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A Decade of Aid Conditionality in Ukraine: Interdependencies and Trajectories of Foreign Development Aid, Democratization, and Public Awareness

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Abstract

Over the course of the 2022-2025 years, Ukraine became the largest recipient of international aid ever for any single country in a single year (OECD, 2024).? This marked the first time that a European country has held the leading position among aid recipients since the Marshall Plan after WWII. For Ukraine, the increase in assistance numbers has become the continuation of the period of aid-policy deals that was initiated with USD 1.3 billion of foreign assistance sent by the DAC member countries to Ukraine in 2015 after the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the armed conflict with Russia in Eastern Ukraine. While the complexity of foreign development aid and its role in recipient countries raises a variety of questions, the paper analyses trajectories and looks into interdependencies between foreign aid, civil society organisations' delivery actor role, and the pace and quality of reforms. The paper provides new 2025 survey data (n=1000) showing that a total of 73.5% of Ukrainians show a high (44.9%) or middle (28.6%) level of interest in foreign aid from the EU and the U.S. Such level is comparable to the interest in primary topics such as 1) negotiations about ending the war (total 85.4%) or 2) the updates on the frontline situation (total 87.9%) signifying predominant public awareness of aid, a variable that rarely measured in recipient countries (S.E. Kim et al., 2025) but holds significant value for future studies.

Keywords: Aid-Policy Relations; Democracy Transition; East-European Countries; Foreign Assistance; War