

Ukraine: Introducing Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)

Friday 11 March 2022, by [Sotsialnyi Rukh \(Social Movement\) Ukraine](#) (Date first published: 12 March 2019).

Sotsialnyi Rukh (SR; The Social Movement) is a new left party being created by the working people of Ukraine. Recent events here have shown the lack of political subjectivity of working classes in the country and the need for a left-wing political force which would promote a socially oriented agenda.

During the 2013-2014 Maidan protests, a group of Ukrainian leftist activists had proclaimed “The Ten Points” of anti-capitalist and pro-labour demands countering the conservative nationalist and liberal mainstream. It went on establishing the Assembly of Social Revolution in 2014. The name itself implied that we believe the problems behind the numerous Ukrainian protests of last decades (poverty, striking inequality, social injustice, lack of democracy, corruption and vested interests in politics, police violence, and attacks on civil and social rights) could be solved only by a genuine social revolution – namely, replacing the existing system of oligarchic capitalism with democratic socialism.

The Assembly was an attempt to bring together activists of various socialist and anti-Stalinist communist currents and politicizing youth; its representatives took part in the local elections, but its main task was the development of extra-parliamentary left-wing politics, thus laying the foundation for the organizing committee of the new party, called the Social Movement, and the eponymous NGO. The founding congress of the party was held in November 2016, and collecting of 10,000 signatures required by law to register the party is now under way.

The key branch of the organization is in the labour heart of Ukraine – the city of Kryvyi Rih (Krivoy Rog). In addition to another significant section in the capital of Kyiv, we are building organizations in other regions as well. Unlike all existing parties of Ukraine which are merely various oligarchic projects, Sotsialniy Rukh is a grassroots democratic political force with a collective leadership and no single capitalist or establishment politician in its ranks. Instead, there are miners, steelworkers, teachers, academicians, students, construction workers, engineers, IT pros, artists, and journalists; youth constitutes the majority of membership.

Most of us are involved in independent trade union movement, including the Independent Trade Union of Miners, the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers (parts of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine), and some militant factions of Federation of Trade Unions. Some members have been active in different leftist organizations (Organization of Marxists, socialist organization “Left Opposition”, student union “Direct Action”, Social Alternative, etc.); for others, Sotsialniy Rukh delivered the first experience of political participation. Besides workers’ unions, Sotsialniy Rukh activists have extensive experience in various social movements: student, human rights, feminist, ecological, anti-fascist, LGBTQ+, and others.

Sotsialniy Rukh supports the struggles and works within millieus of workers in industry (ranging

from mining or missile factories to food industry), medicine, education, science, IT, and trade alike. we actively opposed the government's IMF-enhanced austerity policies, cuts and closures of budgetary institutions.

In 2016, for instance, we participated in the protest march of the physicians from the town of Romny who completed, together with our activists, 350 kilometers on foot to the capital after their clinic had been closed down, as dozens of others throughout the country. The neoliberal policy of the government which considered the idea of the complete abolition of scholarship stipends was faced by protest of left-wing youth, including SR activists, who responded by piecing the architect of this "reform" from the finance ministry.

Sotsialniy Rukh also actively participated in the struggles of transportation workers in Kyiv, especially the trolleybus drivers at Kurenivske depot. When their union was under harsh pressure from the management, we helped them to gain international support including from UK MPs (via LabourStart and the socialist Ukraine Solidarity Campaign).

In 2017, Sotsialniy Rukh assisted the spontaneous wave of Kryvyi Rih workers' strikes and protests demanding increase of their wages to a decent level of €1000. The protests resumed in 2018, triggered by work-to-rule actions by the railroad workers, and leading to a major class conflict at Ukraine's biggest factory, the multinational-owned steelworks ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih. The struggle there continues, and SR activists from other places picked the city for 2018 May Day rally to manifest our solidarity.

Comrades from our organization also provided them a comprehensive research of offshoring: how much profit in Ukraine's iron ore exports is shifted to tax havens by the oligarchs and corporations. This research paper was the first common project of an initiative group where Sotsialniy Rukh and its internal Platform Start cooperate with other progressive organizations, such as SD Platform and Respublika. In general, we held dozens of education programs and street actions in 2018, with more than 2000 Facebook posts at our page <https://www.facebook.com/social.ruh/> and regular articles at our web site <https://rev.org.ua/>.

Another important aspect of the Social Movement activities is "pirate" politics: the struggle for free information and intellectual property rights reform. By the efforts of our comrades, open accounting was first introduced in Ukraine in the Ministry of Education and Science. Decisions-making process in the SR involves the use of e-democracy mechanisms; in formation of governing bodies, special attention is paid to women participation.

Sotsialniy Rukh conducts different educational and cultural activities throughout the country: lectures on various topics of domestic and international politics, political theory and practice (capitalism and the labour theory of value, labour rights and the labour movement, the problem of offshore companies, experience of the international Left: the rise and fall of SYRIZA, Jeremy Corbyn's and Bernie Sanders' campaigns, prospects of Podemos and the Catalan independence movement, Latin America's pink tide and the right-wing backlash etc.); a course on history of Ukrainian socialist movements and ideas; workers' schools; film screenings; presentations of books involving our authors (like *The Future Without Capitalism* and *Left-Wing Europe*, an account of European leftist parties and movements), left-wing intellectual magazine *Commons: Journal of Social Criticism*, studies by Center for Social and Labour Research (e.g. on controversial economic effects of the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, precarious labour conditions, or on social and economic alternatives to neo-liberal capitalism in Ukraine).

The Social Movement activists have repeatedly faced violence both from the employers' mercenaries and from the nationalist far right. For example, right-wingers repeatedly attacked or tried to disrupt

the anti-fascist rallies in memory of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova, leftist activists who fell victims of Russian neo-Nazis, or the presentations of Leon Trotsky's works collection in Ukrainian. Of course, we're facing the atmosphere of systematic far right violence and impunity fueled by the ongoing war, national conservative hegemony in ideology, nationalist and anti-communist hysteria, and regular violations of human rights and freedoms by the state.

Certainly, there's urgent need for us and for the entire Ukrainian society in ending the war in Donbas and achieving peace. This goal requires uniting the working class all over different parts of Ukraine. We offer defending our common class interests against the Ukrainian, Russian and Western capitalists rather than geopolitical nonsense and artificial separation by competing nationalisms and imperialisms.

In this case, as in the struggle for a socialist, democratic and humanistic alternative in general, the solidarity of our comrades and friends with the same views in Europe and worldwide is quite important for the Social Movement.

Sotsialniy Rukh

[Click here](#) to subscribe to ESSF newsletters in English and/or French.

P.S.

Sotsialniy Rukh

<https://rev.org.ua/sotsialnyi-ruk-who-we-are/>