



Vilnius
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UKRAINIAN POLITICS FROM THE LITHUANIAN POINT OF VIEW

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In January 2019, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted constitutional amendments to consolidate Ukraine's direction towards the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Lithuanian foreign policy consistently supports Ukraine's pro-Western direction. The survey of public opinion commissioned by Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VIPA) confirmed that the majority of Lithuanian population supports this policy as well. A representative survey of public opinion was commissioned by VIPA and conducted in 2018, June 20 - July 3 by 'Baltijos tyrimai'. In total, 1005 Lithuanian residents aged 18 and over were interviewed. The results of the research demonstrate the opinions of Lithuanian population of this age according to gender, nationality and type of settlement.

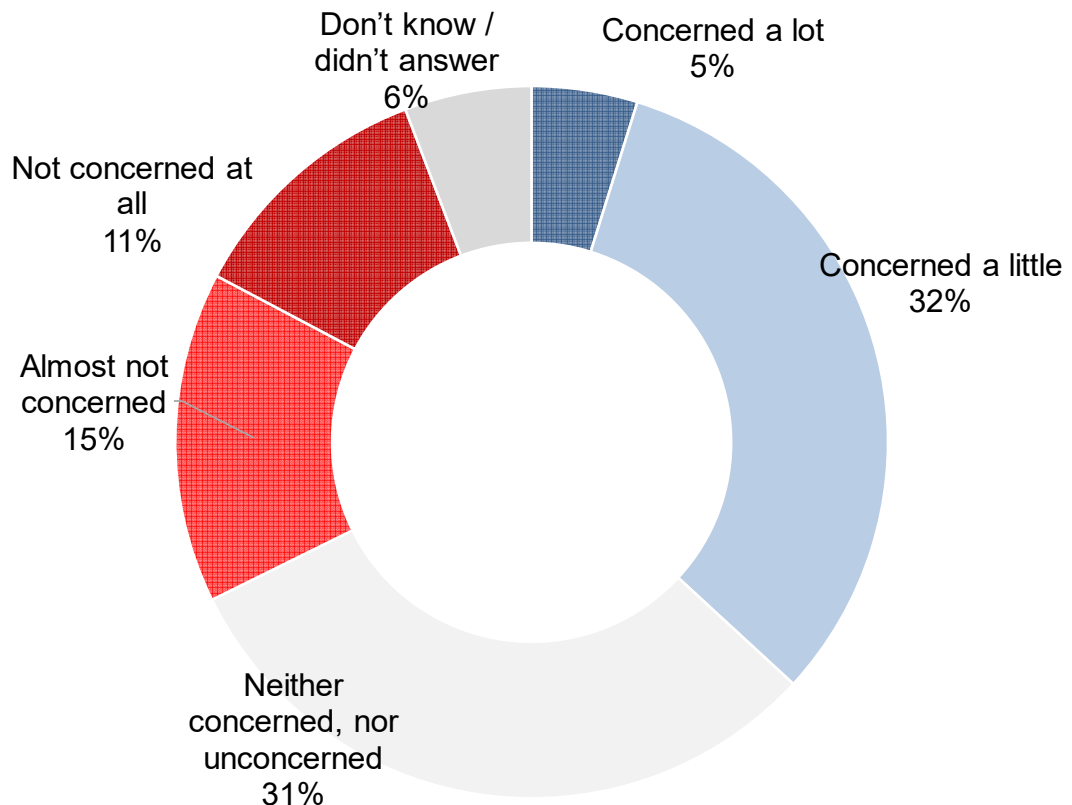
Interest in Ukraine

Do the residents of Lithuania care about the fate of Ukraine? Nearly 37 percent of respondents are concerned about the fate of Ukraine (5 percent are very concerned, 32 percent are concerned a little), and 27 % are not concerned about Ukrainian affairs (15 percent are almost not concerned, 11 percent are not concerned at all). (Figure 1) Greater concern about Ukraine is demonstrated by the residents of the cities – 43 percent of the residents in three major cities are concerned about the fate of Ukraine (even 48 percent of respondents in Vilnius show concern). The higher the education of the respondents, the more they are concerned about Ukraine's fate. Residents who are least concerned about Ukraine are those who have primary, basic, secondary, vocational and higher education (the prevalent answer of this group is 'indifferent'). People who have completed higher education are most concerned about Ukraine's fate – 59 percent of respondents with master's degree and 53 percent of respondents with bachelor's

degree are concerned about Ukraine's faith. Around one-third of respondents were ambivalent towards Ukraine and / or had no opinion on its developments.

Figure 1

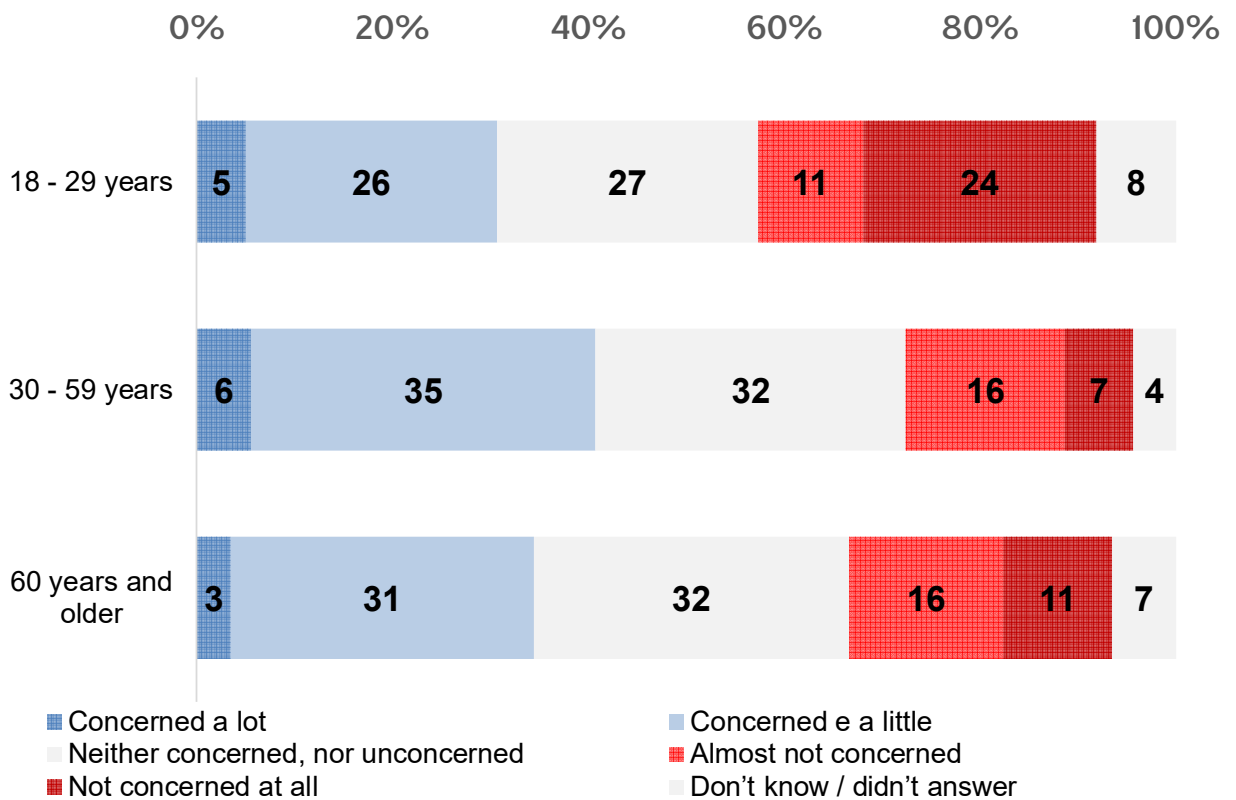
Are you concerned or not concerned about Ukraine's faith? (N=1005)



It is obvious that the age of respondents is a very important factor that determines the interest in politics. The youngest respondents (18-29-year-olds) demonstrate the least interest in Ukraine's policy: even 24 percent said that they are not at all concerned about Ukraine's future. In comparison, only 7 percent of 30-59-year-olds and 11 percent of respondents who are older than 60 are not at all concerned about Ukraine's faith. (Figure 2)

Figure 2

Are you concerned or not concerned about Ukraine's faith? (split by age groups) (N=1005)

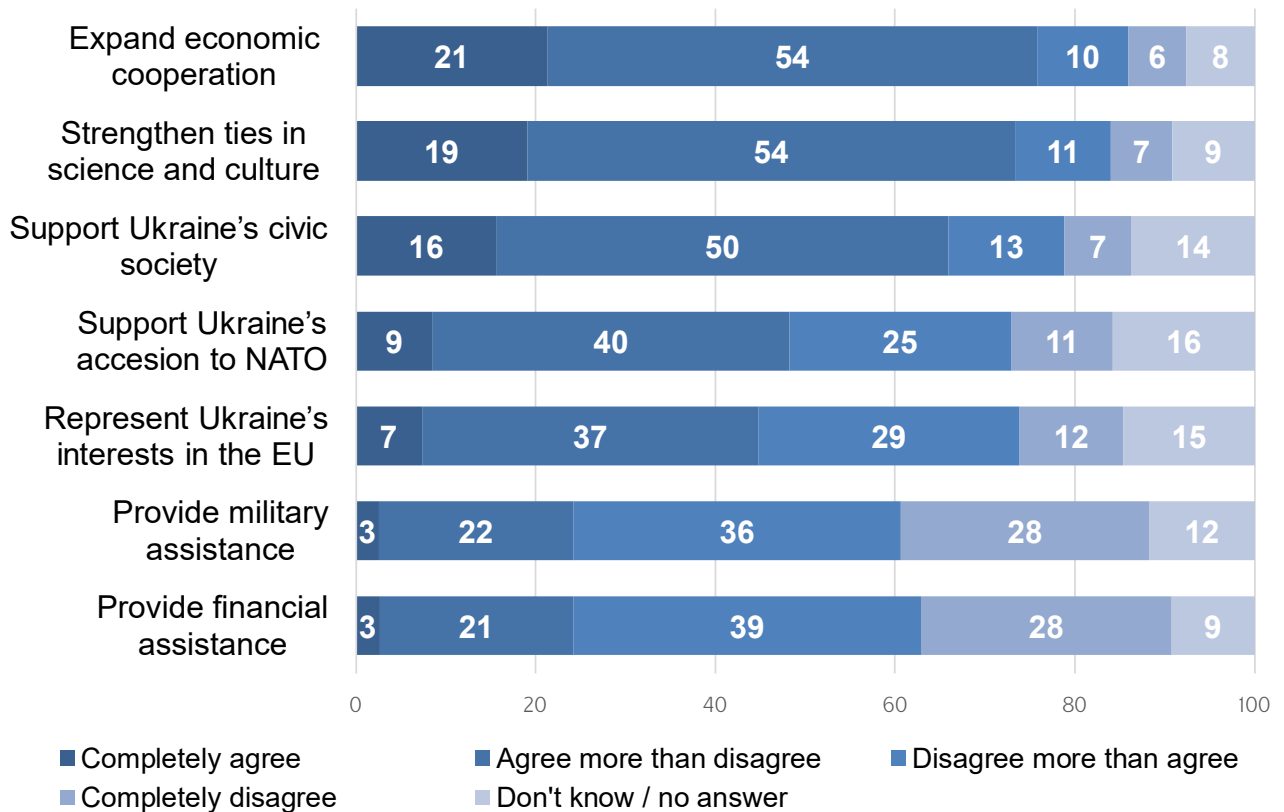


Priorities for cooperation

Responding to the question about areas in which Lithuania should cooperate with Ukraine more actively, most respondents mentioned so-called soft power areas: development of economic cooperation was mentioned by 76 percent of respondents, strengthening of science and culture relations – by 73 percent of respondents, support to Ukrainian civil society – by 66 percent of respondents. Almost one in two respondents would support more active diplomatic support: 49 percent of respondents would support Ukraine’s membership in NATO, 44 percent of respondents would support Ukraine’s membership in the European Union. More financial and military support to Ukraine was mentioned by 24 and 25 percent of respondents, respectively. (Figure 3)

Figure 3

In what areas Lithuania should have a closer cooperation with Ukraine (N=1005)

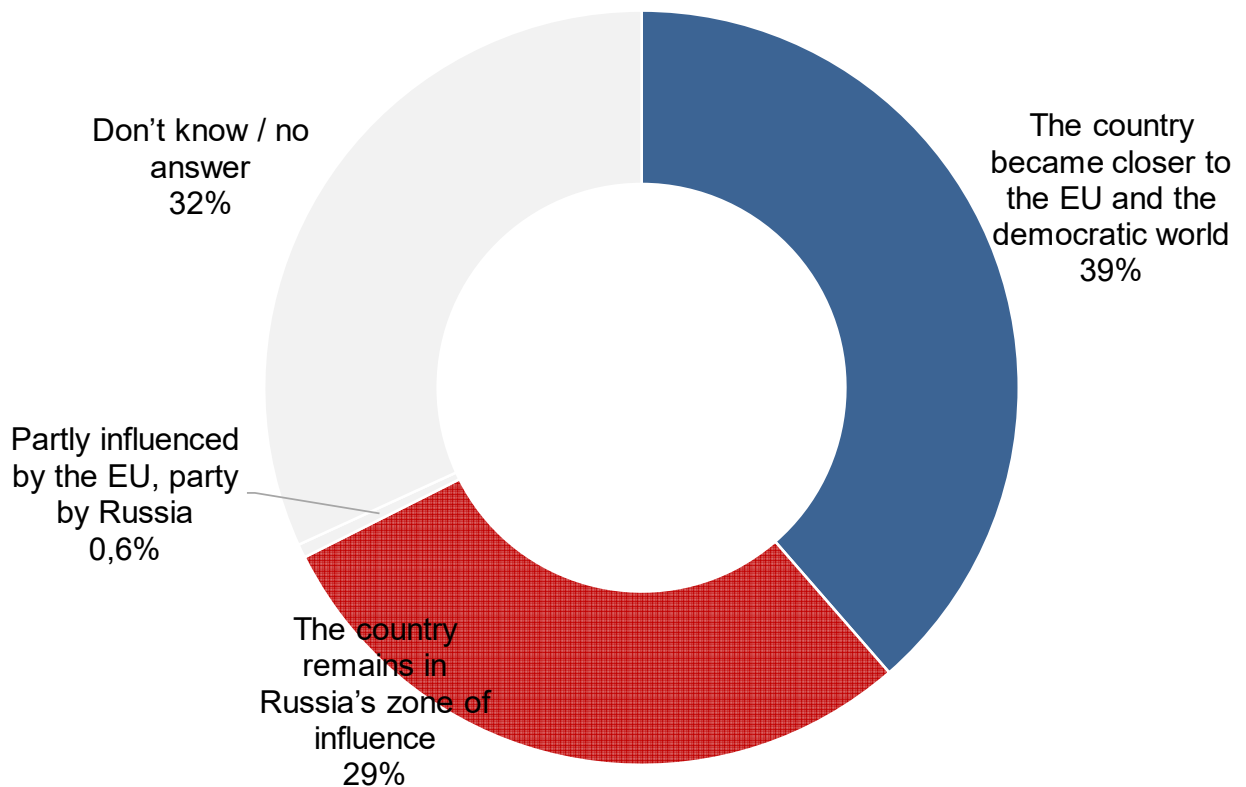


Evaluation of changes in Ukraine

39 percent of Lithuanians believe that the Maidan revolution in 2014 and the ousting of Victor Yanukovych brought Ukraine closer to the European Union and the West. 29 percent of respondents believe that Ukraine has remained in Russia's zone of influence. One third of the respondents (32 percent) do not have an opinion on this issue. (Figure 4)

Figure 4

Do you think that the situation in Ukraine has changed after the Maidan revolution in 2014 and the ousting of Victor Yanukovich? (N=1005)



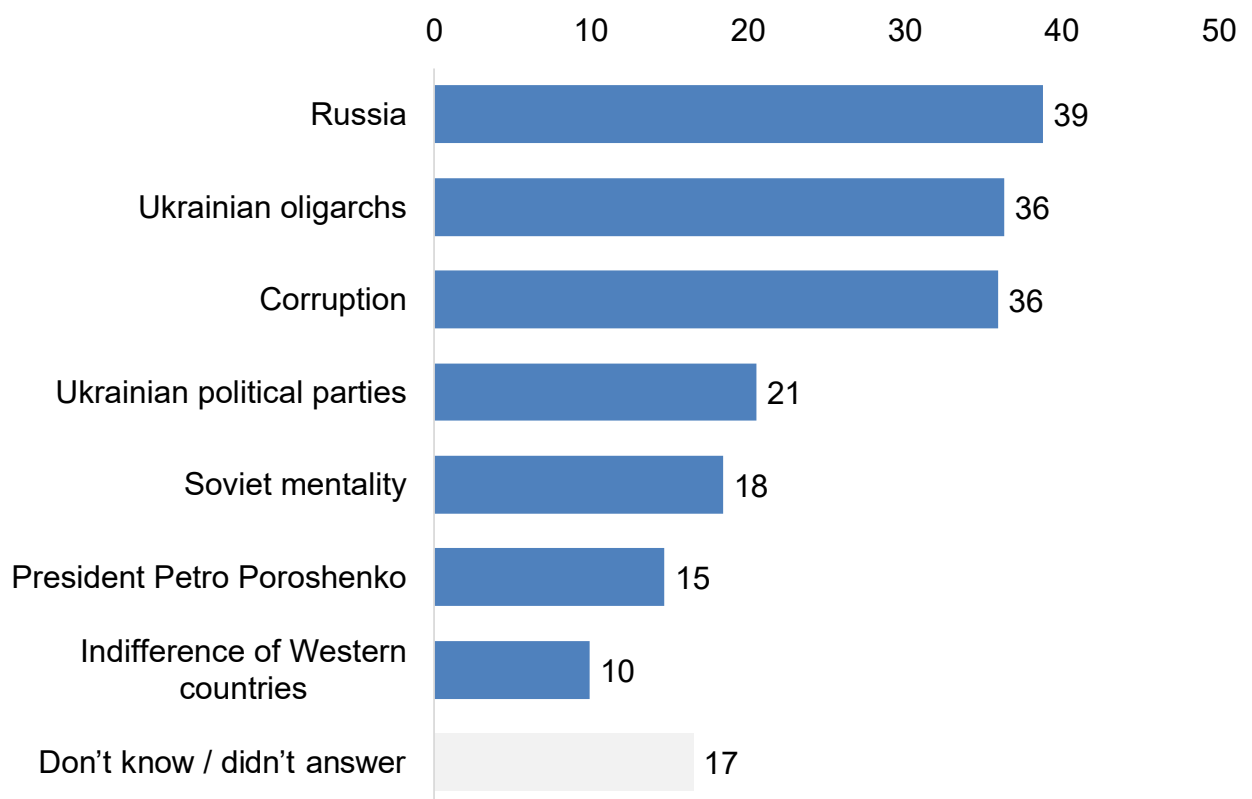
Obstacles to democratic processes in Ukraine

According to the respondents, the main obstacles to democratic change in Ukraine are as follows: Russia (39 percent of respondents), Ukrainian oligarchs (36 percent of respondents), corruption – (36 percent of respondents), Ukrainian political parties (21 percent of respondents), Soviet mentality (18 percent of respondents), President Petro Poroshenko (15 percent of respondents) (Figure 5). Lithuanians and respondents of other nationalities have different opinions on what hinders democratic change in Ukraine. Lithuanians note that the biggest obstacles to democracy in Ukraine are Russia (41 percent) and corruption (36 percent). Russian and Polish people named Russia as an obstacle to democracy

less frequently (Russians – 13 percent, Polish – 17 percent). National minorities in Lithuania believe that democratic changes in Ukraine are mostly hampered by oligarchs (more than 46 percent in all ethnic minority groups) and President Petro Poroshenko (more than 41 percent in ethnic minority groups). The difference in opinions based on nationality shows the influence of different media channels. For example, pro-Kremlin media channels portray Ukraine as a failed state, fuelling distrust of President Petro Poroshenko. Meanwhile, the major media channels of Lithuania mostly portray Petro Poroshenko as a strong supporter of Ukraine’s western direction, the EU and NATO.

Figure 5

**What, do you think, are the main obstacles to democratic change in Ukraine?
(N=1005)**

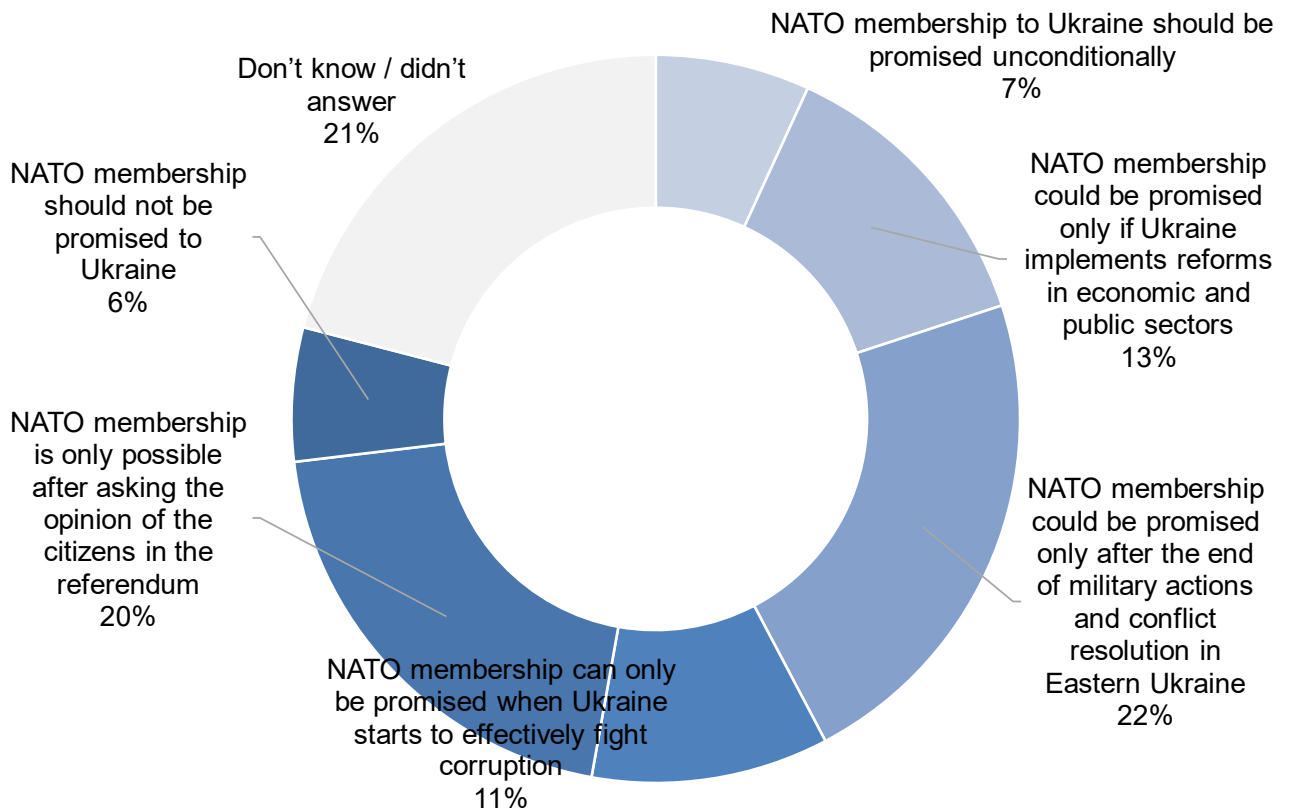


Support for Ukraine's membership in NATO and the European Union

Speaking about the conditions that Ukraine should meet in order to join NATO, respondents have most often identified a resolution of the military conflict with Russia (22 percent of respondents) and citizens' vote in a referendum (20 percent of respondents). 13 percent of the respondents associate Ukraine's membership in NATO with the implementation of reforms in economic and public sectors, and 11 percent of respondents associate it with an effective fight against corruption. 7 percent of respondents would support Ukraine's membership in NATO unconditionally and only 6 percent would not agree at all with Ukraine's membership in the Alliance. (Figure 6)

Figure 6

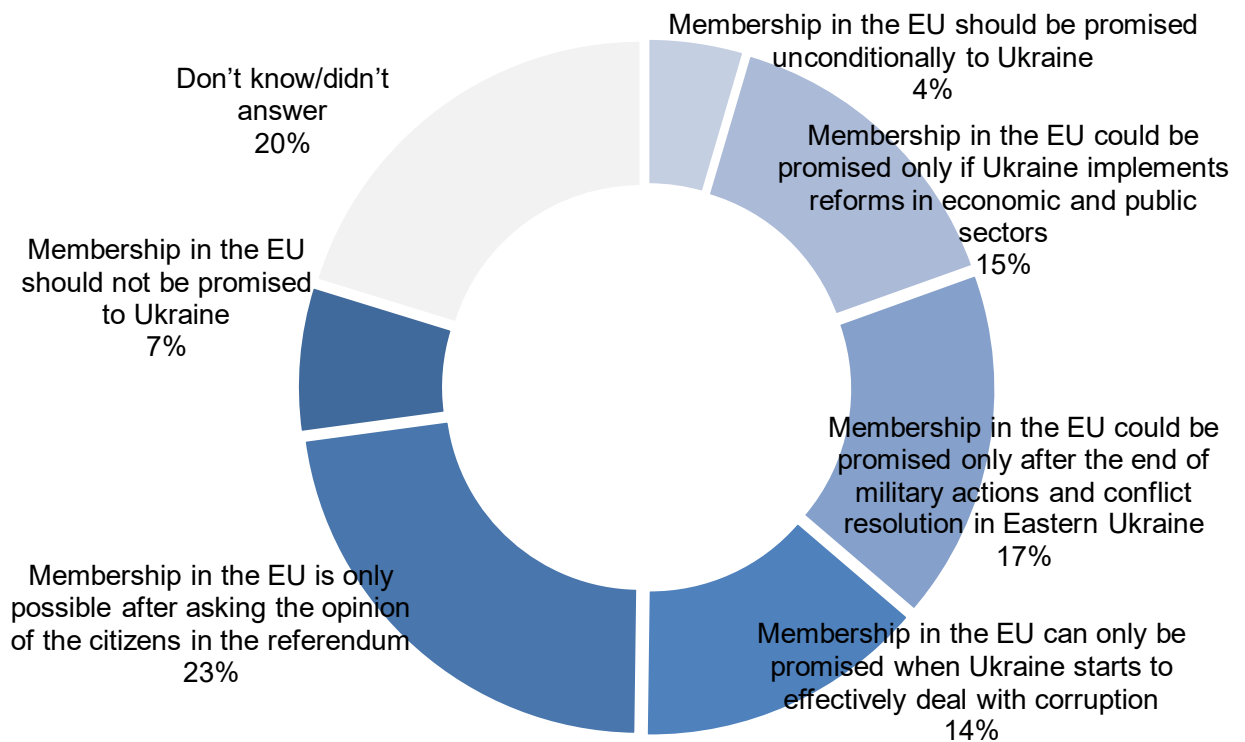
**What is the main condition that Ukraine should meet in order to join NATO?
(=1005)**



Respondents have similar requirements for Ukraine's membership in the EU. 23 percent of respondents indicated citizens' vote in a referendum as the most important condition for Ukraine to join the EU (in NATO's case it was mentioned as the second priority), 17 percent of respondents indicated a peaceful resolution of the military conflict with Russia. The need for economic and administrative reforms was mentioned by 15 percent of respondents, effective fight against corruption was mentioned by 14 percent of respondents. 4 percent would support Ukraine's membership in the EU unconditionally and 7 percent would not agree with Ukraine's membership in the Union under any circumstances. (Figure 7)

Figure 7

What is the main condition that Ukraine should meet in order to join European Union? (=1005)

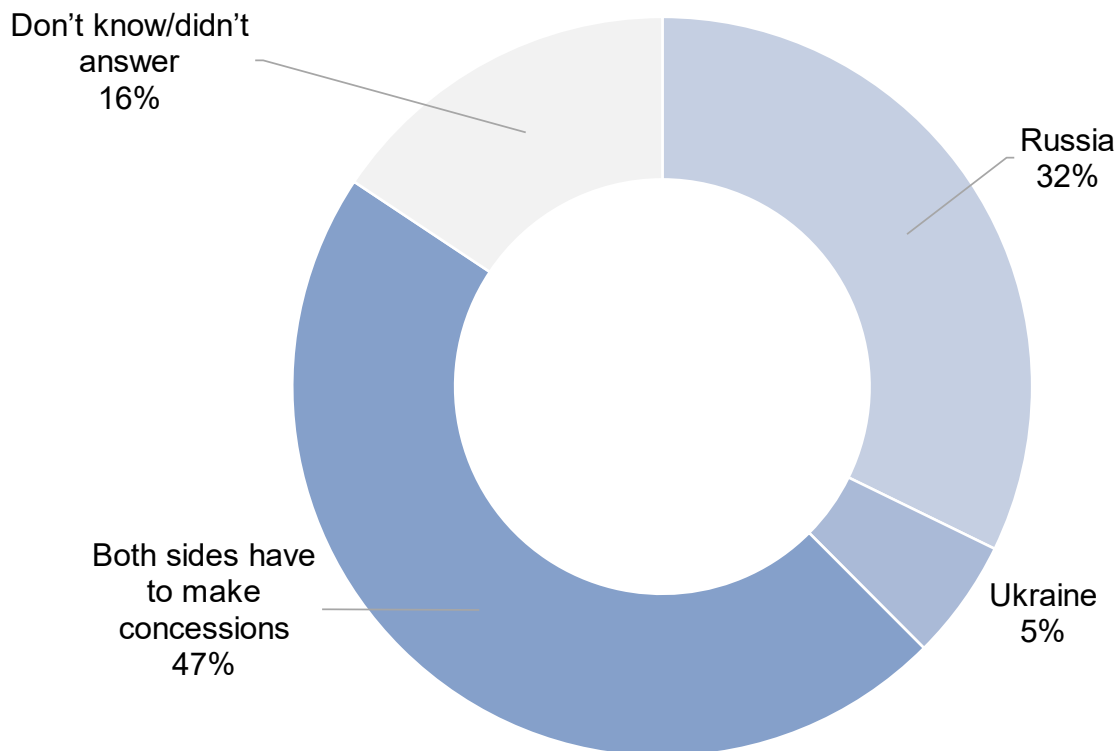


Scenarios for a peaceful solution

In the opinion of the Lithuanian population (47 percent), both sides should make concessions in solving the Ukraine-Russia military and humanitarian crisis. 32 percent of respondents believe that Russia should make concessions and only 5 percent think that Ukraine should make concessions in the conflict resolution. (Figure 8)

Figure 8

When talking about the resolution of the military and humanitarian crisis in Eastern Ukraine, which side should make concessions?



Recommendations

1. A large part of Lithuanian society is concerned about the fate of Ukraine. However, it makes less than a half of all the respondents, and therefore Lithuanian public administration institutions, academic society and educational institutions should pay more attention to informing the public.
2. Lithuanian youth does not show great interest in Ukraine; therefore, it would be worthwhile to modify and implement civic education and history programs in schools.
3. Even one-third of the Lithuanian population is unaware of changes in Ukraine or have no opinion about it, so it is clear that the media should take on a mission to broaden the picture of developments in Ukraine.
4. It is likely that the opinion of the Lithuanian national minorities about Ukraine is mostly formed by the media that is unfriendly to Ukraine; therefore, the state institutions should choose strategic public information directions that would secure the delivery of undistorted information to national minorities.
5. Strategic communication specialists in public institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defence), together with non-governmental organizations, should work together to enhance media literacy and critical thinking.
6. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Minorities should substantially strengthen the efforts of soft power and cultural diplomacy to bring together Lithuanian and Ukrainian civil societies.
7. Migration Department, State Labour Inspectorate and municipalities should take action to destigmatize workers from Ukraine in Lithuania, especially through public communication.

8. The Ministry of the Economy and Innovation and Tourism Department should more actively promote reciprocal educational, conference and health tourism.
9. Lithuanian institutions should be encouraged to use the EU Eastern Partnership, ERASMUS and other instruments more actively in cooperation between Lithuanian and Ukrainian partners.
10. Joint initiatives of Lithuania and other countries that strengthen the security of the region, including the security of Ukraine and Poland, must be promoted more effectively.



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