



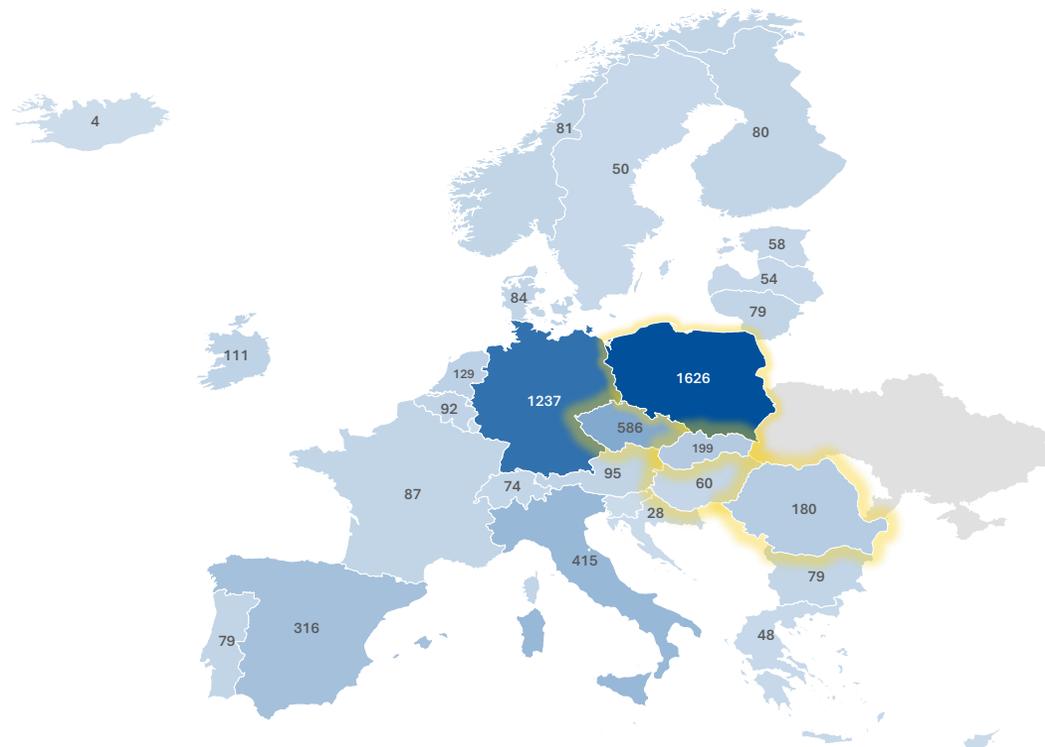
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How can Ukraine build a win-win partnership with EU countries? A Central and Eastern European perspective

The five neighbouring EU economies – Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania – form Ukraine’s regional economic corridor and integration platform with the EU Single Market.

- **These countries collectively represent Ukraine’s primary EU gateway for trade, logistics and labour mobility.**
- Since 2022, economic ties intensified due to the reconfiguration of trade routes, energy interdependence, migration flows, and reconstruction cooperation.
- There is an emerging regional economic system linking:
 - Ukrainian industrial clusters
 - EU manufacturing supply chains
 - reconstruction investment flows.
- Three structural features of this regional partnership:
 1. **Supply-chain integration:** automotive, metallurgy, agri-food, electronics.
 2. **Logistics corridor to the EU:** rail, road, Danube ports, and energy interconnections.
 3. **Human capital mobility:** over 2 million Ukrainians living in these countries.

Ukrainian citizens in the EU, beginning of 2025 (thousand persons)



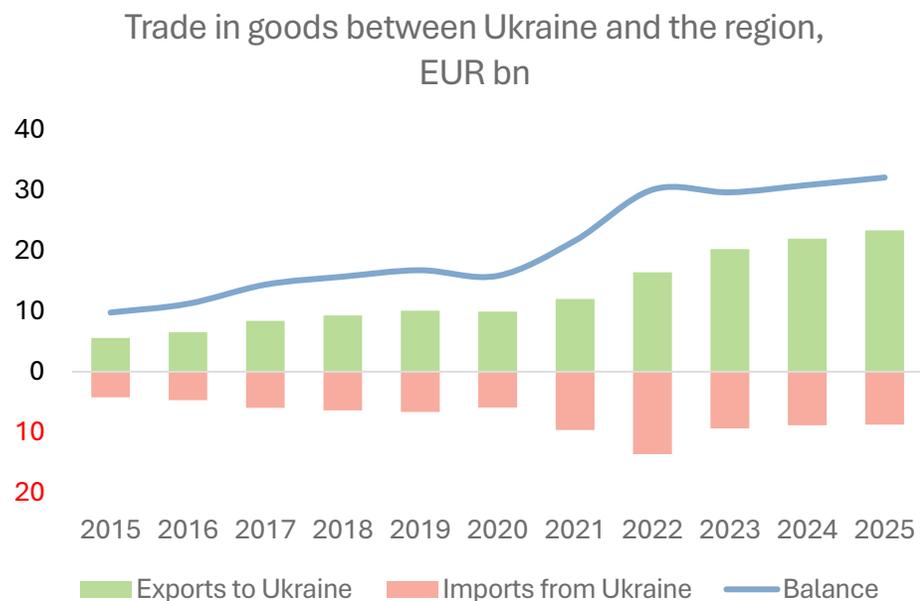
На платформі Bing
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Source: CES visualisation based on Eurostat. *Note: the composite indicator was calculated as the sum of [Ukrainians holding a valid residence permit](#) and [those under temporary protection](#).*

- **Ukrainian migrants were already present in neighbouring labour markets before the war, and the refugee inflow since 2022 has further strengthened their role as a labour force.** Employment rates among refugees are high: ~70% of Ukrainians in Poland and ~67% in Slovakia are employed, supporting economic activity and fiscal revenues.
- **Ukrainians contribute positively to host economies.** Ukrainian refugees added ~0.8 pp to Poland's annual GDP growth in 2021–2023, while in Slovakia, they paid €119 mln in taxes and contributions in 2024.
- Ukrainian diaspora facilitates entrepreneurship and business ties.
- **Migration can support Ukraine's reconstruction.** A substantial number of refugees plan to return, potentially bringing back skills and capital gained in EU labour markets.

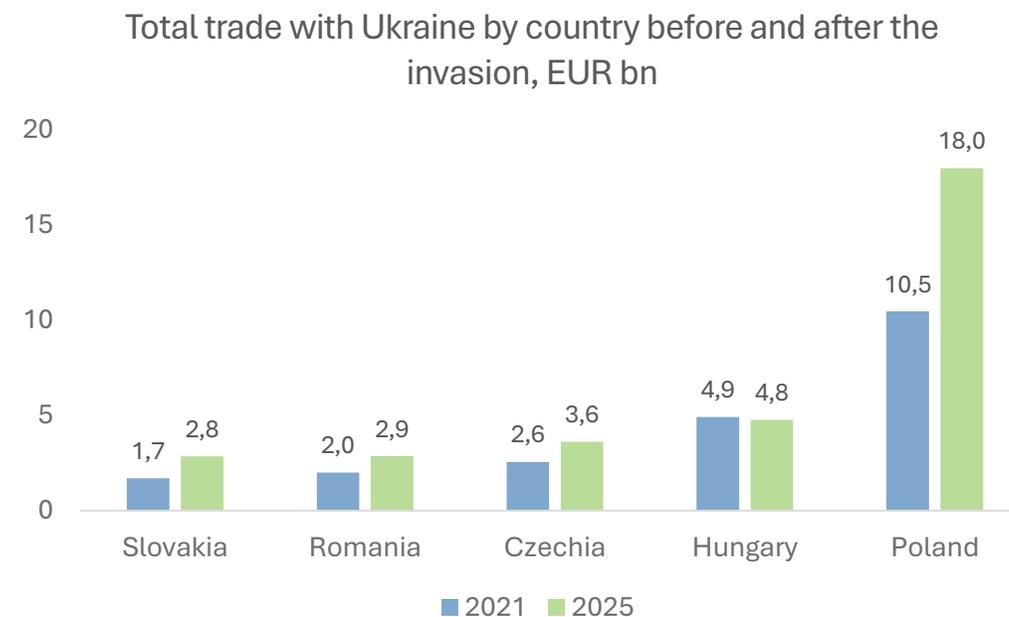
Central European Trade with Ukraine Surged after the Invasion

- Regional exports to Ukraine nearly doubled since 2021, reaching about €23 bn in 2025.
- The region maintains a large and growing trade surplus with Ukraine.
- Neighbouring EU countries serve as logistics hubs for Ukraine's trade with the EU, which is reflected in rising bilateral trade volumes in EU statistics.



Source: CES visualisation based on [Eurostat](#).

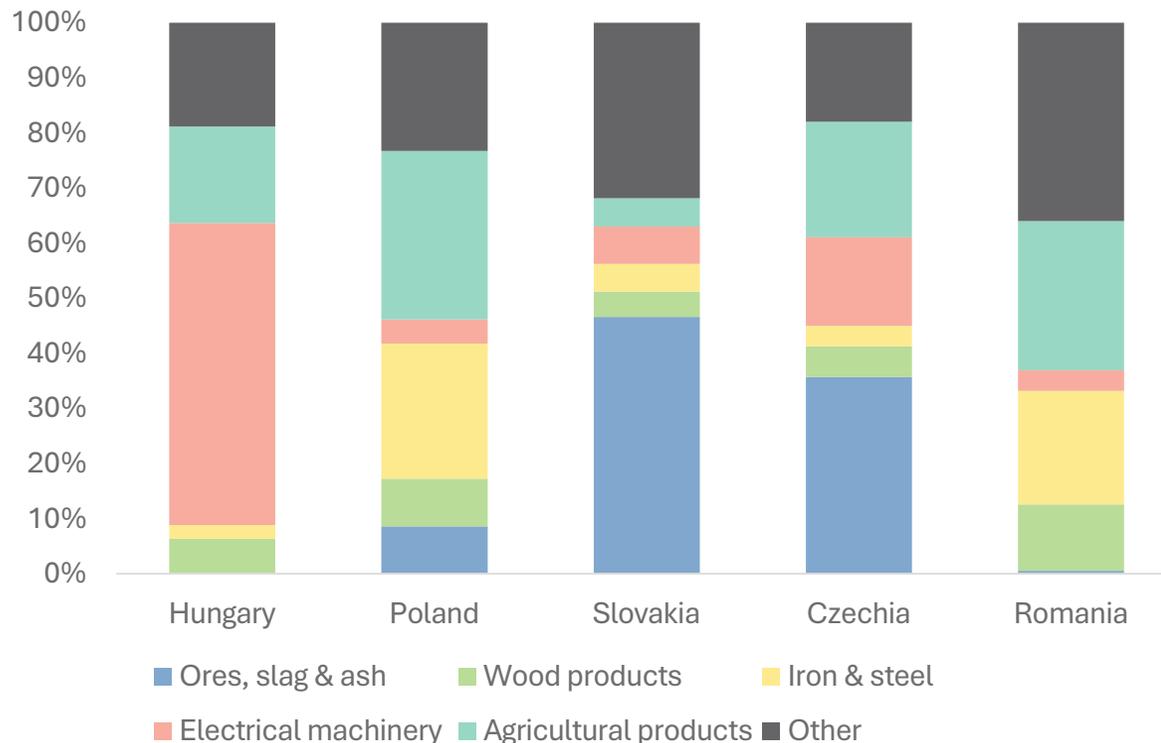
- Poland dominates regional trade with Ukraine, rising from €10.5 bn in 2021 to €18 bn in 2025.
- Trade also expanded with Czechia, Romania, and Slovakia. These countries have become important transit, industrial, and supply-chain partners, facilitating the reorientation of Ukrainian trade towards EU markets during the war.



Source: CES visualisation based on [Eurostat](#).

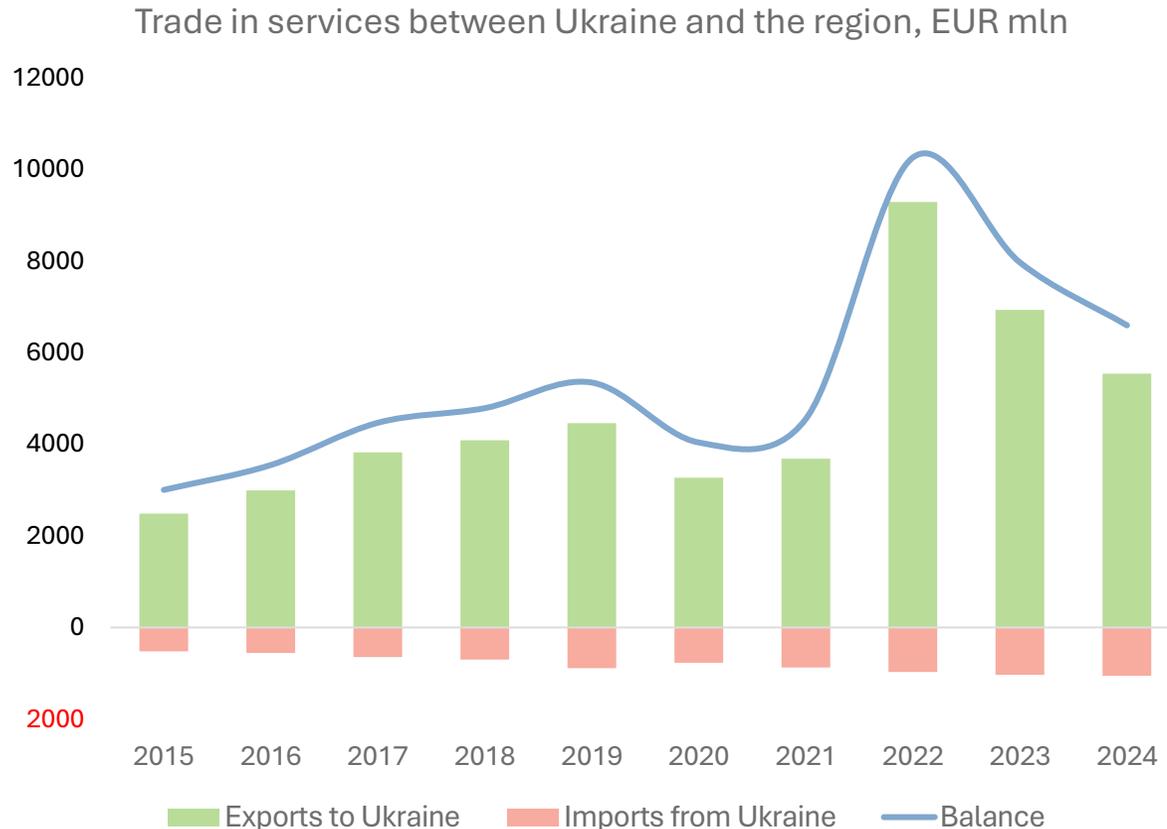
Ukraine Is Emerging as a Strategic Supplier in Central European Industrial Supply Chains

The composition of imports from Ukraine in 2025 by major product groups



- **Ukraine functions as a strategic supplier of raw materials and intermediate goods for Central European industry.** Iron ore, steel products, cables, wood, and agricultural commodities dominate exports to neighbouring EU economies, feeding directly into industrial and food-processing chains.
- **Cross-border production networks already link the Ukrainian industry with Central European manufacturing clusters.** Trade increasingly reflects vertical specialisation.
- **The war temporarily disrupted but ultimately reinforced regional supply chains.** Russia's invasion sharply reduced Ukrainian exports of metals and industrial inputs in 2022–2023, but it also accelerated the redirection of trade flows through neighbouring EU states.
- Expanding joint production in sectors such as automotive components, metallurgy, food processing, defence manufacturing, and energy infrastructure could transform Ukraine from a supplier into a fully integrated part of Central Europe's industrial production.

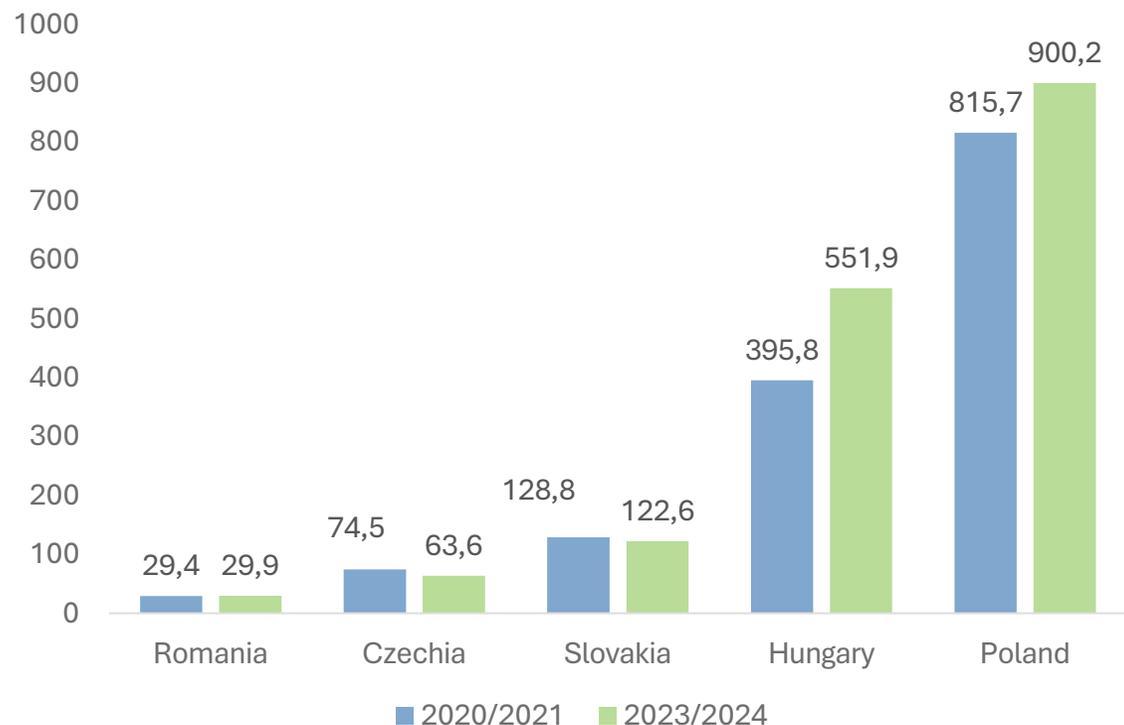
The War Accelerated Ukraine's Integration into a Regional Services Ecosystem



Source: CES visualisation based on [Eurostat](#).

- **The region consistently runs a surplus in services trade with Ukraine.** Exports of services to Ukraine exceed imports throughout the entire period, reflecting the region's role as a provider of logistics, business and digital services.
- **Logistics rerouting drove the sharp surge after 2022.** Wartime disruption of Black Sea routes redirected Ukrainian trade through EU land corridors, sharply increasing demand for transport and logistics services.
- **Migration significantly boosted recorded service exports.** Spending by Ukrainian refugees in host countries increased demand for housing, retail and tourism services, which appears statistically as service exports to Ukraine.
- **EU neighbours became key service hubs for Ukraine.** Poland, Romania, Czechia, and Hungary provided logistics, telecom, and IT services to support rerouted trade flows and displaced Ukrainian firms.
- **Services increasingly reflect regional supply-chain integration.** Transport, processing and engineering services support cross-border industrial value chains and the emergence of a regional economic ecosystem.

FDI stock in Ukraine by country before and after the invasion, EUR mln



Source: CES visualisation based on [Eurostat](#). Note: Data refer to 2020 or 2021 & 2023 or 2024, depending on availability.

- **Investment concentrates in logistics, finance and reconstruction-related sectors.** Key sectors include transport, energy infrastructure, construction, IT and professional services.
- **Border regions and major cities attract most capital.** Foreign firms cluster in Kyiv, and the western regions are considered relatively safer for business operations.
- **Neighbouring EU countries are key investors and reconstruction partners.** Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian companies maintain an active business presence and participate in recovery projects.
- **War shifted investment toward strategic sectors.** Defence, energy security, logistics and infrastructure have become the main areas for new cooperation.
- **EU integration could unlock larger capital flows.** Regulatory alignment and lower risk premiums would enable investment scaling and deeper supply-chain integration.

Conclusion: Strategic Economic Interdependence

- **Economic ties between Ukraine and neighbouring EU countries have deepened significantly since 2022.** War-driven trade rerouting, migration, and the development of logistics corridors have strengthened cross-border economic integration.
- **Neighbouring countries have become key gateways between Ukraine and the EU economy.** They play a critical role in logistics, services provision, energy supply, and industrial cooperation.
- **Cross-border value chains are emerging in several strategic sectors.** Notably in metallurgy, automotive components, agri-food processing, logistics, and defence-related industries.

Implications for Further Cooperation

- **Develop transport and logistics corridors.** Expand rail, road, port and energy interconnections to support trade and reconstruction.
- **Scale industrial cooperation and co-production.** Particularly in automotive supply chains, metallurgy, defence technologies, and green energy.
- **Leverage migration and labour mobility.** Ukrainian diaspora can support entrepreneurship, investment and skills transfer.
- **Promote investment partnerships for reconstruction.** Neighbouring EU firms are well-positioned to participate in infrastructure, energy and manufacturing projects.
- **Accelerate regulatory alignment with the EU Single Market.** Harmonisation of standards will facilitate deeper integration of goods, services and capital.

Map of Ukraine's economic ties with EU countries



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