



## **The status of Crimea in the light of public opinion**

*Results of the national poll conducted in the frames of the project  
“Initiating the Participatory National Dialogue in Ukraine”*

*(Part 2)*

### ***The perception of the Ukrainian society of the Crimean issue***

- The recognition of Crimea as a Ukrainian territory annexed by the Russian Federation prevails in Ukrainian society – 67% of the population support this opinion. Only 14% of respondents identify Crimea as a territory of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, 8% of them believe that the inclusion of Crimea in the Russian Federation was legitimate and the remaining 6% are certain that it was not. 10% of Ukrainian population consider Crimea to be the territory of neither Russia nor Ukraine, and another 8% were unable to clearly define their stand on the status of Crimea.
- The perception of Crimea as a Ukrainian territory annexed by Russia ultimately prevails in almost all regions of Ukraine – from 82.5% in the Lower Dnipro Region to 90% in Galicia. The exception is Donbas, where opinions on the status of Crimea are divided: a relative majority regards Crimea as a territory attached to Russia legally (29%), while 25% consider Crimea to be neither Ukraine nor Russia. Only 22% of Donbas residents regard Crimea as a Ukrainian territory which was annexed by the Russian Federation.

### ***The return of Crimea: urgency of the issue***

- The majority of Ukrainians (69%) believe that it is necessary to raise a question of returning Crimea to Ukraine, while 42.5% emphasize the need to do it today because Ukrainians and Tatars living on the annexed territory require protection. Another 27% think that, generally, the question has to be addressed but later.
- The stand on immediacy of discussion and policy to return Crimea prevails in Galicia (64% of region residents), Volhynia (59%), Lower Dnipro Region (49.5%), Centre (49%), Kyiv (48%), Polesia (46%), Southern West (46%), and Podolia (39%).
- The residents of Sloboda Ukraine and Northern Sea Black Coast have a different opinion on restoring Ukrainian sovereignty in Crimea. In particular, a relative majority in both regions believe that the issue of returning Crimea should be raised (Sloboda Ukraine – 49%, Northern Sea Black Coast – 65%), but they still hold an opinion that this question should not be brought up now.
- The only region in Ukraine where over half of the population does not consider the return of Crimea to Ukraine appropriate is Donbas: 39% of its residents attribute this to the fact that the residents of Crimea exercised their right of self-determination and another 16.5% believe that Crimea has always been a Russian territory, which was transferred to Ukraine illegally in 1954. However, 37% of Donbas residents support the idea of raising the question on the return of Crimea: 15.5% of them believe that this issue is urgent and must be tackled without any delays, while another 21.5% think that a viable solution to this problem is not urgent.

### ***Crimea: how to return the republic to Ukraine?***

- Ukrainian public opinion on how to return Crimea is divided into a few possible options. Thus, the prospect of returning Crimea through effective internal reforms in Ukraine and the improvement of well-being received the most support, but only about a quarter of the population, 24%, share this view. Almost the same support (21%) was given to the scenario according to which Crimea might

return as a result of the deterioration of political and economic situation in Russia, i.e. without Ukraine's concerted effort. Another 14% of Ukrainian residents believe that only military means, the deployment of Ukrainian troops, could return Crimea, and almost as many (13%) back the international pressure and sanctions of the West against Russia. At the same time, 16% of the population of Ukraine do not see any options for returning Crimea.

- Public opinion on possible ways to return Crimea varies somewhat in different regions. Thus, in Volhynia, 28% support military means to return Ukrainian autonomous republic and almost 24% see it through reform implementation. The residents of Southern West and Podolia are unanimous in their opinion: about a third of the residents of both regions believe that Crimea will return itself due to the deterioration of the situation in Russia.

- The implementation of comprehensive reforms in Ukraine as a way to regain Ukrainian statehood in Crimea is prevailing opinion in Centre (28%), Polesia (28%), Lower Dnipro Region (26%), Northern Black Sea Coast (27%) and Kyiv (29%).

- In Galicia, public opinion is almost equally split among the following methods of returning Crimea: the international pressure and sanctions against Russia (23%), internal reforms in Ukraine and welfare (22.5%), and desire of Crimea population to return to Ukraine after the deterioration of the political and economic situation in the Russian Federation (22%).

- The largest share of uncertain residents was recorded in Sloboda Ukraine, where 29% of respondents could not formulate their position on possible mechanisms to return Crimea. In addition, in Kharkiv region, the stand on the need for successful reforms (24%) as a way to return the Crimean peninsula and the disbelief that there is no way to return Crimea (24%) are equally popular among the local population.

- As regards the specific ways to re-establish sovereignty of Ukraine in Crimea, Donbas is different again from all other regions of Ukraine, having its unique opinion. Thus, 56% of Donbas residents do not see any possibility to return Crimea to Ukraine.

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*Ordered by the International Centre for Policy Studies, the poll was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with Ukrainian Sociology Service from December 25, 2014 till January 15, 2015. It covered 11 regions of Ukraine and 4413 respondents (400 respondents in all regions of Ukraine, 401 in Transcarpathia and Bukovina, 402 in Centre, 410 in Polesia).*

*The project developers defined 11 historical regions for the poll:*

1. **Volhynia** (Volyn and Rivne regions);
2. **Galicia** (Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Ternopil regions);
3. **Southern West** (Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi regions);
4. **Podolia** (Vinnytsia and Khmelnytskyi regions)
5. **Polesia** (Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Sumy and Chernihiv regions);
6. **Centre** (Cherkassy, Kirovohrad and Poltava regions);
7. **Sloboda Ukraine** (Kharkiv region);
8. **Lower Dnipro Region** (Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia regions);
9. **Northern Black Sea Coast** (Mykolaiv, Odessa and Kherson regions);
10. **Donbas** (Donetsk region);
11. **Kyiv**

*The poll was not conducted in Luhansk region and annexed Crimea. The quota sample, which was used in the survey, is representative of the population older than the age of 18 in the aforementioned regions of Ukraine by regions, types of settlement, age and sex. The margin sampling error for each region does not exceed 5.0%.*

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