EU–Ukraine: Responding to challenges together

Media Digest, April 2024

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

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

A number of decisions adopted by the European Union in April will have a decisive impact on the future of Ukraine and Europe, both in the context of the war and post-war reconstruction and joint work on the country's path to EU membership.

TOP 3

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The European Commission supports Ukraine Plan

On 16 April, the European Commission endorsed the Ukraine Plan within the Ukraine Facility Mechanism, which outlines the conditions for receiving EUR 50 billion in macro financial assistance over the period 2024–2027. The press release published by the Commission states that "The Ukraine Plan effectively addresses the objectives of the Ukraine Facility, by identifying those key reforms and investments that can boost sustainable economic growth and attract investments to amplify the country's growth potential in the medium-to-long-term".

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EU leaders: Our task, collectively, is to consolidate achievements and potential

On 17–18 April, Brussels hosted a special European Council, during which the leaders of European countries discussed key issues related to EU competitiveness, the current state of the European economy, and ways to improve the efficiency of the single market. In the context of international politics, the heads of state and governments of the EU countries focused on the situation in Ukraine and increasing EU assistance in Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression. Please find below the text of the speech by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

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Photo: European Commission

Photo: European Commission

High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell: No, time is not on Russia's side

In response to Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the European Union has unanimously introduced 13 sanction packages, with a fourteenth, even more substantial one, in the works. The imposed sanctions are the most powerful ones to be introduced by the EU, and they are closely coordinated with numerous like-minded countries. However, there are voices claiming that the sanctions are not working or are not effective enough. Josep Borrell, head of European diplomacy, analyses whether this is actually the case. **Read more**

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EU–UKRAINE: JOINING MECHANISM

An issue of particular importance

The agricultural sector is one of the most important sectors in Ukraine. It is also an extremely sensitive one in the context of international economic cooperation. Ukraine is now an EU candidate country, which means that it will have to align its land legislation and the philosophy of the land market with generally accepted European norms. Ukraine itself needs these changes for economic recovery and subsequent sustainability. The article below discusses the rules of the EU land market.

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Media freedom: enhanced and guaranteed by the European Media Freedom Act

Ukraine's path to the EU is a path of fundamental reforms in all spheres, and media is no exception. The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) will now serve as a benchmark for standards and criteria for the Ukrainian media. At a time when free media is facing challenges in many countries around the world, this document ensures further strengthening of media freedom and pluralism in the EU, guarantees to combat political interference in editorial decisions for both private and state media, and strengthens the protection of journalists and their sources.

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RULE OF LAW

Gender equality in EU Integration

The Verkhovna Rada Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the European Union, in cooperation with UN Women in Ukraine, and with the support from the governments of Denmark and Sweden, held a discussion titled 'Gender Equality in EU Integration'. The participants discussed the implementation of the best parliamentary practices of the European Union Member States. In particular, the analysis and monitoring of legislation, the implementation of the EU acquis into the legal system of Ukraine, as well as legislative initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality. EU Ambassador to Ukraine, Katarína Mathernová, participated in the discussion.

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The EU is facilitating the fight against corruption in Ukraine: This is critically important

On April 16, 2024 the event "The Decade of Transformation, Towards a Future of Integrity: EU-supported Anti-Corruption & Rule of Law Reforms in Ukraine" was held at the Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex. The event was co-organised by the EU Project Pravo-Justice and the EU Anti-Corruption Initiative under the auspices of the European Union.

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EU Council adopts a law envisaging criminal prosecution for violation of sanctions, including crypto assets

The European Council adopted a law covering EU-wide minimum rules for the prosecution of violation or circumvention of EU sanctions in Member States. Certain actions will now be considered criminal offences in all Member States – for example, helping to bypass a travel ban, trading in sanctioned goods, or performing prohibited financial activities. Inciting, aiding and abetting these offences can be penalised. The new law also applies to suppliers of cryptocurrency services and allows for asset freezing.

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Фото: gettyimages

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ECONOMY, FINANCE, BUSINESS

Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine meets in Kyiv

On 10 April, the Steering Committee members and participants of the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine met in Kyiv. The meeting brought together Ukraine, the G7 countries, as well as the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, and observers from Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Belgium, Finland, and Switzerland. The partners are committed to increasing efforts to address the urgent and long-term financial needs of Ukraine.

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Ukraine and the European Investment Bank sign a 10-year cooperation memorandum

In 2024, the EIB will direct EUR 500 million in loans and EUR 60 million in grants to implement ongoing projects in Ukraine. The memorandum also provides for future infrastructure projects, including for local social infrastructure, like educational institutions, investments in healthcare infrastructure, and others.
The EIB is also considering the possibility of increasing guarantees for businesses and additional financial instruments for the development of the private sector in Ukraine.

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Ukrainian veterans to receive financial support

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which is aimed at making the financial sector more accessible to war veterans.

Under this agreement, the EBRD and the NBU will provide support to financial institutions across Ukraine to expand access to finance for hundreds of thousands of veterans. As of now, 27 banks have joined this initiative. The transition to new standards complements and expands the human capital resilience measures that the EBRD has been implementing since the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine.

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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION

Katarína Mathernová: Together, the EU and Ukraine are achieving real change

Over the four years of its implementation, the EU-funded EU4DigitalUA project has developed more than 50 e-services, introduced an e-signature in line with EU standards, facilitated the modernisation of ten registers, and scaled up the Trembita system. Presenting the project results, Katarína Mathernová, Ambassador of the European Union to Ukraine, said Ukraine had created "a uniquely effective e-governance system, and is effectively using digital tools to overcome the challenges caused by war".

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EU allocates extra €10 million to support researchers from Ukraine under Horizon Europe

The European Commission has announced additional funding of EUR 10 million to support Ukrainian researchers under the Horizon Europe programme. The funding will supplement the budget of the MSCA4Ukraine initiative, launched to support researchers forced to flee Ukraine because of Russia's full-scale war. The initiative is part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programme.

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Technology preserves history and evidence against Russian crimes

The Centre for Spatial Technologies (CST) has launched a website, the 'Spatial Archive', to research the attack on the Mariupol Drama Theatre. To create the archive, the project team collected thousands of photographs, satellite images, videos and social media posts, and recorded over a hundred hours of interviews with witnesses to the attack. "Due to the lack of direct access to the site of the tragedy and the systematic destruction of evidence by the Russian Federation, these materials are an important historical document," the project team says.

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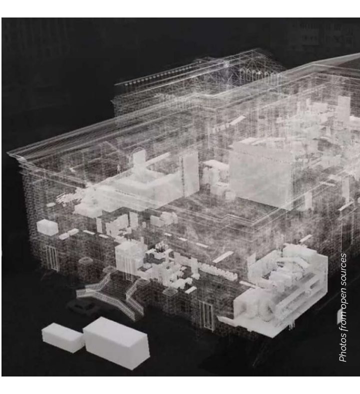
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SECURITY

The European Union has provided €3 million to create a cyber lab and a cyber classroom

"Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression on Ukraine, the European Union has contributed to helping the Armed Forces of Ukraine to defend their cyberspace. The cyber lab, classroom, additional security software and hardware, and related trainings formed a comprehensive approach that has boosted Ukraine's cyber defence capacity, and reinforced our cooperation on security and defence with Ukraine," said Peter Wagner, the Director of European Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

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Supporting energy sustainability of Ukraine

After a recent surge of Russian attacks on Ukraine, the country's energy grid once again teetered on the brink. Stepping in to assist the Ukrainian people, the EU delivered a powerful transformer to Ukraine from Latvia, which will bolster the damaged electricity supply for more than 500,000 Ukrainians

The transportation of the transformer, weighing over 200 tons, required a 25-axle trailer and a special 5-axle ballast tractor. The length of this vehicle was also extraordinary, which required precise calculations of parameters and routes.

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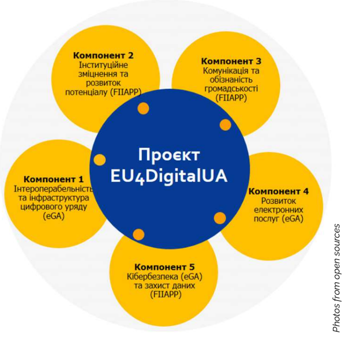

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GOOD GOVERNANCE

Communities receive new opportunities for improving energy efficiency

A EUR 5 million investment grant from the E5P multi-donor fund will contribute to much needed energy efficiency and war related emergency efforts, in particular within the healthcare sector. It will supplement the current EIB's EUR 300 million programme. Currently, 43 Ukrainian communities are involved in the EIB's Ukraine Public Buildings Energy Efficiency programme, with Novoyavorivsk and Kovel being among the first to receive funding for energy efficiency upgrades.

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"EU is interested in expanding the range of opportunities for active youth in Ukraine"

The European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine have opened a new youth space, based at the Centre for Culture and Leisure in Poltava. The space will be somewhere for local youth to offer their own ideas and communicate with like-minded people to improve community wellbeing and develop volunteering. It is expected that the centre will facilitate dialogue between youth and local authorities to enhance youth inclusion in local self-governance and integrate displaced youth into the Poltava community.

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Photo:
EU Delegation to Ukraine

Photos from open sources

Communities learn to work with public budget

The U-LEARN Educational Platform, part of the EU-funded U-LEAD programme, has launched the 'Development and Implementation of the Public Budget' support programme. Teams from 16 municipalities of ten Ukrainian oblasts will work on the implementation of the public budget in their municipalities. U-LEAD experts will help them with everything from the development of a package of documents to the selection of competition winners.

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

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