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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT IN POST-WAR UKRAINE

Abstract. *This article delves into the strategic imperatives shaping business innovation and investment development in Ukraine during its post-war recovery phase. Recognizing the immense economic disruptions caused by conflict, it identifies key hurdles impeding private sector revitalization, including large-scale infrastructure devastation, financial instability, capital flight, and a weakened capacity for technological advancement. The study leverages both global best practices and Ukraine's unique socio-economic landscape to formulate a comprehensive framework for determining innovation-investment priorities across various sectors, regions, and enterprise scales.*

Special emphasis is placed on the role of public-private partnerships (PPPs), adaptive financing mechanisms, and institutional restructuring in fostering a resilient and competitive business environment. The research underscores how targeted investments in digital transformation, green technology, and industrial modernization can serve as catalysts for sustainable economic revival. Additionally, it explores the significance of policy coherence, government incentives, and international collaboration in reinforcing Ukraine's long-term economic reintegration and market positioning.

To bridge the gap between policy ambition and business execution, the paper presents a phased implementation roadmap, ensuring alignment between national recovery strategies and corporate innovation trajectories. By outlining actionable steps and sector-specific investment pathways, it offers strategic guidance to policy-makers, investors, and business leaders seeking to navigate post-war economic reconstruction with agility and foresight.

Keywords: *innovation, investment, business development, post-war recovery, Ukraine, strategic priorities, economic resilience.*



1. Introduction

Ukraine's post-war economic recovery requires a strategic focus on rebuilding not only physical infrastructure but also business capacity and innovation potential. In this context, business revitalization becomes a cornerstone of sustainable growth, employment, and competitiveness. The war has severely impacted the private sector, yet it has also opened opportunities for structural transformation and technological renewal. This paper aims to define innovation and investment priorities that can accelerate business recovery and contribute to long-term economic resilience.

Innovation and investment are widely recognized as key drivers of post-crisis economic development. The Schumpeterian view of "creative destruction" supports the idea that crises create space for new models and technologies to emerge. Investment in innovation — particularly in digital technologies, energy efficiency, and knowledge-based industries — enhances a country's adaptive capacity.

International experience (e.g., the Balkans, Georgia, and post-WWII Europe) illustrates that coordinated innovation-investment strategies are essential for post-conflict renewal, especially when paired with institutional reforms and integration into broader economic blocs (e.g., EU).

The formulation of innovation and investment priorities for post-war recovery has been explored across several domains of economic, regional, and development literature. The academic discourse emphasizes that innovation and investment serve as critical levers in restoring economic functionality, ensuring resilience, and enabling long-term transformation in post-crisis environments.

Schumpeter's concept of "creative destruction" underscores the role of innovation in overcoming economic downturns and crises by replacing obsolete structures with advanced technological systems [13]. In a similar vein, Fagerberg and Verspagen argue that innovation plays a pivotal role in achieving structural change, especially in developing and transitioning economies [5]. Innovation is increasingly viewed not just as a technological endeavor but as a broader social and institutional process [4].

Studies on post-crisis countries such as the Balkans, Rwanda, and Georgia suggest that targeted innovation policies accelerate recovery when integrated with macroeconomic reforms and institutional stabilization [14–15]. In the Ukrainian context, Bilorus and Heiets emphasize that crisis periods can catalyze a pivot towards knowledge-based and high-tech sectors, provided there is coordinated state support and access to financing [1; 6–7].

Investment decisions in post-conflict countries are shaped by high uncertainty, limited credit markets, and institutional weakness. According to Collier, attracting both domestic and foreign investment requires a secure environment, credible governance reforms, and donor coordination [3]. The OECD (2021) stresses the importance of de-risking mechanisms, blended

finance models, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) for stimulating investment in fragile contexts.

Empirical studies confirm that strategic public investment — especially in infrastructure, energy, and education — has strong multiplier effects in post-war economies [2]. Ukraine's recovery architecture, according to the National Recovery Plan (2023), must mobilize both international and local capital through transparent and innovation-oriented mechanisms.

The Ukrainian research field highlights both systemic constraints and emerging opportunities in the post-2022 environment. Mazur and Lukach argue that the war has accelerated digitalization and the growth of resilient sectors (e.g., IT, agro-processing), which could anchor future innovation strategies [9]. Kaleniuk et al. point to the role of EU integration, particularly through Horizon Europe and the Ukraine Facility, in fostering a more innovation-friendly ecosystem [8].

Institutional documents, such as the Strategy for the Development of Innovation Activity in Ukraine (2021–2030) and the SME Development Strategy (2020), emphasize regional innovation hubs, startup financing, and science-business linkages. However, implementation has been uneven, and coordination remains a challenge.

Gaps and Research Focus

While the theoretical and empirical literature offers rich insights, there is a gap in integrated frameworks that align innovation policy, investment planning, and post-war reconstruction. Specifically, few studies focus on how to prioritize business sectors for innovation-investment support based on resilience, technological readiness, and regional disparities — a gap this study seeks to address. Additionally, sectoral and regional prioritization methodologies remain underdeveloped in Ukraine's recovery discourse.

Ukraine's business environment in the post-war phase is characterized by both crisis and opportunity. Key challenges include:

- Infrastructure and facility destruction because over 30% of businesses in conflict-affected regions lost access to production facilities.
- Limited investment inflows as investor uncertainty and security risks remain high.
- Human capital loss due to brain drains and displacement have reduced labor and innovation capacity.
- Supply chain disruptions means that businesses face logistical challenges, especially in exporting goods.
- Reduced R&D capacity because of spending on innovation declined during wartime due to survival priorities.

Despite these, sectors such as IT, agro-industrial processing, green energy, and defense-tech show high adaptive potential.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative expert evaluation and quantitative multi-criteria analysis to determine strategic innovation and investment priorities for Ukrainian businesses in the post-war recovery period.

2.1. Research Design

The research was conducted in three stages:

1. Exploratory analysis: a review of national and international policy documents, academic literature, and statistical data was conducted to identify key sectors affected by war and their potential for innovation and investment.

2. Expert evaluation: semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted with 24 Ukrainian and international experts from academia, government agencies, business associations, and investment institutions. Experts assessed sectoral recovery potential, innovation readiness, and investment attractiveness.

3. Multi-criteria prioritization model: A scoring system was developed to classify business sectors based on key indicators. The results were used to rank sectors and propose tailored policy recommendations.

2.2. Data Sources

The study relies on the following data sources: statistical data from State Statistics Service of Ukraine, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, National Bank of Ukraine, Eurostat and World Bank open databases. Policy and strategy documents such as Ukraine's National Recovery Plan (2023); Strategy for Innovation Development of Ukraine (2021–2030); SME Development Strategy (2020); EU and OECD reports on post-conflict investment also were used to this research.

2.3. Multi-Criteria Scoring Model

To assess innovation-investment priorities, a scoring matrix was constructed based on five key criteria (table 1).

Table 1

Key criteria for scoring matrix

Criteria	Weight (%)
Sectoral Resilience & Recovery	25%
Innovation Readiness	20%
Investment Attractiveness	20%
Export Orientation & EU Integration	20%
Regional Clustering Potential	15%

Each criterion was rated on a 1–5 scale for each sector. Weighted scores were calculated to rank sectors as high, medium, or low priority for innovation-investment support.

2.4. Regional and Sectoral Breakdown

To reflect regional disparities and post-war impacts, the analysis was disaggregated by:

- Macro-regions (e.g., West, Central, East, and South Ukraine)
- Enterprise size (e.g., micro, small, medium, and large businesses)
- Industry sectors (e.g., ICT, agro-tech, manufacturing, green energy)

This allowed for the identification of regional hubs and sectoral clusters with the highest potential for targeted innovation and investment policies.

2.5. Longitudinal Survey Design

To assess the evolution of business perspectives on innovation and investment during the war and post-war periods, the study integrates a longitudinal survey component. Two rounds of structured surveys were conducted:

- First wave (July–September 2022) during active hostilities and uncertainty;
- Second wave (January–March 2024) during the early phase of stabilization and recovery planning.

The survey covered 120 businesses across diverse sectors and regions of Ukraine. It included both closed and open-ended questions grouped into the following thematic blocks (table 2).

A Likert scale (1–5) was used to measure attitudes and expectations, with some questions enabling direct year-over-year comparisons. All survey responses were anonymized. Participants were informed about the research purpose and gave consent for data use. The study adhered to ethical standards of academic social research.

Certain indicator questions (e.g., investment activity, digital maturity, optimism about the future, access to finance) were repeated across both 2022 and 2024 waves to allow direct comparison. Differences were statistically analyzed using **paired t-tests** and **cross-tabulations**.

2.6. Comparative Analysis Approach

The survey data from both waves were analysed using:

- Descriptive statistics to summarize sectoral and regional trends;
- Cross-tabulation to identify changes in perceptions over time;
- Mean comparison (t-tests) to highlight significant differences between 2022 and 2024 responses;
- Cluster analysis to group businesses with similar adaptation patterns.

This longitudinal design enables the identification of trends in resilience, recovery expectations, and the reorientation of investment and innovation strategies among Ukrainian businesses.

2.7. Limitations

The research acknowledges the following limitations:

- Data constraints due to incomplete post-war statistics and displacement of enterprises.
- Expert subjectivity in scoring, mitigated through triangulation and weighted averages.
- Dynamic conditions of war and recovery, which may require ongoing updates to the model.

Despite these limitations, the methodology offers a flexible, evidence-based approach to support policy and funding prioritization for Ukraine's business sector recovery.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Evolution of Business Perceptions (2022 vs. 2024 Survey Findings)

To evaluate the dynamics of innovation and investment readiness among Ukrainian businesses during

Table 2

Structured Survey Instrument by Thematic Blocks

Thematic Block	Question Type	Sample Question
1. Business Status and Operational Capacity	Closed-ended	What is your current operational status?
	Closed-ended	Rate your operational stability on a scale from 1 (very unstable) to 5 (very stable).
	Open-ended	Please describe the key operational challenges your business has faced since 2022.
2. Investment Activity and Access to Capital	Closed-ended	Did your business make any capital investments in 2022? In 2024?
	Closed-ended	Rate your access to the following sources of finance on a scale of 1 to 5: bank loans, private investors, public support schemes, foreign investment.
	Open-ended	What kind of financial instruments would be most useful to your investment planning?
3. Innovation Readiness and Digitalization Level	Closed-ended	Is your business currently implementing or planning to implement any innovations?
	Closed-ended	On a scale of 1–5, rate your digital transformation level: from no digital tools (1) to fully integrated systems (5).
	Open-ended	Describe any innovations (product, process, business model) adopted since 2022.
4. Public Policy and Support Instruments	Closed-ended	How effective do you find national-level recovery programs? (1–5)
	Closed-ended	Have you received any form of state support since 2022?
	Open-ended	What policy measures would most effectively support your business's innovation and investment plans?
5. Priority Needs and Recovery Expectations	Closed-ended	What is your current top business priority? (e.g., finance, digitalization, infrastructure, policy stability)
	Closed-ended	How optimistic are you about your sector's recovery by 2026? (1–5)
	Open-ended	In your view, what should be the government's top three priorities in supporting business recovery?

Source: built by authors

the post-war recovery period, a comparative survey was conducted in 2022 and 2024. The responses of 120 businesses from diverse regions and sectors were analyzed for each year. The survey included key indicators measured using a 5-point Likert scale across the following domains: operational stability, access to

finance, digital transformation, perceptions of recovery policy, and optimism about future recovery.

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the key variables in 2022 and 2024.

These results indicate a general upward trend in all key areas, suggesting improved resilience and

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the key variables in 2022 and 2024

Indicator	2022 Mean (SD)	2024 Mean (SD)
Operational Stability	~3.0 (±1.3)	~3.5 (±1.1)
Access to Finance	~2.8 (±1.4)	~3.3 (±1.2)
Digital Transformation Level	~3.2 (±1.2)	~3.8 (±1.0)
Effectiveness of Recovery Programs	~2.5 (±1.5)	~3.1 (±1.3)
Optimism about Recovery	~2.9 (±1.4)	~3.7 (±1.1)

Source: calculated by authors

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for five indicators

Indicator	t-test results	p-test results
Operational Stability	$t \approx -2.7$	$p < 0.01$
Access to Finance	$t \approx -2.5$	$p \approx 0.01$
Digital Transformation	$t \approx -3.0$	$p < 0.005$
Effectiveness of Recovery Programs	$t \approx -2.2$	$p \approx 0.03$
Optimism about Recovery	$t \approx -3.6$	$p < 0.001$

Source: calculated by authors

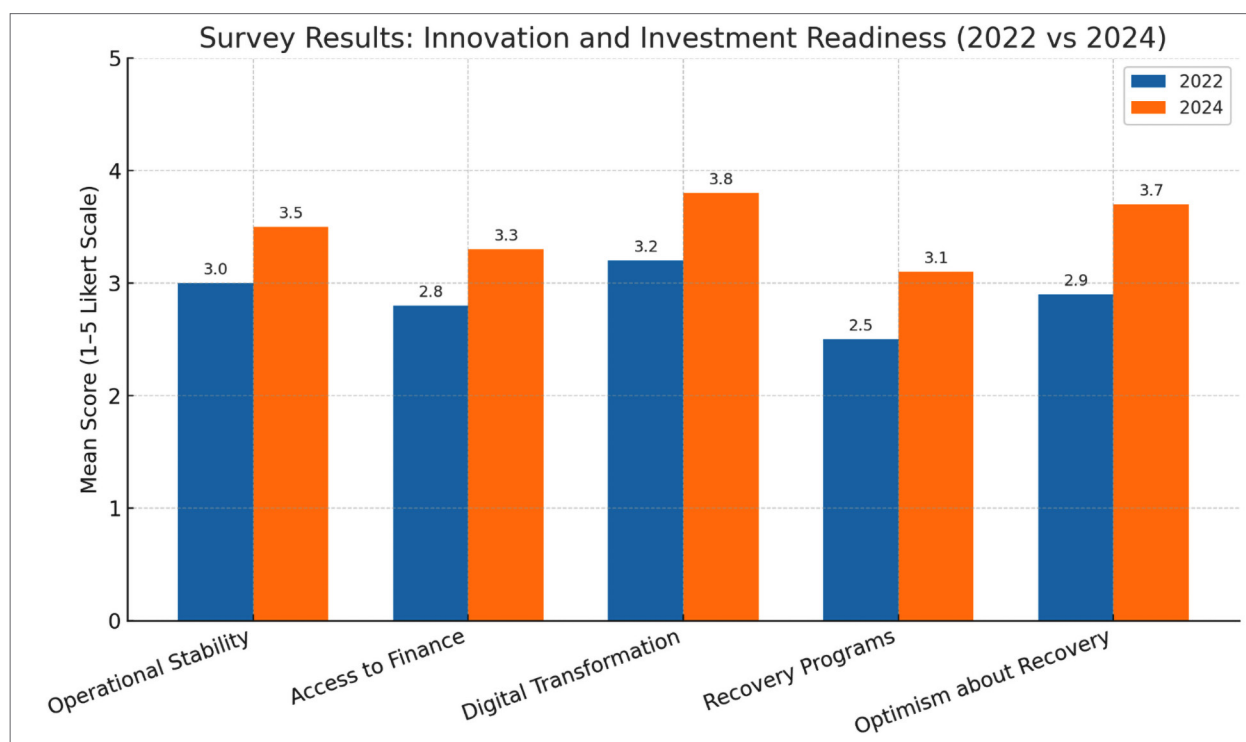


Figure 1. Survey results: Innovation and Investment Readiness (2022 vs 2024)

Source: built by authors

confidence among businesses as the recovery period progresses.

Independent samples t-tests were performed to assess whether the observed differences between 2022 and 2024 were statistically significant. The results revealed statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) across all five indicators (table 3).

These findings support the hypothesis that businesses in Ukraine are becoming more optimistic and better positioned for growth, driven by improvements in access to finance, digital capabilities, and evolving support policies.

The upward trend in digital transformation and innovation readiness suggests that businesses are actively adapting to post-crisis realities by leveraging technology. The modest increase in perceived policy effectiveness and access to capital reflects initial progress in recovery programming, though further targeted support is warranted.

Of particular note is the substantial improvement in optimism about recovery, which may be associated with clearer EU integration pathways and the stabilization of certain macroeconomic indicators.

The comparative analysis of survey data from 2022 and 2024 reveals significant shifts in business

sentiment, investment behaviour, and innovation readiness across sectors and regions.

In 2022, only 27% of surveyed businesses reported stable operations, with high levels of uncertainty and a defensive stance on investment. By early 2024, 62% of respondents reported partial or full recovery of operational capacity, especially in Western and Central Ukraine. Export-oriented sectors like IT and agro-tech showed the fastest return to growth.

Innovation readiness improved markedly from 2022 to 2024 (table 4).

This reflects both internal adaptation and increased external support (e.g., Horizon Europe pilot schemes, regional recovery grants).

Investment appetite rose from 18% in 2022 to 46% in 2024, especially among SMEs in IT, agro-processing, and green energy. However, major barriers remained:

- Access to affordable finance (reported by 64% in 2024)
- Uncertainty in legal and regulatory frameworks (52%)
- Insufficient government guarantees for private investors (47%)

This comparative analysis reinforces the importance of sustained innovation-investment support mechanisms. Tailored policy tools — such as digital

Table 4

Innovation adoption readiness

Indicator	2022 (%)	2024 (%)
Active implementation of digital tools	38	71
Interest in green and energy-efficient tech	19	54
Participation in innovation grants	12	33

Source: calculated by authors

Table 5

Sectoral prioritization based on scoring matrix

Sector	Resilience	Innovation Potential	Export Focus	Priority Group
IT & Digital Tech	High	High	High	High
Agro-tech	High	Medium	Medium	High
Green Energy	Medium	High	Medium	High
Light Manufacturing	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Heavy Industry	Low	Low	High	Low

Source: calculated by authors

grant platforms, regional technoparks, and targeted recovery funds — should continue to be prioritized. In parallel, alignment with EU standards and frameworks (e.g., Horizon Europe, InvestEU) will be essential to maintain momentum.

3.2. Sectoral Prioritization Based on Scoring Matrix

Using the multi-criteria scoring matrix (resilience, innovation potential, export focus, and EU compatibility), sectors were grouped into priority tiers for innovation-investment support.

This classification highlights the need to focus innovation funding, tax incentives, and EU alignment efforts on IT, agro-tech, and green energy — sectors that combine resilience, innovation capacity, and growth potential.

3.3. Regional and Clustering Insights

Survey and policy data confirm that regional disparities in recovery and innovation are pronounced. Western and Central regions (e.g., Lviv, Ternopil, Vinnytsia) demonstrate stronger innovation dynamics due to a higher concentration of SMEs, relocation of firms, and better infrastructure.

Respondents identified potential cluster development zones for each priority sector:

- IT and creative industries — Lviv, Kyiv, Ivano-Frankivsk.

- Agro-tech and bioeconomy — Vinnytsia, Poltava, Khmelnytskyi.

- Green energy and circular economy — Zakarpattia, Dnipro, Mykolaiv.

These findings support targeted regional innovation and investment strategies aligned with local strengths and EU cross-border programs.

3.4. Strategic Instruments and Policy Recommendations

Based on empirical results, the following tools are proposed to stimulate innovation-investment activity in priority sectors:

- Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure and green energy initiatives.
- Innovation Grants & Recovery Funds with co-financing from EU, EIB, and multilateral donors.
- Loan Guarantees & Tax Incentives to lower investment risk.
- Technoparks and Innovation Hubs in high-potential regions.
- Digital Investment Platforms to match local firms with international capital and diaspora networks.

The success of these instruments depends on integration with EU frameworks such as Horizon Europe, InvestEU, and the Ukraine Facility. This alignment will unlock funding, enhance institutional credibility, and promote cross-border collaboration.

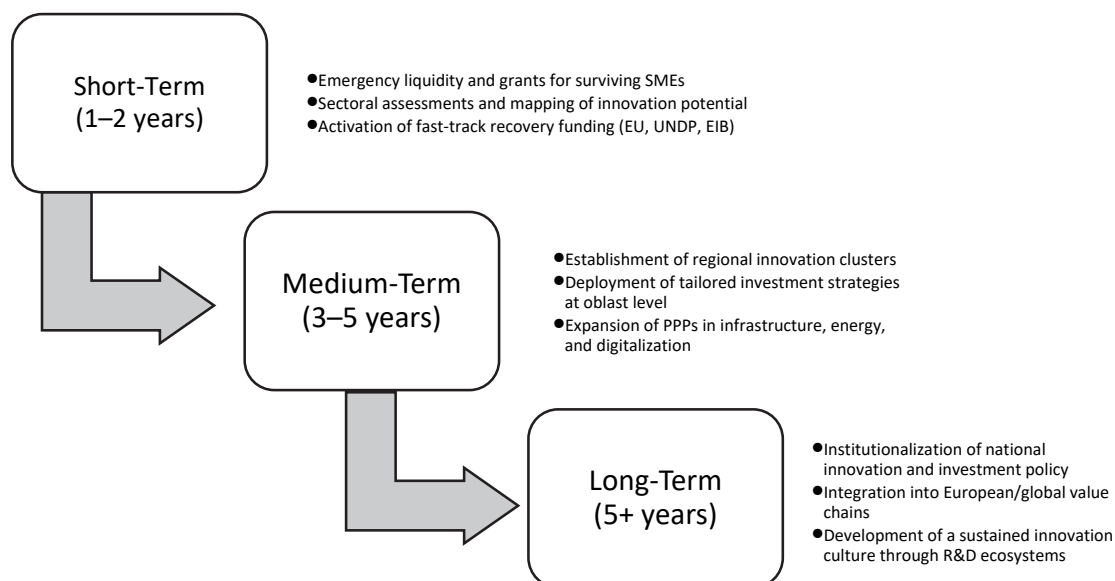


Figure 2. Phased Roadmap for Innovation-Investment Recovery

Source: built by authors

Table 6

Phased Roadmap for Innovation-Investment Recovery

Phase	Timeline	Key Priorities	Expected Outcomes
Short-Term	1–2 years	– Emergency support for SMEs – Rapid assessment of sectoral resilience – Launch of recovery funds (EU, EIB, UNDP)	– Stabilization of business activity – Prioritized sectoral focus – Pilot innovation investments
Medium-Term	3–5 years	– Creation of innovation clusters – Regional investment strategies – Scaling of public-private partnerships (PPP)	– Development of innovation ecosystems – Attraction of FDI and private capital – Regional recovery
Long-Term	5+ years	– Institutionalization of innovation policy – Integration into EU/global value chains – Support for R&D ecosystems and sustained digitalization	– Sustainable innovation culture – Global market integration – Enhanced competitiveness and resilience

Source: built by authors

3.5. Phased Roadmap for Innovation-Investment Recovery

Based on data synthesis and stakeholder input, a phased strategic roadmap is proposed (Figure 2).

The recovery of Ukraine's business sector in the post-war period requires a strategic, phased approach that integrates innovation and investment as central pillars of resilience and growth. The proposed roadmap includes short-, medium-, and long-term interventions aligned with European standards and funding mechanisms.

This roadmap ensures that immediate recovery needs are met without compromising long-term transformation goals. By embedding innovation across all phases and linking investments with EU mechanisms such as Horizon Europe and the Ukraine Facility, Ukraine can establish a globally competitive, sustainable economic model.

Such a framework ensures that innovation and investment policies are not just reactive but strategic and forward-looking, helping Ukraine rebuild a modern, resilient, and globally integrated economy.

4. Conclusions

This study has explored the formulation of strategic innovation-investment priorities for business recovery in post-war Ukraine, drawing on empirical survey data, sectoral scoring frameworks, and international policy alignment. In light of Ukraine's evolving economic context, this research contributes to a growing body of literature on post-conflict economic regeneration, innovation policy, and resilient entrepreneurship.

The research advances theoretical understanding by integrating concepts from innovation systems theory, post-crisis economic recovery frameworks, and smart specialization. The empirical component — based on a two-wave business survey conducted in 2022 and 2024 — provides original insights into how Ukrainian enterprises have responded to prolonged wartime disruptions, particularly regarding innovation readiness, investment dynamics, and policy expectations.

The survey findings demonstrate that:

- Businesses exhibit notable operational resilience, with over 65% remaining partially or fully active in 2024.

- The innovation and digitalization capacities of firms vary significantly across sectors and regions, underscoring the need for differentiated policy instruments.
- Perceptions of public support tools reveal a trust deficit, with preferences leaning toward transparent, EU-aligned mechanisms such as innovation grants and investment guarantees.

Using a multi-criteria matrix, the study classified sectors into high, medium, and low innovation-investment priority groups based on resilience, innovation capacity, export orientation, and EU integration compatibility. IT and digital services, agrotechnology, and green energy emerged as sectors of strategic focus. These findings align with broader European strategic priorities (e.g., Horizon Europe missions, European Green Deal), reaffirming the importance of external alignment in Ukraine's recovery trajectory.

The proposed Phased Roadmap for Innovation-Investment Recovery introduces a structured approach to revitalizing Ukraine's entrepreneurial landscape:

- Short-term (1–2 years) interventions aim to stabilize business operations through liquidity support and rapid assessments.
- Medium-term (3–5 years) actions focus on building regional innovation ecosystems and scaling public-private investment tools.
- Long-term (5+ years) efforts target institutionalization, EU integration, and embedding Ukraine within global value chains.

This model mirrors successful post-crisis frameworks applied in other contexts (e.g., the Marshall Plan in post-WWII Europe, post-earthquake recovery in Chile), tailored to Ukraine's geopolitical and economic realities.

The following policy recommendations are derived from both empirical insights and comparative analysis:

1. **Embed Innovation Policy into National Recovery Architecture:** Innovation must be treated not as a residual component but as a core pillar of Ukraine's reconstruction. This includes embedding smart specialization and cluster-based approaches into national and regional strategies.

2. **Expand Access to Innovation Finance and PPP Instruments:** The scale-up of blended finance tools (e.g., innovation grants, tax credits, loan guarantees) is

crucial to catalyze private investment in high-potential sectors, particularly outside Kyiv and other urban hubs.

3. Develop Regional Innovation Hubs and Smart Clusters: Building technoparks, digital platforms, and sector-specific clusters can accelerate the transfer of knowledge, technology, and capital. These ecosystems can serve as focal points for local job creation and EU integration.

4. Institutionalize Feedback Loops in Public Governance: Business sentiment, captured through recurring surveys, should inform iterative policy cycles. This allows for adaptive governance and the real-time correction of support instruments.

5. Ensure Strategic Alignment with EU Frameworks: Harmonizing national innovation policy with

EU programs such as *Horizon Europe*, *InvestEU*, and the *Ukraine Facility* will facilitate funding access, knowledge exchange, and long-term convergence with European markets.

While the study offers a robust framework and survey-based insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size, while diverse, may not capture the full spectrum of regional disparities. Second, ongoing geopolitical instability may affect the generalizability of findings. Future research should focus on longitudinal tracking of innovation-investment performance, impact assessments of recovery programs, and comparative studies with other post-conflict economies.

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СТРАТЕГІЧНІ ПРІОРИТЕТИ ДЛЯ БІЗНЕС-ІННОВАЦІЙ ТА ІНВЕСТИЦІЙ У ПОВОЄННІЙ УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. У цій статті заглиблюються у стратегічні імперативи, що формують розвиток бізнес-інновацій та інвестицій в Україні під час її післявоєнного відновлення. Визначаючи величезні економічні потрясіння, спричинені конфліктом, вона визначає ключові перешкоди, що перешкоджають відродженню приватного сектору, включаючи масштабне руйнування інфраструктури, фінансову нестабільність, відтік капіталу та ослаблений потенціал для технологічного прогресу. У дослідженні використовуються як передовий світовий досвід, так і унікальний соціально-економічний ландшафт України для формування комплексної системи визначення інноваційно-інвестиційних пріоритетів у різних секторах, регіонах та масштабах підприємств.

Особливий акцент робиться на ролі державно-приватного партнерства (ДПП), адаптивних механізмів фінансування та інституційної реструктуризації у сприянні стійкому та конкурентному бізнес-середовищу. У дослідженні підкреслюється, як цілеспрямовані інвестиції в цифрову трансформацію, зелені технології та модернізацію промисловості можуть слугувати каталізаторами сталого економічного відродження. Крім того, у ньому досліджується значення узгодженості політики, державних стимулів та міжнародної співпраці у зміцненні довгострокової економічної реінтеграції та позиціонування України на ринку.

Щоб подолати розрив між амбіціями політики та виконанням бізнесом, у статті представлено поетапну дорожню карту впровадження, яка забезпечує узгодженість між національними стратегіями відновлення та траєкторіями корпоративних інновацій. Окреслюючи практичні кроки та галузеві інвестиційні шляхи, вона пропонує стратегічні рекомендації для політиків, інвесторів та бізнес-лідерів, які прагнуть гнучко та передбачливо пройти повоєнну економічну відбудову.

Ключові слова: інновації, інвестиції, розвиток бізнесу, повоєнне відновлення, Україна, стратегічні пріоритети, економічна стійкість.