



Oxford Human Rights Hub
A global perspective on human rights



RE: BUILDING UKRAINE FOR ALL:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UKRAINE RECOVERY CONFERENCE 2025



September 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
What is Inclusive Recovery?.....	6
Context and Challenges.....	7
Environment and climate	7
Energy sector and just transition	8
Regional disparities	9
Labour market	10
Demographic situation	10
Internal migration	11
External migration	11
Mobilisation	12
Inclusion of veterans	12
Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024: Retrospective View.....	13
Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025: Prospective View.....	15

THE POLICY BRIEF HAS BEEN PREPARED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT
 “RE: BUILDING UKRAINE FOR ALL: INCLUSIVE RECOVERY, RESILIENT UKRAINE”, FUNDED BY THE
 OXFORD POLICY ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (OPEN)

To cite this Policy Brief: Baetens, F., Kopytsia, I., Dvornichenko, D. (2024). RE: BUILDING UKRAINE FOR ALL: Recommendations for Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025. University of Oxford.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UKRAINE RECOVERY CONFERENCE 2025

Strategic Priorities

Tri-Force Roadmap

Ukraine's security, EU partnership track, and recovery efforts must be integrated into a unified plan as these elements are deeply interconnected. The scale of damage and required funding for recovery are tied to Ukraine's defence capabilities, so recovery discussions should align with clear strategies for ensuring physical security. The EU accession process can serve as a guiding framework, offering benchmarks and best practices, but these need to be tailored to Ukraine's unique post-conflict circumstances. The goal is a recovery roadmap that aligns Ukraine closer to the EU, backed by concrete security guarantees.

Dual-Track Planning

It is critical to design short-term and long-term recovery plans. Recovery perceptions vary across Ukrainian society, influenced by geography, proximity to conflict, and generational differences. Frontline areas prioritise safety and basic needs, while other regions focus on economic development. International stakeholders often emphasise longer-term macro-level recovery, while Ukrainians seek immediate improvements like infrastructure and jobs. Dual-track planning is essential to address these varied needs, balancing short-term and long-term strategies that reflect and address the actual situation on the ground. This will enable all parties to plan funding and interventions accordingly, avoiding the creation of unrealistic expectations.

Progress Pulse

Recovery plans must reflect the current security and political landscape to be realistic and actionable. Regular assessments of human capital and affected communities are critical for informed planning. Local stakeholders should be engaged to understand political dynamics, and flexible strategies must adapt to changing circumstances. Transparent progress tracking, leadership stability in key agencies, and prioritising immediate security concerns while planning long-term stability are vital to sustained recovery efforts.

Reconsidering Recovery Funding

A clear distinction between short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans is crucial for effective recovery. Current efforts, like the Ukraine Facility, focus on institutional support, but a shift toward a 'people-first' strategy is needed. Direct support for citizens and civil society will lead to a more resilient recovery. This requires reassessing funding mechanisms to ensure resources reach local communities, with transparent, accountable systems for fund allocation and impact measurement.

Investing in Energy Transition

Energy transition is central to Ukraine's recovery. The next Ukraine Recovery Conference should prioritise attracting domestic and international investors by streamlining regulatory processes, offering incentives, and showcasing investment-ready projects. Workshops on green financing, capacity-building, and risk mitigation, along with investor dialogues, will help create a stable investment climate. The conference should conclude with a clear long-term energy transition roadmap, signalling Ukraine's commitment to a sustainable future.

Elevating Gender, Education, and Health

Gender equality, education, and mental health deserve dedicated attention at URC 2025 through side events. These issues, often overshadowed by infrastructure needs, are crucial to long-term social resilience. Focused sessions can generate actionable recommendations that should be highlighted in the main conference agenda, emphasising their foundational role in Ukraine's inclusive recovery.

Organisational Imperatives

Recovery Ecosystem Platform

A comprehensive, digitally-based platform needs to be established well in advance of URC 2025, catalysing pre-conference engagement, fostering knowledge exchange and comprehensive sharing of experiences, success stories, and lessons learned from challenges faced. The establishment of this platform will ensure inclusive participation enabling wide engagement from stakeholders across Ukraine and internationally.

Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Board

To enhance the inclusive planning and execution of URC 2025, the organisers should establish a diverse and representative Advisory Board comprising academic experts, civil society organizations, NGOs, representatives of vulnerable populations, the business community, local government officials, and international partners. The Advisory Board will provide strategic guidance and validate conference themes and agendas, thereby enhancing the credibility and relevance of URC 2025.

Cross-Sector Synergy Hub

Fostering cross-sectoral interactions is crucial. The conference should create a platform that facilitates knowledge sharing, experience exchange, and extensive networking among participants from the government, civil society, and business sectors. This approach centralises collaboration and ensures diverse perspectives are integrated.

Public Engagement Strategy

To increase awareness and participation among Ukrainian citizens, URC organisers should establish a multi-channel communication campaign using social media, local news outlets, and community networks; organise pre-conference forums for public input; develop a youth delegate programme; and establish a public-facing platform for tracking the implementation of URC decisions.

Learning from Italy's Experience

Italy's post-WWII recovery offers valuable lessons for Ukraine. With a focus on infrastructure, human capital, and regional cooperation, Italy achieved economic resurgence. URC 2025 should draw from this experience, emphasising not only immediate recovery but long-term economic integration with Europe to position Ukraine for future growth.



What is inclusive recovery?

Inclusive recovery is a comprehensive approach to post-war reconstruction and development that aims to address the needs of all segments of society, particularly vulnerable populations. The United Nation reports that close to 40% of Ukraine's total population — over 14 million individuals — are classified as “vulnerable”.

In Ukraine's context, it is crucial to acknowledge two key facts: (1) reconstruction is taking place now, even as the war continues; (2) the entire population has been profoundly impacted by the war, rendering all citizens vulnerable to varying degrees. The effects of the war will likely span generations, influencing Ukraine's social, economic, and cultural fabric for decades to come. Inclusive recovery strategies must account for this ongoing process, addressing immediate needs while laying the groundwork for the well-being of future generations.

Thus, inclusive recovery for Ukraine can be defined as a comprehensive approach to reconstruction and development that balances immediate reconstruction needs with long-term sustainability goals, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across all regions and demographics. This approach integrates environmental sustainability, economic inclusivity, gender responsiveness, and social equity into all aspects of recovery, while promoting participatory decision-making to create a more resilient and sustainable Ukraine for current and future generations.

Why is inclusiveness important?



People-Powered Reconstruction:

Puts Ukrainians at the heart of decision-making for truly responsive rebuilding



Resilience Through Representation:

Improves decision-making processes through participatory approaches, ensuring recovery efforts are responsive to actual community needs



Future-Proofing Ukraine:

Balances immediate reconstruction needs with long-term sustainability goals, leading to more robust and enduring solutions



Equity in Action:

Promotes social equity by ensuring all segments of society benefit from reconstruction efforts, building a more equitable post-war Ukraine



Gender Equality as a Cornerstone:

Addresses gender-specific challenges, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across all recovery efforts



Economic Renaissance for All:

Supports sustainable economic growth by ensuring economic opportunities are accessible to all, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across all regions



Green Recovery and Just Transition:

Prioritizes environmental sustainability, ensures climate justice and an equitable transition, promoting a greener future for Ukraine aligned with global climate objectives and energy transition goals, while creating new, sustainable economic opportunities across all sectors of society



Bridging the Divide:

Addresses regional disparities exacerbated by the war, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and development across all regions



Trust, Investment, and Transformation Catalyst:

Attracts global investment by building confidence in Ukraine's institutions, reinforcing the rule of law, and driving societal and state transformation towards a modern, equitable European nation



Fast-Track to Europe:

Facilitates European integration by aligning recovery efforts with EU policies and standards

Context and Challenges

The damage caused by war has been devastating. Ukraine's GDP plummeted by 29.1% in 2022, while the inflation rate soared to 25%. Even though in 2023, economic growth exceeded expectations, reaching 5.7% of the annual real GDP growth rate, the pre-war level can be reached [only in 2030](#), in the most optimistic scenarios.

Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine has lost 7.5% of its productive capacity, with direct documented damage to infrastructure totalling [\\$155 billion](#). Over 160,000 agricultural machines and 16,000 public transport units have been impacted. 3,800 educational institutions, 580 government buildings, 426 hospitals, 348 religious institutions, 48 social centres, 31 boarding schools, and 31 shopping centres, have been damaged, destroyed, or seized.

According to the estimations by the World Bank and the United Nations, total reconstruction costs have already reached [\\$486 billion](#). Heavy investment will be needed in the steel and energy sectors among others to regain pre-war capacity.

Environment and Climate

The ongoing war in Ukraine has resulted in unprecedented environmental damage, affecting multiple ecosystems and habitats across the country. [30% of](#) ecologically important areas and nature reserves have been destroyed and one-third of Ukraine's land is contaminated with landmines. Physical and acoustic disruption is affecting marine ecosystems and wildlife. The unprecedented military [occupation of nuclear power plants](#), such as the Zaporizhzhia facility, has introduced new and complex environmental risks. The devastating environmental impact of the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam in June 2023—the worst environmental disaster in Ukraine since Chernobyl—affected 620 square kilometres of territory, impacted 100,000 residents and is estimated to exceed \$5 billion in losses and reconstruction needs. Overall, the war-fighting has inflicted an estimated [\\$56.4 billion](#) in environmental damage.

The war has weakened environmental governance structures, leading to reduced funding and capacity of environmental ministries and agencies; potential implementation of environmentally damaging policies due to lack of oversight; and challenges in enforcing environmental regulations during reconstruction. The climate impact of the war in Ukraine has been officially recognized by [environmental experts](#), [international organisations](#), and multiple authoritative bodies, including the [EU parliament](#).

Total emissions linked to Russia's war are estimated to have already amounted to [175 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent](#) (more than the annual GHG emissions from a highly industrialized country like Belgium), inflicting [\\$32 billion](#) in global climate damage. Meanwhile, one of the largest sources of emissions for Ukraine will be the carbon cost of [post-war reconstruction](#).

Meanwhile, with net zero as a part of EU partnership obligations and aspiration to rebuild with low-carbon technologies, climate adaptation measures are often overlooked, which displaces critical questions of equity and justice. While there is significant [potential to address climate priorities alongside recovery and reconstruction efforts](#), maintain macroeconomic stability, and ensure social protection and equity, climate adaptation is not yet adequately prioritized due to the immediate need for critical survival and infrastructure restoration.

There is a crucial need for robust environmental and health data collection to assess and address long-term impacts, particularly for vulnerable populations facing increased environmental health risks. As a result, URC 2025 will have to conduct a delicate balancing act between addressing urgent reconstruction needs and maintaining long-term environmental sustainability.

Energy Sector, Net Zero and Just Transition

The impact of the ongoing Russian aggression on Ukraine's energy sector has been severe. By mid-2023, the country had lost [43% of its nuclear, 68% of its coal-fired, and 33% of its combined heat and power generation capacity](#). Targeted strikes on the energy infrastructure in the spring of 2024 damaged 85 % of thermal power plants and 50 % of hydroelectric power plants, resulting in the loss of [approximately 9.2 GW of generation capacity](#), and creating a substantial deficit in the power system leading to cuts in electricity, heating, and water supply for two million people. The power grid, primarily reliant on inflexible nuclear plants and limited renewable sources, struggles to respond effectively to fluctuating demand. [Heavily subsidised energy prices](#) and fixed-rate tariffs further compound the problem by failing to incentivise consumers to adjust their energy usage patterns.

Ukraine faces the challenge of balancing urgent reconstruction needs with long-term sustainability and net zero goals. The share of renewable energy equipment in total energy imports dropped significantly [from 38% in 2021 to just 15% in 2023](#), as diesel generators were prioritized for their reliability during wartime power outages. While this shift was necessary for immediate energy security, it has caused solar PV and wind projects to lag due to infrastructural challenges.

Meanwhile, attracting investor confidence in renewable energy projects remains difficult due to ongoing conflict and the [lack of sufficient war-risk insurance](#) as well as [legal and regulatory uncertainties](#).

Additionally, prospective energy investments in Ukraine are highly likely to be unevenly distributed across regions, with areas close to conflict zones being particularly affected and further deterring investors from committing resources to high-risk areas. This situation raises critical questions about ensuring equitable post-war development, particularly in war-affected areas while operating under severe resource constraints and security concerns.

Ukraine has [high renewable energy potential](#), the development of which should be a high priority during accession negotiations, together with implementing energy efficiency legislation to reduce costs for private consumers. The implementation of the EU Energy Acquis was already underway before it was announced that EU membership negotiations would open, but the implementation of the EU Climate Acquis has been lagging. To achieve climate mitigation goals in line with the Paris Agreement and mass calls for a [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), Ukraine should strive to lead the phase out of fossil fuels, including gas.

Meanwhile, energy transition in Ukraine will not be just unless there is a focus on empowering communities as energy consumers through decentralised energy systems based on renewables. This must be supported by comprehensive regional policy frameworks and supplemented with cost-reflective energy pricing, along with social support measures as highlighted by Ukrainian civil society. Additionally, investments in the innovation of Ukrainian energy infrastructure should be ensured.

Both investors and local communities need to know the impact of energy transition investments, which requires open access research on cost-benefit assessments of international standards rather than the older and less comprehensive Ukrainian regulations and pilot studies ahead of scaling implementation. There are already many cases of vulnerable communities in Ukraine that can be used as successful investment case studies of implementing renewable energy solutions to meet the energy demands of critical infrastructure such as hospitals and water pumps.

As Ukraine needs to address the emissions impact of reconstruction, adopting circular economy principles and low-carbon building techniques to minimise the carbon footprint of rebuilding efforts is of high importance. The path forwards demands a delicate balance between rapid reconstruction while regaining energy independence, pursuing sustainable development and 'just transition' across all sectors and regions.

Regional Disparities

Eastern and partially southern regions experiencing the bulk of destruction and emigration as well as facing higher transportation costs to the European market are at risk of becoming ensnared in a poverty trap. The war has dramatically changed the position of this region with regard to the industries in which it has historically specialised (pre-war dominance of iron and steel, metal products and mechanical engineering in the East; agriculture and transport in the South). Infrastructure (water supply, waste management, electricity and gas distribution/supply) have also [declined strongly](#).

The Ukrainian economy faces a high risk that wartime damage will lead to a deep and long-lasting division between the Eastern and Southern regions, on the one hand, and the rest of the country, on the other. The war caused a massive exodus of people, businesses and funds from front-line communities bordering Russia and Belarus to safer areas. This internal relocation increased income inequality between regions. Attempts to mitigate these disparities through government subsidies have not been very successful, with some communities with higher incomes sometimes receiving substantial subsidies, while communities with budget deficits have been less fortunate.

Labour Market

After the start of the full-scale invasion the unemployment rate in Ukraine increased dramatically and reached almost 29% in 2nd quarter of 2022. According to Info Sapiens research, in January 2024 the unemployment rate decreased to 17% although is still quite high compared to the [9.8%](#) reported in 2021. Among the total number of registered unemployed persons, men make up just a quarter, while [75%](#) of the unemployed are women.

Even though the unemployment rate is comparatively high, there are major disproportions between demand and supply on the labour market: according to a [study](#) of the Ukrainian labour market conducted by the European Business Association in February-April 2024, 74% of companies are experiencing a staff shortage to some extent. A similar research study showed this number stood at [55%](#) in autumn 2023.

Labour force demand and supply is distributed unequally among different regions, sectors and professions. Business activity and, accordingly, the number of vacancies is concentrated in certain regions, with Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, and Odesa being the main centers of activity during the war. However, the cost of rent varies significantly across different regions of Ukraine, creating an imbalance when compared to the average salaries in those regions. The western and central regions, as well as Kyiv which have become a heaven for most job seekers are hardly considered a place for long-term stay due to the high cost of living.

Demographic Situation

Military aggression exacerbated the trends of increased mortality and falling birth rates, which has led to a rapid reduction of the country's population. The birth rate in Ukraine even before Russia's invasion in February 2022 was the lowest in Europe and over the past ten years, it has further decreased by [40%](#). As of March 2024, the birth rate, which was 1.2 in 2021, decreased to 1. In 2023, a decrease of 11% was recorded, compared to the same period in 2022, and by 33% compared to 2021. As a result, a demographic shift is taking place, increasing the percentage of elderly people and decreasing the percentage of children and youth. These changes can negatively affect the economic development and recovery of Ukraine.

Internal Migration

As of March 2024, [4.9 million people](#) are registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, [2.5 million](#) of them cannot return to their homes as their housing is either destroyed, or is located in the active hostilities zone or in the temporarily occupied territory. In 2022-2023 [2.5 million](#) IDPs received monthly payments from the Ukrainian government. Payments to IDPs are limited to 6 months. Every six months before March 2024, the government reviewed the decision to provide financial support to IDPs and automatically extended payments to everyone who got internally displaced and who could not return home (for instance, payments for IDPs from Kyiv region were cancelled after deoccupation of their hometowns).

However, in March 2024, the government decided that only specific categories of IDPs (persons with disabilities, low-income people, large families, and others) remain eligible to receive payments. The total number of IDPs who fall within these categories and whose application for payments was approved is 1.5 million people. For these categories of IDPs payments were automatically extended for another 6 months in September 2024. This new approach is intended to stimulate IDPs to find employment. However, it also risks stimulating citizens to leave the country and ask for temporary protection in Europe.

External Migration

According to the Centre for Economic Strategy [estimates](#), as of the end of January 2024, 4.9 million Ukrainians had fled abroad due to the Russian full-scale invasion (including Russia and Belarus, where about 1.3 million Ukrainians are staying). The vast majority of refugees are women ([close to 70% in most host countries](#)) and children. According to the European Statistics Service, as of January 2024, the largest shares of Ukrainian refugees live in Germany (30%) and Poland (22%). The integration of Ukrainians into their host countries seems to be driven by the rational needs of these countries' labour markets and by the urge to reduce the financial load on their social systems. The rationale for up-scaling or training that could benefit Ukraine's recovery upon the refugees' return, seems to be absent. Hence, possible solutions need to be discussed on how both rationales can be combined, and specifically how the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the host countries can be organised in a way that builds their capacities for later Ukraine's reconstruction.

Mobilisation

The updated [law on mobilisation](#) causes concern in Ukrainian society and might provoke negative trends in the economy. This law lowered the age of mobilisation (for men only) from 27 to 25 years old (with the maximum age of 60, which remained unchanged), and introduced new obligations for conscripted Ukrainians, a revised mobilisation process, and penalties for evaders, among other changes. With the adoption of these changes, the Ukrainian government risks strengthening the crisis in economic and financial spheres as some men who do not have an exemption, will try to avoid mobilisation. If they wish to work, they will have to do so unofficially. As a result, this category of workers will be employed in a shadow or “black” labour market without contributing to the state’s finances by paying taxes and without building up a pension.

Inclusion of Veterans

As of 25 July 2024, there are [1,300,000](#) veterans in Ukraine. The results of the Ukrainian Veterans Fund’ [survey](#) of the “Actual needs and vision of opportunities for career and professional growth of veterans” showed that the unemployment rate among Ukrainian veterans increased to 30.95%. This is more than 10% higher than the official unemployment rate in Ukraine. The study showed that veterans are trying to integrate into various fields of employment, including starting their own business (8.31%), or working in the civil service (7.45%), private service sector (5.44%), IT (4.3%), or non-governmental sector (4.3%).

However, veterans face a number of challenges when looking for work, including employer stereotypes and limited opportunities for retraining. In particular, an expert [survey](#) by the Razumkov Center conducted in the Fall of 2023 showed that 55% of employers are not ready to create special conditions for people with disabilities. The biggest obstacle to the employment of veterans is the lack of real incentives for employers in the current legislation of Ukraine to employ people with disabilities (46.5%) and the reluctance of employers to hire veterans due to the existing benefits for veterans in the field of employment, e.g. use of regular annual leave at a time convenient for them, as well as receiving additional leave with retention of wages for a period of 14 calendar days per year (41%).



UKRAINE RECOVERY CONFERENCE 2024: RETROSPECTIVE VIEW

The Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC 2024) held in Berlin in June 2024 brought together leaders from governments, international organisations, business and civil society. The focus was on [“the swift recovery and long-term reconstruction of Ukraine”](#), along business, human, local, and EU dimensions. The two-day URC 2024 resulted in 110 signed agreements between public and private stakeholders, amounting, together with other funding pledges, to over €16bn. The conference also sought to showcase Ukraine’s success stories, such as the ongoing restoration of Bucha, a city in the Kyiv region that was occupied and largely destroyed by Russian forces soon after the invasion began. The main components of Ukraine’s recovery stressed at URC 2024 include (1) private investments, (2) human capital, (3) local community-based initiatives, and (4) the implementation of EU-stipulated reforms.

Integrated cross-cutting issues, as outlined in [Ukraine’s Recovery Plan Blueprint presented at the Lugano Conference 2022](#), include macro-economic stability, resilience and security, infrastructure, housing, energy, climate protection, green recovery, healthcare, education, environment, and gender equality. While these issues were presented at the URC 2024, their articulation lacked clarity and proper prioritisation, it is crucial to recognise that these cross-cutting issues vary in importance at different stages of recovery. Some are critical for addressing urgent needs, while others align with long-term vision. The current approach of mixing immediate and long-term priorities has led to confusion and a lack of tangible outcomes. This has resulted in diminished attention to these issues compared to more immediately visible reconstruction efforts.

This situation underscores the critical need for a comprehensive map of priorities. As the adage goes, “when everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.” Without clear prioritisation that distinguishes between urgent needs and long-term goals, there is a risk of spreading resources too thin, potentially overlooking the most pressing needs of the Ukrainian population while failing to build towards a coherent long-term vision.

The role of private capital in the reconstruction process was especially emphasised through the organisation of the Recovery Forum Business Fair, which facilitated matchmaking between Ukrainian businesses and municipalities with potential private and public partners. Speaking at the conference, a representative of an International Finance Corporation said the ratio of private sector investment to official funding for Ukraine’s reconstruction should be seven-to-one. However, attracting private investment is challenging due to the ongoing war and associated risks.

Sustainable and inclusive recovery financed by private investments is difficult to achieve under the threat of continued attacks. As was acknowledged by many speakers, including US Special Representative for Ukraine Reconstruction Penny Pritzker, this will not be feasible without affordably priced political and war risk insurance, along with export credit guarantees backed by foreign governments.

URC 2024 aimed to mitigate the war damage and losses but there seemed to be a lack of understanding as to what should be prioritised in terms of Ukraine's recovery. During the previous URCs before 2022, the middle R stood for "reform" reflecting Ukraine's focus on a pro-European future. However, the war has drastically altered the situation on the ground, shifting the focus from long-term reforms to the more immediate goal of survival in the face of the ongoing war.

With constant strikes against the civilian infrastructure and over 50% of Ukraine's heating capacity being destroyed and the next winter on the horizon, securing people's immediate well-being seemed much more urgent and pertinent than talking about issues such as environmental safeguards, transition to the decarbonised economy or return of those who left Ukraine. Developing ambitious plans with a broad scope of action in various fields starting from clean energy to gender without ensuring the physical security of Ukraine seems unrealistic. This vision was amplified by representatives of the Ukrainian government who sent clear and understandable messages about Ukraine's needs "here and now": critical energy supply, weapons production, and air defence provision. The only question that remained unclear was whether Ukraine's partners recognised the urgency of situation.

Renewable energy was positioned as a cornerstone in Ukraine's recovery efforts. Alongside rebuilding infrastructure and ensuring energy security, transitioning to renewables was identified as one of the key focus areas at the URC 2024. However, its potential remains largely untapped. Smaller communities, especially rural ones, already have the opportunity to leverage existing solar power plants within their territories, but regulatory and technical constraints hinder this potential.

A comprehensive approach is needed to ensure that local solar energy generation can continue during centralised power outages, appropriate contractual relationships can be established between solar power plants and consumers, and fair pricing and consumption accounting methods are determined. Additionally, the economic, financial, and regulatory framework must be continually adapted to build investor confidence and make renewable projects bankable for investors.

The URC 2024 revealed a significant hurdle in the country's path to sustainable recovery: institutional instability and leadership gaps in key recovery agencies. This was starkly illustrated by the absence of crucial voices at the conference: the top management of Ukraine's State Agency for Restoration and Infrastructure Development had resigned just one day before the conference began. Representatives from the Ministry for Infrastructure were notably absent, including the new minister, who had not yet been appointed.

The URC 2024 largely escaped the attention of most Ukrainians, with many citizens remaining uninformed about its proceedings and implications. This knowledge gap is compounded by a sense of disconnection between high-level policy discussions and the immediate, everyday concerns of the population.



UKRAINE RECOVERY CONFERENCE 2025: PROSPECTIVE VIEW

The host country of the URC 2025, Italy, has already confirmed its intention to maintain the conference's structure within the four main thematic dimensions set out at the URC 2024 in Berlin: business, human, local and EU dimensions with an additional focus on sustainability. This paves the way for future URC editions to build on each other and to facilitate uninterrupted progress.

Tri-Force Roadmap

It is essential to merge Ukraine's security assurances, its EU partnership, and recovery efforts into a unified plan as these three elements are deeply interconnected. As the scale of the damage and the necessary funding for recovery are linked to Ukraine's defensive capabilities, a discussion around Ukraine's recovery should go hand in hand with a clear understanding of how the nation's physical security will be ensured. The EU accession process could serve as a guiding framework, providing valuable benchmarks and best practices for Ukraine's recovery. However, it is crucial to adapt these standards to Ukraine's unique circumstances, particularly considering the ongoing conflict and reconstruction needs. The goal should be to develop a roadmap of recovery which will bring Ukraine closer to the EU based on a concrete set of security guarantees.

Dual-Track Planning

Ukraine's recovery is perceived differently across various segments of society, shaped by geographic location, proximity to conflict areas, sectors, and generational differences. These varied perspectives can lead to uneven recovery efforts and potentially exacerbate existing inequalities. For instance, frontline areas prioritise immediate safety and basic needs, while rear areas focus on long-term economic development. Meanwhile, international perspectives often diverge from local priorities, with global stakeholders emphasising longer-term macro-level recovery efforts and adherence to international standards, whereas Ukrainian citizens are more concerned with immediate, tangible improvements—such as restored infrastructure, job opportunities, and access to essential services. Generational divides also play a role, with older generations favouring familiar pre-war structures, while younger generations advocate for innovative, future-focused solutions. Given these varied perceptions, dual-track planning becomes essential. To bridge these differences, it is critical to design both short-term and long-term recovery plans that explicitly reflect the current realities on the ground. Tailoring interventions to address the immediate concerns of those in conflict areas while also considering the

broader, long-term vision of Ukraine's recovery will allow all parties to plan funding and interventions more effectively. This approach can prevent unrealistic expectations, ensure more inclusive recovery strategies, and create a balance between urgent needs and aspirations for a reimagined future.

Progress Pulse

Recovery plans must be realistic, taking into account the complex interplay of security, political, and economic factors. This approach ensures that proposed interventions are feasible and responsive to the actual conditions faced by communities. It is crucial to establish a transparent progress tracking system for recovery; conduct regular needs assessments of various categories of human capital and affected communities to inform planning processes; to engage local stakeholders to understand the nuanced political landscape; to incorporate economic data and projections to ensure financial viability; to develop flexible strategies that can adapt to changing circumstances. To ensure continuity and effectiveness in recovery efforts, URC 2025 must secure participation from all key recovery agencies, including the State Agency for Restoration and Infrastructure Development and the Ministry for Infrastructure, even if through acting officials or senior staff. The agenda should include sessions on managing leadership transitions and their impact on recovery initiatives.

Reconsidering How Recovery is Funded

A clear distinction between immediate needs, medium-term plans, and long-term vision is equally essential. It will enable all parties to plan funding and interventions accordingly, avoiding the creation of unrealistic expectations. Current Ukraine recovery efforts, however, while well-intentioned, prioritise institutional support channelled through centralised government mechanisms. The Ukraine Facility, for instance, primarily focuses on bolstering institutions, with funds flowing through centralised governmental structures. A paradigm shift is needed towards a 'people-first' strategy that emphasizes bottom-up development. Rebalancing priorities towards direct support for people and civil society organizations could lead to a more resilient, self-sustaining recovery. This approach fosters a more engaged citizenry, stronger civil society, and ultimately, more robust and responsive institutions built from the ground up by the very people they serve. Implementation of this strategy requires a reassessment of current funding mechanisms to ensure a significant portion reaches civil society directly, bypassing centralised governmental channels where appropriate. It also necessitates the development of transparent, accountable systems for fund allocation and impact measurement at the community level.

Investing in Energy Transition

As clean energy transition is a vital part of Ukraine's reconstruction and survival, the next Ukraine Recovery Conference should prioritize creating an attractive environment for both domestic and international investors. The conference programme should be structured to address this critical issue comprehensively, starting with a high-profile keynote speech emphasising the geopolitical and economic benefits of reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels. Key elements should include investor-focused policy sessions discussing concrete measures like streamlined permitting processes and tax incentives; forums on risk mitigation strategies in a post-conflict environment; and showcases of investment-ready projects with detailed financial projections. The programme should also feature workshops on green reconstruction financing, exploring innovative funding mechanisms and blending public and private capital. To address investor concerns about local capacity, sessions highlighting Ukrainian expertise and workforce development programmes should be included. A regulatory reform clinic can offer insights into creating a stable and transparent energy market.

A technology expo, investor-government dialogue platforms, and presentations of success stories from similar challenging environments would further enhance the program's appeal. The conference should conclude with a session outlining Ukraine's long-term energy transition roadmap, demonstrating political commitment to a stable investment climate.

Elevating Gender, Education, and Health in Ukraine's Recovery

Soft topics such as gender equality, education, and healthcare—particularly mental health—deserve dedicated attention through separate side events at the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025. These topics, often overshadowed by immediate infrastructure needs, are critical to the long-term social resilience and well-being of the population. Side events focusing on these issues will allow for in-depth exploration of how gender-sensitive policies, inclusive education reforms, and mental health services can be effectively integrated into Ukraine's recovery framework. The outcomes of these focused discussions should lead to concrete, actionable recommendations. These conclusions should not be relegated to secondary status but seen as foundational to the recovery process. By emphasising these soft topics in a structured and prominent way, the conference can promote a holistic approach that strengthens Ukraine's social fabric, fosters gender equity, enhances mental health support, and ultimately contributes to a more inclusive and resilient recovery.

Recovery Ecosystem Platform

A comprehensive, digitally-based platform needs to be established well in advance of URC 2025, featuring a diverse range of stakeholders including civil society organisations, educational institutions, healthcare establishments, and businesses of all sizes. This platform will catalyse pre-conference engagement, foster knowledge exchange and comprehensive sharing of experiences, success stories, and lessons learned from challenges faced; ensure inclusive participation enabling wide engagement from stakeholders across Ukraine and internationally. This will help to build a more accurate understanding of the reconstruction landscape, enabling participants to develop more effective strategies and collaborations for Ukraine's recovery.

Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Board

The organisers of URC 2025 should establish a diverse and representative Advisory Board to guide the conference planning and execution. This Advisory Board should include members from academia, civil society organisations, NGOs, representatives of vulnerable populations, the business community, local government officials, and international partners. The Board's role would be to provide strategic input, ensure inclusivity, and help prioritise key issues for Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. By leveraging the expertise and perspectives of this multi-stakeholder Advisory Board, URC 2025 can enhance its relevance, impact, and ability to address the complex challenges of post-war recovery and development.

Cross-Sector Synergy Hub

It is vital to provide extensive networking opportunities among various partners at the conference and to ensure these interactions are cross-sectoral, centralising collaboration between government, civil society, and business communities. This would create the right environment for a genuine exchange of ideas between civil society, the Ukrainian government, and international partners. The conference should create a platform that facilitates knowledge sharing, experience exchange, and extensive networking among participants from the government, civil society, and business sectors. This approach centralises collaboration and ensures diverse perspectives are integrated. It is important to involve different types and sizes of civil society organisations and businesses. Grassroots not-for-profit organisations as well as micro- and small-sized businesses significantly impacted by the war, such as

displaced enterprises and social businesses, should also be included in matchmaking efforts with potential private and public partners.

Public Engagement Strategy

To make the recovery process relevant and meaningful to citizens who are grappling with the immediate impacts of war, the organisers of the URC 2025 should implement a comprehensive public engagement strategy to increase awareness and participation among Ukrainian citizens. This should include a multi-channel communication campaign using social media, local news outlets, and community networks; organizing pre-conference town halls and online forums for public input; hosting satellite events across Ukraine to connect local communities with the main conference. Additionally, a youth delegate programme and a public-facing platform for tracking the implementation of URC decisions should be established. These efforts will help bridge the gap between high-level policy discussions and citizens' everyday concerns, ensuring that recovery efforts align with the needs and aspirations of all Ukrainians and fostering a sense of ownership in the nation's rebuilding process.

Learning from Italy's experience

URC 2025 should utilise Italy's post-World War II recovery as a valuable case study to inform Ukraine's reconstruction strategy. Italy, devastated by war with significant human and economic losses, achieved a remarkable recovery and economic resurgence through a combination of international aid, internal reforms, and strategic participation in regional economic initiatives like the Marshall Plan and the European Economic Community (EEC). Italy's recovery was driven by targeted investments in infrastructure, industry, and human capital, along with economic integration with its neighbours. This historical example offers insights into how a country that suffered significant human and economic losses can achieve successful recovery and economic prosperity, particularly through strategic participation in regional economic initiatives.

To maximise the value of the conference, all stakeholders should work to establish a comprehensive, context-driven preparatory process. This would ensure a focus not only on recovery from the war's immediate impacts but also on positioning Ukraine for long-term economic growth and integration with European markets, similar to Italy's successful recovery through regional cooperation.