



## European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)

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# Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy



Thank you very much Mr President, dear Volodymyr,

It is good to be back. Let me mirror what you just said about our meeting. Indeed, this is my fourth time, my fourth visit. And this time, I did not come alone. I brought along the College of Commissioners, my team of Commissioners. By having the College of Commissioners and the Ukrainian government basically gathered around the same workbench, we are now able to work not only on sustaining the Ukrainian people now but also how to build a future for Ukraine in the European Union. It has been almost one year since Putin launched his brutal invasion. One year of suffering but also of legendary bravery by the Ukrainian people. And one year of impressive unity by the global community. Europe has been by Ukraine's side since day one. Because we know that the future of our continent is being written here. We know that you are fighting for more than yourselves. What is at stake is freedom. This is a fight of democracies against authoritarian regimes. Putin tries to deny the existence of Ukraine, but what he risks instead is the future of Russia. Our presence in Kyiv today gives a very clear signal: The whole of the European Union is in this with Ukraine, for the long haul. We will stand up for Ukraine, as we stand up for the fundamental rights and the respect of the international law.

Thus my first point is indeed – you mentioned it too – ensuring economic security for Ukraine. We made a promise last year – that is stable, predictable financial support. And we have kept this promise. Two weeks ago, we delivered the first tranche of our EUR 18 billion financial assistance for 2023. Overall, the European Union's economic, humanitarian and military support for Ukraine amounts now, since the beginning of the war, to almost EUR 50 billion. It is important for us to give economic security to our friends in Ukraine. We are also helping to ensure the energy security, you mentioned it, too.

Putin's unremitting attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure are targeted. He tries to subject the Ukrainian people to a brutal winter with little heat, power and water. But we are working together tirelessly to restore vital energy infrastructure. It starts in Ukrainians homes. From this week on, indeed, the LED light bulbs are available to Ukrainian citizens at the post office. These are the first batches of the 30 million LED light bulbs we promised. But in fact, I am happy to announce that we can overshoot our goal. We are now able to provide 35 million LED light bulbs. We are delivering equipment to keep the Ukrainian grid functioning and we are making sure that electricity is flowing through the grid, despite the attacks. So it is very hands-on what we do, very practical. Today for example, I can announce that we are providing 2,400 additional generators, they come on top of the 3,000 already delivered since the beginning of the war. And alongside the Member States in the Energy Community, we will make available over EUR 150 million to purchase vital energy equipment for Ukraine. Finally, we are inviting Ukraine to our Energy Platform for joint purchasing of gas. You know the principle: We want to make best use of our joint market power. So we will overcome this winter, dear Volodymyr, and many others to come.

We are also working on the mid and long term of energy. Therefore, together, we start to develop renewable energy sources. You have said recently, Volodymyr, Ukraine intends 'to become a leader in building modern green energy' – and rightly so. This is the right goal and it is possible to achieve it. Renewables will not only bring clean energy; they will also increase Ukraine's energy security. Because they are home-grown, and because a decentralised energy system is plain and simply safer. So, we are now working on making available significant funding for solar panels that will be deployed across Ukraine. We will call on Member States and trusted partners to join this initiative. The aim is to power public buildings, so to provide stable supplies to hospitals, to fire departments or schools, for instance with these solar panels on the public buildings. And the final element in the energy security: Today, we are signing a Memorandum of Understanding on renewable gases, such as biomethane or hydrogen. So very concrete steps in the direction of Ukraine's green reconstruction.

And indeed, reconstruction is the big overarching topic. We are in this fight together and we will rebuild this beautiful country together. And here, let me briefly focus on the fact that reconstruction starts now with fast recovery. So we work now together on making available EUR 1 billion for the start of the fast recovery. We can start right away with that fast recovery and with these EUR 1 billion, but of course more

is to be added to that.

The big topic, as I said, the overarching topic is reconstruction. And here, the world is mobilising. The G7 Donors' Coordination Platform is now in place. The Platform will help coordinate the international assistance and will support your reform agenda. Then, there is an engine, a motor, that is the secretariat that is led by representatives of your government and the Commission. And that secretariat is present both here in Kyiv and in Brussels. G7 countries and beyond, as well as international financial institutions, are now meant to prepare sending secondment by experts to this secretariat. So that we are now pooling the efforts to make economic recovery and reconstruction a success.

My second message today is that we are making Putin pay for his atrocious war. Before Russia started this war, we were very vocal about the severe economic costs we will impose on Russia if it invades Ukraine. Today, Russia is paying a heavy price, as our sanctions are eroding its economy, throwing it back by a generation. The price cap on crude oil already costs Russia around EUR 160 million a day. And we will keep on turning up the pressure further. We will introduce, with our G7 partners, an additional price cap on Russian petroleum products. And by 24 February, exactly one year since the invasion started, we aim to have the tenth package of sanctions in place. Russia will also have to pay for the destruction it caused and will have to contribute to the reconstruction of Ukraine. Therefore, we are exploring with our partners how to use Russia's public assets to the benefit of Ukraine.

And Russia must be held accountable in courts for its odious crimes. Prosecutors from Ukraine and the European Union are already working together. We are collecting evidence. As a first step, I am pleased to announce that an International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in Ukraine will be set up in The Hague. This Centre will coordinate the collection of evidence. It will be embedded in the Joint Investigation Team which is supported by our agency Eurojust. We will be ready to launch work very rapidly with Eurojust, with Ukraine, with the partners of our Joint Investigation Team, as well as the Netherlands. The perpetrator must be held accountable.

My third message today is about Ukraine's integration in the European Union. Dear Volodymyr, your stamina and your people's stamina and your determination to join the European Union is impressive. You prepared your application for the European Union membership brilliantly – I know it by experience. You became a candidate country while fighting an invasion. You continue to make impressive progress to meet the seven steps of the Commission's opinion. I am comforted to see that your anti-corruption bodies are on alert and effective in detecting corruption cases. I also commend you on reacting so rapidly at political level to make sure that the fight against corruption is delivering tangible results and is further stepped up. And while Ukraine advances on the European path, we are tearing down barriers between our economies and societies even further. Today, we are proposing to Ukraine to join key European programmes. This will give Ukraine benefits close to those of EU membership in many areas. We will discuss this now in our working session with the Ministers and the Commissioners. And I will then be happy to give more details afterwards in the next press conference.

My final point – and it is last but certainly not least: We are connecting more and more our people, our companies and our cities. Last year, Volodymyr, you called for our cities to twin – the twin partnerships. They heard you, and they are doing it. So let me report you that we have now 100 large cities in the European Union that are twinned with 36 Ukrainian cities by now. Munich with Kyiv for example; Turku with Kharkiv. Almost 1,000 smaller towns in the European Union have partnerships with municipalities in Ukraine – with Hromadas. And, just like as you called for, they are ready to help rebuild the sister cities in Ukraine. Our network, Eurocities, has already launched a project on the sustainable rebuilding of cities in Ukraine. And I think it is amazing because there are urban planners, engineers, architects fully on board. And the New European Bauhaus concept will inspire them. They partner in Ukraine to launch the capacity-building programme. For example, they share knowledge for rebuilding smartly, for example by

recycling concrete so that Ukraine could use half of the debris from destroyed buildings to rebuild better. Our LIFE programme will provide the first steps on that, this is EUR 7 million for the programme to start. So, our vision is to turn the destruction of war into opportunities to build a beautiful and healthy future for Ukraine.

This war of aggression has broken so many lives. The First Lady, Olena Zelenska, told me indeed about the immense suffering of the children that are left orphans. Putin's war has taken away their parents and has shattered their lives. We cannot mend this, but we can offer to comfort their pain and help the best we can. Not in institutions, as you said, but in family-based care. We want these children to grow up in a loving environment that gives them confidence and strength. So, be reassured, we will support Ukraine to provide the best possible care to these orphans. We will share our experience, we will offer financial support. We are starting with EUR 10 million to support here the design of a modern childcare strategy. This includes of course capacity building and a twinning project. Because I think it is wise that Ukraine teams up with European Member States who have gone through the same process, so as to have the experience on what to avoid and on best practices. We cannot bring back the parents to these children. But we can carry their future in our minds and in our hearts, and do the best for them.

So, dear Volodymyr, our teams are rolling up their sleeves. They are already working. We have more than 20 topics on our workbench today. So it is a lot to discuss. It is wonderful to be here again. I am very much looking forward to the discussions this afternoon.

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## Details

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