

**IMF's benchmarks and soft commitments****Parliament rejects to support draft laws on establishing a new administrative court**

The Verkhovna Rada did not support and returned all three draft laws aimed at establishing a new court, the High Public Disputes Court (HPDC), which would handle administrative cases involving national state agencies. This decision stemmed from MPs and the Committee endorsing a model that completely eliminates the role of international experts in the selection process for HPDC judges. Discussions with the IMF regarding the requirements for this law are ongoing. However, only one week remains to meet the end-of-December deadline outlined in the Memorandum.

*Source: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*

**Commission for selecting the ESBU Director elects its chair**

According to our information, on December 5, the commission tasked with selecting a new Director for the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine (ESBU) held its first meeting. Laura Stefan, an international expert on the rule of law with the European Commission and the Council of Europe, was elected as the chair of the commission. Oleg Hylyaka, a commission member nominated by the Ukrainian government, was elected as the secretary.

During its next meeting, the commission is expected to approve its working regulations. It is crucial that these regulations ensure a fully transparent and public process at every stage of the ESBU Director selection—from the submission of applications to candidate discussions. The competition for the position will be announced once the commission's regulation is finalized.

**Obligations to the EU****Verkhovna Rada reinstates property confiscation in plea agreements**

The Verkhovna Rada passed draft law #12243-1, amending the Criminal Code to reinstate the provision for property confiscation

within plea agreements for individuals accused of major corruption offenses. This provision had been inadvertently removed in a prior bill addressing the withdrawal of state rewards from traitors. The draft law has now been sent to the President for signing.

*Source: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*

## **Parliament supports increase in excise tax on tobacco goods**

The Verkhovna Rada has passed draft law #11090 in its final reading, supporting the gradual increase of excise taxes on tobacco products. The legislation proposes a 35.4% increase in the excise tax on cigarettes in 2025. The excise tax on tobacco products will continue to rise gradually to align with the minimum levels set by the European Union.

*Source: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*

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### **Other key economic issues**

## **Two bills required for Ukraine's OECD membership adopted on time**

Last week, the Verkhovna Rada approved, in its final reading, draft law #10319, which introduces tax measures to combat the bribery of foreign officials in international business transactions. Additionally, Parliament passed bill #11443, imposing sanctions on businesses attempting to bribe foreign officials. Both laws were required to be adopted by the end of December to continue Ukraine's negotiations for OECD membership. Ukraine is set to submit its final report by December 13 before applying.

*Source: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*

## **Parliament approves Naftogaz chief Chernyshov as deputy Prime Minister**

Last week the Verkhovna Rada supported Naftogaz CEO Oleksii Chernyshov for the position of Vice Prime Minister and Minister for National Unity. This new ministry appears to build on the former Ministry for the Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories, which the Cabinet of Ministers renamed the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine following Parliament's personnel decision.

*Source: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine*

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