EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE

POLICY BRIEF

EUROPE'S POLITICAL ECONOMY PROGRAMME

3 NOVEMBER 2026

Ukraine's accession needs a different EU budget deal

Philipp Lausberg

INTRODUCTION: MAKING UKRAINE'S ACCESSION WORK FOR BOTH SIDES

On 6 October 2026, the European Commission called for examining arrangements that would significantly limit Ukraine's access to EU agricultural support and markets for sensitive agricultural products following accession. This brought into focus a fundamental challenge for Ukraine's EU membership prospects: how can Ukraine join the EU without imposing unsustainable costs on its budget and disruptive distributional effects on existing Member States?

Ukraine's accession is often presented principally as a challenge for the EU. Ukraine is a large, relatively poor and war-ravaged country with immense reconstruction needs. Applying existing Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) allocation rules mechanically would put considerable pressure on an already constrained EU budget, reducing resources available to existing beneficiaries or requiring politically difficult increases in spending. Ukraine's large and competitive agricultural sector could meanwhile create substantial disruption in European agricultural markets.

Ukraine's accession is often presented principally as a challenge for the EU.

Yet the problem runs both ways. Simply extending existing EU policies to Ukraine may also poorly serve Ukraine's needs. Neither the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) nor cohesion policy are suited to a country facing exceptional reconstruction challenges while possessing significant competitive strengths in sectors such as agriculture, defence and digital technology. At the same time, integrating these capabilities into European industrial and technological value chains could deliver considerable benefits for the wider EU.[1]

This Policy Brief argues for a differentiated accession settlement that limits distributional conflicts while maximising the mutual benefits of integration. Rather than making Ukraine's membership dependent on extending existing budgetary entitlements unchanged, the EU should explore conditional derogations in selected areas, accelerate participation in programmes generating European added value and establish dedicated financing for reconstruction. The objective should not merely be to contain the costs of accession. It should harness Ukraine's economic and strategic strengths through a credible and predictable accession pathway, rather than promising benefits that may prove politically or financially impossible to deliver.

BACKGROUND: AN EXCEPTIONAL ACCESSION AND FINANCING PATHWAY

Ukraine's integration into the EU predates Russia's full-scale invasion. The Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), established a framework for trade liberalisation and regulatory convergence as of 2016. Four months into

Russia's invasion, Ukraine received candidate status in June 2022, formally launched accession negotiations in June 2024 and has since progressed to substantive negotiations. Most recently, on 13 October 2026, the EU opened the internal market and competitiveness and inclusive growth negotiating clusters.[2]

Meanwhile, the EU and its partners have developed a differentiated financing architecture to address Ukraine's exceptional circumstances, departing from the conventional pre-accession model. The €50 billion Ukraine Facility (2024–2027) combines reform-linked budget support, investment and reconstruction financing and technical assistance, while the proposed 2028–2034 MFF envisages up to €100 billion in further support through a dedicated Ukraine Reserve. Additional financing comes from EU macro-financial assistance, the G7 Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration loans backed by revenues from immobilised Russian assets and the €90 billion Ukraine Support Loan for 2026–2027, which also finances defence procurement.

Reconstruction and sectoral investment are also supported through the Ukraine Investment Framework, the EIB Group, international financial institutions and dedicated initiatives such as the Ukraine Energy Support Fund and the European Flagship Fund for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. Ukraine also participates in regular EU programmes, including Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

This architecture demonstrates that Ukraine's needs are already being addressed through instruments extending beyond conventional pre-accession funding, combining grants, loans, guarantees, EU borrowing and contributions from international partners. It provides a starting point for considering similarly tailored arrangements after accession, rather than automatically applying the conventional integration model.

STATE OF PLAY: WHERE THE CONVENTIONAL ACCESSION MODEL FALLS SHORT

Ukraine's integration into the MFF would have markedly different implications across spending programmes. While CAP and cohesion policy risk creating significant budgetary and distributive pressures, competitiveness and security programmes could offer greater opportunities for mutually beneficial integration.

Common Agricultural Policy: A competitive asset turned into an accession problem

Agriculture is arguably the clearest case in which applying the standard accession model mechanically could create problems for both Ukraine and existing Member States. Ukraine combines a vast agricultural resource base with a highly competitive and export-oriented farming sector. Estimates suggest that its full integration into the CAP under existing arrangements could cost around €70–90 billion over seven years.[3]

Increased competition for funding and agricultural markets could further intensify political resistance to accession in Member States with important farming sectors, including France and Poland.

Yet conventional CAP support may not be optimal for Ukraine either. Large-scale area-based direct payments would disproportionately benefit larger agricultural enterprises, many of which are already highly competitive.[4] Ukraine could benefit more from targeted investment and capacity-building support for smaller producers, farm modernisation, compliance with EU standards and sustainable agricultural practices.[5] Moreover, its war-related recovery requires demining, infrastructure reconstruction and bespoke risk-sharing support extending beyond conventional CAP instruments.[6]

Introducing substantial area-based income support could weaken incentives for efficiency gains and technological innovation in a sector that has developed considerable cost advantages under intense international competition.[7] Ukraine is, for example, an early adopter of agricultural drones and precision spraying technologies, partly facilitated by a more flexible regulatory environment.[8] Preserving these competitive advantages should therefore be an important consideration when designing Ukraine's agricultural integration into the EU.

Full integration into the wider agricultural acquis could also increase production and compliance costs, potentially weakening Ukraine's competitiveness in international markets and its smaller producers, even as it improves sustainability and access to the EU market.[9] Ukrainian agricultural associations have consequently called for longer transition periods for certain production requirements, particularly those concerning plant-protection products.[10]

Before Russia's full-scale invasion, around 71% of Ukrainian agricultural exports went to markets outside the EU, particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

These concerns are particularly important given Ukraine's export structure. Before Russia's full-scale invasion, around 71% of Ukrainian agricultural exports went to markets outside the EU, particularly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.[11] Disrupted Black Sea shipping and temporary EU trade liberalisation subsequently redirected substantial exports towards Europe, contributing to market tensions in neighbouring Member States.[12] In response to these countries' concerns, the revised DCFTA arrangements of October 2025 restored tariff-rate quotas for sensitive products at revised levels and introduced

safeguards against market disruption, while linking additional preferential access to commitments to align with specified EU production standards by 2028.[13]

A rebalancing towards traditional export markets could ease competitive pressures on sensitive EU sectors while preserving Ukraine's international competitiveness and strengthening Europe's weight and strategic indispensability in global food markets – an important asset in times of escalating geo-economic competition. At the same time, Ukraine's agricultural production capacity could contribute to EU food security, particularly during supply shortages.[14]

However, accession could complicate this rebalancing. Joining the EU's common commercial policy would require Ukraine to relinquish or adapt existing bilateral trade agreements, potentially losing favourable access to certain third-country markets.[15] Given the differences between Ukraine's agricultural export structure and that of the EU, common trade arrangements may not always reflect Ukraine's particular commercial interests. Ukraine's agricultural exports are heavily concentrated in globally traded commodities such as cereals and oilseeds, whereas the EU has a more diversified agri-food export profile, including substantial exports of higher-value processed products.[16]

The Commission's October 2026 pre-enlargement communication recognises many of these challenges and proposes exploring tailored arrangements for Ukrainian agriculture, including restrictions on CAP support and market access for sensitive products, while helping Ukraine regain access to traditional export markets.[17]

Cohesion policy: Balancing convergence with reconstruction

Cohesion policy presents a different challenge. Under existing allocation principles, Ukraine's enormous territory and comparatively low GDP per capita could make it a very large beneficiary. An illustrative application of current MFF allocation rules suggests that Ukraine could receive around €32 billion in cohesion funding over seven years.[18] Without additional EU budget resources or tailored arrangements, this could put pressure on existing beneficiaries and intensify distributional conflicts. Particularly so, as Cohesion Policy, similarly to CAP, allocates funding predominantly through grants and according to regional needs, rather than according to strategic relevance, quality and European added value.[19] Efforts to align spending under the proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans more closely with shared European priorities have encountered resistance from Member States seeking to preserve national flexibility.[20]

At the same time, Ukraine has substantial needs for regional development, infrastructure and economic convergence that cohesion policy could help address. Yet these should be distinguished from its exceptional reconstruction requirements, estimated at almost $588 billion over the next decade.[21] Reconstruction must respond primarily to war damage, strategic priorities and economic viability, rather than conventional indicators of regional development. Nor should it depend on Ukraine's accession timetable, as reconstruction needs are immediate.

The two objectives also involve different financing approaches. Cohesion policy supports long-term economic, social and territorial convergence through predominantly grant-based funding and multiannual programming. Reconstruction requires more flexible financing, combining grants for public goods and essential services with loans, equity, guarantees and political-risk protection for commercially viable investments.

An illustrative application of current MFF allocation rules suggests that Ukraine could receive around €32 billion in cohesion funding over seven years.

While large scale cohesion grant funding after years of European wartime support might be a hard sell to European electorates, there is nevertheless scope for early cohesion support where Ukraine's development creates more immediate European benefits. Cross-border infrastructure, regional connectivity, environmental cooperation and border-region development could benefit both Ukraine and neighbouring Member States, complementing existing programmes such as CEF and Interreg. Such investments could facilitate economic integration without immediately extending the full range of conventional cohesion entitlements.

As reconstruction progresses and Ukraine's development needs increasingly resemble those addressed by cohesion policy, its participation in conventional funding could be progressively expanded. This would preserve the objective of long-term regional convergence while avoiding substantial immediate redistribution from existing recipients.

Competitiveness and security: A case for early integration

The case is different for programmes supporting European competitiveness, innovation and security. Unlike conventional CAP and cohesion funding, these programmes allocate resources primarily according to project quality, strategic relevance and European added value rather than predetermined national entitlements. Ukraine's participation would therefore not automatically generate large national allocations at the expense of existing Member States. While it could intensify competition for limited funding, it could also strengthen wider European competitiveness and security by supporting projects that generate benefits extending beyond individual countries, making such funding arguably less politically controversial.[22]

The proposed European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) offers particular opportunities to integrate Ukraine into European industrial value chains. Its focus on strategic technologies, industrial scale-up and financial instruments could support Ukrainian companies while strengthening Europe's technological and industrial capabilities. Ukraine's defence sector is particularly promising. For example, its experience in drones, counter-drone systems and electronic warfare could contribute to Europe's defence-industrial capacity, while European investment could help Ukrainian firms expand production and develop new technologies. Similar opportunities exist in digital technologies, energy and agricultural technology.

Cooperation is already progressing through the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), which includes a €300 million Ukraine Support Instrument to strengthen Ukrainian production capacities and cooperation with European manufacturers.[23] The ECF proposal explicitly identifies Ukraine as eligible for full participation in its defence-industry component.[24] Beyond defence, Ukraine is already associated with several programmes whose activities will be incorporated into the ECF, including Digital Europe, LIFE and EU4Health. The proposal permits full or partial association of candidate countries, subject to programme-specific conditions.[25]

The ECF proposal explicitly identifies Ukraine as eligible for full participation in its defence-industry component.

Existing programme participation provides a foundation for deeper integration. Ukraine has been associated with Horizon Europe since 2022, and participates in Digital Europe and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These arrangements demonstrate that integration can take place before accession and be adapted to sector-specific requirements. Ukraine's participation in Digital Europe, for example, has excluded certain sensitive cybersecurity activities.

CEF investments also demonstrate the benefits of cross-border integration in transport, digital and energy infrastructure. For example, CEF co-financed the first 22-kilometre EU-standard-gauge railway line near Uzhhorod, opened in 2025, and awarded €73.5 million for a further connection towards Lviv.[26] Such investments benefit Ukraine's access to European markets while strengthening EU supply chains and connectivity.

However, while participation has delivered tangible benefits, Ukraine has also encountered challenges in competing for funding, for example in Horizon Europe.[27] Ukraine's ability to benefit from competitive EU programmes depends on administrative capacity, co-financing and its ability to develop successful projects. Moreover, these programmes cannot meet the country's much larger reconstruction needs. A complementary reconstruction framework therefore remains indispensable.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TOWARDS A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ACCESSION SETTLEMENT

Ukraine's distinctive needs and strengths call for an accession model that differentiates between redistributive spending, programmes generating European public goods and exceptional reconstruction requirements. Conditional derogations should be an important instrument of this approach. Ukraine's accession treaty could provide for selected derogations where immediate integration would impose disproportionate costs or undermine development. Unlike conventional time-limited transitions, these could remain in place until predefined conditions are met. This would ensure that integration proceeds only when the necessary conditions are fulfilled, while giving Ukraine the option to retain alternative arrangements in selected areas where full participation does not serve its development needs. The euro provides a precedent: Member States with a derogation can remain outside the euro area for an open-ended period. This is illustrated by Poland, which has not entered the Exchange Rate Mechanism II reflecting its government's view that retaining the złoty is currently more advantageous for the Polish economy. Applying a similar approach to other policy areas would require carefully designed accession-treaty provisions and, where necessary, adjustments to primary law.

1. Negotiate a differentiated agricultural settlement

The Commission should explore an arrangement under which Ukraine remains outside conventional CAP area-based direct payments but receives enhanced support through targeted investment, advisory and capacity-building measures, complemented where appropriate by the ECF. Support should prioritise smaller farms, regulatory compliance, modernisation and sustainable production, while war-related agricultural recovery is financed through dedicated reconstruction instruments (see 4.). This could provide more appropriate support while limiting competition for scarce CAP funding and, if successful, serve as a model for a broader shift from area-based subsidies towards investment-based agricultural support.

Ukraine should also be able to negotiate conditional derogations from selected agricultural production requirements that could impose disproportionate costs, undermine competitiveness in third-country markets or threaten small-scale producers. These could include certain rules on plant-protection products, fertiliser use and livestock production, subject to appropriate

safeguards. This would also require revisiting the 2025 DCFTA revision, which commits Ukraine to aligning with specified EU agricultural production standards by 2028.

Corresponding market-access restrictions such as tariff-rate quotas could remain in place for sensitive agricultural products beyond accession. Their relaxation could be linked to regulatory convergence, allowing Ukrainian producers to choose between closer alignment and greater Single Market access or retaining agreed production flexibility to remain competitive internationally. Building on a Croatian accession precedent, which temporarily excluded certain agricultural products from the wider Single Market, such differentiation would require traceability and controls to prevent trade diversion.[28] Sector specific safeguards, subject to regular review, could help prevent market disruption, while temporary relaxation during EU food-supply crises could strengthen European food security.

Finally, the EU should explore ways to expand Ukraine's favourable access to traditional export markets, including through tailored EU trade agreements or, where justified and legally feasible, limited autonomy over selected agricultural trade arrangements. The latter would require exceptional accession-treaty provisions to safeguard the integrity of the customs union. Together, these arrangements could preserve Ukraine's agricultural competitiveness, reduce political resistance to accession and strengthen Europe's position in global food markets.

2. Phase Ukraine into cohesion policy, prioritising projects with cross-border European benefits

Upon accession, Ukraine should receive targeted access to cohesion funding for projects generating clear benefits beyond its borders. This could include regional transport connections, border infrastructure, cross-border energy and environmental projects, and other investments strengthening economic integration with neighbouring Member States, where these are not adequately covered by CEF or existing Interreg instruments.

Ukraine's participation in conventional cohesion funding could then be phased in as reconstruction advances and its development needs increasingly resemble those addressed by cohesion policy. A conditional arrangement, accompanied by regular reviews and clear criteria relating to reconstruction progress, administrative capacity and regional development needs, could avoid substantial immediate redistribution from existing beneficiaries while preserving Ukraine's longer-term entitlement to support for economic, social and territorial convergence.

3. Accelerate Ukraine's participation in programmes generating European added value

The EU should progressively deepen Ukraine's participation in MFF competitiveness and security programmes ahead of accession, building on existing cooperation for example through Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, CEF and defence-industrial initiatives. By allocating funding based on project quality and demonstrable benefits for Ukraine and the wider EU, rather than automatic national entitlements, these programmes could make Ukraine's integration more attractive and politically acceptable to existing Member States.

Integration should proceed programme by programme, prioritising areas where Ukraine's capabilities can contribute to wider European objectives, particularly defence technology, digital innovation, energy security and industrial competitiveness. Participation in the proposed ECF could help mobilise investment, strengthen European supply chains and scale up Ukrainian companies in strategic sectors. Access should be accompanied by targeted technical assistance and capacity-building, particularly in areas such as intellectual property protection, export controls and foreign investment screening. Appropriate safeguards should also be in place to uphold the rule of law, prevent corruption and protect sensitive technologies and security-related activities.

4. Establish a dedicated reconstruction instrument through a coalition of willing partners

Ukraine's exceptional reconstruction needs require a financing framework that complements, rather than relies on, conventional EU budget instruments. A broad coalition of willing EU Member States and trusted third countries, potentially including the UK, Norway, Canada and others should establish a dedicated reconstruction and investment vehicle, building on the Ukraine Facility, the European Flagship Fund for Reconstruction and existing international financing arrangements.

Participating countries could pool guarantees and capital contributions through a special-purpose vehicle (SPV), which would undertake joint borrowing with an indicative initial financing capacity of €100 billion. The instrument should be progressively scaled up to become the central financing vehicle for Ukraine's reconstruction. This would provide predictable financing and strengthen risk-sharing among participating countries. An open architecture involving the EIB Group, the EBRD, national promotional banks, international financial institutions and private investors would provide implementation capacity without unnecessarily duplicating existing structures. Strategy and investment priorities would be jointly set with Ukraine, including through national and regional authorities.

The instrument should distinguish between essential public reconstruction, requiring grants and concessional finance, and commercially viable projects where loans, equity, guarantees, first-loss capital and political-risk insurance could mobilise private investment. Particular attention should be given to energy, transport, logistics, digital infrastructure and industrial investments offering long-term growth opportunities for Ukraine and its partners.

Contributing countries could share financial returns and governance rights according to their capital commitments and risk exposure. The mechanism could also create structured opportunities for contributing countries' companies through co-investment, industrial partnerships, and procurement opportunities. This would strengthen incentives to participate while supporting Ukraine's productive capacity and economic integration.

The instrument should be established without waiting for a ceasefire or EU accession, complementing existing EU financing while preparing the ground for a large-scale reconstruction effort. Waiting until reconstruction becomes an urgent necessity will make the politics harder and another improvised, lowest-common-denominator compromise more likely.[29]

5. **Make the accession financing settlement predictable and conditional**

The differentiated arrangements proposed above should form part of a coherent financial settlement negotiated alongside Ukraine's accession treaty. Rather than relying solely on fixed transitional periods, the EU and Ukraine should agree on objective conditions, review procedures and financing provisions governing the optional and gradual expansion of Ukraine's participation in EU policies.

This settlement should clarify how Ukraine would move from existing pre-accession support to the instruments available to Member States, ensuring continuity of funding and avoiding sudden pressures on the EU budget. The Commission's proposed MFF revision mechanism for enlargement provides an opportunity to design such a transition transparently.[30]

The aim should be a credible accession pathway tailored to Ukraine's development needs and the EU's strategic priorities, with clear benefits and obligations for Ukraine and greater predictability for existing Member States over the budgetary and economic consequences of accession. It should also help steer the MFF towards a more investment-oriented structure that better addresses the challenges Europe faces today.

CONCLUSION: A DIFFERENT EU BUDGET DEAL FOR A STRONGER UNION

Ukraine's accession should not be reduced to a question of how much additional spending existing EU policies can accommodate. Nor should the objective simply be to minimise financial transfers to Ukraine. The central challenge is to design an integration model that responds to Ukraine's needs while strengthening the Union economically and strategically.

A differentiated settlement could limit the distributive pressures associated with CAP and cohesion policy, accelerate participation in programmes delivering European public goods and mobilise a broader coalition for Ukraine's reconstruction. Conditional arrangements would allow integration to proceed according to clear criteria rather than arbitrary deadlines.

Ukraine should not merely be fitted into the EU's existing budgetary architecture. Its accession should become an opportunity to make that architecture more effective, investment-oriented and focused on delivering European public goods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / DISCLAIMER

The author would like to thank Fabian Zuleeg for insightful discussions on Ukraine's integration into the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework, which helped shape many of the ideas presented in this paper.

The support the European Policy Centre receives for its ongoing operations, or specifically for its publications, does not constitute an endorsement of their contents, which reflect the views of the authors only. Supporters and partners cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

[1] Lausberg, Philipp, Taran, Svitlana, (2024), "Economic security: The strategic argument for Ukraine's EU membership", Brussels: European Policy Centre, 2 February 2024.

[2] European Commission (2026), "EU opens accession negotiations with Ukraine on internal market, competitiveness and inclusive growth", 13 October 2026.

[3] Ioannides, Isabelle, Centrone, Marco, Fernandes, Meenakshi (2026) "Paving the way to EU Enlargement", Brussels: European Parliament, May 2026, p.13.

[4] Albaladejo Román, Antonion (2024), "Ukrainian agriculture: From Russian invasion to EU integration", Brussels: European Parliament, April 2024.

[5] Akhvlediani, Tinatin (2026), *From Mines to Markets: Pathways for Ukraine's agricultural recovery*, Brussels: CEPS, June 2026.

[6] Agricultural reconstruction and recovery needs are estimated at over $55 billion over the next decade, based on damage and needs assessed through December 2025. See: World Bank Group (2026), "Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment Released", 23 February 2026.

[7] Research suggests that agricultural subsidies can negatively affect farm efficiency and slow structural adjustment, although their effects depend on the design of support. See: *OECD (2023), Policies for the Future of Farming and Food in the European Union.*, 9 October 2023, p. 21, 130–131 and 136.; Joseph Minviel, Jean, Latruffe, Laure (2016) "Effect of public subsidies on farm technical efficiency: a meta-analysis of empirical results", 12 July 2016.

[8] SWI swissinfo.ch (2025), *Ukraine's once pioneering agriculture drone industry is hoping to return to the skies*, 4 June 2025.

[9] Litvinov, Valentyn. *Eurointegration 2.0: The Ukrainian Dairy Sector*, p. 7.

[10] German-Ukrainian Agricultural Policy Dialogue (2025), Joint Position of Agricultural Associations on the EU Integration Process, 4 March 2026; Nivievskyi, Oleg (2024), "EU integration of Ukraine – assessing the challenges for agri-food public authorities".

[11] European Commission (2021), *Monitoring EU Agri-Food Trade: Developments in 2021*. December 2021; Feingold, Spencer (2022), "Ukraine's food exports by the numbers", 25 July 2022, Updated on 3 June 2025.

[12] Melike, Pala (2025), "EU urges Poland, Hungary, Slovakia to remove Ukrainian import bans", 31 October 2025.

[13] Taran, Svitlana (2025), "EU-Ukraine trade: From emergency measures to a renewed trade agreement", Brussels: European Policy Centre, 18 August 2025; European Union (2025), Document 22025D2130, 14 October 2025.

[14] Lausberg, P., Taran, S. (2024), Economic security.

[15] For example, Ukraine's recently concluded free trade agreement with the UAE provides preferential access that is not yet matched by an EU agreement. See: United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Trade (2025), "United Arab Emirates - Ukraine Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement", February 2025.

[16] For example, in 2024/25, Ukraine exported 69% of its wheat production, while the EU exported only 22%. See: Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy, 2024 export figures and the Commission's EU agri-food trade report for 2024. Ukraine should not have to adopt the entire agricultural acquis upon accession.

[17] European Commission (2026), *Preparing for a wider Union*, 6 October 2026, p.23.

[18] Darvas, Zsolt, Dabrowski, Marek, Grabbe, Heather, Léry Moffat, Luca, Sapir, André, Zachmann, Georg (2024), "Ukraine's path to European Union membership and its long-term implications", Brussels: Bruegel, 7 March 2024.

[19] Riekeles, Georg, Lausberg, Philipp (2025), "From mission polity to mission economy: Making the EU a strategic investment power", Brussels: European Policy Centre, 8 July 2025; OECD (2025), "Repurposing the EU budget for new challenges", Chapter 2 in OECD Economic Surveys: European Union and Euro Area 2025, Paris: OECD Publishing, 3 July 2025.

[20] Council of the European Union (2025), "Progress report on the National and Regional Partnership Plans", Document 16312/25, December 2025, para. 9.

[21] Government of Ukraine, World Bank, European Commission and United Nations (2026), Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA5), February 2026.

[22] These projects are often linked to so-called European Public Goods, see: Riekeles, Georg, Lausberg, Philipp (2025), "From mission polity to mission economy: Making the EU a strategic investment power", Brussels: European Policy Centre, 8 July 2025.

[23] These programmes also support the joint BraveTech EU initiative further promoting collaborative defence innovation, testing and the development of battlefield-proven technologies.

[24] Council of the European Union (2025), 2025/0555 (COD), Article 50.

[25] Council of the European Union (2025), 2025/0555 (COD), Article 11.

[26] European Commission (2025), "New EU-funded railway line brings Ukraine even closer to EU", 5 September.

[27] The success rate of Ukrainian applications under Horizon was 13.4%, compared with an average of 18.9% across participating countries. See: Horizon Europe Office in Ukraine (2025), Deliverable 4.1, 28 July 2025.

[28] European Union (2012), "Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Republic of Croatia", Annex V, Section 5, Part II (Establishments – meat, milk, fish and animal by-products), paragraphs 1–5, Official Journal of the European Union, L 112, 24 April 2012, pp. 72–74.

[29] Zuleeg, Fabian (2026), "Rebuilding Ukraine without breaking Europe", The Brussels Times, 2 September 2026.

[30] European Union (2025), Document 52025PC0571, 16 July 2025.

With the strategic support of



King Baudouin Foundation

Working together for a better society