

# A JOINT STATEMENT OF DIALOGUE FACILITATORS ON THE VALUES AND FOUNDATIONS OF PEACEBUILDING AND DIALOGUE POLICY IN UKRAINE

**WE, THE INITIATORS OF THIS STATEMENT**, members of the community of professional dialogue<sup>1</sup> facilitators, relying on our rich experience in analytical and practical work with social conflicts, appeal to governmental agencies, international organizations and civil society to:

- **welcome** greater government attention to the challenges of the armed conflict, as well as support for the search for strategic approaches to issues of de-occupation, reintegration, transitional justice, peacebuilding, the strengthening of social cohesion, the transformation of social conflicts and the reduction of social tensions and polarization in the country;
- **welcome** the increased use of the words "dialogue" and "national dialogue" in public discourse by representatives of the state, international organizations and various social and political groups;
- **acknowledge** the complexity and challenges of peacebuilding processes during an ongoing armed conflict that intensifies periodically.

## WHILE AT THE SAME TIME:

- **highlighting** the challenges and risks of the unprofessional implementation of dialogue initiatives;
- **cautioning** that the lack of dialogue, as well as its poor implementation, especially at the national level, can retraumatize people, increase societal polarization, discredit the very idea of dialogue in Ukraine and be used to destabilize the society and harm the country's interests.

1 We use the following definition: Facilitated dialogue is a specially prepared group process of professionally managed communication that takes place with the help of a facilitator, aims to improve the understanding/relationships between participants, and may also have the goal of making decisions about common actions or the resolution of a conflict in a way that provides equal opportunities for the participants of the meeting to express their opinions. Policy Brief "How to Integrate Dialogue into the Processes of Transitional Justice in Ukraine". / I. Brunova-Kalisetska, T. Kyselova, O. Martynenko. — Kyiv, 2020. — P. 6, <https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ENG-Policy-paper-How-to-Integrate-Dialogue-into-TJ-2020.pdf>.

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Based on our experience and practice of conflict transformation, we propose the following **PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES** as key aspects for the process of developing and implementing public policies concerning reintegration:

**1. Geographic focus.** It is important to address the whole population across the entire territory of Ukraine when implementing policies and practical measures as hybrid warfare is taking place throughout the country, as well as abroad. Such policies and measures should *inter alia* aim at the reduction of societal polarization and strengthen critical thinking, resilience, social cohesion and the formation of an inclusive national identity.

**2. The difference between human rights and dialogue approaches.** Both approaches are integral and equal aspects of peacebuilding; they have their distinct tasks, functions and instruments and deal with different manifestations of armed conflicts. These approaches can be combined within specific policies and situations to reinforce and complement each other. It is important to understand the differences between these approaches and to involve relevant experts as per the given tasks of a particular process.

**3. Dialogue within a hybrid war.** When developing and implementing policies, it is necessary to adhere to the principle "Do No Harm" with regard to the specifics of hybrid warfare. One must: plan projects and initiatives strategically; monitor their implementation and make adjustments throughout the process; calculate the consequences of any action and avoid measures that could escalate threats to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine or increase societal polarization and conflict. It is crucial to prevent political manipulation and the distortion of information regarding dialogue processes.

**4. On the question: "Dialogue with whom?"** Dialogue as a tool is not limited to communication between residents of territories that are or are not controlled by the Ukrainian Government, or within negotiations of the Trilateral Contact Group, but is widely used in all spheres of socio-political life throughout Ukraine in order to build understanding

in society on questions like national identity, the implementation of reforms, historical memory and the future of the country among others.

**5. Principles of dialogue.** In policies, as well as in dialogue processes convened by governmental agencies, international organizations or civil society, it is important to adhere to the principles of facilitated dialogue, namely:

- to aim at the improvement of understanding and relations between the dialogue participants, which is of more importance than reaching a concrete agreement or decision;
- to ensure an equal opportunity for dialogue participants to express their opinions in a safe space;
- to ensure the inclusiveness of the dialogue process, involving all interested citizens and representatives of conflict-affected groups;
- to create conditions for confidentiality and the security of the process as well as that of participants, initiators and facilitators as necessary;
- to pay sufficient attention and allocate enough resources to organize a high-quality process, taking responsibility for its consequences and results.

**6. Differences between dialogue and other public events.** It is necessary to distinguish facilitated dialogue from other formats of public events (round tables, presentations, discussions, consultations, etc.), which cannot be called "dialogue" due to the absence of dialogue principles, appropriate event preparation and professional facilitation.

**7. Professional support to peacebuilding policies and dialogue processes.** Adherence to the above principles is possible with the development and maintenance of a professional approach to the planning, organization and implementation of dialogue processes, which can currently be provided by the community of dialogue facilitators in Ukraine.

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