



CIVIC ORGANIZATION “DOBROCHYN CENTRE”

RESILIENCE OF THE CHERNIHIV REGION:

PEOPLE-CENTRED RECOVERY AND PARTNERSHIP IN WARTIME

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

CHERNIHIV 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The full-scale war has fundamentally transformed the living conditions and development trajectories of communities in the Chernihiv region. Amid ongoing security challenges, demographic losses, and economic uncertainty, communities are forced to simultaneously respond to crisis situations while laying the groundwork for long-term recovery and development.

This brochure summarizes the outcomes of panel discussions held during a conference dedicated to resilience and people-centred recovery of the region in wartime. The focus is placed on practical community experience, the role of partnerships, human capital development, and the search for solutions that enable the alignment of short-term needs with long-term strategic goals.

The material is structured around two key thematic blocks. The first focuses on community resilience, the integration of security and development, the role of international partners, social cohesion, and citizen participation in recovery processes. The second block is dedicated to the synergy between education and business as a foundation for human capital development, economic recovery, and the long-term competitiveness of the region.

Special attention is given to strategic reflections and recommendations based on existing practices and community experience. The proposed approaches do not claim to be exhaustive but outline directions in which current initiatives may be strengthened, scaled, or complemented by new solutions.

This brochure is addressed to representatives of local self-government bodies, civil society organizations, businesses, educational institutions, international partners, and all those interested in the recovery of the Chernihiv region based on partnership, trust, and people-centred approaches.



RESILIENCE AND PEOPLE-CENTRED RECOVERY IN WARTIME: OUTCOMES OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION



The panel discussion focused on how communities in the Chernihiv region combine security-related responses with long-term development goals under wartime conditions. The discussion demonstrated that during war, security and development cease to be alternatives and are increasingly perceived as interconnected components of community resilience.

1 Combining Security Measures with Long-Term Community Development

The experience of Chernihiv region communities shows that in wartime, security and development are no longer competing priorities. On the contrary, their integration becomes the foundation of resilience.

Communities are required to simultaneously:

- respond to security threats (shelling, energy supply disruptions, risks to critical infrastructure);
- and lay the foundations for future development — economic, social, and educational.

A key approach has been the integration of security considerations into long-term solutions:

- shelters and backup systems are designed together with public spaces;
- energy autonomy (local generation, alternative energy sources) is viewed as an investment in development rather than solely a crisis response;
- infrastructure recovery follows the principle of “building back better,” taking into account new standards and emerging needs.

In this way, resilience before Victory (adaptation and protection) gradually transitions into resilience after Victory – strategic modernization of communities.

Integrating People-Centred Approaches into Recovery Planning

2

People-centred recovery in Chernihiv region communities has moved beyond declarations and is reflected in concrete governance decisions.

The main shift involves a change in focus:

- from “objects” to quality of life for people;
- from formal planning to meaningful resident participation.

People-centred approaches are implemented through:

- ensuring uninterrupted access to basic services (healthcare, education, social support) as a prerequisite for retaining residents in communities;
- regular communication between local authorities, residents, businesses, and civil society organizations;
- consideration of the needs of different groups — internally displaced persons, veterans, older people, and youth.

Importantly, residents already experience tangible changes today, not only in the long-term perspective:

- faster responses to community needs;
- greater openness in decision-making;
- a growing sense of shared responsibility for the future of the community.

Trust between local authorities and communities was identified as a core resource of resilience.

The Role of International Partners and Inter-Municipal Cooperation

3

Panel participants emphasized that international partners are most effective when they:

- do not replace local initiative;
- but strengthen local solutions and capacities.

The most effective forms of cooperation combine:

- financial resources;
- expertise;
- access to networks, technologies, and strategic thinking.

Inter-municipal cooperation plays a particularly important role, including:

- exchange of experience between communities;
- joint projects;
- solidarity between territories of different sizes and capacities.

Such approaches accelerate people-centred recovery and help avoid fragmented solutions.

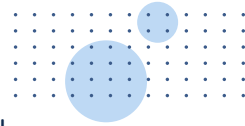
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Social Cohesion as the Foundation of Resilience

One of the strongest conclusions of the panel discussion was the recognition that community resilience is shaped not only by infrastructure, but first and foremost by social factors.

Examples of genuine social cohesion emerge where:

- strong horizontal ties exist among residents;
- civil society is active and developed;
- a culture of mutual assistance and solidarity is supported.



The war has intensified these dynamics while also acting as a catalyst for:

- community mobilization around shared challenges;
- the emergence of new local initiatives;
- the growing role of civil society organizations as intermediaries between authorities and residents.

Social cohesion was defined not as a “soft factor,” but as a critical element of security and recovery.

Youth, Volunteers, and Local Initiatives as Drivers of Resilience

5

Special attention was given to the role of youth, volunteers, and local initiatives, which:

- sustain community vitality during crises;
- shape a new culture of participation and responsibility;
- promote narratives of resilience as an alternative to narratives of vulnerability.



Youth and volunteers contribute to:

- the momentum of change within communities;
- environments of trust;
- spaces of mutual understanding between local and international levels.



Support for these groups is viewed as an investment in the future of the region rather than a temporary social measure.

Conclusion



Resilience of the Chernihiv region in wartime is the result of combining security, people-centered approaches, and partnerships, where communities, authorities, civil society, business, and international partners act as equal participants in recovery.

This approach lays the foundation for sustainable regional development - not only after Victory, but already today.



STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND PEOPLE-CENTRED RECOVERY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



The reflections presented below do not constitute an exhaustive list of actions. Rather, they outline key directions within which existing practices can be further deepened and scaled, as well as areas where new approaches may be developed.

01 Integrating Security and Development at the Local Level

The experience of communities in the Chernihiv region demonstrates the relevance of integrated approaches that combine security, crisis preparedness, and long-term development within a single planning and programming framework.

Why this matters:

Local self-government bodies operate in an environment where crisis response and strategic planning occur simultaneously. Flexible and integrated approaches increase both the effectiveness and sustainability of decisions.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- supporting multi-year and flexible programs that combine humanitarian, recovery, and development objectives;
- creating conditions for integrating security and crisis components into development and recovery projects;
- aligning recovery investments with the principle of “building back better” and EU standards from the earliest stages.

02 Developing People-Centred Governance and Continuity of Services

People-centred approaches to governance play a crucial role in maintaining social stability and trust during wartime recovery.

Why this matters:

Uninterrupted access to basic services (healthcare, education, social protection) is not only a humanitarian necessity but also a key prerequisite for retaining population and enabling long-term community development.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- supporting initiatives aimed at preserving accessibility and quality of essential services in crisis conditions;
- strengthening participation of residents, civil society organizations, and businesses in recovery planning processes;
- advancing governance practices based on transparency, accountability, and sensitivity to community needs.

03

Strengthening Institutional Capacity at the Local Level

Sustainable recovery outcomes are directly linked to the capacity and continuity of local institutions.

Why this matters:

Investments in strengthening the capacities of local self-government bodies and civil society organizations have a long-term impact and contribute to accountability and local ownership of recovery processes.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- training, mentoring, and exchange programs for representatives of local authorities and civil society organizations;
- development of coordination mechanisms for international cooperation at the local level;
- support for institutional sustainability within multi-year programs.

04

Promoting Inter-Municipal and Place-Based Cooperation

Inter-municipal cooperation is a promising tool for enhancing resilience, efficiency, and territorial cohesion.

Why this matters:

Smaller or resource-constrained communities gain additional benefits from joint solutions, coordination, and collective engagement with international partners.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- joint projects involving multiple communities;
- regional platforms for experience exchange and coordination;
- place-based approaches aligned with the principles of EU cohesion policy.

05

Recognizing Social Cohesion as a Strategic Factor of Resilience

Social cohesion is a critically important, though often underestimated, element of community resilience.

Why this matters:

Communities with high levels of social capital, trust, and civic engagement demonstrate greater capacity for adaptation and recovery under crisis conditions.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- supporting civil society organizations that act as intermediaries between authorities and residents;
- promoting initiatives aimed at strengthening horizontal ties and citizen participation;
- integrating social cohesion indicators into recovery programs and impact assessments.

06

Supporting Youth, Volunteers, and Local

Youth, volunteers, and local initiatives represent an important long-term resource for democratic resilience and human capital development.

Why this matters:

Beyond crisis response, these groups contribute to the formation of a new culture of participation, responsibility, and trust within communities.

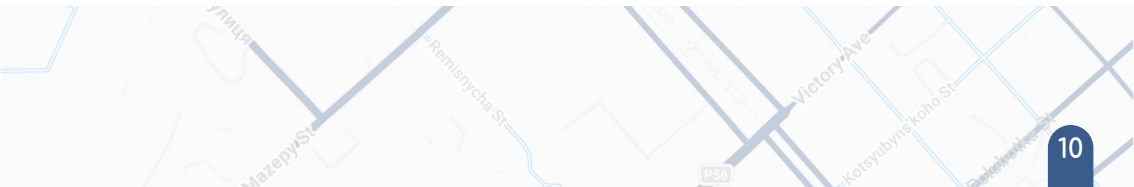
Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- engaging youth in local governance and recovery planning processes;
- supporting civic and volunteer initiatives with potential for scaling;
- implementing international exchange and learning programs for young leaders and civic activists.

07

Developing Partnership-Based Recovery

Partnership-based recovery models are particularly effective in conditions of high uncertainty and rapid change



Why this matters:

Co-created initiatives that combine local knowledge with international expertise tend to be more adaptive, trusted, and sustainable.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- engaging local stakeholders at early stages of program design;
- supporting long-term partnerships that extend beyond individual project cycles;
- facilitating community access to international networks, expertise, and strategic dialogue.

Shared Strategic Vision

The experience of the Chernihiv region demonstrates that resilience is built through the integration of security, people-centred governance, and partnership-based approaches that strengthen local capacity, trust, and social cohesion.



HOW COMMUNITIES CAN EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS



This section elaborates on practical tools for implementing the strategic approaches outlined in the previous block, with a particular focus on the role of communities in international cooperation.

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement with International Partners

Effective cooperation with international partners in the recovery process should be based on the following principles:

1 Partnership rather than donor-recipient relations — international organizations are viewed as co-creators of solutions, not merely sources of funding;

People-centred approach — recovery projects should be grounded in the real needs of community residents;

2

3 Long-term perspective — balancing emergency assistance with strategic development objectives;

Transparency and trust — openness in planning, implementation, and reporting processes;

4

5 Institutional capacity of communities — the presence of responsible structures and adequately trained personnel.

These principles were identified by conference participants and formed the foundation of the recommendations presented below.



Institutionalizing International Cooperation at the Community Level



- Establishing or strengthening international cooperation offices or designated coordinators within communities;
- Ensuring continuous engagement with international partners and advocacy of community interests at the international level;
- Defining clear entry points for donors (contact persons, English-language community profiles).

Preparing “Clear and Accessible Products” for Partners



- Developing concise community profiles, investment briefs, and project proposals;
- Highlighting not only challenges, but also ready-to-implement solutions and existing local capacities;
- Using English-language materials and visual formats (catalogues, presentations).

Strengthening the Capacities of Local Teams



- Training local government and civil society staff in:
 - donor relations;
 - grant application development;
 - international project management;
- Implementing internships and exchange programs for municipal and civil society professionals.

Rapid Joint Projects with High Visibility



- Implementing small-scale but tangible projects that deliver visible benefits to residents, particularly in:
 - education;
 - healthcare;
 - security;
 - support for internally displaced persons, veterans, and youth;
- Joint communication of results with international partners as success stories.

Transition from Project-Based to Programmatic Cooperation



- Developing regional recovery programs aligned with community priorities and international partner engagement;
- Involving donors not only in financing, but also in:
 - strategic planning;
 - provision of expertise;
 - impact assessment.

This approach was identified as key to sustainable regional recovery.

Investing in Human Capital as the Foundation of Partnership



- Prioritizing projects in the areas of:
 - education and reskilling;
 - youth development;
 - support for active citizens;
- Combining international assistance with local educational and business initiatives.

Human capital was identified as the most resilient investment in regional recovery.

Developing Inter-Municipal and International Cooperation



- Strengthening partnerships among communities in the Chernihiv region for joint engagement with donors;
- Expanding cooperation with twin cities and international associations of local authorities;
- Developing joint inter-community projects (e.g. ecology, energy security, infrastructure).

Building a New Culture of Participation



- Engaging civil society organizations, businesses, and youth in cooperation with international partners;
- Transitioning from the role of “critics” to that of co-creators of solutions;
- Embedding inclusiveness, accessibility, and participation of vulnerable groups as standard principles of recovery projects.



Implementation of the proposed tactical and strategic recommendations will contribute to:

- strengthening international partners' trust in the capacity of Chernihiv region communities to act as reliable recovery partners;
- a gradual shift from fragmented support toward more systematic approaches to recovery and development;
- enhanced community capacity to articulate priorities, define needs, and propose solutions;
- positioning the region as an example of recovery based on partnership and participation, with potential for replication in other border and conflict-affected regions.



EDUCATION AND BUSINESS – SYNERGY FOR RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT: OUTCOMES OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION



The panel discussion focused on the role of education as a key factor in human capital development and in strengthening the region's competitiveness under wartime conditions and in the post-war recovery period. Participants concentrated on identifying practical solutions that make it possible to combine short-term wartime challenges with long-term development goals for communities and the region as a whole.

BALANCING WARTIME CHALLENGES WITH STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Today, the education system operates in an environment of constant uncertainty, security risks, and demographic losses. At the same time, this period is decisive for laying the foundation for the region's future recovery.



Educational institutions in the Chernihiv region are required to simultaneously:

- adapt the learning process to crisis conditions;
- maintain the quality of education;
- and build long-term partnerships with businesses and communities.

Strategic development of education during wartime is impossible without continuous engagement with employers, a clear understanding of labour market needs, and readiness to implement flexible learning formats.

THE IMPACT OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Special attention was given to the role of higher education institutions as centres for knowledge creation, innovation, and human capital development.



Regional and national competitiveness directly depends on:

- the ability of universities to prepare specialists demanded by the economy;
- the development of applied research and innovation;
- the integration of education into regional development strategies.

Key steps to strengthen this impact include expanding partnerships with businesses, involving employers in the design of educational programs, and further developing practice-oriented learning.

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN RESPONDING TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

Vocational education and training institutions were identified as an important tool for rapidly responding to the needs of the regional labour market. Participants emphasized that this segment of education has significant potential to quickly adapt programs to business demand, particularly in the context of workforce shortages.

The most effective formats of education–business cooperation were identified as:

- dual education and on-the-job training;
- short-term certificate programs;
- business participation in the development and revision of curricula;
- establishment of joint centres for developing professional and soft skills.

BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS AND SKILLS GAPS

Business representatives articulated a clear demand toward the education system: graduates must be not only professionally trained, but also ready to work in rapidly changing environments.

Among the most critically lacking skills and competencies were identified:

- practical professional skills;
- critical thinking and the ability to learn throughout life;
- communication skills and teamwork;
- responsibility, adaptability, and initiative.

It was emphasized that businesses expect systematic cooperation from educational institutions rather than sporadic engagement, and are willing to contribute to workforce development through mentoring, internships, and joint educational initiatives.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR FUTURE COMPETITIVENESS

Panel participants reached a shared conclusion that a set of core competencies must be developed already today to ensure the competitiveness of young professionals in the medium-term perspective (3–5 years).

These include:

- professional flexibility and readiness for reskilling;
- digital skills;
- entrepreneurial thinking;
- self-management and responsibility;
- understanding of European standards and practices.

Conclusion

In the context of war and post-war recovery, education and business should not function as parallel systems, but rather as interconnected ones. Their synergy is a key prerequisite for economic resilience and the competitiveness of the region. It is precisely through aligning educational strategies with labour market needs that human capital is formed—capable of supporting community recovery and ensuring the long-term development of the Chernihiv region.

Effective education–business cooperation must be based on systemic partnership, joint development of educational programmes, the expansion of practice-oriented and dual education, as well as readiness to implement flexible formats for workforce training and retraining. Higher education and vocational education and training institutions play a particularly important role in this process, serving as centres for rapid response to workforce challenges and as hubs for developing the key competencies of the future.



STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS EDUCATION–BUSINESS SYNERGY AS THE FOUNDATION FOR REGIONAL RECOVERY AND COMPETITIVENESS



The reflections presented below do not constitute an exhaustive list of actions. Rather, they outline key directions within which existing practices may be further deepened and scaled, as well as areas where new approaches can be developed.

1 INTEGRATING EDUCATION INTO REGIONAL RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Education is viewed as one of the key drivers of regional recovery, linking responses to wartime challenges with the formation of long-term human capital.

Why this matters:

In wartime, the education system plays a critical role in preserving knowledge, skills, and development potential, while also influencing people's decisions to remain in or return to their communities after displacement.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:

- integrating educational priorities into regional and local recovery plans;
- aligning education development with the region's economic, social, and demographic challenges;
- supporting flexible learning formats adapted to wartime conditions.

2 STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ENHANCING REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Higher education plays an important role in strengthening regional competitiveness through workforce preparation, innovation, and applied knowledge.

Why this matters:

Without strong links between universities, the economy, and the labour market, regions lose opportunities for recovery, modernization, and investment attraction.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:



- systematic cooperation between higher education institutions, businesses, and communities;
- involving employers in the design and review of educational programs;
- expanding practice-oriented learning and applied research.

3 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS A TOOL FOR RAPID LABOUR MARKET RESPONSE

Vocational education and training is identified as a key mechanism for rapid adaptation to changes in the regional labour market.

Why this matters:

In the context of workforce shortages and structural economic shifts, the ability to quickly train and retrain specialists is critical for the resilience of both businesses and communities.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:



- expanding dual education and workplace-based learning;
- introducing short-term certificate programs;
- co-developing curricula with employer participation;
- establishing centres for professional and soft skills development.

4 ALIGNING BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Sustainable education-business cooperation is based on a shared understanding of expectations and needs.

Why this matters:

The gap between workforce training and actual business needs reduces the effectiveness of investments in education and constrains regional economic development.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:



- regular dialogue between educational institutions and employers;
- engaging businesses in mentoring, internships, and practical training for youth;
- fostering shared responsibility for the quality of workforce preparation.

5 BUILDING CORE COMPETENCIES FOR FUTURE COMPETITIVENESS

Developing core competencies among young people is seen as a strategic task for education in a rapidly changing environment.

Why this matters:

Competencies developed today will determine the competitiveness of professionals and the region in the medium term (3–5 years).

Further development of these approaches is possible through:



- strengthening digital and entrepreneurial skills;
- fostering professional flexibility and readiness for reskilling;
- developing self-management, responsibility, and teamwork skills;
- integrating European standards and practices into educational programs.

6 PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION, BUSINESS, AND COMMUNITIES AS THE BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Synergy between education, business, and communities is considered a key condition for sustainable regional development.

Why this matters:

Partnership-based models allow for the combination of resources, knowledge, and shared responsibility, ensuring long-term impact of investments in human capital.

Further development of these approaches is possible through:



- building long-term partnerships among educational institutions, businesses, and communities;
- coordinating initiatives within regional development strategies;
- leveraging international experience and expertise to strengthen local solutions.

Shared Strategic Vision

Education–business synergy forms the foundation for the recovery of the Chernihiv region through human capital development, enhanced competitiveness, and the creation of conditions for sustainable economic growth during wartime and after Victory.





HOW TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION–BUSINESS SYNERGY FOR REGIONAL RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT



This section outlines practical tools for implementing the strategic approaches described in the previous block.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EDUCATION–BUSINESS COOPERATION

Effective cooperation between education and business during wartime and post-war recovery should be based on the following principles:

- Partnership rather than formal cooperation - business is viewed as a co-creator of educational content, while education is a strategic partner in economic development;
- Practical orientation - educational programs should respond to real labor market needs;
- Flexibility and adaptability — the ability to respond quickly to changes in the economy and workforce demand;
- Long-term perspective - combining short-term solutions with the development of a sustainable human capital system;
- Shared responsibility - joint involvement of education institutions, businesses, communities, and authorities in training and retaining professionals in the region.

These principles were identified by panel participants and underpin the recommendations below.

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

» Short-term perspective: 6–18 months

Strengthening the Practical Component of Education



- Expanding dual education formats and workplace-based learning;
- Engaging businesses in organizing internships, placements, and mentoring programs for students and trainees;
- Introducing short-term certificate programs for rapid workforce training and reskilling.

Operational Interaction Between Education and Business



- Establishing regular dialogue platforms between educational institutions and employers;
- Involving businesses in reviewing and updating curricula;
- Developing a shared understanding of current and deficit competencies.

Supporting Youth at the Entry Stage of Professional Careers



- Developing career guidance centres and soft skills development programs;
- Informing young people about employment opportunities within the region;
- Supporting first jobs and the adaptation of young professionals in enterprises.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Medium- and long-term perspective: up to 2030

Transition to Systemic Education-Business Cooperation



- Building sustainable partnerships between educational institutions and regional enterprises;
- Institutionalizing business participation in shaping regional education policy;
- Integrating education into regional economic development strategies.

Investing in Human Capital as a Strategic Priority



- Prioritizing investments in:
 - education and vocational training;
 - adult reskilling and lifelong learning;
 - youth development and retention of professionals in the region;
- Linking educational initiatives with the development of local business and entrepreneurship.

Human capital is identified as the key and most resilient resource for regional recovery.

Developing Vocational Education as the Foundation of the Regional Labour Market



- Modernizing the material and technical base of vocational education institutions;
- Aligning training programs with real economic needs of the region;
- Expanding cooperation between vocational education providers and small and medium-sized businesses.

Fostering a Culture of Lifelong Learning



- Developing systems of continuous education for different age groups;
- Supporting reskilling and upskilling programs;
- Encouraging employers to invest in workforce competency development.

Expected Outcomes for the Region



Implementation of the proposed tactical and strategic recommendations will contribute to:

- improved alignment between education and regional labour market needs;
- increased competitiveness of businesses and regional human capital;
- retention of youth and skilled professionals within Chernihiv region communities;
- the formation of a sustainable recovery model based on synergy between education, business, communities, and authorities.



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