

## How will the “Bridges of Trust” help rebuild 30 Ukrainian municipalities affected by Russian war?

**February 15, 2023, Brussels** - On **15 February 2023**, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) together with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) and with the support of the U-LEAD with Europe programme (U-LEAD) presented a new phase of the “**Bridges of Trust**” initiative. It will run until September 2023 with 10 CEMR member associations of local and regional governments from the EU member states facilitating 30 new municipal partnerships for the reconstruction of Ukraine. During the online meeting, speakers from the European Committee of the Regions, the EU Delegation to Ukraine, CEMR, AUC and U-LEAD discussed the importance of the “**Bridges of Trust**” initiative as a tool to rebuild Ukrainian municipalities and a new format of international cooperation between local governments in Ukraine and the EU.

Municipal partnerships are a way to provide concrete actions of help and support, show solidarity and build back better together. **The representative of the EU Delegation to Ukraine, Mr. Tomasz Ostropolski**, stated: “Such an initiative has high-level support and visibility from the European Commission and Ukraine’s top officials. Therefore, it is important for us to transfer political ideas into practice in order to contribute to local and regional cooperation between EU and Ukrainian municipalities.”

**Ms. Darja Gontsarova-Parvulescu**, from the European Committee of the Regions, who represents the **European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine** emphasised: “We consider that these direct bilateral exchanges between Ukrainian and European municipalities in the framework of the Bridges of Trust initiative have a lot of impacts on the upcoming process of reconstruction of Ukraine.”

“Links of exchange and cooperation between municipalities are a driving force in the growth and development of the communities and of Europe as a whole. Bridges of Trust initiative represents an innovative and driven approach to the international cooperation in modern Europe and is a strategic priority for CEMR” – noted **Mr. Fabrizio Rossi, CEMR Secretary General**.

**Executive Director of the Association of Ukrainian Cities, Mr. Oleksandr Slobozhan**, expressed gratitude to the European partners for their cooperation and support of Ukrainian hromadas during the war and emphasized: “The work on establishing effective partnerships between municipalities is very significant for Ukraine’s European integration in the future. Therefore, the Bridges of Trust initiative makes a significant contribution to Ukraine’s European perspective.”

In particular, **Mr. Bastian Veigel, GIZ Program Director, U-LEAD with Europe**, noted that: “Our common aim is to connect municipalities and identify interest in fostering cooperation ultimately promoting economic development from both sides.”

During the event, the representatives of the associations of local and regional governments presented ways in which they will contribute to the main goal of the initiative – reconstruction of Ukraine. It is planned that in each of the participating countries 3 small or medium sized municipalities will be selected and matched with similar Ukrainian municipalities. The representatives of partner local governments from Ukraine and the EU will therefore exchange best practices, conduct internships and study visits, organize events and develop projects with the focus on the reconstruction of Ukrainian municipalities.

The participants of the event also emphasized the need to strengthen municipal ties between the EU and Ukraine and expressed their support for the people of Ukraine, who continue to fight for their freedom and the European way of life.

*“Bridges of Trust” initiative is being implemented by Council of European Municipalities and Regions in partnership with the Association of Ukrainian Cities and is funded by the U-Lead with Europe programme. The initiative aims to rebuild Ukraine through international municipal partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities. More about “Bridges of Trust” on the [CEMR website](#).*

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