Sahaidachnyi Security Center

EMBASSY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
IN UKRAINE

Anchoring Ukraine in Europe's Future:

Priorities for the 2027–2028 Trio Presidency

Policy Paper

2025

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Introduction

In 2027, a new Trio Presidency will take over the leadership of the Council of the European Union. The upcoming Trio of Ireland, Lithuania, and Greece will build on the implementation results of an agenda shaped by the current Poland–Denmark–Cyprus Trio, whose 18-month programme focuses on three major priorities: a strong and secure Europe, a prosperous and competitive Europe, and a free and democratic Europe.

On Ukraine, the outgoing Trio has committed to maintaining political, economic, military, energy, financial, and humanitarian support for as long as necessary, linking this to the broader objectives of peace, security, stability, good governance, and prosperity across the Eastern neighbourhood. Their programme places emphasis on coordinating long-term financial support for strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities, resilience, and reconstruction, as well as continuing humanitarian assistance. Sanctions remain central, with efforts directed at closing loopholes and combating circumvention.

The current Trio framework frames Ukraine within the context of EU enlargement. Ukraine has already made substantial efforts to reintegrate into the European family, aiming for full membership by 2030. While EU enlargement is ultimately a political decision, Ukraine's sustained commitment demonstrates its readiness and determination. Even if the next Trio Presidency may not coincide with Ukraine's accession, it can play a pivotal role in bringing Ukraine closer to its rightful place in Europe. This policy brief, designed to help the upcoming Trio sharpen its focus on Ukraine, is the product of collaboration among leading Ukrainian think tanks and experts dedicated to the country's development.

Given an ongoing geopolitical storm caused by the global multipolarization, as well as an evident Ukraine's transformation from a security consumer into a security provider for Europe, it is critical to look ahead and begin shaping the next programme for 2027–2028 under Ireland, Lithuania, and Greece. This upcoming Trio has an opportunity to reinforce the gains of its predecessor, and further anchor Ukraine's integration into Europe's political, economic, and security architecture.

Driving Economic and Financial Stability

The financing needs of Ukraine will remain high for many next years regardless of when the ceasefire will be in place. The formula for Ukraine's economic resilience is an active government stipulating a liberal regulatory framework, adaptive business, and committed international partners.

At the same time, the future development of Ukraine's economy will depend on the security guarantees provided by the EU and other countries. The trio should keep long-term security guarantees for Ukraine, including sustained military assistance and a clear Euro-Atlantic perspective, high on the Council agenda, recognising that durable security is a precondition for any lasting macroeconomic stability.

▶ Macroeconomic Stability and Resilience

To help ensure macroeconomic stability the Trio should lead a comprehensive, well-financed, and forward-looking EU approach to Ukraine's resilience, recovery, and accession by mobilising adequate funding (including Russian assets), strengthening implementation capacity, enabling private-sector investment, and ensuring that reconstruction aligns with EU standards and long-term strategic objectives.

- **Increase budgetary support is essential to sustain Ukraine's resilience and state capacity**, particularly given that the Ukraine Reserve is designed exclusively as a resilience-focused instrument. The currently envisaged EUR 100 billion within the MFF falls significantly short of Ukraine's actual financing needs. Resources for recovery, EU accession preparations, and military assistance should therefore be mobilised through additional dedicated instruments, including the use of proceeds generated from immobilised Russian assets.

- **Establish a specialised expert platform, BRIDGE – EU–Ukraine Network, to ensure Ukraine adopts effective, evidence-based solutions during the EU accession process**. Ukraine is firmly committed to EU membership, which requires extensive alignment of national legislation with the EU acquis. While significant adaptation is necessary, many policy areas still allow room for national regulatory approaches. To make informed choices, Ukraine needs systematic access to best practices and regulatory experience from EU member states. A dedicated

platform BRIDGE (Building Regulatory Implementation and Dialogue for Governance and Enlargement) bringing together experts across all negotiation chapters would enable structured technical advice to the Government of Ukraine and civil society and support high-quality implementation of reforms. The Trio could assume thematic leadership within the network:

- **Lithuania** – rapid EU integration, public administration reform, acquis implementation.

- **Ireland** – financial regulation, taxation, digital transformation.

- **Greece** – infrastructure development, tourism, maritime governance.

- **Place pre-accession financing for Ukraine high on the Council agenda and advocate for a dedicated financing instrument within the current Multiannual Financial Framework**. EU integration is not solely about adopting legislation; it fundamentally depends on effective implementation. Implementation, however, is resource-intensive, and Ukraine currently lacks sufficient fiscal space to finance these reforms at the necessary scale. This includes advocating for a request to the European Commission to design a dedicated pre-accession financing instrument for Ukraine within the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and future cohesion-type instruments. A particular emphasis should be placed on funding to strengthen public administration, regulatory implementation capacity, and the institutions responsible for acquis alignment.

- **Advance the Transfer of Frozen Russian Assets for Ukraine's Recovery and Security**. The Trio Presidency should lead efforts to develop a legally robust and politically viable framework for the use of immobilized Russian state assets. This involves not only advocating for the allocation of windfall profits from frozen reserves, but also seeking interinstitutional agreement on modalities for transferring principal assets for reconstruction, security assistance, and compensation for war damages. The Trio should position this as a strategic imperative tied to accountability, deterrence, and the long-term stabilization of Europe.

- **Champion the development of a coordinated EU framework for war-risk insurance**, incorporating several key components:

- **Capital reinforcement for Ukraine's Export Credit Agency (ECA)** to expand its capacity to support domestic investment and exports.

- **An EU-level reinsurance backstop** enabling member state ECAs — including those of Lithuania, Ireland, and Greece — to systematically insure Ukraine-related risks. This mechanism should apply not only to EU companies but also to Ukrainian firms and EU–Ukraine joint ventures.

Ukrainian businesses continue to invest in relocation, modernisation, and energy independence projects, yet they operate with minimal access to war-risk insurance. Conversely, EU companies often have access to such instruments but remain reluctant to invest due to the elevated risk environment. A comprehensive EU-wide approach to war-risk insurance would unlock significantly more private-sector investment — essential given that the bulk of Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction financing will need to come from private capital rather than official sources.

- **Advocate for a targeted use of EU programmes (ESF+, Erasmus+, TSI) to support VET partnerships and twinning between Ukrainian and EU institutions**. Ukraine faces a significant labour-market skills mismatch. VET institutions require modern equipment, updated adult-learning programmes, and enhanced capacity of qualification centres to recognise informally acquired skills.

- **Ensure that Council conclusions on Ukraine's recovery explicitly promote the "build back better" principle, including alignment with the EU Green Deal, circular-economy approaches, and energy-efficiency standards**. EU funding instruments should prioritise projects advancing these objectives. New architectural and construction standards must be developed, alongside expanded capacity for processing construction waste to enable circular-economy practices.

▶ Infrastructure

Make infrastructure a security tool. Use Council work, CEF/Ukraine Facility funding, and the trio programme to speed up projects that keep Ukraine connected to the EU economy and grid, reduce war-time bottlenecks, and harden Europe's networks against disruption.

Energy transition & security

A deeper integration of Ukraine into the EU energy system is essential to strengthen its winter resilience, enhance regional security, and accelerate the transition toward a stable, interconnected, and sustainable European energy space.

Lithuania should drive system-level integration of Ukraine with the EU energy market and build winter resilience.

- Raise cross-border electricity capacity with Ukraine. Push TSOs to keep the monthly capacity review process and target higher commercial limits on the UA–EU borders, building on ENTSO-E's 2024–2025 steps and the RCC process.

- Use Baltic synchronization know-how for grid hardening in Ukraine. Following the Baltics' successful switch to the Continental European system (Feb 2025), convene a TSO task force (Litgrid, PSE, Ukrenergo, etc.) on frequency control, black-start, and transformer resilience.

- Backstop winter power with trade. Maintain and expand import/export corridors (e.g., PL, SK, RO, HU) and keep increasing export caps from Ukraine when system security allows (recently raised to 900 MW for UA/ Moldova to EU).

- Leverage Klaipėda LNG + GIPL for regional gas solidarity. Use Klaipėda's FSRU and the PL–LT GIPL to strengthen North–South gas flows, and pair that with EU use of Ukraine's large underground storage.

Transport & Connectivity

Robust transport and connectivity corridors are vital for sustaining Ukraine's economy, securing uninterrupted trade flows, and firmly anchoring the country within the EU's single market and wider European logistics system.

Lithuania should turn the Baltic–Poland–Ukraine axis into a reliable export/ import corridor. Within the trio, Lithuania leads the northern land corridor, Greece the Aegean/Sea2Sea route, and Ireland the digital layer.

- Rail Baltica for Ukraine's cargo (Lithuania lead). Table Council conclusions urging accelerated Poland–Lithuania cross-border capacity on Rail Baltica and early freight windows to move Ukrainian agri/metal exports to Baltic ports while the full line is completed.

- Solidarity Lanes 2.0 on roads (Lithuania/Poland). Keep the EU–Ukraine road transport deal in force and operational, and align enforcement (tachograph recognition, training).

- Paperless logistics by default (Lithuania/Ireland). Pilot eFTI data exchange on the LT–PL–UA corridor and help Ukraine align with the 2027 EU obligation for authorities to accept eFTI; mainstream eCMR on these flows.

- Pre-arrival security data (Lithuania/Ireland). Run joint workshops so Ukrainian operators meet ICS2 (Release 3) requirements for rail/road ENS filings on the Polish and Lithuanian frontiers.

- Aegean outlet via Sea2Sea (Greece lead). Fast-track the Bulgarian– Greek Sea2Sea rail and terminal upgrades and set up green-lane transit from the Danube/Constanța to Thessaloniki/Alexandroupolis (grain, metals, containers), including pre-clearance and synchronized border inspections.

▶ Digital Transformation & Cyber Resilience

A resilient, interoperable, and secure digital ecosystem is essential for safeguarding Ukraine's state functionality during war, accelerating its integration into the EU's digital single market, and strengthening Europe's collective cyber and technological security.

Lithuania should secure and extend Europe's digital space to and through Ukraine. Within the trio, Ireland leads digital transformation.

- Keep EU–Ukraine roaming and digital public services moving. Support prolonging free/affordable roaming beyond 2028 and expand cross-border e-services.

- eIDAS 2.0 & EUDI Wallet interoperability. Fast-track mutual recognition and pilots so Ukrainian credentials work across the EU (and vice versa), building on Diia.Signature/eIDAS compliance and ongoing EUDI pilots.

- Strategic backbone links. Back CEF Digital and Global Gateway projects that add redundant routes to/through Ukraine (e.g., the Black Sea subsea cable initiative) to reduce single-point failures.

- Corridor data & cyber. Stand up an eFTI/ICS2-aligned corridor data space and run annual cyber drills for rail and ports; publish KPIs (IE lead; LT/GR hosts).

Advancing Democracy through Good Governance and Rule of Law

Advancing democracy through good governance and the rule of law in Ukraine is not merely a formal requirement of EU integration—it is a profound demand of Ukrainian society, rooted in a value-based, human-centric social contract renewed through the hardships of war. In conditions of extreme pressure, Ukrainians have demonstrated an expectation for institutions that protect dignity, ensure fairness, and uphold accountability. Strengthening these principles is therefore not only about meeting European standards but about fulfilling the country's own moral commitments to its citizens and transforming wartime unity into a resilient, future-oriented model of democratic governance.

▶ Public Administration Reform

__Public administration reform__ must be treated as a strategic priority and mainstreamed across all chapters of accession negotiations, given that Ukraine has set a clear ambition to conclude EU accession negotiations by 2028.

- **Establish a dedicated support mechanism for civil servants responsible for EU acquis transposition**. The EU should work with the Ukrainian government to create a targeted financial instrument that provides enhanced remuneration and capacity-building for officials directly engaged in adapting EU legislation into national law. Drawing on the earlier model of reform-support specialists, such a scheme would help retain qualified staff, improve the quality of legislative alignment, and ensure that Ukraine has the institutional capacity necessary to manage the intensive workload of accession negotiations

- **Support deepening corporate-governance reform in the public sector, particularly in state-owned enterprises**. The EU should provide technical assistance and policy guidance to help Ukraine align SOE governance with EU and OECD standards—strengthening supervisory boards, oversight mechanisms, and transparency requirements. Wartime expansion of SOE mandates exposed structural weaknesses that now require systemic correction; EU expertise can accelerate the drafting or amendment of relevant laws and bylaws, ensuring high-impact reforms without unnecessary regulatory burden.

- **Assist Ukraine in completing administrative-territorial reform**. The EU should support a targeted review of territorial organisation, helping Ukraine eliminate anomalies, reinforce weaker hromadas, and finalise reforms stalled by hostilities. Guidance and capacity-building from the EU would strengthen local governance effectiveness and ensure territorial structures are resilient and aligned with post-war recovery needs.

- **Provide expertise and monitoring to help Ukraine establish clear legal status, mandates, and staffing rules for local and regional executive bodies**. As military administrations are phased out, the EU should offer support in drafting a coherent legal framework that standardises competencies, decision-making procedures, and staffing models across governance levels. This will help Ukraine avoid functional overlap, strengthen administrative predictability, and stabilise governance in war-affected territories.

- **Support reforms to ensure transparent, merit-based recruitment and depoliticised management within the civil service**. The EU should maintain close legislative monitoring and provide targeted technical assistance to ensure that civil-service reform complies with EU principles of integrity and professionalism, including:

- Resumption of competitive recruitment: A prolonged pause in open competitions for civil service positions has weakened the system. The EU should closely monitor the adoption of the draft law on reinstating competitive recruitment processes, ensuring transparent and merit-based hiring across all state bodies—except in areas affected by hostilities.

- Depoliticizing the Selection Process: To ensure independence, impartiality, and professionalism in decision-making, the Senior Civil Service Commission—as well as other competitive and disciplinary commissions—must be reformed.

- **Transform the civil service remuneration system to ensure fair, transparent, and competitive compensation that attracts and retains qualified professionals, strengthens integrity, and aligns Ukraine's public administration with EU principles of efficiency and accountability**. Further changes are needed so that remuneration is based on the level of responsibility and complexity of the role - not merely on jurisdictional level or institutional affiliation.

- Support a balanced recalibration of regulatory and integrity requirements for public servants.

The EU should help Ukraine strike an EU-aligned balance between strong anti-corruption safeguards and the need to maintain an attractive professional environment by advising on:

a) **Asset declarations**: The EU can support development of a risk-based transparency framework that limits full public disclosure to high-risk positions while preserving anti-corruption control

b) **Politically exposed persons (PEPs)**: EU guidance should help Ukraine align lifetime PEP designation with Directive 2015/849, ensuring proportionality and reducing unnecessary barriers for professionals entering or remaining in public service.

- **Guide and support Ukraine in implementing screening recommendations under Chapter 22 (Public Administration)**. The EU should provide hands-on technical assistance, monitoring, and sequencing advice to accelerate alignment with EU administrative standards. Effective implementation will demonstrate institutional readiness, strengthen public-administration capacity, and embed EU-compliant procedures across central and local government.

▶ Rule of Law

The rule of law must be treated as a strategic pillar of Ukraine's transformation and embedded across all chapters of EU accession negotiations, as strengthening judicial independence, accountability, and legal certainty is essential for economic recovery, democratic resilience, and public trust. Safeguarding democratic checks and independent institutions now will ensure that Ukraine emerges from this war not only undefeated militarily but also stronger as a democracy that Ukraine's citizens have fought for since 2014.

Three out of four Ukrainians support stronger EU engagement on reforms, viewing it as a partnership and not an interference. Therefore the Trio should prioritize supporting the following actions in the rule of law domain:

- **Support the independence and protection of Ukraine's anti-corruption institutions (NABU, SAPO, HACC)**.

  The Trio should prioritise reinforcing the autonomy, security, and operational capacity of these bodies, ensuring they can function free from political pressure and fully aligned with EU standards.

- **Ensure decisive participation of independent international experts in all critical selections for rule-of-law institutions**.

  The EU should insist on—and actively participate in—transparent, merit-based selection procedures for leadership positions in judicial and anti-corruption bodies, safeguarding professionalism and independence during this decisive reform period.

- **Support effective judicial renewal, including transparent vetting and selection of Supreme Court judges**.

    The EU should provide technical assistance, monitoring, and international participation in vetting commissions to ensure that judicial renewal strengthens integrity, restores trust, and brings judicial governance in line with European standards.

- **Assist Ukraine in launching a comprehensive overhaul of law enforcement institutions**.

    The EU should support reforms aimed at insulating law enforcement bodies—the State Bureau of Investigation, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the National Police—from political influence. This includes strengthening internal accountability mechanisms, ensuring legal clarity on mandates, and preventing the instrumentalisation of law enforcement against democratic reform.

Advancing Human Capital

Human capital is the backbone of a country's resilience, recovery, and development, encompassing the strength of its education system, scientific capacity, cultural vitality, media landscape, and the skills of its workforce. Deepening interpersonal and inter-institutional cooperation will enrich both Ukraine and the EU through shared knowledge, expanded networks, and the strengthening of a common democratic and innovative space.

▶ Education Reform

Reforming the education system is essential to Ukraine's long-term resilience and development, as it equips citizens with the skills, values, and competencies needed to rebuild the country and integrate fully into the European community.

- **High-quality implementation of the New Ukrainian School reform from 2027 onwards**. Ensure coherence of changes across primary, basic secondary and upper secondary education through the revision of curricula and methodological materials, systematic teacher professional development, modernization of assessment and quality assurance, development of inclusive and competence-based learning environments, and adequate material, technical and digital provision for schools.

- **Implementation of the upper secondary profiled school**. Support the phased introduction of profiled upper secondary education through updated curricula, the development of inter-school learning centres, strengthened human resource capacity, and the creation of a modern material and technical base required for profiled instruction.

- **Implementation of the new Law on Vocational Education (2025)**. Provide technical assistance for the development and implementation of secondary legislation, new financing approaches, institutional autonomy and management monitoring. This may include training programmes for management teams on new procedures and responsibilities. Establish a regular "centre-regions" policy dialogue mechanism to adjust the reform trajectory.

- **Development of a strategic network of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).** Support CoVEs network in strengthening sector-specific priorities aligned with reconstruction needs, such as construction, energy, logistics, agro-processing, digital and green skills. Launch long-term institutional development programmes for

CoVEs and facilitate their participation in European network initiatives, including joint modules, staff exchanges, shared laboratories, and training-practice centres.

- **Development of adult learning**. Provide technical assistance for developing a national adult learning strategy aligned with the new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 (NEAAL 2030). Support the establishment or expansion of adult learning centres within communities, CoVEs and universities, targeting veterans, IDPs, returnees and vulnerable groups. Facilitate the introduction of EU financial instruments, including learning vouchers, municipal grants and short-course support schemes.

- **Scaling work-based learning models**. Support the standardisation of the regulatory framework for dual and other work-based learning models across vocational, professional pre-higher and higher education. Ensure the quality of work-based learning through the development of criteria and monitoring systems, professional development for teachers and in-company mentors, and support for joint workplace learning programmes between education providers and enterprises. Promote financial incentives for employers, including vouchers, mentorship compensation and tax benefits.

- **Digital transformation of education**. Provide technical assistance for developing digital learning infrastructure, including laboratories, simulators, LMS platforms, hybrid classrooms and secure digital systems. Support the implementation of modular programmes, microcredentials and micro-qualifications in blended formats, as well as joint Ukrainian-European online courses and retraining programmes.

- **Development of the qualifications system and recognition of skills**. Support further alignment of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework. Facilitate the expansion of qualification centres capable of assessing non-formal and informal learning outcomes and ensuring the quality of external independent assessment for VET graduates. Provide technical assistance for implementing e-portfolios, digital badges and Diia-based tools, ensuring their interoperability with European systems.

- **Regional balance and social inclusion**. Support infrastructure assistance for education institutions in frontline, de-occupied and rural communities. Promote integration of psychosocial support across all levels of education – pre-school, general secondary, vocational, professional pre-higher and higher education.

- **Establishment of an EU-Ukraine "Skills Compact"**. Create a unified coordination framework between the EU, the Government of Ukraine and donors to avoid duplication of efforts. Conduct joint policy reviews, pilot

innovative financing models and scale successful approaches. Provide technical assistance to develop a monitoring system with clear indicators of education's impact on employment and recovery.

- **Transformation of the education governance system at all levels**. Support the professionalisation of institutional management, including transforming the role of school and college leaders into managerial positions. Strengthen institutional autonomy alongside results-oriented monitoring mechanisms. Enhance the capacity of regional education departments to ensure effective implementation of reforms.

- **Reconstruction and modernisation of educational infrastructure**. Support the reconstruction of education institutions damaged or destroyed by the war. Ensure the establishment of shelters, improved energy efficiency and accessibility. Support the development of modern laboratory infrastructure for technical fields and provide technical assistance for expanding student and teacher housing in frontline regions.

- **Integration of Ukrainian universities into the European Research Area (ERA)**. Deepen Ukraine's participation in ERA and Horizon Europe by simplifying access after 2027, expanding partnership formats and increasing the number of research consortia involving Ukrainian universities. Support the creation of sustainable joint research laboratories in STEM, IT and green energy, and invest in strengthening research teams and young scientists. Promote the expansion of Ukrainian participation in European University Alliances and ensure the institutional, human and financial conditions for full integration.

- **Academic integrity and anti-corruption mechanisms**. Provide technical assistance for implementing automated academic integrity systems. Support the establishment of transparent admission and staffing standards. Facilitate the creation of an independent quality assurance body for vocational education, analogous to the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance.

- **Regional skills clusters**. Support the development of regional skills ecosystems by linking CoVEs, universities, businesses and communities. Promote skills clusters in key sectors such as energy, agro-processing, transport, defence and the green economy, with further integration into European production and innovation value chains.

- **Open and transparent education financing system**. Support the reform of education financing based on the "funding follows the learner" principle. Promote performance-based funding models. Invest in skills development in STEM and other shortage sectors. Ensure transparency of institutional budgeting and support the development of digital management tools.

▶ Academic and Scientific Cooperation

Academic and scientific cooperation is essential for rebuilding Ukraine's human capital, accelerating its integration into the European knowledge space, and generating the innovation and expertise needed for long-term national recovery.

- **Boost technological cooperation with Ukraine through academic and B2B framed R&D partnerships**, recognising the country as a significant source of military and dual-use innovation whose frontline-tested solutions can enhance Europe's defence capabilities, strengthen joint R&D ecosystems, and accelerate the development of next-generation security technologies.

- **Deepen structured cooperation between the EU's Academies of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine**, prioritising joint research in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and security-related technologies.

- **Develop multi-country research consortia with Ukrainian institutions under Horizon Europe and future EU frameworks**, ensuring Ukrainian participation in cross-border teams on conflict studies, hybrid threats, reconstruction, accountability for war crimes, and socio-economic transformation.

- **Establish bilateral and multilateral academic commissions involving Ukraine** to address contested historical narratives, counter disinformation, and provide evidence-based input for EU policy debates.

- **Expand EU university programmes modelled on the Invisible University for Ukraine and boost joint EU–Ukrainian academic programmes**, using Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and Jean Monnet Actions to build shared curricula, hybrid seminars, and research fellowships.

- **Create an EU–Ukraine Coordination Council on the History of the Russian–Ukrainian War** to harmonise research methodologies, ensure ethical standards, and align academic efforts across institutions.

- **Develop a multilingual EU-funded digital archive for wartime oral histories**, ensuring long-term preservation, public accessibility, and integration with major European cultural and educational infrastructures.

▶ Culture

***Culture** is a vital pillar of Ukraine–EU cooperation, strengthening mutual understanding, showcasing Ukraine's resilient and courageous identity within Europe, and countering the aggressor's attempts to erase it. At a time of growing global insecurity, supporting Ukraine's cultural sector is not ancillary but integral to national defence, and must be treated with the same strategic importance as military assistance.*

- **Sustain and expand EU investment in Ukrainian culture** beyond the more than €30 million allocated since February 2022, transforming emergency measures into a long-term cultural resilience programme that secures stable multi-year funding for preservation, recovery, and innovation across Ukraine's cultural and creative sectors.

- **Continue and strengthen Ukraine's participation in Creative Europe** as a core platform for cultural integration, maintaining dedicated calls such as the €7 million special programme "Support to Ukrainian displaced people and the Ukrainian Cultural and Creative Sectors," and widening access for Ukrainian cultural operators to co-production, exchange projects, and European cultural networks.

- **Ensure a permanent presence of Ukrainian cultural actors in cross-border European cultural forums and policy dialogues**, embedding Ukrainian institutions and creators in the EU's cultural ecosystem to support their work today and accelerate post-war cultural revival.

- **Maintain open and simplified access for Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations to EU-funded programmes**, including Culture Bridges, House of Europe, and EU4Culture, and align these programmes with Ukraine's broader reconstruction tools—such as the Ukraine Facility—to ensure culture is recognised as a pillar of sustainable recovery. Increase mobility opportunities for Ukrainian artists, educators, and students, expanding scholarships, joint projects, and mobility grants, building on the demonstrated success of House of Europe in fostering professional exchange and long-term partnerships.

- **Expand the use of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for safeguarding cultural heritage**, following Ukraine's historic activation of the mechanism for cultural-heritage protection, and encourage more Member States—alongside Italy, Germany, and Norway—to provide equipment, expertise, and emergency support for endangered cultural sites.

- **Strengthen and scale the Team Europe for Cultural Heritage** in Ukraine initiative, ensuring coordinated implementation of its 65 actions—ranging from training and scholarships to storage and preservation support—and reinforcing professional capacity for heritage protection under continued Russian missile and drone attacks.

- **Integrate Ukraine fully into the Culture Compass initiative**, recognising its value in shaping a strategic, coherent EU cultural policy, and use Ukrainian participation to enrich the European cultural space and reinforce culture as an instrument of security in the face of growing cognitive and hybrid threats.

▶ Civil Society

Strong civil society has been a pillar of Ukraine's statehood in the darkest times and major crises since independence, and its resilience offers valuable experience for the EU to explore and build upon.

- **Support civil society organizations** in Ukraine by expanding EU funding and training opportunities, especially in light of diminishing U.S. assistance, as it is essential for democratic institution-building and long-term societal resilience.

- **Support civil society in the defence sector** via a multi-donor trust fund. To complement these efforts, the Trio should support the idea of a multi-donor trust fund to support non-governmental actors in defense. Inspired by successful models like the UK's defense assistance program, this fund would address a critical structural gap where non-military defense reforms fall between traditional development aid and military assistance. It would directly support Ukraine's vibrant civil society, including think tanks, NGOs, charities and advocacy groups empowering them to provide crucial oversight, analysis and advocacy in the defense sector.

▶ Media

A free, pluralistic, and resilient media sector is essential for Ukraine's democratic resilience, societal cohesion, and war-time accountability, ensuring that citizens have access to reliable information and that public institutions remain transparent and answerable throughout the country's transformation and EU accession process.

The Trio should prioritize the following activities:

- **Support full European media freedom act (EMFA) implementation** by Ukraine and operational cooperation with the Media Board/the European Commission during the transition period to ensure genuine, not merely formal, compliance.

- **Support the establishment of a dedicated Digital Services Coordinator for Ukraine**, including its Digital Services Unit (DSU), and help create transitional mechanisms that ensure the effective, practical implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and the EU Regulation on Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising (TTPA).

- Integrate into the EU audiovisual single market through **institutional strengthening of the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting**, its participation in the Media Board, and the development of robust supervision and co-regulation systems.

- **Advance joint EU–Ukraine action against disinformation and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)** to boost the EU's own resilience, e.g. to anti-Ukrainian narratives and embed Ukraine in European detection and response mechanisms. Support independent media — sustainable development of the public service media (Suspilne), regional media and independent media organisations as core pillars of democratic resilience.

Integrating Security and Defence Capabilities

As the war in Ukraine — the most significant armed conflict in Europe since World War II — continues to reshape the global security landscape, Ukraine's integration into the EU's security and defence architecture becomes a cornerstone of the European project. While the war has depleted Russia's demographic and economic potential, its aggressive military posture remains enhanced rather than exhausted. The nature of modern warfare is being fundamentally altered by new military technology, demanding a profound reframing of capability development, defence planning, and the industrial base. With the credible threat of full-scale war looming over other European nations by the end of this decade, defence cooperation is currently the most essential track for Ukraine's European integration. The 2024 EU–Ukraine Joint Security Commitments and the most recent €300 million package within the European Defense Industry Program eloquently recognize this fact.

- **Make integration into the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base a strategic priority**, shifting from ad-hoc assistance to a systemic partnership where Ukraine is an integral part of the EU's production ecosystem. The war has made Ukraine the keystone laboratory and factory of next-gen military technology for the democratic world. While ad-hoc assistance was vital in 2022-2025, a systemic shift is now required. The Presidency Trio should champion the practical implementation of the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), ensuring Ukraine's full participation in joint procurement and production initiatives equally with other allied stakeholders.

- Promote a "co-produce in, with, and for Ukraine" approach. The Trio should actively prioritize joint projects in the most critical defence capabilities, specifically artillery and ammunition, integrated air and missile defence, unmanned and counter-drone systems, electronic warfare, secure communications, battle management software, and military AI agents. Such industrial cooperation will tackle the EU's strategic objective of expanding its own defence base while simultaneously sustaining Ukraine's defence effort.

- Remove regulatory barriers and foster joint ventures. This includes eliminating barriers for Ukrainian manufacturers to access EU funding instruments and encouraging partnerships between Ukrainian and

EU defence companies. The effort is supported by the EU's first-ever European Defense Industry Program (EDIP), approved by November 2025, which has already allocated €300 million to support Ukraine's defense industry.

- **Operationalise the EU-Ukraine Security Commitments by transforming them from a political framework into concrete implementation mechanisms**. The Joint Security Commitments signed in June 2024 provide a framework for long-term cooperation, yet they require concrete instruments to function effectively. The Trio should ensure these commitments are treated as the backbone of security integration, not merely an annex to enlargement policy. Council conclusions, programming documents, and Presidency priorities must consistently reference them as the strategic framework for all security- and defence-related initiatives.

- Transition from crisis response to structured military support. The EU must secure sustainable multi-year funding for capability generation of Ukraine's Defence Forces via the European Peace Facility (EPF), NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), and bilateral government mechanisms of EU countries, which have proven most actionable thus far.

- Align defence planning processes. The Trio should advocate for the gradual alignment of Ukraine's defence planning processes with EU mechanisms (wherever possible given wartime limitations), such as the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and PESCO projects, treating Ukraine as a de facto strategic ally before formal accession.

- **Implement a "Security-as-a-Service" paradigm to close critical EU capability gaps through the systematic transfer of Ukrainian expertise**. The character of warfare has fundamentally changed, and Ukraine is the sole battle-hardened capability provider of the free world for this new paradigm. The Trio should spearhead an initiative to transition the EU-Ukraine partnership from a one-way assistance model to a mutually beneficial exchange, where Ukraine systematically transfers its unique expertise and security services to close the EU's most urgent capability gaps.

- Import Ukrainian capability blueprints as whole organic structures. This involves establishing a holistic framework for the rapid transfer of Ukrainian doctrine, SOPs, and combat-proven technologies in critical areas where Europe is most vulnerable: mass-scale drone and counter-drone warfare, unmanned/robotized combat ops, tactical-level EW, layered distributed low-cost air defence architectures, fortification and engineering, frontline contested logistics and MEDEVAC, and uncrewed

anti-surface warfare and sea denial. This provides the fastest and most cost-effective path to enhance deterrence by learning from a partner who has paid the ultimate price for these lessons.

- Offer specialized operational support. Beyond doctrine and training, the EU should explore a new partnership format where Ukraine acts as a specialized "Security-as-a-Service" provider. This would not duplicate NATO functions but rather offer highly specialized, agile operational support to counter specific threats emanating from Russia, providing immediate, battle-tested solutions ranging from advanced threat intelligence and EW countermeasures to specific unmanned system services.

- Evolve the EU-Ukraine Training Partnership from basic assistance to a reciprocal exchange of advanced combat knowledge. The EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM), while successful in its initial phase, must now evolve as radically as warfare itself. The dynamic has fundamentally shifted: Ukraine is no longer just a recipient of training but has become the world's primary source of esoteric, combat-proven knowledge on next-generation warfare. The Presidency Trio should use the mission's extended mandate (until November 2026) to move from emergency training "bursts" to structured, multi-year pipelines in key capability areas, moving beyond legacy infantry basics to a curriculum based on drone-centric combined-arms doctrine.

- Leverage Ukrainian veteran instructors. One of the key objectives is to leverage Ukrainian veteran instructors possessing unique understanding of modern combat to train European forces, particularly junior officers and NCOs, in the realities of the 21st-century battlefield.

- **Enhance resilience against sub-threshold and hybrid threats by integrating Ukrainian intelligence, cyber and counter-drone capabilities into EU frameworks**. Russia's hybrid warfare is the key effector it uses to hit EU nations far beyond the kinetic battlefield in Ukraine, targeting critical infrastructure and democratic institutions across Europe. Ukraine possesses unique, combat-proven, and evolving expertise in countering cyber (including cyber-physical) attacks, aggressive cognitive campaigns, and "unknown" small unmanned aerial systems that can be of great value to the EU.

- Formalise intelligence sharing and establish a Center of Excellence. Cooperation should be deepened by formalising intelligence sharing and establishing a permanent EU-Ukraine Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. This partnership may focus on joint exercises, rapid response teams for cyber incidents, and integrating Ukrainian threat intelligence into EU situational-awareness mechanisms.

- Protect critical infrastructure. Focus should be placed on the protection of critical transport, subsea, and energy infrastructure—areas of particular relevance to the maritime interests of the Trio nations—while systematically associating Ukraine with EU work on foreign information manipulation and civil-protection planning.

- **Integrate Ukraine into the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as a regular contributor**. As Ukraine progresses towards EU membership, its defence and security policy is achieving a high degree of convergence with the EU. To solidify this, the Trio should promote institutional mechanisms that allow Ukraine to participate in CSDP missions and operations as a regular contributor.

- Institutionalize Ukraine's role in EU bodies. Practical steps may include full operationalization of the existing Framework Participation Agreement, granting Ukraine regular partner status at the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC), and embedding Ukrainian liaison officers within key EU bodies like the EEAS and EU Military Staff. Furthermore, integration can be promoted through deeper cooperation with the European Defence Agency for capability development and creating a dedicated window within the European Peace Facility to co-finance the deployment of Ukrainian units in CSDP missions.

- Frame Ukraine as a security contributor. Leveraging the geographic and political profile of the Trio—connecting Atlantic, Baltic, and Mediterranean security theatres—provides a unique vantage point to frame and normalise Ukraine's participation. The Trio should articulate a narrative of Ukraine not only as a beneficiary of solidarity but as a future contributor to collective deterrence, crisis management, and resilience, ensuring the EU's strategic compass fully reflects the security realities on its eastern flank.

- **Lock in defence sector reforms through strategic financial instruments to ensure sustainable post-war governance**. As an essential part of the Ukrainian postwar recovery, the EU's financial instruments are to be strategically leveraged to secure deep and sustainable reforms in Ukraine's defence sector. The €50 billion Ukraine Facility, tied to reform milestones, and the use of windfall profits from immobilised Russian assets, create powerful incentives.

- Target reforms in defence governance. The Trio should champion the use of these funds to specifically advance reforms in defence governance—shrinking legacy post-Soviet command and control and human resources management practices, preserving procurement transparency, strengthening civilian and parliamentary oversight, and aligning defence planning with EU standards.

- **Scale up demining and environmental security efforts through a coordinated "Team Europe" approach**. The scale of land contamination in Ukraine poses a long-term threat to environmental health, regional food security, and economic recovery.

- Combine financial aid with technological expertise. In the postwar phase, the EU's engagement in humanitarian demining must be scaled up through a coordinated "Team Europe" approach, combining financial aid, equipment provision, and the deployment of experts. This effort should be linked to broader environmental security initiatives, leveraging the expertise of Ireland and Lithuania in specialized peacekeeping and engineering operations, as well as Ukraine's unique expertise in unmanned (robotized) combat demining, to assist Ukraine in clearing its controlled territories and restoring safe agricultural production.

Conclusions

The Trio Presidency will play a decisive role in shaping Ukraine's path toward EU membership, securing the credibility of enlargement, and aligning political, financial, and institutional instruments with Ukraine's long-term integration. Coordinated political messaging, harmonised negotiating priorities, and cross-institutional support can help anchor Ukraine within a broader strategic vision of a secure and resilient Union. Moving swiftly to close negotiation clusters opened in 2026 and identifying early bottlenecks will demonstrate tangible progress and reinforce trust in the accession process. At the same time, the Trio must safeguard predictable financial instruments for Ukraine within the next Multiannual Financial Framework, ring-fencing pre-accession assistance and ensuring it is not compromised by competing budget pressures.

Reconstruction should be elevated as a flagship priority, supported by transparent governance of the Ukraine Facility, deeper public-private partnerships, and stronger links between cohesion policy, green transition tools, and Ukraine's recovery needs. Human-centred principles must guide every stage of rebuilding, focusing on jobs, services, and opportunities that motivate Ukrainians to remain, return, and reintegrate—especially veterans. Decentralisation and public administration reform should remain the foundation of recovery, ensuring that communities lead in areas where local action is most effective. Civil society must be integrated at every phase of planning, implementation, and monitoring to ensure transparency, inclusion, and accountability, while active engagement of the business sector will be essential for mobilising the resources required for sustainable development.

A strong, modern, and interoperable Ukrainian defence sector is the EU's top priority, because every other area of support—from economic recovery to energy, digital, and governance reforms—ultimately depends on Ukraine's ability to fight and win this war, making sustained European investment in Ukraine's defence and deterrence an essential pillar of Europe's own security.

Finally, institutional reform within the EU is critical to prevent politically motivated blockages, particularly through advancing discussions on qualified majority voting in key areas. Modernising EU decision-making will be essential to accommodate new members—Ukraine among them—and to ensure that enlargement strengthens, rather than strains, the Union's capacity to act.

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