

# Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

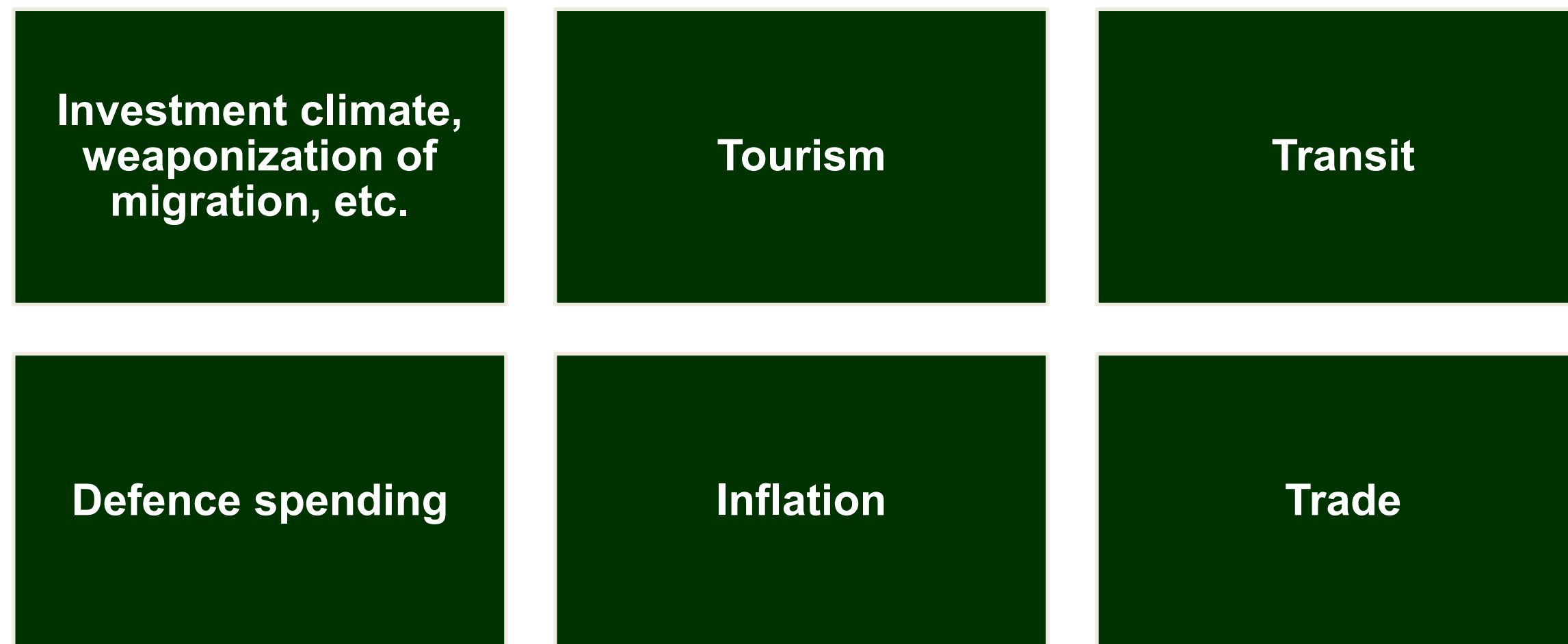
## Strong regions for a safe Europe

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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

## Commission political priority as per EVP Fitto's mission letter

“... work on providing support to the **eastern border regions most affected by Russia's aggression** to address their specific challenges and support them in the reorientation of their local economy.”

# Negative impact of the geopolitical situation on local economies

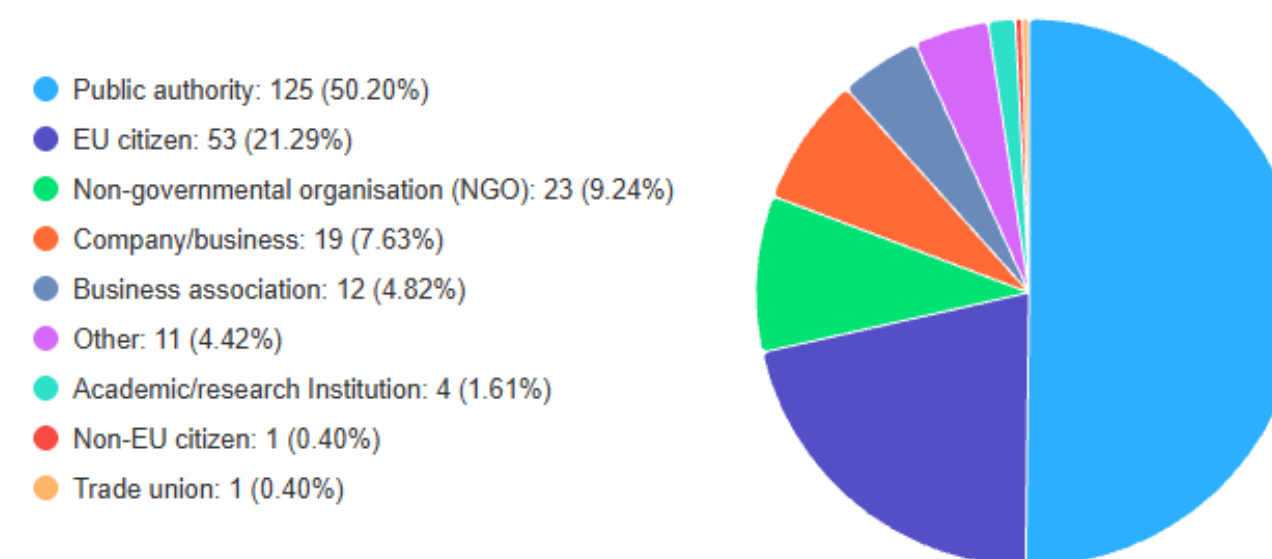


[26 Feb 2026 High-Level Political Dialogue Introduction video](#)  
[Inforegio - Annual political dialogue on EU's Eastern Regions Bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine](#)

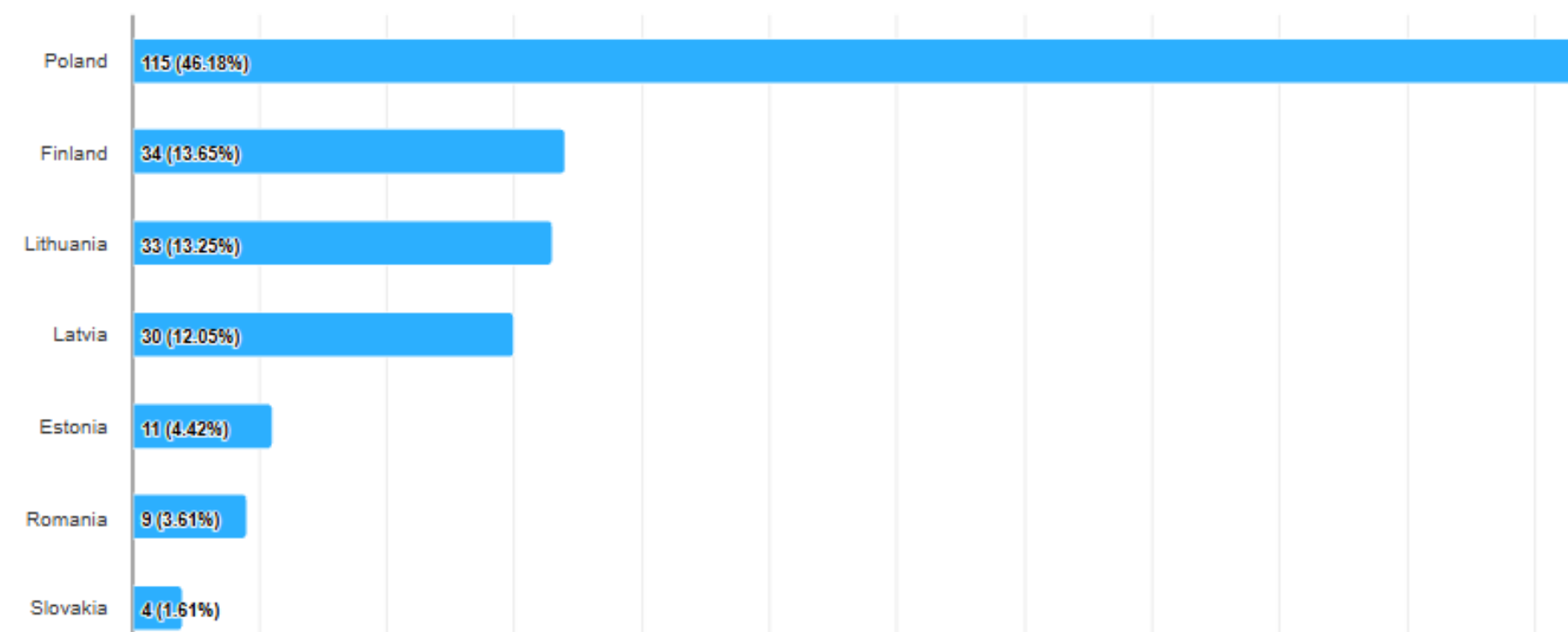
# Aim and process

- Work launched by EVP Fitto at the EU Eastern Border Regions High-Level Conference in **Białowieża**, Poland, in June 2025
- **Call for evidence** launched between 7 August and 18 September 2025
- Aim of this **strategic document** is to serve as a roadmap to address the specific challenges faced by the eastern border regions, with tailor made solutions, offering a clear vision for their support at the EU level.
- **Adopted** on 18 February 2026
- 1<sup>st</sup> **high-level political dialogue** held on 26 February together with signature of EastInvest declaration of intent

## Call for evidence gathered 249 replies



By country

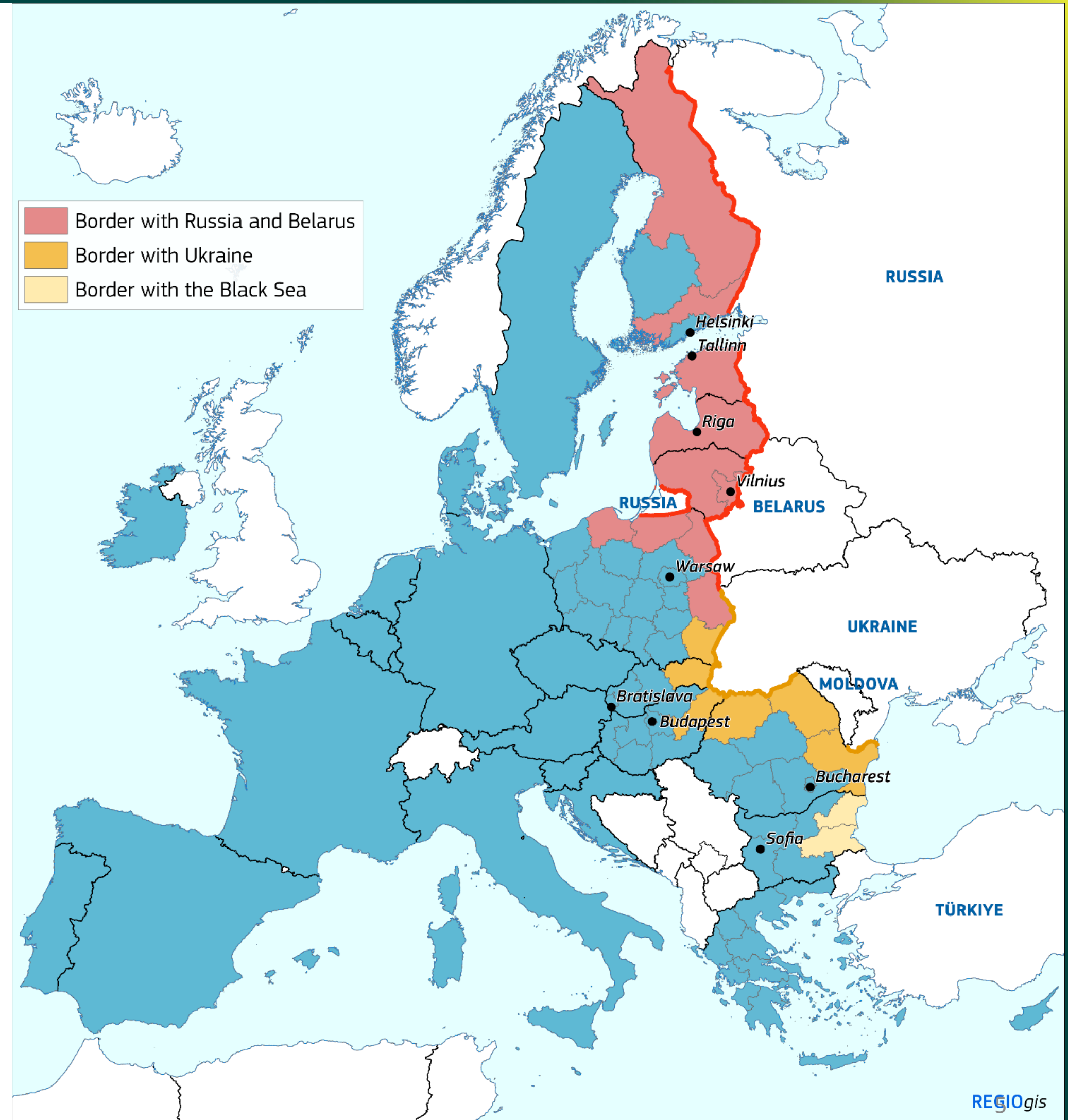


# Geographic scope

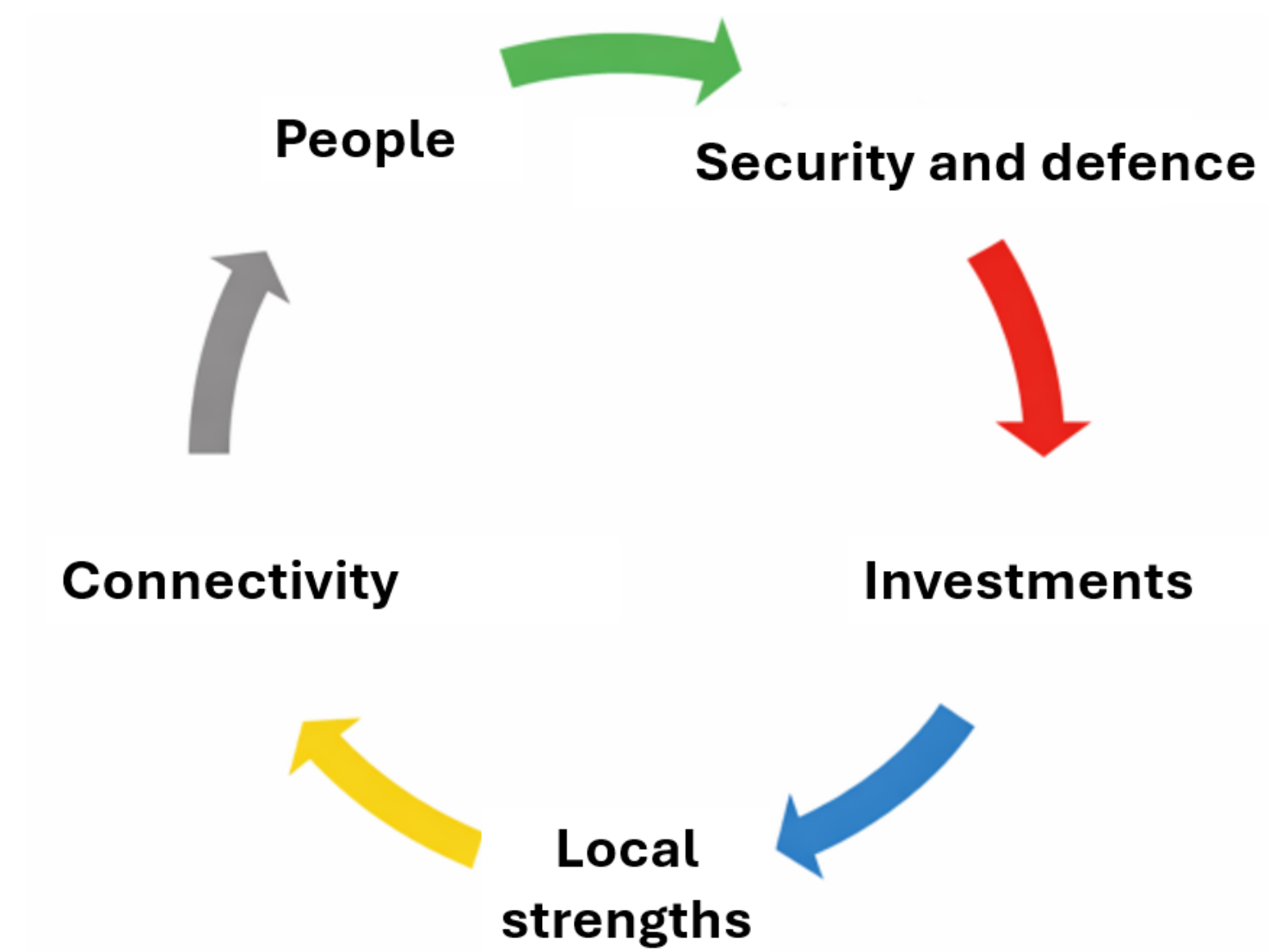
The most affected Member States have long land borders with the **aggressor countries**: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland share 3646 km of border with Russia and Belarus (25% of total EU European external land borders).

Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania share 1372 km of **land border with Ukraine** (10% of total EU external land borders).

Romania and Bulgaria have a combined **Black Sea coastline** of over 600 km, bordering the maritime Black Sea basin also shared with Ukraine and Russia.



# Pillars of the Communication



# Pillars of the Communication

## 1. Security and resilience

Security  
Defence  
Civil preparedness

## 2. Growth

Investments and access to finance  
Economic reorientation, knowledge  
economy and rebranding  
Administrative capacity

## 3. Local strengths

Natural resources  
Environment, renewable energy,  
energy efficiency

## 4. Connectivity

Transport connections  
Digital and energy connectivity  
New cross-border links and  
cooperation

## 5. People

Resilient and inclusive communities  
Skills mismatches & employment  
opportunities  
Civil society, mental resilience and  
communication, fight against  
disinformation  
Service availability

# Highlights – EU commitments

## 1. EastInvest Facility

- A **voluntary open-ended initiative** to promote investment in the EU's eastern border regions and enhance their resilience and attractiveness
- Conceived **to facilitate access of EBRs to advisory and lending support**
- **Could mobilise at least EUR 28 billion** lending support at national level **by end 2027** in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria.
- Already a **declaration of intent signed** (on 26 February) by a coalition of IFIs and NPBIs:
  - the European Investment Bank Group
  - the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
  - the Council of Europe Development Bank
  - the Nordic Investment Bank and
  - the National Promotional Banks having confirmed their participation – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

# Highlights – EU Commitments

## 2. State aid

Commission will assess whether amendments to **General Block Exemption Regulation** are needed to address the specific challenges of the eastern border regions.

## 3. Future funding

- Commission will review how the eastern border regions can best benefit from the opportunities offered by the upcoming **European Competitiveness Fund**.
- When preparing the **guidance on the ‘Do no significant harm’** principle for the next MFF, Commission will take into account territorial specificities and challenges of the eastern border regions ensuring the principle is applied proportionately.

## 4. Exchanges of best practices

Commission will support the creation of an eastern border regions’ **community of practitioners** to exchange preparedness solutions among municipalities.

# Highlights – EU commitments

## 5. Catching up Regions Initiative with the World Bank

About to be finalised (Baltic states) and future (FI and PL) action plans or ‘roadmaps’ on

- Human capital (LT & LV)
- Housing (EE & LT)
- Tourism (LT)
- SME support

...should be implemented and provide as soon as possible a pipeline of mature projects

to also swiftly seize the opportunity EastInvest offers in the eastern border regions concerned.

## Highlights – Invitation to Member States to :

- make use of **financial instruments** under their cohesion policy envelopes to create more favourable lending conditions in the eastern border regions
- ensure that the challenges and opportunities of the eastern border regions are properly considered when programming future **national and regional partnership plans**
- increase **incentives** for economic activity in these regions, such as targeted tax measures and State-aid-compliant subsidies for companies already established or to incentivise new investments in the eastern border regions
- explore the potential benefits of setting up new **special economic zones** in the eastern border regions, and of extending the list of facilities under the existing ones subject to the State aid rules
- prioritise **youth retention** in the eastern border regions through education-to-employment pathways and by setting up first-time homebuyer schemes under cohesion policy programmes, offering low-interest loans to young professionals.

# Follow-up

## Annual high-level political dialogue

The first high level dialogue was held on 26 February and was opened by the President of the Commission, hosted by EVP Fitto and attended by the Prime Ministers from the Baltic states and Romania, Ministers, Members of the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions and representatives from the eastern border regions.



**Thank you**  
**Kiitos**  
**Aitäh**  
**Paldies**  
**Ačiū**  
**Dziękuję**  
**Köszönöm**  
**Mulțumesc**  
**Благодаря**

