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Research-based Policy Paper

# Track III Dialogues in Ukraine: Major Patterns and Resulting Risks

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**Authors:**

**Tatiana Kyselova,**  
Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies,  
Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

**Julia v. Dobeneck,** Center for Peace Mediation,  
European University Viadrina

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Authors: Tatiana Kyselova, Julia von Dobeneck

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies  
Kyiv-Mohyla Academy  
2 Skovorody vul., Kyiv 04070, Ukraine  
<http://jmce.ukma.edu.ua>

Center for Peace Mediation · European University Viadrina  
Große Scharrnstraße 59, 15230 Frankfurt (Oder), Germany  
[www.peacemediation.de](http://www.peacemediation.de)

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## Executive Summary

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The overall aim of the research project “Challenges to Dialogue in Ukraine”<sup>1</sup> (2016-2017) was to explore and explain the current challenges of dialogues at Track III in Ukraine. Empirical data from 40 in-depth interviews and three focus groups revealed the following six patterns and possible risks if the patterns are continued:

» 1) Different dialogue concepts and an overuse of the term “dialogue” risk to undermine its value and add complexity to an already blurred definition of dialogue as a means of conflict transformation.

» 2) Not many facilitated dialogues are taking place and of those few, most focus on technical issues while existential dialogues remain rare.

» 3) Facilitated dialogues are concentrated in the Eastern part of the government-controlled territories, leading to further societal polarization.

» 4) Focus on mainstream political views in dialogues may cause further exclusion of people who do not support political mainstream ideas (“the other Ukrainians”).

» 5) In contrast, women are overrepresented at Track III dialogues while lacking influence on decision-making.

» 6) These patterns are underpinned by poorly coordinated short-term interventions, low conflict expertise of implementers and funders, little connection of dialogue supply to local facilitation needs, a lack of cross-fertilization of societal tracks, as well as minimal post-dialogue support – all together labeled “parachuting” approaches – leading to low impact.

We assume that although some patterns observed are worrying and the associated risks substantial, the societal costs of having no dialogues at Track III in Ukraine would be even higher.

<sup>1</sup> This is a project of the research group of Tatiana Kyselova (Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in EU Studies/Kyiv-Mohyla Academy), Lars Kirchhoff, Anne Isabel Kraus and Julia von Doben-  
eck (Center for Peace Mediation). In 2016 and 2017, Tatiana Kyselova conducted three focus groups and 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews with Ukrainian and international dialogue facilitators, dialogue participants and individuals from organizations such as the OSCE and the United Nations and international donor organizations active in Ukraine. The research also included the analysis of Internet sources and policy documents. For further information on the research project, please see: <http://www.peacemediation.de/expert-round-table.html>. For information on the methodology and detailed research findings, please see the Research Report <http://www.peacemediation.de/ukraineresearchreport.html>

# 1. Introduction

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The aim of this paper is to transfer the findings of the research project “Challenges to Dialogue in Ukraine” (2016-2017) to dialogue experts and actors including donor institutions and policy makers based or engaged in Ukraine in order to help them make informed decisions on implementation strategies and process design of dialogues.

Our research starting point was the observation that efforts to conduct dialogue addressing the current societal and political crisis in Ukraine<sup>2</sup> encounter considerable challenges, sometimes insurmountable. As far as the authors know, this project is the first attempt at a scientific examination of Track III dialogue approaches in Ukraine. The research relies on qualitative methodology and diagnoses the general patterns, possible reasons and risks if these patterns are continued, but does not allow for precise estimation about the scale or quantitative characteristics of the identified patterns. Nor does it assess the identified patterns against the background of a normative approach to facilitated dialogue, its methods, or the measurement of its societal impact.

**Definition of Dialogue:** There are no global standard definitions for dialogue as a means of conflict management or conflict transformation, although the term is widely used by practitioners referring to different elements or concepts of dialogue and different methodical approaches.<sup>3</sup> This pre-existing conceptual unclarity is mirrored in Ukraine, where the interviewees of this study have a rather intuitive yet clear understanding about what can and what cannot (see pattern 1) be termed dialogue in the sense of means for conflict transformation. Thus, interviewees referred (directly or indirectly) to **dialogues as specially prepared meetings between people or groups of people facilitated by a third party with the aim of building mutual trust and/or making a joint decision (hereinafter “facilitated dialogues”)**.

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<sup>2</sup> For the context of the conflict, see Research Report <http://www.peacemediation.de/ukraineresearchreport.html>

<sup>3</sup> N. Ropers, “From Resolution to Transformation: The Role of Dialogue Projects,” in: Berghof Handbook, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004; available at: [http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/ropers\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/ropers_handbook.pdf). T. Paffenholz, “Dialogues in Peace and Mediation Processes,” in: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative Report, 2016; available at: <http://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IP-TI-National-Dialogues-12-pager.pdf>. A. Feller / K. Ryan, “Definition, Necessity, and Nansen: Efficacy of Dialogue in Peacebuilding,” 29(4) Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 2012. OSCE Reference Guide “Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation in the OSCE”; available at: <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/126646?download=true>.

## 2. Key Patterns, Reasons and Risks



### Pattern 1: Different Dialogue Concepts and an Overuse of the Term “Dialogue” Risk to Undermine its Value

The interviewees in this study<sup>4</sup> said that dialogue has become a buzzword and the number of dialogue projects in Ukraine is very high compared to other conflict locations (a phenomenon termed “dialogue profanation” by one interviewee).

Many one-time events such as debates, film-discussions, live libraries, conflict analysis meetings, and strategic communication events organized by various actors in Ukraine are called “dialogues,” but in the opinion of the interviewees these are not true dialogues because they aim neither at mutual trust-building, nor at decision making and problem-solving.

There also are many projects whose titles contain the word “dialogue” but focus on public awareness about peace and tolerance, student exchanges, intercultural school and university curriculum, peace journalism, culture of political decision-making and other issues that generally promote a culture of dialogue and peace-building in Ukraine, but do not result in actual meetings around a table. In a similar vein, many dialogue projects are focused on capacity building without a clear understanding that training does not automatically translate into facilitated dialogues (see also pattern 6). Although these are valuable peace-building activities, interviewees in this study suggested distinguishing them from facilitated dialogues.

**Possible reasons** for the proliferation of dialogue projects (not fulfilling the interviewees’ criteria of facilitated dialogues):

- Inflow of international peace-building organizations and, subsequently, a crowded field of actors
- Increased funding opportunities under the umbrella of peace-building and reconciliation
- Low expertise in conflict resolution on the part of donors as well as local implementers (see pattern 6), and subsequently low awareness regarding conceptual issues
- Local implementers applying for and using funds with the preliminary aim to maintain their own organization, not necessarily aiming at facilitating dialogue (“grant-eating”)
- Hesitance to invest substantial efforts and resources into preparation and facilitation of dialogues

The lack of clarity regarding dialogue concepts and the consequences of this vagueness encouraged Ukrainian mediators and facilitators to seek a common understanding of the term.<sup>5</sup> Interviewees remarked that overuse of the term contributes to dialogue fatigue and a perception of dialogues as “empty talks” that – if continued – in the authors’ opinion risks an inflation of the value of dialogue and adds complexity to its already blurred definition as a means of conflict transformation.

<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter the source of research findings refers to information obtained through focus groups and interviews. Where the source is different it is directly mentioned in the text.

<sup>5</sup> One of the public outcomes is the definition of dialogue and its major principles in the online course “How to Efficiently Plan and Conduct Dialogue”; available at: [https://courses.prometheus.org.ua/courses/OSCE/DIAL101/2017\\_T1/about](https://courses.prometheus.org.ua/courses/OSCE/DIAL101/2017_T1/about).

*“Now everything is called by a fashionable name: ‘dialogue.’ Debates are dialogues, round-tables are dialogues, sitting and shouting at each other is a dialogue.... ‘Shuster-show’ is also a dialogue.”*

Ukrainian dialogue facilitator



## Pattern 2: Focus on “Technical” Instead of “Existential” Issues Bears Unclear Risks

According to the interviewees, not many facilitated dialogues are taking place and if they do, most focus on technical issues (also referred to as problem-solving or result-oriented), such as the decentralization reform, the inclusion of local civil society into community decision-making, the solving of community problems, the integration of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Facilitated dialogues

*“The prevalent thinking of the international community is... that they want to in a way bypass the obvious: that it is a political conflict, that Russia is involved and so on. They bypass it by trying to find issues that are technical, because technical issues can be solved; you just find the right technology and you bring it here and the solution will somehow come.”*

International dialogue expert

that deal with hot existential issues (also called identity- or value-oriented issues) regarding societal stereotypes, reconciliation, tolerance, various narratives of the conflict, historical memories, etc., are rare. Although existential dimensions can be raised also within technical dialogues (for example the question of East-West stereotypes in dialogues on humanitarian aid to IDPs), some interviewees indicated that attempts to raise existential dimensions within technical dialogues were rare and unsuccessful.

*“They are shying away from the hard issues. They agree they need dialogues, they agree they need to ring a bell, they agree they need to co-operate because there’s no single person who is seen as trustworthy from all sides. But they still shy away from tackling the hard questions, like getting along with the 2nd of May events in Odessa... They rather want to do some social dialogues on the kind of problems that IDPs have, which is good but not enough.”*

International dialogue expert

The focus on technical issues is confirmed by the Dialogue Support Platform, which lists issues discussed in various Track III dialogues in Ukraine in 2015-2016: 90 out of 110 listed issues can be regarded as technical (judged by their titles).<sup>6</sup>

**Possible reasons** for the focus on technical issues include:

- The use of technical dialogues as a strategy that teaches people to talk to each other in a depoliticized context as a prelude to later discussion of hot issues (according to some interviewees this is the only feasible strategy in the East)
- The polarized context (including the interest of political elites in maintaining societal divisions rather than promoting political unification) not being conducive to facilitated existential dialogues and a reconciliation discourse
- The high interest of mass media in facilitated existential dialogues and the likelihood of their immediate politicization, even when conducted solely within the government-controlled territories

Overall, there was no agreement among the interviewees about what types of facilitated dialogues – technical or existential – are most needed in or most suited to the Ukrainian Track III context. Nevertheless, the interviewees pointed to the potential of existential dialogues, in particular those focusing on historical memory or the future of Ukraine, to connect Ukrainians and ultimately lead to societal transformation.

The potential risks of a continued emphasis on technical issues over existential ones remain unclear. The only possible negative consequence that became apparent in this study refers to “the other Ukrainians” who may remain excluded if the focus on technical issues persists (see also pattern 4).

<sup>6</sup> Ukraine Dialogue Support Platform: <http://ukraine.dialoguesupport.org/en/tags>.



### Pattern 3: Geographical Focus on the East of Ukrainian/Government Controlled Territories Risks Further Societal Polarization

Most facilitated dialogue initiatives take place inside the government-controlled territories and are geographically focused on the Eastern part of Ukraine, which is most affected by the armed conflict. According to the interviewees and an analysis of Internet sources, since 2014 only a handful of facilitated dialogues at Track III have involved people from the non-government controlled territories (“cross-contact-line” – hereinafter CCL dialogues) or Russian civil society groups (hereinafter Russian-Ukrainian dialogues). The pattern seems to continue in 2017 despite the Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories having given a green light to facilitated CCL dialogues in its 2017 Action Plan.<sup>7</sup>

**Possible reasons** for the focus on the Eastern Ukrainian territories controlled by the Ukrainian government include:

- Limited resources of the Ukrainian government and the international community restricting the area of engagement
- Need to concentrate on a selected region to produce meaningful results
- Eastern Ukraine accommodating the highest number of IDPs and local communities with humanitarian needs, leading to required support

Additionally, the following **challenges regarding facilitating CCL and Russian-Ukrainian dialogues** were seen as reasons for the “safer” focus on government controlled territories:

- Societal and political bias against contacts with Russians and people from non-government controlled territories during wartime
- Possibilities of political manipulations and accusations of collaboration with “the aggressor” if facilitated CCL and Russian-Ukrainian dialogues are held<sup>8</sup>
- High security risks for people from non-government controlled territories when participating in facilitated dialogues
- Unclear status and minimal societal influence of civil society from non-government controlled territories as well as Russia and a subsequent unclarity regarding whom to involve
- Logistical problems for facilitated CCL and Russian-Ukrainian dialogues including difficulties of finding neutral venues and obtaining visas for participants

Interviewees argued that a focus on the Eastern territories controlled by the Ukrainian government is perceived as unequal resource distribution, which actually increases rather than decreases polarization and divisions between East and West. Ukrainian facilitators would therefore invest their efforts in dialogue facilitation inside entire Ukraine (all parts of it) while the impetus for CCL and Russian-Ukrainian dialogue facilitation comes mostly from the international community based on experience in other conflict zones. The interviewees did not suggest increasing the number of CCL and Russian-Ukrainian dialogue facilitations but rather improving their quality, including a strategic systematic approach to process design and a connection to the political Track I process (see pattern 6).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories Action Plan on Domestic Policy Regarding Certain Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions where State Authorities Temporarily do not Exercise Their Power, 11 January, 2017, available at: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8-2017-%D1%80>

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, “Under the Cover of Peace and Women”: NGO Statement, 5 March 2017; available at: <http://www.ukrpress.info/2017/03/05/pid-prikrittyam-miru-y-zhinok-zayava-nou/>. The authors of the statement were thirteen Ukrainian women activists. Inter alia, they asked to “establish a Parliamentary Commission to investigate the activity of peace-building initiatives that are carried out under cover of women and human rights movements.” Although admittedly this clash between two groups of NGOs has to do with the interpersonal relations between their leaders, it still demonstrates the deep polarization of Ukrainian civil society on peace building and reconciliation issues.

*“Things that happened to Crimea and the East are symptoms. This is not a disease but rather symptoms of a disease that affects the whole country. When you start treating only external symptoms the disease gets worse. And this is very threatening. The focus on the East is not only artificial; it leads to conflicts inside the community. [People say]: ‘We had shelling, and you didn’t; humanitarian aid went there, they built a new school here, but not there. You have safely survived 70 km [from the frontline] and applied for that project and got it...’”*

Ukrainian dialogue facilitator



## Pattern 4: Focus on Mainstream Political Views in Dialogues Risks Further Exclusion of “the other Ukrainians”

The interviewees were concerned that Ukrainians who do not support the current political mainstream views represent one societal group that is largely excluded from facilitated dialogues. No term seemed to describe this group exhaustively, therefore the authors adopted the term “the other Ukrainians” from interviewees to indicate excluded political views.<sup>9</sup> The other Ukrainians may oppose joining EU and NATO and be critical of the current Ukrainian government. Sometimes they are referred to as anti-Maidan, pro-Russian, pro-federalist, Donbas Ukrainians, or anti-European Ukrainians, but none of these labels captures all aspects.<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this research, the analytical category of “the other Ukrainians” should be distinguished from the “people from non-government-controlled territories” because the latter are treated as a separate analytical category. Therefore, “the other Ukrainians” refers only to people holding non-mainstream political views and living within governmentally controlled territories.

**Possible reasons** for the exclusion of “the other Ukrainians” include:

- The current mainstream political discourse excludes and marginalizes “the other Ukrainians.” Involving them in facilitated dialogues would exacerbate tensions with mainstream politics.
- A discourse of inclusiveness related to facilitated dialogue does not exist in governmental rhetoric and is profoundly missing from the professional community of dialogue facilitators, albeit a few organizations of mediators and facilitators use inclusivity strategically as their own organizational brand.
- “The other Ukrainians” are not desperate to take part in facilitated dialogues as many currently suffer from economic depression and psychological trauma, and fear retribution for their non-mainstream political ideas.
- International documents<sup>11</sup> and governmental policies<sup>12</sup> that deal with peace building and facilitated dialogues do not mention “the other Ukrainians” as the target of inclusion.

The authors suppose that a continued focus on technical issues might unintentionally contribute to a further exclusion of “the other Ukrainians” because problem solving does not always require the representation of opposing political views among participants. The authors assume that if the exclusion of “the other Ukrainians” from many facilitated dialogues remains unheeded by the international community, the Ukrainian government and civil society, this pattern may contribute to further societal polarization.

<sup>9</sup> The term “the other Ukrainians” is also used by A. Wilson to describe a similar “group” of people: A. Wilson, “The Ukrainians - Unexpected Nation”; Yale University Press, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> In one study, conducted in Odessa in 2015, interviewees were very cautious about applying simplistic labels, especially binary distinctions (such as Pro-Russian/Pro-Ukrainian or Pro-/Anti-Maidan), and described their own political position with specific, self-chosen labels or terms covering a wide range of perspectives. Kerber/Kraus: “Dialogue in Odessa, Ukraine” Research Report, Center for Peace Mediation, available at: [http://www.peacemediation.de/uploads/7/3/9/1/73911539/odessa\\_dialogue\\_study.pdf](http://www.peacemediation.de/uploads/7/3/9/1/73911539/odessa_dialogue_study.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> UN/EU/World Bank “Ukraine Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment”; available at: <http://www.un.org.ua/en/publications-and-reports/un-in-ukraine-publications/3738-ukraine-recovery-and-peacebuilding-plan-volume-2>.

<sup>12</sup> The Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories Action Plan aimed at the implementation of certain fundamentals of domestic policy regarding certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, where state authorities temporarily do not exercise their power”, 11 January, 2017, available at: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8-2017-%D1%80>. Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories, Draft State Program on Recovery and Peacebuilding in Eastern Regions of Ukraine; available at: <http://mtot.gov.ua/uvaga-ogolosheno-provedennya-gromadskiyh-publichnyh-obgovoren-proektu-derzhavnoyi-tsilovoyi-programy-vidnovlennya-ta-rozbudovy-muru-v-shidnyh-regionah-ukrayiny/>. Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, National Action Plan on Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security”, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/113-2016-%D1%80/print1493904687523518#n11>.

*“The current spirit of patriotism deters people who think differently. In my dialogue practice... only 10% of participants held other views and ideas; for example seeing Maidan differently. Perhaps there were more of them but only those [10%] spoke openly at the dialogues. And it troubles me because these people live everywhere – in Kyiv, Poltava. In Kremenchug tonight someone broke the memorial plaques to ATO [Anti-Terrorist Operation] soldiers. We do not know who these people were but it is an aggression against patriotic orientation. And this is the problem: These people were not heard and they feel some kind of threat.”*

Ukrainian dialogue facilitator





## Pattern 5: Quantitative Overrepresentation of Women at Track III Not Leading to Qualitative Influence

Women are the only population segment expressly mentioned in all analyzed policy documents of the international community and the Ukrainian government as a target of inclusion in dialogue facilitations and peace processes.<sup>13</sup> However, according to the interviewees, women in fact represent around 75% of Ukrainian dialogue facilitators and the majority of participants in most facilitated dialogues at Track III. In contrast, the interviews suggested that women – along with other civil society groups – are excluded from Track I and possibly also from Track II. Thus, in quantitative terms, an asymmetrical representation of women can be observed – they are overrepresented at Track III and excluded from Track I. At the same time, interviewees noted that women lack qualitative influence at all tracks when, for example, ultimate decisions are made without women or disregard women’s issues.

*“We aim to increase the involvement of national minorities and women in peace building. But with women it is all right, here they are more actively involved than men. We have a deficit of men who have time to take part in these initiatives. Men are very valuable human resources for us. These are generally businessmen who have a bit more free time than those men who are busy at work [for others]. This is indeed a valuable resource.”*

Ukrainian dialogue facilitator

**Possible reasons** for overrepresentation of women and their lack of influence:

- Traditional gender stereotypes prevalent in Ukrainian society lead to men being busy with earning money and having no time or incentive to take part in facilitative dialogues.
- Traditional prevalence of women within civil society translates into prevalence of women in dialogues and dialogue projects.
- Low awareness – including among women themselves – about the importance of gender-related issues such as sexual and gender-based violence precludes raising topics that are important for women in some dialogues.
- Insufficient training of facilitators in gender-sensitive methodologies precludes greater empowerment of women at the dialogue table.

Interviewees agreed that continuous insistence on quantitative representation of women in facilitated Track III dialogues may be detrimental to the effort, risking reinforcing a Ukrainian stereotype that “something that is done by and for women is not serious” – and therefore facilitated dialogues can’t be serious. The authors assume the current strategy is detrimental to the inclusion of women, as it deters attitudinal change by representing facts as achievements and camouflaging the low qualitative inclusion of women in actual decision-making.

<sup>13</sup> See notes 11 and 12, above.



## Pattern 6: Dialogue Without Sustainable Project Strategies Risks Low Impact of Dialogues

When talking about patterns regarding facilitated dialogues in Ukraine, interviewees were concerned about the potentially limited impact of facilitated dialogues given the many activities taking place. Although they were aware that the impact of facilitated dialogue in any conflict context is extended over time and difficult to measure, they nevertheless were persuaded that the impact potential of Track III facilitated dialogues in Ukraine can still be improved. This can be done even within the current macro-political and logistical constraints, provided poorly coordinated shortterm implementation approaches (“parachuting”) are decreased.

*“We observe unsystematic work. They start some projects that have neither a logical end nor a logical continuation. These projects are very isolated actions that do not have any meaning unless they are included within a system and can be continued. I have a feeling that donors do not care about this or that they hope for magic: We work six months on social cohesion in communities and we finish it, enough...”*

Ukrainian dialogue facilitator

**The reasons for “parachuting”** implementation approaches leading to low impact were numerous:

- Absence of evaluation of facilitated dialogues not allowing for tracking of results
- Absence of a systematic monitoring of facilitated dialogues at the national level and subsequent low coordination among donors, local implementers, and dialogue facilitators (and inside these groups)
- Insufficient conflict expertise and lack of deep understanding of peace building and dialogue on the part of donors having led in some instances to activities funded as “peace building” that in fact aim at strengthening national identity and patriotism
- Diverse conflict sensitivity and expertise of local implementers (while the core professional community of mediators/facilitators generally has a sufficient professional level, new players lacking expertise and experience have been receiving grants for dialogue projects, some of which end with inadequate training or even physical fights during the facilitated dialogues)
- Short time-frames of most facilitated dialogue projects (6-12 months) impeding systematic approaches
- Lack of connection of some facilitated dialogues to local needs, leading to “dialogues for the sake of dialogues” (although donor institutions or international organizations attempt to conduct feasibility studies or consultations with local actors regarding local needs and prospective process designs, many consultations ultimately remain disregarded)

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» Reasons will continue on next page »

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- Little awareness on the part of donor institutions and local implementers that many people on the ground are still not ready to talk to each other, requiring greater preparation of facilitated dialogues (from psychological trainings and tailored meetings with potential participants to awareness-raising events), which is not foreseen in many facilitated dialogue projects
- Lack of mechanisms connecting local needs to competent facilitators who can respond to a request quickly and facilitate dialogues
- Insufficient post-dialogue support to participants of facilitated dialogues – “diapaxis”<sup>14</sup> – such as support of joint activities resulting from facilitated dialogues
- Lack of post-training support to facilitators (peer supervision, internships, co-facilitation and other professional practices as well as payment of fees) enabling facilitators to apply what they have learned without immediately needing to facilitate dialogues on their own
- Civil society perception of Track I peace process as “fake” leading to low interlinkage of Tracks (some civil society activists regard their inclusion in the Track I process as meaningless and threatening to their reputation, so they do not support the results of facilitated dialogue being taken up at higher tracks)
- Lack of outreach by facilitated dialogues to mass media and the public (although some types of facilitated dialogues – like CCL or Russian-Ukrainian dialogues – do require secrecy, even purely technical dialogues facilitated at government controlled territories are currently not widely publicized and do not communicate the outcome to the broader society)

Interviewees found the above challenges to impactful facilitated dialogues could lead to a waste of limited international resources and might also increase the public perception of “dialogues as empty talks,” eventually leading to “dialogue fatigue.”

Although the flaws in impact and efficiency of dialogue projects sound familiar to many practitioners worldwide, the authors conclude that if these flaws are included in the overall picture of dialogue patterns identified in Ukraine, they seem to reinforce the risks inherent in other patterns.

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<sup>14</sup> But some positive dynamics can be observed in this question, as more dialogue projects begin to include budgets for post-dialogue activities, although the time frame for these projects still remains very short (one year).

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### 3. Implications of the Research Findings

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Based on empirical data, this research has identified major patterns of and risks to dialogues at Track III in Ukraine. Facilitated dialogues present only a minor part of all dialogue projects in Ukraine; they are focused on technical issues; concentrated in the Eastern part of Ukraine; and often implemented through impactless approaches with a deficient inclusion of women and “the other Ukrainians.” Instead of promoting a cross-fertilization between Track III and Track I, it seems that facilitated Track III dialogues in Ukraine mimic the political Track I processes in terms of exclusiveness and technical focus.<sup>15</sup>

The research group suggests that although the study has identified serious risks associated with facilitated dialogues in Ukraine, efforts to conduct dialogues should be continued, as the risk of having no facilitated dialogues would be even greater. Every day, polarization and fragmentation of society increases while societal trust and social bonds between Ukrainians deteriorate, making new outbreaks of violence in different parts of the country more likely. Facilitated dialogues along with other inclusive participatory practices may contribute to uniting Ukrainians as a political nation and ultimately to democratic societal transformations.

**Having this in mind and considering the identified patterns and potential risks, the authors conclude that after three years of peace-building and dialogue efforts in Ukraine, it is time for all actors involved to take stock and reassess implementation strategies in order to increase the impact potential of facilitated dialogues and embed them systematically within larger programs of peace building and conflict transformation.**

**While designing or reassessing the strategic approaches, special attention should be paid to the theories of change underpinning the choices of issues and geographical focus of facilitated dialogues; as well as to questions regarding the inclusion of women and “the other Ukrainians” and the impact of dialogues at various levels.**

This research was the first attempt to understand the complex Track III dialogue landscape in Ukraine. In order to formulate detailed recommendations that will help counteract the observed negative tendencies and enable positive changes, more in-depth research is required, in particular on the following questions: What are the systemic and institutional reasons for the gap between Tracks I and III and – taking these characteristics into account – how can this gap be bridged? What is the anatomy of the dilemma that might have led to the exclusion of “the other Ukrainians” from facilitated dialogues and how can it be resolved? What methodologies of dialogue monitoring can contribute to the improvement of implementation strategies? What theories of change underpin choices of issues and geographical focus of facilitated dialogues and what implementation strategies derive from these choices?

<sup>15</sup> For analysis of some challenges of the Track I processes, see R. Cristescu and D. Matveev, “The Challenge of Inclusiveness in the Peace Processes in Ukraine”, Background Paper, Civil Society Dialogue Network, 2017