

Five ways in which the EGAP Program supports Ukrainians in wartime



The full-scale war has brought about new values, priorities, and challenges for Ukraine. Ukrainian teachers, artists, and activists had to take up arms and go to the frontline. Similarly, many organizations and businesses repurposed themselves to deliver aid to war-torn Ukraine.

Since the outbreak of the war, the Swiss-Ukrainian EGAP Program implemented by East Europe Foundation has also not drifted away from its original mission — digitalization. During this period, it has used its tools and expertise to adapt to the new needs and pains of society since 24 February 2022.

At the onset of the war, due to heavy cyberattacks from Russia, many digital services had to be suspended.

Within a month after the full-scale invasion, to ease the lives of millions of Ukrainians, the EGAP Program proceeded to automate many services. Ukrainians breathed a sigh of relief, as restarting e-services allowed entrepreneurs to register their businesses, to dynamically change relevant data such as their businesses' location or name, or to close them altogether due to the hostilities. In March and April 2022, more than 90 percent of new sole proprietors were registered online.

In this brief, we look at the various innovative digital tools that the EGAP Program has created to help Ukrainians during the time of war.

Application “Mine Clearing of Ukraine”

*“Ukraine is now by far the most heavily mined country in the world, and most of those mines haven’t yet exploded,” noted **Renske Hollants**, Policy Officer for Humanitarian Mine Action.*





Recognizing the dangers of Ukrainians being exposed to mines in public spaces, the EGAP Program joined the efforts to prevent civilian injuries and deaths caused by mine explosions. Together with the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, EGAP created a mobile application called the “Mine Clearing of Ukraine” that allows Ukrainians to detect and report explosives.

*“This innovative app became a bridge of crisis communication between the government and people,” mentions **Veronika Chechotkina**, Project Manager at East Europe Foundation.*

Since the application's launch, people can inform the State Emergency Service about the sighting of suspicious objects and call sappers (soldiers responsible for clearing mines) to check and diffuse them, if needed. Another function of the app is an interactive map that visualizes possible and confirmed dangerous mining zones for people to avoid. This way, the “Mine Clearing of Ukraine” can notify users as they approach an explosive device in real time and space.

An important mission of the application is to raise awareness and inform its users about the most common explosives in a detailed catalog by describing and portraying them. Additionally, the app provides a step-by-step guide about what to do when one comes into contact with a mine.

Since its launch in May 2022, the application has received more than **20,000 downloads**, which is about more than a thousand downloads a month.

Veronika Chechotkina endorses the humanitarian idea behind the application:

“It does not matter to us that the application may not be hyper popular, as long as it saves lives. For us, even one saved life is a significant result.” She also shares a unique feature of the app — users can firsthand contribute to making Ukraine safer *“by applying to become a pyrotechnist or to get certified as a mine action worker.”* During the war, all efforts count.

E-services for sole proprietors

Since February 2022 when Russia launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Ukraine's unemployment has reached 35%. This is when electronic services for businesses became particularly important. In times of hostilities, attacks on infrastructure, migration of employees, or shortages of electricity, Ukrainian businesses are actively working to sustain the economy. The wartime economy benefits from SMEs, as they provide job places, feed and inform people, and provide various services, such as legal support, to civilians and soldiers. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine,



Amici Cafe

in early fall 2023, there were more than two million sole proprietors in Ukraine, with SMEs employing over 4.7 million people or 20% of Ukraine's labor force.

Recognizing SME's contribution to the country's economy, EGAP decided to advance e-services for businesses. By October 2023, the entire business registration process was fully automated in Diia, Ukraine's national digital portal

for state services. Through Diia, it is possible to open a sole-proprietor (SP) enterprise, change business activities, name or location of an enterprise, close a sole-proprietor enterprise in one minute, or register an LLC online.



Park Audio Production: Speakers Amplifiers Ltd.

Business registration on the Diia Platform takes **12 seconds**, making Ukraine a country with the speediest business registration globally.

Business registration services have become extremely popular.

In June 2023 alone, there were **31,477 SP registered** — a record number over the past three years.

Since February 2022, some **299,040 citizens** registered as sole proprietors online. **223,409 citizens** closed their business activities online and **218,506 citizens** changed their business information online.

Hence these new series of services are helping Ukrainian business owners, many of whom had to move out of their home cities due to hostilities, to carry out their business activities seamlessly.

Online application to the European Court of Human Rights

During a war like this one, when Russia commits war crimes and terrorizes the civilian population, the victims need access to legal remedies. The EGAP Program helped to make this often challenging process easy for many war-affected Ukrainians. In the spring of 2022, an electronic system to lodge an online application to the European Court of Human Rights was created.

The system was designed to guide an applicant and to facilitate the process, as it contained all the necessary fields and templates a person needed to fill in. Once an individual filled in the online application form, they could then print it out, sign it, and bring it to the closest post office for validation. The documents were then sent to the European Court for free.

As many as **3,233,384 individuals** visited the platform's website and **7,598 Ukrainians filed applications** to the ECHR through the electronic system.

According to **Olha Riabukha**, EGAP's E-services Project Coordinator, the key value of this service was its user-friendliness and a simplified way to access the ECHR by the Ukrainian victims of Russian aggression.

Riabukha noted, "As the platform provided templates for specific situations, a person could apply easily and without a lawyer".



In more complex cases that did not qualify for the online procedure, the victims could access the contacts of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union's lawyers to receive qualified legal aid to apply to the court.

As Olha Riabukha notes, the platform's creation paved the way for Ukrainians to seek justice and to receive compensation for war-induced damages through the ECHR procedure.

Unfortunately, on 16 September 2022, the portal stopped its work due to Russia's expulsion from the Council of Europe. Thus, no international legal mechanism exists to provide compensation to the victims of Russian aggression.

Diia.Centers in war-affected regions

In 2023, despite the ongoing shelling, the EGAP Program extended its support to its sixth target region — Chernihiv. In Chernihiv, four communities were competitively selected to receive support for digitalization. The Snovsk community is one of them. There, EGAP is supporting the establishment of a Diia.Center, a one-stop shop where people can receive various state services and resolve administrative issues in the course of only one visit.



In this barrier-free modern space and one-story building, residents and businesses of the Snovsk community will be able to enjoy in-person e-services consultations but also a space for self-service. Additionally, they can receive free legal aid, postal and banking services, visit a coworking space with a coffee machine, make payments for utility services, and come to a meeting with the head of Diia.Center's community.

Citizens whose homes were destroyed may visit a Diia.Center to apply for compensation for the damages they incurred. At the Diia.Center those who had to flee their home due to hostilities, can receive a document proving their eligibility for allowance as internally displaced persons or to restore their ID cards, passports, and other documents that were damaged or lost due to war.

The Diia.Center will be equipped for the comfort of persons with disabilities. Residents can be sure that they will receive the necessary state services even during power blackouts since the building is planned to be energy-efficient through solar power panels.

Energy-efficient administrative service centers (ASCs)

The UN Global Compact Network Ukraine awarded the EGAP Program at the Partnership for Sustainability Award 2023 Ceremony for its work on energy efficiency of ASCs. In this year's competition, projects from 12 European countries participated. The EGAP project in partnership with Atmosfera company won the nomination "PLANET."

Owing to the solar panels, even during Russia's attacks on critical infrastructure, the ASCs can continue functioning and serving citizens.

The fall and winter of 2022 became particularly challenging for the provision of seamless administrative services as Russian missiles repeatedly targeted civil infrastructure hence leaving many homes, companies, and

administrative centers without power. EGAP has taken this into account and started implementing the idea of energy-efficient self-sustained ASCs. They are meant to ensure that state services are continuously available to Ukrainians and that people remain in touch despite possible blackouts.



Technically speaking, only one solar power station with a capacity of **30 kW** can sustain the supply of electricity for lighting, a server room, and ASC workplaces **for six hours**. This way, not only state services will remain available but also people will be able to come to an ASC and charge their phones or connect to public WIFI networks. Service stability during the war is the key mission of this project.

Another goal that EGAP pursues through this energy efficiency project is to save public resources. For example, one such solar panel can save up to **3.7 mln UAH for its 20 years of work**. Moreover, in the summer, thanks to the solar power stations, ASCs can be completely energy self-sufficient. Through these innovative initiatives, EGAP is trying to help Ukraine to offload its power system and contribute to savings in electricity.

Last but not least, this energy-saving project has an ecological dimension since a solar power station with a capacity of 30 kW reduces O₂ emissions **by 15 tons annually**. Using alternative energy sources to generate power in schools and hospitals all around the country is also bringing Ukraine closer to the EU's green standards.

So far, the EGAP Program has equipped **22 ASCs** with solar panels in five regions.

All in all, the digital solutions and innovations introduced by the EGAP Program keep ensuring that Ukrainians are safe, sound, and well-informed. At the same time, these initiatives keep optimizing the work of the government during times of crisis.