



Flanders
State of the Art

THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS' STRATEGY FOR THE EAST

**FLANDERS AND THE EUROPEAN EASTERN BORDER -
PARTNERS FOR RECONSTRUCTION,
RESILIENCE AND PROSPERITY**

Management summary in English

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has profoundly changed the geopolitical situation at Europe's eastern border. Flanders' safety, stability and prosperity are directly linked to developments in this region.

The Government of Flanders is taking its responsibility within the European context through an ambitious and values-driven Strategy for the East, as stated in the 2024-2029 Flemish Coalition Agreement. This strategy aims to enhance cooperation between Flanders and Central and Eastern Europe. It will be rolled out in phases, both content-wise and geographically, and will initially focus on Ukraine and then be extended gradually to the wider region.

The Strategy for the East is built around three pillars:

1. contributing to Ukraine's societal and economic reconstruction;
2. strengthening political and economic relations along the EU's eastern border;
3. supporting the democratic movement in Belarus.

Through this strategy, Flanders seeks to establish a sustainable partnership along the European eastern border, aimed at reconstruction, resilience and prosperity, and based on shared values.

Reconstruction of Ukraine

Flanders has supported Ukraine since the start of the war. Initially, the main focus was on welcoming Ukrainian refugees in Flanders and sending emergency aid to Ukraine. In 2026, Flanders' taskforce for the reception of Ukrainian refugees (Taskforce Opvang Oekraïne) is again making serious efforts to address the refugee challenge by providing resources for language lessons and civic integration programmes. Flanders continues to deliver humanitarian aid and finance projects for Ukraine through multilateral organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Through the Strategy for the East, Flanders wants to focus more strongly on support for Ukraine's reconstruction. Demining is a crucial lever in this. Today, almost 30% of Ukraine's territory is littered with mines, which seriously hinders the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure and economic activity (e.g. agriculture). For this reason, Flanders has decided to contribute to demining specifically by furthering international initiatives and providing Flemish expertise.

Preparing the reconstruction is necessary pending a peace agreement. This will mainly take place through companies and investments. The Government of Flanders will help Flemish companies deploy their expertise.

Flemish public agencies are pooling their efforts in **Team Flanders for Ukraine** to guide companies towards Ukraine by offering them targeted support focused on:

- information on projects and market opportunities
- assistance in finding local and international partners
- guidance in accessing European and multilateral funding
- support to participate in reconstruction projects.

Our Delegations of Flanders to the EU and to multilateral organisations will closely monitor developments relating to the reconstruction, both at policy and project level. They will flag opportunities and coalitions in which Flanders can respond to their actions by acting as a lever for their efforts. Flanders will examine, among other things, how it can use its expertise in EU legislation to help Ukraine adopt EU standards and

implement EU legislation. In addition, a specific project will be put in place together with the OECD to support Ukraine's alignment with OECD standards and thus its preparation for EU accession.

The Delegation of Flanders and the Economic Representation of Flanders in Warsaw act as regional hubs for Poland and, by extension, for Ukraine.

The mental well-being of several target groups in Ukraine is supported through a financial contribution to UNESCO. Flanders joins the Cultural Resilience Alliance established during the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome in July 2025.

Flanders also invests in local knowledge institutions and public authorities and will deploy the Flanders Inspires International Visitors Programme (FIIVP) to share expertise in reconstruction and resilience with Ukrainian delegations.

Reinforcing relations along the EU's eastern border

The broader aim of the Strategy for the East is to strengthen diplomatic and economic relations with Central and Eastern Europe. The region is gaining strategic importance within the European Union and boasts a strong economic development, with an expected growth of approximately 3% by 2030. This represents both a geopolitical and a major economic opportunity for Flanders.

By deepening cooperation with the countries along the EU's eastern border, Flanders wants to tighten trade and investment relations, build innovation partnerships and better position Flemish companies in European value chains.

Flanders is relying on its diplomatic and economic network in the region to implement this strategy. Based on a coordinated One Team Flanders approach, the Delegations of Flanders and FIT offices are working together to reinforce partnerships, identify opportunities and support Flemish companies. In addition, existing needs for a stronger presence on the ground will be identified in order to better respond to economic and geopolitical developments and to offer even more targeted support to Flemish companies in this rapidly evolving region.

Finally, Flanders will examine how the Strategy for the East can be extended to other countries along the EU's eastern external border at a later stage. A possible further EU enlargement is considered important from a geopolitical perspective but must always be based on strict and fair terms and conditions for accession and fully comply with European values.

Supporting the democratic movement in Belarus

In addition to reconstructing Ukraine and reinforcing relations along Europe's eastern border, the continued support to the democratic movement in Belarus represents the third pillar of the Strategy. In doing so, Flanders endorses the EU's policy framework that has been in place since 2020. Building a democratic state in Belarus is not just important from a values-driven perspective, but also vital for the safety of Flanders. Moreover, a stable and democratic Belarus may generate future investment and trade opportunities.

