

Winter Starts Today

COMMUNIQUÉ

following the meeting of the closed community of practitioners, organised by ISAR Ednannia

Kyiv, Civil Society Home, 4 August 2026

On 4 August 2026, ISAR Ednannia held a closed meeting of the community of practitioners “Winter Starts Today”, bringing together representatives of the expert community, civil society and charitable organisations, donors, and public authorities.

The purpose of the meeting was to jointly discuss solutions that will help civil society ensure continuity of operations, support people, and interact with the state and communities amid a possible deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the winter of 2026–2027. The idea of preparing specifically in the summer was a response to the experience of the previous winter, when responding to a crisis at the moment it unfolded was already too late.

Diagnosis of the energy system: *“The shortage of energy resources is becoming the new normal for planning”*

During the meeting, participants reviewed the current state of Ukraine’s energy system and the key challenges that will determine the course of the 2026–2027 heating season.

Over four years of full-scale war, around 70% of generation capacity has been damaged or destroyed to varying degrees. Despite the ongoing restoration of energy infrastructure, the country begins each new heating season with less available capacity than the previous one.

As noted, projected electricity consumption during the winter period will be around 18 GW, while domestic generation may provide only around 11 GW. The deficit will be partly offset by electricity imports from Europe, but import opportunities remain limited by the physical transmission capacity of the grids. This is why the deficit has become a permanent planning variable that must be taken into account by the state, communities, businesses, and civil society.

It was also noted that the situation next winter may be more difficult due to a combination of factors: continued attacks on critical infrastructure, increased missile production by Russia, and limited capacity to quickly replenish stocks of modern air defence systems. Under these conditions, preparations should be based on realistic scenario planning and readiness to operate under a prolonged shortage of resources.

Practical experience: lessons from frontline communities

Participants also heard about the experience of one community in Mykolaiv Oblast, which for the third consecutive year has been preparing to get through the autumn-winter period under wartime conditions.

Winter Starts Today

As emphasised, preparing for winter is a continuous process of testing, adaptation, and revising approaches. The community is gradually diversifying its energy supply sources, combining centralised systems with autonomous solutions, which helps reduce dependence on a single energy source.

Among the effective practices highlighted were:

- Decentralisation of heating: Almost all apartments in the community were switched to individual heating back in 2024.
- Solid-fuel alternative: Social facilities (hospitals, schools) are equipped with solid-fuel boilers that run on wood chips from local garden waste.
- Energy independence of the water utility: Thanks to solar panels (solar power plants), the water utility meets 70% of its energy needs, which helps contain tariffs and ensure stability.
- Cooperation with donors and civil society organisations in supporting energy resilience.

Key challenges identified by meeting participants

During the discussion, participants considered systemic challenges that may significantly affect the ability of communities, public authorities, and civil society to ensure continuity of operations and support people during the winter period.

Lack of public preparedness for prolonged crisis scenarios

Participants repeatedly stressed that ordinary community residents do not know how to act in the event of a prolonged interruption of heat supply, water supply, or communications. This is particularly relevant for residents of apartment buildings who may be forced to leave their homes. That is why people need to be prepared for possible scenarios now: by providing information, explaining courses of action, and preventing panic.

Organisations often work in parallel rather than together

Participants identified the absence of a coordination mechanism among civil society organisations, donors, communities, and public authorities as a separate problem and, as a result, the duplication of assistance. Consequently, some needs are covered several times, while others remain unsupported. Participants proposed establishing permanent coordination mechanisms rather than coming together only during crises.

Insufficient interaction between authorities and civil society

Participants noted that civil society and charitable organisations are often the first to help people during crises, but they do not always know how the authorities plan to act. This makes it difficult to complement government measures and use their own resources effectively. Organisations should be involved in planning even before the crisis period begins.

Winter Starts Today

Need for local self-organisation mechanisms

In a large-scale crisis, the level of a building, neighbourhood, or community may become key to a rapid response. Participants noted that it is not advisable to rely exclusively on centralised solutions; instead, local mutual-aid networks and cooperation among associations of co-owners of apartment buildings (OSBBs), volunteer initiatives, and local organisations need to be developed.

People who require ongoing support are at greatest risk

Participants separately emphasised the needs of persons with disabilities, people with limited mobility, older people, and those receiving social services. Communities need to have up-to-date data, procedures, and protocols in advance, and to know who needs assistance, what specific needs these people have, and how to support them in the event of prolonged disruptions to basic services.

Civil society organisations also need to prepare themselves

Some participants pointed out that not all organisations have continuity plans. At the same time, organisations already need to think about backup power, communications, autonomous workstations, the necessary equipment, and to include these needs in projects and grant applications so that they are able to help others.

Preparations need to start now

One of the recurring points throughout the discussion was that most decisions are already too late to make in the autumn. If organisations, communities, or donors are planning equipment purchases, investments in energy resilience, or new support mechanisms, this needs to be done now. Once the crisis begins, there will no longer be time to prepare.

Recommendations: for civil society and charitable organisations

Meeting participants recommend that civil society and charitable organisations:

- Do not postpone preparations for winter – review their own continuity plans now and prepare for different scenarios for getting through the winter period.
- Prepare not only the organisation itself, but also its target audiences. Explain possible risks, courses of action, and ways for people to prepare for prolonged disruptions to basic services.
- Equip teams with backup power sources, alternative communications, and the ability to continue working even during prolonged interruptions of electricity, heat, or water supply. Discuss such needs openly with donors.
- Strengthen coordination among organisations and regularly exchange information on needs, resources, and responsibilities in order to avoid duplication of assistance.

Winter Starts Today

- Work more actively with communities, associations of co-owners of apartment buildings (OSBBs), and local initiatives, developing local mutual-aid networks.
- Build partnerships with local authorities before a crisis occurs. Jointly prepare response scenarios and agree on the distribution of roles, rather than acting only after an emergency has arisen.

Recommendations: for state authorities and local self-government bodies

- Move from response to advance planning. Prepare for different scenarios for getting through the winter period before the heating season begins.
- Develop clear action protocols for interruptions of heat supply, electricity, water, and communications, identifying responsible parties and interaction mechanisms. This need was repeatedly raised during the discussion.
- Invest in the energy resilience of communities. Develop diversified heat sources, autonomous energy supply systems, backup power, and solutions that reduce dependence on a single energy source.
- Pay particular attention to ensuring communications. Ensure the uninterrupted operation of mobile operators, hotlines, emergency services, and other critically important services.
- More actively involve civil society organisations in planning and response, using their experience and capacity to work quickly with people.

Recommendations: for international partners and donors

- Support not only responses to the consequences of crises, but also the advance preparation of communities and organisations for the winter period.
- Provide funding in grant programmes for measures that ensure organisations' continuity of operations: the purchase of backup power sources, communications equipment, other equipment, and other solutions for organisational resilience.
- Ensure greater flexibility in programmes and procurement procedures so that organisations can respond quickly to changes in the situation.
- Support long-term investments in the energy resilience of communities, rather than emergency response alone.
- Facilitate the development of coordination among donors, public authorities, and the civil society sector so that assistance is delivered faster, in a more targeted manner, and without duplication.

Winter Starts Today

Conclusions

Meeting participants agreed that preparations for winter cannot begin when the crisis has already occurred. The resilience of communities, organisations, and the system for supporting people is built in advance — through planning, coordination, partnership, and readiness to act together.

They called on civil society and charitable organisations, state authorities, local self-government bodies, and international partners to begin preparing today for possible challenges during the winter period of 2026–2027, in order to ensure continuity of operations, preserve people's access to critically important services, and strengthen the resilience of communities.

Participants also expressed their readiness to continue exchanging experience and jointly developing practical solutions that will help civil society respond effectively to challenges and remain a reliable partner to the state and communities.

Winter starts today. And today is the time to prepare for the challenges that tomorrow may become a test for millions of people.