During the period of January-March 2020, the DB Secretariat focused on supporting Minregion in coordinating the establishment of the Office for Reform Support at Minregion and conducting consultations on draft Minregion’s Operational Plan 2020-21.

A number of DB’s WGs had their meetings during that period, dedicated to issues related to the reform implementation. Following the introduction of quarantine related to the COVID19 emergency the physical meetings of the WGs have been suspended; instead they were provided with the opportunity to meet online using the Zoom platform.

The WG discussed with the representative of the Ministry of Finance the challenges of shifting 108 newly established amalgamated territorial communities (ATC) to direct inter-budget relations in 2020. Those ATCs were not formed in line with the perspective plans of territories formation, and only 44 of them are recognized as sustainable. The WG recommended to apply the provisions of Articles 93, 101 of the Budget Code of Ukraine for regulating inter-budget relations between the rayon budget and the 108 ATC budgets.

The WG also discussed amendments needed to the Budget Code of Ukraine after the adoption of the new version of the Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-governance” and contributed to the work of Minregion and its newly established Reform Support Office on drafting a proposal on distribution of powers between levels of local self-governments in line with the Territorial Administrative Reform Concept.

Finally, the WG delegated its representatives to the Ministerial WG on conducting the expenditures overview in selected fields under Minregion’s responsibility (in particular in regional development and in the section related to infrastructure development of the ATCs) in the framework of the overall expenditure review, launched following the CMU Resolution “On conducting overviews of state budget expenditures in separate fields in 2020”.

The WG members were presented lessons learned by “Dobrochn Centre” NGO and “Chernihiv Human Rights Centre” NGO in the area of support of the anti-corruption reform at the local level, including the methodology of a community anti-corruption ecosystem and approaches to mainstreaming anti-corruption to local policies, regulation, public relations, functioning of local self-government bodies, programs and the public.
4 REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The WG reviewed the updated State Regional Development Strategy 2027 that aims at: forming a united country in social, economic, environmental and spatial dimensions, increasing the competitive level of the regions, and delivering effective human-centered multi-level governance. The strategy is still meant to be reviewed from an SDG and gender perspective, coordinated with the central bodies of executive power, oblast state administrations and local governments associations before it is approved by the Government. Group members also reflected on the need to review the format, and that upgrading the status of the Interagency Regional Development Coordination Commission is an important tool for strategy implementation.

Minregions invited donors’ support in the following areas: awareness-building on the new Strategy, support development of the Action Plan to implement the Strategy, improving data management for Strategy monitoring, advancing the systems of regional development management and financing. Minregion presented innovations initiated at the regulatory base on State Regional Development Fund: distinguishing between support to implementation of regional strategies without quoting, and financing projects within the framework of sectoral support of regional development on the basis of transparent competition; online streams of the work of competition committees; and a state scheme of territory planning as an inseparable part of regional development.

5 PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION

5.1 Administrative Services

The WG with the Ministry of Digital Transformation went through the draft Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Network Optimization and Functioning of the Administrative Services Centers and Improvement of Access to Administrative Services provided in Electronic Form” (Reg. No. 2679 of 26.12.2019). The Draft Law foresees such important changes as: mandatory establishing of territorial administrative services centers (TSNAPs) in communities with more than 3,000 residents; liquidation of TSNAPs of rayon state administrations; expansion of administrative service menu provided by TSNAPs; creation of a single web-portal of electronic services. The WG members made several important propositions related to: a sound approach to determining the mandatory level for TSNAPs formation by LSG; costs estimate for setting up TSNAPs foreseen by the draft Law and sources of costs; the procedure for concluding cooperation agreements with communities in administrative services provision; the timing for TSNAPs formation under the Draft Law; a mechanism of application-free service provision, etc.

The Ministry of Digital Transformation agreed with the development on collecting regular information about (re)training of TSNAP staff. The respective format was developed with the help of the Secretariat and agreed by the WG. The need to transfer the TSNAP monitoring system developed by GIZ Project “Administrative Reform in the Eastern Ukraine II” to the Ministry was stressed by the WG.

5.3.2 Culture, youth, sports and tourism

The WG discussed with the Ministry of Culture its approach to multi-functional centers of cultural services and standards for providing citizens with cultural services, which is one of the tasks of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Concept of Reforming the System of Provision of Cultural Services (CMU Decree No. 355 of May 22, 2019), and the Action Plan for the new phase of formation of new local self-government and territorial organization of authority in Ukraine for 2019-20 (CMU Decree No. 77 of January 23, 2019). Setting standards of cultural services ensures equal access to a basic set of quality cultural services for citizens of all ages and social groups. Special attention was paid to reviewing KPIs, including financial, to assess progress of ATCs in reforming the cultural sphere in four areas – museums, art education, libraries, clubs – elaborated jointly with the Association of ATCs.
6.1 Communication

The WG has extensively focused on discussing the consultation process related to amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine in line with the requirements of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, formulated by the donor community and shared with Minregion, including the consultations logic and plan of conducting events at both regional and national levels in cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Office of the President of Ukraine, MinRegion, all-Ukrainian associations of local self-government bodies and leaders of the “Servant of the People” party. The WG has set up a Task Force from representatives of key projects and programs to facilitate the organization of the consultative process and public access to information. The four key topics for the consultations were reconfirmed: administrative-territorial structure, authority distribution based on subsidiarity principles, oblast/rayon councils, and introduction of supervision for executive bodies of power. The consultations were planned to be completed by mid-March but the emergency situation related to COVID-19 delayed the process. Given the new circumstances, ICT tools have been used to resume consultations online.

6.2 Training System and Knowledge Management

The WG reviewed the results of the survey conducted by Minregion on coverage and effectiveness of trainings provided by various international community projects to ATCs. Although the study was not full or representative (and it was decided not to publish its results online), it reconfirmed a general need for better targeting, coordination of training provision to ATCs and more systematic sharing of feedback received by projects from trainees. Further, the WG discussed with the representatives of the National Agency of Civil Service of Ukraine the content of the CMU Resolution No.106 of 19/12/2019 “On approval of the system of professional training of civil servants, heads of local state administrations, their first deputies and deputies, local self-government officials and deputies of local councils” (https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/106-2019-%D0%BF), and also discussed the structure and functions of the National Agency’s knowledge management portal that matches training needs and provision (https://pdp.nacs.gov.ua/). It was agreed that on the former, the Agency will provide methodological recommendations in the near future.

7. GENDER

The WG provided inputs to integrating gender issues into the State Strategy for Regional Development under UN Women coordination. Comprehensive gender analysis of regional development was conducted and recommendations on mainstreaming gender equality and a human rights-based approach to the entire cycle of regional development policy were developed and submitted to the MCTD. The WG held a working meeting to discuss the gender analysis and recommendations, and also the harmonization of the State Strategy for Regional development with the Sustainable Development Goals. It was agreed that the gender analysis of regional development will be shared with the Ministry of Social Policy, which will submit its gender comments to the State Strategy for better coordination. The WG members also briefed on their planned activities in the context of women’s empowerment and agreed to coordinate their work among group members in order to correlate the gender profiles of ATCs. It was also agreed that the UN Women would develop a draft annual working plan of WG and submit to members for their review and approval.
Pending issues requiring attention

Among the issues requiring development partners and the Minregions’ discussions are:

- Progress of the territorial administrative reform, the outcomes of constitutional consultations and implications of those for the upcoming local elections, as well as the impact of COVID19 on the law-making and the reform processes.

- Finalization of Minregion’s Action Plan in the context of updating overall the Government Activities Program and Action Plan.

- The implications of the COVID19 for Minregion’s Action Plan and support is to be provided by development partners programs and projects.