



EMPOWERING UKRAINE

Spend smarter, support harder

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INTRODUCTION

by

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For over four years, Ukraine has bravely resisted Russia's imperialist aggression. Positive momentum has been building up. Ukraine has consolidated its defences and slowed, and in places reversed, Russia's advances. Its defence-industrial production capacity is expanding rapidly, and its innovation ecosystem is becoming one of the country's most valuable assets. Kyiv can rely on the EU's support through the unprecedented €90 billion loan approved in April 2026 and has successfully mobilised international support through skilful wartime diplomacy. Even the Trump administration, known for its scepticism, now admits that Ukraine 'has cards'. The country is also drawing closer to the EU as accession talks have finally begun. Meanwhile, Ukraine's increasingly frequent long-range strikes deep inside Russia are steadily raising the costs of Moscow's war of aggression.

The EU has welcomed this development as it points towards a future peace favourable to its interests. However, it should not become complacent.

Russia, while under increasing strain, can still mobilise further resources in an effort to reverse the setbacks it has suffered. Ukraine's successes have been uneven, and Kyiv will continue to face relentless attacks against its civilian infrastructure designed to break its resolve. These will add to the immense destruction already inflicted on the country.

To defend itself and, ultimately, to rebuild, Ukraine will continue to rely on partners. Here is where this collection of proposals can offer a way forward, setting out innovative ideas to improve the ways in which the EU, foremost among those partners, can effectively empower Ukraine.

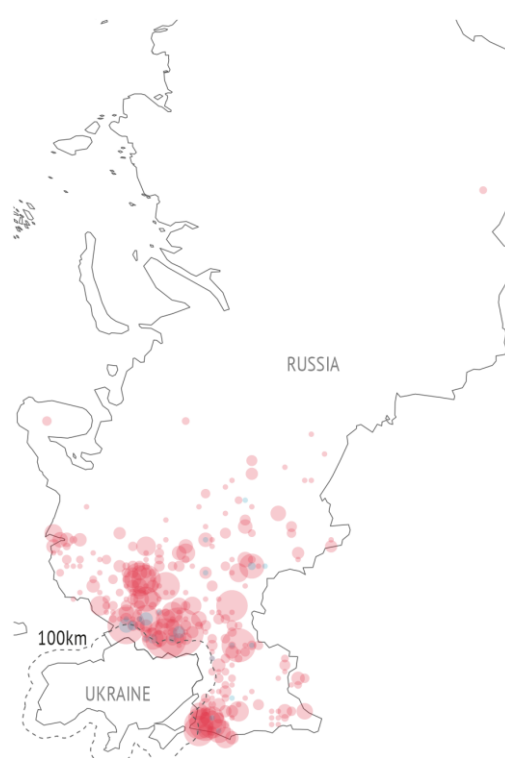
Authored by EUISS Analysts pooling their regional and thematic expertise, these contributions look beyond the immediate challenges of the war. They propose new ways in which the EU can empower Ukraine, explain why these ideas could have a transformative impact, and show how they

Ukrainian long-range strikes

Ukrainian strikes 100km or more inside Russia,
Feb 2022 - Jun 2026

Type of strike ● Air/drone strike ● Shelling/artillery/missile attack

Number of strikes ● 2 ● 20 ● 80



Data: ACLED, 2026; European Commission, GISCO, 2026

From a modest start in 2022, the number of Ukrainian strikes deep inside Russia has risen steadily. Ukrainian drones now reach targets up to 3 000 km away, including Russia's [largest oil refinery](#) in Omsk in the heart of Siberia.

This year the number of deep strikes is set to reach a record, likely more than doubling the number of attacks recorded in 2025 (661). Domestic production of Ukrainian long-range drones capable of deep strikes [increased](#) by 53% between January and April 2026.

Meanwhile, daring operations like Spiderweb have demonstrated Ukraine's skill in planning and conducting complex covert missions by deploying drones that successfully targeted distant Russian military airbases.

Sustained strikes on Russian energy infrastructure are also imposing rising economic costs and broadening the domestic impact of the war. Innovations like FP-1 'motherships', which can launch smaller quadcopters near their targets, are increasing the effectiveness of attacks on military targets.

could be translated into policy by building on existing initiatives.

The collection covers a range of subjects: from building societal resilience to deepening defence-industrial cooperation to strengthen the foundations for defending and deterring Russia; from reconstruction and recovery to Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU; and from reinforcing international support networks for Ukraine to dismantling Russian influence networks across Africa.

In each case, the authors' analysis of Ukraine's current and future needs, together with an assessment of the EU's response, paves the way for practical policy recommendations that build on existing opportunities, address systemic weaknesses and overcome key obstacles.

When they look at the approximately five million Ukrainian citizens now residing in the EU, they see them not just as people who have found refuge from war, but also as a strategic constituency to be engaged to ensure Ukraine's future resilience and recovery. Likewise, when they look at the impressive rebirth of Ukraine's defence industry, they see not just a sector that merits continued EU support, but also an opportunity to use joint ventures to build stronger and more enduring partnerships.

Looking ahead, the authors propose practical solutions to the challenges of rebuilding Ukraine, including likely shortages of available funding. To ensure stakeholders' confidence and trust as well as efficient and fair use of available funds, they advocate the swift completion of a 'single collector pipeline' that brings together parallel funding streams within one integrated and transparent digital platform. To complement public funding, they propose new incentives for external investors, combining domestic reforms with external derisking measures to attract more private capital.

Safeguarding Ukraine's long-term prosperity will also require governance reforms that strengthen the rule of law and improve the business environment, as well as modern infrastructure capable of powering up Ukraine's future economic growth. This is why the authors recommend shifting the focus from ensuring the continuity of essential energy services in the face of Russia's sustained attacks to long-term investment in a distributed energy system that

could serve as a model for Europe's future energy networks. They also caution that this infrastructure must be protected by robust safeguards to ensure that the involvement of third countries, including China, does not create undesirable dependencies or vulnerabilities to sabotage and espionage. They stress that enhanced support to Ukraine must be accompanied not only by a credible EU accession perspective, but also by accelerated integration across the functional, political and societal domains ahead of formal accession, firmly anchoring Ukraine in wider Europe while delivering tangible benefits to its population.

Finally, the authors highlight the key role the EU can play in helping Ukraine to leverage international partnerships for defence and reconstitution. Mindful of the current state of the transatlantic relationship, they argue that the EU should try to convince the Trump administration to increase pressure on a weakened Russia, and to recognise the strategic and commercial benefits of a just and lasting peace. They point in particular to the scope for expanding defence-industrial cooperation by setting up more weapons production lines in Europe, including in Ukraine. Beyond political divergences that extend well beyond public rhetoric, the authors identify common interests in Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery. They therefore propose to create a compact, building on the G7's Ukraine Donor Platform, to at least partially overcome collective action problems and avoid the costly consequences of a failed reconstruction effort.

They also advocate for establishing a more robust and coherent network to prevent, expose and disrupt Russia's deceptive recruitment schemes in Africa, thereby reducing the flow of recruits to the frontline, and undermining the Kremlin's global influence.

The ambition of this collection is to inspire new policies and encourage a more innovative way of thinking about how the EU can empower Ukraine that is firmly grounded in an understanding of where the EU's key strategic interests lie.

It is mindful of the substantial support that the EU offers to Ukraine, but also of the challenges ahead.

To date, the EU and its Member States have provided €211.3 billion overall in support

Financial assistance

From the EU, as of 8 June 2026, € billion



Data: Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2026

The amount of the EU's support exceeds that of any other international donor. The US comes a distant second, having provided an estimated €120 billion worth of support, [according](#) to the Kiel Institute's Ukraine Support Tracker.

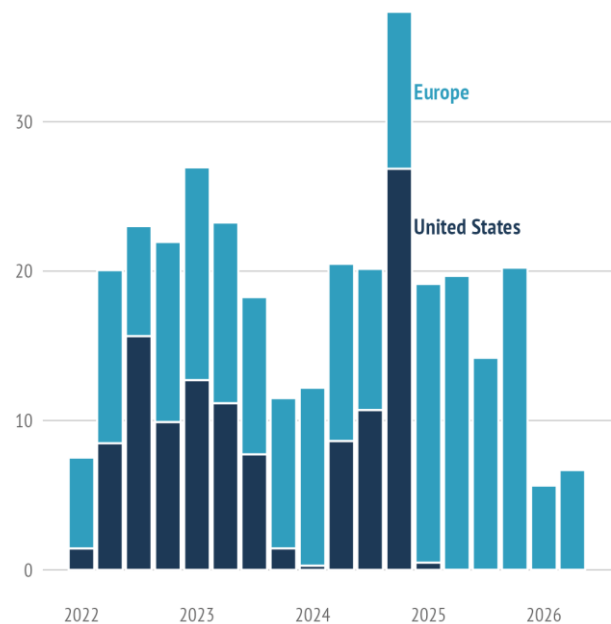
(including €3.8 billion windfall revenues from immobilised Russian assets).

Since the second Trump administration took office, US direct support to Ukraine has largely petered out.

However, the EU has stepped up its assistance to offset this decline, increasing military aid by 67% and non-military aid by 59% above the previous three-year average, as recorded by the Kiel Institute.

Stepping in

Support to Ukraine, 2022-2026 quarterly, € billion



Data: Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2026

In addition to increasing financial aid, the EU has supported the training of Ukraine's armed forces and security sector reform through two CSDP missions – EUMAM (which, at the time of writing, has trained [over](#) 93 000 Ukrainian troops) and EUAM. Meanwhile, extending defence-industrial cooperation and Ukraine's integration into initiatives such as Security Action for Europe (SAFE) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) allows Ukraine to pool financing, production capacity and innovation with its European partners to meet shared defence needs more effectively.

The EU is also looking to the future. It has earmarked €100 billion for further support to Ukraine under the next Multiannual Financial

Framework (MFF). However, Europe's fiscal space is under pressure as Member States increase spending on their own defence to deter the mounting threat from Russia, while the US recalibrates its security and defence priorities. The EU is therefore keeping open the option of using immobilised Russian assets in the future to repay the support loan and finance a new reparations loan for Ukraine. Assets immobilised in Member States amount to €209.2 billion, or 72.3% of the global total.

The reality is that Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery needs will be several times greater than the amount the EU has earmarked for 2028–2034. Member States and other donors can still mobilise additional resources, but they are being stretched thin. Unlocking private capital can provide an important additional source of funding.

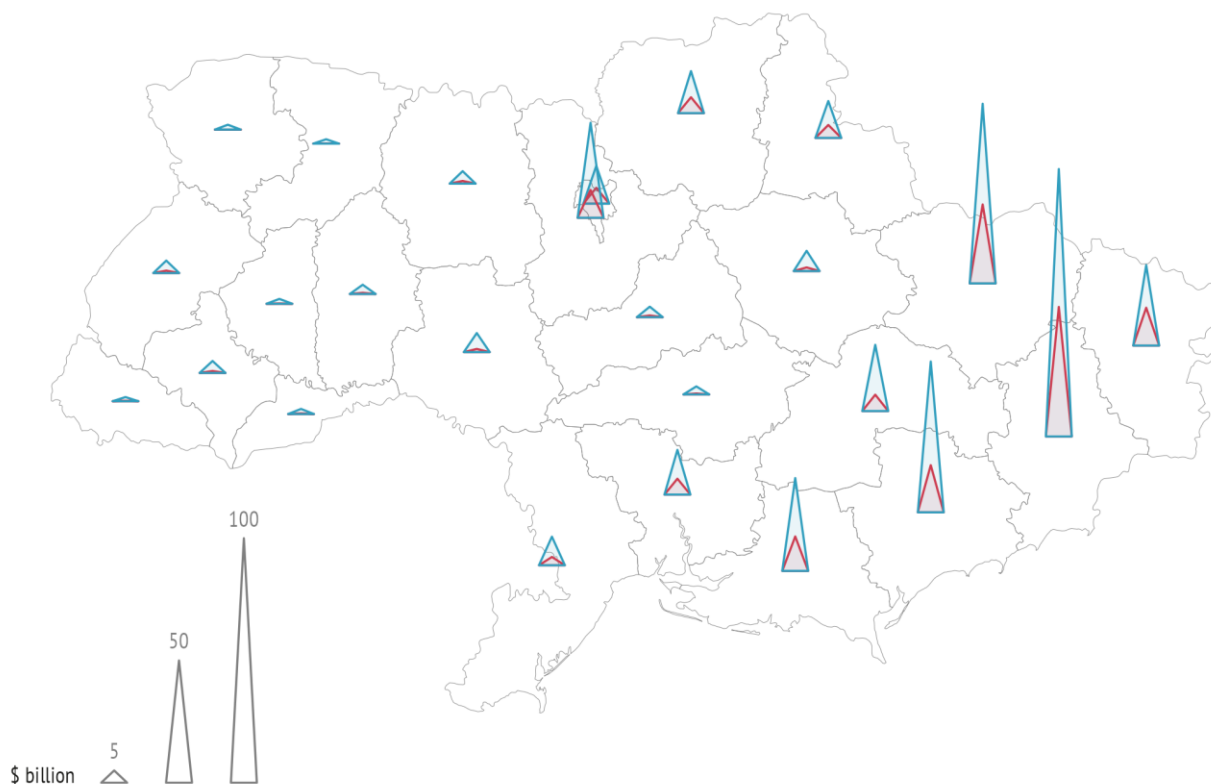
But still, EU support will need to continue over a sustained period after a ceasefire is reached and until the now devastated Ukrainian economy is

capable of generating sufficient revenue – and comes to resemble the government's vision of a liberal '[Economy of the Future](#)' with sustained growth, foreign direct investment (FDI) exceeding prewar levels and conditions conducive to the eventual return of at least three million Ukrainians from abroad to meet the country's labour needs. Russia's war has caused terrible human suffering and vast economic damage. The most recent [Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA5\)](#), undertaken by the European Commission together with the World Bank, the Ukrainian government and the UN and published in February 2026, estimates the country's reconstruction and recovery needs over the next decade at €515.3 billion, or three times Ukraine's nominal GDP. Of this amount, up to 40% (but no more than that) could be met by the private sector provided necessary governance reforms take place. Much of the damage is due to Russia's deliberate targeting of Ukrainian civilian

Damage and needs

As of 31 Dec 2025

■ Damage ■ Needs



Data: World Bank assessment of damage to social, infrastructure, productive and cross-cutting sectors in the 46 months from 24.02.22 to 31.12.25

infrastructure, which has steadily intensified over time.

The damage has been distributed unevenly across Ukraine's regions, including the territories under illegal Russian occupation.

Donetska oblast accounts for about one quarter of the overall damage, while Kharkivska and Zaporizka oblasts together account for another quarter.

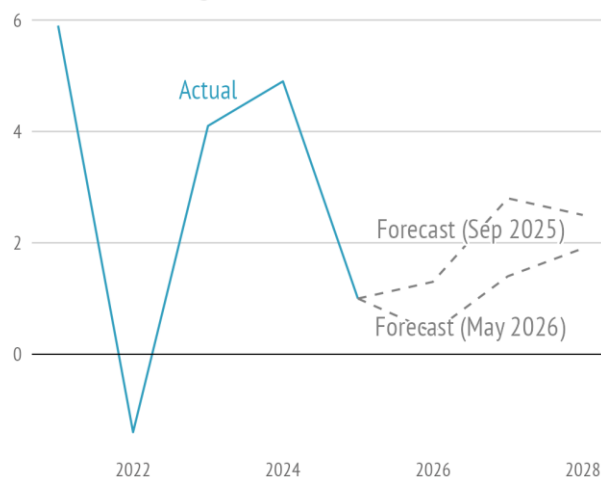
As a result, reconstruction and recovery needs vary significantly across the country. The most severely hit frontline regions risk failing to attract sufficient funding.

Meanwhile, the likelihood of a ceasefire agreement being reached in 2026 is slim. Russia may seek to exploit diplomatic negotiations as a way of achieving its war objectives – in other words, as a continuation of war by other means. However, it can no longer place hopes in the Trump administration as it once did. The conditions each side considers acceptable for a ceasefire continue to differ dramatically, while neither side has the military capacity to achieve a decisive breakthrough on the battlefield. Both Ukraine and Russia now have the capacity to inflict significant damage deep behind enemy lines, but both appear willing to bear the costs of a prolonged war. Ukraine's ability to strike military infrastructure close to the frontline, as well as logistics hubs and oil refineries deep inside Russia, has increased sharply. This is complicating the delivery of Russian supplies to the front, constraining Russia's petroleum exports, and creating fuel shortages during the peak summer demand season that extend beyond Moscow to nearly all regions in the country. Illegally occupied Crimea features prominently among the targeted territories. However, Russia maintains missile superiority, while Ukraine struggles to field sufficient air defences.

The Kremlin may still believe that it can take the whole of Donbas and use it as a springboard for renewed pressure further inland. But neither side is likely to make significant advances on the ground. Both continue to believe, however, that they can improve their position through deep strikes: Ukraine by intensifying pressure on Russia's fuel supply, and Russia by once again targeting Ukraine's energy and heating infrastructure come winter.

This situation is not conducive to a ceasefire in the near future. But neither is it a stalemate. Ukraine is now in a much stronger relative position *vis-à-vis* Russia than at the beginning of 2026, while the latter's vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly evident. Russia's economy is now contracting for the first time since 2023.

Russian GDP growth



Data: Bank of Russia, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, 2026

The windfall from the Hormuz crisis offered Moscow a welcome lifeline but did little more than temporarily plug the holes in an increasingly leaky ship. Signs of war fatigue are becoming more and more visible in Russian society, while even within the elite there are occasional, if fleeting, expressions of discontent over a war that has [claimed](#) the lives of 450 000 Russian soldiers.

This is the moment to increase pressure on the Kremlin and work to [unpower](#) it. Defeating Putin's imperialist project will require a sustained long-term effort, with empowering Ukraine remaining central to that strategy.

Steadfast support by the EU, Ukraine's key partner, will be essential both to help Ukraine secure a favourable peace agreement, and to manage the aftermath. The post-war period is likely to be characterised by economic malaise, a persistent security deficit and a difficult transition from martial law to a new political 'normal'. The Kremlin will spare no effort to foment internal instability and drive a wedge between Ukraine and the EU.

Hybrid incidents attributed to Russia 2022-2025



Data: Bart Schuurman, 2025

undertaking. It requires political resolve, a clear understanding of the challenges ahead and a readiness to confront them head-on. Above all it requires forward-thinking about how this objective can be pursued more effectively and, where possible, at lower cost.

Russia-engineered foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) campaigns will, as they [already do at present](#), persistently and opportunistically exploit insecurities in both Ukraine and the EU, amplify perceptions of incompatible values, and seek to turn citizens against 'elites' portrayed as betraying their real interests. The Kremlin will seek both to undermine the enlargement process, and to use that process to undermine the EU and Ukraine.

To make sure it does not succeed, and to safeguard the accession process that anchors the vision of a free and democratic Ukraine in a united Europe, will require robust resilience on both sides.

Ensuring that an empowered Ukraine is on its side, and becomes a Member State down the road, is one of the EU's core strategic interests in the face of Russia's efforts to rebuild its empire. Externalising threats that by default are shared by the community of European states is not a realistic option. Empowering Ukraine is a major