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## GENERAL SOCIAL MEASURES FOR PREVENTING BANDITRY UNDER MARTIAL LAW

**Abstract. Purpose.** The purpose of the article is to formulate a conceptual vision of the general social measures aimed at preventing banditry under martial law. **Results.** The article emphasizes that the general social measures for preventing banditry constitute a comprehensive set of large-scale, systemic, and long-term legal, socio-economic, managerial, and cultural-educational measures implemented at the national, regional, local, and interagency levels. These measures are aimed at ensuring sustainable national security, shaping an anti-criminal social environment, and eliminating or neutralizing the determinants that facilitate the emergence and functioning of armed criminal groups. Taking into account the results of criminological research and an assessment of contemporary threats, the article proposes a set of legal and managerial measures designed to ensure security and prevent banditry under martial law and during the post-war recovery of the state, based on the formation of an integrated system of programmatic and strategic documents. With these key priorities in place, general social measures evolve into a multi-level system of social stabilization that creates conditions for systematic prevention of banditry by: eliminating the social causes behind the formation and activity of bandit groups; fostering legal and moral culture among the population; reducing social tension and post-war trauma; limiting access to illegal weapons; ensuring stable functioning of public authorities; integrating state security policy with economic, social, youth, defence, and educational policies; preventing marginalization and the criminalization of combatants and youth. **Conclusions.** The article concludes that the implementation of general social measures for preventing banditry should include, *inter alia*: adopting the *Strategy for Combating Organized Crime in Ukraine until 2035* and advancing the program-targeted approach through improving strategic planning mechanisms and expanding law-enforcement instruments. The key directions of this innovative Strategy should operate as a nationwide directive for developers of medium- and short-term national and regional plans, subject to adjustment depending on the criminogenic situation; adopting the *Comprehensive Plan for Preventing Criminal Offenses in Ukraine for 2027–2035* as the basic document for the implementation of the Strategy, which, given its long-term nature, will become the methodological foundation for developing regional crime prevention plans; developing regional banditry prevention plans at the level of regions and oblasts, assigning responsibility for their implementation to regional state administrations and territorial units of the National Police, and ensuring a standardized format that reflects state planning requirements, regional criminogenic specifics, resource potential, and organizational capacities; establishing the *Directorate for Criminal Offense Prevention* within the central apparatus of the National Police of Ukraine, entrusted with determining strategic priorities of state policy on crime prevention, conducting nationwide crime research (including organized crime), coordinating the activities of prevention actors, synthesizing preventive practices, and organizing international cooperation in the field of criminal offense prevention.

**Key words:** banditry, gang, organized group, criminal offense, criminology, prevention.

### 1. Introduction

The current conditions of martial law, caused by armed aggression against Ukraine, have significantly transformed both the criminogenic environment and the parameters of the national crime-prevention system. This transformation is especially evident in the sphere of violent offenses and organized forms of criminal activity. One of the most dangerous manifestations of such criminality—characterized by a high level of public danger, structural stability, and growing latency—is banditry.

Under wartime conditions, this phenomenon acquires additional complexity: social control becomes considerably weakened, the number of individuals with combat experience and access to weapons increases, economic and social disparities intensify, and psychological instability spreads among a significant part of the population. These factors create a favourable environment for the emergence of stable criminal groups capable of armed attacks, coordinated violent acts, and establishing localized influence over certain territories.

In such circumstances, general social measures for preventing banditry acquire particular significance, as they form the foundational preventive mechanism targeting violent and organized crime. Their purpose is to eliminate or neutralize a broad range of determinants that generate or reinforce motivation to participate in armed organized groups. These measures encompass a complex of political, socio-economic, cultural-educational, legal, informational, psychological, and institutional actions that ensure the proper functioning of public authorities, the stabilization of social relations, maintenance of public order, strengthening of public trust in the state, reduction of social tension, and restoration of citizens' sense of security.

Given the scale and systemic nature of banditry during wartime, solely criminal-law instruments prove insufficient; instead, a wide, interdisciplinary system of measures is required—those implemented at the levels of society, state institutions, communities, and the individual.

The purpose of the article is to articulate a conceptual vision of the general social measures aimed at preventing banditry under martial law.

Various criminological aspects of preventing organized forms of crime have been addressed by V. Batyrhareieva, V. Beschastnyi, V. Vasylevych, B. Holovkin, O. Holovkin, O. Dzhuzha, P. Yepryntsev, A. Zakaliuk, O. Lytvynov, O. Kulyk, M. Semenyshyn, O. Shostko. The issue of preventing banditry has been examined by V. Bedrykivskyi, V. Holina, Yu. Zhyvova, and Yu. Kyliuk. The scientific contributions of these scholars are undisputed; however, the specific problem of general social measures for preventing banditry under martial law remains insufficiently explored.

## 2. Foundations of General Social Measures for Crime Prevention

In criminology, general social measures for crime prevention are traditionally understood as a set of long-term socio-economic and cultural-educational measures aimed at the further development and improvement of social relations, as well as the elimination or neutralization of the causes and conditions of crime (Holina, Holovkin, Valuiska, 2014). As aptly noted by O.M. Dzhuzha, this level of crime prevention is characterized by the fact that its components constitute an integral part of socio-economic development and the enhancement of the moral and spiritual spheres of society (Dzhuzha, Vasylevych, Kolb, 2009).

According to V.V. Holina, the primary objectives of this preventive direction include overcoming or limiting criminogenically dan-

gerous contradictions within society, as well as the gradual eradication of negative phenomena generated by political, economic, psychological, ideological, and other factors contributing to the emergence of criminal potential in society. These include economic and political crises, dangerous levels of property stratification, unjustified—even criminal—enrichment of certain groups of citizens, unemployment, wage arrears, subsistence-level living conditions for the majority of the population, moral degradation, prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism, and homelessness (Holina, 2011). Under martial law, these factors not only intensify but also assume new forms (mass displacement of the population, traumatic combat experience, the increasing circulation of weapons, destruction of infrastructure, decline of trust in governmental institutions in certain regions), thereby creating an exceptionally favourable environment for the emergence and consolidation of bandit formations. Consequently, general social measures in the fields of the economy, social protection, support for veterans and internally displaced persons, and the reconstruction of devastated territories are directly linked to preventing banditry as the most dangerous form of organized armed criminality.

As noted by O.O. Tytarenko, the application of the program-targeted method constitutes one of the key elements of a fundamentally new approach to organizing and ensuring a comprehensive system of crime prevention. This approach emerged within the framework of a modern criminological concept that requires the development, adoption, and implementation of preventive measures in strict accordance with defined systemic and programmatic requirements (Tytarenko, 2019). For preventing banditry under martial law, this is of particular importance, as program-targeted models allow for the integration of general social, organizational, operational, and analytical capacities of the state into a single strategic framework for countering stable armed criminal groups.

Comprehensive crime-prevention programming has its own specific content—its own goals, a defined circle of actors, objects of influence, and forms of interaction between these actors and objects (Dzhuzha, Vasylevych, Hida, 2011). Adopting the concept of crime prevention, O.M. Lytvynov identified three principal levels of such activity: the level of large social groups (the state, regions, economic sectors, social subsystems); the level of small social groups (work collectives, communities, families, organizations); and the level of individual actors (specific officials, professional crime-prevention subjects) (Bandurka, Lytvynov, 2012).

In the context of preventing banditry under martial law, programming functions not only as an instrument of strategic planning but also as a mechanism for integrating general social, special criminological, and individual preventive measures. This allows the consolidation of efforts across various sectors of security, the economy, the social sphere, and local self-government to eliminate the deep-rooted factors that facilitate the emergence and functioning of armed organized groups.

Attention should be drawn to the *Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Reform of Law Enforcement Agencies as part of the Security and Defense Sector of Ukraine for 2023–2027* (Decree of the President of Ukraine, 2023) and the *Action Plan aimed at implementing the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Reform of Law Enforcement Agencies as part of the Security and Defense Sector of Ukraine for 2023–2027* (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024). These documents encompass all core directions of reforming the law-enforcement sector and outline the systemic transformation of law-enforcement agencies in accordance with EU standards, intelligence-led policing (ILP), the SOCTA model, risk-oriented management, multi-level coordination, and the enhancement of criminal-justice effectiveness. Many of the prescribed measures have direct preventive relevance for combating banditry: weapons control, analytical intelligence, risk-oriented management, technical modernization, strengthened interagency coordination, strategic planning, and criminal policy improvement. At the same time, successful implementation depends on: the speed of legislative adoption; adequate resource provision; avoidance of institutional competition; strengthening public trust; and effective control over weapons circulation in the post-war period. These documents create the prerequisites for significantly reducing the risks associated with the formation and activity of armed criminal groups; however, their impact will depend on the practical implementation of each specified direction.

In our view, the core element of developing a crime-prevention program is the scientifically grounded definition of its goals and objectives.

The goals of programming serve as the fundamental benchmarks that determine the logic, structure, and substantive content of the relevant decisions. Such goals include: reducing and gradually lowering the overall crime rate, including its most socially dangerous forms; overcoming negative social-development phenomena that determine criminal behaviour (the mass spread of background deviant phenomena, economic crises, the creation of “conversion centres”, the growth of weapons circulation, etc.);

preventing deviant behaviour of citizens that leads to or facilitates the commission of offences; preventing unlawful forms of behaviour within society, collectives, and families; fostering positive socio-legal processes that neutralize antisocial manifestations; strengthening legal consciousness, discipline, and moral norms; and cultivating active civic engagement in the sphere of law observance and counteraction to criminal manifestations.

In the context of preventing banditry, these goals are transformed into the task of creating socio-economic conditions that minimize opportunities for the formation of armed criminal groups, as well as establishing measures that enhance community resilience to violent threats. The objectives of programming further include: systematizing the processes of preparing, adopting, and implementing managerial decisions in the field of crime prevention; enhancing the effectiveness of all types of criminological activity; strengthening coordination among crime-prevention actors; ensuring regional monitoring of crime, its determinants, and consequences; optimizing expenditures on law-enforcement activities at the regional level; rationalizing the management system through timely decision-making; improving the qualifications of personnel in law-enforcement and supervisory bodies; enhancing regulatory and legal frameworks; and stimulating the activity of civil-society institutions in the field of prevention (Dzhuzha, Vasylevych, Hida, 2011).

Of significant scientific and practical interest is the State Targeted Social Program *“Youth of Ukraine” for 2021–2025* (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021), which emphasizes that the full development and self-realization of young people constitute key social values, and that their social support is one of the principal priorities of state policy. In this regard, harmonization of Ukrainian approaches with European standards is essential, since one of the European Union’s youth-policy priorities is likewise the enhancement of youth participation in public life.

Regarding the legal dimensions of prevention, an important benchmark in this area is the *National Security Strategy of Ukraine* adopted in 2020 (Decree of the President of Ukraine, 2020). Its purpose is the affirmation of human and civil rights and freedoms, the creation of conditions for a new quality of economic, social, and humanitarian development, Ukraine’s integration into the European Union, and the formation of prerequisites for NATO membership. A further important step was the adoption of the *Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of Youth Policy”* (2021), which defines

the main tasks of youth policy, including: creating conditions for the involvement of young people in the public, political, socio-economic, and cultural life of society; promoting the role and importance of youth participation in decision-making; supporting youth in realizing their socio-economic potential, including resolving housing issues, ensuring professional development and employment, and meeting educational, medical, cultural, and other needs; fostering the civic, national, and cultural identity of Ukrainian youth; promoting institutional development of youth and children's public associations and youth centres, strengthening their role in the socialization process; developing youth infrastructure; and supporting national and international youth cooperation.

The escalation of brutality and violence, together with the destabilization of the domestic socio-political environment, leads to disruption of the functioning of state authorities and local self-government bodies, and undermines the authority of the state and its law-enforcement agencies among the population. In such a context, organized crime functions not only as a criminal phenomenon but also as a geopolitical instrument that may be used by foreign intelligence services to destabilize the situation in Ukraine and to undermine national security, including through stimulating banditry and other forms of violent group criminality.

In this regard, the Government approved the *Strategy for Combating Organized Crime* (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020), which is intended to serve as a framework document setting strategic guidelines and standards for a systemic response to organized criminal activity, including banditry, both in peacetime and under martial law.

### 3. General Methodology of Strategic Planning as a General Social Measure for Preventing Banditry

According to V. V. Vasylevych, pursuant to the general methodology of strategic planning, an effective model of state anti-crime policy must be developed in several stages:

**Stage I** – drafting a Concept or Strategy that defines the fundamental principles, the strategic objective (ensuring national security for a 10–15-year period), crime trends at the national and regional levels, key crime-prevention tasks, and resource support;

**Stage II** – drafting, on its basis, a State Programme as a systemic normative document;

**Stage III** – adopting a State Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy (for a period of 3–5 years), which specifies the sequence of implementation;

**Stage IV** – developing regional and local programmes that adapt nationwide provisions

to territorial specifics (Vasylevych, 2021).

Based on this doctrinal approach, we argue that the set of legal and organizational-administrative measures aimed at ensuring security and preventing banditry under martial law and during the post-war recovery of the country must be implemented through the formation of a coherent system of programme-strategic documents, including the following:

#### 1. Adoption of the Crime Prevention Strategy of Ukraine until 2035.

Its content must be grounded in preliminary criminological forecasting of crime development in Ukraine, taking into account potential international, military, and socio-economic threats expected over the next ten years (Law of Ukraine *On State Forecasting and Development of Programmes for Economic and Social Development of Ukraine*, 2000; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine *On Approval of the Procedure for the Development of Forecast and Programme Documents for Economic and Social Development and for Preparing Draft Budget Declarations and the State Budget*, 2003).

The Strategy should:

- define the basic principles of state policy in the field of crime prevention and its specific manifestations, including banditry;
- specify the principles of planning and management in the field of criminal policy;
- establish requirements for the crime-prevention system, criteria of effectiveness, and monitoring procedures;
- contain recommendations on the development of state and regional plans detailing the strategy for the medium term;
- formulate mandatory tasks for crime-prevention actors, serving as binding guidelines for all executive authorities.

Long-term crime forecasting must rely on objective criminal-law statistics, ensuring that strategic decisions are scientifically grounded.

This normative act should become the single framework document guiding state authorities in preventing the growth of criminal activity and the formation of a criminal environment, while its detailed provisions should be further developed in lower-level documents.

#### 2. Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention of Criminal Offenses in Ukraine for 2026–2035.

This document will have a long-term nature (ten-year period); serve as the foundation for regional plans; and ensure a unified planning vertical aligned with the Strategy until 2035.

The plan must include a system of objectives, measures, performance indicators, and control mechanisms, thus ensuring an effective—rather than declarative—policy in the field of criminal security.

### 3. Adoption of Regional Plans for Preventing Banditry (by oblasts).

The necessity of such plans is conditioned by:

- the increased risk of forming armed criminal groups as a consequence of the war;
- substantial regional variations in the crime situation across Ukraine;
- the need to account for territorial specifics of violent group crime.

Regional programmes must:

- contain region-specific, evidence-based measures rather than duplicate nationwide documents;
- incorporate the views of not only the Ministry of Internal Affairs but also:
  - civil society organizations,
  - research institutions,
  - universities,
  - expert communities;
- be grounded in the principles of transparency, openness, and scientific validity.

Unlike the Strategy, such normative acts must avoid broad, non-specific language ("to improve," "to ensure," "to promote") and instead include precise, concrete measures and mechanisms for their adjustment based on changes in the crime situation.

### 4. Establishment of a specialized body within the structure of the National Police of Ukraine – the Directorate for the Prevention of Criminal Offenses.

The key functions of such a body should include:

- identifying the main directions of state policy in the field of crime prevention;
- conducting nationwide studies of latent crime and its determining factors;
- coordinating the activities of all crime-prevention actors;
- summarizing best practices in preventive activity;
- organizing and expanding cooperation among crime-prevention stakeholders;
- developing applied scientific recommendations for state authorities.

The proposed system of measures enables the formation of a unified, structured, and effective mechanism of general social prevention, which is a necessary precondition for restraining and preventing the spread of banditry under martial law. Without strengthening the strategic and programmatic components, the fight against organized armed groups will remain fragmented, and the risks of societal criminalization will remain high.

### 4. Conclusions

Within the framework of general social measures for preventing banditry, the following measures are proposed:

#### 1. Adoption of the Strategy for Combating Organized Crime in Ukraine until 2035

and the development of a program-targeted approach through the improvement of strategic planning mechanisms and the expansion of law-enforcement instruments. The key directions of the innovative Strategy are intended to ensure the implementation of nationwide directives for the developers of medium- and short-term state and regional plans, which will be adjusted according to the criminogenic situation.

**2. Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention of Criminal Offenses in Ukraine for 2027–2035** as a fundamental document for the implementation of the Strategy. Due to its long-term nature, this Plan will serve as a methodological basis for the formation of regional crime-prevention plans.

**3. Development of Regional Banditry Prevention Plans (by oblasts)**, with implementation entrusted to regional state administrations and local bodies of the National Police of Ukraine. These plans should follow a standardized format that takes into account state-level planning, regional criminogenic specificity, resource capacity, and organizational capabilities.

**4. Establishment of the Directorate for the Prevention of Criminal Offenses within the central apparatus of the National Police of Ukraine**, tasked with defining the strategic priorities of state policy in crime prevention; conducting nationwide research on crime, including organized crime; coordinating the activities of crime-prevention actors; systematizing preventive practices; and organizing international cooperation in the field of crime prevention.

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## ЗАГАЛЬНОСОЦІАЛЬНІ ЗАХОДИ ЗАПОБІГАННЯ БАНДИТИЗМУ В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО СТАНУ

**Анотація.** *Мета статті* полягає у необхідності сформулювати концептуальне бачення загальносоціальних заходів запобігання бандитизму в умовах воєнного стану. **Результати.** У статті наголошено, що загальносоціальні заходи запобігання бандитизму становлять комплекс масштабних, системних і довготривалих правових, соціально-економічних, організаційно-управлінських та культурно-виховних заходів, що реалізуються на загальнодержавному, регіональному, місцевому та міжвідомчому рівнях, спрямованих на забезпечення стійкої національної безпеки, формування антикриміногенного соціального середовища та усунення або нейтралізацію детермінант, які сприяють виникненню й діяльності озброєних злочинних угруповань. З урахуванням результатів кримінологічних досліджень та аналізу сучасних загроз, запропоновано комплекс правових, організаційно-управлінських заходів впливу на забезпечення безпеки й запобігання бандитизму в умовах воєнного стану та післявоєнного відновлення країни на основі формування цілісної системи програмно-стратегічних документів. За допомоги таких ключових пріоритетів, загальносоціальні заходи перетворюються на багаторівневу систему стабілізації суспільства, яка створює умови для

системного запобігання бандитизму шляхом: усунення соціальних причин, що зумовлюють виникнення та діяльність бандитських угруповань; формування правої та моральної культури населення; зниження рівня соціальної напруги й поствоєнних травм; обмеження доступу до нелегальної зброї; забезпечення стійкої роботи інституцій публічної влади; інтеграції державної політики безпеки з економічною, соціальною, молодіжною, оборонною та освітньою політиками; подолання маргіналізації, недопущення криміналізації учасників бойових дій та молоді. **Висновки.** Зроблено висновок про доцільність виконання загальносоціальних заходів запобігання бандитизму зокрема: 1) прийняття Стратегії боротьби з організованою злочинністю в Україні до 2035 року та розвиток програмно-цільового підходу шляхом удосконалення механізмів стратегічного планування і розширення інструментарію правоохоронної діяльності, при цьому визначені ключові напрями інноваційної Стратегії мають забезпечити виконання загальнодержавної директиви для розробників середньо- та короткострокових державних і регіональних планів, що корегуватимуться залежно від криміногенної ситуації; 2) прийняття Комплексного плану запобігання кримінальним правопорушенням в Україні на 2027–2035 рр. як базового документа для реалізації Стратегії, який завдяки довгостроковому характеру стане методологічною основою формування регіональних планів запобігання злочинності; 3) розробка Планів запобігання бандитизму за регіонами, областями, організацією виконання яких покласти на обласні державні адміністрації та органи Національної поліції на місцях, забезпечивши стандартизований формат із урахуванням державного планування, регіональної криміногенної специфіки, ресурсного потенціалу та організаційних можливостей; 4) створення Управління запобігання кримінальним правопорушенням у структурі центрального апарату Національної поліції України, на яке покласти функції визначення стратегічних пріоритетів державної політики щодо запобігання кримінальним правопорушенням, проведення загальнонаціональних досліджень злочинності, у тому числі й організованої, координації діяльності суб'єктів запобігання, узагальнення превентивної практики та організації міжнародного співробітництва у сфері запобігання кримінальним правопорушенням.

**Ключові слова:** бандитизм, банда, організована група, кримінальне правопорушення, кримінологія, запобігання.