*Poznań, 23 August 2023*

**Program of the Common Future Ukraine Reconstruction Conference**

**Three stages, several dozen debates with the participation of nearly 100 speakers, a number of expert meetings with business owners, networking zones – in short, this is the program of the COMMON FUTURE Ukraine Reconstruction Conference that will be held on 21-22 September 2023 at the MTP Poznań Expo. The substantive partners and hosts of the debates held during the conference are: The Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, the Polish Association of Construction Industry Employers, the Jagiellonian Club and the Poznań Institute.**

**Main Stage – “strategic” stage**

The Main Stage is the substantive heart of the conference. This is where strategic issues of international cooperation related to the reconstruction of Ukraine will be discussed. The discussion on this stage will begin with a debate organised by the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, devoted to the **strategic economic partnership between Poland and Ukraine**, involving the participation of the Secretary of State, government representative for Polish-Ukrainian cooperation for growth and development at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Jadwiga Emilewicz.

The next debate will be held under the title **“End-of-war scenarios and the reconstruction of Ukraine”**.It is a common thesis that the reconstruction of Ukraine will begin immediately after military operations have ceased. However, what if military operations continue to extend in time? Is reconstruction possible in wartime conditions? Participants will discuss the current most likely scenarios for how the war situation will develop and ponder how they will affect the pace, scale and form of reconstruction efforts.

Hostilities cause major destruction of infrastructure in Ukraine, but also give rise to other challenges for the country of Ukraine. Therefore, the reconstruction of that country requires much more than the renovation of destroyed buildings and roads. It requires the commitment of businesses and public institutions. “**Is Poland institutionally prepared to support Ukraine?**” is the topic is another debate during which debaters will discuss what has already been done and what still needs to be done.

**A billion dollars, i.e. a million million**

Different estimates indicate that **the cost of reconstructing Ukraine after the war may amount to even a billion dollars**. Such major needs resulting from large-scale destruction that continues to grow naturally exceed the capabilities of Kiev. This raises the question whether it is possible to mobilise foreign capital. Reconstruction conferences held thus far did not answer the key question – will the European Union and the United States contribute significant capital to the reconstruction of Ukraine? What will be the form of aid provided by the EU/US to Ukrainians? What conditions must be satisfied? The answers to these questions are sought by participants of the debate hosted by the Jagiellonian Club under the title “**Will the EU and US contribute major funds to the reconstruction of Ukraine?**”

The Fireside Chat moderated by the Polish Association of Construction Industry Employers will also take place on the Main Stage. It will be a conversation with the Secretary of State, government representative for Polish-Ukrainian cooperation for growth and development at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Jadwiga Emilewicz, and her counterpart in the Ukrainian government, held under the title “**Where are we and where are we headed?**”.

Major aid provided by Poland to Ukraine gives rises to general expectations and hopes related to the Ukraine reconstruction process. On the other hand, the narrative gaining popularity is that the scale of aid and support for Ukraine will not have a significant impact when decisions concerning the involvement of individual countries in the reconstruction of Ukraine are being made. The government in Kiev will be guided by other criteria. What is the role of Poland in the reconstruction of Ukraine according to Kiev? This will be the topic of a discussion panel “**Can Poland count on special favour of Ukraine in the reconstruction process?**”

“What is the realistic path of Kiev to the EU?” – is the topic of the last debate on the Main Stage of the conference. Ukraine became a candidate Member State of the EU. However, a common topic of discussion in Europe is whether this status gives Ukraine a real opportunity to accede to the EU in the near future. There are contradictory narratives. On the one hand, the public opinion and statements made by many politicians indicate that there is a belief that Ukraine is on the path to join the EU relatively quickly due to its special circumstances. On the other hand, there are also opinions that there are certain EU Member States who will attempt to block this process.

**“Construction” stage**

For obvious reasons, construction will play a special role in the reconstruction of Ukraine. In light of that, the program of the conference includes a separate stage where topics of interest to representatives from this branch of the industry will be discussed. The stage will be hosted by the Polish Association of Construction Industry Employers.

The following topics will be discussed during debates: “**National and international opportunities and threats related to the participation of Polish construction companies in the reconstruction of Ukraine**” and “**Competencies and potential and the Polish construction industry – financial aid instruments, material and equipment resources**”.

Polish companies are already operating in Ukraine. The conference will make it possible to learn about the experiences of construction companies related to operation on the Ukrainian market. A good opportunity to share these experiences will be a debate titled “**A forum for practical experiences related to the operation of construction businesses in Ukraine**”.

Participants will gain a lot of substantive knowledge during the presentation titled “**Architectural and engineering design, construction evaluation reports, recognition and application of European standards in construction**”.

**“Economic” stage**

This stage will be hosted by the Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, one of the oldest bilateral chambers of commerce in Poland, which has been acting towards the development of economic and cultural relations between Poland and Ukraine since 1992.

The first debate on this stage will be held under the title “**Poland as the hub for the reconstruction of Ukraine – challenges for logistics, infrastructure and transport**”.As of 24 February 2022, the Rzeszów - Jasionka airport has become a window to the world for Ukraine, a hub for western diplomacy as well as humanitarian and military aid. The Government Strategic Reserves Agency (RARS) has delivered more than 300 thousand pallets with aid to Ukraine. At the same time, it was not possible to establish solidarity corridors for the export of Ukrainian agricultural produce. Businesses continue to criticise the functioning of border crossings. The border, warehouses, road and rail infrastructure, industry and expert preparation, promotion of Polish know-how – that is Common Future. What has to be done in order for Poland to transition from the centre of solidarity and aid to an effective hub for the reconstruction of Ukraine? – discussion participants will attempt to answer that very question.

Demographics will not help in reconstruction. More than 4.5 million Ukrainian nationals have fled to the other side of the border to escape the nightmare of war. Several million have been forced to relocate to western Ukraine. Each day brings new fatalities casualties among the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Territorial Defence Forces and civilians. It is expected that labour market shortages during the reconstruction period in Ukraine may amount somewhere from 3 to 4.5 million workers. How to encourage migrants to return? How to bring war veterans back to professional activity? Can the reconstruction of Ukraine succeed without women? These questions will be raised during the discussion titled “**Human resources for the reconstruction of Ukraine – labour market challenges**”.

The discussion titled “Energy independence of Ukraine – new source of power. **Energy efficiency, renewable energy, use of hydrogen, connections with EU countries”.** Planned energy mix of Ukraine: 50% nuclear energy, 50% renewable energy. Winter 2022/2023 showed that green, distributed energy can be an effective solution against the effects of Russian attacks. Green energy is a guarantee of security and independence for Ukraine. Polish experts have dealt with energy efficiency in construction. ORLEN provided several thousand Starlinks to Ukraine. We have a network. Together we can build new energy sources in Ukraine.

Another discussion will be devoted to the **recovery of Ukrainian business and cooperation between local governments and the SME sector**.The SME sector is the salt of Polish business. Polish SMEs generate half the GDP. This experience will be the path to the reconstruction of Ukraine, creation of new jobs, strengthening local communities and encouraging expatriates to return. The European Commission declares that part of the funds allocated to the reconstruction will be distributed locally, to local governments. It is a chance for local governments and local businesses. Polish cities, municipalities, SMEs have good experiences in this organic work.

Polish farmers can already feel what their counterparts from “old EU” countries have feared when Poland joined the EU. A fear of competition from Ukrainian producers, change does not necessarily have to be destructive. In the panel titled “**Economy, i.e. market: from aid and cooperation to competition and investment**” proposed by the Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, we will discuss how to build the Polish-Ukrainian partnership on the European market, how to work together to shape the market, and how the reconstruction will contribute to the restructuring of standards in Ukrainian business.

**Local Government Area**

The Association of Polish Cities will host the debates titled “**Involvement of business and local governments in the process of aiding reconstruction**” and “**The road of Ukraine to membership in the EU – expectations of local governments in Ukraine and financial instruments**”. It will be preceded by the presentation of the project titled “**Bridges of Trust 2.0**”. The following have been invited to participate in these panels: representatives of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, the International Association Europe – North – East, the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Ukrainian Cities, the Ukraine Reconstruction Fund – DG NEAR at the European Commission, INTERREG Next program and the Polish-American Freedom Foundation.

**Expert meeting with business owners**

The conference will also feature consultations for Polish companies interested in participating in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Experts from business support institutions and key authorities will provide advice by referring business owners to appropriate aid programs, answering questions and listening to observations regarding problems faced by Polish companies that are already operating in Ukraine.

*Detailed program of the conference will soon be available at* [*https://common-future.pl/pl/*](https://common-future.pl/pl/)