and completed pilot projects in 2021, consisting in providing support for people harmed in the conflict in Upper Karabakh, professional activation of internally displaced persons, as well as legal education for young people and their motivation to undertake actions in order to introduce changes in the judicial system.

In countries in which SFPL does not have its branch, the important things include not only the knowledge of the local context and adaptation of activities to that context, but first and foremost finding reliable and trusted partners. In 2022, SFPL continued the legal education project for the youth in Armenia. The second pilot project concerned the enhancing of competences of rural local governments in the building of a participatory self-government model.

Activities in aid of Armenia contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 16.

Project En route to independent and transparent judiciary

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 16,600

Solidarity Fund PL has been involved in supporting the democratic model of the state in partner countries, and its integral part is transparent and effective judiciary. This project constitutes an example of such activities.



53 volunteers – observers

790 visits to courts in Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor

114 court cases monitored





The justice system in Armenia is criticised by the society among other things for its lack of independence and its bias. The project entitled “Trained young citizens – guardians of independent and transparent judiciary”, implemented by SFPL in 2021 complemented the activities conducted at the legislative level by the authorities with the mechanism of civic control of standards of judicial proceedings. Its objective was to develop and implement a practice mechanism of civic control over court cases and to create recommendations for the Armenian Ministry of Justice. Young volunteers (110 persons), trained by the Helsinki Association of Human Rights (HAHR) – SFPL’s partner in Armenia, observed court cases in terms of their compliance with domestic and international standards. The result of their work was a report containing recommendations of changes. It attracted huge interest from the society and institutions responsible for the organisation of courts’ work.

The experience and commitment of part of the volunteers trained were used by SFPL in 2022 in the second edition of the project entitled “En route to independent and transparent judiciary”. The purpose of the project was to conduct a comparative analysis of results of the monitoring from both editions. Observers also participated in debates with judges and other court employees in order to learn more about the problems encountered by the judicial circles.

The conclusions from the monitoring were collected in a report with comparative data from 2021 and 2022. Remedial actions undertaken by the Ministry of Justice and General Public Prosecutor’s Office were analysed. Attention was also paid to problems hindering the efficient operation of the justice system, and the method of solving these problems was suggested. The report was published among other things at the [partner’s website](#) and on Facebook. The activities under the project were also [filmed](#).

Volunteers developed their legal knowledge and their skills in monitoring the work of courts. Many aspects of operation of courts and conducting of cases have improved. Judges are more open to the presence of observers at court cases and other court employees are willing to cooperate and to assist citizens.

Prospects

Activities undertaken by SFPL and HAHR have been getting a sympathetic response from the Armenian authorities and have been improving the courts’ work. In 2022, the parliamentary committee for judiciary included the partner organisation HAHR in consultations concerning improvements in how court cases are conducted. 10 new courts were also selected for the monitoring activities.

In 2023, the training of observers and the monitoring of court cases will also take place in a new region – in the Syunik province.



Pilot project

Strengthening of competences of the local government unit in the building of a participatory model of self-government in rural regions

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 51,300

As a result of the administrative and territorial reform, Armenia is managed by newly established local government units with broad competences. The local government is to play a key role in the development of civil society and responding to challenges connected with local development. But the new local governments have limited competences for efficient implementation of tasks entrusted to them. Strengthening these competences constitutes the objective of SFPL’s activities in this project.

SFPL, together with its partner in Armenia – [“Eurasia” Charity Public Organization](#), recruited task forces in each of the three small local governments invited to the project from the Lori region bordering on Georgia (Debet, Dsegh and Vahagni). They were composed of a local community leader, business representatives, and active residents. After the training, in cooperation with mentors, they created projects which improved the living conditions in their communities and received subsidies to implement these projects.

The methodology of work with Armenian partners based on SFPL’s experience in activities with local communities in Georgia (participatory budget) and Moldova (the LEADER approach).

The result of the project is not just the implementation of three local initiatives, developed and implemented by residents and local authorities but also the increased trust among them and readiness to carry out shared undertakings. An initial methodology of work with the local community, entitled “The Best Practices Guideline” was also developed – it contains principles of effective cooperation between non-governmental organisations and local communities.

In 2023, SFPL is implementing a similar project in neighbouring local councils.



The training sessions and workshops provided participants with knowledge about better local management, cooperation between residents and local authorities, project writing, financial reporting. Important topics also included: change in thinking, motivation for changes, involvement in teamwork for the local community, and fast crisis response.

Local initiatives completed

Dsegh. The lighting of the main H. Tumanyan Square will enhance the charm of statues situated on the square.



Debet. Instead at a bus stop, elderly people may now meet in a place specially created for them.



Wahagni. The restored roof of the Technopark protects against weather agricultural machines and equipment stored here by residents, also those from neighbouring villages.



Election observation mission

Funding: Polish Aid

Value of the award: EUR 41,500

Free elections are the foundation of democracy, and their progress constitutes an important test of operation and stability of democratic procedures. Supporting freedom is part of SFPL's mission. Since 2012, 680 short-term and 67 long-term observers trained by SFPL participated in 32 missions in total.

Election observation missions are organised by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe ([Elections | OSCE](#)). SFPL, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, has been recruiting, training and sending Polish observers to elections.

In the second half of the year, due to political reshuffle in Kazakhstan, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced early presidential elections which were held on 20 November. They were observed by 16 short-term observers and 2 long-term observers from Poland, trained and sent by SFPL. They were elected through an open recruitment process and internal recruitment among the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On 26–27 November, SFPL also organised a training session for 17 future candidates for short-term observers selected through open recruitment. The training was conducted by trainers from Poland, representatives of OSCE/ODIHR and the EU Election Observation and Democracy Support ([EODS](#)) programme.





