Ukrainian Partnership Foundation



Фонд Партнерство Україна

partnership
for Ukraine

Feasibility Study on Establishing an Environmental Foundation in Ukraine

Compiled by The Kyiv Independent Insights in November 2025
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Foreword

The idea of **establishing the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation** as the seventh member of the Environmental Partnership Foundations network in Central Europe emerged during the network's 30th anniversary celebration in Prague in October 2022.

Building on the proven success of the Partnership Foundations in the Visegrad countries, Romania, and Bulgaria, and inspired both by a desire to repay the solidarity and support that Central Europe received from US and international foundations in the 1990s and by a strong sense of solidarity with Ukraine, we launched the Partnership for Sustainable Recovery of Ukraine Programme (P4UA). At its core lies a simple conviction: **sustainable recovery must be built on trust, on the leadership of local communities**, and on the power of experience — **because seeing is believing.**

The Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation took the initiative, and in 2023 we began by organizing week-long study visits for carefully selected and highly motivated Ukrainian local leaders. **By 2026, we have delivered 18 fellowships and engaged more than 250 participants**, now connected through an active and growing network with whom we continue to work on a long-term basis. Over four years, we have enabled leaders from across Ukraine to visit inspiring projects and institutions in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Austria. This direct exposure has clearly demonstrated how relevant and transferable the transformation experience of Central Europe's newer EU member states is for Ukraine today. At the same time, it has shown us the extraordinary **resilience, creativity, and determination** of Ukrainian communities, from which we ourselves continue to learn.

We have built a strong foundation. Now it is time to take the next step. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the P4UA ecosystem, we are expanding beyond its first two pillars — **(1) a network of local leaders and (2) the transfer of experience between Ukraine and European Union countries** — by establishing a third: the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation.

Our vision is clear. The new foundation will be Ukrainian-owned, anchored in local leadership, and supported in its early phase by international partnerships and funding. It will draw on the **proven DNA of the Partnership Foundations in Central Europe**: empowering communities to address their own environmental challenges and operating as lean, agile, and solution-oriented institutions. We believe this approach can help Ukraine build not only a greener future, but also stronger communities, more resilient local institutions, and a vibrant civil society capable of shaping the country's **sustainable recovery for decades to come.**

Miroslav Kundrata
Founder and Strategic Director,
Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation

Executive Summary

This feasibility study evaluates the potential for establishing a Ukrainian environmental foundation designed to support local NGOs, community initiatives, sustainable development programs, cross-sector partnerships, and exchange of best practices.

Drawing on interviews with **thirty+ key environmental actors**, NGOs, and think tanks, the study highlights opportunities, challenges, funding realities, and strategic recommendations.

Key Findings

- The future task of tackling these environmental issues is **tremendous, especially in the frontline regions**, and environmental practices are weakened all around the country.
- The war has accentuated human resource limitations, legislative gaps, and general level of operational challenges.
- Small NGOs and community initiatives are **critical actors** and require targeted support.
- The scope of environmental problems and issues has been **enormous**, even prior to the Russian aggression starting in 2014.
- Ukraine **lacks** a permanent national foundation dedicated to environmental recovery and community-based sustainability.
- The Russian war of aggression has further dramatically **deteriorated the environmental situation**, particularly in the regions most affected by the war (including cases of ecocide, as with the Kakhovka dam destruction).
- Long-term sustainability depends on a combination of grants, private philantropy, and strategic partnerships.

Recommendations

- The Foundation's design should **build on existing civil society efforts**, avoid duplication, and respond to gaps identified by Ukrainian and international experts.
- Focus on local **micro-granting** (€2.000–20.000, depending on project type and impact) and technical support for small NGOs combined with mentoring and organisational development support.
- Maintain **independence** from state and corporate or oligarchic influence while fostering collaborative networks and cross-sector partnerships.
- Invest in **capacity building**, legal and policy advisory, and public awareness programs.
- Establish the foundation in a safe **but strategically positioned city**: Lviv, Ternopil, Rivne, Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk or Khmelnytskyi. Presence in Kyiv should be considered for advocacy and policy access. Establish the Foundation close to local communities while maintaining access to national policy processes.

> "It is necessary to develop small local organizations — teach them how to write grants and communicate."
>
> Olena Onischuk

Methodology

This study draws insights from **31 semi-structured interviews** focusing on organizational history, programs, governance, funding, challenges, and recommendations.

It further proceeds to carry out a cross-analysis of responses to identify sector-wide trends and strategic opportunities and synthesizes them into actionable **recommendations for establishing a Ukrainian environmental foundation.**

Interviews were carried out in 2024–25 with representatives of Ukrainian environmental NGOs and a set of environmental sector stakeholders. A full list of interviewees can be found in the Appendix.

This study is intended as a living document and will be further refined through consultations with Ukrainian and international stakeholders.



> **There are very few non-profit organizations currently operating exclusively in the eco-sector, and they may lose quality as most volunteers are directed towards military assistance. Building structures and independence in eco-governance could significantly improve the situation.**

Sector Mapping

International Organisations in Ukraine (examples)

Renaissance (IRF): Part of OSF Wide scope of work, environment as a minor focus, over 40 employees.

GIZ (local office): German development assistance, including environmental and climate projects.

Oak Foundation: Climate and wildlife conservation, emergency grants to Ukrainian and regional NGOs on war-related environmental issues.

Heinrich Böll Foundation: Grants and expertise for climate policy, sustainable energy, and environmental education projects.

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation: Community energy projects, environmental NGOs, roundtables on Ukraine's green reconstruction.

Greenpeace Ukraine: Green recovery, renewables and nature restoration, and nuclear hazards monitoring. 8 people local team.

UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme: Ukraine community-level environmental projects

European Climate Foundation: Climate-resilient policies, partnerships, renewable energy.

Environment People Law (EPL): Legislative drafting, compliance monitoring, litigation, 14 people team.

Association for International Affairs: Think tank facilitating expert talks on Ukrainian environmental security.

Bankwatch: Advocacy and research focused on post-war reconstruction, green recovery, and accountability.

WWF Ukraine: Research, education, advising state bodies and lobbying. Focus on forests, water, rare species.

National Level Organisations

3MIN Foundation: Expert activity for sustainable development.

Ecoaction: Leadership programs, capacity building, grant-making initiatives; Team of over 40.

Let's Do It Ukraine: Fostering volunteerism and waste management. Biggest youth movement.

MAMA-86: A network of over a dozen environmental organizations.

National Ecological Centre of Ukraine: Policy influence, conservation efforts and public awareness campaigns, 300 members.

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group: Consolidates expert and scientist efforts to protect biodiversity, over 50 professionals.

Zero Waste Alliance: Coalition of zero-waste initiatives for advocacy, sustainable resource use.

Ukrainian Climate Network: Coalition of environmental NGOs for advocacy, public mobilization.

Greencubator: Green startups, clean-tech business development.

RACSE: Advocacy, policy analysis, post-war reconstruction support, 6–8 people team.

Institute for Global Politics: Contributes to policy discourse on environmental security.

Legend:

Green – Ukrainian NGO

Brown – Ukrainian charity / foundation

Dark green – local office / active in Ukraine without local presence

The Ukrainian Partnership Foundation offers a distinct and unique combination — being a Ukrainian and Ukrainian-run foundation, while leveraging the transformational experience from Central Europe, focus on cross-sectoral partnerships and on intermediary role.

Ukrainian-owned · Community-based · Central European know-how · Partnership model · Long-term presence

Sector Description and Challenges

- Implementation of EU environmental acquis requires local monitoring, civic input into public consultations, and watchdog capacity. Current CSO capacities are insufficient to match the scale of upcoming reforms, **creating a strategic gap that a new foundation could help address.**

- Some NGOs provide consulting and training services to diversify income. Sustainability is tied to **multi-year grants and diversified funding.**

- There is heavy competition for limited grant funds. Short-term project-based financing hinders long-term planning. The war has **shifted donor and public attention toward military aid.**

On the next page you can find the key challenges of Ukrainian environmental NGOs identified in interviews carried out for this study.

> “They often lack resources, yet this level holds most of the environmental money. With better capacity, strategy, and examples of good practice, local communities could deliver far greater impact than they do today.”
>
> Iryna Stavchuk

- **Human Resources:** Shortage of qualified staff; competition with international NGOs, private sector for scarce pools of talent. Post-war labour emigration risk.

- **Funding Scarcity:** High demand for grants; dependence on foreign donors; limited local sources of funding and philanthropic activity. The problems has become especially acute after the recent reductions in international donor funding

- **War:** Interruptions in programs, restricted access to data, focus on military support. Mobilization of key personnel. Mass relocation. Workload volatility. Conflict between urgent wartime needs and environmental protection.

- **Legislative Gaps:** Weak or incomplete implementation of environmental laws; relative scarcity of technical expertise; insufficient monitoring.

- **Community Engagement:** Many small initiatives lack guidance, capacity, or funding. There is no widespread practice of using members as a source of funding.

- **Corporate Cooperation:** Limited engagement due to skepticism about CSR and environmental responsibility.

- **Coordination:** The lack of proper horizontal, nation-wide coordination.

Introduction and Justification

Ukraine stands at a **pivotal** moment in its environmental and institutional development. The full-scale war has destroyed natural habitats, strained local governance, and redirected national attention toward survival and defense. At the same time, the country's civil society has demonstrated exceptional resilience and innovation — particularly at the local level.

Within this context, the creation of the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation focused on environment and sustainability is both **timely and necessary**. Unlike short-term donor programs, **the Foundation would operate as a permanent, independent platform**, supporting local NGOs, stimulating community initiatives, and cultivating a nationwide network of environmental leadership.

Its establishment is **essential** regardless of the war's duration or outcome: Ukraine needs support in addressing both chronic and urgent environmental challenges that will only **become more severe.**

The proposed foundation would serve as a structural backbone for environmental action — empowering NGOs and their cooperation, fostering partnerships between the public, private, and civic sectors, and ensuring that **environmental recovery becomes integral to Ukraine's broader reconstruction and European integration.**

The Foundation will focus on empowering NGOs, local communities and fostering their cooperation rather than replacing or controlling existing initiatives. It will serve as a resource intermediary, enabling local actors to implement projects effectively, share expertise and build capacity.

The concept of the Foundation **builds on 34 years of successful operation of the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe** foundations in Visegrad countries, Romania and Bulgaria, and especially on the experience of the Czech Nadace Partnerství.

This was gathered over the past four years via initiatives like the Partnership for Sustainable Reconstruction of Ukraine program by the Czech Nadace Partnerstvi (Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation) which cultivated a **network of 250 local leaders**, whose skills, energy and expertise now enable broader environmental and civic action.

The establishment of the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation is grounded in **3 core realities** that justify the need for a new entity:



Limited domestic resources: Ukrainian environmental NGOs operate on minimal budgets, heavily dependent on international grants. There is no long-term domestic fund dedicated to ecological reconstruction or community-based sustainability and the capacity of both individuals and the state to support civic causes is in decline due to the war.



Unique NGO structure: Unlike Western membership-based organizations, Ukrainian NGOs tend to be expert-driven or think-tank oriented. This creates high-quality, technically skilled actors but also means that continuity, coordination, and cross-regional networking are critical for scaling impact.



Strategic opportunity: Postwar reconstruction and EU integration provide a unique chance to embed sustainability principles into regional planning, energy policy, and other related matters, creating a window to boost civic participation. This is reinforced by the decentralization reform: amalgamated territorial communities (OTHs) now hold key competencies and budgets, making them essential partners for local sustainability initiatives.

Introduction and Justification

To clarify its added value, the Foundation will apply the following logic:

Gaps & opportunities in the sector → Existing stakeholder efforts Identified whitespaces → Foundation's existing assets (networks, CEE know-how, local partners) → Suitable modes of engagement (microgrants, shared services, ecosystem building, or, where justified, independent foundation-based operations).

This ensures that the establishment of the Foundation is part of a **broader ecosystem-building strategy** rather than an isolated solution.

The Foundation can aid Ukraine in turning wartime challenges into opportunities, ensuring that local leadership, expertise, and civic engagement drive national environmental transformation.

The foundation's creation can stimulate bottom-up reform and build a **critical mass of committed local leaders** and impactful projects that would create **an avalanche effect** — strengthening the sector, promoting sustainable development, and building long-term environmental resilience in Ukraine.

In designing its operational model, the Foundation evaluated several alternatives to a standalone institution, including facilitating a national network of environmental organizations, providing shared back-office services to local CSOs, or launching a cross-sector resource hub. These alternatives remain relevant instruments that the Foundation may integrate into its long-term programming to ensure wide participation and avoid duplication.

Vision and Mission



Vision: A resilient Ukraine where local communities, civil society and responsible institutions work together to restore the environment and build a sustainable future.



Mission: To cultivate cross-sector partnerships, support ecosystem resourcing, test creative and innovative solutions, and empower local communities to lead Ukraine's ecological recovery and sustainable development.

The foundation will:

- **Support** local NGOs and community initiatives, empowering them to scale impact, share knowledge and collaborate more effectively.
- **Transfer know-how:** experience from successful European programs to Ukraine and best practices from Ukraine's resilience to the rest of Europe.
- **Bridge the gap** between policy and practice, translating environmental commitments into action.
- **Enable regional saturation** by supporting initiatives beyond the main cities — reaching mid-sized towns and rural areas where environmental awareness remains low but potential impact is high.
- **Act as a platform** for innovation, knowledge exchange, and advocacy that unites state, private, and civil actors under a shared sustainability agenda.
- **Cultivate** domestic philanthropy for environmental causes.

Niche and Unique Role

- **Cross-sectoral partnerships and intermediary role**
  Instead of pursuing a particular political agenda, the Foundation is uniquely positioned as an intermediary to maximize the impact of environmental initiatives by fostering robust cross-sectoral partnerships. It connects local community needs and government policy with private sector resources and technology, ensuring that reconstruction and sustainability efforts adhere to EU standards. This strategic role leverages diverse resources to guarantee the long-term relevance and effectiveness of green recovery programs.

- **Transformational experience from Central Europe**
  A conduit of transformation know-how, offering a crucial accelerator for Ukraine's EU path. Unlike existing foundations, it will proactively import and contextualize practical lessons — including mistakes made and successful strategies — learned during the Czech Republic's own transition to full EU membership.

  This direct, experience-based transfer of specific knowledge provides Ukraine with a tailored, accelerated roadmap that general international or local foundations cannot offer.

- **Local embeddedness and ownership**
  Being run by Ukrainian staff and located outside Kyiv helps ensure an authentic needs ownership and sustainable, long-term impact, unlike ad hoc international support. This stable presence facilitates a crucial two-way knowledge transfer, where the foundation shares Czech transformation expertise while also exporting Ukraine's unique know-how in resilience and crisis preparedness to Europe, all while gaining local leverage to influence key policies, such as environmental planning for reconstruction.

Foundation Purpose

To establish a permanent institutional vehicle capable of financing, supporting and sustaining Ukraine's environmental transformation.

It will provide continuity where donor cycles end, and capacity where local initiatives lack structure, **ensuring environmental priorities are not sidelined** in wartime or reconstruction agendas.

Specifically, it aims to:

- **Strengthen** local NGOs through microgrants, matching funds, and capacity-building programs.
- **Multi-level and collaborative governance:** Offer advisory and technical support to municipalities and communities, integrating environmental measures into reconstruction plans.
- **Encourage collaboration** between academia, business, and civil society, as well as within environment-focused civil society itself.
- **Promote civic participation and transparency** in environmental governance.
- **Create a pool of local expertise** capable of shaping long-term environmental policy and practice.

The Foundation will be designed to strengthen, not duplicate, existing mechanisms. Its role will be to provide complementary support, fill gaps in coordination capacity, and facilitate cooperation between environmental actors and the private sector, municipalities, and donors.

Why It Is Necessary to Create Ukrainian Partnership Foundation

- **Resource Scarcity**
  Ukraine's environmental sector lacks stable domestic funding sources. Most organizations rely on short-term international aid (often project grants), leading to volatility and burnout. The foundation will aim to help alleviate funding shortages and increase Ukrainian NGO sustainability.

- **Institutional Continuity**
  Many NGOs with unique competencies and know-how are at risk of closure after grant cycles end. The foundation aims to ensure long-term continuity, institutional memory, and strategic consistency.

- **European Integration**
  Meeting EU environmental and governance standards will require coordinated capacity-building and civic monitoring functions. The foundation institutionalize those across regions.

- **Decentralization & Reconstruction**
  As Ukraine rebuilds, local goverments need environmental guidance, right incentives, and partners capable of implemeniting "green recovery" principles. The foundation would bridge local authorities with environmental expertise.

- **Cross-sector Integration**
  Environmental recovery requires cooperation among municipalities, civil society, academia and private capital. The Foundation's programs would cultivate partnerships, building trust and shared goals.

- **Post-war Democratic Stability**
  A strong, independent civil society will be crucial for post-war Ukraine. The Foundation will help increase the sector's resilience and help ensure that environmental priorities are reflected in reconstruction priorities.

Instruments to Strengthen the Sector Despite Limited Resources

To overcome the scarcity of resources, the foundation will employ four key instruments:

a Micro-granting & Matching Funds

Small grants (ranging from €2–3.000 for small community events, €5–10.000 for municipalities, up to €20.000 for projects with broader impact) will be accompanied with capacity support (e.g., project writing, reporting) to support marginalized Ukrainian organizations, particularly in pilot projects aimed at sharing expertise or implementing innovative solutions.

Additionally, matching funds with local municipalities or businesses will double local impact while building ownership.

To avoid supporting formally registered but inactive NGOs while helping active CSOs grow, **grants will combine two components:**

1. **funding for direct environmental activities**

2. **tailored institutional support** (financial management, reporting, community engagement, governance).

This approach filters out non-performing actors and strengthens credible long-term partners.

b Capacity Building & Mentorship

As Ukraine rebuilds, local governments need environmental guidance and partners capable of implementing “green recovery” principles. The Foundation will support local NGOs, municipalities and community leaders through mentoring, peer learning, internships and study visits.

Moreover, the Foundation can help with the organization of internships and study tours — both within Ukraine and internationally — to help spread valuable know-how.

c Foster existing networks and expertise

Foster, further develop, and leverage the existing networks of decision-makers, Ukrainian environmental networks, and expert resources present in Ukraine with the P4UA network of 250 local leaders.

d Facilitating the spread of sustainable funding models

Help spread know-how and expertise on alternative sources of revenue for Ukrainian environmental CSOs, particularly sustainable investing. The Foundation will explore long-term sustainability mechanisms, including endowment-building and other sources of mission-aligned revenue, such as renewable energy sources.

Suggested Implementation Sequence

Phase 1: Opening the set-up process
September 2025 / June 2026

- Carry out **feasibility study** based on interviews with NGO leaders and selected experts.
- Identify an initial list candidates for the **board (3–5 people)**, including a board chair, and involve them into strategy consultations and strategic decisions (personal, funding, etc.).
- Prepare **registration set-up.**

Phase 2: Closing the set-up process
By the end of 2026

- **Fundraising** starts for the first 3 years of operation for approximately €1 Million; develop plans to create **an endowment** (sustainable investment e.g., a stake in a wind power station) for board consideration.
- **Finalize Foundation registration**, select the director and location of the headquarters.
- **Organize internships** and / or onboarding at the Central European Partnership Foundations (CZ, SK, PL, HU...).
- **Testing** solutions to deliver grants from outside Ukraine.

Phase 3: Start of operational activities
2027 and beyond

- Start **delivering grants** within Ukraine.
- Decision on **creation of an endowment**, e.g., via a minority stake in a money-generating sustainable investment.
- Implement **follow-up activities**, providing consulting support to fellows in the Czech Republic and Ukraine, and connecting them with other innovators and resources.
- Empower activities which **have been already started with the help** of the Partnership for Sustainable Reconstruction of Ukraine (P4UA) of Nadace Partnerstvi (Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation), such as LEADER Ukraine, Adapterra UA, etc.
- **Strengthening the P4UA network of local leaders** through a Ukrainian-owned P4UA platform, to help share experiences and best practices beyond the scope of the visits in Central Europe.

In designing its operational model, the Foundation evaluated several alternatives to a standalone institution, including facilitating a national network of environmental organizazations, providing shared back-office services to local CSOs, or launching a cross-sector resource hub. These alternatives remain relevant instruments that the Foundation may integrate into its long-term programming to ensure wide participation and avoid duplication.

Legal Form and Incorporation Process

Choice of Legal Form

A charitable foundation (благодійний фонд) is the most suitable organisational form for establishing an entity in Ukraine. It offers a high degree of flexibility, broad legal recognition, and allows the foreign founder to retain full governance control through a General Meeting and an appointed executive body. Unlike a charitable institution, the foundation model does not require founders to relinquish governance rights or transfer assets irrevocably, and it is far more familiar to Ukrainian authorities and partners than a charitable society.

Structuring the Foundation and Endowment

The foundation can manage an endowment directly or appoint an asset management company. A Supervisory Board may be created at the founders' discretion. If Nadace Partnerství (NaP) acts as the sole founder, it may take decisions unilaterally and exercise oversight over the executive body without the need to form a Supervisory Board.

Administrative expenses are legally capped at 20% of total annual income, though this can be adjusted by donor agreement. Ukrainian law strongly protects donor intent: changes to the purpose or timing of endowment use require explicit donor consent. For operational efficiency, the charter should outline only general provisions for endowment management, while detailed procedures should be defined in internal regulations that can be amended without state re-registration.

Permitted Activities and Legal Constraints

Charitable foundations are permitted to engage in a wide range of charitable activities, including grants, in-kind donations, free services, joint projects, public fundraising, and management of endowments. They may also conduct auxiliary economic activities and hold shares in other entities, provided all income is used exclusively for statutory purposes. The main legal constraint is a strict prohibition on providing assistance to political parties or engaging in political campaigning.

Income derived from an endowment is legally restricted to **three categories of charitable expenditure:**

- assistance to beneficiaries designated by the donor,
- implementation of charitable programmes,
- participation in joint charitable activities.

In line with charitable nature of the fund, its principal economic activity code must be indicated in the Unified State Register as:

88.99
– Other social work activities without accommodation, n. e .c.

Registration Timeline and Practical Steps

Establishing a charitable foundation in Ukraine is **comparatively swift.** Key stages include:

1. Document preparation

- Draft charter (typically drafted by lawyers **within 1 week**).
- Founder's resolution establishing the foundation.
- Notarised and apostilled identity documents for individual founders or registry extracts and ownership structure documents for foreign legal entities.

2. Power of attorney (PoA)

If the founder is not present in Ukraine, the lawyer prepares a PoA, to be notarised and apostilled abroad.

3. State registration

Once the full document package is submitted, registration is completed **within 1 business day.**

4. Obtaining non-profit status

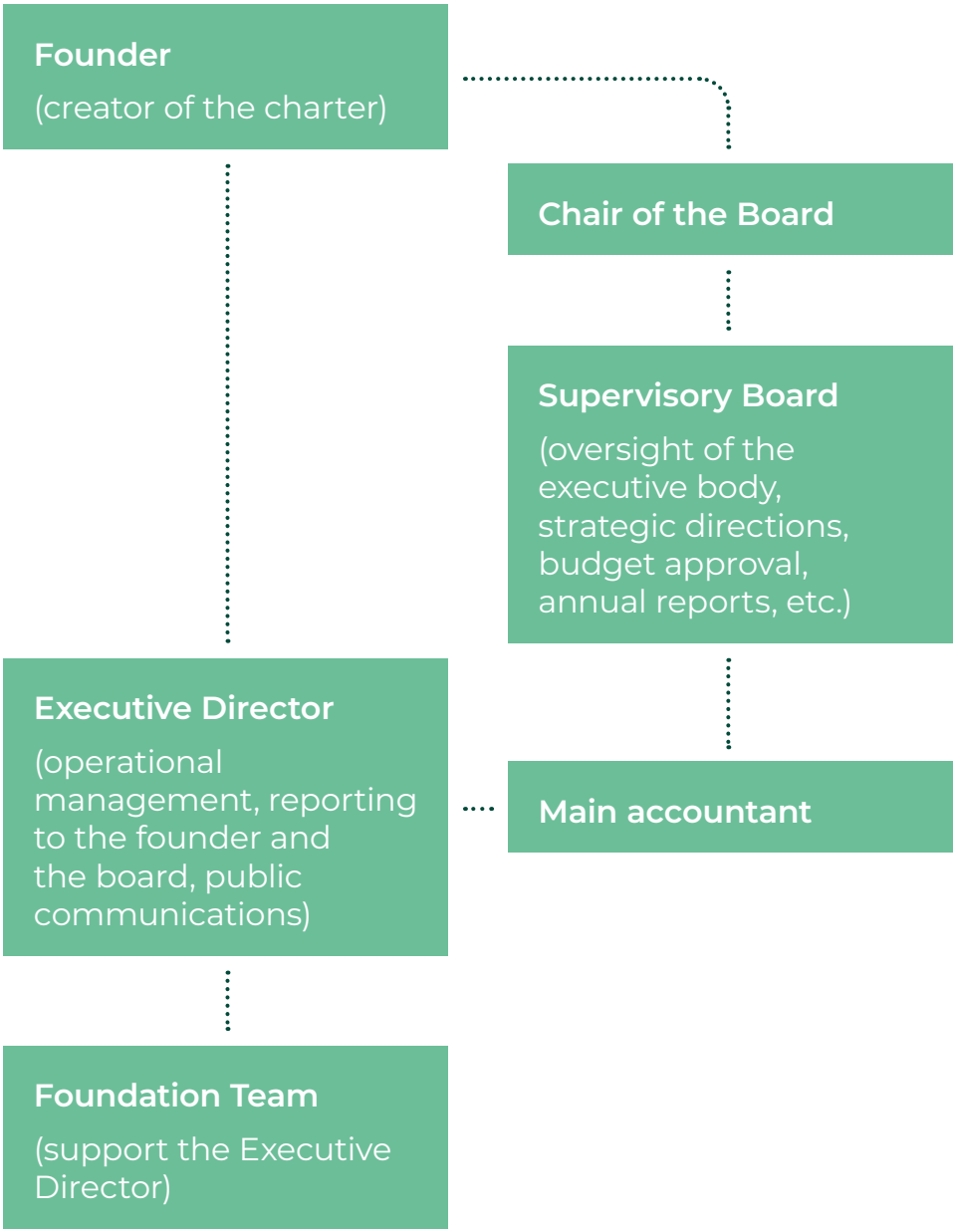
The tax authority reviews the charter and decides on inclusion in the Register of Non-Profit Organisations within **3 business days.** If technical inconsistencies arise, lawyers typically prepare amendments within **7 days.**

5. Opening a bank account

Typically requires several days to **1–2 weeks**, depending on bank compliance procedures.

Overall, the entire process — from initial drafting to a fully operational, bank-enabled, non-profit foundation — can be completed **within 3–6 weeks**, provided document preparation by the founder proceeds smoothly.

Legal and Organizational Structure



Sources of Funding



International Foundations: Raising funds from global foundations aimed at supporting environmental organizations and civic activity.



European Commission: Applying for European Commission programs, potentially within a consortium of affiliated Central European Foundations.



Private companies and philanthropies: Raising funds from private companies (corporate social responsibility) and philanthropic ventures, after careful due diligence to avoid reputational risks.



Sustainable investing: Investing into sustainable, income generating ventures (e. g. share in a wind farm) to create a de facto endowment that can support the foundation.

> Create stable jobs for locals who can gradually become the first wave of re-settlement and re-establishment of life in rural areas that were affected by war.
>
> Přemysl Šedý

Strategic Recommendations

- **Location:** Lviv, Ternopil, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Vinnytsia, Ivano Frankivsk are safer, closer to communities, have lower operational costs; Kyiv can provide access to national govern ment, ministries, and policy actors. Involvement of the P4UA network of local leaders is a great asset.

- **Governance:** Small core staff, supported by volunteers, leveraging networks, local action groups, P4UA fellows from the network, etc. The Supervisory Board provides strategic oversight. Focus on an intermediary role between government, corporations, and CSOs.

- **Reputation & Apolitical Stance:** Ukraine has a history of pseudo-environmental organizations being instrumentalized for business or political interests. The Foundation should adopt internal policies, due diligence mechanisms, and partner-screening procedures to prevent association with such actors and protect the integrity of its grantmaking.

- **Funding Model:** Diversify: international grants, local philanthropy, consulting, and small corporate partnerships. Ensure multi-year sustainability for program planning. Explore the possibility of creating an endowment that can cover part of the costs from its assets (e.g. shares in a wind farm).

- **Program Focus:** Empowering cross-sector partnerships, municipal policies and ensuring best practices; Waste management and circular economy; Renewables and clean energy, decentralised energy solutions, Climate resilience; Community engagement and leadership development; Transfer of transformation experience and successful CEE programs in Ukraine.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Implement measurable KPIs for grants and training programs, or advocacy impact. Conduct annual reviews and impact assessments. Use feedback to continuously improve grant-making and program design.

Conclusion

Interviews consistently highlighted the need for independent and stable **civil society institutions**, that can empower democracy not only in wartime, but especially after.

Ukraine's environmental sector presents both challenges and opportunities for establishing of a sustainable foundation. It is highly grant-dependent, human resource-constrained, and affected by war-related disruptions. However, the emerging need for capacity building, micrograntS, community support, and policy advocacy **creates a strategic entry point** for a new foundation.

By focusing on small NGOs, community initiatives, capacity building, and an independent catalytic role, the foundation **can build a critical mass of smart project**s and continue empowering committed local leaders.

This can create an avalanche/snowball effect, turning marginal changes into mainstream ones, thus helping strengthen the sector, promote sustainable development, culture of cooperation among sectors, and build **long-term environmental resilience in Ukraine.**

List of Interviewees

- **Elena Shafranova,** Lawyer, Coordinator and Spokesperson for “Stop Poisoning Krivyi Rih”
- **Oleg Bereziuk,** Institute of Global Politics, Environmental Security and Consequences of the War: Challenges, Threats and Ways to Overcome Them
- **Iryna Stavchuk,** Interim Director, Ukraine and Central & Eastern Europe Programme, European Climate Foundation
- **Evhenia Zasidchko,** Climate Change Advisor, GIZ Ukraine
- **Pavel Havlíček,** Research Fellow / Analyst at Association for International Affairs (AMO), focusing on Ukrainian foreign and internal policy
- **Tomáš Jungwirth Březovský,** Project Coordinator at Association for International Affairs (AMO)
- **Oksana Karpach,** Director of the Princes-Benefactors Ostrozky Foundation
- **Natalia Gozak,** Director of Greenpeace Ukraine
- **Oleksij Pasyuk,** Head of Ecoaction
- **Olena Kravchenko,** Director of the NGO “Environment-People-Law”
- **Khrystyna Boiko,** Director, ZMIN Foundation
- **Oleksii Vasyliuk,** Ukrainian Environmentalist specializing in protected areas and biodiversity conservation, Ukraine War Environmental Consequences
- **Andriy Zheliezniy,** Member of the Board, Ekoltava
- **Olena Onischuk,** documentation for the installation of solar power plants, Ecoclub
- **Petr Dlouhý,** Owner Agriculture, Kharkiv

List of Interviewees

- **Oksana Stankevych-Volosyanchuk,** Ecologist at Ecosphera NGO
- **Halyna Mikytchak,** Acting Deputy Head of the Department of Ecology and Natural Resources – Head of the Environmental Protection Division, Department of Ecology and Natural Resources, Urban Planning Department of the Lviv City Council
- **Andriy Andrusevych,** Senior Policy Expert and Co-founder of the Resource and Analysis Center “Society and Environment (RAC)”
- **Natalya Andrusevych,** Chair of the Board and Co-founder of the Resource and Analysis Center “Society and Environment (RAC)”
- **Mykola Riabyka,** Coordinator of the Ukrainian Climate Network and one of the founders of the organization “Plato”
- **Iryna Myronova,** Founder of Zero Waste Lviv, Co-founder of the Zero Waste Alliance of Ukraine
- **Bohdan Prots,** Head of the Danube-Carpathian Initiative program
- **David Stulík,** Diplomat and member of the Czech ecological initiative “Hnutí Duha”
- **Natalyia Zubar,** Director of the Maidan Monitoring Information Center, Kharkiv Oblast Representative
- **Yulia Gus,** Kharkiv Environmental Activist, MMIC member & photographer
- **Vlad Sokolov,** DSNS, demining
- **Přemyslav Šedý,** EOD specialist, Volunteer in demining Ukraine

Key Questions for Donors and Partners

Can We Build It?

Yes. The proposed Ukrainian Partnership Foundation builds on a proven institutional model that has successfully operated in Central and Eastern Europe for more than three decades.

Guided primarily by the Czech foundation Nadace Partnerství and supported by the broader Environmental Partnership national foundations network active in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, the Ukrainian initiative benefits from extensive institutional knowledge on how to establish and operate a national environmental foundation that responds to local needs while maintaining international credibility.

Across neighboring countries, the model of Partnership Foundations has demonstrated that **strategic small grants, leadership development, and cross-sector cooperation** can generate lasting environmental and civic impact. These foundations have helped mobilize local communities, strengthen civil society organizations, and support practical environmental solutions.

The Ukrainian Partnership Foundation offers a practical and scalable way to empower environmental leadership and strengthen the foundations of sustainable recovery in Ukraine.

The model's applicability to Ukraine is further supported by the existing network od 250 local leaders who have participated in the Czech Partnership Foundations fellowship programme between 2023 and 2026. This network represents an initial base of engaged local actors from across all regions of Ukraine, with practical experience, local knowledge and potential to drive environmental initiatives.

Ukraine does not need to invent this model from scratch. The expertise, governance frameworks, and operational experience already exist. The Ukrainian Partnership Foundation will adapt this proven approach to the country's specific environmental, social, and wartime realities.

Is It Worth It?

Yes. The cost of establishing the Foundation is modest compared to the long-term impact it can generate.

The initial objective is to secure a multi-year operational and program budget that will allow the Foundation to launch grantmaking, capacity-building programs, and sector coordination activities. Importantly, approximately 30% of the initial funding target has already been committed or pledged, demonstrating early confidence in the initiative.

The Foundation's initial model is based on a mix of funding sources to ensure both stability and independence. Over the first three years the minimum target is €1.000.000, with an optimal scenario of €3.000.000. Funding will be structured across four pillars.

50% from international foundations, 20% from foreign development assistance, 15% from private sector contributions and 15% from endowment or sustainable investment.

The return on investment lies not in individual projects alone, but in strengthening the environmental sector as a whole. By supporting local communities, fostering cooperation between NGO, governmental and business sectors, and developing environmental leadership, the Foundation will create conditions for sustainable environmental action across the country.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that micro-grants alone will not solve the structural funding scarcity faced by Ukrainian NGOs. The Foundation will therefore operate as both a grantmaker and a sector enabler, helping organizations access international funding and know-how, build partnerships, and strengthen their institutional capacity.

The greater risk lies in not establishing such an institution. Without a dedicated platform supporting collaboration and capacity-building, Ukraine risks missing a critical opportunity to create nationwide environmental synergy at the very moment when reconstruction and environmental recovery must move forward together to the country's specific environmental, social, and wartime realities.

Ukraine does not need to invent this model from scratch. The expertise, governance frameworks, and operational experience already exist. The Ukrainian Partnership Foundation will adapt this proven approach to the country's specific environmental, social, and wartime realities.

Are We Allowed to Do It?

Yes. Ukraine's legal framework provides clear conditions for establishing an independent philanthropic foundation.

Existing legislation governing foundations and charitable organizations allows for transparent grantmaking, fundraising, and partnership-building with international donors, civil society, municipalities, and responsible businesses.

This legal environment provides a solid institutional foundation for the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation to operate independently and responsibly.

Will It Work in the Ukrainian Context?

Yes. The Foundation is designed specifically to support — not compete with — existing organizations and initiatives.

Ukraine already has a vibrant network of environmental NGOs, advocacy groups, and research institutions. The role of the Foundation will be to strengthen this ecosystem, not replace it. Through micro-grants, training programs, and networking platforms, it will help organizations cooperate, share expertise, and expand their impact.

This approach addresses several structural challenges identified during consultations with sector stakeholders: limited funding continuity, shortages of technical expertise, and weak coordination between actors. Specific niche of the Foundation will be in fostering stronger connections between civil society, municipalities, and the private sector, helping translate environmental priorities into practical local solutions.

Importantly, the model has already proven adaptable across different national contexts in Central and Eastern Europe. With appropriate local leadership and partnerships, it can succeed in Ukraine as well.

Can We Do It in Time?

Yes. Timing is critical. Ukraine is entering a period in which reconstruction planning, environmental recovery, and alignment with European environmental standards will increasingly shape national development.

Decisions made in the coming years will influence environmental outcomes for decades. Establishing the Ukrainian Partnership Foundation now ensures that local environmental actors are prepared to contribute meaningfully when large-scale reconstruction efforts accelerate.

A realistic implementation timeline has already been outlined, allowing the Foundation to become operational while reconstruction processes and environmental policy reforms are gaining momentum.

In this sense, the opportunity is time-sensitive. The longer the creation of such an institution is delayed, the greater the risk that environmental priorities will remain fragmented and under-supported during a decisive period for Ukraine's future.


Zyphel
Chernihiv
Berezhany
KIEV
Bar
Zhytom
Vinnytsia
Zhmerynka
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✓ The model is proven.

✓ The legal framework exists.

✓ The need is clear.

✓ The timing is right.

Acknowledgements

The feasibility study was prepared by Kateřina Krejčová and by KI Insights, a research center backed by the Kyiv Independent, including Director Jakub Parusinski, Head of Research Olena Yermakova, and Senior Research Analyst Adam Sybera.

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Ukrainian Partnership Foundation

Feasibility Study on Establishing an Environmental Foundation in Ukraine