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From Lived Experience to Policy Action: Evidence and Recommendations from Veteran-Led Workshops in Ukraine



**R.T. Weatherman
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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

First edition (October 2025)

To cite this report:

McFee, Erin, and Röders, 2025. "From Lived Experience to Policy Action: Evidence and Recommendations from Veteran-Led Workshops in Ukraine." Corioli Institute.

This work was funded by the generous support of the Romulus T. Weatherman Foundation.

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1. Executive Summary

This analytic brief synthesizes key findings from research conducted for the comprehensive *Full Project Report*, which presents detailed evidence, methodology, and extended analysis of these findings, focusing on themes that emerged most prominently during veteran-led workshops held in Kyiv on May 26-27, 2025. The workshops convened 35 participants: the first day centered exclusively on veterans, their families, and families of the fallen, while the second day brought together veterans and institutional representatives from government, civil society, and international organizations. The workshops aimed to surface lived experiences of reintegration and translate them into actionable insights that bridge the gap between policy ambitions and practical implementation. By centering veteran voices alongside multi-sector stakeholders, the sessions created space for collaborative dialogue that informs both the recommendations presented here and Ukraine's broader veteran reintegration strategy. Thematic coding analysis supported the following key takeaways from the workshop transcripts, participant surveys, and activity outputs:

1. **Micro-Level Findings: The Lived Realities of Reintegration.** Veterans' reintegration depends on managing highly variable responses to trauma, securing basic material needs alongside psychological support, and reconciling forward-moving identities rather than attempting impossible returns. These realities demand policies responsive to individual variation rather than uniform models.
2. **Meso-Level Findings: Communities and Social Context.** Veterans face a gap between symbolic respect and lived reality: persistent stigma constrains employment opportunities, conditional recognition erodes trust despite high survey ratings, and fragmented memorialization practices undermine both social cohesion and national identity formation.
3. **Macro-Level Findings: Policy and Institutions.** Despite extensive policy frameworks, fragmented coordination, opaque bureaucratic processes, and the absence of unified reintegration architecture mean that veterans' access to support depends on geography and individual initiative rather than functioning as a guaranteed, integrated system across government and civil society.
4. **Veteran-Led Solutions Findings.** Veteran-led peer networks, localized initiatives, and grassroots organizations consistently prove more trusted and adaptive than externally imposed models, filling critical gaps in mental health support and community integration while demonstrating that sustainable reintegration depends on recognizing veterans, their families, and families of the fallen as co-producers of policy rather than passive beneficiaries.

Building on the above analysis of the workshop data, as well as additional stakeholder interviews, observational data, and life history interviews (included in the *Full Project Report*), the following are the policy and program recommendations developed in the last section of this Brief:

1. **Institutional Strengthening and Coordination.** Establish unified coordination mechanisms, interoperable data systems, and tiered governance structures that enable systematic policy implementation, cross-sector collaboration, and veteran participation from national to local levels.
2. **Psychosocial and Family Support Systems.** Build an integrated national MHPSS network with competency-based professional standards, family-centered programming, and flexible funding for local and veteran-led organizations to deliver trauma-informed care across urban and rural areas.
3. **Economic Reintegration and Local Development.** Create accessible pathways to employment and entrepreneurship through simplified enterprise support, public-private partnerships with hiring incentives, municipal targets with ring-fenced budgets, and networked veteran hubs that connect training to market access.
4. **Social Perception and Public Awareness.** Counter stigma and build social cohesion through co-created national communication campaigns, official recognition insignia, standardized education in schools and workplaces, and cultural partnerships that portray veterans as multifaceted contributors beyond military identity.
5. **Veteran-Led and Peer-to-Peer Solutions.** Empower veteran-governed organizations through dedicated financing mechanisms, formal consultative roles in policymaking, capacity-building support systems, and mentorship networks that recognize veterans as co-producers of effective reintegration policy and practice.

Together, these recommendations provide an evidence-based roadmap for charting a path from fragmented support toward a coordinated, veteran-centered system that recognizes those who served—and their families—as essential architects of their own successful transitions and Ukraine's post-war recovery.



2. Analysis & Key Themes

This analysis synthesizes findings from thematic coding of workshop transcripts and written outputs, including participant contributions to cross-sector co-construction of veterans programming, intention-setting exercises, and workshop assessment replies. It comprises four interconnected dimensions: 1) the micro level examines the lived experiences of veterans and their families; 2) the meso level explores how community dynamics, social narratives, and local institutions shape veterans' reception and integration; 3) the macro level analyzes the institutional, policy, and governance structures that enable or constrain reintegration at scale; and 4) veteran-led solutions highlight the programs, networks, and innovations that veterans themselves have designed and implemented to address gaps in formal systems.

This multi-level framing reflects the fact that reintegration is not a linear path; instead, it is a cumulative process shaped by individual resilience, social cohesion, institutional capacity, and veteran agency. The following sections detail key findings across these dimensions with supporting illustrative quotes from the workshops. Building on this empirical and analytic base, the Brief concludes with program and policy recommendations.

2.1 The Lived Realities of Reintegration (Micro)

Key Takeaway: Reintegration hinges on meeting basic needs (e.g., sleep, stress management, family connection, identity reconciliation), yet these fundamentals remain under-resourced and poorly coordinated across support systems. (Recurring themes and illustrative quotes can be found in **Table 1**.)

Veterans and their family members describe wide variations in coping with different forms of stress related to the war: some build resilience, while others struggle severely. Reintegration depends equally on psychological recovery and meeting basic needs, which include, but are not limited to, consistent sleep, economic stability, and social connection. Repeatedly, veterans emphasize there is no "return" from war but a forward process of reconciling military and civilian selves in a changed society. These dimensions of trauma response, material stability, and identity integration shape their everyday lives and social interactions.

2.1.1. *Exposure to Violence and Psychological Stress*

Taken together, the insights from veterans' accounts underscore that exposure to violence is not a uniform experience but one that carries distinct psychological weight depending on the intensity and character of their wartime experiences. During service, the absence of structured recovery periods in between deployment cycles compounded trauma risks. Veterans, families, and families of the fallen name healthy stress management techniques as fundamental for individual recovery, collective safety, and resilience-building.

2.1.2. *Differences in Coping*

In addition to exposure to different *kinds* of potentially traumatic events (PTEs), there exists a wide range of *responses* to those stressors. Some participants report channeling their experiences into greater resilience while others struggle with isolation and harmful coping strategies such as substance abuse. The lack of intervention and treatment options widens the gap between these divergent paths over time. Simple approaches to self-regulation (e.g., breathing exercises) can be useful when formal psychological services are limited or inaccessible, however, they tend to be more effective when learned pre-deployment and / or before the transition to civilian life.

2.1.3. *Daily Struggles and Basic Needs*

Successful reintegration hinges as much on meeting everyday biological needs (rest, food, housing, hygiene) as on addressing psychological wounds. In the case of the latter, distance from family, weakened social ties, cultural stigma around seeking professional support, and the absence of necessary assistance compounds daily challenges.

2.1.4. *Transition and Identity*

Furthermore, the transition from military to civilian life is not a return to a pre-war self, but a forward movement into a changed identity. It requires actively combining the civilian dimensions of one's life with the enduring imprint of military service, and while some veterans embrace renewal and the message that "life after war is possible," others stress the permanence of their military identity, recognizing that a part of them will always remain tied to their wartime experiences.



Thus, there is no single veteran experience—a truth that compels more nuanced policy approaches and original research to better capture and address the wide range of needs, motives, and future aspirations of Ukraine’s former service members, their families, and families of the fallen. These micro-level realities underscore why structural and institutional arrangements must respond to human variation rather than assume uniformity.

Table 1: Recurring Workshop Themes Related to the Lived Realities of Reintegration and Illustrative Quotes

Recurring Themes	Illustrative Quotes
2.1.1 Exposure to Violence and Psychological Stress	
Exposure to extreme violence	You can get used to rockets, to artillery, to tank assaults. But Wagner — that really had a significant impact.
Stress regulation	Managing processes under stress factors and being able to pull yourself out of that state [is critical], because one panicked soldier can turn a company of 100 in the wrong direction.
Prolonged deployment; Structural drivers of psychological stress	Some units have already been deployed for three years without rotation or recovery.
2.1.2. Differences in Coping	
Resilience variation; Innate coping capacity; Individual differences	For some, stress factors allow them to realize their inner potential; they even become more psychologically resilient. Others are not able at all to develop this quality of resilience. They simply don't have it by nature.
Maladaptive coping; Isolation; Substance abuse	[Many] soldiers will tend to lock into a shell, and if left like that, they may not come out, leading to self-medication, alcohol, and other issues.
Self-regulation techniques; Learned coping capacity	If [soldiers] were taught self-regulation techniques, then the lack of time and access to psychological help would not be so tragic or problematic, because people would at least hold on through these methods.
2.1.3 Daily Struggles and Basic Needs	
Biological needs; Family separation, Social disconnection; Psychological strain linked to daily life	First, there is social: communication with the family, which is far away, and social disconnection. Then, biological—the basic conditions to wash, sleep, and eat. And psychological issues from the mental strain of exposure to violence and prolonged deployment.
Access to care; Stigma in help-seeking; Cultural barriers	Seeking help and accepting the psychologist as someone who truly knows how to help—this is not yet common.
Bureaucratic barriers; Housing insecurity; Administrative burden	There is a [monthly stipend] and the city council promises housing, but it takes a lot of time and a lot of paperwork, and it's very difficult to get it to work out.
2.1.4 Transition and Identity	
Peer-to-peer relationships; Post-war life possibilities	I come back, and my task is to tell my guys that [wartime] life is over. I'm constantly repeating, "You can have your life back."
Forward movement vs. return; Identity transformation; Integration of civilian and military selves	The most important thing I heard today, and I wish somebody had told me sooner, is you're not going to return, you're going to move forward. Once you've been in the military, you're a different person. Your task is to unite the human part of you with your military experience and find a new place for yourself as a whole, transformed person.
Permanent imprint of service; Enduring military identity	Those who fought...there is no "former" to that. A piece of you will always stay there, even if you feel like a civilian.



2.2 Communities and Social Context (Meso)

Key Takeaway: How communities perceive, represent, and include veterans significantly influences whether reintegration becomes a shared project of belonging or a cycle of stigma and exclusion. (Recurring themes and illustrative quotes can be found in Table 2.)

Workshop participants emphasized that reintegration is not only a personal journey, but a collective experience shaped by societal perceptions, symbolic recognition of service, and institutional responses at every level. Their accounts reveal that community dynamics, employer behavior, and the broader social narrative can either reinforce or undermine the reintegration process. This section examines how stigma, recognition, symbolism, and international engagement intersect to shape veterans' everyday social realities. Many reported that veterans face persistent stigma that constrains opportunity, uneven respect that leaves them feeling undervalued, underdeveloped symbolic practices that erode cohesion, and inconsistent international engagement that signals commitment without always delivering practical change.

2.2.1 *Stigma and Negative Stereotypes*

Veterans note that stereotypes of instability (PTSD, addiction, deviant behavior) fill the “empty space” left by the state’s underdeveloped narrative management. These negative associations shape community perceptions and directly constrain economic reintegration. Employers hesitate to hire or entrust veterans with responsibility, compounding isolation and pushing veterans into a cycle of reduced opportunity and reinforced suspicion.

2.2.2 *Recognition and Respect*

While national surveys suggest high levels of social respect for veterans, veterans themselves often report that this respect is conditional or shallow. The disjuncture between symbolic affirmation and lived experience erodes trust: veterans may hear narratives of appreciation but encounter daily behaviors of employment discrimination, lack of accessibility, and indifference that undercut this message.

2.2.3 *Symbolism and Memorialization*

Participants highlight a policy vacuum in memorialization: Ukraine lacks the consistent forms, materials, and standards that ensure cohesive symbolic recognition in other contexts. This creates frustration and leaves memory practices fragmented across local initiatives. Participants narrate this absence as a missed opportunity for unifying national identity, risking both neglect and politicization of memory.

The patterns observed within communities highlight that reintegration is sustained (or stalled) by the meanings society assigns to service and the everyday practices that express them. The interplay of stigma, symbolic recognition, and local initiative underscores that social cohesion depends not only on policy but on narrative and participation. These findings point to the need for approaches that strengthen community-level legitimacy and align social narratives with the everyday realities of veterans and their families.





Table 2: Recurring Workshop Themes Related to Communities and Social Context and Illustrative Quotes

Recurring Themes	Illustrative Quotes
2.2.1 Stigma and Negative Stereotypes	
Narrative vacuum; Negative stereotypes	As a general rule of life, empty spaces create tension. If we don't create a positive image about veterans in society, that emptiness creates tension, and veterans will be displayed with negative imagery related to PTSD, alcohol, drugs, and deviant behavior.
Suspicion and social distrust; State inaction as amplifier of stigma	Veterans are treated with suspicion. If the state does not help (with this public perception), it multiplies the negative experience.
Labor market exclusion; Perceived risk of veterans in the workplace	Companies don't want to take risks. It's a risk for them to bring veterans in—how to work with them and give them responsibility. We have a big problem with this.
2.2.2 Recognition and Respect	
Perception gap; Disjuncture between symbolic and lived recognition	I have conducted surveys at the start of the war and repeated them each year, asking about respect for veterans and whether veterans feel respect from society. Nationally, citizens say “we respect veterans,” but only 80% of veterans say they feel that respect. (<i>practitioner attendee</i>)
Loss of societal recognition after service; Perceived lack of social value	I came home and realized that no one needed me anymore. No one was interested in me, and I was completely written off. At that moment, I felt sad that I had resigned from the army, because at least there I was needed.
Professional legitimacy; Recognition within support systems	It's very common for veterans not to want to share their stories. Sometimes a veteran will come to you, but he doesn't want to share. This makes many young psychologists unsure what to do with such a serious man with a beard who has PTSD—what could they possibly say? The important thing is not to need the veteran's experience yourself, but to bring your own experience of helping people. That shifts the recognition dynamic. (<i>veteran and clinical psychologist</i>)
2.2.3 Symbolism and Memorialization	
Policy vs. practice; Memorialization as a contested policy tool	[Memorialization] needs to be a policy. It exists on paper, but it diverges in practice, and it serves as a political tool.
Structural and material gaps; Lack of standards for memorials	In Ukraine, we don't have structural or material standards [for memorials]. We have some foundations, but it's poor.
Policy and legal frameworks	It's terrible. We should write a law on memorialization.



2.3 Policy and Institutions (Macro)

Key Takeaway: Ukraine's reintegration system is rich in policy but requires strengthened coordination capabilities. Durable recovery depends less on new laws than on coherent, accountable delivery. (Recurring themes and illustrative quotes can be found in **Table 3.**)

Veterans and practitioners describe an institutional landscape that is policy-rich on paper yet delivery-poor in practice. Laws, programs, and offices exist; however, coordination gaps, ad hoc management, opaque and overwhelming bureaucracy, and misaligned initiatives blunt their effect on reintegration outcomes. Analog, crisis-driven administration and insufficient local capacity impede consistent service delivery. At the same time, the previously mentioned absence of a national narrative that contributes to challenges at the community level, coupled with inconsistent application of the law (e.g., fines for wearing uniforms), also erodes veterans' visibility and social integration.

2.3.1 Bureaucratic Barriers

Narratives reveal that bureaucratic barriers are not limited to excessive paperwork but extend to unclear entitlements and centralized service provision that marginalizes rural and displaced populations. These obstacles impose hidden financial and logistical costs on veterans and their families. Such costs and inefficiencies, along with unofficial "fees" for services, erode trust in institutions by making access to promised benefits contingent on navigating complex bureaucratic processes rather than guaranteeing rights.

2.3.2 Institutional Approaches and Gaps

Veterans identify critical gaps in service infrastructure (in particular, mental health support) that become starkly visible upon return from service. International organizations contribute to filling these gaps, though the translation of their engagement into consistent, community-level outcomes is constrained by coordination challenges and the complexity of operating within Ukraine's evolving institutional landscape. The result is a patchwork system where coordination between state structures and international actors remains weak, leaving veterans to navigate inconsistent support that varies dramatically between urban centers and rural areas.

2.3.3 Institutional Reforms

Beyond service delivery gaps, Ukraine has yet to operationalize the conceptual architecture for systematic reintegration. Participants note that policy language itself is incomplete, reflecting the broader need to articulate what comes after service. Without unified strategies, clear benchmarks, or future-oriented planning, reintegration feels reactive rather than systematic. Veterans face uncertain post-service trajectories despite the presence of related programming because programs function as disconnected initiatives rather than a coherent framework with measurable progress markers.

The gap between formal policy commitments and practical delivery demonstrates that reintegration outcomes hinge on institutional coordination and enforcement capacity, not isolated programmatic efforts. Fragmented mandates and weak cross-sector linkages create a system where reintegration quality depends on individual actors' commitment and programmatic presence in specific localities instead of coordinated institutional capacity across government, multilateral organizations, and civil society. These findings establish that sustainable reintegration depends on building a unified, consistent, coordinated governance architecture before programmatic expansion can yield lasting results.





Table 3: Recurring Workshop Themes Related to Policies and Institutions and Illustrative Quotes

Recurring Themes	Illustrative Quotes
2.3.1 Bureaucratic Barriers	
Budgetary constraints; Recognition of state obligation	All needs must be covered by the budget as a state and federal obligation. We are working so at least something will be covered if possible. (<i>government representative</i>)
Access inequities (geographic)	Veterans report burdensome documentation processes, unclear entitlements, and a centralization of services in major cities that disadvantage rural and displaced populations. (<i>practitioner attendee</i>)
Hidden and indirect costs of access; Administrative burden	[Navigating the hidden costs faced by veterans and their families when facing reintegration systems – i.e., costs for travel to centralized offices, repeated documentation requests, and unofficial “fees” tied to bureaucracy]: It turns out, this was our biggest expense.
2.3.2 Institutional Approaches and Gaps	
Gaps in mental health infrastructure	You go to war and immediately understand everyone and everything. That makes the absence of mental health services [when you return] even worse.
International organizations’ contributions, Coordination and complementarity with state structures	I want to make space for other international organizations, especially the international ones. For example, IOM has been working on veteran reintegration since 2014.
Symbolic vs. practical engagement; Inconsistency in international support	International engagement signals commitment, but it does not always deliver practical change.
2.3.3 Institutional Reforms	
Conceptual gaps in policy language; Lack of future orientation	Yes, you need to structure reintegration somehow, but it is a double-edged sword because we don’t even have the word “demobilization.” There is no understanding of what you should do afterwards. It’s about understanding the future.
Incremental benchmarks; System-building	To make reintegration more systematic rather than reactive, we need markers to identify [the gaps] and close them. Then, it would gradually take shape.
Fragmentation and lack of coordination	There is a patchwork of programs and a lack of coordination. Fragmented initiatives duplicate efforts or leave significant gaps, especially outside the cities. We need a reintegration strategy.





2.4 Veteran-Led Solutions

Key Takeaway: Veteran-led networks are transforming reintegration from a top-down service into a bottom-up system of trust, innovation, and shared learning, though efforts are fragmented and require consolidation, support, and coordination for effective scaling. (Recurring themes and illustrative quotes can be found in **Table 4.**)

Veteran-led solutions have emerged as a cornerstone of Ukraine's reintegration landscape, reflecting both necessity and credibility. Through workshops and testimonies, participants emphasized that programs designed and driven by veterans themselves are consistently more trusted, sustainable, and adaptive than externally imposed models. From peer-to-peer mentoring and knowledge-sharing networks to family support groups and grassroots organizations, veterans are leveraging their lived expertise to provide psychological support, fill gaps left by state and international actors, and build resilient pathways for themselves and their communities. In this way, veteran leadership emerges as both an obvious guiding principle of reintegration and a practical mechanism for anchoring collaboration, ensuring relevance, and reinforcing social cohesion.

2.4.1 Peer-to-Peer Support and Veteran Networks

Peer-to-peer networks have been vital to reintegration and are reported to support mitigating the negative sequelae of post-traumatic stress (PTS), though workshop participants caution that such support is imperfect since “everyone has their own story.” Shared activities like hobby groups or sports activities also facilitate positive reintegration experiences, which additionally serve to increase participation in community life. Such groups tend to be more effective when they are “moderated, activity-oriented, and collective,” intentionally designed to provide safe spaces that foster belonging rather than reproducing narratives of experiences trauma.

2.4.2 Decentralization and Localized Solutions

Participants underscore that meaningful reintegration happens closest to home, where communities, families, and local organizations can adapt support to real, urgent, and relevant needs. Services that remain concentrated in major cities leave rural veterans and their families without access or representation, and many urge a shift toward locally led initiatives that are better situated to ensure continuous reintegration support. Decentralization is understood as shared ownership, rather than mere administrative reform, and veterans and their families conceptualize a model in which municipalities, businesses, and veteran networks collaborate to sustain recovery from the ground up.

2.4.3 Institutional Innovation and Knowledge-Sharing Systems

Workshop participants agree that reintegration must evolve from fragmented projects into a learning system that connects local innovation with national strategy. They call for a reintegration framework with measurable indicators, timelines, and accountability mechanisms, arguing that sustainable progress depends on institutions that can adapt and improve through feedback in real time, especially giving the uniquely dynamic conditions of reintegration in a wartime society. Their contributions reveal a vision of networked, data-informed governance, where lived experience actively shapes how Ukraine learns, reforms, and delivers reintegration support over time.

Veteran-led initiatives illuminate a pragmatic pathway toward sustainable reintegration: one rooted in embodied expertise, shared trust, and adaptive learning. The proliferation of peer networks and local initiatives demonstrates that transitions to civilian life flourish when veterans and their families are recognized as co-producers of policy and community life. These dynamics suggest that the future of veteran support will depend on how effectively formal institutions can learn from and integrate the systems veterans have already begun to build.



Table 4: Recurring Workshop Themes Related to Veteran-Led Solutions and Illustrative Quotes

Recurring Themes	Illustrative Quotes
2.4.1 Peer-to-Peer Support and Veteran Networks	
Psychological health and resilience; Preventive and protective dimensions	Veteran peer support significantly reduced even the chance of developing specific kinds of PTSD. <i>(veteran-practitioner attendee)</i>
Complexities and limits of peer support	Support is very subjective. We (veterans) are not angels; we're not perfect people. Everyone has their own story.
Barriers to civilian reintegration	Many veterans may not want to join civilian [activity-based] clubs.
2.4.2 Decentralization and Localized Solutions	
Community-based reintegration pathways; Activity-based models	There needs to be a systematic approach and many different options, but one of the most common in life is community interest groups, hobby groups, or sports groups – a common group where people stay engaged.
Access inequities (geographic); Need for local infrastructure	In our locality, 30, 40, 50, or even 150 kilometers from the center, no one is really working with the families of servicemembers and veterans.
Bottom-up reintegration; Local initiative	It has to be a process... the contours are constantly forming, and there must be strong state and independent communication programs to prepare businesses and society. If we wait for things to come from above, nothing will happen.
2.4.3 Institutional Innovation and Knowledge-Sharing Systems	
Knowledge exchange and learning systems; Horizontal learning and coordination	We need to exchange experiences and share best practices so that we don't reinvent the wheel every time.
Strategic planning and accountability	We need a reintegration strategy that isn't just on paper but has clear indicators and deadlines. <i>(veteran-practitioner attendee)</i>
Institutional learning and adaptability; Adaptive governance	We must create not just programs, but institutions that know how to learn. <i>(institutional participant)</i>





3. Policy Recommendations

While the preceding analysis organizes findings by scale (micro, meso, macro, veteran-led), the recommendations below are structured by policy domain to facilitate coordinated action across multiple governance levels within each thematic area, recognizing that effective reintegration requires simultaneous intervention at individual, community, and institutional scales. Additionally, these represent concise summaries drawn from workshop discussions and subsequent supporting research. For comprehensive evidence, data sources, and analytical context, please refer to the *Full Project Report*. Table 5 provides a synthesis of the recommendations, along with relevant sectors involved in implementation, prioritization, resource sources and requirements, and process dependencies.

3.1 Institutional Strengthening and Coordination

Veterans and administrators emphasized persistent fragmentation among institutions delivering veteran-related services. Overlapping mandates, limited accountability mechanisms, and weak data coordination across ministries and local authorities result in inefficiencies, unequal access, and declining trust. Effective reintegration requires a unified institutional framework that ensures coordination from national to local levels. Recommendations include the following:

- 3.1.1 **Strengthen and operationalize the Government's Coordination Headquarters for the Implementation of the State Veterans Policy** (Resolution No. 1478 on December 20, 2024) and [Veterans Policy Strategy for the period until 2030](#) (Document 1209-2024-r on November 29, 2024) as the national reintegration coordination mechanism under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, with a clear mandate and authority to align services, referral pathways, and oversight across ministries, regional administrations, and veteran-serving organizations (*responds to Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3*).
- 3.1.2 **Codify and train front-line officials and administrators in a national, interoperable data and case-management standard among state institutions**—including a unified state registry for veterans and their families, e-Veteran/Diia “[Veteran PRO](#),” the “Single Window” system for veterans and their families within Administrative Service Centers (ЦНАП), and [Trembita 2.0](#) (for general institutional interoperability)—to enable secure cross-sector exchange and KPI-based monitoring across psychosocial, employment, and health services (*addresses Section 2.3.1*).
- 3.1.3 **Develop a cross-sector unified digital reintegration dashboard that consolidates government data and enables real-time coordination, transparency, and resource alignment among ministries, local authorities, civil society partners, and international donors** (*responds to Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2*).
- 3.1.4 **Institutionalize a tiered coordination framework** that provides the various forms of capital (financial, professional, political, temporal) required for substantive, regular inter-ministerial, regional, and community-level meetings to **align policy implementation, share data, and translate field feedback into adaptive learning and responsive reforms**. Include structured, inclusive, and monitored veteran participation, including parity in representation between veterans, family members, and institutional counterparts, and regular assessments of perceptions of meaningful engagement (*addresses Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.4.3*).
- 3.1.5 **Commission differentiated and longitudinal research on veteran subcategories** (e.g., POWs, Donbas vs. post-2022 veterans, gender, age, disability, regional disparities, and self-identification with veteran status) to ensure policies and programs are responsive to the actual composition and needs of the veteran population. (*responds to findings in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.3.3*).

3.2 Psychosocial and Family Support Systems

Workshop participants underscored that mental health recovery and family stability are central to sustainable reintegration. However, psychosocial services remain unevenly distributed, under-resourced, and disconnected from primary care and community systems. Family members, especially spouses and parents, often carry unaddressed emotional and economic burdens. Recommendations include the following:

- 3.2.1 **Establish an integrated national MHPSS network** connecting the Ministry of Health, local governments, and veteran organizations to **ensure a coordinated continuum of care** for veterans and their families from field to community (*addresses Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3*).



- 3.2.2 **Expand family-centered programming**, including counseling, parenting support, and peer support groups for spouses and children of veterans (*addresses Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3*).
- 3.2.3 **Implement, enforce, and support implementation for a national, competency-based certification and CPD regime (per Law No. 12030)**—including supervised practice, quality assurance, and sanctions for noncompliance—to prevent unqualified care and ensure trauma-informed, evidence-based services for veterans and families (*responds to findings in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.3.2*).
- 3.2.4 **Establish rolling, flexible grant windows (including rapid-response tranches) for local and veteran-led NGOs and community centers** to deliver outreach, mobile/home-based care, and family reintegration services, with simplified reporting and rural coverage requirements (*addresses Sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.4.2*).

3.3 Economic Reintegration and Local Development

Economic participation was identified as a key factor in fostering dignity and belonging among veterans. Participants highlighted ongoing barriers such as stigma, a lack of employer incentives, limited access to credit, and uneven local job creation. Economic reintegration must connect individual livelihoods with broader community recovery. Recommendations include the following:

- 3.3.1 **Scale and simplify veteran- and family-run enterprise support** with easy micro-grants, structured mentorship, and enforceable procurement set-asides backed by certification and outcome tracking (*responds to Sections 2.1.3, 2.4.2*).
- 3.3.2 **Establish a unified public-private partnership (PPP) regime** that pairs wage subsidies and targeted tax credits with veteran-friendly certification and integrated retraining vouchers. Make it accessible to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and audited for hiring, retention, and workplace accommodation outcomes (*addresses Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3*).
- 3.3.3 **Set veteran- and family-focused targets in municipal plans** with ring-fenced budgets, veteran councils, and Diia-linked monitoring to ensure substantive compliance. Align with data-driven forecasts for reconstruction, infrastructure, and rural revitalization, including rural outreach via veteran spaces/mobile teams. Ensure municipalities have sufficient human, technical, and financial resources to integrate these targets effectively (*responds to Section 2.1.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.2*).
- 3.3.4 **Consolidate fragmented efforts to establish veteran hubs in universities and vocational schools to anchor oblast-level economic hubs that co-locate retraining, business incubation, and procurement/market access.** Networked with [Diia.Business](#), grassroots, and municipal veteran spaces, extended via mobile rural teams, financed through blended instruments, and audited on placement, contracts, and 12–24-month firm survival (*responds to Sections 2.4.2, 2.4.3*).

3.4 Social Perception and Public Awareness

Negative stereotypes and social fatigue toward veterans undermine their social reintegration and employment opportunities. Veterans report being perceived through a lens of pathology rather than capability, while public recognition remains inconsistent. Building positive social narratives requires deliberate state- and multi-sector coalition-led communication and civic engagement strategies. Recommendations include the following:

- 3.4.1 **Launch market research-driven national communication campaign that is co-created with veterans, their families, and media partners** to promote public respect, inclusion, and accurate understanding of veterans' service and civic contributions, aligned with Ukraine's broader social reintegration and education initiatives (*addresses Sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3*).
- 3.4.2 **Establish an Official Veterans Recognition Insignia Program** that provides veterans verified through the e-Veteran ID system with distinctive civilian identification that may be worn in public and professional settings to restore symbolic visibility and dignity without generating security risks (*responds to Sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3*).
- 3.4.3 **Integrate standardized veteran awareness and reintegration education into school curricula and workplace training** to reduce stigma, promote inclusion, and prepare communities to support veterans and their families (*addresses Sections 2.1.4, 2.2.1*).



- 3.4.4 **Expand coordinated partnerships among media, cultural institutions, and local councils to celebrate veterans' diverse contributions** through inclusive exhibitions, public art, and storytelling that portray veterans as **multifaceted individuals beyond their military identity**, fostering public understanding and social cohesion (*responds to Sections 2.1.4, 2.2.2, 2.2.3*).

3.5 Veteran-Led and Peer-to-Peer Solutions

Veteran-led organizations and peer networks consistently surfaced in narratives related to trust and uptake of services. Yet their engagement in decision-making and funding pipelines remains limited. Empowering these actors enhances legitimacy, innovation, and sustainability within the reintegration ecosystem. Recommendations include the following:

- 3.5.1 **Establish a Veteran Peer-Led Integration Fund to provide sustainable financing** for veteran-governed organizations that integrate mental health support, economic reintegration, and community cohesion—filling the gap between individual business grants and traditional NGO service provision within Ukraine's broader veteran reintegration system (*addresses Section 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.4.1, 2.4.2*).
- 3.5.2 **Institutionalize multi-level consultative councils that grant veteran organizations formal, resourced, and gender-inclusive roles in policymaking** at national and local levels, ensuring their input is systematically integrated into legislation and implementation (*responds to Section 2.1.4, 2.4.1, 2.4.2*).
- 3.5.3 **Align existing capacity support systems across all sectors and eliminate redundancies**, leveraging the efficiency gains to **establish a national Veteran NGO Compliance and Capacity Support System** that provides free legal, financial, and operational training to help veteran-led organizations, especially smaller, rural, and grassroots peer-led groups, meet donor and government partnership standards sustainably and inclusively. Prioritize organizations that advance community well-being and development to reduce risks of unintended adverse effects on social cohesion (*responds to Sections 2.4.2, 2.4.3*).
- 3.5.4 **Support bottom-up development of a national veteran mentorship and exchange framework** that connects regional and international initiatives to strengthen peer networks, leadership development, and policy advocacy, with equitable access for women, rural, and frontline veterans (*addresses Section 2.1.4, 2.4.1, 2.4.3*).

4. Conclusion

Ukraine's reintegration landscape reveals a fundamental tension: extensive policy frameworks exist alongside fragmented implementation, while veterans themselves have built trusted peer networks and local solutions that formal institutions have yet to fully integrate or resource. Sustainable reintegration depends both on programmatic expansion and establishing a unified, coordinated, cross-sector governance structure that leverages data systems and participatory co-production to translate formal commitments to consistent, locally grounded and relevant support. At the same time, this architecture can reduce redundancies and inefficiencies in financing and delivery that, when grounded in ongoing empirical data collection, assessment, and dynamic learning, can put existing resources to better use rather than depending entirely on the infusion of additional forms of capital.

The findings across micro, meso, and macro levels demonstrate that effective reintegration must simultaneously address individual psychological and material needs, counter persistent social stigma through narrative coherence and symbolic recognition and build institutional capacity that responds to geographic and demographic variation rather than imposing uniform and urban-centric models. Veteran-led initiatives illuminate the path forward: when those with lived experience are recognized as policy co-producers and equipped with sustained resources, they are better positioned to deliver more adaptive, trusted solutions than externally designed programs. The recommendations presented here provide a roadmap for aligning Ukraine's reintegration systems with these realities, ensuring that the transition from military to civilian life becomes a guaranteed process anchored in dignity, coordination, and shared ownership rather than a geographic lottery and dependence on the commitment, will, and capabilities of individual officials within implementing organizations.

Table 5: Policy Recommendation Stakeholder & Implementation Matrix

Lead & Supporting Sectors					Priority	Resource Requirements
 National Gov	 Local Gov	 Private Sector	 NGOs	 Media	 High	\$ Existing
 Veteran & Civil Society		 Universities/ Think Tanks			 Medium	\$\$ Reallocation
 Development/Humanitarian/INGOs		 Foundations/Private Donors			 Strategic	\$\$\$ New Funding

Recommendation	Lead & Supporting Sectors	Priority	Resources	Dependencies and Sequencing
3.1.1 Institutionalize inter-ministerial & regional coordination	  		\$\$	Foundation for all subsequent reforms
3.1.2 Unified reintegration data & case management systems	 		\$\$\$	Precedes dashboard (3.1.3)
3.1.3 Cross-sector digital reintegration dashboard	  		\$\$	Dependent on 3.1.2
3.1.4 Regular tiered coordination meetings	  		\$	Links to Veterans Policy Strategy 2030
3.1.5 Differentiated research on veteran categories (POWs, Donbas vs. post-2022, gender, disability, region, identity)	  		\$\$	Feeds into all monitoring and evidence-based policy and program efforts
3.2.1 National MHPSS network	  		\$\$\$	Requires certification scheme (3.2.3)
3.2.2 Family-centered psychosocial programming	  		\$\$	Builds on MPHSS network (3.2.1)
3.2.3 MHPSS competency-based certification regime	 		\$\$\$	Precondition for 3.2.2.
3.2.4 Flexible grant windows for NGOs/community centers	  		\$\$	Supports rural service expansion and decentralization

Recommendation	Lead & Supporting Sectors	Priority	Resources	Dependencies and Sequencing
3.3.1 Veteran/family enterprise microgrants & mentorship	  		\$\$	Feeds into PPP Framework (3.3.2)
3.3.2 PPP regime for veteran hiring & tax incentives	 		\$\$	Builds on 3.3.1 outcomes
3.3.3 Municipal employment targets for veterans	 		\$	Parallel to 3.3.4
3.3.4 Oblast-level economic hubs	  		\$\$\$	Requires PPP framework (3.3.2)
3.4.1 National veteran inclusion communications campaign	  		\$\$	Quick start for awareness
3.4.2 Official Veteran Recognition Insignia Program	 		\$	Linked to e-Veteran ID
3.4.3 Veteran awareness in schools/workplaces	  		\$\$	Curriculum alignment needed
3.4.4 Cultural partnerships for veteran storytelling	  		\$\$\$	Extends market research-driven public narrative (3.4.1)
3.5.1 Veteran Peer-Led Integration Fund	  		\$\$\$	Expands NGO grants (3.2.4)
3.5.2 Multi-level consultative councils	  		\$	Feeds coordination mechanisms
3.5.3 Veteran NGO Compliance & Capacity Support System	  		\$\$	Parallel to 3.3.4 setup
3.5.4 National mentorship & exchange framework	  		\$\$	Builds on 3.5.1 peer fund



ABOUT THE CORIOLI INSTITUTE

The Corioli Institute is a think-and-do tank dedicated to (re)building social cohesion and sustainable futures among individuals and communities affected by violence. We recognize that enhancing social, psychological, economic, and climate security, among many other factors, is fundamental to holistic recovery and peacebuilding.

We engage with formerly armed actors and their receiving communities to enhance the resource commons, fostering environments where trust and social cohesion can be cultivated. We leverage a fully participatory, data-driven approach of “nothing about us without us” with all project partners as a part of our zero-waste funding philosophy, in which every dollar spent serves the community's actual needs.



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