


INFOBRIEF:

# Establishing a System for Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life

2026



## The Problem

Following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022, the return of combatants to civilian life and their full reintegration has become one of the key challenges of state policy. Ukraine already has over 2 million veterans<sup>1</sup>, and once the active phase of the war ends their number will rise significantly. At the same time, the current system of support for veterans remains fragmented and is largely based on approaches formed back in the early 1990s.

The principal legislative act in the field of support for veterans and their families is the Law of Ukraine 'On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection'<sup>2</sup>, adopted in 1993. This Law does not establish a coherent system of state veterans policy; it regulates matters of status and sets out more than 20 benefits, only a few of which work in practice. The regulation of other aspects of veterans support is scattered across dozens of laws and items of subordinate legislation. This leads to the duplication of provisions, gaps in legal regulation and difficulties in accessing services and support.

A further problem is the absence of a legally regulated mechanism for the transition from military service to civilian life. As a result, veterans often face difficulties in accessing medical assistance, mental and psychological support, professional retraining, employment, the launch of their own business, the receipt of social services and participation in community life.

The situation is compounded by insufficient coordination among state authorities, local self-government bodies, healthcare institutions, employment services and other actors that provide services to veterans.

The existing system does not take into account the importance of communities as the principal actor in delivering veterans' reintegration measures. There is also uneven access to services depending on the community of residence, a shortage of trained specialists — particularly in psychological support, rehabilitation and social care — and the insufficient adaptation of many state services to the specific needs of veterans.

The need to create a comprehensive state veterans policy and a system for the transition from military service to civilian life is reflected in the Veterans Policy Strategy until 2030<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ['Ukraine Already Has Over Two Million Veterans: The Leading Regions'](#) // CHESNO.

<sup>2</sup> Law of Ukraine 'On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection' of 22 October 1993 [No. 3551-XII](#).

<sup>3</sup> Veterans Policy Strategy until 2030, approved by Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 29 November 2024 [No. 1209-r](#).

The need to develop a comprehensive state veterans policy corresponds to Ukraine's commitments in the spheres of social policy, employment and inclusion within the process of accession to the European Union.

The European Commission's Ukraine 2025 Report<sup>4</sup> points to the need to promote the integration of veterans into the labour market and to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, whose number is growing as a result of the war.

The need to develop a comprehensive system of support for veterans and their reintegration is also noted in the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) briefing 'Ukraine's Veterans Policy' (2026)<sup>5</sup>, which regards veterans as one of the key resources for the country's post-war recovery.

In June 2026, the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) was expanded, adding new priorities to its work that include support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of veterans<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, the Ukraine Facility Plan<sup>7</sup> expressly provides for a reform of the transition from military service to civilian life, encompassing rehabilitation, psychological support, professional retraining, employment and support for veteran entrepreneurship, with a completion deadline in the third quarter of 2026.

## Why This Matters

- › a fragmented and outdated model of veterans support oriented towards a system of benefits and payments;
- › limited access to medical and rehabilitation care and to mental health support and psychosocial support;
- › reduced employment and economic self-sufficiency owing to the underdevelopment of employment and entrepreneurship-support mechanisms;
- › heightened risks of social exclusion, deterioration of psycho-emotional wellbeing and the loss of human capital;

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission. [Ukraine 2025 Report](#). Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the 2025 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Brussels, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). ['Ukraine's Veterans Policy'](#). Briefing, April 2026. European Parliament.

<sup>6</sup> Council of the European Union. 'EUAM Ukraine: Council broadens the Mission's mandate to counter hybrid threats and support veteran reintegration'. [Press release](#), 11 May 2026. EU Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine). ['EUAM Ukraine Starts Operating under Expanded Mandate'](#). News release, 15 May 2026.

<sup>7</sup> [Ukraine's Plan under the Ukraine Facility 2024–2027](#), approved by Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 18 March 2024 No. 244-r.

- › ineffective use of veterans' potential for economic recovery, community development and strengthening societal resilience;
- › the persistence of fragmented regulation and insufficient coordination among authorities, local self-government and service providers;
- › a mismatch with contemporary international approaches to veterans policy and the reintegration of veterans.

## The Current Response

In March 2025, Law of Ukraine No. 4285-IX was adopted, setting out priorities for creating a system of support for war veterans, members of their families and the families of fallen Defenders of Ukraine, in particular through the streamlining of veterans policy<sup>8</sup>.

These priorities are to be implemented in a corresponding legislative act. Several draft acts have been developed so far: the draft Law of Ukraine 'On the Fundamental Principles of State Veterans Policy regarding Veterans Who Took Part in Repelling the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine' (registration No. 13696, dated 25 August 2025)<sup>9</sup>. The draft was prepared to implement step 7.4 of the Ukraine Facility Plan.

In parallel, the Government has drafted the Code of Ukraine on the Protection of Statehood, Independence and the Status of Defenders of the State (the Veterans' Code) (registration No. 14265, dated 28 November 2025)<sup>10</sup>, which aims to codify legislative acts into a single legal instrument.

The Verkhovna Rada Committee on Social Policy and Protection of Veterans' Rights has prepared its own (alternative) version of the draft Code on the Protection of Statehood, Independence and the Status of Defenders of the State (registration No. 14265-1, dated 17 December 2025)<sup>11</sup>.

All of the above draft legislative acts enshrine veterans' rights in the areas of:

- › rehabilitation and medical care, including psychological assistance;
- › training, retraining and professional development programmes;

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<sup>8</sup> Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy" regarding the Formation of a Comprehensive Approach to Domestic Policy in the Veterans Sphere' of 11 March 2025 [No. 4285-IX](#).

<sup>9</sup> 'On the Fundamental Principles of State Veterans Policy regarding Veterans Who Took Part in Repelling the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine': draft Law of Ukraine of 25 August 2025 [No. 13696](#).

<sup>10</sup> Code of Ukraine on the Protection of Statehood, Independence and the Status of Defenders of the State: draft Code of Ukraine of 28 November 2025 [No. 14265](#).

<sup>11</sup> Code of Ukraine on the Protection of Statehood, Independence and the Status of Defenders of the State: alternative draft Code of Ukraine of 17 December 2025 [No. 14265-1](#).

- › the conditions necessary for the employment of veterans as a distinct category;
- › measures to support veteran businesses.

## Key Risks

### **1. Persistence of a Fragmented Veterans Policy System**

Legislation in the veterans sphere remains scattered across a large number of laws and items of subordinate legislation. In the absence of a comprehensive legislative act, individual aspects of support for veterans and their families continue to be governed by different instruments.

This creates risks of:

- › duplication of the functions and powers of public authorities;
- › inconsistency among state veterans-support programmes;
- › difficulty for veterans in accessing services and support programmes;
- › the uneven application of state policy at community level.

### **2. Absence of a Coherent System for Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life**

Despite the development of individual veterans-support programmes, Ukraine still lacks a legally defined, coherent system for the transition from military service to civilian life that would ensure continuous support for a service member both before and after their discharge.

This increases the risk that:

- › veterans will not receive timely information about available services and support;
- › veterans' needs in the spheres of rehabilitation, mental health, education and employment will go unidentified;
- › state and local support programmes will operate in isolation from one another;
- › the reintegration of veterans will depend largely on their place of residence and the capacity of the particular community.

### **3. Loss of Human Capital and of Potential for the Country's Recovery**

Veterans are one of the key groups on which Ukraine's post-war recovery will largely depend. The absence of an effective system of support and reintegration may limit veterans' opportunities for employment, education, entrepreneurial activity and participation in community life.

This creates risks of:

- › a decline in veterans' economic activity;
- › increased social isolation;
- › growing demand for social support in the future and an excessive burden on the social assistance system;
- › the underuse of veterans' potential for community development and the country's recovery.

#### **4. Risk of Failing to Meet Commitments under the Ukraine Facility**

The entry into force of a legislative act on state veterans policy is defined as one of the steps of the Ukraine Facility Plan. The purpose of this step is to build a comprehensive system of support for veterans, particularly in the spheres of rehabilitation, medical and psychological assistance, professional adaptation, employment and veteran entrepreneurship.

A delay in adopting or implementing the relevant legislation may:

- › complicate the fulfilment of the indicators of the Ukraine Facility Plan;
- › negatively affect the assessment of reform progress by European partners.

## Conclusions

A comprehensive state veterans policy is the foundation for an effective transition from military service to civilian life and for the successful reintegration of veterans into society. The current system of legal regulation remains fragmented and largely oriented towards the granting of statuses and benefits; it does not provide a coherent approach to supporting veterans throughout the entire life cycle following the end of their service.

Implementing step 7.4 of the Ukraine Facility Plan matters not only for the fulfilment of Ukraine's international commitments but also for the creation of a modern system of support for veterans covering medical care, rehabilitation, psychological assistance, education, employment, veteran entrepreneurship and integration into community life. The absence of such an approach creates risks of the loss of human capital, the growing social isolation of veterans and the ineffective use of their potential for the country's recovery.

# Recommendations

## **Short-Term (Urgent Legislative Actions)**

### **1. Adopt a legislative act on state veterans policy.**

A single legislative act should enshrine the foundations of state veterans policy and create the legal basis for forming a system for the transition from military service to civilian life.

In doing so, it is advisable to:

- › define the principles and objectives of state veterans policy;
- › establish a system for the transition from military service to civilian life;
- › define the powers of state authorities, local self-government bodies and other persons involved in ensuring the transition;
- › provide for mechanisms to identify the individual needs of veterans and members of their families and to introduce case management approaches;
- › ensure inter-agency coordination in the field of veterans support.

## **Medium-Term**

### **2. Establish a fully fledged system for the transition from military service to civilian life.**

The introduction of such a system should go beyond individual support programmes and provide for the continuous support of a service member from the moment preparation for discharge begins until the reintegration process is complete, engaging numerous stakeholders and ensuring coordination among them.

In particular:

- › introduce a mechanism for assessing a service member's needs prior to discharge;
- › define the procedure for inter-agency cooperation between the security and defence sector and civilian authorities;
- › ensure continuity of access to medical, rehabilitation, social, educational and other services;
- › create mechanisms for informing veterans about available support programmes;
- › establish a system of coordination among state authorities, local self-government bodies and other persons that provide support to veterans and their families.

### **3. Strengthen the role of territorial communities in implementing veterans policy.**

The reintegration of veterans takes place primarily at community level, so state policy should provide appropriate tools to support the local level.

To this end, it is advisable to:

- › define minimum standards for supporting veterans in communities;
- › ensure the development of a system of veteran-support specialists;
- › create mechanisms for coordination among communities, veteran spaces and service providers;
- › help strengthen communities' capacity to provide services to veterans and members of their families.

### **4. Ensure the transition from a benefits model to a model of restoring human capital.**

The further development of veterans policy should be aimed not only at social protection but also at creating conditions for veterans' active participation in the life of the state and communities.

In particular, it is necessary to:

- › expand opportunities for vocational education and requalification;
- › improve veteran employment-support programmes;
- › develop tools to support veteran entrepreneurship;
- › ensure the necessary level of health recovery;
- › integrate mental health issues into all stages of reintegration;
- › introduce mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of state veterans policy on the basis of veterans' outcomes and needs.

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