

Regional Visits to the Offices of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights

Rivne, Volyn, Lviv and Zakarpattia regions | 8–10 July 2026

The visits gave a much clearer picture of how the regional offices actually work, what pressures they face and where RWI can provide practical support. Across all four regions, the conversations were unusually open and concrete. Colleagues spoke not only about achievements and training interests, but also about internal gaps, workload, difficult cases, underused capacities and areas where outside expertise would be useful. This level of candour suggests that RWI is increasingly seen not simply as a provider of trainings, but as a trusted partner with whom more strategic and sometimes sensitive institutional issues can be discussed.

In Rivne, the office highlighted the need for stronger skills in communicating with people who have experienced trauma, as well as practical training on international law. The team also spoke openly about the limited use of existing public monitors and the need to prepare new ones. At the same time, there is strong interest in educational partnerships, including potential cooperation with Ostroh Academy to explore the introduction of a “Student Ombudsman” initiative, building on the experience of the already established “School Ombudsman” model. The office receives a high volume of complaints, particularly from military personnel and internally displaced persons, and regularly conducts outreach visits to local communities.

In Volyn, the most distinctive issue is the humanitarian corridor through which people return from the temporarily occupied territories via Belarus. A regional office representative is permanently present at the crossing point, providing first consultations, identifying possible human rights violations and helping people navigate available services. The office sees a need for a more comprehensive referral and follow-up system for returnees, as well as stronger knowledge on documentation, migration issues and communication with traumatised people and children. The team also showed interest in developing the “Lutsik – Human Rights City” initiative, while being very honest that a clear methodology and roadmap are still missing, RWI support is needed.

In Lviv, the discussion was more strategic and focused on the ambition to develop the “Lviv Region – Human Rights Region” initiative. The office plans a broader assessment of the human rights situation in the region and is exploring the idea of human rights advisers in local communities. Importantly, when developing the concept and related checklist for this initiative, the Regional Representative drew on materials provided by RWI following the study visit to Sweden. The office also shared plans to explore the potential involvement of the State of California, which has a sister-state partnership with Lviv Region, including the possibility of attracting financial support for the “Lviv Region – Human Rights Region” initiative. There is also strong interest in strengthening the capacity of local self-government to apply a human rights-based approach, particularly when working with veterans and people affected by trauma. The openness of the office to involve RWI in these longer-term initiatives, as well as the practical use of RWI materials in shaping its regional human rights agenda, is a strong signal of confidence in our expertise and potential role beyond individual training activities.

In Zakarpattia, the discussion went furthest in terms of institutional development. The office proposed a deeper organisational capacity assessment, potentially including confidential interviews with staff, analysis of workloads and functional responsibilities, and an external review of staffing needs. The office also identified needs related to basic human rights standards, information rights, veterans, children, missing persons, monitoring methodology and burnout prevention. At the same time, it has strong internal expertise that could be shared with other regions, including a certified trainer on children’s rights and practical experience with a Social Atlas of Roma communities. Another promising development is that Mukachevo is also ready to move forward with a “Human Rights City” initiative. To support this process, the Regional Representative in Lviv has already shared

with the Zakarpattia colleagues the full set of documents and materials previously developed for the “Lviv Region – Human Rights Region” initiative, creating a useful basis for adapting this experience to the local context.