



A year of war in Europe: The balance sheet

by Ian Bond, Elisabetta Cornago, Zach Meyers, Camino Mortera-Martinez,
Luigi Scazzieri and Sander Tordoir, 22 February 2023

A year ago, Russian forces launched an unprovoked attack on Ukraine. Ever since, the CER has been tracking the effects of the conflict on the protagonists, the EU, NATO and other powers. In a new [policy brief](#), CER researchers look at the last year's policy successes and failures, the winners and losers, and the challenges ahead for Ukraine and the West.

The key conclusions of the policy brief:

- ★ Overall, it would be an exaggeration to say that Ukraine is winning the war; but it is not losing it. The West has rallied to its aid.
- ★ Russia has suffered enormous military casualties. It would be wrong to say that it is losing the war, but it cannot win it either.
- ★ NATO has been revived. The US role in defending Europe remains essential, but Europeans are taking defence more seriously. With more money and more joint defence procurement, the EU could make a bigger contribution to European defence and security.
- ★ Western sanctions have not led to the collapse of the Russian economy but they are damaging it. The goal for sanctions at this stage should be to weaken Russia's military industrial capabilities, making it harder for Moscow to win the war.
- ★ Despite having been heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas supplies before February 2022, the EU has managed to cut its imports dramatically; it is unlikely ever to return to 'business as usual' with Moscow.
- ★ The reduction in imports of oil and gas from Russia and shortages of agricultural products from Ukraine have stoked inflation in the EU. Energy-intensive industries will struggle if energy prices stay high.
- ★ After decades of asking, Ukraine has finally gained EU candidate status. But it has a lot to do to meet EU standards and overcome some member-states' scepticism.
- ★ The EU's unity has been its biggest challenge and its biggest success. The Commission has strengthened its position by acting decisively to support Ukraine, and few have been willing to challenge it. But cracks are appearing.
- ★ The war is likely to continue for months, if not years. Whenever the war ends, relations with Russia are likely to remain cold, while Ukraine will become much more deeply integrated in the EU.

"It has been a terrible year for Ukraine, but not much better for Russia," said Ian Bond, one of the brief's co-authors. "And at least Ukraine has the prospect of greater integration with the West – something it has been trying to get for a long time – whereas Russia will be shunned by the West and forced into dependency on China."

Luigi Scazzieri, one of the authors of the report, said *"The war has given new impetus to EU enlargement. But, while the European Commission is enthusiastic, many countries in the EU's north and west are unwilling to admit candidate countries until they are convinced that they fully meet the EU's membership criteria. Many EU countries have also tied further enlargement to EU institutional reforms to abolish vetoes, but there is little sign of any progress in this direction."*

Camino Mortera-Martinez, one of the authors of the report, said *"The war has changed the EU for good. For the past year, unity has been the EU's biggest challenge – and its biggest success. But cracks are beginning to appear. To help Ukraine win the war, the Union needs to maintain that unity to without compromising on its own values. The longer the war goes on, the more difficult this becomes."*

Elisabetta Cornago, one of the authors of the report, said *"The EU energy market and policies look very different from a year ago: natural gas is no longer considered as the cheap bridge fuel to help Europe transition to a fossil-free energy system, and renewable energy investment has risen. We will look back to 2022 as the year of the energy crunch that led to a more integrated EU energy policy."*

Note for editors:

For further information on the new research and to request an interview with any of the authors please contact Octavia Hughes in the CER press office on pressoffice@cer.eu or +44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

The Centre for European Reform is a think-tank devoted to making the EU work better and strengthening its role in the world. The CER is pro-European but not uncritical. Follow us on Twitter: [@CER EU](https://twitter.com/CER_EU)