

## **Andriy Pyshnyy: War-tested innovations - Ukraine becomes an exporter of security and financial solutions**

Speech by Mr Andriy Pyshnyy, Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, at the high-level conference for the governors of the IMF Constituency in Brussels, session "Innovation in a new (cold) war economy", Brussels, 13 February 2026.

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Good afternoon, dear colleagues!

War is a crisis in its purest form.

It is a combination of adverse factors that converge at a single point under conditions of limited resources and enormous internal and external pressure.

Is there room for innovation in such a situation?

The short answer is yes. And Ukraine proves this every day.

Moreover, war becomes an explosive catalyst for innovation. After all, you cannot look into a textbook. There simply is none. No one has left you instructions on how to act. We are writing this textbook ourselves every day, on the ground.

Ukraine is demonstrating innovation at every levels: at the state level, in the financial sector, and at the central bank. And the examples of innovation that I will now give are not about survival. They are about solutions that can already be scaled beyond Ukraine's borders today.

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Before moving on to the examples, allow me to make a brief personal observation.

I remember my first experience participating in a similar conference as Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine. It was 2023, in Amsterdam. Six months had passed since I became the Governor of the central bank during a full-scale war. It was a fact that defined our every day, our every action. However, this war was not on Europe's agenda, it was just mentioned in passing.

Central banks considered the effects of the war in Ukraine on their countries' economies through relatively standard channels, such as the impact of high inflation. However, no one said that this war and its further development would pose completely different existential challenges for European countries.

The same thing happened during my first visit to the Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank. At the Regional Economic Outlook breakfast, there were very important reports on the "green" transition, structural reforms, and long-term trends in the European region - but these reports did not mention the war or Europe's defense budgets.

The war remained outside the room. And then we saw how it not only entered the room, but also settled at the table, and began to set the tone for nearly every report.

I understand that war is frightening in its uncertainty and global scope. It creates a false sense that maybe it's worth waiting, maybe it might end soon, and tomorrow there will be no need to mention it. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has now lasted for 1,451 days - in fact, a month longer than the Great Patriotic War of the former USSR against Germany. We are at the beginning of 2026. The fourth anniversary of the full-scale war in my country. I am again at a high-level conference.

War is no longer on the sidelines of the agenda. It is the agenda.

Not only for Ukraine, but also for the European region and the entire world.

And if you ask me whether there will be war in Europe, I will answer with the words of my colleague, the governor of the Bank of Latvia: "It is naive to think that we are not at war with Russia."

What this war will be like depends not on the aggressor, but on your readiness.

And this is where we return to the topic of innovation. It is my deep conviction, backed up by practice, that innovation, together with crisis management, shapes the resilience of systems.

Now, let's look at some examples.

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## **LEVEL ONE - THE STATE**

MILTECH as part of the economy.

In 2022–2025, Ukraine built a full-fledged state MILTECH ecosystem that brought together the state, private companies, science, and defense forces into a single framework for quick decisions - from development and testing to certification, procurement, and scaling. Through institutional mechanisms, in particular Brave1, the path to the implementation of defense technologies-unmanned, autonomous, AI solutions, communication systems, and electronic warfare-has been radically shortened, with constant adaptation to real combat conditions.

Ukraine has effectively become a unique testing environment where technologies are tested not in laboratories but in reality. Where development from idea to implementation and testing takes place in a matter of months. For partners, this means a shorter learning curve, reduced risks, and access to solutions that have already proven their effectiveness.

For our part, as a financial regulator, we have opened a dedicated track to support the defense industry, primarily through regulatory easing to activate lending to defense enterprises.

Ukraine has a special legal regime for businesses in the defense industry-Defense City- to provide the most favorable conditions for the development of the defense sector and attract investment. This means, accordingly, separate tax and regulatory regimes, into which we have integrated special FX control conditions.State digital infrastructure – the state in a smartphone.

First of all, I am talking about the digital platform Diia, which has moved interaction between the state and citizens to smartphones where possible, including identification, applications, registries, and support services. All this has significantly reduced dependence on physical logistics.

In fact, all important documents of Ukrainian citizen are now in their smartphones thanks to Diia: passport, driver's license, IDP certificates, etc. Considering that there are millions of internally displaced persons in Ukraine and beyond, it is difficult to overestimate this solution.

If documents are lost or destroyed, they are stored on the phone and have the same legal force as paper documents. Diia helps when you need to apply for financial or social assistance, as well as obtain certificates or extracts. In terms of speed, convenience, and security, this is an incredible innovative solution.

The platform continues to evolve. By the way, through Diia, people can purchase war bonds or locate the nearest shelter, or find an open branch of the POWER BANKING network, which operates even during blackouts.

What's more, you can even get married or divorced in Ukraine through Diia. Or start your own business by registering as a private entrepreneur. The platform handles onboarding, financial monitoring, and identification, providing everything a citizen needs in one place.

By the end of 2025, the number of users of the Diia app reached over 23 million people.

Energy companies as an example of operational innovation.

I cannot fail to mention Ukrainian energy companies. Today, they deserve to be mentioned first and foremost. Energy terrorism, genocide of the civilian population during frosts below -20 degrees - this is what Russia is doing right now. In January 2026 alone, Russia launched more than 6,000 strike drones, about 5,500 guided aerial bombs, and 158 missiles of various types at Ukraine. The targets were energy facilities, railways, logistics, residential buildings, and hospitals.

Ukrainian energy professionals have learned to restore systems in a matter of hours, reprogram their logic, and combine backup schemes. This is an example of how the system and people are learning faster than those trying to destroy it.

No one in the world probably understands distributed generation better than Ukrainians do, and therefore no one will be able to build a more autonomous and secure energy infrastructure in the future.

## **LEVEL TWO – FINANCIAL SECTOR**

- Financial inclusion as a response to war

The war has sharpened the issue of access to financial services and expanded the list of customer group requiring a special approach: veterans returning to civilian life who need flexible, humane financial solutions for servicing and reintegration; residents of frontline and de-occupied territories, where the physical presence of banks is often impossible.

The response has been primarily practical innovations-mobile bank branches that travel to places where there is no permanent infrastructure

Now we are taking a new step-creating a new banking entity-a financial inclusion bank. This is an institution with a limited banking license. It can be obtained by businesses that already have an extensive network and enjoy customer trust: retailers, postal operators, service companies. This is a fundamentally new approach: financial services come to where our people are, not the other way around. In essence, this is an institutional innovation that can change the perception of banking in crisis.

- **POWER BANKING** – a financial system that works despite the darkness.

Ensuring the continuous operation of banking and payment systems has been our absolute priority since the first days of the full-scale war. The Ukrainian payment infrastructure has shown exceptional resilience: without exaggeration, this is the first war during which Apple Pay, Google Pay, and cashless payments continued to be available.

But when Russia moved on to systematic destruction of the energy sector, this was no longer enough. A new solution was needed, and that solution was the combined network of **POWER BANKING** bank branches, which operate during blackouts. This is more than 2,400 branches across the country - in fact, every second branch in the country is equipped with backup power supply and communications.

In fact, we have created a wartime infrastructure that guarantees access to financial services under any conditions. This anti-crisis measure has become an example of how innovations are born under pressure and immediately scaled up across the country.

I often participate in government meetings. And the fact that there are no questions about the functioning of the banking system during technological or weather-related collapses is the best confirmation that our solutions are effective. Banks are simply not talked about because they do their job. During the most difficult months of massive attacks, there were zero calls to the NBU contact center regarding the unavailability of basic services.

By the way, as I mentioned, citizens can find out where the nearest working POWER BANKING branch is located in Diia, which contains a map of the entire network.

As you can see, Ukraine's financial sector is rebuilding itself during the war, creating models that may become relevant for other countries during potential future crises.

- The volunteer movement and the donation economy.

During the war in Ukraine, a completely unique phenomenon emerged: nationwide volunteerism and civic financial support for the defense forces through donations. I have not found any similar examples in the world. People are willing to take on part of the financing of the fight and support for the country on a daily basis.

To achieve this scale, we had to create a certain infrastructure for fundraising. The financial sector played a key role - banks provided specific functional solutions in banking applications. These include quick creation of groups and fundraising, sharing them via links, seeing progress in real time, making instant transfers with a single click, automating regular donations, accepting funds from abroad, closing fundraising, and reporting.

Banks and payment systems are competing to create services that facilitate participation in charity and, most importantly, ensure the transparency and accountability of fundraising. Such innovative tools have made the culture of donations a mass phenomenon and, for many users, a daily activity.

In general, volunteer organizations in Ukraine have become large gateways that accumulate and direct millions of charitable funds to support the country. The three largest charitable foundations - United24, Come Back Alive, and the Prytula Foundation - raised a record UAH 105.87 billion in donations in 2025. This is 37% more than in the previous three years combined.

Moreover, Ukraine already has unprecedented cases of receiving donations from the government of a European country. For example, the Come Back Alive Foundation received a historic 19 billion hryvnia for Ukraine's military needs. Without absolute trust and transparent reporting, this would have been impossible.

## **LEVEL THREE - THE CENTRAL BANK**

Here I want to ask a question: where are the limits of innovation during wartime?

When, on 24 February 2022, the entire structure was destroyed and standard tools no longer worked, any new solution that produces results becomes an innovation.

In fact, none of the NBU's decisions since the start of the full-scale war have been conventional. We started with unprecedented anti-crisis measures necessary to stabilize the situation in the face of a shock, and then consciously and gradually moved on to decisions that had a different goal: to maintain macrofinancial stability and, at the same time, create conditions for economic recovery. This is a constant balance between security and development-and in this particular balance innovations emerged.

We were actually creating new entities and concepts.

For example, the managed exchange rate flexibility regime was a decision that did not fit into any classical model and was adapted to the reality of war, risks, and uncertainty. This required, among other things, a change in the approach to communication: complex monetary and FX decisions began to be explained through the logic of "packages" and stages, even using elements of marketing approaches—as in the case of stimulating FX liberalization or the establishment of the POWER BANKING network. Communication ceased to be an accompaniment—it became a policy tool.

We expanded the framework not only for ourselves but also for our partners. The fact that Ukraine was able to obtain an IMF program in the context of full-scale war and powerful exogenous shocks also meant an evolution in the Fund's own approaches. And this is also a form of innovation, when the practice of one country changes the global rules of the game and opens up access to the program for other countries.

Finally, innovation is not always about financial instruments. Is it innovative when a central bank opens children's rooms so that employees can bring their children to the office during blackouts and not interrupt critical processes? It opens its own "points of resilience," because at -20 degrees in cold homes, it is sometimes impossible to stay overnight... I am convinced that it is. Because in wartime, institutional resilience starts with people, their ability to work, make decisions, and maintain the system.

That is exactly how we thought: innovation is not about form, but about facing the challenges. And this approach, shaped during the war, matters far beyond Ukraine's borders.

Today, the question is no longer what the world can do to help Ukraine.

The question is what Ukraine can give to the world.

The war has highlighted a very simple but often underestimated truth: security is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development and financial stability. As the ECB President Christine Lagarde said in her speech in Berlin: " Europe must ensure it has a solid and credible geopolitical foundation by maintaining a steadfast commitment to open trade and underpinning it with security capabilities."

This call is to join forces to build up defense capabilities as a prerequisite for strengthening Europe's global role, in particular the role of the euro.

I would like to elaborate on this idea.

Europe's security today has many components. It is not just about the army and defense budgets. It is about technology, industrial chains, energy resilience, digital and energy infrastructure, a financial system capable of operating in shock conditions, and institutions that remain independent.

And in each of these dimensions, Ukraine can be a supplier of ready-made solutions.

First and foremost, thanks to the most combat-ready army in Europe and the MILTECH ecosystem, tested in real combat conditions.

And when the Ukrainian President tells in Davos that Europe should be able to defend itself, this is because he can offer a solution. "If Russian warships are sailing freely around Greenland, Ukraine can help – we have the expertise and weapons to ensure not one of those ships remains".

This is already a concrete military and economic proposal.

However, Ukraine's strength extends beyond military expertise alone.

There are also financial, regulatory, and institutional solutions that have proven their effectiveness during the full-scale war - from ensuring the continuity of payment systems to managing macrofinancial stability in conditions of existential shock.

And we are ready to share this knowledge with our partners. In fact, we are sharing it. Just in 2026, we scheduled 19 events as part of technical assistance provided by the National Bank of Ukraine.

War-tested innovations become a global public good.

I will repeat the phrase I said at the opening of our Annual Research Conference: "Ukraine is not a question. Ukraine is the answer."

And an alliance with Ukraine is an investment in the resilience of the future of Europe and the global economy.

Thank you for your attention.