Cross-Party Group on Ukraine

28 October 2026, 18:00-20:00 (Hybrid: Committee Room 5 and MS Teams)

Present:

MSPs: Colin Beattie MSP, Iris Duane MSP.

Invited guests:

Ivan Taran

Ostap Lukianchuk

Vitaliia Turchyn

Amalia Shepel

Benjamin Pyatski

Vladyslava Rozenko

Polina Demianchuk

Oleksandra Frankevych

Tetiana Pidhirna

Ruslan Dudkin

Tetiana Rudenko

Kari Johnstone

Robin Goodwin

Jamie Moffat

Maryna Gorbunova

Catriona Hill

Maksym Vivchar

Yevhen Skrebtsov

Leonid Hrabov

Anna Petrova

Jelena Franckevica

Bohdan Jarecky

Halyna Matshyshyn

Inna Nedostup

Nataliya Bezborodova

Svitlana Skrebtsova

Non-MSP Group Members:

Anna Kulish

Anna Makhlay

Anne Yarney

Bohdan Slobodianiuk

Doug Allan

Flora Lang

Hanna Tekliuk

Joe Goldblatt

John Hawryluk

Joyce Landry

Juliette Lichman

Kiril Sharapov

Larysa Zhdankina

Lesia Vynnychuk

Linda Allison

Marian Pokhylyy

Mariia Miskova

Maryna Mokretska

Maryna Zvarych

Nataliia Danova

Nataliia Hinde

Nataliia Pidruchna

Nataliya Lyalyuk

Oleksandra Novatska

Olga Vivchar

Olha Maksymiak

Olha Maslova

Peter Kormylo

Ritwij Raj

Serhii Kuzminov

Steven Carr

Tetiana Puchkova

Vitaliia Melnyk

Yevheniia Zhdankina

Yuliia Solovyeva

Zhenya Dove

Kseniia Smirnova

Vladyslav Shumeyko

Andrii Kuzma

Apologies:

Varvara Mishyna

Amy McNeese-Mechan

Item 1: Welcome

- The Convener, Colin Beattie MSP, welcomed members to the first meeting of the CPG following the new parliamentary session.
- The Convener outlined the revised membership application process and confirmed that applications considered by the Working Group Chairs had been approved for:

Tetiana Pidhirna, Svitlana Skrebtsova, Inverclyde Ukrainian Club, Ukrainian Students Union, Mykhailo Nimashchuk, Dïaspora Journal, Kateryna Chala, Anna Petrova.

- Applications received shortly before the meeting would be considered at the next meeting.
- Members who had not yet confirmed their intention to remain in the Group were asked to respond to the Secretariat.

Item 2: Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh (Recorded Message from Andrii Madzianovskyi)

- The meeting heard a recorded message from Andrii Madzianovskyi, representing the Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh, who was unable to attend in person.
- He thanked the Convener and MSPs for their continued support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian community in Scotland.
- Andrii Madzianovskyi highlighted Scotland's role in welcoming almost 30,000 displaced Ukrainians and the importance of the CPG in strengthening bilateral relations.
- Consul referred to cooperation between Scottish and Ukrainian cities, including Glasgow and Mykolaiv, Perth and Nikopol, and the ongoing twinning process involving Dumfries and Nizhyn.
  Andrii Madzianovskyi also noted the signing of an economic memorandum of understanding last year to support bilateral trade and development, and highlighted ongoing cooperation between the Consulate, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS), and Scottish construction professionals, urban planners and investors on plans for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.

- Following the message, the Convener noted that the CPG on Ukraine enjoys the support of all six political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament.

Item 3: Preventing Human Trafficking: OSCE Cooperation and Support for Ukrainians

- Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, delivered a presentation on trafficking risks affecting people displaced by war and the importance of integrating anti-trafficking measures into Ukraine's recovery.

- Key risks identified included:

    - Prolonged displacement and uncertainty over immigration status.
    - Limited employment opportunities and skills mismatches.
    - Inadequate labour protections and exploitation in supply chains.

    - Victims being misidentified or criminalised, particularly in cases involving forced criminality.

- The OSCE had delivered more than 120 workshops and training events, involving over 6,300 participants from 43 countries.
- She also highlighted a newly finalised OSCE issue brief on integrating crisis-related provisions into national anti-trafficking action plans, which analyses over 60 national plans and provides a four-pillar framework for policymakers
- Johnstone introduced the **R.E.S.T.O.R.E. Ukraine Alliance**, launched by Austria, Canada, Italy, Poland and Ukraine at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in July 2026. The initiative aims to incorporate anti-trafficking safeguards into Ukraine's recovery.
- Priorities for reconstruction included:
    - Anti-trafficking safeguards in public procurement and private supply chains.
    - Improved identification and support for potential victims.
    - Regulation and oversight of recruitment and employment agencies.
    - Effective labour inspections and cooperation with trade unions and employers' organisations.
- Kari also highlighted the importance of raising public awareness through information campaigns, engaging local communities in preventing human trafficking, and ensuring that potential victims are identified and referred to appropriate support services.

- **Discussion:**
    - Martin Hunt requested that the presentation be circulated with the minutes.
    - In response to a question from Professor Kiril Sharapov of Edinburgh Napier University, Johnstone confirmed the importance of trade unions and workers' organisations in the Alliance.
    - In response to a question about further participation, Johnstone confirmed that the Alliance was open to additional countries and organisations. She noted ongoing discussions with the UK delegation and the possibility of Scottish participation, alongside commitments from Liechtenstein and Malta, and ongoing discussions with Estonia ahead of the next Ukraine Recovery Conference in January.
    - Vladyslav Shumeyko, a former Chair of AUGB Glasgow, also raised concerns about forced displacement and the exploitation of people, particularly children, in occupied Ukrainian territories. Johnstone highlighted the difficulties of accessing these areas and identifying potential victims.

Item 4: International Solidarity Convoy to Ukraine

- Peter Cooper presented the International Solidarity Convoy initiative, which aims to coordinate civil society support for Ukraine across Europe and increase political pressure for continued assistance.
- The Scottish delegation will travel through the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Poland before reaching Ukraine.
- The Scottish contribution includes a vehicle carrying approximately £8,000 worth of aid, including English-language children's books supplied in partnership with the National Education Union (NEU) at the request of the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, alongside power banks and other essential winter supplies.
- The initiative has received support from European trade unions and more than 170 elected representatives and supporters internationally, including 30 from Scotland.
- Cooper also noted that the Convener had lodged a parliamentary motion in the Scottish Parliament welcoming the convoy, modelled on a similar cross-party motion recently passed by the Catalan Parliament.
- **Discussion**:
    - Jamie Moffat, a trustee of Brave hearts for Ukraine, asked whether the convoy could cooperate with smaller NGOs facing logistical difficulties in transporting aid. Cooper welcomed cooperation, subject to vehicle capacity.
    - Ritwij Raj proposed developing a communications partnership to connect academic, research and policy networks supporting Ukraine.
    - Ivan Taran, a partnerships director of the Ukrainian Students Union, asked whether physical generators could be included in the shipment and whether additional vehicles could join the convoy. Cooper welcomed generator donations and confirmed that additional vehicles could participate if arranged within the available timeframe.
    - The organisers will assess the initiative following their return in early December, with a further convoy potentially planned for the spring.
    - Cooper's presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

Item 5: Working Groups update

- The Convener proposed reinstating the five existing Working Groups:
    - Resettlement
    - Business
    - Culture and Arts
    - Health and Wellbeing
    - Education
- Members agreed to the proposal.

5.1 Resettlement Working Group – John Hawryluk

- John Hawryluk outlined the need to review the Working Group's future role and remit during the new parliamentary session.
- He highlighted the planned closure of Edinburgh's dedicated Ukraine resettlement programme on 31 March 2027 and the need to consider longer-term arrangements, including planning beyond 2027 towards 2029.
- The Working Group will consider how the CPG can best influence the Scottish Government and other partners, and which stakeholders should be involved.
- Hawryluk also raised potential trafficking risks associated with the eventual expiry of visa arrangements, including increased vulnerability among people with no recourse to public funds and those returning to Ukraine.
- The Convener suggested liaising with the CPG on Human Trafficking to avoid duplication.
- Members also discussed possible engagement with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ukraine (APPG) in Westminster. Andrii Kuzma, on behalf of the Secretariat, confirmed that they were already in contact with the APPG and could facilitate an introduction.

5.2 Proposal for an Interfaith Working Group

- Joe Goldblatt proposed establishing an additional Working Group focused on interfaith relations, recognising the contribution of faith organisations to support for Ukrainians in Scotland.
- The Convener welcomed the proposal in principle and asked Goldblatt to prepare a one-page outline for consideration at the next CPG meeting.
- Anna Petrova, joining online, expressed support for the proposal and highlighted the important role of faith communities in welcoming and supporting Ukrainians in Scotland.

5.3 Business Working Group – Anna Kulish

- Anna Kulish welcomed the relaunch of the CPG and highlighted the importance of connecting Scottish expertise with Ukrainian needs and opportunities.
- She presented *Designing Solidarity: An Architect's Guide to Working in Ukraine*, developed by four Scottish architectural practices in collaboration with the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and with support from the Scottish Government.
- The guide draws on input from Ukrainian specialists and provides practical information for Scottish architects and built-environment professionals, including local regulations, procurement, professional accreditation and funding.

- Catriona Hill of Oberlanders Architects, joining online, emphasised the importance of collaboration and confirmed the practice's willingness to support Ukrainian architects and the reconstruction effort.

  Kulish also reported that the Working Group was updating a guide for Scottish businesses interested in the Ukrainian market, which had originally been developed with BDO Ukraine.

- **Discussion**:
  - Bohdan Slobodianiuk, representing the Ukrainian Hub of Scotland, outlined the organisation's work connecting Ukrainian and Scottish professionals and supporting networking, business development and access to potential partners, investors and grants.
  - Natalia Hinde, Chair of Integravia Foundation and Ukrainian Inverclyde Club, highlighted the need to move beyond initial resettlement towards deeper social and economic integration. She suggested gathering information from the Ukrainian community about its emerging needs and priorities.

5.4 Culture and Arts Working Group – Zhenya Dove

- Zhenya Dove highlighted several cultural initiatives undertaken by members during the parliamentary recess:

  - *DOCU/CLUB*, established by Polina Moshanska as part of the Ukrainian *DocuDays Documentary Film Club Network*.
  - Public art, mural and window-painting projects delivered by *Abandoned Artists* for organisations including Volunteer Edinburgh, Mission of Innocence, City of Edinburgh Council and North Lanarkshire Council.
  - *Ceramic Map of Ukraine*, an exhibition at the City Art Centre from 28 November to 13 December, featuring 25 Ukrainian participants and 25 stories representing Ukraine's regions.
  - *Ukraine in the Heart of Scotland*, an online exhibition developed by the Museum of Ukrainian Craft and Culture Scotland in collaboration with Dovira.
  - Academic exchange with a doctoral researcher at Aalto University in Finland, prompted by last year's *The Weight We Carried* exhibition, exploring the experiences of displaced Ukrainians through objects and storytelling.
  - Clay-based workshops with displaced Ukrainians, delivered in collaboration with Glasgow School of Art.
  - Work by Ukrainian artist Oleksandra Novatska, selected for the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour annual exhibition.

- The Working Group will review its remit, priorities and ways of working to ensure that its activities remain sustainable and responsibilities are shared effectively.

- Its core purpose remains promoting Ukrainian culture in Scotland and strengthening cultural connections between Scotland and Ukraine.

- **Discussion**:
    - Jamie Moffat offered Greyfriars Kirk for future Ukrainian cultural events and exhibitions. The offer was welcomed.
    - Benjamin Pyatski, Operations Director of Dïaspora Journal, expressed interest in closer cooperation and asked about the Working Group's status. Dove clarified that the group's activities had been paused during the parliamentary recess and elections, while individual members had continued their work.
    - Members discussed how the Working Group could better represent the breadth of Ukrainian cultural activity across Scotland, including personal and intercultural stories.
    - Maryna Gorbunova, founder and trustee of Inverclyde Ukrainian Club, shared the organisation's experience of using arts and cultural events to bring Ukrainian and Scottish communities together. The possibility of digital exhibitions was discussed.

5.5 Health and Wellbeing Working Group – Olha Maksymiak

- Olha Maksymiak outlined the Working Group's continued advocacy on the rights and wellbeing of displaced Ukrainians.
- Research involving 375 displaced Ukrainians across more than 70 locations in Scotland highlighted:
    - Uncertainty over immigration status as a major source of stress.
    - Increased anxiety, disrupted sleep and persistent sadness.
- She referred to University of Birmingham research involving almost 5,500 displaced Ukrainians across the UK:
    - 76.6% wished to remain in the UK even if it were safe to return to Ukraine.
    - 4.6% wished to return.
    - The findings were due to be published on 7 November 2026.
- Maksymiak highlighted barriers facing Ukrainian psychologists and psychotherapists seeking to practise in the UK, and the need to explore accreditation and supervised practice pathways.
- The full findings were due to be published on 7 November 2026, with the full report also scheduled to be presented at Westminster on that date.
- Discussions with the Scottish Government were ongoing regarding potential pilot schemes for trauma-informed and culturally sensitive support.
- She also highlighted the needs of military families and the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- *Bridges to Belonging: Healing, Learning and Integration* for Ukrainian Youth, launched in June 2026 by Ukrainian St Mary Trust and St Mary's Ukrainian

School in Glasgow, provides support to children and young people aged 10–25 and their families. The initiative is funded through the Scottish Government's Cashback for Communities programme and offers psychological support, mentoring, creative and social activities, and practical guidance.

- The Working Group continues to work with Professor Robin Goodwin at the University of Warwick on policy recommendations addressing the needs of displaced Ukrainians with disabilities.

5.6 Education Working Group – Kseniia Smyrnova

- Kseniia Smyrnova reviewed the Working Group's achievements, including joint projects between Scottish and Ukrainian universities in philology, literature, urban studies and research into the geopolitical impact of the war.
- She highlighted:
    - The establishment of the Centre for Ukraine at the University of St Andrews.
    - The introduction of Ukrainian-language teaching at the University of Edinburgh.
    - The development of a Centre of Astrobiology involving Ukrainian and Edinburgh-based researchers.
    - A new academic publication on Scottish literature in Ukrainian.
- Smyrnova identified potential priorities for future cooperation:
    - Trauma medicine, rehabilitation and psychological recovery.
    - Environmental remediation and research into the effects of ecocide.
    - Dual-use technologies, artificial intelligence and cyber defence.
    - Commercialisation of research and stronger links between universities and business.
- She highlighted the opportunities offered by the UK's participation in the Erasmus+ programme for strengthening cooperation between universities and researchers.
- Kseniia Smyrnova highlighted the potential to further develop educational and research cooperation between Scottish and Ukrainian universities, particularly in the context of the UK–Ukraine 100-Year Partnership.
- She noted that close links had already been established with the Ukrainian Student Union and highlighted the presence of almost 400 Ukrainian students across Scottish universities. She emphasised the importance of connecting Ukrainian and Scottish students through academic networks, encouraging the exchange of ideas and the development of new technologies and start-ups
- The Working Group aims to develop stronger and more permanent links between academic institutions, students and businesses.

Item 6: AOB and Close

- No additional items of business were raised.
- The Convener thanked members and speakers for their contributions and expressed the hope that the situation in Ukraine would improve before the Group’s next meeting.
- The meeting closed with a group photograph.