Trends in Ukraine's Post-War Reconstruction Within EU Initiatives

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Abstract:

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022 marked a turning point with irreversible consequences for the country. Statistical data on losses, destruction, damage, and economic costs illustrate both the scale of the war's impact and the complexity of post-war recovery. The article presents an analysis of the main trends in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, as reflected in the initiatives of the European Union, which has demonstrated steadfast partnership and support for Ukraine on its path to recovery. The outcomes of key conferences and events on Ukraine's reconstruction are outlined, including the 2022 Ukraine Recovery Conference, the 2025 Ukraine Recovery Conference, the International Conference on Environmental Security, and the final conference of the project Strengthening Social Protection in Ukraine. The social, economic, and environmental consequences of the war are examined as the basis for strategic planning of the country's recovery. The article also includes an overview of Ukraine's Post-War Recovery Plan, its key goals and guiding principles. Particular attention is given to the concept of a "green" recovery in the context of the EU4Green Recovery East program. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of European Union support in Ukraine's reconstruction process, highlights the scale of financial and expert assistance provided, and stresses the necessity of mobilizing efforts to bring the war to an end.

Keywords: *post-war reconstruction, post-war recovery, European Union, Russian–Ukrainian war, losses.*

Introduction

War is a complex phenomenon whose consequences do not vanish with the declaration of victory, the signing of a ceasefire, or the transition of a conflict into a "frozen phase." Because war entails loss of life and injury, the destruction of infrastructure, forced migration, and harm to the climate and environment, neither a ceasefire nor the withdrawal of troops can erase these effects without a trace. Post-war recovery therefore often takes years, requiring the involvement of numerous stakeholders and resources. One constant, however, remains: even the most extensive efforts cannot compensate for the loss of human lives.

The outbreak of the Russian–Ukrainian war in 2014 and its escalation into a full-scale invasion in 2022 marked the beginning of massive human, economic, social, and infrastructural losses. According to the fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4), which covers the period from 24 February 2022 to 31 December 2024 and was prepared by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the services of the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN) in coordination with other partners, Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery needs as of 31 December 2024 amount to 524 billion USD over the next decade. This figure is approximately 2.8 times higher than the country's projected nominal GDP for 2024. Direct damage to Ukraine is estimated at 176 billion USD (World Bank Group, 2025). However, these figures do not account for the extensive destruction and losses inflicted by Russia in 2025, which means that the actual reconstruction needs already significantly exceed the reported estimates.

In this context, the availability of funding for post-war reconstruction and the support of partners in this process is of critical importance. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, expressed unwavering commitment to Ukraine's recovery. In one of her statements, she emphasized that Ukraine can count on the EU's full support. The

European Commission is prepared to assume a leading role in international recovery efforts, to help rebuild Ukraine as a democratic and prosperous country. Moreover, as von der Leyen noted, investments will be linked to reforms in order to support Ukraine's progress along its European path (Recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine).

The European Union has already provided substantial financial assistance to Ukraine to strengthen its resilience and facilitate recovery. Yet, as Russia's brutal war continues, the overall amount of required resources remains uncertain and, regrettably, will continue to grow. Ukraine will therefore require additional support from the European community, and certain steps must begin now – particularly those related to advancing Ukraine's integration into the European and global economy and supporting its path toward EU membership (Recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine).

The aim of this article is to analyse the main trends in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction within the framework of European Union initiatives. Specifically, it seeks to identify the key directions and mechanisms of support that the EU has already provided or may provide in the future, as well as to assess their alignment with Ukraine's European course.

Ukraine's Post-War Recovery Plan

The central strategic document guiding Ukraine's reconstruction efforts is the Post-War Recovery Plan of Ukraine. It was developed in 2022 by the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the War as a key framework document that defines the directions and priorities of the recovery process. The plan was first presented at the international conference in Lugano on 4–5 July 2022, where it was endorsed by representatives of more than forty countries and international organizations. Its main objective goes beyond rebuilding facilities and infrastructure destroyed by the Russian

Federation's aggression: it seeks to ensure economic growth so that Ukraine can reach the level of development of modern European states.

Therefore, the core goals of the Post-War Recovery Plan include:

- Ensuring Ukraine's multidimensional resilience – economic, social, and environmental – on its path to victory.
- Identifying the most effective approaches for the prompt restoration of critical economic and social processes, as well as natural ecosystems.
- Designing a modernization agenda for the country aimed at sustainable economic growth and improved living standards (Ivanov, 2022).

It is worth highlighting the principles of Ukraine's Post-War Recovery Plan:

- **Immediate start, gradual development.** Recovery initiatives must be launched as quickly as possible to secure a flexible and resilient economy capable of functioning under security threats. A phased implementation strategy is crucial: gradual expansion of initiatives accompanied by a gradual increase in project risk levels.
- **Promoting equitable prosperity.** The ultimate beneficiary of the Recovery Plan is the Ukrainian people. The plan must therefore pursue the objectives of stimulating GDP growth, ensuring fair resource distribution, and raising the overall well-being of citizens.
- **European integration.** This ambitious strategic imperative establishes the institutional and regulatory foundation for Ukraine's integration into international supply chains, including the "green" economy, knowledge networks, and information flows.
- **Building back better.** Reconstruction should rely on advanced, environmentally friendly technologies to achieve higher standards than those of the destroyed facilities. This creates opportunities to implement the EU's key principles of "green" transition and digital transformation.

• **Encouraging private investment and entrepreneurship.** A critical element of recovery is attracting private investment and fostering the accelerated development of entrepreneurship. Support for small and medium-sized enterprises is therefore positioned as a cornerstone of the new economic model (Ukraine Recovery Conference, 2025b).

In drafting the Post-War Recovery Plan, experts divided it into several stages, each involving the implementation of key tasks.

The first stage focused on preparing the document:

• defining the objectives of national recovery;

• systematizing recovery projects and initiatives with attention to principles of inclusiveness;

• identifying priority projects and initiatives.

The second stage involved creating a roadmap that sets out the purpose and tasks of the recovery plan:

• assigning responsibilities to relevant actors;

• developing national programs in cooperation with Ukraine's partners;

• establishing a governance structure;

• ensuring consistency between the Recovery Plan of Ukraine and the State Program.

The final stage consists of implementing the plan, with the process expected to begin even before the war has ended (Ivanov, 2022).

It is important to note that the international launch of Ukraine's recovery process was the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC, 2022), held in Lugano on 4–5 July 2022 and co-organized by Switzerland and Ukraine. Initially, the event was to take place as the fifth annual Ukraine Reform Conference, a traditional high-level

political forum. The four preceding conferences had made it possible to assess the progress of reforms in Ukraine and to outline future reform agendas. However, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine reshaped the geopolitical agenda, and it was therefore decided to continue with the conference but reorient its focus toward the urgent issue of recovery. The URC 2022 became a unique platform for presenting Ukraine's Recovery Plan and for building effective cooperation with international partners to address the country's key tasks and challenges.

The main themes addressed at the Lugano Conference included:

- The Recovery and Development Plan of Ukraine and proposals from international partners regarding Ukraine's reconstruction.
- Approaches, priorities, and principles of the recovery process.
- Restoration of the social sphere, economy, environment, and infrastructure after the destruction and losses caused by the war.
- Reforms that can or must be implemented under the current circumstances.

Thus, the URC 2022 continued the initiatives already launched and announced in support of Ukraine and helped to unite the country's partners, who stand by it in difficult times. With the support of international partners, Switzerland and Ukraine presented the Lugano Declaration, which summed up the agreements reached during the two-day conference. This document laid the foundation for Ukraine's recovery and set out common guidelines for this process – the Lugano Principles:

1. **Partnership.** Ukraine, together with international partners, carries out the recovery process based on needs assessment, agreed priorities, transparent financing, and effective coordination.

2. **Focus on reforms.** Recovery must align with Ukraine's course of European integration, ensuring the acceleration, deepening, and expansion of reforms in the country.

3. **Transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.** Recovery must be transparent and accountable, grounded in strengthening the rule of law and combating corruption, and with financing that is fair and open.

4. **Democratic participation.** Recovery is a shared endeavour of the entire society, relying on democratic participation of citizens – including internally displaced persons and returnees – as well as on strong local self-government and effective decentralization.

5. **Involvement of stakeholders.** Recovery should be based on cooperation among the state, international partners, business, civil society, academia, and local authorities.

6. **Gender equality and inclusiveness.** Recovery must be inclusive, grounded in gender equality and respect for human rights, reducing inequalities and benefiting society as a whole.

7. **Sustainability.** The recovery process must be consistent with the principles of sustainable development, taking into account social, economic, and environmental dimensions, and ensuring a transition to a "green" economy (Ukrainian World Congress, 2022).

Thus, the International Ukraine Recovery Conference held in 2022 set an important precedent, and such conferences have been taking place annually for the past three years. Building on this, it is appropriate to focus on the results of the most recent (fourth) conference.

Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025

On 10–11 July 2025, Rome hosted a major international event organized by the governments of Ukraine and Italy, which played an important role in shaping policies

for Ukraine's recovery, transformation, and long-term development (Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, 2025a). This was the fourth **Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC2025)**, continuing the series of high-level political events dedicated to Ukraine's rapid recovery and strategic reconstruction, held since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

The main objective of URC2025 was to raise international awareness and consolidate further support and investment for Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction, reforms, and modernization. This included the provision of emergency assistance for urgent needs, the implementation of rapid recovery projects, the creation of a favourable business environment to attract private investment, and the active involvement of civil society and local communities in the reconstruction process. Governments, international organizations, financial institutions, businesses, regional representatives, and civil society actors participated in the conference, affirming their collective readiness to support Ukraine's resilience for as long as necessary and confirming their commitment to the country's future (Ukraine Recovery Conference, 2025a).

Italy, as the host of URC2025, assumed the mission of building on the outcomes of the previous conferences in Lugano, London, and Berlin, while maintaining the "four Berlin dimensions" (the main pillars of Ukraine's recovery), which became the central themes of the conference agenda:

- **Business dimension: mobilizing the private sector for reconstruction and economic growth.** Recognizing that private capital is a critical factor influencing the scale of economic growth and the success of recovery, URC2025 sought to address private sector concerns related to security, financing, the labour market, and regulation.
- **Human dimension: social recovery and human capital for Ukraine's future.** Post-war recovery requires mobilizing human capital, social cohesion, and inclusiveness to

foster the development of the nation's human resources. A key challenge in this context is the reintegration of refugees, internally displaced persons, and veterans into civilian life.

- **Local and regional dimension: recovery of communities and regions.** The conference placed particular emphasis on the role of local self-government bodies and regional state administrations in Ukraine's reconstruction, especially regarding their influence on access to financial resources and the expansion of their agency within the framework of decentralization reform.

- **EU dimension: EU accession and related reforms.** A key expected outcome of deeper European integration and Ukraine's potential accession to the single market is the harmonization of its policies and institutions with European Union standards, thereby creating conditions for sustainable socio-economic development (Ukraine Recovery Conference, 2025a).

Given the ambitious objectives of this year's conference, the availability of tangible results and clearly defined next steps is of particular importance. During URC2025, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced the provision of €2.3 billion in financial assistance to Ukraine. This support is part of the Ukraine Investment Framework, which falls under the second pillar of the EU's Ukraine Facility. The overall package includes loan guarantees (€1.8 billion) and grants (€580 million). These funds are also expected to help mobilize up to €10 billion in additional investments.

The EU is strengthening its economic support for Ukraine by allocating nearly €600 million to the energy sector, transport, and key enterprises. The new financing package was announced by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Commission at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome. Most of the funding is

provided as EIB loans backed by EU guarantees. The package is aimed at restoring critical infrastructure, including the repair of major hydroelectric power plants, the modernization of municipal heating systems, the repair of key roads and bridges, and the upgrading of border crossing points (European Commission, 2025a).

EU support extends beyond the financial sphere and includes the introduction of further measures to advance Ukraine's integration into the EU, including the strengthening of Ukrainian institutions and improvements in governance. Among the key initiatives are: the launch of the EU4Reconstruction program; the enhancement of defence cooperation under the Strategic Assistance for Armaments in Europe (SAFE) initiative and the European Defence Fund; the signing of a memorandum with the insurance sector to facilitate coverage of war-related risks for investors. In addition, new trade agreements and the development of the Roam Like at Home initiative bring Ukraine even closer to the European community. The EU also supports Ukraine's socio-cultural resilience by providing funding to Ukrainian artists under the Creative Europe program (Peters & Melo Almeida, 2025).

A particularly significant initiative is the launch, within the Team Europe framework, of the EU4Reconstruction program, which pools EU resources and expertise to support Ukraine's recovery with a budget of €37 million. The project will provide coordinated funding, technical assistance, and digital tools, while ensuring accountability, transparency, and compliance with EU standards. Its duration is from 10 July 2025 to 30 June 2028. EU4Reconstruction aims to strengthen the role of the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine, The State Agency for Reconstruction and Development of Infrastructure of Ukraine, and local authorities in managing the recovery process, as well as to enhance the capacity of civil society and independent media to exercise oversight and foster public trust. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, GIZ, Expertise France, and CPVA. Moreover, EU4Reconstruction reflects the combined

strength of the EU and its member states through the pooling of resources, political will, and expertise (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2025a).

In the context of EU4Reconstruction, Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Kęstutis Budrys emphasized that Ukraine's recovery involves not only the rebuilding of infrastructure but also the strengthening of institutions, public trust, and the promotion of European values. Participants in the project expressed their partnership-based support for Ukraine as a state fighting in war for its right to European belonging (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2025a). These efforts lay the foundation for the next steps – reconstruction in the social and educational spheres.

Social and Educational Recovery

Russia's war against Ukraine has caused severe human losses and mass displacement of civilians. Since the start of the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has documented at least 13,883 civilian deaths, including 726 children, and 35,548 injuries, among them 2,234 children (OHCHR, 2025). At the same time, according to the UN Refugee Agency, as of 17 April 2025 there were 6.918 million Ukrainian refugees (6.358 million in Europe and 0.56 million outside Europe) (RBC-Ukraine, 2025). These figures highlight both the urgent need for international assistance to bring the war to an end and the complexity of Ukraine's future recovery efforts.

On 27 November 2024, Kyiv hosted the closing conference of the Council of Europe project Strengthening Social Protection in Ukraine, which reviewed the achievements of two years of implementation. The event gathered senior Ukrainian officials alongside representatives of the Council of Europe, international organizations, and social rights experts. During the conference, then Minister of Social

Policy of Ukraine Oksana Zholnovych emphasized that social rights are not only a foundation for the country's post-war recovery but also an essential part of Ukraine's future within the European community. She stressed that cooperation with the Council of Europe remains vital for strengthening the social protection system, while also noting Ukraine's commitment to European standards and its continuous efforts to improve legislation to safeguard citizens' rights and enhance trust in the state, especially under wartime conditions (Government portal, 2024).

The Council of Europe project Strengthening Social Protection in Ukraine supported the Ministry of Social Policy in harmonizing national social standards with European requirements. Its main achievements include the adaptation of Ukrainian policies to the standards of the European Social Charter, ensuring equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, nationality, or age, strengthening the protection of vulnerable groups (children, persons with disabilities, survivors of violence), and promoting the implementation of reforms in the area of social rights in Ukraine (Government portal, 2024).

Meanwhile, the EU Council has extended temporary protection – an immediate and collective form of protection granted to large groups of displaced persons arriving in the EU who cannot return to their home country – for Ukrainians until March 2027. More than 4 million Ukrainians displaced by the war currently benefit from this status in EU member states, with the largest numbers residing in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The European Commission has also created the position of Special Envoy for Ukrainian Affairs in the EU, tasked with supporting the inclusion of Ukrainians into the European environment or, eventually, their gradual return (Government portal, 2024).

The extension of temporary protection status represents a deliberate step by Brussels to provide legal certainty both for Ukrainian refugees and for the host states. At the same time, the EU believes it is necessary to develop programs for the voluntary return of

Ukrainians to their homeland. Initial proposals include the creation of "unity hubs" and familiarization visits, though detailed mechanisms have yet to be specified.

Most Ukrainian refugees remain in a state of uncertainty, facing difficulties in obtaining permanent residence permits in host countries and the risk of returning to a homeland still at war. It is important to note that some have lost their homes as a result of hostilities in Ukraine. Meanwhile, in certain countries public opinion regarding continued support for Ukrainian refugees has become less favourable, further complicating the situation (Tryfonenko, 2025).

Migration experts stress that Ukrainians' willingness to return depends largely on conditions within Ukraine itself, rather than on circumstances abroad. Former head of the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine Oleksii Chernyshov predicted that once active hostilities cease, around 30% of Ukrainians may return immediately, with another 40% returning gradually, provided a stable and safe environment exists. Simultaneously, according to Dr. Zinovii Swereda, the state can only simplify procedures and remove barriers for those who left, but cannot offer anything extraordinary. He emphasizes that a full return of Ukrainians should not be expected for approximately another 20 years, as Russia's scorched-earth tactics have left many people with no homes to return to. In addition, the question of priorities in reconstruction will arise – whether to focus first on housing for individuals or on social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals (Tryfonenko, 2025).

It must also be noted that Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has severely damaged the country's education sector. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, from February 2022 to early 2025, approximately 4,000 educational institutions were damaged or completely destroyed (UNPD, 2025). This affected millions of children and created an urgent need for recovery measures, as

restoring access to education is a direct priority. In 2022, the EU allocated €100 million for the reconstruction of schools damaged by the war. Furthermore, Russian aggression has raised the issue of children's safe access to schools. Because many schools were destroyed, children were forced to travel greater distances to attend classes. To address this, the EU launched the School Buses for Ukraine program.

On 4 November 2023, during her visit to Kyiv, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen took part in the ceremony of handing over school buses. In total, 371 school buses were delivered to Ukrainian communities. The European Commission purchased 100 buses (worth around €14 million), while the remaining 271 were provided by authorities, regions, and transport organizations of EU member states under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (School buses for Ukraine).

In addition, the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine recently completed a large-scale project, EU4UASchools: Build Back Better, aimed at restoring educational infrastructure. The project was carried out in partnership with the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine. As a result, 66 schools in 11 regions affected by the Russian–Ukrainian war were renovated. Implementation of the project enabled around 21,600 pupils and teachers to return to safe learning conditions. The initiative addressed an urgent need: guaranteeing uninterrupted access to education for children even in wartime. Renovations included new roofs and windows, upgraded heating systems, modern furniture, and equipped shelters, while some schools also received new equipment (Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, 2025a).

In the broader context of Ukraine's future recovery, it is important to design social initiatives that apply an environmental approach – an essential foundation for Ukraine's "green" recovery, which constitutes another key dimension of post-war reconstruction.

Ukraine's "Green" Recovery

As a state aspiring to become a full member of the European Union, Ukraine has since the 2010s made considerable efforts in combating climate change and aligning its environmental strategy with European standards, actively engaging in the European Green Deal. However, further progress in this field was disrupted by Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, which for more than three years has caused widespread environmental destruction.

The war reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to industrial decline and the destruction of energy facilities, but at the same time generated new pollution through military activities, soil degradation, damage to waterways and marine infrastructure, and increased risks of forest fires, with potentially long-term consequences for human health and biodiversity. In the first 18 months of the war, new emissions from hostilities amounted to 77 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, approximately 1.7 million hectares of Ukrainian forests (over 15% of the total area) have been destroyed. Pressure on natural resources has intensified due to large-scale logging, while unexploded ordnance and fire hazards remain. In 2024, Ukraine experienced record forest fires: 965,000 hectares were burned, more than double the forest area destroyed by fire in EU member states during the same period. Most of these fires occurred along the front line during hot and dry weather.

Equally concerning is the pollution of the Black Sea. Since 2022, chemical discharges have increased and ecosystems have been destroyed, but at present environmental monitoring is impossible due to limited access to coastal and marine areas (European Commission, 2025b).

In response to these challenges, on 19 October 2024 Helsinki hosted an International Conference on Point 8 of Ukraine's Peace Formula, *Environmental Security*. The conference concluded with a joint communiqué addressing issues of compensation for environmental damage, accountability of the Russian Federation, and opportunities for ecosystem restoration and environmental resilience.

In 2024, Ukraine's Ministry for Communities and Territories Development drafted the Law of Ukraine On the Principles of Ukraine's Recovery, an attempt to codify the principles of reconstruction. The law defined "recovery" as a set of measures aimed at overcoming the humanitarian, social, economic, environmental, and other consequences of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine. However, the draft provided a rather narrow interpretation of the concept, failing to specify "green" recovery (Andrusevych et al., 2025).

Subsequently, Ukraine's Ministry of Environmental Protection, in partnership with UNDP, began work on the draft law *On Green Recovery*. This initiative is fully aligned with the requirements of the EU green taxonomy and incorporates European experience. The draft law is intended to become the foundation of Ukraine's sustainable recovery strategy, providing comprehensive regulation of the green recovery process, including environmental restoration and other sectors, while adhering to "green" principles (Andrusevych & Kozak, 2025).

In March 2025, Ukraine and the European Union launched the EU4Green Recovery East program, reaffirming their commitment to European integration, the development of a green economy, and effective water resource management. This program, designed for the Eastern Partnership countries, is funded by the EU with a budget of €21.3 million for 2025–2028. It builds on a decade of EU support in the areas of circular economy, sustainable water management, and environmental data. EU4Green Recovery East aims to reduce water

pollution, promote cost-effective water management, and enhance cross-border cooperation in this field (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2025b).

European Initiatives for Ukraine's Recovery

The process of Ukraine's recovery is multidimensional; therefore, a variety of initiatives and instruments have been introduced to restore specific areas affected by Russian aggression. One such instrument is the Ukraine Facility – an EU initiative for the period 2024–2027, aimed at supporting recovery, reconstruction, and modernization. The launch of this initiative was yet another confirmation of the EU's commitment and support during the Russian–Ukrainian war and throughout the post-war recovery phase. The EU has pledged to provide €50 billion in financial assistance over the lifetime of the program.

The Ukraine Facility is designed to:

- support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction processes;
- ensure the uninterrupted provision of public services in Ukraine through financing urgent needs;
- facilitate Ukraine's rapid economic recovery by mobilizing investment in the Ukrainian private sector;
- help address the social consequences of the war;
- support the reform of Ukrainian state institutions and processes to align them with European standards.

It should be emphasized, however, that EU assistance to Ukraine under the Ukraine Facility is not automatic but conditional on Ukraine meeting specific commitments. Key requirements include continued implementation of the recovery and reform plan, the functioning of democratic mechanisms, adherence to the rule of

law, and the protection of human rights. Thus, quarterly disbursements to Ukraine are possible only after the European Commission confirms compliance with these conditions (European Commission, 2024).

Another significant initiative, launched in December 2022 by G7 leaders, is the Ukraine Donor Platform, which coordinates support for Ukraine's budgetary needs, including economic recovery and post-war reconstruction. The European Union is a permanent member of the Platform's Steering Committee. The Ukraine Donor Platform brings together diverse funding sources and instruments, coordinating them to ensure that assistance to Ukraine are delivered in a coherent, transparent, and inclusive manner. This approach not only enables more effective planning of support but also avoids duplication of efforts.

The Ukraine Donor Platform places particular emphasis on supporting Ukraine's European integration by aligning economic assistance with Ukraine's reconstruction priorities and reform ambitions. In this way, the consolidation of international efforts for economic recovery is grounded in sustainability, resilience, inclusiveness, and environmental responsibility. In turn, this contributes to strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, and anti-corruption mechanisms. For 2025, the Steering Committee identified five key objectives of the Platform:

1. Promote financial and economic stability through the provision of direct budgetary support.

2. Support Ukraine in meeting its priority recovery and reconstruction needs**,** with particular focus on energy, heating, water supply and sanitation, housing, transport, the social sector, and humanitarian demining. Implementation is carried out in cooperation with Ukraine's coordination structures and aims to strengthen the capacity of government bodies (from local to regional administrations) to manage funds more effectively at the local level.

Humanitarian and development programs are also implemented to ensure the rational allocation of budgetary resources.

3. Strengthen Ukraine's recovery system by reforming public investment management on the basis of a whole-of-government approach, in order to ensure both the efficient allocation of resources and maximum return on public investments in line with the country's strategic economic vision, Ukraine's Plan, and EU accession requirements. This also includes prioritizing state recovery and reconstruction measures (under a whole-of-government approach) that are not classified as investments.

4. Facilitate the implementation of reforms and key measures in Ukraine necessary for sustainable economic recovery and for advancing the country on its path toward EU membership, with the Reform Matrix serving as the guiding tool.

5. Encourage active private sector engagement in Ukraine's recovery processes and in supporting its economic stability, by creating conditions for sustainable growth and investment activity, including through the introduction of insurance mechanisms (Ukraine Donor Platform).

For Ukraine's financial support, the creation of specialized funds to coordinate the inflow of assistance has proved promising. In June 2022, six recovery funds were launched to collect resources for different sectors: a fund for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, a fund for supporting the army, a fund for economic recovery and transformation, a humanitarian fund, a fund for servicing and repaying public debt, and a fund for restoring property and infrastructure. Financial contributions can be made by organizations, businesses, investors, and citizens of any country. In addition, the **United24** platform was initiated to raise funds for Ukraine's recovery in three areas: defence and demining, medical aid, and reconstruction.

Ukraine will also receive additional European support for accelerated recovery through a new initiative focused on implementing infrastructure projects. The goal of the **Ukraine FIRST** program is to ensure financing for such projects and to facilitate their swift implementation. At the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the European Commission announced the launch of this program. A total of €30 million has been allocated for its implementation, with additional contributions planned by individual EU member states such as Italy, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The program covers the preparation of public investment projects in Ukraine, including technical assistance, feasibility studies, environmental assessments, cost estimates, and procurement plans (EU financial support to Ukraine).

The Ukraine FIRST program is part of the **Project Preparation Facility initiative**, jointly developed over the past year by the Government of Ukraine and international partners. The main aim of this initiative is to improve coordination among Ukrainian ministries, international financial institutions, and donors for more effective advancement of recovery plans. Pilot projects for Ukraine FIRST have already been identified. Within its framework, the EBRD plans to provide a €160 million loan to the state energy company Ukrnafta to strengthen the country's energy resilience through the supply and installation of 250 MW of distributed gas generation capacity across Ukraine.

At the same time, the EIB will provide technical assistance for preparing investments in the reconstruction and modernization of the **M-15 Odesa–Reni** highway, working in cooperation with the World Bank and the EBRD. This highway is a key transport route in the southern part of Odesa region and an important link for strengthening transport connections between Ukraine and the European Union via Romania (EU financial support to Ukraine).

In addition, a financing package has been designed for Ukrainian small and medium-sized enterprises, including new loans and guarantees through the EIB Group, channelled via major Ukrainian banks such as Ukrgasbank, Ukreximbank, Bank Lviv, Kredobank, and the Ukrainian subsidiary of Greece's Piraeus Bank. Moreover, ten EU member states have joined the pilot project **InvestEU Ukraine Export Credit Pilot**, under which the European Investment Fund provides guarantees to national export credit agencies, thereby supporting the export of goods and services to Ukraine by small and medium-sized enterprises (European Commission, 2025a).

EU support contributes to the intensification of trade between Ukraine and EU member states, strengthening economic integration and serving as an important step toward Ukraine's accession to the European Union. Financial assistance directed at rebuilding modern and resilient energy and transport systems, as well as supporting enterprises, creates new opportunities and hope for the country's development (European Commission, 2025a).

A significant step taken by non-governmental organizations was the establishment in 2022 of the Build Ukraine Back Better platform, which functions as an informal forum for exchanging information and expertise among more than 50 NGOs from Ukraine and other European states. The platform has prepared the Roadmap for Ukraine's Sustainable Recovery – an analytical and strategic document listing priority reforms and programs to be implemented within two to three years to ensure sustainable and resilient recovery across six key sectors: buildings, environment, economy, energy, agriculture, and transport (Build Ukraine Back Better).

The Roadmap is built on three strategic pillars:

1. **Principles of sustainable and green recovery in Ukraine.** The Roadmap is based on principles defined by civil society organizations as early as 2022. These include the integration of environmental and climate approaches, a focus on the needs of local communities, the development of the green economy, transparent planning with public participation, adherence to environmental standards, and efficient use of funding. Sustainability has been recognized as the cornerstone of Ukraine's recovery, formally confirmed by international partners in the Lugano Declaration of 2022.

2. **European integration of Ukraine** – an irreversible strategic choice that guides the transformation of all areas of public life. Some reforms, particularly in the fields of climate and environment, require decisive action already today, regardless of the course of the war. Their implementation not only fulfils commitments to the EU but also creates opportunities to improve the quality of life for Ukrainians in both the short and long term.

3. **The goal of climate neutrality by 2050,** which Ukraine has set as a long-term ambition. Even in times of full-scale war, the country is steadily advancing toward this objective, aligning it with the European Green Deal, new EU clean industry initiatives, and international commitments under the Paris Agreement. The planned coal phase-out in electricity generation by 2035, the development of renewable energy sources, and support for new green sectors of the economy not only deliver on climate policy but also open opportunities for Ukraine to secure a meaningful role in the emerging European economy.

Members of the platform stress that Ukraine's recovery should not mean a simple return to its pre-war condition, but rather a decisive step forward – towards a more sustainable, resilient, and climate-secure country. This approach, known as ***building back better***, represents the central objective of the Roadmap (Build Ukraine Back Better).

Conclusions

Post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is a long journey that requires vast resources and cannot be undertaken without the support of partners. The European Union, by backing Ukraine's aspiration for European integration and recognizing the high price the country is paying for it, stands as one of the key partners in the recovery process – both for the post-war phase and for the rebuilding that began in the first days of destruction caused by Russian aggression.

What, then, are the trends in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction shaped by European initiatives? Above all, they involve the combination of environmental modernization, inclusiveness, the development of a green economy, and gradual integration into the broader European space. They reflect a systematic and strategic approach under which the principle of building back better is applied, with attention to the Copenhagen criteria and European values. Moreover, a central theme running through EU initiatives for Ukraine's recovery is the preservation of the "green course," which the country had consistently pursued even before the outbreak of full-scale war.

It is important to note that the assistance the European Union provides and plans to provide speaks more of partnership than of charity or "pay-off." This, in turn, lays the groundwork for deepening and strengthening cooperation. At the same time, the EU also gains benefits from such support: the loyalty and trust of Ukrainian authorities and citizens, new markets for investment and innovation, and shared achievements in the Green Deal and in border security, where a restored Ukraine serves as a counterbalance to threats.

Therefore, despite all the challenges Ukraine faces in the midst of this brutal war, post-war reconstruction must become a decisive step – one that simultaneously opens the possibility of building a better country. Reconstruction in partnership with

the EU will not merely restore what has been destroyed, but will mark a stage of modernization, creating resilient systems and institutions. Yet Europe must clearly recognize that the first step toward post-war recovery is the maximum effort of partners to bring the war to an end. Without this, all plans for "green technologies" and a sustainable economy risk remaining only on paper. For as long as human lives are at stake here and now, any investment in the future loses its meaning if that future never arrives for the majority.

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