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## **SPECIFICS OF REBUILDING UKRAINIAN TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL**

The restoration of communities serves as the cornerstone for supporting and further developing Ukraine's economy, as it forms the basis of the economic dimension of security and, consequently, the country's defense capability. Unfortunately, due to Russia's military aggression, 12 regions of Ukraine have been classified as territories experiencing active hostilities or having been temporarily occupied, affecting more than 330 communities [1].

Alongside the critical tasks of rebuilding essential infrastructure and strengthening energy security, Ukraine has set the strategic goal of joining the EU. This process requires harmonizing Ukrainian legislation with European legal frameworks, adopting the best EU practices, and achieving compliance with European standards and norms.

A crucial step in the recovery process within the framework of European integration is digitization. Amid the launch of the European Green Deal, Ukraine faced Russia's full-scale invasion. While the war has slowed progress toward achieving the Green Deal's objectives, environmental and climate challenges have not diminished in importance. On the contrary, they have intensified due to the devastating impact of armed conflict on Ukraine's ecosystems.

Given the urgent need to address the consequences of destruction and rebuild territorial communities based on principles of innovation, environmental sustainability, and alignment with European standards, identifying the key aspects of such recovery in the context of the European Green Deal becomes a top priority.

Even amidst wartime conditions, Ukraine remains committed to its European integration path, with the European Green Deal continuing to be a priority. The European Green Deal is a step-by-step action plan developed by the EU to achieve climate neutrality across Europe by 2050. It focuses on decarbonizing energy, enhancing energy efficiency and renewable sources, implementing circular economy principles, addressing climate change, and improving public health and well-being through sustainable development.

Funding for the European Green Deal in EU member states is structured within its Investment Plan, which allocates 1 trillion EUR through two primary financial streams. Over 50% of this, totaling 528 billion EUR, is sourced from the EU budget and the EU Emissions Trading System. The remainder is financed through the InvestEU program, comprising 279 billion EUR from public and private sectors by 2030, alongside 114 billion EUR in national co-

financing. Additionally, the European Innovation Council has designated 300 million EUR for innovative projects aligned with the Green Deal's objectives.

Under this investment plan, funding is available exclusively for projects that contribute to the deal's goals. These range from small-scale initiatives, such as energy retrofitting of individual households, to large-scale projects, like expanding electric vehicle charging networks. Notable examples of sustainable investments supported by the European Investment Plan include the modernization of Budapest's centralized heating system, support for residential solar panel installations and energy-efficient industrial upgrades in Lithuania, and improvements in electricity and heating supply in Zagreb. However, Ukraine will only gain access to this funding after formally joining the European Green Deal.

The trend of increasing financial support for Green Deal initiatives has intensified following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, driven by the EU's need to diversify energy sources and enhance energy independence. A key aspect of this expanded funding includes solidarity measures with Ukraine and access to specific EU programs. With Ukraine's prospective candidate status for EU membership, the country may secure direct access to additional funding sources, which should be utilized for economic modernization and sustainable reconstruction.

Although the war has slowed Ukraine's progress in implementing its long-term climate neutrality strategy, launched in 2021, it has also reinforced the urgency of pursuing this path [2]. Given that Russia's aggression has caused an estimated EUR 46 billion in environmental damage [3], environmental protection will be a critical component of post-war recovery.

Russia's military actions have inflicted severe damage on various environmental elements, including air quality, soil, surface and underground water, wildlife, vegetation, and landscapes. As of October 11, 2023, Ukraine's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources estimated total environmental losses at 2,108 billion hryvnias. This includes 1,078.7 billion hryvnias from air pollution, 984.4 billion hryvnias from soil and land damage, and 60.7 billion hryvnias from water pollution.

During wartime, the primary environmental threats stem from potential contamination due to damage to industrial facilities and infrastructure. These risks arise from the impact of munitions, disruptions in electricity, water, and gas supply, and violations of technological processes. The industrially developed regions of eastern and southern Ukraine are particularly vulnerable to such environmental hazards.

Many industrial sites, including nuclear power plants (Chornobyl, Zaporizhia, Khmelnytskyi, Rivne, and South Ukraine), hydroelectric stations (Kyiv, Dnipro, Kremenchuk, Dnistrovska, and Kakhovska), thermal power plants, chemical and metallurgical factories, mines, oil refineries, and fuel storage facilities, have suffered damage or operational disruptions. These incidents pose significant environmental risks [4].

Throughout the conflict, repeated infrastructure damage and power outages have severely impacted coal mining operations, leading to the

failure of mine water drainage systems. In several cases, this resulted in complete mine flooding, causing contamination of surface water, widespread flooding, land pollution, and ground subsidence.

Furthermore, Ukraine's transition to a green economy is embedded in its Association Agreement with the EU. The agreement includes specific directives and regulatory acts that outline the shift towards sustainable development [5]. Therefore, the concept of green community recovery is not only crucial for addressing war-related destruction but is also a fundamental requirement for Ukraine's European integration.

Despite the critical circumstances, Ukrainian communities must have the opportunity for sustainable recovery, serving as a platform for implementing innovative climate policies.

The green recovery of communities should be guided by key principles, including stability and systemic solutions, transparency, active community and public engagement in decision-making, the application of best available technologies and practices, sustainable urban and regional development, energy decarbonization and decentralization, the creation of resilient agro-food systems, and the protection of Ukraine's ecosystems and natural resources. By adhering to these principles, Ukraine will not only restore what has been lost but will also establish a fundamentally new economic model rooted in inclusivity and sustainability.

Post-war reconstruction must align with environmental priorities, ensuring access to modern energy resources, integrating innovative energy-saving technologies, developing contingency plans for energy supply disruptions, transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, and raising public awareness about climate change and associated risks.

The war in Ukraine has created unprecedented challenges for the world, particularly for Europe in its pursuit of climate neutrality. However, driven by both domestic needs and European financial support policies, the necessity for green recovery can become a catalyst for Ukraine's long-term sustainable development. This approach envisions significant advancements in the functionality of these territories through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and best global practices.

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