

## **OSCE NATIONAL DIALOGUE PROJECT IN UKRAINE: The facts**

On 20 March 2014, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe started to deploy a team of 15 international staff to Ukraine as part of the National Dialogue project.

### **Why is the OSCE sending a National Dialogue team to Ukraine?**

Recent developments in Ukraine have put pressure on social and political cohesion in Ukrainian society. Participating States of the OSCE as the largest regional security organization have called on the Organization to assist and support Ukraine.

### **Who decided to send the National Dialogue team to Ukraine?**

The team is being deployed following a request to the OSCE from Ukraine. The project will be carried out by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine that for several years has been implementing projects in various fields at the request of the Ukrainian authorities.

### **What are the aims of the National Dialogue project?**

The project will contribute to defusing tensions by identifying areas for further targeted OSCE activities with aim of supporting dialogue between different parts of Ukrainian society. The project aims to address issues of concern for citizens and communities in different regions of the country.

### **What will the team do?**

The team will gather information about issues of concern that need to be addressed through dialogue, in particular social, humanitarian and minority issues.

The team members will be unarmed expert civilians.

### **Who will the team consist of?**

The team will consist of 15 international experts headed by a Team Leader, Ambassador Hidajet Biščević of Croatia. The team will be supported by a team of ten administration staff, interpreters and drivers. The Project Experts will be divided into five teams. They will be deployed to locations across the country starting from 27 March for three weeks as identified by the Team Leader and agreed with the government of Ukraine.

The team will also work in co-operation with the OSCE's institutions and other international organizations such as the UN and the Council of Europe.

### **How long will the project last?**

The project is expected to last four weeks.

### **Who will the team report to?**

The team will submit a final report with concrete recommendations on how the OSCE can support dialogue and restore confidence in Ukraine at the local, regional and national levels.

The team will report to the Team Leader on any restrictions to the freedom of movement or other impediments to fulfilment of their work.

## **What is the difference between the National Dialogue project and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission?**

Goals: the Special Monitoring Mission will do full-fledged monitoring of the current situation on the ground, while the National Dialogue is an assessment project meant to foster dialogue within society and pave ground for further OSCE work in Ukraine.

Size and scope: the Special Monitoring Mission is a much larger initiative (up to 500 monitors working in ten locations for six months), than National Dialogue (15 experts in five locations for four weeks).

Implementation: The Special Monitoring Team is a result of a consensus decision by all participating States of the OSCE. The launch of the National Dialogue did not require a consensus decision: it is implemented by the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine which has a mandate to plan, implement and monitor projects between the relevant authorities of Ukraine and the OSCE.

## **Is the National Dialogue project different from the OSCE military verification mission?**

Yes. The team of military and civilian experts from OSCE participating States in south and east Ukraine from 5 to 20 March were deployed as a verification mission at the request of the authorities of Ukraine. The visit took place under Chapter III of the OSCE Vienna Document 2011, which allows for voluntary hosting of visits by an OSCE participating State to dispel concerns about unusual military activities.

The composition of participants of that military verification visit and of the National Dialogue project will be different.

## **Will the team observe the early presidential elections in May?**

No. An Election Observation Mission from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is already in Ukraine to observe the preparations and campaign ahead of the 25 May 2014 early presidential election. The Election Observation Mission has been sent to Ukraine following an invitation from Ukraine's authorities.

ODIHR is the specialized institution of the OSCE dealing with elections, human rights and democratization, and observes elections across the OSCE's participating States for their conformity with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation.

The National Dialogue team will not conduct any election observation activities.

Neither this team nor any other OSCE mission or initiative conducted observation of the so-called referendum in Crimea held on 16 March 2014.

## **For the media**

Regional Advisor Konsta Akseli Heikkila ([Konsta.Heikkila@osce.org](mailto:Konsta.Heikkila@osce.org)) is co-ordinating media requests. The team will be able to comment on the goals and course of the project and their activities. However, they will not comment on their assessment of the political, social or security situation in the country.