

# EUROSCOPE

## **EUROSCOPE DIGEST 1/2023** **Ukraine's EU approximation and security challenges**

**February 2023**

The escalation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine posed an unprecedented challenge to global security. Ukraine's integrity and commitment to preserving European values, peace and stability in the region have been supported by international partners. In June 2022, the European Council granted candidate status to Ukraine. EU enlargement policy and strong Ukraine is an anchor for peace, security and stability on the European continent.

Russia's disinformation and propaganda attempt to challenge the West's credibility, undermine public trust in democratic institutions, and incite wars. Therefore, an increasing joint effort is needed to counter Russian hybrid threats, particularly to strengthen informational resilience and cybersecurity, including ensuring food and energy security along with protecting critical infrastructures.

Strategic communications and countering information manipulations remain crucial. Ukraine is determined to fight on the information front too, including clearly communicating the benefits of Ukraine's path towards the EU and its commitment to European values and security, while calling on the global community to unite to restore the international security order.

Euroscope Digest summarizes the key recent developments and actions that need to be taken to ensure security and peace, enhance human rights protection and increase Europe and Ukraine's resistance.

## DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated that all means are used to undermine peace and security, causing humanitarian crises and reducing entire cities to rubble. To defeat Russia in 2023 and strengthen Ukraine's defense and security, the global focus should be on enhancing the capacities of the Ukrainian defense, energy and food sectors.

### ARMS

**Joint projects/ventures on the production of ammunition and/or the restoration of military equipment on Ukrainian territory** should be founded in partnership with established industrial leaders and under common Security Policy revision. The international community should continue providing weapons, air defense systems, and other military assistance to Ukraine. The fast Ukrainian victory in 2023 will save lives and resources, which would otherwise be directed towards rebuilding at much greater costs and with higher risks and vulnerabilities in other regions of the world.

Ukraine demands **fighter jets** to ensure the **imminent end of the war in 2023** and further fast rebuilding efforts under the protected sky. Countries that support the Freedom of Ukraine and the global security currently have over **2 000 of F-16 multi-purpose fighter jets**. Ukraine's victory and restoration of global security will require only **10% of that count**.

### ENERGY

**The energy system** must be **decentralized** using lower-capacity equipment scattered all over Ukraine. Ukraine also needs to increase the percentage of **renewables** in its energy mix and continue to take energy efficiency measures to decrease energy consumption.

It is an urgent and global concern to improve **nuclear safety** in Ukraine. Russia should withdraw its troops from the nuclear plants. Its deployment of military and weaponry to shell Ukraine may cause a **technogenic catastrophe on a global scale**. Additionally, Russia should stop any other actions leading to nuclear threats such as opening of the locks at the [Kakhovska](#) hydropower plant (HPP), which can lead to improper functioning of the cooling systems of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

### FOOD

Ukraine is one of the [world's biggest exporters](#) of corn (12,6%), wheat (10%), and sunflower oil (49,6%). Nearly [40%](#) of its territory has been mined since 24 February 2022 with about 10% of this area being farmland and roughly half of the land-mine accidents stemming from farm work.

It is projected that Ukrainian farmers this spring will likely **plant 45% less** territories than in 2021 and the drop in exports is expected to be around half of what was shipped in 2021. This can exacerbate the situation with global food security.

Russia should withdraw its troops from the territory of Ukraine, including the Crimea peninsula, in 2023 to prevent the otherwise most probable **food security crisis in 2024**. It also should be demilitarized, including nuclear disarmament, to avoid repetition of Russia's aggression against sovereign countries and nuclear blackmail in the future.

## **SECURING THE FUTURE: REBUILDING A BETTER UKRAINE**

As of November 2022, Ukrainian infrastructure losses account for more than [\\$135.9 billion](#). The losses have increased since that time due to the new Russia's attacks on energy and civilian infrastructure.

The security considerations stated above should be taken into account when rebuilding Ukraine back better: decentralized energy systems, deployment of renewable energy sources, demining and regeneration of the Ukrainian farmlands. To ensure secure rebuilding, Ukraine needs to be protected with the enhanced military defense capacities of local ammunition production and the urgent provision of multi-purpose fighter jets.

The European Green Deal outlines an ambitious potential for Ukraine's green reconstruction in all spheres. Yet, the catastrophic experience of the war dictates extra needs and requirements: for instance: new residual housing and civilian infrastructure should be equipped with bomb shelters.

Ukraine should apply the EU's best practices to further its accession to the EU, such as creating social infrastructure (insurance, online registration, accessibility to services) and connectivity (smart cities, industrial hubs, startups etc.). The implementation of such changes will require new educational exchange programs and EU internships for the young leaders of Ukraine.

**Russia's confiscated assets and claimed compensations should be used to rebuild Ukraine.** While established institutions such as the International Criminal Court have already started their investigations into war crimes committed in Ukraine, significant effort will be required to conclude investigations of public infrastructure and private assets' destruction by other courts or a new specialized Reconstruction Court.

## **HUMANITARIAN SECURITY: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

Yale School of Public Health published an observatory report on 14 February 2023 describing in detail Russia's **systematic program for the re-education and adoption of Ukraine's children who have been abducted** from the occupied territories of Ukraine by the aggressors since February 2022.

From 260 to more than 700 thousand Ukrainian children could have been forcibly relocated to Russia. The exact number is unknown as the information is not accessible due to the occupation of the territory of Ukraine. Most of the children have parents and were relocated with them.

Ukrainian children are forcibly involved in and are victims of the following illegal activities in Russia:

- placement in foster care and possible adoption by Russian citizens (including those children whose custody status was unknown);

- placement to re-education camps and similar facilities, which purpose is to promote cultural, historical, societal, and patriotic messages or ideas that serve the political interests of russia;
- indefinite postponement of children's returns, for example, one boy was told he could not go home due to his "[pro-Ukrainian views](#)";
- engagement in military training, which is part of the program at camps in Chechnya and Russia-occupied Crimea, for example, "for a young fighter".

All levels of russia's government are [involved](#), and the operation is centrally coordinated.

**The international community should interfere and persuade [russia](#) to ensure the protection of children's rights during the war and:**

- to create a registry of all children from Ukraine currently in russia's custody and share it with the Government of Ukraine and all relevant intergovernmental organizations working on the child protection and restoration of family links;
- to provide the possibilities to all Ukrainian children, in russia or on russia occupied territory, separated from their parents or legal guardians to immediately communicate with family members of their choosing;
- to stop immediately adoptions and other forms of rehoming Ukrainian children by russia and its proxies. All adoption records, court decisions, and other relevant documents generated by the russian government related to Ukraine's children from the start of 2022 up to date should be shared with appropriate inter-governmental authorities at once;
- to grant a neutral inter-governmental organization with immediate and free access to the facilities at which children from Ukraine are being held in russia and on the occupied territory, in order to meet the children and conduct unhindered inspections of the facilities.

Children under the care of Ukrainian state institutions before the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine also became victims of deportation to russia. These children are the most vulnerable and their return to Ukraine is the most challenging. Most of these children have parents in difficult life circumstances; some children are orphans or deprived of parental care.

Ukraine has one of the world's highest rates of child institutionalization (1.5% of all children, or approximately 105 thousand children). This is a serious concern that needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency. More than 92% of institutionalized children have parents who are not deprived of parental care. The number of vulnerable children at risk of being institutionalized is rising rapidly due to the war.

To stop the russian systematic violations of the Ukrainian children's' rights, Ukraine needs strong support from the EU, international partners, and donors to develop community-based services for children and families with children.

## MEDIA AND CYBERSECURITY / FIGHT AGAINST PROPAGANDA AND FAKE NEWS

Russia's information war against western countries began long before 2022. Russia was directly involved in almost all the largest mass disinformation campaigns of recent years (for example, the propagation of anti-vaccination narratives and interference in the 2016 US elections). The Kremlin has been **systematically criticizing and blurring European values** for more than a year, particularly supporting anti-immigrant, homophobic, and anti-liberal sentiments.

In the first months after the full-scale attack on Ukraine, journalists talked about the failure of the Russian propaganda because the leading world media did not support the Russian version of the attack on Ukraine at all. But in fact, **Russian propaganda can still be effective since some of its ideas resonate among the European audience.** For instance, [according to a survey of ECFR](#) conducted in 10 European countries, 35% of respondents want peace as soon as possible, even at the cost of Ukrainian concessions to Russia. [According to a Forsa institute survey](#), 30% of Germans consider the armed support of Ukraine too big.

The blocking of the Russian media RT and Sputnik broadcasting in the EU is a positive, albeit belated, step. However, there is still a large and fairly influential [network of journalists](#) and public speakers promoting Russian narratives in EU languages. They have their own media outlets and occasionally even get access to more mainstream European media.

Therefore, European politicians and media regulators should go further and block all possible channels for Russian disinformation and propaganda, particularly in social networks and alternative media, which are the most suitable ground for Russian disinformation. It may be appropriate to adopt a joint plan to counter Russian disinformation campaigns at the EU legislation level.

Undoubtedly, **not only politicians and journalists but also law enforcement agencies should be engaged in countering propaganda.** [A recent OCCRP investigation](#) showed that Russia systematically bribed European politicians and journalists, who then advocated the lifting of sanctions against Russia and supported the annexation of Crimea. Some of them continue to promote Russian narratives even today. Therefore, **law enforcement agencies need to investigate the activities and financing of public figures, who have cooperated with the Kremlin since 2014.**

The influence of Russian propaganda on countries outside the "Western world" is even greater. [According to the Economist](#), two-thirds of the world's population live in countries that are neutral (more often) or side with Russia in the war in Ukraine. In these countries, the Russian broadcasters are not restricted, therefore the Russian propaganda has more influence. **European institutions should coordinate efforts to counter Russian disinformation campaigns with journalists and public speakers from non-European countries.**

Most European decision-makers realize that Russia is actually at war not only with Ukraine, but with the entire "collective West". Yet, information warfare has not been attended adequately to the threat. Supported by cyberattacks, info-terrorists pose a major threat to the EU's unity and global stability. Unified effort in media- and cybersecurity should be prompt, decisive and adequate to the immediate threat.