

Analytical brief

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CORONAVIRUS DIPLOMACY.

HOW DO INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS HELP UKRAINE FIGHT COVID-19?

Tetiana Levoniuk

Ukraine has been quarantined for eight weeks, trying to overcome the coronavirus pandemic. In these times, the solidarity and help of partners is extremely valuable. Interestingly, 34% of Ukrainians, according to a poll by KIIS, believe that China can help Ukraine most effectively in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, only 10% chose the EU and 8.7% named the United States. However, the lack of systematic information does not allow us to state that China is a key donor to Ukraine in the context of the pandemic. So, who is really helping Ukraine overcome the crisis and how are they doing that?

MACRO-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM WESTERN PARTNERS

According to the International Monetary Fund assessments, Ukraine's economy is expected to decline by 7.7% in 2020¹. **Obviously, the**

¹ World Economic Outlook, April 2020 : The Great Lockdown, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/World-Economic-Outlook-April-2020-The-Great-Lockdown-49306>



macro-financial assistance of 1.2 billion euros to combat COVID-19, including overcoming social and economic consequences of the pandemic, announced by the European Commission is extremely urgent². This assistance is provided in two tranches: Ukraine will be able to receive the first 600 million euros immediately after the approval of the respective decision by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, and another 600 million euros in exchange for reforms. It should be noted that macro-financial assistance from the European Union is received only by countries that successfully cooperate with the International Monetary Fund.

In addition, the European Commission is allocating more than EUR 190 million to Ukraine for urgent and short-term needs to combat COVID-19³.

For example, this aid will cover assistance to vulnerable populations, small and medium-sized businesses, and counteracting misinformation. The European Investment Bank, in turn, will provide Ukraine with a loan of 40 million euros. Finally, the EU allocates additional EUR 3 million to support health care systems in the border communities of Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus under the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 cross-border cooperation program⁴.

In the context of the pandemic, the population of Donetsk and Luhansk regions requires even more attention. Therefore, its support is one of the priorities of the EU assistance. For example, from December 2019 to April 2020, the European

Union has allocated UAH 123.5 million in the form of subventions and compensations for micro, small and medium enterprises in these territories under the FinancEast program, within the framework of the EU4Business project⁵. Reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost of investment projects, including the purchase of agricultural machinery on credit, etc. is provided. Furthermore, the Center for Emergency Care in the Donetsk region, for example, received 100 sets of personal protective gear and 70 liters of antiseptic liquid from the European Union.

On the other hand, certain EU countries have also announced their support for Ukraine. For instance, Germany will provide 150 million euros to fight the coronavirus under a state loan⁶. The Lithuanian Government will allocate 100,000 euros for the purchase of medical supplies for Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova⁷. Taking into consideration the role of emergency services in the fight against COVID-19, Poland allocates USD 280,000 for the implementation of European models of emergency services response to civil protection against man-made disasters, natural disasters, etc. in Ukraine and Georgia⁸. In turn, all Visegrad countries will provide 250 thousand euros under the V4EastSolidarity program for the

² *Coronavirus: Commission proposes €3 billion macro-financial assistance package to support ten neighbouring countries,* https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/mex_20_721

³ *The EU will allocate more than 190 million euros to Ukraine in response to the pandemic,* <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2020/04/8/7108529/>

⁴ *The program will provide additional 3 million to combat COVID-19,* <https://www.pbu2020.eu/ua/news/1540>

⁵ *The EU provided UAH 123.5 million to entrepreneurs from Donbas under the FinancEast program within the EU4Business project,* https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/78180/ес-надав-1235-млн-гривень-підприємцям-з-донбасу-за-програмою-financeast-в-межах-eu4business_uk

⁶ *The President of Ukraine had a telephone conversation with the Federal Chancellor of Germany,* <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-ukrayini-proviv-telefonnu-rozmovu-z-federalnim-kan-60401>

⁷ *LT MFA StratCom,* https://twitter.com/LT_MFA_Stratcom/status/1253266378339037184

⁸ *Poland allocates over PLN 1 million for cooperation with firefighters in Ukraine and Georgia,* <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/poland-allocates-over-pln-1-million-for-cooperation-with-firefighters-in-ukraine-and-georgia>



Eastern Partnership countries⁹. Their objective is to strengthen the health care system, social assistance, and economic sustainability of vulnerable populations in the Eastern Partnership countries.

In turn, the United States announced an increase in aid to Ukraine from USD 1.2 million to 14.5 million.

Funding will be provided through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (i.e., these funds will be grant (non-repayable) resources, unlike loans) in the amount of USD 12.1 million. These funds will be used to strengthen the capacity of local health care facilities to provide medical aid and counter the spread of coronavirus. In addition, this funding will help mitigate the effects of the crisis, such as a lack of public services or loss of resources, among the most vulnerable populations, including those affected by the hostilities in Eastern Ukraine. The rest (USD 2.4 million) will be allocated through the US State Department to support the most vulnerable populations during the coronavirus pandemic. It should be noted that over the past 20 years, the United States has invested almost USD 5 billion in aid to Ukraine, of which more than 362 million in health care sector¹⁰.

In summary, the coronavirus is a test of solidarity, and even the nominal aid of individual states is an important indicator in these times, as demonstrated by Ukraine's Western partners. The conditions on which certain funding for Ukraine or its part depends, such as the EU's EUR 1.2

billion macro-financial assistance, are intended to help us move forward and implement reforms. By the way, since 2014 and until now, the amount of support provided to Ukraine by the European Union has reached more than 15 billion euros in grants and soft loans¹¹.

UKRAINE-CHINA AIR BRIDGE

In January, the EU sent over 50 tons of medical equipment to China¹², but did not advertise it too much in the media at the request of the Chinese Government. Today, however, China is actively utilizing humanitarian aid as a tool of diplomacy to spread influence not only in the West but in the entire world. ***And it is worth acknowledging that this PR campaign to assist other countries and the fight against the coronavirus pandemic have contributed to the increase of China's "soft power" in certain countries.***

For example, on March 12, an airplane with donations from the Chinese Red Cross arrived in Italy, with an appropriate media coverage. And while it is still unclear what the share of donated and purchased medical supplies from China was, these actions have been successful. According to a recent poll by SWG, 52% of Italians consider China a major friendly country¹³. At the same

⁹ *Humanitarian aid from the Czech Republic contributes to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic,*
https://www.mzv.cz/kyiv/uk/x2005_11_03/x2020_04_15.html

¹⁰ *Updated: US assistance in the fight against COVID-19,*
<https://ua.usembassy.gov/uk/update-the-united-states-is-continuing-to-lead-the-humanitarian-and-health-assistance-response-to-covid-19/>

¹¹ *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary debate on the situation in Ukraine,*

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/68652/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-european-parliament-plenary-debate_en

¹² *President Ursula VON DER LEYEN on her phone call with the Prime Minister of China LI Keqiang,*

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004589>

¹³ *Se gli italiani preferiscono la Cina agli Usa (e alla Ue),*

<https://formiche.net/2020/04/italiani-preferiscono-cina-usa-ue/>

time, for instance, politicians of the Five Star Movement are quite positive towards China.

At the same time, in the Netherlands, the Ministry of Health returned 600,000 masks purchased from Chinese commercial manufacturers due to their low quality. There are discussions in this country regarding its dependence on foreign suppliers of medical equipment, including China, and the need for strategic autonomy in the production of such goods.

The European institutions were not ignored by this issue either. Several media outlets recently reported on pressure from China on representatives of the EU institutions to amend the EU report on Chinese and Russian misinformation about the coronavirus¹⁴. As a result, the report was allegedly published with softened statements about China.

Ukraine also receives an airplane from China with medical equipment and protective gear almost every day. **Moreover, according to a poll conducted by KIIS in late March, 45.6% of Ukrainians believe that China is coping best with the coronavirus epidemic. Moreover, according to 34% of respondents, it is China that can most effectively help Ukraine in the fight against coronavirus.** At the same time, only 10% chose the EU and 8.7% named the United States¹⁵.

On April 1, Ukraine received humanitarian aid from the Chinese Government, as agreed upon by the authorities during a teleconference, in

the form of RNA-nominal coronavirus COVID-19 detection kits, disposable medical protective gear (overalls, surgical gloves, boot covers), medical protective goggles, and infrared thermometers¹⁶.

Furthermore, the “Ukraine-China Air Bridge” humanitarian initiative has been put in place to ensure regular supply of Chinese medicines and equipment to Ukraine. According to the Office of the President, 17 airplanes have already been dispatched to deliver cargo to Ukraine at the request of the Government and commercial structures¹⁷.

The financing of the purchase of express tests for the diagnosis of COVID-19 for Ukraine by Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba Group, is another well-known story. Interestingly, the data on the number of such tests and the amount of funding differ. According to the information on the website of the Office of the President of Ukraine, USD 80 million was spent on this purchase¹⁸.

Two teleconferences and direct communication have also been organized between Chinese and Ukrainian medical experts by the Chinese Embassy. And the address of the President of Ukraine, in which he expressed his gratitude

¹⁴ China put pressure on EU to soften coronavirus disinformation report, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/25/china-put-pressure-on-eu-to-soften-coronavirus-disinformation-report-207797>

¹⁵ Evaluation of the authorities' accomplishments and public response to events related to the coronavirus epidemic, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=928&page=1>

¹⁶ A plane with Chinese humanitarian aid with medical kits arrived in Ukraine, <https://moz.gov.ua/article/news/v-ukrainu-pribuv-litak-iz-gumanitarnuju-dopomoguju-kitaju--z-medichnimi-naborami>

¹⁷ The total budget of the fund for liquidation of consequences of COVID-19 amounted to over UAH 370 million – Kyrylo Tymoshenko, <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zagalnij-byudzhet-fondu-z-likvidaciyi-naslidkiv-covid-19-skl-60989>

¹⁸ A large batch of express test kits for coronavirus will soon arrive in Ukraine - Volodymyr Zelenskyy, <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/v-ukrayinu-nezabarom-pribude-velika-partiya-ekspres-testiv-d-60189>



to China for its support in counteracting COVID-19, was broadcast by China Central Television.

However, there are no consolidated data or reports on the funds spent and the amount of medical equipment and protected gear delivered from China. The same applies to where these goods are sent after arriving from China and whether there were any problems with their quality. After all, representatives of European countries have repeatedly complained about low-quality products from China and forged certificates, such as in the case of 7 million medical masks delivered by the Mriya aircraft from China to Poland¹⁹. The only available information is a statement in the report, recently published by the Fund for Elimination of Consequences of COVID-19 at the Office of the President of Ukraine, that products worth UAH 182.6 million have been purchased from seven foreign suppliers (and most flights were directed to China). UAH 33.89 million was spent on air delivery, customs clearance, logistics, and freight services²⁰.

Apparently, commercial supplies of medical goods from China exceeded the amount of aid provided to us. Certainly, the issue of access to protective gear was and still is important for us, as Ukraine does not have its own capacity to produce most goods of this type. Just for example: China is a leader in the production of masks, medical gloves, and tests for COVID-19.

Moreover, in addition to orders from the Ukrainian Government, a significant amount of medical supplies was purchased in China by commercial entities or representatives of private businesses as charitable aid.

NOT BY CHINA ALONE

Despite the significant attention paid to China and numerous airplanes with relevant cargo, Ukraine is also aided by other countries. For instance, Japan is providing Ukraine with a batch of Avigan medicament for a clinical trial, which is a potential treatment for the coronavirus²¹. The exact amount of the batch and its cost are currently unknown, as Ukraine is expected to respond regarding the signing of a joint document. In turn, India has donated 30,000 tablets of the drug, which also, according to experts, is a treatment for COVID-19²². While appreciating this kind of aid, Ukraine, however, should be careful about its composition, so that Ukrainians are not used to test new, ambiguous drugs under the guise of aid.

South Korea will provide USD 400,000 to the United Nations for humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and another USD 300,000 in laboratory tests or funds for their purchase²³. Canada will donate more than USD 500,000 to support humanitarian

¹⁹ *The masks that Mriya brought from China to Poland have a forged certificate – 3MI,*
<https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2020/04/23/659701/>

²⁰ *The total budget of the fund for liquidation of consequences of COVID-19 amounted to over UAH 370 million – Kyrylo Tymoshenko,*
<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zagalnij-byudzhet-fondu-z-likvidaciyi-naslidkiv-covid-19-skl-60989>

²¹ *Japan will hand over a batch of antiviral drugs to Ukraine,*
<https://japan.mfa.gov.ua/news/yaponiya-peredast-ukrayini-partiyu-protivirusnogo-preparatu>

²² *India officially provided over 30,000 tablets of antiviral drugs to Ukraine,*
<https://mfa.gov.ua/news/indiya-oficijno-peredala-ukrayini-30-tisyach-tabletok-protivirusnogo-preparatu>

²³ *Dmytro Kuleba: Korea has allocated USD 700 thousand to Ukraine to fight the coronavirus,*
<https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-koreya-vidilila-ukrayini-700-tisyach-dolariv-ssha-na-borotbu-z-koronavirusom>

efforts in Ukraine through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs²⁴. Finally, we received more than 10 tons of humanitarian aid (protective masks, overalls, disinfectants, etc.) from the United Arab Emirates²⁵.

In addition, Ukraine is actively supported by international organizations. The UN Secretary-General's Global Humanitarian Response Plan to combat COVID-19 provides assistance to Ukraine as well. As of April 6, USD 33 million should be allocated for humanitarian projects in Eastern Ukraine on both sides of the delimitation line²⁶. In particular, these funds will support local health care facilities, food security, assistance to the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as the organization of distance school education.

At the same time, the UN system has begun searching for resources to fund a comprehensive plan to overcome the pandemic in Ukraine, which requires USD 165 million by the end of 2020. According to UN Resident Coordinator in Ukraine Osnat Lubrani, as of April 3, "UN structures have already raised USD 27 million out of the required 165."²⁷ It should be noted that these

USD 33 million are part of this plan, but they are allocated under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Ukraine is to receive another USD 38 million from the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

This is by no means an exhaustive list of aid provided to Ukraine by representatives of the UN system and other international organizations. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross, together with the World Health Organization, recently donated equipment and medicines to medical facilities and residents of Eastern Ukraine.

IT IS NOT ONLY THE AID THAT IS IMPORTANT, BUT ALSO THE EFFICIENCY OF ITS USE

In 2019, Ukraine ranked 94th among 195 countries in the world according to the Global Health Safety Index²⁸. The country launched the second phase of health care reform on April 1, but corruption, including the lack of procurement of medical equipment and protective gear, has already led to deep public distrust of the health care system and contributed to the spread of COVID-19.

The President was forced to appeal to big business to fight the coronavirus in the regions where they have their assets. Moreover, a special fund has been created with their participation to support the medical sector during the quarantine. According to the operational report published on the website of the Office of the President of

²⁴ Canada provided USD 700,000 in humanitarian aid to Ukraine, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3011992-kanada-vidilila-ukraini-500-tisac-gumanitarnoi-dopomogi.html>

²⁵ Ukraine received 10 tons of humanitarian aid from the UAE – SSU, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ukraina-humanitarna-dopomoha-uae/30547583.html>

²⁶ The UN is launching a global plan against coronavirus with USD 33 million allocated for Ukraine, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/2904713-oon-zapuskae-globalnij-plan-proti-koronavirusu-iz-33-miljonami-dla-ukraini.html>

²⁷ UN Resident Coordinator in Ukraine Osnat Lubrani was pleased to discuss openly and comprehensively how the UN can help Ukraine in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic with the Prime Minister of Ukraine, <http://www.un.org.ua/ua/informatsiinyi-tsentr/news/4862-koordinatorka-systemy-oon-v-ukraini-osnat-lubrani-bula-rada-vidverto-ta-tsilisno-obhovoryty-z-premier-ministrom-ukrainy-iak-same-sistema-oon-mozhe-dopomohy-ukraini-pid-chas-borotby-z-pandemiieu-covid-19>

²⁸ Global Health Security Index, <https://www.ghsindex.org/#l-section--map>



Ukraine, the total budget of this fund amounted to UAH 374 million 620 thousand²⁹. **However, there is no consolidated data on the spending of the representatives of big business, but in the long run, they may well seek to be compensated for their assistance by the authorities approving decisions in favor of their business interests.**

Therefore, if we talk about the assistance provided by international partners, the right amount of resources is not sufficient by itself, as much depends on the ability of our government to use them effectively. After all, the coronavirus has once again exposed the deep-rooted vulnerabilities of the Ukrainian system of governance. This applies to the lack of coordination of government agencies, the role of big business in the country's political life, and efforts to compensate for the weak institutional capacity through macro-financial support.

²⁹ *The total budget of the fund for liquidation of consequences of COVID-19 amounted to over UAH 370 million – Kyrylo Tymoshenko,*
<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zagalnij-byudzhet-fondu-z-likvidaciyi-naslidkiv-covid-19-skl-60989>

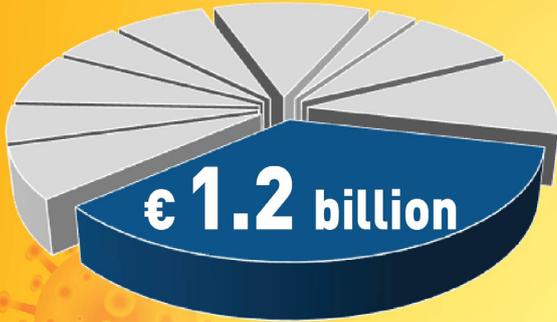
CORONAVIRUS DIPLOMACY

How international partners are helping Ukraine to fight COVID-19?

European Union

Macro-financial aid:

from € 3 billion
for 10 partners



for Ukraine

Over
€ 190 million

for urgent and short-term needs



€ 40 million

in particular to purchase the necessary medical equipment



€ 13 million

to the most vulnerable social groups affected by the conflict. Humanitarian projects will also help to take action against COVID-19

€ 123.5 million

Support for Donbas:
subventions and compensations for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises under the FinancEast program

100 kits of personal protective gear and over 70 liters of antiseptic fluid for the Emergency Medical Center in Donetsk region.

Individual EU Member States



GERMANY

€ 175 million

(redirected under the German state loan for the relevant needs).
Masks, protective suits and disinfectants

(€ 175,000)



LITHUANIA

€ 100,000

to purchase medical supplies for Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine



POLAND



CZECH REPUBLIC



SLOVAKIA



HUNGARY

€ 250,000

to the Eastern Partnership countries under the V4EastSolidarity program

- to strengthen the health care sector
- for social assistance
- for the economic sustainability of vulnerable populations of the Eastern Partnership countries

USA



\$ 14.5 million

12.1 million

2.4 million

in medical and humanitarian aid through the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID):**

- to improve the capacity of local health care institutions to assist patients and to counter the further spread of COVID-19
- to mitigate secondary effects, such as loss of resources and lack of public services, for the most vulnerable social groups

through the **US Department of State** to support the most vulnerable populations.

CORONAVIRUS DIPLOMACY

How international partners are helping Ukraine to fight COVID-19?

UN



165 million*

Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan to the COVID-19 Pandemic

including

WHO, UNICEF and UNDP



International Committee of the Red Cross



ICRC



38 million

for the purchase of medicaments, equipment, etc.



33 million*

as part of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan for the Eastern Ukraine

- to support health care facilities
- to ensure food security
- to support the elderly and people with disabilities
- to assist in the organization of distance school education.

Equipment and medicines for the medical institutions and residents of the Eastern Ukraine. The cargo also includes humanitarian aid from the WHO.

*data as of May 6, 2020

Individual countries



CHINA

There is no systematic information on the cost and quantity of medical equipment and protective gear delivered from China.

Humanitarian aid from the Chinese Government (COVID-19 RNA-nominal coronavirus detection kits, disposable medical safety gear, medical safety goggles, infrared thermometers).



SOUTH KOREA

700,000

of which USD 300,000 in a shipment of Korean lab tests or funding to purchase tests. The rest will be transferred to the UN for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.



JAPAN



a medicament "Favipiravir" (or "Авіран"), which has a potential for the treatment of COVID-19. Ukraine is among the 20 countries, that can be the first to receive it.



CANADA

Over 500,000

to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine (through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

over 10 tons of humanitarian aid

(protective masks, overalls etc.).



INDIA

30,000 tablets

of a medicament, which has a potential for the treatment of COVID-19.