EU–Ukraine: Responding to Challenges Together

Media Digest. March 2025

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

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

Nearly 80 years have passed since the end of World War II, and Europe is once again forced to address issues concerning the continent's economic security and independence. Despite discussions and controversial moments, the European Union demonstrates willingness to undergo transformations and seriously approach its response to modern-day challenges. The EU seeks and formulates effective solutions to ensure peace both through military means, and by enhancing the continent's defence.

In tandem with Europe, and in close cooperation with it, Ukraine is also evolving, and despite the ongoing war, is implementing reforms and confidently progressing along the path of European integration.

This issue features the events of March that reflect these changes.

Top 3

Ursula von der Leyen: The time for illusions is over

At a plenary session of the European Parliament on 12 March, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed: "Europe is called to take more responsibility for its security. We did some dishonest future, but already today. Not with incremental steps, but with the speed and scale of transformation that need a surge in European defence, and we need it now. We need it first and foremost because of the situation in Ukraine. There is the urgent need to fill the gaps in Europe's defence capabilities to provide Ukraine with solid security guarantees. But this moment of reckoning is not only about Ukraine. It is about what Europe and our entire continent's security.

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EU's total support since the start of Russia's full-scale war has reached €140 billion

On 12 March, Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis visited Kyiv to mark the transfer of a €1 billion loan under the G7 bid-EBA credit initiative. He met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and assured them that the EU would utilise all available means to limit Russia's capacity to wage war, including the use of revenues from the devastation inflicted upon the Commissioner Dombrovskis, accompanied by EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarina Mathernova and Deputy Foreign Minister Ihor Polishchuk, also discussed the recovery of Ukraine's fallen heroes.

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Katarina Mathernova: "Security guarantees are key to lasting peace."

Responding to a question from Ukrinform, Ukraine's Ambassador to the EU assessed Europe's future actions in the field of security, given the evolving US policy, the Ambassador of the European Union to Ukraine, Katarina Mathernova, underscored: "We need to be very clear who is the aggressor and who is the victim. I think that the first order of priority is to ensure that Ukraine has the means to defend itself and strength for the negotiations and how to develop security guarantees that are key to lasting peace. It is a very important EU enlargement track with Ukraine. So, in the middle of not only three various crises and the fighting, you keep reforming. We have a big agenda."

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SECURITY SUPPORT

The EU – Ukraine's primary strategic ally

On 12 March, the European Parliament adopted a non-binding resolution on the proposal for a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine, which had been put forward the day before, on 11 March. MEPs stated that they expected the Russian leadership to agree to and implement the ceasefire, including cessation of hostilities, infrastructure and territory.

At the same time, the resolution emphasised that the EU and its Member States should substantially increase military support for Ukraine. The European Parliament welcomed the establishment of a 'coalition of the willing' to facilitate military support for Ukraine through European mediation.

Ukraine's future lies within the EU, MEPs stressed, calling for an acceleration of accession negotiations.

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European Council meeting results: Ukraine to gain access to SAFE

Ukraine's security is integral to EU security", stated European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at a press conference following the European Council meeting in Brussels. The Ukrainian defence industry will therefore be able to participate in joint procurement within the EU's new defence credit programme, SAFE.

President von der Leyen also emphasised that Ukraine's defence industry within the Union will be able to join the programme. The programme will form the basis for Ukraine's accession to the Defence Industrial Union at strengthening Europe's defence capabilities.

In addition to SAFE, the European Commission is proposing several other measures to strengthen European defence, including the possibility of activating fiscal exemptions and voluntarily directing funds from EU regional programmes to defence needs.

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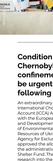
BUSINESS, ECONOMY, FINANCE

Consistent and fair: Russian assets contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction

On 30 March, within the framework of the EU's unprecedented financial assistance, the European Commission transferred an additional tranche of €1 billion to Ukraine. This will be repaid using revenues from immobilised Russian state assets within the EU.

The total amount of macro-financial assistance amounts to €18.1 billion – the EU's contribution to the G7-led EBA lending initiative, which aims to provide



Ukraine with approximately €45 billion in concessional loans.

Following this payment, the European Commission's total lending to Ukraine under this programme since the beginning of the year has reached €4 billion.

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Strengthening resilience and security: European Commission and EIB invest €2 billion in Ukraine's reconstruction

On 6 March in Luxembourg, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed a guarantee agreement worth a total of €2 billion. The EIB will invest at least €2 billion in urgent recovery and reconstruction projects in Ukraine. The agreement underscores the importance that Ukraine's security is the security of all of Europe, and the signed agreement will enable the implementation of vital projects to strengthen the country's resilience.

Previously, Ukraine and the EIB signed agreements on financing the restoration of energy and critical infrastructure.

Condition of the Chernobyl NPP confinement arch to be urgently assessed following Russian attack

An extraordinary meeting of the Chernobyl Nuclear Safety Association Account (CNA) Assembly – in collaboration with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, and the Nuclear Agency for Exclusion Zone Management – approved the allocation of €400,000 from the Chernobyl Shelter Fund to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund. The funds will support research into the damage caused to the Chernobyl New Safe Confinement (NSC) by the Russian attack on 14 February. Specifically, the remaining fuel and structural elements of the consequences of a Russian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) impact on the NSC's protective shell.

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LAW AND ORDER

Human rights without language barriers: What Ukraine will gain from the ECHR Knowledge Sharing Platform

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Knowledge Sharing Platform – the Knowledge Sharing Platform is now accessible in three languages that are not spoken by judges of the court – Ukrainian, Romanian, and Turkish.

This provides access in native languages to a unique resource that was previously accessible only in English and French.

Through this initiative, the ECHR is creating new opportunities to ensure compliance with the Convention by the Member States' human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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GOOD GOVERNANCE

€62 million to strengthen local governance and development

The 'U-LEAD with Europe' initiative, implemented with the support of the EU and its Member States (Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands) in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine, has officially launched its third phase.

Governments change, but well-established public services, such as quality schools, roads, and clean water, remain constant. They shape people's everyday lives in a truly important way. Decentralisation makes citizens happier, services better, reduces corruption, and improves the quality of life for people in Ukraine, even in the face of unprovoked Russian aggression. Ukraine needs decentralisation more than ever," emphasised the EU Ambassador to Ukraine, Katarina Mathernova.

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Bolhrad municipality joins 'Energy Efficiency of Public Buildings in Ukraine' programme

Bolhrad municipality is among the nine municipalities in Ukraine selected from from the EIB following the third call for proposals for participation in the "Energy Efficiency of Public Buildings in Ukraine" programme. The municipality will receive support for the thermal modernisation of public buildings.

The Energy Efficiency of Public Buildings in Ukraine programme is financed by the EIB with EU support through the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP) and the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P). It provides technical assistance and technical support from the Council of Mayors East, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and NTU International.

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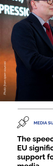

Comfortable, energy-efficient, and safe housing for IDPs

Housing construction for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Yahotyn has begun. The project is being implemented within the framework of the Housing for IDPs and Rehabilitation of Liberated Cities project. The project is implemented and financed by the European Union and implemented by Nefco in Ukraine.

A solar power station will be installed on the roof of one building, providing electricity to residents. The modern heated water heating system will also be implemented, ensuring water supply even during the non-heating season.

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EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE

UNESCO launches EU-backed initiative to preserve Jewish documentary heritage in Ukraine

A two-year project, with a budget of €2.2 million, aims to digitise, preserve, and make rare historical materials, strengthening the capacity of specialised institutions and promoting a series of educational initiatives that highlight the contribution of Jewish heritage to Ukraine's history and culture.

"Protecting Ukraine's vast and diverse heritage is not just about conserving the past, it is first and foremost an investment in our joint future. Diversity is a defining trait of Ukraine's heritage, and it is a cornerstone of inclusiveness we key for our cohesion and unity," said Bern Duffel, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Ukraine.

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MEDIA SUPPORT

The speech must be free: EU significantly increases support for Ukrainian media

During a conversation with journalists, EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarina Mathernova said: "We have the support of EU support for independent media in Ukraine since 2017 exceeds €100 million. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, this support amounts to €37 million. Suspiline occupies a very special place, and since its inception, we have funded its work with over €5 million. We are currently preparing to announce a call for proposals for €3 million for regional media and independent journalists in Ukraine's regions. We are therefore currently in preparation."

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The media digest was prepared by the EU project Communicating EU for Ukrainians (CEuU)

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