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## Bilateral Relations

### Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest  
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

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### Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>  
e-mail: [Ukraine\\_analytica@ukr.net](mailto:Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>  
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# UKRAINIAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITY IN GERMANY: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND ITS ENGAGEMENT FOR ITS HOME COUNTRY

*Ljudmyla Melnyk, Magdalena Patalong, Richard Steinberg  
Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin*

***During Euromaidan and its aftermath, the Ukrainian community in Germany experienced the emergence of new non-state actors: civically engaged Ukrainians, forming a new diasporic community. Based on the research project “#EngageEUkraine – Engagement of Ukrainians in Poland and Germany”, the paper examines selected aspects of the study. By asking if the diasporic community could act as a new homogenous non-state actor, the analysis shows that such potential exists: with their activities, the diasporic community does not only indirectly contribute to the democratization of Ukraine, but at the same time acts as a cultural bridge between German and Ukrainian societies, thereby potentially contributing to the improvement of relations between both states. Therefore, its support should also be of interest to Ukrainian government.***

The Euromaidan protests in 2013 and 2014 in Kiev can be regarded as an initial trigger for the formation and engagement of a civil society not only within Ukraine but also in Ukrainian communities in Germany. In addition, the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and the war in Eastern Ukraine raised a common feeling, a sense of belonging to Ukrainian community, which led to the support of Ukraine in a vast number of diasporic activities, from political demonstrations and cultural events to military and humanitarian aid. This tendency was further increased by the interconnectedness of Ukrainians in different parts and regions of the globalised world. The constant, immediate flow of information about the developments in Ukraine has resulted in strong ties between the “homeland” and its diaspora. This raises the question whether and how the Ukrainian diaspora can contribute to the stabilization and democratization of Ukraine.

Focusing on this question, this paper gives an overview of the history of Ukrainian diaspora in Germany since 1945 up to the emergence of new Ukrainian non-state actors since November 2013, forming a new diasporic community. From a historical and empirical perspective the paper explains how and why the evolution of the “old Ukrainian diaspora” has led to a “white spot” in the mental map of Germans concerning Ukraine and Ukrainian matters and asks whether the diasporic community can fill this gap. In order to answer the question whether this diasporic community can be viewed as a new homogenous non-state actor, this paper will focus on the content and development of its engagement as well as on connecting factors within the community. It will also analyse the two main forms of its engagement: humanitarian aid in Ukraine on one side and cultural and informative activities in Germany on the other side.<sup>1</sup> Thereby, the paper gives an overview of

the potential influence on both states. It concludes with policy recommendations for Ukrainian government in order to support and strengthen Ukrainian diaspora.

## Research Project und Design

This paper stems from a larger research project “#EngageEUkraine – Engagement of Ukrainians in Poland and Germany” that was conducted in 2015 and 2016 by the *Institut für Europäische Politik* (IEP), Berlin, and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), Warsaw and funded by the German Polish Science Foundation. The results of the project were published in May 2016.<sup>2</sup> The joined project of IPA and IEP dealt with the civic engagement of Ukrainians living in Germany and in Poland. The main objectives of the project were:

1. Mapping the fields, intensity and structure of Ukrainians’ engagement as well as its potential contribution to the process of democratization in Ukraine;
2. Exploring how Ukrainian diaspora has been influenced by recent developments in Ukraine since November 2013;
3. Providing recommendations on how public and private actors on the EU level as well as in Poland, Germany and Ukraine can support Ukrainian civic engagement in both countries to indirectly support the process of democratization in Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

For this purpose, 88 structured interviews, 44 in each country, were conducted. The interviewees were Ukrainians who are civically engaged either individually, in formal organisations, or in non-formalised initiatives. Besides civic engaged interviewees, a group of “experts” was interviewed, consisting of people who are well informed about Ukrainian diaspora in these two countries. In order to guarantee a high degree of heterogeneity in terms of age, gender, place of activity etc., and to include people from the whole range of civic engagement, the first selection of interviewees was identified in a desk research. To control the criterion of heterogeneity, the following interviews were conducted in waves, using the snowball system to identify further interviewees.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed following Mayring’s (2003) qualitative content analysis using the software “f4transkript” and “f4analyse”. The initial code system was systematically and inductively extended during the process of coding.

## Main facts about Ukrainians in Germany

According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, there were around 128.000 Ukrainians with Ukrainian citizenship living in Germany in 2014.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, comparing the numbers of Ukrainians of 1995 (30.000) and 2014, significant growth can be observed. The largest groups

<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the Ukrainian engagement in Germany in the end of 2013/beginning of 2014, solidarity demonstrations were playing a major role. Nevertheless, in the following we will concentrate on engagement that was mainly pursued during the interview phase (August-November 2015) and still remains important, in order to analyse the potential long-term effects of the engagement of the diasporic community.

<sup>2</sup> Katrin Böttger/Agnieszka Lada (Eds.): “#EngageEUkraine – Engagement der Ukrainer in Polen und Deutschland”, published in May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Melnyk/Patalong/Plottka/Steinberg (2016): How the Ukrainian Diasporic Community in Germany Contributes to EU’s Policy in its Home Country, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Statistical Office Germany (2015): Statistisches Jahrbuch. Deutschland und Internationales 2015. Accessible at: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) [27.03.2016]

of Ukrainians are found in North Rhine-Westphalia (28.000), in Bavaria (24.000) and in Baden-Wuerttemberg (14.000).<sup>5</sup> The main reasons to move to Germany are family (18.810), education (5.830) and work (4.550).<sup>6</sup>

Due to historical circumstances, Southern Germany can be regarded as a center of the Ukrainian diaspora. About three million Ukrainians were driven to Western Europe during and after the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> Around 2.3 million Ukrainians were deported as forced labourers to Germany.<sup>8</sup> After the end of the war, many Ukrainians returned home either voluntarily or were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. A small part of them remained in German and Austrian camps for Displaced Persons (DPs), with an estimated number of 140.000 Ukrainians living in German DP camps in 1947.<sup>9</sup> By autumn 1945<sup>10</sup>, 50 percent of Ukrainian refugees remained in the US Zone (mainly in Bavaria), 25 percent in the British Zone and 5 percent in the French Zone of West Germany.<sup>11</sup> At the end of 1951, only around 22.000 Ukrainians remained in West Germany whilst the majority migrated to other western countries.<sup>12</sup> The DP camps were both a political and social asylum for Ukrainians.

The inhabitants organized many cultural, educational, social and political activities. In order to protect the rights of Ukrainians and to coordinate the life in DP camps, the official Central Representation of the Ukrainian Emigration<sup>13</sup> was created in 1945. In addition to official international institutions, medical assistance was also provided by institutions like the Ukrainian Red Cross, which was not officially recognized but worked as an independent body.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a lot of educational institutions such as kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education were established, for example the Ukrainian Higher School of Economics (Munich), the Ukrainian Free Academy of Science (Augsburg) or the Ukrainian Free University (Munich). However, with the migration of most Ukrainians to other western countries in the end of the 1940s and in the beginning of the 1950s, many institutions of higher education also moved to other countries. The only exception is the Ukrainian Free University, which still exists in Munich today.

With the emigration of the majority of the Ukrainian DPs, including many scientists, writers and journalists, the short period of

<sup>5</sup> Federal Statistical Office Germany (2016): Ausländer: Bundesländer, Stichtag, Geschlecht, Ländergruppierungen/Staatsangehörigkeit. Accessible at: [https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online/data;jsession-id=5180E542575D4996027CEF8379A13ED3.tomcat\\_GO\\_1\\_2?operation=abrufabelleBearbeiten&levelindex=2&levelid=1463484116805&auswahloperation=abrufabelleAuspraegungAuswaehlen&auswahlverzeichnis=ordnungsstruktur&auswahlziel=werteabruf&selectionname=12521-0021&auswahltext=%23SSTAAG6-ST166&nummer=5&variable=3&name=STAAG6&werteabruf=Werteabruf](https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online/data;jsession-id=5180E542575D4996027CEF8379A13ED3.tomcat_GO_1_2?operation=abrufabelleBearbeiten&levelindex=2&levelid=1463484116805&auswahloperation=abrufabelleAuspraegungAuswaehlen&auswahlverzeichnis=ordnungsstruktur&auswahlziel=werteabruf&selectionname=12521-0021&auswahltext=%23SSTAAG6-ST166&nummer=5&variable=3&name=STAAG6&werteabruf=Werteabruf) [27.03.2016]

<sup>6</sup> Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Germany (2016): Migrationsbericht 2014. Accessible at: [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Broschueren/2016/migrationsbericht\\_2014\\_de.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Broschueren/2016/migrationsbericht_2014_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) [27.03.2016]

<sup>7</sup> Kubijovyč, Volodymyr (1984): Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Toronto, p. 822.

<sup>8</sup> Dyczok, Marta (2000): The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees. New York., p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Jacobmeyer, Wolfgang (1985): Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer – die ‚Displaced Persons‘ in Westdeutschland 1945–1951. Göttingen, p. 271.

<sup>10</sup> First statistical data on Ukrainians living in Germany can only be found for the year 1945.

<sup>11</sup> Dyczok (2000): The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees, p. 76–77.


<sup>12</sup> Marunjak, Volodymyr (1985): Ukrajinska Emihracija v Nimeččyni i Avstriji po druhij svitovij vijni. Munich, p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> In Ukrainian: „Centralne Predstavnyctvo Ukrajinskoho Emihraciji“

<sup>14</sup> Dyczok (2000): The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees, p. 70.

Germany as a center of Ukrainian cultural and scientific life in Western Europe ended. The consequence of this development was not only a lack of Ukrainian scientific institutions in Germany but also a lack of bilateral institutional platforms. Thus, Ukrainians neither participated directly in the public debate about Ukraine in Germany nor did they comment on other historical events from a Ukrainian point of view after early 1950s. Along with the general post-war circumstances in Germany, this lack of Ukrainian perspective and Ukrainian players in the German public sphere led to a certain “invisibility” of Ukrainians and Ukrainian matters. This effect was further enhanced by the fact that Ukraine was not an independent state and the Soviet Union was mostly perceived as

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 ***Within the framework of the Ostpolitik, it was not in the main interest of the West German government to get involved with particular Soviet republics in order not to complicate the relations with the Soviet Union***

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a homogenous political actor. The policies pursued by the German government, particularly the so-called Ostpolitik (new Eastern policy) of Willy Brandt that aimed at easing tensions between West Germany and Eastern Europe, could be regarded as an additional factor for this “invisibility”.<sup>15</sup> Within the framework of the Ostpolitik, it was not in the main interest of the West German government to get involved with

particular Soviet republics in order not to complicate the relations with the Soviet Union. Consequently, Ukraine, for many years, became a “white spot” in the German society. This perception remained after the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to Ukraine still being frequently regarded as a part of the Russian sphere of influence.

### **Ukrainian diasporic community in Germany – the rise of a new non-state actor?**

While this “white spot” on the mental map of many Germans regarding Ukrainian matters still exists today, this “gap” might slowly be filled in. This mainly results from the emergence of a possible new non-state actor, the Ukrainian diasporic community. This community includes a considerable number of Ukrainians living in Germany who are not a part of the “old diaspora”<sup>16</sup>, as described above, and who can be characterized by a high level of interconnectedness with other Ukrainians both on a national and international levels. This group mainly consists of labour migrants, students and Jewish Ukrainians<sup>17</sup> who came to Germany in the last decade as well as (German) spouses of Ukrainians. During the interviews, it became clear that many of them do not consider themselves as part of Ukrainian diaspora. Instead, they rather see themselves as Ukrainians living abroad for a certain time or indefinitely. Quite often they show high willingness to integrate into the German society, and are characterized by low levels of interconnectedness amongst each other and low civic engagement with regard to Ukrainian issues before Euromaidan.

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<sup>15</sup> Kappeler, Andreas (2001): Die Ukraine in der deutschsprachigen Historiographie. In (Hrsg.): Jordan, Peter et al.: Ukraine: Geographie – Ethnische Struktur, Geschichte – Sprache und Literatur, Kultur – Politik – Bildung – Wirtschaft – Recht. Frankfurt/M., Berlin, Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> In the context of this paper the “old diaspora” is defined as a rather homogenous group of people of Ukrainian decent living in Germany in the first, second or third generation. Further explained in the section “Main facts about Ukrainians in Germany”.

<sup>17</sup> Since the collapse of the Soviet Union Jewish persons and persons of Jewish heritage are accepted to migrate to Germany as so called quota refugees (Kontingentflüchtlinge).

As the events of Euromaidan in Kyiv led to mobilization and manifestation of a civil society within Ukraine, a similar development can be observed in Germany. Euromaidan was the initial trigger for networking among Ukrainians in Germany and for their engagement leading to the emergence of a diasporic community. The perceived necessity to help and a growing sense of belonging to a Ukrainian group in Germany motivated many to take part in solidarity protests and common activities. Whereas Euromaidan triggered the emergence of a new diasporic community, the annexation of the Crimea and the war in Ukraine were additional drivers for the formation and civic engagement of this new community. In late 2013 and early 2014, a plethora of political initiatives was started, which since then have experienced a continuous change concerning intensity, organization, goals and means. The interviews showed that many engagements are undergoing a process of further institutionalization and professionalization since their formation.

The use of social media considerably facilitated this process not only as a tool to initiate protests and common activities but also as a means to establish new contacts and to extend personal networks. Besides social media, another factor that played a decisive role for networking among members of the diasporic community was the Church. Before Euromaidan, the Church (especially the Greek-Catholic Church) provided the only platform for Ukrainians in Germany to meet, discuss and share ideas. This exchange became even more important during Euromaidan. Furthermore, the process of networking was actively promoted by Ukrainians themselves, e.g. by holding so-called “*Stammtische*” (regular’s tables). Additionally, since 2014, the Ukrainian embassy and the consulate generals in Germany have been increasingly focused on connecting Ukrainians in Germany, e.g. through the organization of

joint events. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that a major factor uniting the members of the diasporic community and their different forms of engagement are common values as a group. Especially, “Euromaidan values” or “European values” as listed in art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), i.e. human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, were named. For the interviewees, this overlap also creates a constant link to Euromaidan in Kyiv and the civil society in Ukraine.

With regard to the variety and ongoing institutionalization of the engagement of Ukrainians in Germany, a stabilized diasporic community has the potential to function as a non-state actor in the long term. To date, we can observe the mobilization of new individual actors starting to establish a homogenous community. This becomes not only evident in their transnational activities with Ukrainian civil society, but also in their interaction with the German society, thus acting as an intercultural link between Ukrainians and Germans. Recently, bilateral activities between Ukrainians and Germans have gained in importance. As such joint activities are increasingly initiated by the German side, it can be assumed that Ukrainians finally are becoming more visible in Germany. The next section will elaborate on the two main forms of civic engagement – humanitarian aid in Ukraine and engagement in Germany – and their potential internal and external influence.

### **The engagement of the diasporic community**

Starting in November 2013, the first Ukrainian diasporic initiatives, which emerged in Germany, were mainly focusing on political protest and information activities (e.g. Euromaidan Wache Berlin). Not only did the engagement during this time focus on showing solidarity with the protests in Kiev, but many informative



initiatives were aimed at the German public as well. The interviewees describe that along with the first violent incidents on Euromaidan and the following war in Eastern Ukraine many of the formerly political initiatives broadened their range of activities – now mainly focusing on activities aimed at Ukraine, e.g. humanitarian aid for Ukrainians suffering from the outcomes of the war in Eastern Ukraine or military support for the Ukrainian army. At the same time, with the manifestation of the situation in Ukraine, cultural and informative activities in Germany are gaining importance again with the intention to explain Ukraine and Ukrainian matters to the German public, thus trying to fill in the “white spot” on the mental map of Germans.

### **The engagement in Ukraine**

Humanitarian and military aid plays a major role in the engagement of the diasporic community. The main activities include supplying hospitals and social institutions like orphanages with equipment and drugs, the support of families and the bereaved of soldiers and displaced persons and – at the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine – the provision of equipment for the Ukrainian army, such as uniforms and protective vests. This engagement was deemed necessary as the state itself, suffering from the consequences of the war in the East and the economic crisis, did not seem fit to provide these services. Therefore, the diasporic community indirectly contributed to the stabilization of the Ukrainian government, especially in the beginning of the conflict – which potentially, by reducing reform pressure in some fields, could also support the process

of democratization in Ukraine.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, there is a risk that the reduction of reform pressure will only have positive effects in the short term. In the long run, reversed consequences could occur, with the continuous support of the diasporic community leading to the omission of needed reforms.<sup>19</sup>

The indirect stabilization of Ukraine is not the only process contributing to democratization. To provide humanitarian aid, Ukrainian activists in Germany often cooperate with civil society in Ukraine. The interviewees pointed out that this does not only serve as a control mechanism to ensure that donations reach their recipients, but is also crucial to receive information from Ukraine. Furthermore, the members of the diasporic community sharing European values as described in the section before, strictly insist upon these values in their activities and in their cooperation with Ukrainian partners. For example, engagement is structured in a democratic way, as decision-making is often based on discussions where everyone can participate. Furthermore, the interviewees follow rules of transparency in their activities, e.g. by making financial expenses public and publishing reports on their activities – not only to gain trust from German partners, but also to support the underlying normative concept. This also influences their work with partners in Ukraine – interviewees describe that they are not only making sure that their partners are reliable, but also expect transparency from their side. In the long term, the advocacy of democratic norms and the demand that partners in Ukraine adjust to these norms can considerably influence civil society in Ukraine, leading

<sup>18</sup> Melnyk/Patalong/Plottka/Steinberg (2016): How the Ukrainian Diasporic Community in Germany Contributes to EU's Policy in its Home Country, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

to the democratization of Ukraine from the bottom up.<sup>20</sup>

### The engagement in Germany


While an important part of the Ukrainian activities in Germany aim at the support and stabilization of civil society in Ukraine, therefore indirectly contributing to the democratization of the country, the trend of activists to refocus on cultural and informative activities in Germany can be observed. These are not only addressing the members of the diasporic community, but also the German society – to close the gap between the German society and Ukrainians and to counter their limited visibility, as interviewees often highlighted. This gap is of historical origin as described in the historical overview. For example, active Ukrainians feel that Euromaidan was incorrectly perceived by the German society as it was often equalized with a right wing movement in the German public debate. They actively tried to change this view, e.g. by translating Ukrainian news into German, using their slogans in German during numerous demonstrations and the organization of informative events to explain that the Euromaidan was not about nationalism but about European values.

At the same time, the interviewees expressed the feeling that Ukrainian culture and history is often associated with the Russian one. This seems to be mainly due to the historical perception of Ukraine as being merely a “post-soviet” state, which remains a part of the Russian sphere of influence. The close links between Germany and Russia enhance this understanding of Ukraine as well as the large impact of Russian propaganda in Germany, as the interviewees describe. To counter

this perception, activists are organizing different events to promote Ukrainian culture and history.

Another problem perceived by the diasporic community is the indifference of many Germans regarding the engagement of Ukrainians. Even though Euromaidan, the annexation of the Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine were present in German media over a long period of time and Germans supported humanitarian aid to Ukraine, many interviewees described a lack of support for the activities of the diasporic community. This became also apparent in the low interconnectedness between the diasporic community and other German actors, e.g. civil society, media and political institutions. This problem does not only result from the missing or critical perception of Ukrainian engagement in the German society, but also from a lacking platform for joint initiatives. Only few German institutions

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have been working with Ukrainian actors within the country itself or in Germany. The few organizations mentioned by the interviewees most often only organize annual conferences or hold round tables, but are not pursuing long-term activities, e.g. in capacity building in Ukraine, where skills and intercultural competence of Ukrainians living in Germany could contribute as well. With only some exceptions like the “Kiev Dialogue”, bilateral initiatives

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<sup>20</sup> Melnyk/Patalong/Plottka/Steinberg (2016): How the Ukrainian Diasporic Community in Germany Contributes to EU's Policy in its Home Country, p. 8.


like the Ukrainian-German Historical Commission, the UKRAINE Network or the UkraineLab-Forum were founded only after Euromaidan, mainly providing a platform for networking. Despite these initiatives, the overall cooperation between German and Ukrainian civic actors remains limited. Overall, the attempts of Ukrainians to find access to the German public are predominantly lacking long-term success. Nevertheless, with their engagement the diasporic community actively tries to influence the German perception of Ukraine, which – in the long-term – has the potential not only to fill in the “white spot” in the German mental map, but also positively influence bilateral relations between Germany and Ukraine.

## Conclusion

Ukrainians are looking back on the mixed history in Germany. While after the World War II the Ukrainian diaspora was in the process of institutionalizing its activities, the emigration of the majority of Ukrainians interrupted this development. Ukrainians became an invisible community, a „white spot“ on the mental map of the German public. Euromaidan led to the emergence of a new group: the diasporic community. Characterized by a high interconnectedness amongst its members and common European democratic values, this group has the potential to act as a new non-state actor if the process of institutionalization and professionalization of their engagement continues. To estimate this potential, two main fields of engagement were analyzed. The analysis showed that the activities have the potential to support the process of democratization of Ukraine in the long term – both through the indirect stabilization of the Ukrainian government and the diffusion of norms in the cooperation with Ukrainian civic actors – besides the risk of a reduced reform pressure. At the same time, the diasporic community in Germany is experiencing a new trend: more and more

activists are working in German projects that aim at capacity building in Ukraine. Thus, they are not only contributing their expertise but also serve as a bridge between the German and Ukrainian civil society through their intercultural competence.

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***diasporic community indeed can be perceived as a new non-state actor acting as an intercultural link between Ukrainians and Germans***

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These trends show that the diasporic community indeed can be perceived as a new non-state actor acting as an intercultural link between Ukrainians and Germans.

## Recommendations

Due to the diasporic community’s potential, it becomes apparent that its support should also be of interest to Ukrainian government – not only as a contributor to stabilization and transformation of the state but also as a bridge between Ukrainian and German societies.

- Therefore, Ukrainian government should support the diasporic community by setting up a Ukrainian cultural institute in Germany. Ukrainians in Germany often complain about the lack of a “Ukrainian House”. Such a “Ukrainian House” could not only provide a platform for networking and space for joint activities, but would also strengthen both the visibility of Ukrainian culture and the diaspora in Germany – thus supporting the diasporic engagement both in Ukraine and in Germany.
- Ukrainian government should also invest in the establishment and support of bilateral forums – both between the diasporic community and German civic actors as well as between the diasporic

community and Ukrainian civil society. First, bilateral forums between Ukrainian diasporic and German civic actors would foster their interconnectedness. The engagement of Ukrainians, often still lacking institutionalized structures, could gain expertise and resources from the cooperation with German organizations and initiatives, thus contributing to the formalization and professionalization of their activities. This, in turn, could lead to the extension of their engagement, both in Germany and Ukraine. Second, the engagement of the diasporic community might gain in credibility and visibility when working in joint projects with established German actors and organizations.

- The Ukrainian government should also foster bilateral platforms between the diasporic community and civic actors in Ukraine. Especially the latter would considerably profit from extensive interconnectedness and exchange between both groups, as they could learn from the experiences of diasporic activists and thus professionalize and extend their activities in Ukraine. Furthermore, the above mentioned mechanism of norm diffusion could take place when actors from both states cooperate – thus leading to the bottom-up democratization of Ukraine in the long term.

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**Ljudmyla Melnyk** works as a Research Associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik. Since 2015–2016 she has been a part of the project team “Ukrainians in Poland and Germany – Civic and Political Engagement, Expectations and Courses of Actions” supported by the German Polish Science Foundation. Currently, she is the leader of the project “Strengthening Ukrainian Think Tanks: institutional capacity building and empowering cooperation with partners from the EU” supported by the German Federal Foreign Office. Her research focuses on civil society, the language situation in Ukraine, intercultural communication and German-Ukrainian relations.

**Magdalena Patalong** works as a Research Assistant at the Institut für Europäische Politik. From 2015 to 2016 she was a part of the project team “Ukrainians in Poland and Germany – Civic and Political Engagement, Expectations and Courses of Actions”, supported by the German Polish Science Foundation, and is now part of the project team “Strengthening Ukrainian Think Tanks: institutional capacity building and empowering cooperation with partners from the EU” supported by the German Federal Foreign Office. She is currently studying East European Studies at the Free University, Berlin.

**Richard Steinberg** works as a Research Associate at the Institut für Europäische Politik. He studied history and social sciences at the Humboldt-University of Berlin, the Université de Toulouse II – Le Mirail and the University of Erfurt. From 2015 to 2016 he was a part of the project “Ukrainians in Poland and Germany–Civic and Political Engagement, Expectations and Courses of Actions” supported by the German Polish Science Foundation. Richard Steinberg is an alumnus of the Foundation of German Business and was Junior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2010).

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