EU-Ukraine: Meeting the challenges together



Media Digest, September 2023



The latest edition of the Media Digest includes publications on the main events of September that reflect the state and prospects of relations between the European Union and Ukraine.

The main political event of the month was the 2023 State of the Union address by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the European Parliament (Strasbourg) on 13 September. To a certain extent, this speech was a summary on the eve of the European Parliament elections in 2024. Still, it was about the future, showing the sustainability of the European Union's policies, focusing on change, improvement and development.

We should also note the attention paid to the issue of future enlargement. In this context, Ukraine should consider the provisions of the President's speech as guidelines, taking them into account when doing the candidate 'homework' and formulating its development strategies for the future.

Matti Maasikas, whose term as EU Ambassador ended in September, expressed the same confidence in Ukraine's EU membership – but it will all depend on Ukraine itself.

Read more in TOP THREE.





The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen: 'We will be at Ukraine's side every step of the way'

On 13 September, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, delivered her 2023 State of the Union address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The key points, which

Ukrainians particularly expected, clearly demonstrated the unwavering position of the European Union: «We will be at Ukraine's side every step of the way. For as long as it takes».

Equally clear was the answer to the question of EU enlargement: «The future of Ukraine is in our Union. The future of the Western Balkans is in our Union. The future of Moldova is in our Union,» said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

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Matti Maasikas: «Ukraine will be in the EU, that's 100%. But... almost everything depends on the candidate.»

In an extended interview with Ukrainska Pravda, Matti Maasikas, finishing his term as the European Union's Ambassador to Ukraine, spoke about the changes the EU and Ukraine are going through together, and about the future. He is convinced that Ukraine will do its 'homework' and join the EU, because the EU is now ready. In addition to political



support, Ukraine also has the support of EU citizens: a Eurobarometer survey in the spring showed that 70% of people support their own government's policy and the EU's policy towards Ukraine.

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Josep Borrell: Unity is the key word

The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, gave a lengthy interview to The Guardian. He noted, among other things, that Ukraine's accession to the EU puts an end to passivity and inaction on enlargement. But recent events have also accelerated long-overdue global processes, and the war in Ukraine and its ultimate outcome will be one of the three driving forces behind the creation of a new world order.

«This poses a significant long-term challenge for Europe. Europeans must prepare to be part of a new world in which we constitute a smaller portion of the population and a smaller proportion of the global economy. So, we have to look for political influence, technological potential and unity. Unity is the key word.»

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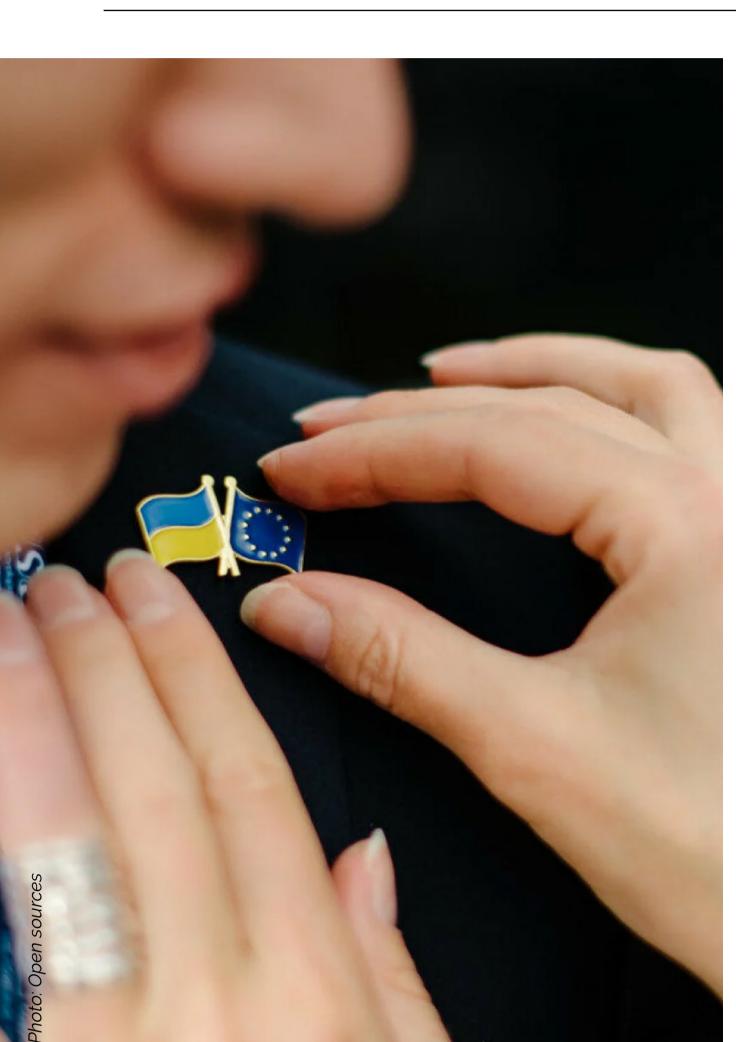
UKRAINE-EU: ACCESSION ALGORITHM

Experts set benchmarks

As Ukraine prepares to begin negotiations to join the European Union, it must complete its 'homework' by implementing reforms in seven areas. Experts note Ukraine's progress in this work, but warn that the goals must be achieved and the transformations must be irreversible. as the planned changes should not only harmonise national criteria with European ones, but also – first and foremost – improve the lives of Ukrainians themselves. The Ukrainian Centre for European Policy (UCEP) commissioned a group of professional experts to prepare a document entitled 'A Realistic Path to Ukraine's Accession to the EU', which was presented to the public in September.

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EU polls: support for Ukraine and energy independence from Russia

The August Flash Eurobarometer survey on EU challenges and priorities in 2023 was conducted in 27 EU Member States.

As has been the case since February 2024, most Europeans say they support aid to Ukraine, and 71% express solidarity with Ukraine in its war against Russia.

The majority of EU citizens also support tougher economic sanctions against the aggressor country. The vast majority are convinced that Russia's war in Ukraine is a sign of the need to ensure the EU's energy and economic security. 75% of respondents are in favour of expanding military cooperation within the EU.



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ECONOMY, FINANCE, BUSINESS

EU to provide funding to support operation of the International Register of Damage

The EU is ready to co-finance establishing the International Register of Damage and procuring premises for this institution in The Hague.

The Declaration on the Establishment of the Register of Damage for Ukraine was signed at the Council of Europe Summit in May. The EU and 43 countries have joined or declared their intention to join. Initially established for three years, the Register of Damage from Russian Aggression will be based in the Netherlands, with a satellite office in Ukraine.

Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović-Burić called the decision 'historic', noting that it will help victims record their losses, and is essential for any compensation mechanism.

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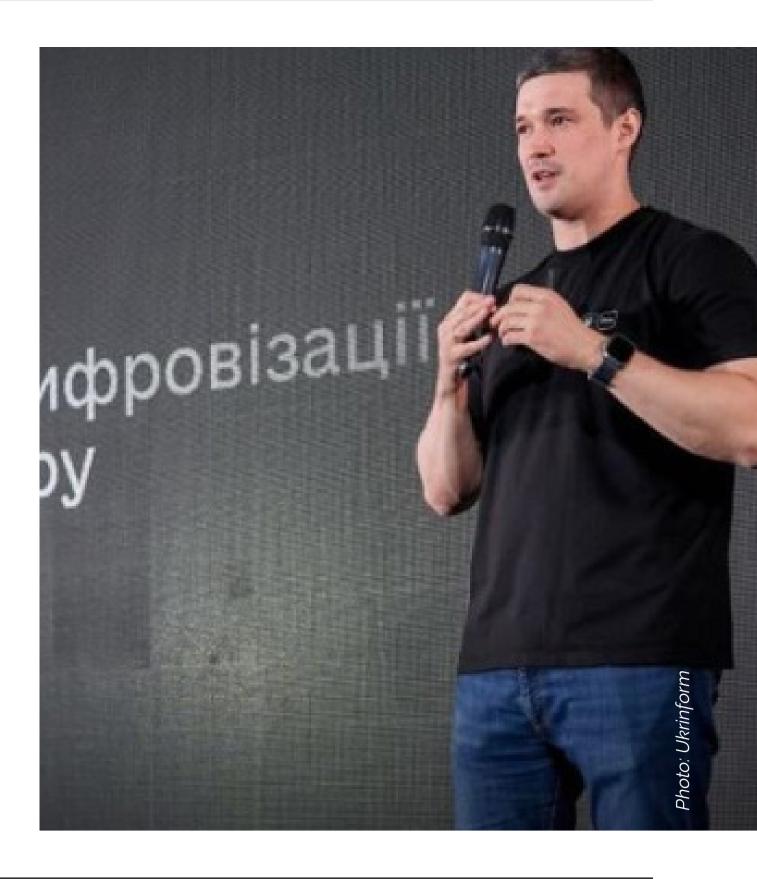
The European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-implement a programme to rebuild schools destroyed by the fullscale war of Russia. This programme has a budget of €14 million. Nine schools in the Zhytomyr region will be the first to be rebuilt and equipped, out of a total of 66 schools to be renovated in 11 regions of Ukraine. Renovation work will include the installation of new windows, roofing and plumbing repairs. All repairs will be carried out in accordance with inclusion. environmental and energy efficiency standards. Bomb shelters will also be built to protect children from air strikes.

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More digital services to come

The Diia.Engine digital platform has only been in operation for a short time, but the next 20+ electronic registers are already being created on it. This will ensure user friendliness and market transparency, and form the basis for introducing new online government services. The following steps include digitising the Ministry of Agricultural Policy's crop production system, the register of grain storage documents, and the pet registration system. European integration registers are also being developed, including blood systems and notification systems for cosmetics, food additives, disinfectants, etc.

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SECURITY SUPPORT

Another framework contract

signed for the purchase of 155 mm ammunition for Ukraine

As of 20 September 2023, the European Defence Agency has already signed 8 framework agreements for the joint purchase of 155 mm ammunition – the Ukrainian Armed Forces fire 6,000 to 8,000 rounds of this ammunition every day. At the same time, Russian howitzers use about 40,000 rounds daily, so it is essential to provide the Ukrainian army with this ammunition to achieve a balance. High Representative Josep Borrell, who also heads the European Defence Agency, stressed: «Putin shows no sign of stopping his aggression against the Ukrainian people. Our military support for Ukraine's defence must therefore continue».

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GOOD GOVERNANCE

Amalgamated communities exchange know-how with the support of EU programmes

Reliable partners support Ukraine on all fronts, helping rebuild the country, despite the war. Thanks to EU-funded projects and programmes, Ukrainian communities have many more opportunities to implement modern practices and share reform experiences. The working visits of the delegations of amalgamated communities are very productive, as they address the most pressing issues in citizens' livelihoods, the economy and the environment. During their visit to the Vinnytsia region, the Cherkasy experts learned about innovations in education, health care and waste management, as well as social work, support for military families, IDPs and preservation of cultural heritage.

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Internationalisation for cultural development

As part of the EU-funded #EU4Culture project implemented by the Goethe-Institut, Czech Centres, Danish Cultural Institute and Institut Français en Géorgie, cultural and educational workers from Vinnytsia visited Lublin. Together with their colleagues from Odesa and Rivne, they took part in a training on internationalisation for cultural development and gained valuable experience and tools necessary to increase cultural activity and support creative initiatives. In particular, the participants noted that they also better understood the logic of creating international projects that take into account the context of war.

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The media digest was prepared by the EU project 'Communicating EU for Ukrainians CEU4U).'

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