

Annual Report 2017

– Ukraine

Relational Peacebuilding Initiatives (RPI) has focused over the last 12 months on its work in Ukraine and has developed a new initiative for peacebuilding in the Korean Peninsula.

Ukraine Initiative

The Design Process

Dr Jeremy Ive (later Relational Peacebuilding Initiatives (RPI) Director of Political Process) and Dr Valery Morozov (later RPI Adviser on Eastern European Affairs) began work on the design of a process for Ukraine in 2014, under the auspices of Concordis International[1]. This work was then taken further under the aegis of Relational Research[2] in 2015 until RPI was established as an association, under Swiss law, in January 2016, specialising in Track Two initiatives.

RPI's approach involves a multi-year process of consultations among a previously identified group of informed and influential individuals drawn from different constituencies and geographies. In preparation for each consultation, information is gathered and, where necessary, research commissioned on specific sets of issues that are likely to feature in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. RPI's role is to facilitate conversations about alternative futures that will strengthen prospects for lasting peace and catalyse broadly-based partnerships for practical action. [3]

2017 year (January to December)

Consultation on Environmental Issues

In mid-January 2017, Mr Bromwich returned to Geneva for further discussions with the Director of Zoï's programme in Ukraine, Dr Nikolai Denisov, and Mr Douglas Weir of Toxic Remnants of War together with Ms Gwynne, Dr Ive and Mr Rimando. As a result of these discussions, agreement was reached between RPI and Zoï Environment Network, based in Geneva, to work together to prepare for RPI's first major consultation to be held in September 2017, focusing on environmental issues.

At the end of March 2017, Mr Bromwich and Dr Ive travelled to Kyiv together with Dr Denisov. Accompanied by Mr Dmytro Averin from Zoï Environment Network's office in Kyiv, they conducted a series of meetings with key Ukrainian Government ministries, International Organisations (both UN and OSCE) and non-governmental organisations working in Ukraine. All confirmed the grave extent to which the environmental situation in Donbas has been exacerbated by the current conflict, with the effects of impending environmental disaster resulting from flooded mines and toxic chemical and radioactive waste affecting the water table and disruption of water and sanitation services having serious implications not just for the population of Donbas on both sides of the line of contact but beyond. A follow up RPI-Zoï workshop took place in Geneva in May.

Following discussions between RPI representatives and Mr Moritz Ehrmann of the Austrian Delegation to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna on 31 May, 2017, RPI has decided to put its plans to focus on environmental issues at the launch its Track Two consultative process in September 2017 on hold, pending clarification of the intentions of other interested parties and bring forward the planned second phase of consultations which will focus on “Relational Economy”. Details of the preparatory work carried out by RPI and Zoï have been shared with Mr. Ehrmann to encourage improved coordination of efforts among the various actors and optimise the use of the resources available.

There was continued networking both in London, Berlin and Geneva. Ms Gwynne travelled to Berlin in mid-June and made contact with the Ukraine Task Force of the German Federal Republic Dr Ive attended the high-level conference “Ukraine’s Transformation: Assessments and Solutions” organised by Chatham House held at Lancaster House, London on the 5th July 2017 and a number of important contacts were made, including with H.E. Dr Andreas Prothmann, the Special Envoy for Ukraine and Head of the Ukraine Task Force of the German Federal Republic.

Relational Business stream was launched with a series of presentations to business, academic and political audiences by Dr Schluter at the International Management Institute in Kyiv (MIM-Kyiv) and other venues on the 16th and 17th November on the application of Relational principles and Relational Analytics in business, finance and the economy. These involved the following:

1. Presentations on corporate reporting and public accountability in Ukraine based on the stakeholder model of corporate reporting currently being introduced in the UK
2. Relational Capital – its definition, significance and measurement

Next Steps

In addition to the topic of Relational Business discussed above, the following topics could be explored in a future Track Two consultation process. These topics align with the interests and capabilities of the members of the Relational Thinking Network, enabling rapid mobilisation of activity, as funds become available.

Environmental risks: These are focused on Eastern Ukraine arising from the residual problems of the concentration of heavy industry in the East, but also the dangers resulting from the continued conflict in Donbas which have exacerbated the situation and prevented the rapid deterioration of the points of urgent concern, especially in the areas not controlled by the Ukrainian Government. But Donbas, and, more widely, Ukraine East of the Dnieper, are not the sole areas of environmental concern. Although active pursuit of this strand had to be suspended, as indicated above, this remains a key strand which could be actively focused on at a later date.

Agriculture: There is the potential for re-invigoration of agricultural production and sustainable forestry in the region, within a Relational framework. Current partners include individuals with significant business interests in this sector, combining global trade as well as smaller scale “local food systems” for domestic consumption and cross border exchange.

Schools and Education: Discussions are also underway regarding opportunities to update the delivery of education services, build citizenship and prepare Ukraine's younger generations for a rapidly changing work environment, in line with relational principles. In addition to the work of the Relational Schools Project's UK and Netherlands chapters, these discussions will explore opportunities for incorporation of "strategic foresight" (futures thinking) partners, with interest expressed by UNESCO and partner institutions in Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Finland.

The future structures of Ukrainian government and political life: Although any systematic consideration of this matter is a deeply vexed one, not least with the difficulties arising in the implementation of the constitutional provisions in the Minsk II accord, this has scope and significance far and beyond the immediate questions arising from the conflict in Donbas. On paper, Ukraine is a unitary, presidential state with the separation of legislative, judicial and executive powers. However, there is a strongly entrenched localism across many of the regions, which countervails and subverts the unitary character of the constitution; and the de-facto divisions of powers at a central level is undermined and counteracted by interdepartmental strife among the central authorities, with a multiplication of rival sources of authority and diversion of financial, administrative and military resources across the legislative, executive and judicature for the accumulation of power and money in private and sectional hands. It will be necessary to review the present structures of government and political life so that there can be a more robust system of constitutional checks and balance, and that the diversity of the regions can be more fully taken into account and served without undermining the unity and proper regulation of all state functions by the people as a whole.

The role of civil society including faith communities: In relation to all of the above, cognisance is taken of the important role of civil society, community groups and faith communities, and the particular challenges facing younger people, which constitute migration "drivers" in the absence of peace and prosperity at home.

RPI was able to draw on the collective expertise of Ms Beris Gwynne, Dr Jeremy Ive as Director of Political Process and Dr Valery Morozov as Senior Advisor on Eastern European affairs (based in the UK) and of founder members, Dr Michael Schluter (Chair of Relational Research and based in Cambridge, UK), Professor Prabhu Gupta, and Mr Edmond Granges (Treasurer) and other members of the Relational Thinking Network (Relational Research, Relational Analytics, Relational Schools etc.)