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on cohesion policy in the EU's eastern border regions: strengthening territorial resilience and cross-border cooperation
(2026/2054(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on cohesion policy in the EU's eastern border regions: strengthening territorial resilience and cross-border cooperation

(2026/2054(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 14, 174, 175 and 177 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy¹ (Common Provisions Regulation),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013³,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments⁴,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund⁵,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2025/1914 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2025 amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1058 and (EU) 2021/1056 as regards specific measures to address strategic challenges in the context of the mid-term review⁶,

¹ OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj>.

² OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/oj>.

³ OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj>.

⁴ OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1059/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1056/oj>.

⁶ OJ L, 2025/1914, 19.9.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/1914/oj>.

- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2028 to 2034 (COM(2025)0571),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2026 on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2028 to 2034⁷,
- having regard to dedicated territorial development programmes and instruments supporting eastern and structurally vulnerable macro-regions, such as the European Funds for Eastern Poland 2021-2027 programme,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028-2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 (COM(2025)0565),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Social Fund as part of the National and Regional Partnership Plan set out in Regulation (EU) [...] and establishing conditions for the implementation of the Union support to quality employment, skills and social inclusion for the period from 2028 to 2034 (COM(2025)0558),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Fund for Regional Development including for European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) and the Cohesion Fund as part of the Fund set out in Regulation (EU) [...] [NRPP] and establishing conditions for the implementation of the Union support to regional development from 2028 to 2034 (COM(2025)0552),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities (COM(2025)0545),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 July 2025 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the European Competitiveness Fund ('ECF'), including the specific programme for defence research and innovation activities, repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/522, (EU) 2021/694, (EU) 2021/697, (EU) 2021/783, repealing provisions of Regulations (EU) 2021/696, (EU) 2023/588, and amending Regulation (EU) [EDIP] (COM(2025)0555),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 July 2025 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility for the

⁷ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2026)0111.

period 2028-2034, amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 (COM(2025)0547),

- having regard to the 9th Cohesion Report, published by the Commission on 27 March 2024, and the Commission communication of 27 March 2024 on the 9th Cohesion Report (COM(2024)0149),
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 May 2025 on the ninth report on economic and social cohesion⁸,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 18 February 2026 on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – Strong regions for a safe Europe (COM(2026)0082),
 - – having regard to the EU's defence readiness initiatives for 2030, including the European Drone Defence Initiative and the Eastern Flank Watch,
 - having regard to the EU preparedness union strategy and its whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to crisis prevention, preparedness and response,
 - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 17 June 2026 on the communication from the Commission on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – Strong regions for a safe Europe⁹,
 - having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 28 May 2025 on the European Union's strategic approach to the Black Sea region (JOIN(2025)0135);
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 4 November 2025 entitled '2025 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2025)0690);
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 8 December 2010 on the European Union strategy for the Danube region (COM(2010)0715),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2009 on the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea region (COM(2009)248);
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A10-0264/2026),

- A. whereas the EU's eastern border regions constitute its first territorial layer of resilience and deterrence and play a strategic role in the protection of the EU's external border and make a significant contribution to European security, as well as to the EU's territorial cohesion; whereas these regions collectively guard some 3 646 km of the EU's external

⁸ OJ C, C/2026/583, 24.2.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/583/oj>.

⁹ OJ C, C/2026/4654, 23.9.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/4654/oj>.

land border with Russia and Belarus and serve as the EU's frontline gateway along a further 1 370 km with Ukraine and 680 km with the Republic of Moldova, together with over 600 km of maritime border on the Black Sea, representing well over a third of all the EU's external land borders in Europe; whereas many of the regions covered by the Commission's communication are among the EU's less developed regions, are facing long-standing demographic challenges, while also being very sparsely populated areas in some cases, and are suffering the effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the hybrid activities being carried out by Russia and Belarus, including the instrumentalisation of migration, as well as the direct and indirect consequences of proximity to the war along the borders with Ukraine and Moldova; whereas these regions are bearing disproportionate economic, social, demographic and territorial and security costs in connection with their fulfilment of strategic functions for the benefit of the EU as a whole, in particular by ensuring the security of external borders, the resilience of supply chains, military mobility, energy security and the functioning of the European logistics infrastructure; whereas the eastern border regions should be regarded as strategic territories of the EU whose development constitutes an element of building European resilience, competitiveness and strategic autonomy; whereas the economic impact goes beyond direct financial costs and also encompasses lost opportunities, deferred investments, higher perceived risks for private investors, and the need for public authorities to rapidly adjust to an evolving geopolitical environment, elements that remain insufficiently accounted for in the conventional indicators of cohesion policy;

- B. whereas border regions are home to 30 % of the EU population and account for 40 % of its territory; whereas one third of the population of rural regions lives in a border region; whereas the regions on the eastern flank, constituting a protective barrier for the entire EU and a particularly vulnerable part of its territory, deserve a dedicated policy and financial response encompassing instruments relating to cohesion policy, competitiveness policy, security policy, research and development policy, and strategic investment, commensurate with the challenges that they face, including the adverse effects of climate change, and to reflect the asymmetric economic and social burden borne by these territories relative to the rest of the EU; whereas in the eastern border regions EU cohesion policy has delivered tangible results for citizens, local authorities, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), transport accessibility, climate adaptation, energy infrastructure and for quality of life;
- C. whereas the eastern border regions have experienced a significant population decline – by an average of 2.6 % between 2016 and 2025 – while the population of the EU as a whole has increased by 1.2 %; whereas some of these regions have lost more than 10 % of their population over the last decade, and, in extreme cases, more than 17 % of their inhabitants; whereas labour shortages and the emigration of young people are undermining the long-term prospects for regional development, further widening regional disparities and increasing the need for targeted cohesion policy measures to strengthen territorial resilience, economic competitiveness and social cohesion; whereas, the depopulation of border regions poses a threat not only to their socio-economic development, but also to the security and resilience of the EU as a whole;
- D. whereas border regions, and especially eastern border regions, are disproportionately bearing the costs of hosting war refugees: by early 2026, over 1.3 million Ukrainian

refugees had been registered in Poland alone, and significant numbers of them have settled in the border regions of Romania, Hungary and Slovakia; whereas the Baltic States host beneficiaries of temporary protection at levels well above the EU average relative to their population; whereas these regions must simultaneously cope with an outflow of their own residents and growing demand for public services from new arrivals, placing sustained pressure on local budgets, healthcare, education, housing and public infrastructure; whereas migration pressure, as well as the efforts involved in protecting the EU's external borders, should be taken into account as a permanent factor in assessing the financial needs of border regions, even after the end of hostilities; whereas these burdens have largely been borne by national, regional and local funds, without adequate compensation from the EU budget, which provides justification for the establishment of a permanent financial support mechanism for the regions bearing the heaviest burden;

- E. whereas the consequences of the closure of the borders with Russia and Belarus are being felt directly by local communities and businesses in the eastern border regions; whereas the volume of rail freight traffic on the corridors serving these borders has fallen by 75-80 %, and the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in the most affected regions has decreased by 10-35 %; whereas from 2022 to 2023, Member States on the eastern flank have experienced weaker real GDP growth since the start of the war, with growth in this period estimated to be 1.4–1.8 percentage points lower than the EU average and recorded inflation rates approximately 3-4 percentage points higher than the EU average; whereas these effects compound current problems linked to the peripheral nature of these regions, their sustainable development and poor transport connectivity and consequently their limited attractiveness to investors; whereas the regions bordering Ukraine are experiencing similar adverse effects resulting from the ongoing armed conflict and are bearing long-term costs associated with acting as the EU's main logistics, transport and humanitarian hub; whereas these adverse effects also include lost investment opportunities resulting from an increase in the perceived risk of doing business, particularly in regions directly neighbouring Ukraine, owing to their proximity to the ongoing hostilities; whereas the Commission should develop a methodology for estimating the geopolitical costs incurred by border regions and take these into account when allocating funds;
- F. whereas Russia conducts coordinated hybrid activities, including large-scale disinformation and information manipulation campaigns aimed at undermining public trust in the European Union, NATO and democratic institutions, disseminating false narratives about Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and distorting historical facts; whereas such campaigns increasingly target young people through online platforms and social media and constitute a direct threat to democratic resilience and social cohesion in the eastern border regions;
- G. whereas the Member States bordering Ukraine have substantially increased their support for Ukraine's resistance against Russia's aggression, notably through the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes, which have mobilised nearly EUR 2 billion to strengthen cross-border road and rail connectivity, improve Danube navigability and expand capacity at key border crossings and ports such as Constanța, thereby sustaining Ukraine's export routes and vital trade flows; whereas these Member States have simultaneously reinforced their own security and energy resilience, including through improved military mobility

and cross-border energy interconnections supported by the Connecting Europe Facility, thereby also strengthening connectivity and cooperation with Ukraine and Moldova; whereas, in doing so, these Member States are bearing a considerable share of the overall effort to build resilience in response to increased pressure, including responding to an influx of displaced persons, strained public services and disrupted trade and transport networks;

- H. whereas heightened geopolitical risk in eastern border regions increases the cost of capital, weakens investor confidence, raises insurance and logistics costs, disrupts supply chains and reduces the capacity of local SMEs to remain competitive within the single market; whereas EU eastern border regions perform a strategic gateway function for the EU through key road, rail, customs, humanitarian and logistics corridors, which are essential for trade, military mobility, emergency response, reconstruction logistics and the functioning of the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes; whereas this gateway function benefits the EU as a whole and should therefore be supported as a European strategic priority, rather than treated as a purely local or national responsibility; whereas the implementation of EU measures to facilitate Ukrainian exports has placed a disproportionate burden on the eastern border regions, where the increased transit and temporary concentration of agricultural products has generated significant market distortions, additional logistical and storage costs, downward pressure on agricultural prices and serious challenges for local farmers and agri-food businesses, which have contributed to the EU's solidarity efforts while bearing a disproportionate share of their economic consequences; whereas the deteriorating security perception is undermining investor confidence in the eastern border regions, leading some foreign investors to reconsider their investment plans, to make investment decisions conditional upon future security developments or in some cases to withdraw from the region;
- I. whereas the Commission's communication of 18 February 2026 does not refer to the European Union's existing macro-regional strategies, two of which – for the Baltic Sea and Danube regions – have territorial scopes that partially overlap with the territory of the eastern border regions defined in the strategy;
- J. whereas the EU has decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova recognising that its role and responsibility in the Black Sea region is increasing and that the enlargement process constitutes a strategic investment to enhance regional security and resilience; whereas enlargement unifies Europe, based on shared values and identity, while embodying an economic, social and democratic model; whereas Ukraine and Moldova have made good progress on their paths towards European integration; whereas eastern Member States have provided direct and substantial energy support to Moldova, including covering up to 62 % of its electricity needs at points of acute shortage and supplying natural gas through the Iași–Chișinău pipeline, made necessary by Russia's targeted destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, which had previously supplied a significant share of Moldova's electricity; whereas the Black Sea region, encompassing the EU's Black Sea Member States, Ukraine, Moldova and other regional partners, represents almost 164 million people and a combined GDP of approximately EUR 2 trillion, underlining its considerable economic and geostrategic significance for the EU; whereas the increasing investment pressure on Member States bordering Ukraine and Moldova is compounded by Russia's continued attacks on regional infrastructure, which discourage private investment and increase insurance

costs, underlining the urgency of reinforced EU financial and political support to accompany the integration of Ukraine and Moldova into the internal market; whereas Moldova is also deeply affected by the war in Ukraine and the disinformation campaigns led and/or funded by Russia and has to find new means and partners to resolve its economic and social challenges;

- K. whereas special economic zones, industrial parks, resilience clusters and regional investment platforms are tools for attracting investment to structurally weak regions affected by high unemployment, depopulation, weakened connectivity, the consequences of climate change and heightened geopolitical risks; whereas the eastern border regions, which are characterised by a combination of these factors, require particular support in this regard, including higher regional aid intensity, adjustments to regional aid maps and greater flexibility in the application of State aid rules to reflect the exceptional situation they are facing; whereas the development of these regions' industrial, logistical and technological potential will be of fundamental importance for Ukraine's future reconstruction and for strengthening the economic resilience of the EU as a whole; whereas brain drain disproportionately affects less developed and border regions and, if left unaddressed, the phenomenon will have long-term and permanent effects on the future of the EU; whereas insufficient transport infrastructure and digital and energy connectivity, together with the interruption of long-established economic relations with Russia and Belarus, have further weakened the competitiveness of the eastern border regions, discouraged private investment and deepened their structural economic disadvantages; whereas limited energy autonomy, higher energy prices and insufficient local renewable energy production increase the cost of living and cost of production in many eastern border regions; whereas the development of diversified and locally available energy sources, including geothermal energy where appropriate, contributes to both regional competitiveness and strategic resilience; whereas the economic, political and social relations and the partnership between the eastern border regions and Ukraine have drastically changed since the full scale invasion of the country, reshaping necessities, and the cooperation and investment priorities;
- L. whereas strong administrative capacity is an essential prerequisite for the effective absorption of EU funds, the successful implementation of investments and the provision of high-quality public services; whereas in the eastern border regions, the combined effects of geopolitical challenge, demographic decline and institutional pressure make strong administrative capacity a strategic necessity rather than merely a technical issue, requiring targeted and long-term support at European level;
- M. whereas the security, resilience and competitiveness of the EU are interlinked, and the development of the eastern border regions represents an investment in the achievement of all three objectives simultaneously; whereas the development of dual-use technologies, in particular in the fields of aviation, unmanned systems, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, robotics and space technologies, constitutes one of the pillars of the EU's economic resilience and security; whereas investment in the eastern border regions is not merely a component of cohesion policy, but constitutes an investment in the security, resilience, competitiveness and strategic autonomy of the EU as a whole;

The eastern border regions are facing unprecedented challenges and crises

1. Welcomes the Commission's communication entitled 'Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – Strong regions for a safe Europe', and regards it as an important first step towards a comprehensive European strategy for these territories; stresses, however, that this communication should mark the start of legislative action, rather than be a substitute for it; is firmly convinced that the scale of the challenge facing the eastern border regions calls for a dedicated and long-term financial response, primarily through the use of cohesion policy, complemented by instruments under direct and indirect management of the EU, commensurate with their contribution to the security, resilience, fight against climate change and territorial integrity of the EU; underlines that future financial and policy responses should preserve the long-term investment capacity of these regions while addressing emerging strategic priorities, and should, where appropriate, be accompanied by adequate financial resources commensurate with the scale of the challenges they face; stresses that this response must involve genuine additional resources, rather than the mere reallocation of current cohesion policy funds;
2. Calls, therefore, for the establishment, under the 2028-2034 cohesion policy framework, of a dedicated top-up allocation for the eastern border regions, additional to the national and regional allocations otherwise available to the Member States concerned and distributed on the basis of objective territorial vulnerability and strategic function criteria; stresses that the eastern border top-up allocation should follow the logic of current specific territorial instruments used for EU territories facing permanent or structural constraints, including specific additional allocations and tailored implementation rules, while reflecting the specific nature of eastern border regions as territories exposed to war-related, hybrid, demographic, economic and security pressures; underlines that no Member State or region located on the EU's eastern border should be left alone in addressing the consequences of Russia's military aggression, hybrid threats and geopolitical pressure; stresses that solidarity with the eastern border regions is not merely an expression of cohesion policy but a strategic investment in the security, resilience and future prosperity of the entire EU;
3. Recalls that the cohesion policy mid-term review led to the reallocation of approximately EUR 34.6 billion from cohesion policy funds to new priorities in 25 Member States; welcomes the increased levels of co-financing and pre-financing; notes, however, that these measures were conditional on the reallocation of at least 10 % of the programme's funds to new priorities and did not involve the provision of additional EU financial resources; stresses that the eastern border regions have made effective use of the additional opportunities introduced as part of the mid-term review by reallocating approximately EUR 5.6 billion to measures relating to military mobility, the development and production of key technologies, and the defence industry, thereby contributing to increased security in these regions, whilst maintaining economic competitiveness and long-term prospects for their inhabitants; warns that rising expenditure on security and defence is placing increasing pressure on national budgets, limiting Member States' ability to provide appropriate co-financing for cohesion policy programmes; stresses that new security policy commitments must not be funded at the expense of traditional cohesion policy objectives; calls on the Commission to develop a separate co-financing mechanism for projects carried out by regions bearing particular geopolitical costs;

4. Calls on the Commission to recognise the eastern border regions as strategic territories of significance for the security, competitiveness and strategic autonomy of the EU and to ensure that their specific needs are reflected in future cohesion policy regulations and programmes, with a particular focus on the legislative package for the EU financial perspective from 2028 to 2034; calls on the Commission to ensure that eastern border regions constitute a horizontal priority across the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), including within national and regional partnership plans, in particular by ensuring that these plans set out, as a requirement, the priorities, measures, indicators and financial allocations corresponding to the specific needs of the eastern border regions as well as by ensuring that these regions and local authorities are involved in the preparation, amendment and implementation of the relevant plans, chapters and programmes on a compulsory basis; insists on the full application of the partnership principle and multilevel governance; stresses the need to establish a structured governance framework, going beyond the Commission's annual dialogue with the eastern border regions, to ensure the systematic involvement of their local and regional authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society, including, in particular, youth organisations, representatives of women and vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, in the implementation of the EU strategy for these regions, supported by strengthened administrative capacity and robust, mechanisms for territorial impact assessment; stresses that administrative capacity-building must be treated as a strategic investment, not merely as technical assistance, and must be directly linked to programme priorities, to beneficiaries and to the implementation ecosystem, rather than limited to the internal functioning of administrations; calls on the Commission to establish a permanent European forum of eastern regions as a platform for cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and regional authorities, and including Moldova, that would ensure strategic coordination and coherence beyond national boundaries, and be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy; stresses the need for the regions to be systematically involved in the preparation of legislation concerning security, military mobility, critical infrastructure and economic resilience; stresses that the eastern border regions should be treated as one functionally interconnected European macro-area for the purposes of programming, implementation and evaluation of EU financial instruments, without prejudice to the Member State competences;
5. Calls on the Commission to provide greater implementation flexibility for programmes in the eastern border regions, including through simplified procedures for programme amendments, adapted eligibility rules and extended implementation deadlines where justified by the consequences of geopolitical developments; underlines that EU implementation rules should encourage responsible innovation and justified risk-taking in project design and execution, while maintaining sound financial management, legal certainty and proportionality in control and audit requirements; supports a revision by the Commission of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER)¹⁰ and its assessment of the need to amend the current guidelines on regional State aid in order to address the specific challenges facing eastern border regions, so that, through greater flexibility in this area, Member States can more effectively address investment gaps and

¹⁰ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 187, 26.6.2014, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/651/oj>).

market failures; underlines that such flexibility would allow higher regional aid intensities, accelerated pre-financing and streamlined approval for resilience-enhancing projects; calls on the Commission, in this context, to grant the eastern border regions a special border region status and to introduce greater flexibility and simplification of the State aid rules applicable to them, including by increasing the maximum aid intensity in these regions by at least 10 to 15 percentage points above the standard regional aid ceilings and by raising the relevant notification thresholds, in a manner compatible with Article 107(3)(a) and (c) TFEU; stresses that where a regional managing authority does not launch calls, delays project selection, applies non-transparent criteria or fails to ensure fair access for local authorities and public-service providers in eligible eastern border regions, the Member State, in agreement with the Commission, should be able to activate a national reserve or direct-call mechanism for the affected territories;

6. Calls on the Commission to actively integrate the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region and for the Danube region into the new financing mechanisms and to make them key instruments of democratic cooperation, civil security and economic exchange; stresses that making use of current management structures and macro-regional partnerships will help to avoid duplication of effort and increase the effectiveness of support, particularly in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regions; calls on the Commission to take into account the ongoing work on a macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian region, which could become an important instrument for strengthening resilience, territorial cohesion and cross-border cooperation with Ukraine;

Addressing the specific needs of the eastern border regions in policies and instruments funded under the 2028-2034 MFF

7. Stresses that the suspension of cross-border cooperation programmes with Russia and Belarus has created a persistent rift in support for the EU's eastern border regions; recalls that these regions have lost support amounting to approximately EUR 300 million, while only approximately EUR 150 million has been reallocated to other cross-border cooperation programmes, meaning that these regions have suffered a net loss of EUR 150 million in territorial cooperation support and that this loss has not yet been compensated for; notes that these regions are currently forced to build new partnerships within the EU and that part of the EU funding has been redirected towards security and resilience objectives; points out that the loss of these programmes was not a choice made by the regions, but a consequence of a political decision taken at EU level, and that the regions deserve full financial compensation under the next financial framework; stresses that border regions should not be forced to choose between cohesion and security; calls on the Commission to establish a dedicated allocation for regions bordering Russia and Belarus in European territorial programmes after 2027;
8. Calls on the Commission to establish, within the framework of the future Interreg programme, a dedicated funding envelope amounting to at least the equivalent of the funds lost by the regions bordering Russia and Belarus; emphasises that such funding should enable these regions to establish partnerships with other regions on the EU's eastern flank – as well as with regions in Ukraine and Moldova – without having to meet the standard geographical requirements of Interreg programmes; recognises that such surrogate partnerships are already being implemented in some regions and should be formalised and adequately funded in the next financial framework; calls, therefore,

on the Commission to ensure the continuity and substantial reinforcement of the dedicated Interreg cooperation with Moldova and Ukraine, which should support projects in the fields of transport, energy connectivity, border-crossing infrastructure, healthcare, education, civil protection, water and environmental resilience, digital connectivity and local economic development; believes that cross-border cooperation is an essential step in the EU pre-accession processes, and is one which encourages candidate countries to share experiences and learn about how the EU functions internally;

9. Expresses concern that the planned centralisation of the management of Interreg programmes within a single plan for the next MFF may further limit the ability of eastern border regions to build flexible cross-border partnerships tailored to their specific geopolitical situation; calls on the Commission to ensure that the centralisation of management does not come at the expense of these regions' territorial flexibility, and that the new specific objective for eastern border regions is based on financial allocations that genuinely compensate for lost funding, simplified rules for the selection of partners, and a guaranteed role for local and regional authorities, in line with the partnership principle in managing the programmes; underlines that local and regional authorities play a key role in cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries; calls, therefore, on the Member States to provide them with the tools and resources they need to foster ambitious cross-border cooperation; calls for the future Interreg 2028-2034 programmes to include a dedicated north-south cooperation dimension among EU eastern border regions, enabling the exchange of best practices on administrative and civil resilience, the development of joint infrastructure, energy, security and logistics projects, and the formulation of common positions on the adaptation of European instruments; underlines the need to strengthen cooperation between the states of the Baltic Sea region, in particular through targeted support for cross-border civil society projects, youth exchange programmes and cultural initiatives; emphasises the importance of small-scale and cross-border projects in bringing people together, and in that way creating new potential for sustainable local development; calls, moreover, on the Member States and regions to make full use of the potential offered by the BRIDGEforEU Regulation¹¹ to establish cross-border partnerships;
10. Calls for the eastern border regions to be granted frontline priority status under the new Interreg-specific objective, with a higher co-financing rate, simplified application procedures, dedicated technical support and a mechanism for the rapid mobilisation of funds in the event of a further escalation of geopolitical threats; stresses that these regions cannot be treated in the same way as cross-border regions operating in a stable geopolitical environment, as their situation requires specific institutional and financial solutions; calls for accelerated investment in railway interoperability, including European-standard gauge connections, transshipment capacity, signalling systems and the removal of technical and administrative bottlenecks at EU borders with Ukraine and Moldova;
11. Is convinced that, within the framework of the national and regional partnership plans for 2028-2034 as well as the Interreg plan, eastern border regions should be covered by

¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2025/925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 May 2025 on a Border Regions' instrument for development and growth (BRIDGEforEU) (OJ L, 2025/925, 19.5.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/925/oj>).

a mandatory package of financial preferences and simplifications, including higher levels of pre-financing and co-financing, simplified cost options, fast-track project approval, reduced administrative burden and dedicated technical assistance in order to improve projects' liquidity and the regions' capacity to respond to challenges relating to security, non-conventional or hybrid risks, resilience, and economic, social and territorial development; stresses that the maximum level of co-financing for projects carried out in eastern border regions should be up to 95 %, while for security, resilience or critical infrastructure projects of significance, there should be the possibility of financing up to 100 % of eligible costs; believes that a 30 % pre-financing rate should be provided to meet urgent liquidity needs; points out that the crisis provisions envisaged for 2028 to 2034 are framed primarily around natural disasters and health crises;

12. Stresses that the specific needs of the eastern border regions should be addressed horizontally across all relevant EU financial instruments from 2028 to 2034, whether under shared management or managed directly by the Commission; calls for an enabling policy and investment framework, supported by appropriate conditions and financial incentives, to be provided for eastern border regions; stresses that support should not be limited to cohesion policy instruments such as national and regional partnership plans or the Interreg plan, but also through other relevant EU policies and programmes, including the common agricultural policy, the ECF and the Connecting Europe Facility; stresses that this is in order to strengthen resilience, competitiveness, territorial connectivity and to ensure that these instruments prioritise projects contributing to the creation of local and regional value chains, including agriculture and food processing, traditional and energy-intensive industries, dual-use industries and strategic manufacturing; calls for dedicated and ring-fenced allocations of up to 10 % of the relevant EU instruments' budgets for eastern border regions, additional to the resources otherwise available under national and regional envelopes, and stresses that such support should not result from the reallocation or reduction of funding already assigned to other cohesion policy priorities or less developed regions; points out that this ring-fenced allocation should primarily finance investments in education, skills and entrepreneurship for young people in the eastern border regions, particularly in defence technologies, cybersecurity, digital technologies, agriculture, food production and civil preparedness; stresses that these investments should be designed to directly support regional labour markets, reduce youth outmigration and strengthen the integration of young people into local, regional and European value chains;
13. Stresses that eastern border regions face specific structural and geopolitical constraints which generate a disadvantage when applying for funding from programmes managed centrally by the EU; calls on the Commission to take these specific circumstances into account through dedicated calls for proposals, higher co-financing rates, targeted technical assistance, capacity-building, and the incorporation, where justified, of strategic criteria reflecting the contribution of projects to EU security, resilience, territorial connectivity and supply-chain resilience; stresses that this support should primarily take the form of grants and should supplement the funds available under cohesion policy; supports the development of regional innovation ecosystems linking enterprises, universities, research institutions, vocational education providers, young people and public authorities, including in the fields of cybersecurity, energy, transport, health, agri-food and dual-use technologies; stresses the need to strengthen the strategic

industrial potential of eastern border regions, their innovation, research and development capacities and the participation of their enterprises in European supply chains, in particular in sectors relevant to the EU's security, resilience and competitiveness and the future reconstruction of Ukraine; calls, therefore, for dedicated funding instruments to be provided for projects relating to logistics, digital and transport infrastructure, innovation and cooperation between businesses preparing to participate in the reconstruction of Ukraine; calls, in addition, for the establishment of regional one-stop-shops for the private sector in eastern border regions, providing companies with integrated access to financing, advisory services, market information, innovation support and partnership opportunities;

14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, supported by EU financial instruments, to strengthen the fact-checking initiatives of local, regional and national TV channels and media literacy programmes in the eastern border regions; stresses that such actions should be systematically supported under relevant EU financial instruments, including under cohesion policy, Creative Europe and other applicable programmes, as part of a structured response to foreign information manipulation and interference; underlines the importance of targeted investment in democratic resilience, particularly for young people and vulnerable communities;
15. Stresses that the EU's strategy for the eastern border regions must be tailored to the specific needs of each of these regions, including in terms of natural resources, economy and human capital and taking into account their varying levels of potential, as well as the environmental risks; notes, in the light of the above, that the geographical scope of the term 'eastern border regions' should therefore encompass EU regions at NUTS 2 level which have at least a land border of 5 km or at least a maritime border of 30 km with Russia or Belarus, or which have a land or maritime border with Ukraine or Moldova or access to the Black Sea; stresses that all these regions bear the geopolitical costs of war and the threats related to it, regardless of which non-EU country a given NUTS 2 region borders; notes furthermore that the thus defined eastern border regions directly neighbouring Russia and Belarus are the regions that are most vulnerable to a deterioration in security conditions and an increased risk of military incidents, including numerous incursions by unmanned aerial vehicles, cyberthreats and disinformation campaigns, which must be reflected in the EU's approach to these regions compared to other eastern border regions; underlines that the Commission should periodically review the territorial scope of the strategy, taking into account changing geopolitical circumstances and the implications of the EU's future enlargement without undermining the objective geographical criteria defining the eastern border regions; calls for the first such review to be carried out, at the latest, as part of the mid-term revision of the 2028-2034 MFF; calls, therefore for the eastern border regions strategy to be fully integrated into the implementation of the 2028-2034 MFF and the policies and instruments financed from that budget;

Security and resilience as prerequisites for the socio-economic development of the eastern border regions

16. Raises concern about the increasingly serious hybrid threats affecting the eastern border regions, including sabotage, cyber-attacks, disinformation, the instrumentalisation of migration, GPS jamming and spoofing, drone incursions, the presence of drifting sea

mines and attacks on critical infrastructure; expresses serious concern about repeated drone incidents and the associated airspace threat warnings, which have generated security, economic and societal consequences extending well beyond the territories immediately adjacent to the EU's external border, and have had a severe impact on the tourism industry in the eastern border regions; stresses that such security-related economic shocks should be recognised as crises capable of triggering the relevant EU flexibility mechanisms, including those of the national and regional partnership plans; welcomes, moreover, the European Drone Defence Initiative at the eastern border of the EU; stresses that this initiative should be fully integrated into the relevant EU financial instruments, including security-related, defence and dual-use funding mechanisms, in order to ensure rapid deployment, adequate financing and long-term operational sustainability;

17. Notes that the EU's approach to its eastern border regions is consistent with its security initiatives, including for increased military mobility, and recognises that investments in these regions contribute directly to the EU's overall security resilience and strategic preparedness; notes, however, that while so-called dual-use investments may create economic opportunities, in this context they risk being concentrated in regions that already have industrial and innovation capacities; emphasises that, without appropriate territorial safeguards and participation mechanisms, this risks further increasing spatial concentration rather than promoting cohesion; considers that this limitation can be overcome by extending the scope of dual-use investments to further areas of activity, such as healthcare or education; emphasises the economic importance of such measures – including high-quality jobs, improved transport, greater logistical capacity, which also encompasses the development of intermodal terminals, transshipment infrastructure, logistics centres and regional airports of strategic importance, and multiplier effects in terms of innovation – for strengthening the broader links between the eastern border regions and the rest of Europe, which remain an essential element for the competitiveness of these regions and for EU cohesion; emphasises that military mobility in eastern border regions requires investment not only in Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) corridors, but also in maintenance facilities and border-crossing procedures enabling the rapid movement of troops, equipment, emergency services and humanitarian aid; calls for cohesion policy and the Connecting Europe Facility, including its military mobility strand, to be deployed in a complementary manner so that dual-use corridors also deliver tangible improvements in civilian connectivity including east-west road and rail links connecting the eastern border regions to the core TEN-T network; stresses that the development of dual-use technologies should encompass not only infrastructure, but also scientific research, technological development, the commercialisation of research results, business development and the training of highly qualified personnel; underlines that the need for security investment, resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, is particularly acute at the EU borders with Russia and Belarus, but also in the Black Sea region, and at the EU borders with Ukraine and Moldova, following recurrent drone incursions into the EU airspace and territorial waters and growing threats to critical offshore energy infrastructure; points out that these developments require reinforced investment in surveillance, border protection, air and maritime monitoring, critical infrastructure resilience, and rapid-response capabilities, in order to safeguard territorial integrity, protect strategic assets, and strengthen the overall security posture of the affected regions; emphasises that cohesion and social policy cannot deliver on their objectives without a strong European

defence, as security is a precondition for economic and social development and for the willingness of people and businesses to remain in the eastern border regions; calls, therefore, for civil protection and preparedness infrastructure to be eligible across all EU funding instruments, including the national and regional partnership plans;

18. Is of the opinion that the unique security and resilience challenges facing the eastern border regions require support to be extended to categories of investment which, under standard cohesion policy rules, would not be eligible for funding; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that, during the negotiations of the national and regional partnership plans for 2028 to 2034, specific provisions are made enabling investments to be made in the eastern border regions in the following categories:
- (a) healthcare infrastructure in border regions, including hospitals, emergency medical services and telemedicine, within a 150 km radius of the EU border with Russia, Belarus or Ukraine, bearing in mind that such infrastructure fulfils both a civilian healthcare function and a support function for civil defence and protection in the event of armed conflict;
 - (b) local and regional road infrastructure, and smart, green and sustainable mobility solutions, including cross-border solutions and links not forming part of the TEN-T network, which are important for mobility, accessibility and territorial resilience, in particular for roads serving border crossings and routes and rural road networks in sparsely populated border areas, which are essential for connecting isolated communities, for evacuation and for military transport;
 - (c) energy infrastructure strengthening regional energy autonomy, including renewable energy generation, interconnectors, geothermal energy projects where appropriate, smart grids and energy storage;
 - (d) sustainable maritime infrastructure, ports and offshore energy networks in the Baltic Sea region, contributing both to European energy independence and security of supply, and creating high-quality training and jobs in border regions;
 - (e) critical digital infrastructures and connectivity, including effective cybersecurity measures, high-capacity broadband and 5G connectivity, counter-drone detection systems, low-level airspace surveillance systems, including for the protection of airports, electronic warfare resilience and secure backup systems for critical public services;
 - (f) dual-use infrastructure such as investments in transport, energy, telecommunications and logistics serving both civilian purposes and civil defence and preparedness needs, as well as the development of regional dual-use technology ecosystems encompassing aviation technologies, unmanned systems, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, space technologies, robotics, autonomous technologies, advanced materials and centres for the testing and certification of new technologies;
 - (g) civil preparedness and resilience infrastructure such as multi-purpose public shelters, energy microgrids, including those utilising renewable energy sources, water supply, sewerage and flood control infrastructure, including water reserves, emergency

communications systems and ground-based Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) support infrastructure, rescue systems, civil protection infrastructure and solutions ensuring the continuity of supply of essential goods and services;

- (h) infrastructure supporting border protection and cross-border cooperation, including logistics centres, administrative cooperation centres, training facilities and digital platforms for cooperation between local authorities, as well as infrastructure supporting cross-border resilience, such as customs and sanitary-veterinary facilities, parking and queuing systems, digital border management tools, crisis reception points, secure warehouses, mobile inspection equipment and facilities enabling the separation of civilian, humanitarian, military and commercial traffic in times of crisis;
 - (i) management of security-related incidents and crises, including as a result of hostile acts, such as hybrid threats;
 - (j) infrastructure supporting food security and agri-food resilience, including cold-chain infrastructure, food storage, veterinary and phytosanitary laboratories, agri-food logistics hubs and SMEs operating in regional food supply chains, in particular in agricultural eastern border regions;
 - (k) productive investment support for enterprises and activities that are complimentary with European Defence Projects of Common Interest, especially the DronE and Counter-Drone European Resolve and the Eastern Flank Watch;
 - (l) essential local public-service infrastructure, including schools, childcare facilities, elderly-care services and affordable housing for healthcare professionals, teachers, emergency personnel and other essential workers, where such investments are necessary to counter depopulation and guarantee the continuity of essential services, as well as to boost the local economies and attract workforces in the eastern border regions;
 - (m) human capital, skills, youth retention and community resilience, including investments in vocational education and training, reskilling and upskilling through the European Social Fund Plus and the Pact for Skills; stronger education-to-employment pathways through Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence, quality apprenticeships, the upskilling of VET teachers and cooperation between the education, research and innovation sectors and local employers; support for civic participation, volunteering, media and financial literacy, civil preparedness and grassroots initiatives aimed at strengthening local resilience, mutual trust and social inclusion;
19. Underlines that the Commission and Member States should facilitate the acceleration of the permitting and implementation of strategic dual use infrastructure financed under EU financial instruments; stresses that administrative procedures should be adapted to the urgency of security-related and resilience-enhancing investments in the eastern border regions, without compromising environmental and legal standards, but ensuring proportionality and efficiency in implementation; calls, therefore, on the Commission to ensure that the guidelines on the ‘do no significant harm’ principle for the 2028-2034 MFF include clear and proportionate exceptions for investments in security, defence and civil preparedness in the eastern border regions;
20. Calls for EU support to be made available for regional and local civil-preparedness

plans in eastern border regions, including population alert systems, evacuation and reception plans, emergency stockpiles, school and community preparedness education, first-aid training, regular crisis simulation exercises and coordination between municipalities, civil protection services, police, border guards, healthcare providers, firefighters, NGOs, transport operators and critical infrastructure owners; recognises that the experience gained by local authorities in the eastern border regions since 2022 in the areas of crisis management, humanitarian aid, refugee integration, cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities and infrastructure reconstruction constitutes European added value and should be taken into account when designing future EU financial instruments;

21. Calls on the Commission to prioritise investments that improve transport accessibility in border regions, including road and rail links, as well as inland waterways and ports, the development of logistics infrastructure and the modernisation of border crossings with Ukraine and Moldova, as measures that strengthen resilience, competitiveness and future European integration; stresses in this context the strategic importance of transport infrastructure, logistics hubs and the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes for maintaining EU support to Ukraine and supporting its future reconstruction; calls for dedicated EU support for investments increasing the capacity, resilience and interoperability of this transport and logistics infrastructure; encourages, moreover, the development of alternative transport routes in eastern border regions in order to ensure continuity of mobility and supply chains where principal corridors are disrupted by military, hybrid or natural crises; encourages investment in cross-border and regional public transport services connecting peripheral communities with employment centres, education facilities, healthcare services and border crossings, given that territorial connectivity is a prerequisite for economic convergence, military mobility, regional competitiveness and full integration into the single market;
22. Stresses that investment in the energy sector should be explicitly prioritised under cohesion policy, the ECF, Connecting Europe Facility for Energy and other relevant instruments, as part of a broader objective of reducing energy poverty and strengthening strategic resilience; moreover, calls for enhanced EU support for the protection, development and connection of offshore and onshore energy infrastructure and associated port facilities, as well as for investment in the monitoring, protection, redundancy and rapid repair of undersea energy and telecommunications infrastructure;
23. Encourages public-private partnerships supported by EU financial instruments to mobilise private investment in the eastern border regions; stresses that blended finance instruments under InvestEU, the European Investment Bank Group and other relevant programmes should be actively used to reduce perceived investment risk and unlock private capital in geopolitically exposed regions;
24. Stresses that the right to stay should be understood as citizens' right to live, work, receive an education, start a family and benefit from high-quality public services in their region of residence, including in areas exposed to geopolitical pressure and security threats; emphasises that, in eastern border regions, the right to stay also requires support for local entrepreneurship, vocational education, healthcare, housing, transport accessibility and attractive jobs for young people, so that border communities are not forced to choose between security risks and economic emigration; recognises in this

context, the higher mobility costs faced by residents of border regions; calls, therefore, on the Commission, together with the Member States, to ensure adequate and predictable funding of measures aimed at retaining and attracting populations in the eastern border regions;

25. Points out that many eastern border regions are experiencing long-term depopulation and an exodus of young people and have an ageing population, which undermines their development potential and their ability to maintain public services; stresses that these phenomena are structural in nature and affect the entire eastern flank of the EU; calls on the Commission to prioritise eastern border regions in the implementation of the upcoming strategy on the right to stay; calls for national and regional partnership plans under the 2028-2034 MFF to include specific, measurable and adequately funded commitments to retain and attract residents, including loan schemes for first-time buyers on preferential terms, retention bonuses for healthcare workers and teachers, grants for the purchase of land for young farmers intending to settle in the eastern border regions, and co-funded childcare and elderly care infrastructure, with particular emphasis on rural areas at risk of depopulation; calls, moreover, for the establishment of a dedicated EU human capital mechanism for eastern border regions, structured around three complementary pillars: i) accelerating skills development in strategic sectors, ii) supporting the retention of existing talent and the return of young people who have left the region and iii) systematically linking every major investment project with a tailored vocational training component, developed in collaboration with universities, training centres and economic actors; stresses that, in the eastern border regions, the right to stay is directly linked to territorial resilience, demographic renewal and the EU's ability to maintain thriving communities along its external border; recognises that the depopulation of the eastern border regions should be regarded not only as a social and economic challenge, but also as a strategic threat to EU security; emphasises that infrastructure without people produces no lasting impact, and that demographic resilience is inseparable from economic resilience;
26. Emphasises that cohesion policy investments in security and defence in the eastern border regions must be complemented – not replaced – by sustainable investments in the socio-economic fabric of these regions; warns against any trade-off between security spending and long-term cohesion investments, which would lead to accelerated depopulation and irreversible regional decline; furthermore, stresses that the EU's eastern border regions suffer from structural shortages of private investment, resulting from their peripheral location, institutional weakness and the heightened geopolitical risks they have faced since 2022; stresses the need to support the tourism sector, which has been affected by the war, by funding campaigns to promote EU border regions as being safe and stable, as well as through investment in trans-regional infrastructure and the development of medical wellness tourism; points out that most of these regions are below the EU average in terms of innovation capacity, market access and institutional quality;
27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish new special economic zones and to expand and strengthen current ones in all eastern border regions, where structural unemployment, closed borders and an outflow of investment create an economic vacuum that market-based instruments alone cannot fill; calls, moreover, for EU State aid rules to be adapted to the specific situation of the eastern border regions,

so that the Member States can support investment in these areas more effectively without excessive procedural burdens; stresses that these regions bear disproportionate geopolitical and economic costs, which justify greater public involvement in attracting private investment; calls on the Commission to examine whether the current legal framework is flexible enough to address the exceptional structural challenges facing these territories;

State aid as an essential instrument to ensure the competitiveness of eastern border regions and equal access to the single market

28. Notes that the eastern border regions are characterised by higher levels of economic, demographic, security, territorial, climate and environmental vulnerability, and that none of the territorial classifications currently used in cohesion policy adequately reflect these differences; stresses that the current analytical and programming frameworks do not sufficiently capture the impact of persistent security-related pressures on regional development and investment conditions since none of the current measures treat security threats as a distinct dimension of territorial cohesion; points out that, while it is positive that the regions are identified as being at the NUTS 2 level, the map presented in the Commission communication of 18 February 2026 on the EU's eastern border regions does not reflect the geographical proximity of current administrative regions to the EU's external eastern border in all the countries concerned; recalls that administrative regions geographically adjacent to the Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian and Moldovan borders, as well as with access to the Black Sea, face unique challenges directly related to the proximity of these borders to the conflict resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; recognises, however, that within the geographical scope as defined in paragraph 15 of this resolution, mere geographical proximity to the external eastern border does not reflect the actual scale of the structural, demographic, economic, territorial and security-related challenges faced by individual eastern border regions and their degree of exposure to geopolitical risks; stresses, therefore, that the scale and persistence of these negative impacts should be taken into account when determining the intensity and forms of EU support; believes, moreover, that geopolitical threats should be regarded as a new dimension of EU territorial cohesion;
29. Calls on the Commission to review the rules on State aid, in particular the GBER, in order to reduce the administrative burden and increase the flexibility of support for businesses operating in regions along the EU's eastern border; emphasises further that, in the eastern border regions, the regional aid intensity map should be subject to adjustment by raising the maximum levels of support; points out that the aim of this change is to provide an additional economic boost to eastern border regions facing specific economic and geopolitical challenges, including those resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, in particular in relation to the stagnation of investment and the outflow of capital from these regions;
30. Calls on the Commission to develop, in cooperation with Eurostat and the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) as well as with the active engagement of Parliament and the Council, a composite vulnerability indicator for eastern border regions, as defined in paragraph 15 of this resolution, capable of capturing the combined negative effects of geopolitical economic,

demographic and security-related pressures; considers that this indicator should be updated and published regularly by the Commission and should be used to assess the degree of vulnerability of individual eastern border regions, identify their investments needs, guide the intensity and forms of EU support and monitor territorial resilience, while complementing current cohesion and territorial indicators; stresses that the indicator should complement, and not replace or modify, the geographical criteria defining the eastern border regions in paragraph 15 of this resolution; considers that the indicator may apply to the introduction of special State aid arrangements for eastern border regions, including those relating to aid intensity;

31. Stresses that the indicator should particularly take into account, as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, security-related pressures, exposure to hybrid threats, proximity to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova or the Black Sea, the economic consequences of the loss of cross-border trade and tourism, regional connectivity, demographic and social challenges, including brain drain, refugee and evacuation pressure, the presence of border crossings, cybersecurity and GNSS disruption exposure, the availability of public services and administrative capacity; points out that the indicator should also take into account deteriorating investment conditions, including increased perceived investment risk, higher financing and insurance costs, deferred or cancelled investments and the outflow of private capital, as well as the additional burden on regional transport, logistics, public services and municipal infrastructure resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including the operation of humanitarian and military assistance hubs and the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes; stresses that the indicator should primarily measure negative territorial impacts, structural vulnerability and additional costs borne by eastern border regions as a consequence of geopolitical and security related pressures; underlines that the presence, scale or strategic importance of transport, port, industrial logistics or other strategic infrastructure should not in itself constitute a factor increasing the assessed vulnerability of a region; calls on the Commission to use the indicator as a tool for monitoring territorial resilience and assessing investment needs, and for determining the appropriate intensity and forms of EU support within the group of eastern border regions defined in paragraph 15 of this resolution; calls on the Commission and Eurostat to publish regular statistical reports on the eastern border regions, based on a common monitoring framework and harmonised indicators;
32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The European Union's eastern border regions play a particularly strategic role, as they constitute the Union's first line of defence against geopolitical and security challenges, as well as economic disruptions resulting primarily from Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Russia's unjustified aggression has fundamentally altered the conditions for the development of these regions, exposing them to previously unseen problems such as: hybrid warfare activities, airspace violations, artificially induced migratory pressure and economic problems resulting from the suspension of economic and trade cooperation.

In the area of regional policy, one example of the adverse effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine is the suspension of Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes involving Russia and Belarus. As a result, some EUR 150 million has been reallocated to other cross-border cooperation programmes. For many years, these programmes were an important tool to support local development, infrastructure development, institutional cooperation and contacts between communities on both sides of the border. Their suspension was a necessary and justified response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the complicity of the Belarusian regime; however, this decision also had tangible economic and social consequences for the border regions on the European Union side.

The specific challenges faced by the eastern border regions were highlighted during the 2025 mid-term review of cohesion policy. The legislative package adopted as part of the mid-term review enabled these regions to make use of dedicated mechanisms in the form of a 10 % higher co-financing rate and a 9.5 % pre-financing rate. It also introduced the possibility of using cohesion policy funds to finance new priorities in the following areas: security and civil protection, competitiveness, housing, energy infrastructure and water resilience. It should be noted, however, that the review merely constituted a reallocation of existing funds without providing any new financial resources.

In February 2026, the European Commission adopted a strategy for the EU's eastern border regions ('Strong Eastern Regions for a Safe Europe'). This strategy recognises the special role that areas bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine play in ensuring the security, cohesion and competitiveness of the entire European Union, as they form the Union's external border. As part of the strategy, the European Commission committed the European Union to continuing its support for the eastern border regions. It also identified five priority areas:

- security and resilience;
- growth and regional prosperity – including through the new EastInvest instrument, designed to help the countries and regions concerned access credit and advisory support, with the involvement of the European Investment Bank Group, other international financial institutions, and national and regional development banks;
- building on local strengths;
- connectivity;
- supporting people, as the resilience of any region is based on the strength of its communities.

This report has been drawn up to set out the European Parliament's common position on EU support for eastern border regions in the context of the strategy for these regions published by

the European Commission. It is also worth highlighting the particular timing of this report's publication, given the ongoing legislative work at European Union level on the new multiannual financial framework and the package of regulations governing cohesion policy post-2027.

In the context of the EU budget post-2027, the report emphasises that the specific needs of the eastern border regions must be reflected in future cohesion policy regulations and programmes, including in the national and regional partnership plans for 2028 to 2034, calls for adequate financial compensation to be provided in connection with the suspension of Interreg programmes involving Russia and Belarus, and also calls for appropriate financial incentives and implementation conditions to be ensured for these regions in policies and instruments beyond the scope of cohesion policy, such as programmes managed centrally by the European Commission.

The report also stresses that Europe's security begins at its eastern border. The eastern border regions bear disproportionately high costs arising from geopolitical tensions on behalf of the Union as a whole. It is therefore essential to provide specific support to ensure the resilience of these regions by funding dual-use projects in various sectors, including healthcare and education. Furthermore, the report notes the need to ensure the 'right to remain' for the populations of these areas, highlighting the vital role of access not only to high-quality infrastructure, but also to public services.

The strategy for the EU's eastern border regions defines the boundaries of these areas; however, it is primarily of a geographical nature and has not been supported by a detailed analysis of the varying levels of exposure of individual regions to the effects of geopolitical changes. This report emphasises that eastern border regions do not constitute a uniform territorial category. The scale of the challenges relating to security, the loss of cross-border cooperation, the decline in economic activity, migratory pressure, hybrid threats and depopulation varies significantly between Member States, and even between regions within the same country. Consequently, the report calls for a shift away from a one-size-fits-all approach in favour of a more analytical and targeted approach, reflected, among other things, in the development of a composite vulnerability indicator for eastern border regions, which identifies the regions most affected by geopolitical pressure and its structural consequences.

ANNEX: DECLARATIONS OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that he included in his report input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that he received, in the preparation of the draft report, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register
1. European Economic and Social Committee;
2. European Committee of Regions;
3. Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland;
4. Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union.
2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that he has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).

**INFORMATION ON ADOPTION
BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE**

Date adopted	1.10.2026	
Result of final vote	+:	23
	—:	2
	0:	6

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

23	+
ECR	Giovanni Crosetto, Denis Nesci, Daniele Polato, Francesco Ventola
PPE	Fredis Beleris, Paulo do Nascimento Cabral, Isabelle Le Callennec, Alexandra Mehnert, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu, Andrey Novakov, Riho Terras
Renew	Dan Barna, Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Elsi Katainen, Ciaran Mullooly
S&D	Dragoș Benea, Sérgio Gonçalves, Nora Mebarek, Sabrina Repp, Marcos Ros Sempere
The Left	Younous Omarjee
Verts/ALE	Gordan Bosanac, Ana Miranda Paz

2	-
ESN	Irmhild Boßdorf
The Left	Valentina Palmisano

6	0
NI	Ruth Firmenich
PfE	Mieke Andriese, Mireia Borrás Pabón, Jaroslav Bžoch, André Rougé, Rody Tolassy

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention