EU-Ukraine: Responding to challenges together

Media Digest, December 2023

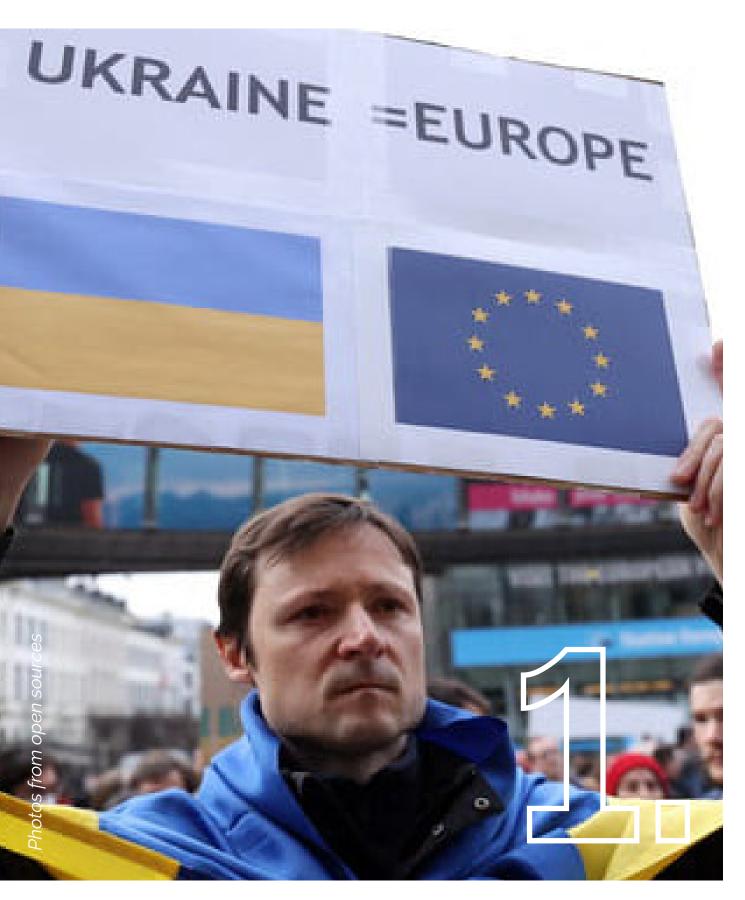


The latest issue of Media Digest features publications on the key events of December manifesting the condition and prospects of EU-Ukraine relations.

The decision of the European Council to open negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the European Union is the key event not only of December but of the decade. The dramatic circumstances and discussions that led to the 14 December vote in Brussels coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity, which was sparked by the refusal of the Yanukovych government to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. December also marked the 30th anniversary of the diplomatic presence of the EU Delegation in Ukraine. This close concentration of events related to Ukraine's civilisational choice highlights the difficult path of the country's return to the European family. A path that has a logical development and is becoming irreversible.

More information is available in the latest issue of Media Digest.

TOP 3



European Council gives 'green light to Ukraine' path of hope and challenges

'The European Council has decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. The European Council granted candidate status to Georgia. And the EU will open negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is reached and has invited the Commission to report by March with a view to taking such a decision. A clear signal of hope for their people and for our continent,' President of the European Council Charles Michel wrote on social media network X, marking an historic decision. Read more about the lessons and challenges Ukraine faces on its path towards EU membership.

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EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarína Mathernová: We have a shared goal – coming together ever more closely and, ultimately, being under the same roof of the European Union

During the 30 years of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the European Union, the sides have moved from cautious diplomacy to close partnership and, ultimately, found themselves at the beginning of negotiations on Ukraine's membership in the EU. 'To reach this goal, the EU has accompanied Ukraine on its path through countless projects, investments, and, importantly, in key reform agendas,' notes Katarína Mathernová. Read more in the column by EU Ambassador Katarína Mathernová.





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Europeans continue to strongly support Ukraine, Eurobarometer shows

The 100th Standard Eurobarometer survey has been released confirming that, despite the pluralism of opinions, Europeans are united in their commitment to universal values and have a good understanding of the strength and weight of unity. Over the year, their assessment of threats has changed. Last year, concerns about rising prices/inflation were in first place, while this year the Europeans put war in Ukraine and immigration on top. At the same time, the vast majority supports providing assistance to Ukraine and shelter for those fleeing the war. 70 % consider the EU to be a place of stability in a troubled world and 61 % are optimistic about the future of the EU.

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UKRAINE-EU: ACCESSION ALGORITHM

EU decision to open negotiations makes European future realistic for Ukraine

In practice this means that the European integration will stop being 'homework' that can be done incompletely or any other way. 'This needs to be done. Period. There cannot be any compromises here,' stressed EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarína Mathernová. At the same time, the EU will now also be more actively involved in the process of fulfilment of the negotiation framework than when Ukraine was performing the Association Agreement, assessing all roadmaps for reforms and setting conditions for progress in the negotiation process. Currently, Ukraine and the EU are only at the beginning of the road, but with a wise and decisive approach, we will undoubtedly be able to overcome this difficult path.

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Ukraine's legislation: the reform continues

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain, the European Union embarked on a mission to extend its democratic values beyond its eastern borders. The prospect of full EU membership, which loomed large for the countries in the region, ultimately helped to speed up reforms and the establishment of the rule of law and democracy. But how has the EU influenced legislative changes in countries that, until recently, had no immediate prospect of accession, but have long declared their desire to join? Find out more in the article on the example of Ukraine.



SECURITY

Training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to intensify

On 28 November, the Council of the European Union decided to provide additional funding for training service members of Ukraine's armed forces under the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). The financial amount is increased by EUR 194 million totalling EUR 255 million. As a reminder, western countries provided training for 100 000 soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. A coalition of 32 partner countries is involved in the training of personnel. Also, 12 000 Ukrainian soldiers have undergone training according to NATO standards.

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ECONOMY, FINANCE, BUSINESS

Together We Are Resilient: EU supports Ukraine's SMEs at times of war and with consideration for recovery

The European Union, one of the most powerful systemic donors to Ukraine for many years, has focused its resources on supporting small and medium-sized businesses since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion. Grants, consultations, support for relocated businesses, lifting of trade quotas on exports, assistance in finding new markets, and partnerships are the key vectors of EU programmes to help Ukrainian businesses.

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Ukrainians exchanged nearly 24 million incandescent light bulbs for energy-saving LED ones

At the beginning of 2023, a programme was launched by the Government of Ukraine with support from the European Union to exchange power-hungry incandescent light bulbs for energy-saving LED ones. In December 2023 alone, Ukrainians exchanged close to 3 million light bulbs, bringing their total to nearly 24 million. This brings us closer to an ambitious goal: according to preliminary estimates, exchanging another 18 million LED bulbs will save up to 1 000 MW of electricity at the same time. Since 5 December, rural pensioners have had an additional opportunity to get modern light bulbs to replace incandescent ones, even if they had previously exchanged five bulbs under the EU-funded programme.

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Civil society is uniting and taking actions

The war has changed everything in the lives of Ukrainians, but it has also become a motivator for even greater unity and development of Ukrainian society. According to the presentation of the report 'NGO Barometer: Ukraine 2023' https://csometer. info/countries/ukraine, the State and civil society organisations have not only learned to live in war conditions, but also made significant progress in legislation and practice. The incredible resilience of civil society in Ukraine and its genuine commitment to European values are evident at all times, both in the rear and on the frontlines, where many NGO activists are defending Ukraine and Europe.

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Horizon Capital Growth Fund IV received an investment of €25 million aimed at strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine and Moldova

The EU for Ukraine Fund, managed by the European Investment Bank (EIB), greenlighted the fund's first project financing – an investment of EUR 25 million in Ukraine's equity growth fund Horizon Capital Growth Fund IV (HCGF IV) – aimed at strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine and Moldova. The programme focuses on companies with small assets, rich in human capital, and technology companies focused on exports. The EU for Ukraine Fund, initiated by the EIB in spring 2023, is part of the broader EU for Ukraine initiative, which aims to address Ukraine's urgent needs and bolster economic stability.

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GOOD GOVERNANCE Decentralisation: a barometer of the reform

The European Commission gave a high assessment to the achievements of decentralisation in its report on Ukraine's progress in implementing reforms: 'This is one of the most effective and successful reforms that have been carried out in the country. It has become a decisive factor in social and economic development.' In the context of war, in most cases, it was thanks to the new local self-government bodies on a new territorial basis that it was possible to effectively organise local government, defence measures, etc. How can Ukraine avoid losing the achievements of decentralisation? What challenges await the reform in the context of war? How can we strengthen the potential of communities for post-war reconstruction? How can Ukraine continue the decentralisation reform taking into account EU legislation?

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New energy for recovery

The EIB, the Government of Germany, and Ukraine's Ministry for Restoration have agreed on the intention to sign a EUR 20 million grant for the Renewable Energy Solution Programme (RES). This grant will enhance renewable energy in Ukrainian municipalities and foster energy independence in public institutions.

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

Additional information: Anton Teretyshnyk, CEU4U media expert E-mail: Anton.Teretyshnyk@ecorys.com



