Alona Lebedieva: Ukraine’s Exports Are Declining — and So Are Its Chances for Growth

KYIV, UKRAINE, March 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has downgraded its global economic growth forecast for 2025 from 3.3% to 3.1%. The figure may seem small, but for Ukraine, it speaks volumes: GDP growth in January–February this year dropped threefold — to 1.1% from 3.6% last year. The economy reacted instantly — and not without reason. Ukraine is highly dependent on global demand, and any decline in external momentum hits the internal balance hard.

Alona Lebedieva

Minister of Economy Yulia Svyrydenko listed a number of reasons for the slowdown: a shortage of labour, limited access to capital, damaged infrastructure, and high energy prices. But these factors alone don’t paint the full picture.

“We are not just facing difficulties. We are receiving signals that cannot be ignored,” says Alona Lebedieva, owner of the Ukrainian diversified industrial and investment group Aurum Group. She emphasizes: the economy is also being affected by the negative trade balance, shaped by what’s called “net exports” — the difference between exports and imports. This year, exports have fallen while imports have increased. “Less foreign currency is entering the country, and more is leaving. And all of this hits GDP immediately. It’s basic math, but it works without emotion,” she explains.

According to Lebedieva, one of the most vulnerable sectors has turned out to be energy. Due to missile strikes on gas extraction facilities — both state-owned and private — Ukraine was forced to rapidly increase gas imports. In February, gas imports rose twelvefold. “The reason is simple: Naftogaz miscalculated demand and had to make additional purchases during winter — at prices 60% higher than in summer. For businesses, that’s a blow. For the state budget, it’s an expense,” Lebedieva says.

Industry is operating under regular electricity blackouts, and the transport sector is under pressure due to attacks on ports. Agriculture traditionally does not show results in the first quarter — crop production hasn't yet entered the season, and livestock farming has reduced its output. "There is no growth in agriculture, no stability in extraction, and no confidence in industry. And at the same time — exports are falling, imports are growing. Under such conditions, there's simply no one left to drive growth," explains Alona Lebedieva.

She also draws attention to the global context. Ukraine remains an economy tightly bound to external demand. "Our GDP literally mirrors the trends of the EU and the world. The growth correlation is over 0.5 and 0.7 respectively. This means that half of our economic outcome doesn't lie in Kyiv — it's in Brussels, Berlin, and Beijing," says Lebedieva. She stresses that the latest OECD forecasts only confirm the worrying trend. If the world grows even more slowly in 2026, Ukraine will also fall short of expected percentages.

"The state budget for 2025 is based on a projected GDP growth of 2.7%. If the reality turns out to be worse — and it already isn't looking optimistic — the government will have to cut spending. Social obligations, defence, infrastructure — everything will come under pressure," warns Alona Lebedieva.

Ukraine's economic trajectory increasingly resembles a fragile structure balanced on external factors. And while there's no reason for panic just yet, there's even less reason for excessive optimism.

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