

The needs of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction must be incorporated into future Eastern Partnership initiatives

Position of the Ukrainian National
Platform of the Eastern Partnership
Civil Society Forum
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This position paper has been prepared as part of the activities of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) to communicate to the Ukrainian government and international partners the need to prioritise post-war reconstruction and recovery within the Eastern Partnership policy framework. The document outlines the key processes for planning and implementing Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction, addressing reconstruction needs within Eastern Partnership policies and funding programmes, and exploring opportunities to enhance the security component and sectors related to reconstruction, such as energy, environmental protection, industrial policy, construction, and others, in future Eastern Partnership documents.

Introduction

The full-scale war waged by Russia against Ukraine, now in its third year, is causing massive damage to the country: lives are lost, infrastructure and housing are destroyed, with entire cities and villages affected, and the environment suffering irreversible impacts. Despite this, Ukrainians believe in victory and are making tremendous efforts every day to bring it closer. The issue of Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery is one that cannot wait until the end of the war: post-war rebuilding must be planned, critical infrastructure and housing rebuilt, and people's immediate needs addressed right now.

International partners, including the European Union, are actively participating in the reconstruction process: launching their own initiatives, supporting efforts at national and local levels, and funding the rebuilding of specific critical infrastructure or housing projects. To enhance international support, it is essential to utilise all available policies, initiatives, and funding programmes, while leveraging international platforms to advocate for Ukraine's needs and future development, including its potential EU membership.

The European Union updated its main policy documents and funding programmes under the Eastern Partnership just before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Although the initiative itself does not directly address post-war reconstruction needs or account for the new geopolitical conditions and challenges of the region, it can serve as an effective platform for advocating and rebuilding Ukraine according to the principle "build back better."

Ukrainian civil society plays an active role in post-war reconstruction processes: from contributing to the development of plans and legislation to implementing projects for rebuilding housing or installing solar panels. The Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) has set strengthening Ukraine's post-war reconstruction processes as a strategic development goal through 2026, with Eastern Partnership initiatives serving as one of the tools for this work.¹

For effective planning and implementation of reconstruction, it is essential to understand the perspectives of ordinary Ukrainian citizens, their stance on reconstruction issues, what they are prepared to support, and what they consider untimely. According to Ukrainian residents, post-war reconstruction should begin with rebuilding homes and infrastructure. This is the view of 47% of respondents in a nationwide opinion poll conducted at the beginning of 2024. The next priorities are demining territories (37.9%), further strengthening the army (37.3%), and creating jobs (33.7%).²

A survey of member organisations of the Ukrainian National Platform of the EaP CSF was used to prepare this document, gathering their views on the challenges of post-war reconstruction and the prospects for addressing reconstruction needs in the future.³



¹ <http://eap-csf.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Stratehiia-rozvytku-UNP-2024-2026.pdf>

² <https://rac.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/racse-ukraine-of-the-future-survey-ukr.pdf>

³ Further details on the summarised survey results can be found in Appendix 1 of the Position Paper.

1. Processes for Planning and Implementing Ukraine's Post-War Reconstruction

Ukraine's post-war reconstruction is a significant political process being undertaken at international, national, and local levels. Reconstruction processes encompass a wide range of activities: strategic planning, development of legal regulations, international reconstruction initiatives, and financing for rebuilding specific infrastructure or housing projects, among others.

Currently, Ukraine lacks a comprehensive post-war reconstruction plan that would include strategic goals, specific tasks, and the necessary funding for all aspects of reconstruction and Ukraine's future development. Work initiated in 2022 on the development of an Action Plan for Post-War Recovery and Development of Ukraine resulted in some preliminary materials; however, in early 2023, this process halted without achieving a final outcome.

The closest document with a strategic vision is the Ukraine Plan, developed and approved for the purposes of the Ukraine Facility – an EU financial instrument to assist with reconstruction and European integration. To receive funding, Ukraine must timely meet indicators that facilitate reforms in various sectors. The Ukraine Facility programme provides for €50 billion in support for Ukraine between 2024 and 2027, with Ukraine receiving its latest tranche of €4.2 billion in August 2024.

International processes for planning and discussing pathways for Ukraine's post-war recovery facilitate the engagement and coordination of Ukraine's international partners. One of the main international processes for planning post-war recovery is the Ukraine Recovery Conferences (URC): in Lugano (Switzerland) in 2022, London (United Kingdom) in 2023, and Berlin (Germany) in 2024. The priority areas of the Berlin conference were the "Business Dimension" (mobilisation of the private sector), "Human Dimension" (social recovery and human capital), "Local and Regional Dimension" (recovery of cities and territories), and "European Dimension" (EU membership and associated reforms).

Several initiatives have been launched to support the capacity of Ukraine's regions and communities in implementing specific reforms and recovery and reconstruction projects. For instance, the "Communities Support Team" working group was established within the Ministry of Reconstruction, and Recovery and Development Offices were opened – platforms for collaboration among local authorities, international organisations, NGOs, and businesses to coordinate international aid and prioritise reconstruction projects. As of early 2024, such offices have been established at the regional level in Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and two in Dnipro, and at the community level in Sumy, Nizhyn, Mykolaiv, Pervomaisk, Kamianske, and Voznesensk. The offices were opened with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine, in partnership with the EU and the governments of Denmark and Sweden.

At the end of December 2022, the G7 leaders established the Interagency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine. The main purpose of the platform is to mobilise external budget support to ensure economic resilience and social protection for the population.

Between 2022 and 2024, the main source of reconstruction funding has been restructured loans (from the EIB, EBRD, and the World Bank), with a smaller portion from grants (from the US, Japan, and Germany), which were primarily provided through technical assistance projects or relevant development agencies (USAID, UNDP, JICA, GIZ). In 2023, UAH 21 billion was allocated for local and regional recovery projects, almost half of which came from EIB loans, with the remainder from the Liquidation Fund (confiscated Russian assets in Ukraine).⁴

Civil society organisations are also actively involved in the reconstruction process. Key activities include organising public events, collecting and disseminating information, conducting research, and providing training and workshops. Conferences, forums, and other events are commonly held to raise awareness and engage the public in the political processes of Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery. In 2023, a series of regional forums titled "Manifesto of Civil Society in Shaping and Implementing Ukraine's Recovery Plan" were held.

⁴ <https://rac.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/racse-post-war-green-reconstruction-of-ukraine-ukr.pdf>

Another significant contribution of civil society to Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction is the implementation, promotion, and support of actions by specific communities and residents aimed at restoring buildings, infrastructure, assisting communities in seeking financial support, drafting planning acts in the context of recovery, and developing community capacity, including training and awareness-raising.

The involvement of civil society in planning and implementing reconstruction processes varies depending on each specific process. International processes tend to be more closed, particularly the work of certain financial institutions, while there has been formal public participation in shaping strategies, plans, and other documents at the level of government bodies, although comments were not always taken into account appropriately. The state institutions not enough and sometimes formally involves civil society organizations to the processes of planning and implementation of plans for the Ukraine's reconstruction.



2. Addressing the Challenges of Ukraine's Reconstruction in Eastern Partnership Policy Documents and Funding Initiatives

The main challenge for Ukraine is Russia's armed aggression and associated issues. These security challenges are not only pressing during the war; they will also shape the principles of the country's post-war reconstruction and recovery, as well as the state's future development in the strategic and long-term outlook. The threat from Russia is evident in all sectors, particularly in terms of critical infrastructure and ensuring the provision of basic services to people (e.g., electricity, heating, and water supply).

Civil society representatives highlight issues related to ensuring principles of good governance, particularly regarding civil society engagement, transparency, and accountability.

The war has exacerbated longstanding issues in Ukraine, including inadequate social policy provision, modernisation of healthcare, development of the education system, the low priority given to environmental policy and its integration into sectoral and regional policies, institutional weakness in state bodies, and excessive use of natural resources, among others.

Platform members believe there is a risk that reconstruction efforts may fail to incorporate principles of inclusion and gender equality, sustainable development, and proper application of environmental assessment instruments (EIA, SEA). Obstacles to effective post-war reconstruction include the low capacity (institutional and financial) of municipalities to implement reconstruction programmes, corruption risks, and low motivation among people to rebuild in front-line regions.

In the context of green reconstruction, there is a risk of distrust or negative attitudes towards environmental initiatives due to their perception as "untimely" amidst reconstruction and urgent socio-economic issues.

A separate, overarching challenge is the shortage of human capital and the highly complex task of encouraging people to return home.

There are varying opinions on how effectively existing policy documents and Eastern Partnership initiatives can help address the current challenges in Ukraine. Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Union updated its strategic directions in shaping the Eastern Partnership policy.

The joint communication "Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020"⁵ outlines five long-term policy goals for the Eastern Partnership:

- Together towards resilient, sustainable, and integrated economies;
- Together towards accountable institutions, rule of law, and security;
- Together towards environmental and climate resilience;
- Together towards sustainable digital transformation;
- Together towards resilient, fair, and inclusive societies.

The priority issues included in each area reflect the goals of the European Green Deal, as well as the needs for democratic development and reform in all sectors, which are extremely important and can be utilised by Ukraine to achieve its strategic post-war development goals. However, the strategic document does not account for new challenges, particularly security-related ones, and the resilience of people and economies is presented in a somewhat different context. The proposed 10 main goals by 2025 do not include significant issues, particularly in areas such as security, energy, support for people displaced during the war, and post-war challenges in the region.

The financial documents for implementing the Eastern Partnership policy, adopted annually, are more flexible in addressing the current challenges in the Eastern Partnership region. According to the European Commission Implementing Decision of 26 July 2024 on the financing of the annual action plan in favor of the Neighbourhood East Region for 2024⁶, two areas of action for funding are defined: (1) governance and EU-related reforms; (2) green and sustainable development, including trade and investment promotion facility.

⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/1_en_act_part1_v6.pdf

⁶ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7b12b695-2ea3-4f73-a452-c8bfcd924e72_en?filename=C_2024_5375_F1_COMMISSION_IMPLEMENTING_DECISION_EN_V2_P1_3582254.PDF

In justifying the provision of funding for 2024, the European Commission emphasises the new geopolitical conditions in the region due to two factors: (1) Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine; and (2) new progress in EU enlargement (including candidate status for Ukraine and Moldova). In this context, the rule of law, including judicial independence, anti-corruption efforts, respect for fundamental human rights, the economy, functioning of democratic institutions, and public administration reform continue to be cornerstone elements of EU enlargement policy and fundamental pillars of the EU enlargement process.⁷

With respect to the second area of action, emphasis is placed on a range of socio-economic challenges in the EaP region and on supporting the EU accession process for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Regarding green issues, priority is given to supporting the energy transition and energy security, particularly through regulatory alignment, as well as supporting municipalities in developing and implementing climate and sustainable energy actions. The human capital component is aimed at reforming Georgia’s educational system.⁸

Table 1. Allocation of Funding for the Eastern Partnership Region (2024 Indicative Budget)

	Component	EU Support, EUR	Funding Priorities
Green and Sustainable Development, Trade and Investment Facilitation Tool			
Component I	Trade and investment promotion	26,000,000	Enhancing cross-border trade between EaP countries and the EU, increasing the export potential of enterprises
Component II	Green and sustainable development	5,000,000	Further alignment of national legal systems with the EU acquis in the energy sector
Component III	Investing in human capital	5,000,000	Reforming Georgia's educational system
Governance and EU-Related Reforms			
Outcome 1	EaP countries have a more resilient public - administration system in line with principles of public governance; - development of national statistical systems to obtain high-quality, gender-disaggregated statistical data; - improve knowledge of EU policies and enhance the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of judicial systems	12,000,000	
Outcome 2	Enhancing the resilience of EaP societies through conflict prevention and resolution, civil protection, and democratisation	18,000,000	
Outcome 3	Enhancing perception and attitude towards the EU and raising awareness, fostering a more receptive - environment in EaP countries towards European values and - principles supporting closer association with the EU	6,500,000	
Total		72,500,000	

⁷ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2e7f3927-49f9-4140-a078-249455ee877b_en?filename=C_2024_5375_F1_ANNEX-1_3581895.PDF

⁸ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/f43ca0f7-d2f2-4f79-ad82-48abc3d319ea_en?filename=C_2024_5375_F1_ANNEX_-2.PDF

3. How the Eastern Partnership Can Support Ukraine's Post-War Reconstruction and Recovery in the Future

The Eastern Partnership policy already has tools and mechanisms that can support Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and recovery, particularly based on principles of "build back better," good governance, decarbonisation, and others. For this purpose, platforms for dialogue, interaction, and cooperation between Eastern Partnership countries and the EU (at government, parliamentary, business, and civil society levels), relevant financial programmes, and advocacy support for Ukraine's expedited EU accession can be utilised.

However, the policy needs to be strengthened in light of current challenges and should consider several priorities important to Ukraine and the region as a whole. Foremost, it involves security challenges and the interconnection of its various components, including energy and environmental security. There is a need to incorporate priority cross-cutting development directions, such as human potential, including social policy and the return of displaced people, green transition, and strengthening the role of civil society in the Eastern Partnership policy and recovery processes. It should not be forgotten that policy development should take place first, and then funding distribution based on priorities and tasks.

According to a survey of UNP member organisations, security issues are considered the highest priority in the reconstruction process. The next priorities include energy issues, particularly energy security, renewable energy, decentralisation, environmental protection and ecosystem preservation, education, economic development, social policy, human capital retention, and public engagement, among others.

All these issues are important for mitigating the impacts of the demographic crisis and for encouraging the return of those who have left Ukraine.

RECONSTRUCTION PRIORITIES



Fig. 1. Priority Issues in Post-War Reconstruction. Based on the survey of UNP members.

Mechanisms to improve consideration of relevant issues include strengthening partnerships, community building based on specific topics, sharing best practices, and presenting documents and materials developed by Eastern Partnership participants to the relevant institutions at national and European levels.

An important direction for Ukraine's future development is strengthening institutional and technical support for reforms required for EU accession. This direction closely aligns with issues and needs in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and recovery.

To ensure Ukraine's green recovery using advanced technologies, a key issue is integrating environmental and climate considerations into various policies, legislation, and initiatives, supporting the achievement of the European Green Deal's objectives and goals, one of the significant EU policies Ukraine should align with for EU membership.

Addressing issues important to the country in the Eastern Partnership policy will provide a sense of greater belonging and engagement in relevant initiatives in the future.

Recommendations

For European Institutions

- Consider geopolitical changes in the region in the process of reviewing the Eastern Partnership policy framework.
- Reflect the needs and challenges related to Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine in policy documents and financial programmes to support the Eastern Partnership policy.
- Include security enhancement issues, including energy and environmental security, as a priority on the future Eastern Partnership agenda.
- Incorporate war-time recovery and post-war reconstruction issues into current planning for financial allocations and priorities in annual Eastern Partnership funding programmes.
- Add EU accession preparation for Ukraine and Moldova as a separate cluster within Eastern Partnership initiatives (with the possibility of including Georgia if membership negotiations begin).
- Increase civil society engagement in the process of reviewing Eastern Partnership priorities.

For Civil Society Organisations, including EaP CSF and UNP EaP CSF

- Strengthen interaction with other Eastern Partnership policy stakeholders to advocate Ukraine's priorities in relation to Russia's armed aggression, particularly through joint platforms, preparation of joint statements, advocacy efforts, networking, etc.
- Actively utilise existing Eastern Partnership initiatives to promote support for Ukraine's EU membership and Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and recovery needs.
- Engage in EU-level work, including submitting contributions, commenting, participating in events, and consultations on issues concerning Ukraine and the future of the Eastern Partnership.
- Create a coalition of civil society organizations — members of the EaP CSP for more active and effective involvement of the civil society of Ukraine and Moldova (with the possible accession of Georgia) in the process of negotiations on EU accession.
- UNP EaP CSP can become an effective platform for coordinating civil society initiatives and exchanging information about the processes of post-war reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine, as well as play an important role in communication with European civil society.
- Strengthen own capacity to advocate for necessary reforms in Ukraine, participate in the negotiation process, and engage in pro-European platforms.

For State Bodies of Ukraine

- Implement reforms in Ukraine that will contribute to the post-war reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine, while strengthening their inclusiveness.
- Actively use the opportunities of the Eastern Partnership initiative and the expert potential of Ukrainian civil society institutions to promote the issue of supporting Ukraine's membership in the EU and the needs of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and recovery.



The Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (UNP) (<http://eap-csf.org.ua/>) is a network of more than 150 non-governmental organizations in Ukraine that advocates Ukrainian interests within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The platform is part of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region and boost pluralism in public discourse and policy-making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms. The EaP CSF is a non-partisan bona fide non-governmental organisation”.

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