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UKRAINE AND EU: TOWARD DEEP COOPERATION IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

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Within the framework of the international conference, teachers, professors, scientists, students, experts in the field of studying hybrid threats and security studies, and representatives of civil society had the opportunity to exchange practical experience, valuable and relevant knowledge on current issues of the European security system, security policy in the EU and Ukraine, the formation of a secure space, the development of educational programs in European studies, etc.

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THE EU-UKRAINE-NATO COOPERATION DURING THE FULL-FLEDGED WAR

Introduction

February of 2022 opened a new epoch in relationship between Ukraine and NATO that was more theoretical than practical before. It was quite clear that relations developed with fits and starts, because Ukraine was not a member state of the Alliance.

Public opinion towards NATO in Ukraine slowly changed. The support of NATO membership increased from 18% to 47,8% in 2014 compared to 2013 while after the beginning of the Russia's full-fledged war public opinion increased to 83% [3].

Discussions regarding membership in NATO were closely connected with reforms in the state. Despite numerous obstacles on the road to forming a democratic state, there were successful attempts to implement reforms, eradicate corruption, reform the judiciary and banking system. In 2019, the Parliament embedded Ukraine's Euro and Euroatlantic integration into the Constitution.

During the whole period of existence of Ukraine as an independent state, NATO supported Kyiv through various programs, the Comprehensive Assistance Package, Trust Funds and initiatives. Despite the fact that Ukraine was not a member state, it developed cooperation with NATO, participated in bilateral training and strengthened ties through constant dialogue and meetings. It regularly took part in joint multilateral exercises as well as hosted them. In 2020, Ukraine received an Enhanced Opportunity Partner status, which provided preferential access

to NATO's interoperability toolbox, including exercises, training, exchange of information and situational awareness [3].

Bilateral cooperation was not an easy task for Kyiv. First of all, because the EU and NATO perceived Ukraine through the prism of Russian influence. As a result, there were a lot of talks, but almost no significant results. The first results in strengthening relations could be seen in 2022 after the beginning of the full-fledged war of Russia. In February of 2022 the European Commission and NATO initiated the EU-NATO Staff Coordination on Ukraine, organized with the purpose to provide assistance and support. There were regular meetings with agenda focusing on military and humanitarian support, energy security, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear preparedness, demining etc. [4].

The Ukraine-NATO Council (UNC) is a joint body within which Alliance member states and Ukraine hold joint meetings on an equal footing with a view to promoting political dialogue, interaction, cooperation and Ukraine's aspiration to become a member of NATO. It provides for mutual consultation, decision-making and joint activities. The Ukraine-NATO Council also serves as a crisis consultation mechanism between Ukraine and NATO.

The Ukraine-NATO Council was established at the NATO summit in Vilnius in 2023 as one of three elements of an assistance package bringing Ukraine closer to NATO. The package also includes a multi-year assistance program designed to support the restructuring of Ukraine's security and defence sector and the country's transition to full operational compatibility with NATO, along with confirmation that Ukraine will become a member of NATO subject to meeting the relevant requirements and approval by the Alliance's member states. The inaugural meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Council took place on 12 July 2023 at the Vilnius Summit. The Council meeting was held at the level of heads of state and government, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in attendance [2].

A significant change occurred in April of 2022 when the Ukraine Defence Contact Group («Ramstein format») was organized. At the meetings of Ramstein format all NATO allies and 25 EU member states participated discussing how to help Ukraine. Common efforts

had brought significant results. This coalition, Ramstein format, formed capability coalitions that covered appropriate military gaps, air defense, artillery, armor, drones, demining, maritime security, IT, and integrated missile defense. The coalitions enhanced both pooled procurement and task-sharing mechanisms [5].

Under the pressure of war and atrocities committed by Russian militaries, the European Union and NATO acted like partners. The European Peace Facility took responsibility for covering military support to Ukraine through its Member States, involving various funds and initiatives, such as Ukraine Facility, EU Civil Protection Mechanism, Foreign Policy Instruments, and The Common Security and Defence Policy missions [4]. Simultaneously, NATO initiated its own program, the so-called the Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine as a program to streamline defence and security reforms in Ukraine and increase interoperability with NATO.

Ukraine, under the threat of constant air raids, fierce attacks at the front lines, urgently needed lethal weapons, intelligence data, air defence, drones and missiles. Apart from weapons, Kyiv received financial assistance that covered current social needs. With every year, since 2022, Ukraine had received financial and military support. In 2024 support given to Ukraine was worth EUR 50 billion, surpassing the minimum baseline funding of EUR 40 billion [4].

In its turn, Ukraine shared the battlefield information with NATO and the EU partners. In order to have regular contacts, the European Union and NATO opened their offices in Ukraine. The staff of the offices collected data and studied the experience of militaries from the battlefield.

It is worth mentioning, that Ukraine was not only a passive recipient of the support. Kyiv took steps to for a circle of partners within and beyond NATO and the EU. In 2025 in Poland, Ukraine and NATO opened the Joint Analysis Training and Education Centre to collect combat experience and transform it in future NATO's defence planning [4].

Despite bilateral efforts it became evident that there was a necessity to develop closer ties. That's why, July of 2023 was marked

by creation of the NATO-Ukraine Council that was a significant institutional breakthrough. In contrast to former proposals the newly formed mechanism set a foundation for equal footing of Ukraine with NATO members, and not only in discussions, but also in joint decision-making. The approach granted Ukraine a right to participate directly in shaping policy responses to security threats. Moreover, it enables real-time crisis coordination – an unprecedented step for a non-member state [5]. With approval from NATO, Ukraine got a status of a frontline partner in European security, unprecedented example of the state not being a member of the alliance. Two-sided working groups, joint consultations and operational dialogues creates a permanent political channel to advance defense cooperation between Ukraine and NATO. The above-mentioned initiatives and changes indicated that the Alliance sustained significant transformations that improved its functioning and efficiency. On the other hand, the changes from both sides and the evolution of the NATO-Ukraine shows growing interest in bilateral relations.

Like the EU, the Alliance also provided financial support that grew with intensification of the conflict. In 2023, both partners proposed to develop a multi-year program to rebuild the Ukrainian army. During the Alliance's 75th Anniversary in 2024, the Allies established security assistance and training for Ukraine to coordinate military equipment and training.

Talking about future it is quite evident that there no options for Ukraine regarding joining the Alliance. One and the only option is NATO membership. The Alliance membership is a guarantee to protect the state in case of next aggression.

NATO 2022 Strategic Concept mentions Russia as «the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security.» Ukraine is the only country that has direct combat experience in repelling the Russian invasion. That is an asset for the development of new doctrines, exercises and trainings for NATO.

From the practical point of view, Ukraine has the largest and the most experienced army in Europe which will strengthen the Alliance's military capacity, form a NATO forward defensive line

and bolstering the safety of the Central and Eastern Europe states. Moreover, Ukraine has already proved to be a reliable contributor to transatlantic security, having taken part in all major NATO-led missions earlier [3].

Ukraine continues to actively cooperate with NATO in various areas. An important step in this direction was the granting of Enhanced Opportunities Partner status to Ukraine in 2020. This status opens up additional opportunities for participation in joint operations, training and information exchange. In September 2022, when Ukraine was facing Russian aggression, the official Kyiv submitted an application for NATO membership under an accelerated procedure. As an example, Ukraine cited the allies' decision on the precedent of inviting Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance, which began the NATO accession process without first obtaining a Membership Action Plan. Incidentally, at the last NATO summit in Vilnius in July 2023, the allies waived the requirement for our country to implement the Membership Action Plan. This decision simplifies our path to the Alliance to a certain extent, as it changes the two-stage process of joining NATO to a single stage [1].

Thus, the history of Ukraine's relations with NATO is a history of gradual rapprochement, made possible by joint efforts in the field of security and democratic reforms.

Conclusions

Ukraine is paving way to NATO slowly, but inevitably and its membership is only the question of time. Despite barriers and challenges, relations between the sides over the last few years showed a positive dynamic with significant changes in Ukraine's favor.

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SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE BALTIC STATES AND UKRAINE

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are among Ukraine's main partners in the defence sector. These countries have provided significant technical military support and have become active allies in politics and diplomacy. Their experience in integrating into NATO, reforming the defence sector in line with Euro-Atlantic standards, and creating effective cybersecurity systems is extremely valuable to Ukraine as it changes its security policy.

In 2018, Lithuania launched a joint cybersecurity project with Ukraine, which included technical assistance, specialised training, and the exchange of analytical capabilities through the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn [9]. In 2022, in response to Russia's full-scale invasion, Lithuania significantly expanded its assistance to Ukraine, providing military support that exceeded 1% of its GDP, according to the Kiel Institute, 2023 [7]

The aid included M101 artillery systems, ammunition, drones, medical supplies, and communications equipment. In January 2024, the governments of Ukraine and Lithuania announced their intention to conclude a bilateral security agreement that would include long-term military-technical assistance, intelligence sharing, and cooperation in arms production [6]. After 2014, Latvia began supplying anti-tank weapons, communications equipment,

infantry fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers. Training programmes were also organised for Ukrainian engineers, medics and sappers. In 2022-2023, Latvia transferred multiple launch rocket systems, artillery systems, mobile hospitals and night vision devices to Ukraine. In addition, Latvia actively participated in the European military training mission, within which Latvian instructors trained Ukrainian military personnel, including drone operators [8].

Estonia is one of Ukraine's most generous donor countries in terms of GDP. Cooperation began in 2005 with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement, which was updated in 2020 to take into account new hybrid and digital threats. Estonia is a particularly important partner in the field of cybersecurity. It is home to NATO's Centre of Cyber Defence Cooperation. As part of joint projects, Estonia has provided Ukraine with technical means to protect critical infrastructure, organised training for cybersecurity specialists, and provided software for operational management. In 2022, Estonia transferred field hospitals, artillery, drones, air defence systems and IT resources for combat units to Ukraine. Estonian instructors also participated in the training of Ukrainian military personnel within the framework of NATO and EU programmes. In addition, Estonia provided humanitarian and medical assistance to support Ukrainian military personnel [3].

At the legislative level, Estonia's participation in cooperation with Ukraine is enshrined in the Foreign Policy Strategy until 2030, which explicitly provides for support for democratic states in countering authoritarian influences in Eastern Europe.

The level of solidarity between the Baltic peoples and the Ukrainian people was demonstrated by the 30,000-strong March in Support of Ukraine on 5 March in Riga, the largest protest in Latvia in recent years. Four presidents of the state, including the current one, took part in it. Together, they carried a large blue and yellow banner reading 'Kopa par Ukrainu! Kopa pret Putin! / Together for Ukraine! Together against Putin!' [1].

It should be noted right away that the involvement of representatives of foreign countries in the Armed Forces of Ukraine

has become an extremely powerful signal of support. From late February to early March 2022, more than 40,000 volunteers from 52 countries arrived in Ukraine to join the Ukrainian International Legion. Among them are representatives of the political elite of some countries.

Cultural and artistic events on a national scale in the Baltic countries since 24 February 2022 have also been dedicated to Ukraine. On 11 March 2022, on the Day of Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, a programme of commemorative events at the state level was dedicated to Ukraine's struggle for freedom. The Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT broadcast podcasts of two charity concerts, 'Freedom Shines' and 'Strong Together,' which were available throughout Europe, and the funds raised during the concerts were directed to aid Ukraine [2].

Together with Poland, from the first day of full-scale war, the Baltic states, using all available diplomatic methods, encouraged other EU and NATO countries to increase their assistance to Ukraine in the war – first and foremost, to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine, immediately provide all necessary weapons, provide financial support, impose the toughest possible sanctions against the aggressor country, and accelerate Ukraine's accession to the EU. These are the key messages that the leaders, MPs and diplomats of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have consistently conveyed to European and North American countries regarding Ukraine [10].

At a time when the West believed that Ukraine would not be able to withstand the 'second army of the world' and gave it only a few days to fight, such support from the Baltic countries was invaluable [4].

In September 2025, representatives of the Baltic countries visited Ukraine. The visit was initiated and organised jointly by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the WHO Office in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The purpose of the delegation's visit was to strengthen cooperation in the field of health care, study Ukraine's experience in countering and responding to challenges caused by full-scale war, etc.

«The support of international partners is what allows our medical system to withstand the difficult times of full-scale war and continue the process of its reform. From day one, we have been forced to find quick and effective solutions in response to the challenges facing our country: ensuring access to medical care and essential medicines, reconfiguring the system in light of migration processes and changes in logistics, constant shelling and attacks by the enemy, destruction of medical and energy infrastructure, etc. Ukraine's experience is complex but extremely important for other countries on the path to building sustainable healthcare systems that are capable of adapting quickly in emergencies. Today, we welcome our partners and friends from the Baltic countries. We are happy to share our experience with them. However, I sincerely hope that they will never need to use it in practice,» said Ukrainian Health Minister Viktor Lyashko [5].

It should be noted that during the visit, representatives of the Baltic countries familiarised themselves with approaches to preparedness and response in the context of Russia's armed aggression. In addition, the delegation will learn about the unique experience of resilience and resistance of Ukrainian medical institutions at the regional level.

In addition to objective concern for their own national interests and security, active support and consistent assistance to Ukraine from the Baltic states is driven by a number of factors: understanding that there is an interdependence between the security of Central European states, in particular Ukraine and the Baltic states; the desire to encourage key Western European states to counter the Russian threat and strengthen security guarantees in the region; the need to eliminate threats from the Russian Federation in the long term.

Thanks to their active assistance to Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania have gained time and experience to strengthen their own security and develop defence cooperation within NATO and with a number of its leading member states on a bilateral basis.

In line with the wide range of conventional and hybrid risks, the Baltic countries are consistently developing response strategies

and intensively coordinating the activities of their foreign policy, military, intelligence, law enforcement and border guard agencies in the areas of defence, foreign policy and security.

Given the constant provocative actions on the borders by Belarus and Russia, the Baltic states are working purposefully to strengthen and protect their borders. For example, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania have agreed to build barrier fences on their borders with Russia and Belarus, as well as joint plans to close borders and checkpoints in the event of an escalation of the situation, and to synchronise actions within the common border perimeter. This is also linked to the need for a broad international response to the threats of terrorism, extremism and migration, which the Russian Federation uses as levers of influence in the context of its destructive policy.

The strengthening and development of the common border of the Baltic countries with the Russian Federation and Belarus is partly financed by the EU. Joint training and coordination of actions between the border services and law enforcement agencies of the Baltic countries take place on a regular basis. In addition, all three countries have adopted a strategy of restricting movement in the border area, abandoning the simplified border crossing regime in areas bordering Russia and Belarus, gradually closing border crossing points, and restricting the entry of citizens, vehicles and goods. A ban on vehicles with Russian license plates in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia is also being introduced, or their mandatory re-registration in accordance with the requirements of the legislation of these countries.

Military cooperation between Ukraine and Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is key to ensuring regional security and strengthening defence capabilities in the current environment. The Baltic states, which have considerable experience in countering Russian threats, are members of NATO and the EU, and therefore actively support Ukraine through bilateral ties and international initiatives. Joint exercises, exchange of experience, military-technical assistance and political support create a solid foundation for further strengthening the strategic partnership.

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INTEGRATED CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND RESILIENCE ENSURING IN THE CONTEXT OF HYBRID THREATS

Multilevel crisis management is a key tool for ensuring resilience and effectiveness in the face of modern challenges, such as pandemics, climate change, economic crises and geopolitical instability. The effectiveness of such management depends on the definition and adherence to certain criteria that allow assessing the effectiveness of anti-crisis measures at different levels (local, regional, national and international). The criteria for the effectiveness of multilevel crisis management should be considered as follows: the efficiency of responding to crises, which is simultaneously one of the key criteria for the effectiveness of the relevant measures, and also significantly reduces the negative consequences of crises [3]; coordination between levels of management, which ensures effective interaction between local, regional, national and international institutions and is also critical for crisis management [2]; adaptability and flexibility, since the ability to adapt to changes in the external environment is a key criterion for effectiveness. This includes the ability to quickly change strategies and plans in conditions of uncertainty.

The advantages of the integrated approach, according to V. Suvorov, are complexity due to the integration of various concepts and ensuring a comprehensive approach to crisis management; efficiency, based on a combination of strategic planning, quality management and risk management and due to proper interlevel interaction; flexibility, which determines the adaptation of the system to changes. At the same time, the defining advantage of the integrated approach to multilevel management, according to the author, is efficiency, which depends on compliance with key criteria, such as responsiveness, coordination between levels of management, adaptability, transparency, assessment of resources and results. On these grounds, the sustainability of the management system is achieved, as well as its ability to withstand modern challenges under transformational conditions [7, 8].

The formation of a national ecosystem of resilience is aimed at overcoming systemic vulnerabilities of the spheres of influence of hybrid threats in ensuring the comprehensive security of society [4, 5]. The Concept for the Implementation of a National Resilience System [6] states that a crisis situation should be understood as «a state characterized by extreme aggravation of contradictions, significant destabilization of the situation in any sphere of activity, region, state, including a significant violation of the conditions for the functioning of the main spheres of life of society and the state, and requiring the adoption of a set of measures to stabilize the situation and restore the quality of life of the population.»

As a conceptual basis for overcoming the consequences of a permanent crisis, we propose the concept of an integrated crisis management system – Integrated Crisis Management System (ICMS), which, unlike established management concepts used for multi-level management structures, is determined by its focus on social systems that are characterized by a high degree of instability (unsustainable) and require prompt adoption of rational decisions. That is, it is aimed at ensuring the proper functioning of unstable social systems with an emphasis on the ability of all levels of management to have a certain autonomy in making their own decisions without delaying their reactions, due to the need to

comply with agreed procedures, which is achieved by previously developed response algorithms and inter-subject interaction.

Among the fundamental principles of forming the concept of an integrated crisis management system, it is necessary to determine, first of all: ensuring predictability of processes and avoiding unpredictability during decision-making; implementation of the entire complex of response measures and actions to overcome crises, taking into account such characteristics as comprehensiveness, proactivity and prevention (prevention); identification of critically necessary processes that must be ensured under any conditions of the system's functioning to ensure its survival, further functioning and stability; further functioning of the socio-economic system (organization) should take place with an emphasis on the elimination of its unviable components and elements; adaptation of the system to new conditions while preserving its main areas of activity and functions with the least losses; further reorientation from the functional type of the system to the functional-matrix type with the addition of such types of activity that involve the introduction of a project approach to the established routine processes of functioning.

It should be noted that the systemic crisis of a complex social system is not static. It dynamically violates the stability of the social system. Therefore, the crisis management system must take into account the dynamics of social transformations. To build such a system, it is necessary to determine the basic and defining structures of the crisis, taking into account a wide range of influences on it. The crisis is uncontrollable. Therefore, it is necessary to give the uncontrollable problem maximum controllability, and uncertainty – certainty. The crisis is irrational with an emphasis on the system acquiring a chaotic vector. Therefore, in crisis management it is necessary to: use rational approaches aimed at streamlining the components and elements of the system, break down difficult processes into simpler, clearer and more understandable ones; apply preventive actions and establish productive communications, using specific tools and methods for quickly making informed and balanced decisions; establish algorithmization of actions in extreme

conditions of uncertainty, which requires the concentration of available resources and the involvement of potential resources, with limitations in their quantity and time.

In general, an integrated crisis management and resilience system assumes the presence of the following three main components: a system of inter-subject coordination of actions (including appropriate measures); an operational model of response and interaction (including appropriate resources); tactical algorithms for decision-making and collective actions.

The author's vision of the concept of crisis management is that, unlike the established anti-crisis, crisis management is aimed not at preventing and responding to individual, sporadic crisis phenomena, but at managing in conditions of a permanent systemic crisis, which continues and is predominantly complex and comprehensive in nature.

Crisis management, in our opinion, is a system of planning, organization, coordination and control of urgent measures aimed at ensuring the stability of the socio-economic system, responding to crisis situations, processes and phenomena based on the use of effective approaches, tools, methods and means of solving problems and resolving contradictions, taking into account the ability and effectiveness of their application in the presence of a wide range of real and potential threats under conditions of a high level of uncertainty caused by a crisis state of a certain duration.

The formation of an integrated crisis management system involves the unification of previously isolated parts into a single holistic system, resulting in the ability of the relevant system to organize timely and effective crisis management measures at different levels of ensuring the stability of socio-economic systems. The relevant levels should be interconnected in terms of goals, resources, time, and qualitative characteristics. At the same time, the target setting of the integrated crisis management system involves achieving by the socio-economic system such a state of equilibrium and degree of stability, where all external and internal factors and influences are balanced.

When forming an integrated crisis management system, it is necessary to consider and model the process of ensuring stability primarily at the basic, i.e. local – organizational level. Since the organization is a basic structural and functional structure subject to managerial influence, and the dynamic processes of functioning and development of socio-economic systems occur in accordance with common laws on the basis of common principles, conceptual foundations, methodological and other approaches using appropriate means and tools for implementation.

The formation of the concept of an integrated crisis management system also involves the definition of critically necessary administrative and technological processes that must be ensured under any conditions of the organization's functioning in order to ensure the survival and maximum possible stability of the organization. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly imagine what socio-organizational macrosystem a particular social organization is a part of under transformational conditions.

Ensuring constant scientific and methodological support for the processes of assessing risks and capabilities, planning and analyzing the implementation of measures to ensure resilience, conducting crisis management exercises, developing and approving universal protocols (algorithms) of coordinated actions to prevent and respond to threats and crisis situations, as well as establishing appropriate coordination at different stages of their development, taking into account inter-sectoral interdependencies – these are only the main measures included in the relevant action plan for the implementation of the Concept for Ensuring the National Resilience System, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated November 10, 2023 No. 1025-r [1]. All of them require a comprehensive approach to professional crisis management under transformational conditions.

The formation of an integrated crisis management and resilience system involves the development of a comprehensive mechanism for the development and further application of clear organizational and methodological approaches, tactical algorithms, specific tools, effective coordination measures at different levels of

functioning and development of socio-economic systems, where the relevant levels should be interconnected in terms of goals, resources, time, qualitative characteristics, as well as inter-subject coordination taking into account inter-sectoral and inter-agency interaction using effective methods and means (emphasis on highly effective, innovative and technological methods and means). The specified system should be as effective as possible, simple and understandable, logical, flexible and adaptive, for operational and timely application at all levels of crisis management under transformational conditions, taking into account systemic vulnerabilities and hybrid threats.

Particularly relevant in the context of external influences and hybrid threats are the issues of professional training and professional selection of managers, crisis managers at various levels of decision-making and their implementation, which is primarily related to the responsibility of managers of institutions, organizations and enterprises of various forms of ownership for the functioning and development of organizations in the context of hybrid threats.

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**CONFLICT DURATION AS A KEY FACTOR
IN CONFLICT ESCALATION RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE, 2014
TO THE PRESENT**

«Die Freiheit, die Sie meinen, das ist die Willkür für Sie, der
Terrorismus für andere. Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, //
So schlag' ich dir den Schädel ein.»

Bernhard von Bülow, 1903

I am a historian of 20th century East Central and East European history, focusing on the development of national identity and religious life in those regions, particularly Poland. Of necessity this has required me to attend closely to Russian (and German) visions of, and interests in the peoples and states of Europe, particularly those east of the Odra and Nysa and how non-Russians have resisted, compromised with, accommodated themselves to, or have been broken, by these great powers.

A key contention of this presentation is that the protracted nature of Russian aggression in post-Soviet spaces since 1991 matters greatly. The relatively muted international response of what Russia terms the «collective west” to Russia’s wars, hybrid conflicts and weaponization of its trade (inextricably linked with the growing power of transnational organized crime in Russia) since that time have strengthened both Russian authoritarianism at home and imperial expansion abroad. From 1991 to 2014 the results of Russia’s expansionism both within de jure Russian

territory – especially in Chechnya – as well as in the «near abroad” from Transdnistria, to Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia, all seemed to have vindicated a Russian strategy of patiently regathering the Soviet lands through military and economic coercion. Such conflicts, and the degree to which much of the international community acquiesced to Russian neo-imperialism (indeed subsidized and legitimized it through high levels of trade and diplomatic cooperation particularly via the OSCE) in turn encouraged what so far has proven to be Russia’s overly ambitious efforts to destroy Ukrainian independence since 2014.

That Russia’s military-security-criminal complex believed it could forestall long-term Ukrainian ambitions to integrate with the European Union and force Ukraine back into the «ruski mir” by beginning military conflict in 2014 through territorial partition and proxy war was a reasonable gamble. While Russia’s over decade-long war with Ukraine so far appears to have failed, the current prolonged conflict, whatever its aftermath (short of an unlikely Ukrainian and equally unlikely Russian collapse) holds numerous risks for those desiring Ukraine to maintain its independence, especially if what ensues is yet another «frozen conflict” near the current front line.

Under the ice of «frozen conflicts” Russian security and criminal elites have fostered a flourishing, complex ecosystem of corruption within its own and other societies for decades. Russian-enabled frozen conflicts have nurtured authoritarian stability within Russia, distorted democratic development in countries on whose territory Russia sponsors satellite states, and increasingly is becoming a springboard for broader geopolitical destabilization.

Thus, a key problem with «the collective West’s” current approach to «escalation management” includes not understanding the radicalizing impact of prolonged conflicts both domestically and internationally both in Russia and those countries it is targeting. Also, by treating the various conflicts in post-Soviet spaces as discrete, regional problems the international community has underestimated deep continuities in Russian statecraft (particularly institutionally in the Security, military and the now

fully emergent criminal networks that both dominate Russia and have a significant presence not just in post-Soviet spaces, but increasingly globally). This misapprehension of the transformative social, cultural and political toll of sustained warfare will make the transition to peace more difficult, if not impossible in Ukraine for the foreseeable future and can facilitate the normalization of the conflict in ways that benefit Russian imperial influence.

For Ukraine there are several problems that are important to explore in terms of conflict duration both currently and in the postwar period. For those who want to assist Ukraine in efforts at reconstruction and deeper integration into Western institutions it will be important to be mindful of some of the following problems, in no particular order of importance, if only because how large any given factor will loom depends upon the ultimate results of the conflict:

- The domestic social and cultural impact of prolonged war for Ukraine includes a significant – and understandable – level of current bitterness that what to many Ukrainians appear to be a betrayal of Ukrainian interests by its western allies and much of the developing world. This is doubly dangerous, because even a relatively successful Ukrainian defense over this long war can enable Russian narratives of how the West is using Ukraine to fight a proxy war against Russia to gain credence among Ukrainians. This, and other sources of domestic division over issues including the conduct of the war, attitudes toward those who fled Ukraine and how they might be reintegrated into Ukrainian society, etc. need to be taken seriously and discussed soberly in order not to create openings for renewed Russian influence in Ukraine. As difficult as it is to imagine now, sustained Russian aggression in Georgia and horrific Russian atrocities in Chechnya have not prevented pro-Russian governments from gaining and holding power in those countries. The wounds of war can stay infected – and Russia has every interest in facilitating this.

- Some corruption during any war is all but inevitable. There is too much money circulating too freely to achieve immediate objects of national survival to allow for overly careful accounting.

However, as Ukrainians are aware, getting control of corruption is essential – particularly given the degree to which organized crime is so thoroughly integrated into Russian strategies of extending the influence of the Russian state. Europeans, who have a key role to play in supporting Ukrainian efforts in this regard also need to renew efforts to combat Russian influence and criminal corruption within their own economies and politics. Transnational crime is a key security issue – and a long war creates deep channels of corruption.

- One of the most important consequences of this long war for the United States, Europe and Ukraine (which is a key element in the failure of efforts at escalation management since 2022) is China's growing investment in prolonging and rendering intractable the current conflict. The war isolates Russia and increases its dependence upon China. This in turn points to how a truly global strategy of peace-making and deep Ukrainian stabilization, reconstruction and Western integration is a necessity for «the collective West.” Russia's elites must be made to understand that Ukraine has permanently slipped away from their grasp.

Among the dysfunctions that this war is and almost certainly will continue to inflict on Russian society – which render any efforts at reconciliation with Russia as unlikely to succeed include:

- Russian security institutions that potentially are more isolated and feel under threat due to their country's greater geopolitical dependence on China and unlikelihood of even partial reintegration into «the collective West.”

- Domestically, these institutions are stronger – even if the war goes badly the legend of Russia versus the «collective West” (would that were so) will allow the military-security apparatus to avoid any deeper accountability for a losing war. Furthermore, the relative impunity with which Russia has waged hybrid war will offer additional encouragement and scope for an unreconstructed hostility – Russia will continue to see the collective West as weak but also as a threat and so will do things that only increase its isolation.

- Criminal networks and dependence on China, North Korea, Iran and other countries that already have high indexes of corruption – that have been so important in helping Russia wage war – will continue to distort Russian domestic politics.

Finally, it is exceedingly unlikely Russian veterans likely will function like the «Afghantsy» did in Gorbachev’s Russia. The criminal element among them will be a useful kind of new «Black Hundreds» that can easily be mobilized to defend Mr. Putin and his successors Russian imperial vision.

An open question will be the impact of this war on pro-Russian elements in Donbas. The high levels of mobilization there could produce a possibility of driving a wedge between what separatists there are regionally and Moscow. However, this will prove difficult since the domestic dynamics that likely will be at play in postwar Ukraine will make such an outreach to pro-Russian collaborators likely politically unsustainable.

What are some lessons for what Russian propaganda calls «the collective West?» It will be a struggle to ensure that war’s end does not produce the kind of frozen conflict we imagine is the same as peace and helped facilitate the current war. We in the «collective West» also need to cultivate a heightened awareness that the brutalization produced by the prolonged war both Russian aggression and our belief we could shape it in Ukraine by slow-walking military aid will require a kind of political «demining» of the West’s ties with Ukraine. That current European purchases of Russian energy are close to on par with – or remain greater than – Europe’s military and economic support of Ukraine also suggest the need for sustained European efforts to decouple itself more thoroughly from Russia and be wary of China’s destructive influence in global affairs.

In conclusion – all of this is possible – but it will not be easy. This will be doubly difficult because Russia likely will undergo postwar radicalization – and hence will both by design and due to factors over which its own leadership has little control will bleed over whatever Russo-Ukrainian border eventually emerges. «Freezing the conflict» and regarding that as peace – then attempting to return

to «normality” is a dangerous temptation. It will only continue to vindicate the decades’ long Russian strategy of violence, corruption and using the «collective West’s” own desire for the peaceful resolution of conflicts to further Russia’s imperial agenda in Ukraine and further destabilization of the West. However this war ends, the illusions that made us in the West believe it only began three years ago reflects errors in our own (lack of) vision and a misapprehension of Russia’s long-term imperial design. This short-sightedness must end.

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THREATS POSED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE: CONSEQUENCES FOR EUROPE

The full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, launched on February 24, 2022, has become the most serious military challenge to European security since World War II. It has radically changed the political, economic, humanitarian and security architecture of Europe, demonstrating the vulnerability of European systems to hybrid, energy, information and military threats. The consequences of this war go far beyond the borders of the Ukrainian space, creating long-term challenges for regional stability, the functioning of international law, energy security and the economic well-being of European societies.

Escalation and security risks

One of the key threats to Europe is the risk of conflict escalation, including a possible direct confrontation between Russia and NATO. The lack of clear «red lines» and possible misinterpretations of the parties' actions increase the risk of accidental or deliberate escalation. European states, while trying to support Ukraine, limit the scope of direct intervention by adhering to informal rules to avoid escalation (the so-called ground rules). However, strategic uncertainty remains a significant factor in instability [1].

The nuclear aspect is particularly dangerous. Russia uses nuclear rhetoric as a tool of psychological pressure and strategic deterrence, which increases tensions. Although the probability of direct use

of nuclear weapons remains low, the threat of their use is part of Moscow's hybrid strategy aimed at intimidating the West [10].

Energy security

By 2022, the EU imported more than 40% of its gas, 27% of its oil and 46% of its coal from Russia. The war disrupted these logistical and economic chains, creating an energy shock and causing inflationary waves across Europe [2; 4]. The EU is actively diversifying its supply through the development of LNG terminals, new routes and the expansion of renewable energy (REPowerEU). However, this process is long-term and requires significant investment. At the same time, the risk of cyberattacks and sabotage against energy infrastructure is increasing, as demonstrated by the attacks on Ukrainian power grids and the explosions at Nord Stream [3; 7].

Cybersecurity and information threats

Cyberattacks have become an integral part of modern conflict. They target government institutions, banks, transport and energy supply systems. Europe is increasingly facing transnational cyber operations that test its digital resilience. In parallel, a large-scale information war is taking place – through disinformation, propaganda, and the creation of fake narratives. This undermines trust in governments, media, and democratic institutions, and also provokes social divisions [8; 9].

Migration challenges and social tension

As a result of the war, the EU has accepted more than 6 million Ukrainian refugees. This has become a test for social systems – healthcare, education, the labor market, and housing. Despite the solidarity of most EU countries, there are political risks associated with the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment and internal tensions in communities. The energy and inflation crises only exacerbate social imbalances, threatening the stability of some political regimes [5].

Political and institutional threats

The differences between EU member states in their attitudes towards sanctions, arms supplies and energy policy create the risk of fragmentation of European unity. In addition, the war

has undermined the authority of international law and global institutions: the annexation of territories, systematic violations of the UN Charter and the Hague Conventions reduce the effectiveness of legal mechanisms for collective security [1].

Economic consequences

The war has caused deep economic turbulence in Europe: rising energy prices, disruption of logistics chains, shortages of food and fertilizers. The blockade of Ukrainian ports and attacks on grain infrastructure have had global consequences for food security. High energy costs, reduced production and trade restrictions have increased inflationary pressures and reduced the competitiveness of European industry [6].

Thus, the European security system has suffered a structural shock. Dependence on authoritarian regimes in the energy sector has become a strategic vulnerability. Cyber and information attacks prove that war is not only fought on the battlefield, but also in the digital space. Support for Ukraine has become a key test of European solidarity.

In order to eliminate threats, it is necessary to:

1. Strengthen defensive deterrence and clearly define «red lines” in communication with Russia.

2. Invest in energy independence by developing LNG terminals, interconnections and «green” energy.

3. Increase cyber resilience and coordination within the EU and NATO.

4. Strengthen humanitarian policy – support for refugees, integration programs, combating social discontent

5. Strengthen international law by responding to aggression through legal, economic and diplomatic means. Conclusions Russia’s war against Ukraine, which began with a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, has not only resulted in massive human casualties and destruction on Ukrainian territory, but has also become a catalytic factor that has significantly transformed the security, economic and political landscape of the entire European continent. Its impact is evident at a number of interconnected levels. Firstly, in the military sphere, the conflict has demonstrated a

changing nature of modern warfare: the combination of traditional ground operations, precision weapons, unmanned systems and the large-scale use of cyber and information operations has created a complex picture of threats that go beyond the framework of classical interstate confrontation. For European arsenals, this means the need to rethink the force structure, increase mobilization capabilities, and modernize missile and air defense.

Secondly, the energy component of the conflict has acted both as an instrument of pressure and as a signal for strategic reform. The sudden reduction in Russian gas and oil supplies has created deficits that have hit industry and households, producing a chain of economic effects – increasing energy costs, inflationary waves, and the need for urgent investment in infrastructure diversification. This has stimulated the acceleration of renewable energy processes, the creation of reserve capacities, and regional mechanisms for cooperation in the supply of energy carriers.

Third, the conflict has exacerbated issues of international law and order: annexations of territories, massive violations of humanitarian law, and targeted strikes on civilian infrastructure have called into question the ability of existing institutions to hold the aggressor accountable. This has led to the intensification of international judicial procedures, sanctions packages and discussions on the effectiveness of collective security.

Fourth, the socio-political consequences are felt differently in EU countries: the simultaneous influx of refugees, rising energy bills and macroeconomic shocks increase internal political risks, to which are added the challenges of integration and the protection of social guarantees. This creates a political field where external security is closely intertwined with the internal stability of political regimes.

Finally, the digital and information sphere has become one of the main theaters of competition: large-scale disinformation campaigns, cyber operations against critical infrastructure and the use of social networks for manipulation have contributed to the undermining of trust in institutions and increased divisions within societies. Given these dimensions, it is quite obvious that threat analysis must be comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and focused

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PERSONNEL TRAINING SYSTEM FOR THE SECURITY AND DEFENSE SECTOR IN WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND UKRAINE

In the modern security environment, characterized by constant dynamics of threats, hybrid challenges, and a full-scale war in Ukraine, the issue of high-quality training of specialists for the security and defense sector is of particular importance. The formation of an effective, sustainable, and adaptive personnel training system is a key element in strengthening the state's defense capabilities, ensuring public security, and implementing the strategic course for integration into the Euro-Atlantic space. Western European countries have accumulated significant experience in building a multi-level, institutionally sustainable model of education for law enforcement agencies, combining academic training with practical orientation, civilian control with professionalism, and openness to international cooperation. For Ukraine, which is simultaneously fighting for its statehood and implementing security sector reform, it is extremely important to take these practices into account and adapt them to national conditions.

The aim of this work is a comparative analysis of the system of training personnel in the field of security and defense in Western European countries and in Ukraine. In particular, special attention is paid to the system of training specialists in institutions with specific training conditions, such as institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and similar structures in Western European countries. Western European models are characterized by high adaptability to modern challenges, and the example of Germany is illustrative in this context. D. Shvets, «each country has its own unique systems of training specialists in the field of law enforcement, which were created under the influence of various factors, but they all have characteristic features» [1, p. 201], which opens up opportunities for comparing the German experience with the Ukrainian one.

A feature of police training in Germany in general is that professional training in police institutions does not involve obtaining higher legal education, which significantly distinguishes this system from training in higher educational institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, as well as from models adopted in many other countries[2]. This difference partly explains the high level of competition between police higher education institutions and institutions that train economists and lawyers, as young people often choose the latter because of broader career prospects.

At the same time, during the initial selection of candidates for admission to German police institutions, the main requirement is to have a driver's license, while in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, this condition is not mandatory. These features reflect the practical approach to training in Germany, which, in particular in Bavaria, is based on a clear three-level structure aimed at combining theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Yarmaki H. P., Yarmaki V. H. indicate that «the first level includes primary training in police schools, which includes studying general, specialized, and final courses, as well as passing an exam for the right to fill junior command positions. The term of study is 2.5 years»[3, p. 250].

The second stage is the training of middle management staff, which is carried out in higher police schools (institutes) for three

years and ends with the issuance of a diploma of higher special police education. The purpose of such training is to consolidate the theoretical knowledge obtained in practice[3, p. 250].

The third level of training covers senior management training, which is conducted at the Higher Police Academy and culminates in a certificate of higher specialized police education at the master's level. The duration of the program is two years[3, p. 250].

For example, in Belgium, the requirements for candidates for service in the Belgian police are generally in line with the standards adopted in most European countries.

As Borovyk M.O. notes, the leading educational institution for training future police officers is the Royal School of Gendarmerie of Belgium. The training course for students is two years. The curriculum includes a number of subjects that are directly related to the future field of activity: law, forensic medicine, professional ethics, prevention of juvenile delinquency, traffic legislation, etc.

The educational process is divided into 9 modules with a total duration of 470 to 490 hours. 15% of the training time is allocated to physical training classes. To consolidate the theoretical knowledge gained and participate in special operations, students undergo internships in practical units three times during their studies"[4, p. 72].

In Ukraine, the training system for the National Police is carried out within the academic model, which involves obtaining a full higher education with a legal profile.

The main emphasis is on the study of theoretical disciplines, although in recent years there has been a gradual expansion of the practical component of the educational process. At the same time, training in the institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine remains less flexible compared to European approaches, in particular due to the lack of a modular training structure and limited interdepartmental cooperation[5].

Despite this, some institutions are actively implementing modern training methods, participating in international projects, and demonstrating a willingness to adapt European standards in the training of future security sector specialists.

Conclusion: An analysis of the systems of training specialists for security and defense in Western Europe and Ukraine shows that they are very different. In Europe, for example in Bavaria or Belgium, training is flexible, practical and well adapted to modern needs – there are clear levels or modules and a lot of practice.

In Ukraine, training at the Ministry of Internal Affairs institutions is more focused on theory. But recently, Ukraine has begun to add more practice and cooperate with other countries, which gives hope for change.

If we take the best from European experience and combine it with our realities, the training of police officers and defenders in Ukraine can become much more effective, especially now, when the war is ongoing and we strive to be closer to Europe.

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METACOGNITIVE APPROACH IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANIZING A SAFE SANOGENIC EDUCATIONAL SPACE: UKRAINIAN-CZECH EXPERIENCE

The results of the research inspired by the Ukrainian nationwide program for supporting public mental health, titled „How are you? « [13] have stressed the importance of addressing diligently ever worsening mental health issues of Ukrainian population due to prolonged war conflict. The program was created as part of the initiative of *the Ukrainian First Lady, Mrs. Olena Zelenska*, and was presented at the third Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen in eleven countries around the world. Special attention requires persistent findings about global population of young adults who consistently demonstrate the lowest scores in mental health indicators [9]. For instance, a recent survey conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and the Czech school Inspectorate in the Czech republic revealed an alarming number of students – 9th graders feeling anxious and depressed, at the level of mild to moderate depression and anxiety (NUDZ, 2023)[10]. Both

projects testify to the increasing global mental health problem, especially among children, adolescents and young adults.

We see the solution to this problem in substantiating the relevance of the use of the metacognitive approaches in the organization of a safe sanogenic educational space, in particular the role of mindfulness as a metacognitive self-supporting technique for its participants. To further support the idea, we define the concept of **salutogenesis**, first introduced by the medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky [1] in the late 1970s. Simply put, salutogenesis focuses on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease (pathogenesis). In the context of our present research, we focus on the dimension of sanogenic thinking of an individual. **Sanogenic thinking** refers to protective and adaptive mechanisms in individuals that contribute to resilience and positive self-regulation when faced with life adversities. It is clear that sanogenic thinking aims at supporting and strengthening mental health (Melnychuk, 2019[8]) characterized by high level of metacognition and self-reflection. Sanogenic thinking is manifested in the understanding of past, traumatic experiences and emotional factors that can negatively impact wellbeing of individuals, as well as awareness of non-constructive, often self-defeating behavioral patterns, their correction and acquisition of skills to apply adequate ways of responding to stressful situations (Hilman, 2017[4]). Therefore, the metacognitive approach will be relevant for participants in the sanogenic educational process in the Czech Republic and Ukraine.

One of the metacognitive skills – the ability to be aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions forms the basis for self-regulation. Preliminary findings in the pilot study performed on the group of Ukrainian (n=47) and Slovak (n= 46) students (Handzilevska, 2025 [3]) showed an equal rate of respondents' **mistrust in their cognitive processes**, especially their level of attention and memory when performing problem – solving tasks. The indicator of the average value exceeded the cited norm in the interpretation of results of the Metacognition Questionnaire – 30- MCQ -30 both in the Ukrainian (M = 11, 23; SD= 4, 135) and Slovak (M=12, 56; SD=4,

330) groups. Preliminary findings show the respondents' mental health conditioned by the trust in their own cognitive processes. Both groups, Ukrainian ($r = -.525^{**}$, $p=0$) and Slovak ($r = -.361^*$, $p=0,15$) displayed similarities when scoring high in the „Absence of cognitive certainty» indicator while scoring low on the overall level of mental health and conversely, when scoring low in the „Absence of cognitive certainty» indicator, scoring high on the overall level of mental health).

Based on the above, we consider it professionally justified and necessary to provide participants in the educational process with means of developing and improving **metacognitive skills**. After all, in addition to all the awareness and regulation of one's own thoughts, emotions and behavior, it is one of the tools for managing stress, and therefore a sense of psychological security. Self-regulation, which is the basis of the metacognitive approach (Balashov, 2020[2]), is one of the conditions of good mental health (Kuleshova & Zakharchenko, 2025[6]). Therefore, the organization of a sanogenic educational space to strengthen the mental health of its participants requires metacognitive (self-conscious and self-regulated) learning, which involves developing the ability to consciously work with one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Within this framework, we will try to critically comprehend **mindfulness** as a metacognitive technique of self-support in terms of its functional capabilities in the organization of a safe educational environment. Over the past four decades, mindfulness meditation and its possible positive effects on people – reducing levels of stress and fear, and anxiety – has attracted a lot of attention from researchers. At the same time, mindfulness approach to self-discovery provided by mindfulness techniques opens up space for a conscious reassessment of rigid schemas of maladaptive cognitive processes (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2013 [11]; Kabat-Zinn, 2003[5]) such as rumination among others. To further elaborate, we mention the concept of **mindful awareness** defined as the ability to pay close attention to one's present moment experience in the form of feelings, thoughts, physical sensations and bodily

states with **kindness and non-judgmentally**. In the context of education, we emphasize the importance of:

❖ **Safe educational environment defined as:**

– an environment in which both, students and teachers, feel safe and welcome.

❖ Studying and researching the state of **mental health** of both students and teachers in the educational setting.

❖ **Sanogenic thinking defined as:**

– the type of thinking that promotes mental resilience and courage to face one's emotional pains, traumas, present feelings without falling victim to it.

❖ Development of **adaptive behaviors and coping mechanisms** through **improving metacognitive skills** to support one's ability to solve problems, learn, and handle stressful situations, supporting one's own mental health.

❖ Mindfulness practices can be applied to any experience: sensations in the body, emotional experience, thoughts, sights or sounds.

Moreover, the specific and often different characteristics of health are represented by various sociocultural variables that are relative and determined by specific social conditions, cultural context, and specifics of the national way of life, and the picture of the world (Shtyfurak & Shportun, 2019, p.24 [12]). At the same time, the integration of metacognitive, salutogenic and culturally sensitive approaches can provide a safe educational environment for its participants. Due to its versatility and transcultural compatibility, mindfulness can be safely used in multicultural educational environments.

To simply summarize the benefits of regular mindfulness meditation practice, meditators and research often mention:

- Enjoying the present moment
- Better quality relationship towards oneself, towards others.
- Improved emotional control, better management of negative or ruminative thoughts.
- Improved attitude towards life adversities
- Better sleep

- Increased focus and improved attention
- Overall improved life satisfaction

Mindfulness (developing mindful awareness) and heartfulness (developing qualities such as generosity, kindness, compassion and equanimity) can teach us to treat the inevitable discomfort, pain, and loss of life with greater poise, resilience, and compassion (Kvapilová, 2024[7]). In the context of safe educational space in Ukraine and the Czech republic, we remain diligent and loyal to further inquire about the benefits of mindfulness as a potent metacognitive approach to support students and teachers' wellbeing alike.

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INTERACTION OF UKRAINIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WITH FOREIGN PARTNERS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF EMPACT

According to the Office of the Prosecutor's General web site, as of 23 September 2025, 188,873 war crimes and crimes of aggression (as well as 23,029 crimes against national security), had been registered [1]. However, regardless of the scale and severity of these criminal offences, Article 6 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine [2] requires that every culprit has to be brought to justice and – if proven guilty in accordance with the procedure established by the law – punished adequately and fairly.

There are numerous cases where individuals who are reasonably suspected of committing war crimes, crimes of aggression, crimes against humanity and crimes against national security are identified as located in other countries and are generally free to move around the world. This raises a logical question – why are such persons (even if they are wanted by Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, frequently even with the arrest warrant issued in absentia by domestic courts) not detained in their countries of residence and extradited to Ukraine for further criminal prosecution?

Ensuring cooperation between all criminal police agencies within the framework of current legislation and in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as creating and developing institutions that can successfully contribute to the prevention and combating of general criminality, are the tasks of the International Criminal Police Organisation – Interpol, in accordance

with Article 2 of its Statute [3]. However, such cooperation is limited due to the provisions of Article 3 of the same Constitution, which strictly prohibits any Interpol's interference or activity of a political, military, religious or racial nature. Consequently, Ukraine has no choice but to resort to other, more effective instruments of international law enforcement cooperation.

The European Police Office (Europol), established in 1994 as a regional coordination unit for combating drug trafficking and transformed in 2010 into a multidisciplinary police agency of the European Union, occupies a prominent place among our foreign partners. Europol's task is to improve the effectiveness and level of cooperation between the competent authorities of the participating states in combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other serious forms of international crime where there are indications of the involvement of organised criminal structures (or when such crimes cause harm to two or more participating states) in a manner that requires the joint efforts of the participating states, given the scale, significance and consequences of these crimes (Article 2 of the Europol Convention [4])

Ukraine's cooperation with Europol is currently based on the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation of 14 December 2016 [5], which replaced the Agreement on Strategic Cooperation of 4 December 2009 [6] and provides grounds for mutual support in preventing and combating organized crime, terrorism and other forms of international crime, including through the exchange of information. Europol's activities are not limited in the same way as those of Interpol, so our country has (and should) make much wider use of the capabilities of this international law enforcement organisation. Moreover, after the start of the full-scale aggression against Ukraine our European colleagues themselves expressed interest in improving cooperation with the competent domestic law enforcement agencies.

One of the most prominent examples of the effective interaction between our national law enforcement agencies (mostly the National Police of Ukraine) and Europol is mutual activity within the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (or EMPACT). This instrument was officially

introduced by the European Commission in April 2021 as a new strategy to intensify operational cooperation and efforts to counter organized criminal structures by conducting coordinated law enforcement operations.

It would be useful to remind that Ukraine already at the beginning of 2022 was (for the first time) included in most of the measures defined by the Operational Action Plans in all priority areas of combating organized and serious crime within the EMPACT cycle for the years 2022-2025. These areas were formulated as follows:

- high-risk criminal structures;
- cyber attacks;
- trafficking in human beings;
- sexual exploitation of children;
- smuggling of migrants;
- illegal trafficking of drugs;
- fraud, economic and financial crimes;
- organized property crime;
- environmental crime;
- illegal trafficking of firearms.

This was a clear signal that the EU recognizes the importance of organizing proper operational cooperation with Ukrainian law enforcement agencies.

In 2023, despite the ongoing aggression, structural units of the National Police of Ukraine ensured participation in 122 Operation Actions of all 15 Operational Action Plans within the EMPACT framework.

For example, the Strategic Investigations Department of the National Police of Ukraine has been designated as a co-leader of Operational Action 2.8 (combating Russian-speaking organized criminal groups) of the Operational Action Plan «High-risk Criminal Networks”.

Also our law enforcement agencies – namely National Police of Ukraine and State Border Guard Service of Ukraine – actively participated in Joint Operational Days in South-Eastern Europe (hereinafter – SEE JAD) within the framework of Operational Action 8.1 of the Operational Action Plan «Firearms”. Thus, during

the six-day period in November 2023 representatives of Criminal Police Department, National Police of Ukraine, and Operative Search Department, Administration of State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, worked at the Operational Command Center in Skopje (Republic of North Macedonia); simultaneously the National Coordination Station was launched at the International Police Cooperation Department, National Police of Ukraine.

Beside this, in 2023 the officials of the National Police of Ukraine took part in the implementation of 20 out of 24 operational actions of the Operational Action Plan «Combating Human Trafficking», including Operational Action 8.7 (combating human trafficking in Eastern Partnership countries with an emphasis on Ukrainian citizens who moved to Europe due to the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation), in which Migration Police Department, National Police of Ukraine, has been designated as a co-leader.

In accordance with the national distribution of activities and bearing in mind competence of certain law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, it has been planned to involve the National Police of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine in 223 operational actions of all 15 Operational Action Plans within the EMPACT framework in years 2024 and 2025.

In fulfillment of this National Police of Ukraine and State Border Guard Service of Ukraine took part in the global operation «Global Chain» as was foreseen by Operational Action 3.5 of the Operational Action Plan «Combating Human Trafficking» (along with other 39 countries). The operation was aimed at destroying high-risk criminal networks and focused on cases of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Representatives of the National Police and the State Border Guard Service participated in the abovementioned operation on the relevant spots as well as at the Coordination Center at FRONTEX (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) Headquarters in Warsaw, Poland.

It is worth to mention that the Europol officials and colleagues from the EU member states repeatedly paid tribute to the active participation of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in activities within the EMPACT framework.

Responding to the most pressing challenges of today, at the initiative of the National Police of Ukraine, certain operational actions of different Operational Action Plans within the EMPACT framework were amended and put into implementation to prevent and react to the facts of deportation of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation, to the attempts of Russian-speaking organized criminal groups to arrange illegal trafficking of weapons, sanctions busting etc.

To sum up, it should be noted that the International Police Cooperation Department, National Police of Ukraine, acting as Ukrainian National Contact Point of Europol, is already preparing (in cooperation with the Europol and the EU member states drafts of the Operational Action Plans within the EMPACT framework for the next four year cycle of 2026-2029.

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ON INTUITIVE DIMENSIONS OF SUBSTANTIVE CRIMINAL LAW

The dynamics of criminal justice in contemporary society increasingly reflect a profound tension between material (substantive) criminal law and intuitive (moral or emotive) criminal law. This tension not only influences public perceptions of justice but also significantly impacts the legitimacy and efficacy of legal systems.

While material criminal law is grounded in codified principles aimed at consistency, predictability, and deterrence, intuitive criminal law draws upon collective moral instincts, emotional responses, and cultural norms.

The interplay between these dimensions underscores the complexity of aligning legal frameworks with evolving societal expectations [1].

This divergence becomes particularly salient when the principle of ultima ratio: that criminal law should serve as a measure of last resort clashes with deeply held public sentiments. For instance, disproportionately lenient sentences in cases involving particularly egregious offenses often provoke moral outrage and undermine confidence in the legal system. Conversely, overly punitive measures for mala prohibita offenses acts criminalized by statute rather than inherent immorality, can generate perceptions of injustice and lead to diminished societal compliance. In both cases, the gap between legal reasoning and moral intuition challenges the legitimacy and perceived fairness of the criminal justice system.

The mediation offered by subjective criminal law serves as a critical mechanism for reconciling state-imposed legal structures with individual and collective moral judgments. It allows for interpretive flexibility and contextual sensitivity, thereby fostering public trust while maintaining the coherence of legal principles.

Such mediation is particularly important in transitional societies or in legal systems undergoing reform, where existing norms may be contested or in flux. Developing coherent criminal policy in such contexts requires a careful balancing act aligning the imperatives of legal proportionality and procedural consistency with the demands of public morality and emotional resonance [2].

This is evident in areas such as drug policy, where excessively harsh sanctions have often led to public disillusionment, resistance to enforcement, and broader conditions of legal cynicism or anomie. A failure to calibrate sanctions to both normative standards and social tolerance thresholds risks not only legal inefficacy but also a breakdown of societal trust in institutions.

Moreover, the intersection of intuitive and material criminal law frequently emerges in the context of cultural and religious pluralism. In such cases, traditional practices and belief systems may conflict with modern legal standards, particularly in areas such as gender rights, freedom of expression, and family law [3].

The resulting tensions highlight the difficulty of formulating universally applicable criminal norms without disregarding cultural specificities. Thus, criminal law must simultaneously aspire to universality and remain responsive to the ethical diversity that characterizes modern pluralistic societies.

Ukraine provides a salient illustration of these challenges, particularly as it undertakes legal reform in the context of post-conflict transitional justice and European integration. The Criminal Code of Ukraine grounds criminal liability on the Constitution and in universally recognized principles of international law.

However, thy principle of legal monism embedded within domestic legislation sometimes stands in contrast to the autonomous concepts of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) jurisprudence, creating interpretive tensions that

complicate the harmonization of national and international legal standards.

On EU supranational level the principle of subsidiarity, enshrined in Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), requires that the Union act only where objectives cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States themselves. In the field of criminal law, this principle ensures that EU intervention complements, rather than supplants, national legal systems. By contrast, Article 86 TFEU concerns the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's Office and, more broadly, identifies areas of serious cross-border crime that the Union may recommend for harmonized criminalization, such as terrorism, trafficking, and corruption, where shared action is necessary to protect the Union's interests. For Ukraine, prospective harmonization with EU criminal law within the framework of association and integration must respect both the limited and subsidiary nature of the EU's competence and the moral-cultural autonomy of Ukrainian criminal justice. Criminalization and penalization in Ukraine arise from its own ethical foundations, collective historical experience, and constitutional identity; thus, their adjustment to European standards should not proceed through mechanical transposition of EU norms. Instead, alignment should embody a dialogic process of adaptation, whereby the substantive values underlying EU recommendations under Article 86 TFEU are internalized in a way that accords with Ukrainian societal tolerance thresholds, normative traditions, and constitutional principles. This approach preserves the functional logic of subsidiarity while enabling Ukraine to participate in a common European space of criminal justice without eroding the cultural legitimacy of its domestic penal system.

A further complexity arises in Ukraine's application of international criminal law, particularly concerning the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Rome Statute imposes temporal limitations, allowing for individual criminal responsibility for such offenses only for acts committed after January 1, 2002, and, in the case of Ukrainian

nationals, after January 1, 2032. Accordingly, crimes committed before these dates must be prosecuted under general provisions of domestic criminal law through established frameworks concerning the object, subject, objective, and subjective elements of the offense, or doctrines of preliminary criminal activity and co-participation. This creates a temporal inconsistency, as crimes against humanity, though prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) following Ukraine's 2015 declaration, were only formally incorporated into Ukrainian legislation in 2024.

Addressing such temporal and normative gaps requires robust international cooperation and sustained efforts to establish shared legal frameworks for the prosecution of universally condemned acts (*mala in se*), while also respecting the sovereignty and cultural specificities of national legal systems. Embedding ethical norms into domestic material law and enhancing its responsiveness to shifting societal values can serve to reinforce both legal legitimacy and institutional trust.

Ultimately, criminal justice systems must evolve in ways that reflect their international obligations and domestic legal principles, fostering coherent and accountable mechanisms that sustain public confidence and social order in transitional and pluralistic societies.

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THE EU-UKRAINE COOPERATION IN THE SPHERE OF MIGRATION

Migration crisis in Europe turned out to be a challenge for the UE and almost each of the European countries. Nobody expected that migration will bring up so many negative consequences that will affect economy, politics, social life and other spheres [7:69]. Along with many other challenges, the White Paper, released in 2017 by the European Commission, highlighted pressures of migration as the effect of population growth and widespread tensions (White Paper, 2017, p.11) [6:119].

For Ukraine, the migration policy of the European Union is of double interest. Firstly, the EU is an important partner for our country in terms of population exchange, with a large migration flow directed there. Numerous Ukrainians work, study and live in the European Union, primarily in neighbouring countries, as well as in southern European countries. For example, according to official data from the countries of residence, there were 153,400 people from Ukraine in Germany in 2013, 192,300 in Italy, 107,700 in the Czech Republic, 84,000 in Spain, and 44,000 in Portugal [3:3].

The second argument in favour of the practical and theoretical significance of studying the European Union's migration policy is related to Ukraine's European integration aspirations. Among other things, integration into the EU requires compliance with European standards in the field of migration legislation and management.

Legal norms that are binding on EU member states, known as the *acquis communautaire*, must be gradually implemented into legislation, and administrative practices must be brought closer to those commonly accepted in Europe. Moreover, successful progress in this direction is, on the one hand, a prerequisite for deepening international cooperation and obtaining financial and technical assistance aimed at strengthening the Ukrainian government's capacity to manage migration processes, and, on the other hand, a condition for broader access for the Ukrainian population to opportunities for free movement in Europe, i.e., the full presence of Ukrainians in the pan-European migration space [3:3].

The migration caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 took two forms: internal and external migration. According to IOM estimates, 48% of displaced persons in Ukraine left their place of residence after the start of the war, 45% left their place of residence when the war reached their area, and 5% left their place of residence in anticipation of the conflict. The largest share of internal migrants, more than 2.5 million people, moved to the western regions of Ukraine. The country's leadership is trying to respond quickly to the situation and correct shortcomings in legislation. External migration of Ukrainians is no less important for the country's security. As of the end of 2023, more than 1.2 million refugees from Ukraine had been registered in Russia due to the Russian invasion. In addition, as of 11 June 2024, there were 957,505 refugees who had fled Ukraine in Poland. In total, as of July 2024, there were about six million Ukrainian refugees registered in Europe and 6.6 million worldwide. Most of them fled the country by crossing the border with Poland [4:380].

According to UN data, as of 15 February 2023, there were 8,073,182 refugees from Ukraine registered in Europe. At the same time, 4,848,209 Ukrainians are registered as seeking temporary asylum in European countries [9]. In February 2023, the following number of Ukrainians seeking temporary asylum were registered in European countries: 1) Bulgaria: 152,515; 2) Czech Republic: 488,227; 3) Poland: 1,563,386; 4) Romania: 113,086; 5) Slovakia: 108,895. Ukrainians use some European countries as transit

points for further travel to Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, the Baltic states, etc. An example is Moldova, whose border was crossed by 770,354 people, but only 109,410 Ukrainians were registered in Moldova itself, with the rest moving on to other European countries [9].

Ukraine's legislative approach with the EU is guided by the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, signed in 2014 and effective since 2017. The monitoring of task implementation in the justice, freedom, and security (JFS) chapter has been repeatedly determined as successful by both Ukraine and the EU. This part of the Association Agreement also includes the issues of migration and borders, as well as human rights and freedom of movement. After becoming an EU candidate country in June 2022, Ukraine received seven recommendations for meeting the accession negotiations criteria. The European Council gave the green light to the accession talks on December 14, 2023. As a result, the screening of Ukrainian legislation and its gradual alignment with the EU *acquis* began. The main implementation goal of activities featured in Chapter 3 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement is to enable the free movement of people while guaranteeing their security. The sub-areas include the following components: Migration (mainly immigration), Asylum, Visa policy, External borders, Judicial cooperation system in civil and commercial matters, Judicial cooperation in criminal matters. According to EU migration law, this chapter has to be amended by the new tasks in the EU Citizenship policy and Schengen horizontal issues (SIS, VIS, ETIAS) [8].

Illegal migration poses perhaps the greatest challenge for European countries in terms of regulating migration processes. According to European Commission estimates, there are between 6 and 8 million foreigners without regulated legal status in the EU. The influx of illegal immigrants, which can be estimated based on the number of detentions, has decreased somewhat since 2008, which can be explained by the economic crisis and the narrowing of opportunities for illegal employment in Europe, as well as the consistent efforts of European countries to improve migration and border control. At the same time, according to data from the

European border agency Frontex, 107,000 illegal migrants were detained while attempting to enter the EU illegally in 2013, which is more than in the previous period (104,600 detentions in 2009, 104,000 in 2010, and 72,500 in 2012) [5].

The migration crisis is also destabilising the EU, with corresponding consequences: doubts are arising about the advisability of free movement of people within the Schengen area; the number of dissatisfied Europeans is increasing; and the risk of crime and terrorist attacks is growing. Researchers note that as a result of such actions by Russia, EU countries are beginning to act independently, ignoring the interests of their neighbours. In other words, the migration crisis provoked by Russia is proving to be a hidden tool for exerting pressure on European countries. As a result of this policy on the part of Moscow, the EU is losing its unity and, thereby, reducing its political weight and losing its ability to resist pressure from Moscow. According to experts, these results were and remain one of the goals of the forced migration strategy as an instrument of hybrid warfare on the part of the Russian Federation [1; 2; 4:390-391].

Re migration policy of the EU there are certain steps taken by the member-states though it is a really complicated process. Control of migration is a component of the interior and exterior policy of the European Union. All European countries have strategies related to migration management in place, including strategies on combating irregular migration integrated border management (IBM), antitrafficking strategies, etc. The key goals of the migration strategies concerned the improvement of border management, the suppression of illegal migration and the fight against the smuggling and trafficking of people. Most strategies were in accord with relevant EU regulations in the sphere of migration and cooperation on the prevention and control of irregular migration and readmission [6:120].

So, the migration to the EU is a serious challenge faced by the EU as an institution and for the state-members. Russian aggression against Ukraine instigated migration processes in Europe and it turned out to be a heavy baggage for the European states. Despite

challenges the EU manages the problem though it is not always efficient.

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LEGAL REGULATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FIELD OF MILITARY SERVICE IN UKRAINE

The present article examines the legal meanings and scope of the notions 'loss' and 'damage' of property as mandatory elements of the corpus delicti under Article 413 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. The study aims to clarify these notions, to determine their mutual relationship and their correlation with the legal concepts of 'destruction' and 'impairment' (or 'damage' in another terminological sense), and to assess the advisability of using alternative statutory formulations such as 'loss, destruction or damage' in future codification.

The terms 'loss' and 'damage' as used in Article 413 are not widespread in criminal-law terminology and create interpretative challenges for scholars and law-enforcement practitioners alike. The term 'loss' appears in various provisions of Ukrainian legislation with different nuances – from loss of an organ to loss of documents or loss of information – but none of these uses yields a sufficiently precise definition applicable to military property entrusted to servicemen [1–3]. The term 'damage' (Ukr. «зіпсування») is used even less frequently in criminal law and requires a careful doctrinal elaboration so that courts and commanding officers can reliably distinguish between alternative consequences envisaged by the statutory language of Article 413 [2–4].

The research combines doctrinal methods, comparative analysis, and study of judicial practice. The author analyzed

doctrinal definitions in Ukrainian criminal-law literature, norms from related branches (civil and administrative law), and relevant judicial decisions that illustrate practical problems in qualifying acts under Article 413 CC Ukraine [6–11, 16, 21]. Where helpful, comparative legislative drafts and proposed texts for the new Criminal Code were also considered [22].

Definitions and conceptual framework. In civil law scholarship, factual possession is defined as effective control over a thing, the power to use it and to perform acts regarding it [8]. Derived from this premise, loss of property should be understood as the withdrawal of an object from the possessor's control such that the possessor has lost the ability to perform any acts with respect to it or to use it at his or her discretion. This definition embraces both permanent and temporary withdrawals: property may be lost forever (for instance, by destruction or appropriation by another person) or temporarily (for instance, when it is misplaced or taken away but later recovered) [3, 9–11].

Damage (Ukr. «зіпсування») is conceptualized as a change in the physical condition of property caused by unlawful actions that limits or eliminates its suitability for intended use while the object remains in the possession of the lawful possessor. The concept covers both partial and total impairment of functionality and includes cases where an item, though technically extant, cannot be restored to its prior state of utility [18–20]. Thus, damage differs from loss in the essential element of continued possession.

Delimitation of loss and damage. Article 413 CC Ukraine lists 'loss' and 'damage' as alternative consequences; consequently, in each prosecution the adjudicating authority must indicate which of these outcomes actually occurred. The practical criterion for differentiation is possession: if the object left the possession of the serviceman and the serviceman lost the capacity to act with respect to it, the consequence is loss; if the object remains in possession but its usability is limited or eliminated, the consequence is damage. Jurisprudence supports this approach. For example, a conviction for loss was sustained where an entrusted firearm was taken from a serviceman while he was intoxicated and was thereafter under

the control of others; conversely, convictions for damage have been affirmed where an item remained physically with the serviceman but was rendered unusable by fire or mechanical deformation [9, 16, 21].

Relationship with destruction and impairment. The doctrinal notion of 'destruction' generally denotes complete cessation of an object's existence, irreversible loss of consumer or market value, or a state where the item can no longer be separated from its environment in a form recognizable as the original thing [4, 18]. Destruction may thus coincide with loss when the object ceases to exist as such; however, not all forms of destruction automatically fall within 'loss' as regulated in Article 413, because the statutory construction distinguishes between the act (violation of storage rules) and the resulting consequence (loss or damage).

Conversely, 'impairment' as used by some authors overlaps substantially with the concept of 'damage' employed in Article 413; impairment is characterized by partial loss of utility that is, at least in principle, susceptible to restoration through repair [18, 20]. Therefore, while every impairment is a form of damage, not every damage is merely an impairment, because some damages amount to irreversible devaluation although the object remains present and in possession.

Practical implications for qualification. The conceptual distinctions have immediate consequences for criminal qualification and sentencing. Mischaracterizing a loss as damage (or vice versa) may affect both the legal basis for culpability under Article 413 and the proportionality of sanctions. Prosecutors and courts must, therefore, identify the exact factual moment when possession ceased or was materially altered, and must explain whether an object was retained by the possessor in a materially impaired state or genuinely exited his control.

Comparative and legislative considerations. The analysis of the draft texts proposed for the new Criminal Code reveals a tendency to prefer the triadic formula 'loss, destruction or damage' that is more common in comparative criminal law instruments [22]. Such terminology is arguably more familiar to practitioners and may

reduce terminological ambiguity. Nonetheless, implementing this change without modifying the existing syntactic structure of Article 413 (which presently specifies the forbidden act separately) could create redundancies or overlap among terms. Therefore, adopting the triadic formula would be appropriate only alongside a restructured statutory model that either integrates the prohibited act with consequences or replaces the present bifurcated design.

Policy recommendations. Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) issue official commentary clarifying the notions of ‘loss’ and ‘damage’ in the context of Article 413, with illustrative examples drawn from judicial practice; (2) amend procedural guidelines for military law-enforcement bodies to ensure consistent identification of the moment of loss or the conditions of damage; (3) consider harmonizing statutory vocabulary in the context of broader codification so that terms correspond to their civil-law and doctrinal counterparts; and (4) develop training modules for commanding officers and military investigators aimed at reducing terminological confusion and improving evidentiary practices.

Conclusions. The study demonstrates that ‘loss’ and ‘damage’ in Article 413 CC Ukraine are conceptually distinct: loss relates to the withdrawal of property from the possessor’s control (temporary or permanent), while damage involves a change in condition that limits or prevents intended use while the object remains in possession. The concept of damage is not identical to destruction or impairment though it intersects with both. The triadic statutory formulation ‘loss, destruction or damage’ can be used in a reformed code, but only if corresponding structural changes to the provision are implemented. The author bears personal responsibility for the reliability of the information provided.

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HYBRID CONFLICTS AND SECURITY RESEARCH: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF OSTROH ACADEMY IN INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Hybrid conflicts have become one of the most complex security challenges of the twenty-first century, combining traditional military threats with disinformation, cyberattacks, identity manipulation, and psychological operations. These multidimensional threats blur the line between war and peace, external aggression and domestic instability. In such circumstances, higher education institutions play a crucial role not only as research centres but also as laboratories for social resilience and civic preparedness. The National University of Ostroh Academy (NaUOA, Ukraine) has become an active participant in international initiatives aimed at studying and countering hybrid threats, developing interdisciplinary curricula, and promoting the values of European security culture.

Hybrid warfare is characterised by the combination of kinetic and non-kinetic actions, where information and perception become key battlegrounds. The European Union defines hybrid threats as «coordinated and synchronised actions that deliberately target systemic vulnerabilities of democratic states.” Research conducted at NaUOA lies at the intersection of political science, media studies, psychology, and security studies. The University’s approach aligns with EU research programs that emphasise resilience, societal security, and strategic communication as integral components of hybrid conflict prevention.

Ostroh Academy's mission in this field is twofold: to educate a new generation of professionals capable of understanding and mitigating hybrid threats, and to contribute to the development of research-based solutions within the European and Ukrainian academic space. Through Jean Monnet Erasmus+ projects, the university integrates European perspectives on civil society, digital transformation, and security governance into its teaching and research activities.

A decisive contribution to this process has come from a wide range of international projects implemented by the university in recent years. The project «Academic Response to Hybrid Threats” (WARN, 610133-EPP-1-2019-1-FI-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP, 2019-2024) has been particularly influential in introducing the topic of hybrid warfare into Ukraine's higher education system. Within this initiative, NaUOA has modernised curricula across several disciplines, integrating game-based learning, AI-enhanced teaching tools, and lifelong learning modules that develop the cognitive resilience of students and teachers alike. The project has helped create an academic community capable of recognising and responding to hybrid threats in digital, political, and social dimensions. The Self-Regulated Studies of Hybrid Threats and European Security (EUROHYBSEC, 2023–2025) project builds on this work by expanding awareness of the European security system, fostering public dialogue, and connecting the academic community with civil society. Its activities, such as open lectures, public discussions, and international seminars, have turned Ostroh Academy into an intellectual platform where European and Ukrainian perspectives on security meet.

Equally important is the Jean Monnet Module EURoCoRP (Civil Society in Conflict Resolution Processes: The EU Experience for Ukraine, 2022–2025), which examines the role of civil society in conflict mediation and hybrid threat management. This project has developed academic courses, such as «Hybrid Conflicts as a Threat to Security Systems” and «Activism in Cyberspace as a Tool for Countering Hybrid Threats,” while also organising conferences, roundtables, and digital dissemination campaigns. The project

demonstrates that a community's ability to resist hybrid threats depends not only on information literacy but also on civic participation and a democratic culture.

Additionally, Ostroh Academy was implementing the «REACT – Resilience and Adaptive Capability in Training: Higher Educational Institutions in Ukraine in Light of the Russian Invasion» (2024) project, which focuses on training young Ukrainian researchers in the Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedure (REAP). This innovative approach enables the rapid analysis of communities affected by war, allowing scholars to produce real-time insights into the human dimension of resilience. Similarly, projects such as «Foreign Veterans, PTSD and Moral Injury» (2023–2024) address the mental health consequences of war, exploring how metacognitive monitoring and moral recovery can support reintegration and stability in post-war society. Together, these initiatives demonstrate that the University's approach to hybrid conflicts is multidimensional, encompassing military and cybersecurity, as well as the psychological, ethical, and humanitarian dimensions of resilience.

Another significant line of work at NaUOA connects hybrid security with European integration and value-based governance. The Jean Monnet Module POLIS – Studies of Principles and Values of European Politics from Pericles to Modern Times (2023–2026) explores how the ideological foundations of European democracy can inform Ukraine's institutional transformation, while the HREU – Human Rights in the European Union (2022–2025) project introduces new teaching methods and digital tools such as MOOCs, debates, case studies, and even a Telegram bot that educates users about EU human rights. These initiatives affirm that the defence of democracy begins with education and that human rights are inseparable from national and information security. Complementing them, the Hub of EU Solutions (HEUS, 2023–2026) establishes a multifunctional platform that unites research, education, and digital expertise. The Hub provides a space where academic analysis can directly inform public policy, governance reforms, and media literacy initiatives.

While international cooperation is crucial, Ostroh Academy also places great emphasis on its regional mission. Located in the Rivne region, which comprises sixty-four territorial communities, the university has actively analysed their development strategies with particular attention to how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integrated into local policies. This research has revealed that security cannot be understood solely in terms of geopolitics. For local communities, security means stable energy supply, functioning healthcare, transparent governance, protection from disinformation, and the ability to sustain social trust even in times of crisis. By helping communities integrate SDGs into their strategic planning, the university demonstrates that resilience is not separate from development but rather the condition that makes sustainable development possible.

One of the most invisible yet decisive battlefields of hybrid warfare is the sphere of identity. Through its research and publications, NaUOA has examined how media narratives reshape collective memory, distort values, and fragment societies. Student media projects at the Academy have become platforms of resilience, offering narratives of hope, solidarity, and dignity that counter disinformation. Hybrid warfare seeks to erode identity by spreading lies and doubt, but education and culture resist this erosion by cultivating truth, meaning, and belonging.

In the digital sphere, where threats emerge silently and strike suddenly, universities invest in cybersecurity education. Through specialized modules, workshops, and laboratory simulations, students learn to recognize vulnerabilities, practice cyber hygiene, and respond to attacks responsibly. The alignment of these activities with European standards, and the collaboration with foreign partners such as the University of Jaén (Spain), Leeds Beckett University (United Kingdom), and the University of Oslo (Norway), ensure that training at Ostroh Academy meets international quality benchmarks. In this way, students are transformed into defenders of digital resilience, equipped with both technical competence and ethical responsibility.

Security, however, is not only about systems and structures but also about people and communities. In August 2025, for instance, the University hosted Drum Power Ukraine, a summer school that combines music therapy with resilience training, project management, and crisis communication. The philosophy behind this initiative is that resilience is both psychological and social: when people come together, create music, share experiences, and learn new skills, they strengthen their inner stability and empower their communities. Projects like this demonstrate that resilience can be cultivated through creativity and solidarity, even in the midst of war's hardships.

The University's strong partnerships with European institutions also reinforce its research capacity. By participating in consortia, NaUOA contributes Ukrainian perspectives to European academic debates on hybrid threats, identity, and democracy. Events such as the Project Management Forum for Sustainable Community Development and others have become regular platforms for sharing EU-Ukraine experiences in countering hybrid threats and fostering democratic resilience. Furthermore, the NaUOA's «Hub of the EU solutions» serves as a nucleus for interdisciplinary collaboration, managing projects related to youth engagement, digital literacy, and social innovation.

The University's research teams employ mixed-methods approaches that combine discourse analysis, content monitoring, and psychological profiling to identify hybrid threat patterns. Case-based learning and scenario modelling simulate the dynamics of hybrid attacks, allowing the testing of community resilience mechanisms. In cooperation with international experts, Ostroh Academy organises simulation-based training, hybrid threat mapping exercises, and workshops on countering online manipulation. These activities lead to tangible outcomes, including policy recommendations, methodological toolkits, and curricular innovations at both national and EU levels.

Ostroh Academy's engagement in these international security research projects has strengthened its institutional capacity, enhanced public visibility, and built an educational culture grounded

in ethical communication, civic engagement, and responsible media consumption. Students gain not only theoretical knowledge but also hands-on experience through field projects, online campaigns, and research internships. Local communities benefit from public lectures, civic education programs, and collaborative initiatives between academia and municipal authorities that aim to foster social resilience and digital awareness.

The challenges, however, remain substantial. The sustainability of project outcomes depends on continued funding and institutional support. Ethical awareness and gender sensitivity still require systematic inclusion in security education. The psychological and physical strain caused by the ongoing war affects both students and staff, creating new risks for academic performance and project management. Yet, by applying European best practices in project governance, engaging local communities, and continuously adapting strategies, the university turns these challenges into opportunities for learning, solidarity, and growth. In the dynamic landscape of hybrid conflict research and education, it brings both immense opportunities and complex risks. While these initiatives strengthen resilience, knowledge exchange, and European integration, they also operate in an environment shaped by uncertainty, war, and evolving security challenges. Understanding potential risks is therefore essential to ensure the sustainability, ethical integrity, and long-term impact of such projects.

One of the major risks associated with such international projects involving hybrid conflicts is their dependence on external funding and political stability. Since most of these initiatives are financed through competitive EU programs such as Erasmus+ and Jean Monnet, fluctuations in funding priorities or geopolitical shifts can jeopardise long-term sustainability. Administrative delays, exchange restrictions, or disruptions caused by ongoing warfare can also impede cross-border collaboration, limit mobility, and reduce the scope of international engagement. Moreover, digital security challenges, such as cyberattacks targeting project databases or online events, pose constant threats to data integrity

and participant safety, particularly in the context of hybrid warfare research.

Another critical risk involves the human and institutional dimension. The psychological strain of war, displacement, and economic uncertainty affects students, academics, and local partners, leading to burnout, reduced motivation, or interruptions in project implementation. Ethical and gender-sensitive approaches, while central to EU values, may be unevenly integrated due to contextual limitations or lack of training. Additionally, the dissemination of project results can face barriers such as information fatigue, censorship, or disinformation campaigns that distort the message of resilience and democracy. Mitigating these risks requires consistent monitoring, capacity-building, and adaptive management that align with European standards of accountability, inclusiveness, and transparency.

Nonetheless, the next phase of NaUOA's work in hybrid conflict research will focus on expanding interdisciplinary cooperation within EU networks such as Horizon Europe, Jean Monnet, and Erasmus+; developing AI-based analytical tools for the detection of hybrid narratives and disinformation; and strengthening policy dialogue between academia, civil society, and local authorities to promote sustainable security governance. The experience of the National University of Ostroh Academy proves that a Ukrainian higher education institution can serve as a regional centre for hybrid conflict studies and resilience-building. Through international cooperation, NaUOA contributes to the European research area, supports Ukraine's democratic transformation, and fosters a security culture rooted in knowledge, ethics, and civic responsibility. Its ongoing projects are not merely academic activities but instruments of societal resistance and hope, demonstrating that education and research remain among the most powerful tools for defending freedom and democracy in times of hybrid warfare.

In conclusion, the National University of Ostroh Academy stands today as a bridge between European integration and Ukrainian reality. It combines tradition with innovation, research

with practice, and local engagement with global collaboration. Its project portfolio shows that modern security is multidimensional, encompassing digital, civic, cultural, psychological, and local aspects. The academic community of NaUOA has chosen not to retreat into isolation but to embrace its role as a frontline institution of democratic resilience. The war in Ukraine tests the nation's endurance every day, yet it also proves that when education, research, and civic action unite, they can protect identities, build trust, and inspire societies to persevere and ultimately to prevail.

1. Scientific and Educational Projects of the National University of Ostroh Academy. <https://www.ou.edu.ua/en/science/projects>

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**INTEGRATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY INTO THE ARCHITECTURE
OF NATIONAL SECURITY: UKRAINE'S EXPERIENCE
AS A PARADIGM OF «COMPREHENSIVE RESILIENCE»
FOR THE EU**

Since 2014 – and especially after 24 February 2022 – Ukraine has developed a security practice in which state institutions, business, and civil society operate as a single ecosystem: from early warning and resource mobilization to the maintenance of critical services, information hygiene, and cyber-resilience. This empirical model aligns with the updated Euro-Atlantic approaches to comprehensive resilience, where security is conceived as the co-production of the state and society rather than the state's exclusive prerogative. In 2025, NATO institutionalized the Resilience Reference Curriculum (RRC), a training framework that systematizes preparedness, response, and recovery competencies for Allies and partners; the RRC explicitly underscores the cross-sectoral nature of resilience-building and the need for integrated civil-military coordination [1].

In parallel, the EU proposed an updated preparedness strategy: the EU Preparedness Union Strategy was presented by the European Commission on 26 March 2025, establishing 30 key actions and a detailed implementation plan to embed «preparedness-by-design» at all levels of governance. Among other measures, the document recommends 72-hour autonomous household preparedness as an element of society's basic self-defence capacity [2].

Another EU framework initiative – ProtectEU as an internal security strategy (presented on 1 April 2025) – aims to strengthen

Member States' capabilities to counter terrorism, organized crime, and hybrid threats, and to integrate security dimensions into other Union policies. Importantly, ProtectEU has a strategic rather than regulatory character and requires further implementation (including through reinforcing the roles of Europol, Frontex, and Eurojust, and by updating data-sharing instruments) [3–4].

At the same time, existing secondary law – most notably the UCPM (Decision No. 1313/2013/EU on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism) and the CER (Directive 2022/2557) and NIS2 (Directive 2022/2555) – sets requirements for risk management, the resilience of critical entities, and cybersecurity. However, it has historically focused on the public and corporate sectors, with little institutionalization of the role of trained NGOs as distinct operational actors. Thus, a gap persists in the EU between the strategic rhetoric of a «whole-of-society» approach and the procedural mechanisms for engaging civil society, and this gap calls for «fine-tuning» policies [5–6].

Ukraine's experience demonstrates how this gap can be closed in practice. In the material-technological dimension, the «Come Back Alive» Foundation in June 2022 became the first Ukrainian charitable organization to obtain a license to procure military and dual-use goods, including lethal weapons, enabling it to operate without intermediaries and to scale deliveries of high-tech solutions to the front [7].

The Serhiy Prytula Foundation built institutional capacity for the systematic provision of units with communications equipment, vehicles, optics, UAVs and drones, and elements of electronic warfare (EW); public reports by the foundation and its units document both the regularity and the scale of such supplies [8].

In the information-cyber domain, StopFake – launched on 2 March 2014 by the community of the Mohyla School of Journalism – has become a long-term example of institutionalized fact-checking and public education regarding Russian disinformation; the IT-Army of Ukraine was publicly announced on 26 February 2022 by the Minister of Digital Transformation, Mykhailo Fedorov, with volunteer tasks disseminated via a Telegram channel – facts

confirmed by primary announcements and independent media reviews [9].

A theoretical framing of this practice is offered by the joint work of the Hybrid CoE and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre – the CORE model (Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem), which presents society as a system of interrelated domains and levels (from local to supranational), allowing policy-administrative actors to model vulnerabilities and interdependencies in response to hybrid threats. CORE already serves as a tool for shaping EU policies and national resilience strategies. From this perspective, the Ukrainian «volunteer ecosystem» appears not as an element external to the state but as an operational component of a unified resilience architecture [10–11].

This yields policy implications for the EU. First, the Preparedness Union Strategy already contains instruments to standardize approaches to local and individual preparedness, including the recommendation of 72-hour household autonomy; the institutionalization of «civil resilience modules» – local points of autonomous support (energy, communications, heating) and volunteer rapid-deployment groups – can be achieved at the level of guidance and implementation programs without amending primary law. Second, ProtectEU should logically be reinforced by programs for cooperation with the civic sector in counter-disinformation, cyber hygiene, and the protection of critical services, aligned with EDMO/EUvsDisinfo hubs and national cybersecurity centers. Third, within the UCPM (Decision No. 1313/2013/EU), it is advisable to provide a voluntary «certification pathway» for trained NGOs (logistics, humanitarian warehousing, technical reconnaissance using UAVs for damage assessment, communications teams). Through standardized training/assessment and national registers of civil-protection partners, such a pathway would clearly define NGO roles in exercises and operations. This proposal does not require amending the primary act; it can be implemented through updated guidance, module certification procedures, and joint-exercise programs within the existing legal framework. Finally, synchronization with the sectoral CER/NIS2 regimes should

consolidate practices for NGO participation in the resilience of critical services – above all in public communication, alternative communications channels, and rapid preliminary assessment of damage to critical infrastructure [12].

Accordingly, Ukraine’s experience offers the European Union not merely a narrative of «societal mobilization» but an operational design for integrating the civic sector into the security architecture: from the licensed capabilities of large foundations to extensive networks of fact-checking and digital volunteering. Combined with the CORE model and the RRC, this enables the translation of the strategic declarations of the Preparedness Union Strategy and ProtectEU into procedures, competencies, and verifiable practices. For legal doctrine, this implies a shift from the question «should civil society be engaged? « to «how can it be institutionally embedded within the legal and organizational mechanisms of security while safeguarding human rights and the rule of law?» For practice, it underscores the need for standardized «bridges» between NGOs and state/municipal structures to ensure mutual interoperability, accountability, and reliability in high-intensity crises. This is precisely where Ukraine’s paradigm of comprehensive resilience can become an applied paradigm for the EU in 2025–2030.

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RUSSIA'S SHADOW FLEET: SCALE, MANIPULATION STRATEGIES AND SANCTIONS EVASION RISKS FOR EUROPE

The so-called «shadow fleet” of the Russian Federation refers to a covert network of oil tankers and shipping companies facilitating Russian oil exports outside of international oversight and sanctions control. This fleet has become an essential pillar in sustaining Russian fossil fuel revenues amidst EU and G7 sanctions, particularly the \$60 per barrel price cap (4). These vessels are typically aging, uninsured, operating under flags of convenience, and engaging in clandestine transfers of oil at sea, often with deactivated Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) (1).

As of September 2025, the shadow fleet comprises around 940 tankers, or approximately 17% of the global crude oil tanker fleet (4). The average age of these vessels exceeds 20 years. Over 60% lack insurance from members of the International Group of P&I Clubs (3), while 75% are owned through opaque offshore structures (8). The majority operate under the flags of Liberia, Panama, the Marshall Islands, and Tanzania, exploiting regulatory weaknesses of these flag states.

The fleet has grown by 45% since early 2024, largely due to a wave of secondary market transactions, in which outdated tankers—especially from Greek, Cypriot, and Maltese operators – were sold to anonymous buyers based in the UAE, Singapore, and Hong Kong. These transfers typically involve immediate changes to vessel names, flags, and IMO numbers to obscure origin. Some

vessels had previously been decommissioned but were brought back into operation without proper inspections.

Geographically, Russia's shadow fleet operations start from major Black Sea and Baltic ports like Novorossiysk, Ust-Luga, and Primorsk. Vessels then transit the Bosphorus and Suez Canal toward South and Southeast Asia, often stopping near Greece, Libya, or Malaysia for ship-to-ship (STS) oil transfers. These exchanges are frequently accompanied by AIS deactivation and falsified documentation. Analysts estimate that more than 65% of Russian seaborne oil exports to Asia during 2024–2025 occurred outside the G7 price cap framework (4).

Shadow fleet vessels pose serious ecological and safety risks. In 2024 alone, at least 12 incidents involving oil spills were attributed to uninsured, technically uninspected vessels from the shadow fleet (9). One notable case involved a tanker explosion off the coast of Oman, polluting over 150 km² of sea. Another major spill occurred in the Mediterranean near Libya, releasing more than 10,000 barrels of crude (9).

Sanctions enforcement remains insufficient. Many vessels circumvent enforcement by quickly reflagging or transferring ownership before sanctions take effect. The lack of a unified global registry of beneficial ownership and poor cross-jurisdictional coordination between sanctioning authorities further hampers effectiveness (5).

Experts and monitoring organizations such as Windward, SkyTruth, and SourceMaterial emphasize the role of satellite data and AI analytics in tracking AIS gaps, dark transfers, and false documentation patterns (6). Yet despite their capabilities, most of their findings remain underutilized by sanctioning regimes, which lack formal mechanisms to convert such intelligence into action.

To respond to the evolving tactics of Russia's shadow fleet, a coordinated strategy is required. Recommended measures include:

- the creation of a global registry of vessel beneficial ownership;
- legal liability for brokers, insurers, and operators enabling sanctions evasion;
- mandatory insurance standards tied to compliance with international law;

- enhanced due diligence for flag states and classification societies;
- legal acceptance of satellite monitoring as admissible evidence in sanction designations;
- restricting the sale of tankers from G7 countries to high-risk jurisdictions (5).

Russia's shadow fleet is not merely a shipping issue – it is an intersection of global trade manipulation, fossil fuel financing of war, maritime insecurity, and environmental negligence. Addressing this challenge requires international collaboration across financial, legal, environmental, and geopolitical domains.

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**CORUPTION PREVENTION AND FINANCIAL CONTROL
IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT:
THE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE**

In modern difficult economic conditions, accompanied by an increase in the number and volume of violations of legislation on the use of material and financial resources in the public sector, there is an objective need to ensure effective state internal financial control over the activities of public sector entities, in particular internal control and internal audit. Control is the key to compliance with the legality and efficiency of managing and using financial resources and other assets, achieving results according to the established goals, objectives and requirements for the activities of public sector entities, and the reliability of their financial and budget statements. As a result, the quality of providing services to the population, their confidence in the state authorities increase.

Currently, a retrospective analysis of the identified violations is insufficient, and it is necessary to take measures to prevent them in a timely manner. For the past 20 years, PwC's «Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey» has remained one of the world's leading analytical publications on economic crime [1]. The «Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey» aims to assess companies' attitudes towards fraud and economic crime and their impact on organizations worldwide.

According to the aforementioned study, procurement fraud accounts for 31% and is among the top five types of fraud, along with misappropriation of property (47%), bribery and corruption

(47%), customer fraud (31%) and cybercrime (31%) worldwide and in Ukraine.

Procurement of goods, works and services to meet the needs of territorial communities or the state, according to numerous studies, is considered to be an area with a high level of corruption risks. Thanks to the procurement reform in Ukraine, procurement procedures are mainly carried out electronically through the ProZorro system, which is designed to minimize corruption schemes and is recognized as one of the best practices in global rankings of public procurement transparency. Unscrupulous customers and procurement participants find opportunities to abuse their rights and loopholes granted by law in this system as well. One of the latest cases concerns corruption in procurement in 2025 in Ukraine. «Corruption in medical equipment procurement for cancer patients: National Agency on Corruption Prevention exposed a criminal scheme. According to the investigation, the head of the largest medical equipment supplier group (over 300 company representatives) established a criminal organization that included representatives from controlled companies and officials from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Between 2021 and 2022, the criminal organization misappropriated over 231 M UAH allocated by the state for purchasing medical equipment for cancer patients” [2]. It is noted that NCI officials facilitated non-competitive victories for controlled companies in tenders, while equipment prices were artificially inflated. The suspects in the scheme include company executives, NCI employees, and a regional council deputy. The investigation is ongoing to identify other individuals involved in the crime.

The methodological basis of this research on preventing corruption risks is general scientific methods of cognition, special methodological techniques. To achieve the purpose of the research, the following methods are used: analysis, induction, deduction – when considering the corruption risk factors, analyzing reports of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention; the method of logical generalization – when formulating conclusions.

The information base of the research is regulatory legal acts on internal control and preventing corruption risks, materials of the State Audit Service and National Agency on Corruption Prevention reports on the results of the state financial audits of Ukrainian institutions, scientific articles and reference literature on the research topic.

State financial control is one of the most important functions of public administration, which contributes to the implementation of the financial policy of the state, ensures the process of formation and rational use of financial resources of the state to achieve the goals set.

However, the domestic state financial control system is not effective, since it does not fully fulfill its tasks and operates in the form of separate elements. In Ukraine, the level of financial discipline in the public sector is quite low; there is an increase in the number and volume of violations, including in the field of procurement, as evidenced by the results of the activities of the state audit service bodies. Among the main reasons for violations are the low level of effectiveness of internal control, the irresponsibility of many budget managers, heads of enterprises, institutions and organizations in making managerial decisions.

It should be noted that the works of many Ukrainian scientists-economists were devoted to the problem of corruption risks in public procurement, internal control and audit such as Garbinska-Rudenko A. V, Legenchuk S. F., Lyubenko A. M., and others[4,5,6]. However, new corruption risk factors are emerging that require analysis and study.

Scientists consider various aspects of financial control, state financial audit, internal audit and other types of audit in the context of preventing corruption risk. In most cases, a study of the implementation of financial control and its development in Ukraine is conducted; at the same time, its further implementation is not considered, namely, the impact of financial control on the establishment and determination of losses, further prevention of deviations through the risk identification system.

The direction of strategic analysis of corruption risks of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention is designed to identify systemic corruption risks (schemes) in the activities of state bodies, local governments, enterprises, institutions and organizations, as well as to provide proposals for their minimization. Corruption risks factors – conditions and reasons that encourage (stimulate), cause or allow an official to commit actions by a person in the performance of state or local self-government functions that may lead to the commitment of a corruption offense or an offense related to corruption. Corruption risks factors are: dishonesty of officials, weaknesses in the internal control system, practice of narrow operational control of public procurement.

Dishonest behavior of officials distorts the principles of efficient and transparent procurement, creation of a competitive environment, development of fair competition, and also leads to financial losses of the customer, illegal enrichment of the persons involved, receipt of goods/works/services of inadequate quality and/or at an inflated cost.

The Law of Ukraine «On Public Procurement» [3] defines the procedural boundaries and the order of actions of the customer's officials during the implementation of procurement. At the same time, a number of discretionary powers (the ability to act at their own discretion, i.e. to choose from several legally permissible solutions the one they consider best in the circumstances), in particular, during the planning of procurement, the formation of tender documentation, and the consideration of tender proposals, creates conditions for the spread of corrupt practices. The discretionary powers in this case stem from the essence of the procurement function, since it is the customer who can reliably determine the need for individual goods/works/services necessary to ensure its activities, detail the technical, qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the subject of procurement, determine the requirements for suppliers, as well as the terms of the contract.

A common factor of corruption risks in the procurement sector is the lack of comprehensive policies and procedures at the customer,

which provide for the division of functions between structural units for effective planning, organization and implementation of public procurement, preservation of the body's assets, prevention of corrupt acts, as well as their detection. Instead, common practices are the lack of holistic analysis and monitoring of procurement, implementation of a risk management system, proper division of functions, audit of contract performance, low level of competence of internal audit representatives. Taking into account the above, in the absence of effective influence on potential dishonesty and the discretionary nature of the customer's powers, the main tools for minimizing corruption risks in procurement are the division of functions, which makes it impossible to concentrate power within one structural unit (responsible person) during the formation of needs and favoritism when considering proposals; conducting internal (and periodic external) audits to assess the performance of contracts; amending the Law of Ukraine «On Public Procurement» in order to regulate the scope of discretionary powers.

Elements of public procurement procedures vulnerable to corruption include:

- identification of procurement needs;
- procurement planning and calculation of expected cost;
- development of tender documentation and definition of qualification criteria;
- application of non-competitive procedures;
- conclusion of direct contracts;
- consideration of tender proposals;
- conclusion of a contract.

To prevent specific corruption risks and schemes, it is important for enterprises, institutions and organizations to identify the most corruption-vulnerable elements of public procurement procedures and to identify corruption risk factors inherent in the organization. On this basis, it is possible to develop lines of anti-corruption protection and improve the distribution of functions between structural units of the customer in planning and organizing procurement. We recommend using tools to identify risk indicators in procurement, which will allow authorized units (authorized

persons) for the prevention and detection of corruption to conduct an internal analysis of the procurement procedure for corruption vulnerability. To achieve an effective result of the analysis of the procurement procedure by the customer and the study of the presence of corruption risks, it is advisable to have a checklist prepared in advance, which contains a list of issues to be checked. This makes it possible to draw an objective conclusion about the ongoing procurement of goods/works/services and potential corruption vulnerabilities of the procedure.

In the conditions of martial law in Ukraine, new and new initiatives are emerging that can significantly weaken control over the use of funds during public procurement and worsen the situation with corruption. The World Bank, which is already financing some critical reconstruction projects in Ukraine, recommended using «Prozorro» for all procurement for reconstruction needs. With the start of full-scale implementation of the «Ukraine Recovery Plan», the number of such projects will increase significantly, and «Prozorro» should become the only system for conducting all procurement within the framework of reconstruction. The Ukrainian electronic procurement system has proven that it meets the highest international procurement standards. The uninterrupted operation of the procurement system in conditions of large-scale invasion and the ability to flexibly respond to the needs of the state indicate that «Prozorro» should become the only system for conducting all procurement for reconstruction projects – both for budget funds and for funds from international partners and investors.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM: CHALLENGES FOR UKRAINE

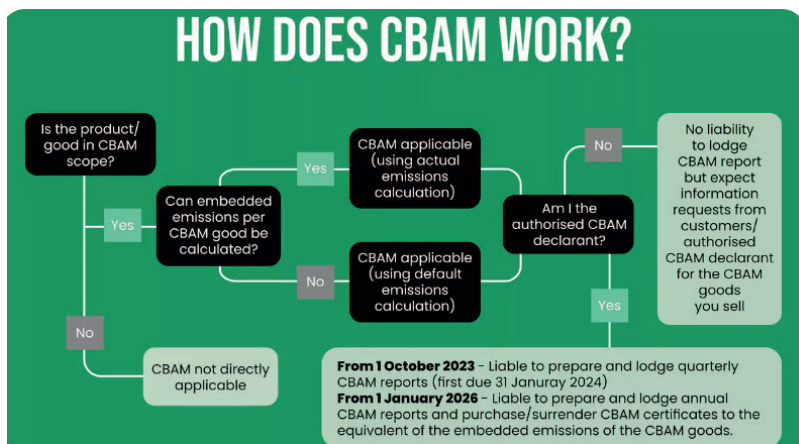
The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is an initiative of the European Union aimed at creating conditions for carbon emission taxation on imports of goods from countries where emission reduction measures are not applied to the same extent as in the European Union. The main goal of the mechanism is global in nature and is aimed at reducing carbon emissions, creating equal conditions for producers to comply with EU environmental laws. Such steps will lead to an increase in CO₂ emissions fees, and accordingly there will be an additional financial burden on certain categories of goods and industries with high emissions.

The procedure for implementing and applying CBAM is determined by Regulation (EU) 2023/956 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2023 [1], which defines its scope of application:

1) goods whose production sectors are characterized by high levels of carbon emissions (electricity, aluminum, steel, cement, chemical fertilizers etc.) are presented in Annex 1 of the document. It is also worth noting that the exceptions will be goods used or moved to ensure military activities;

2) the countries to which the CBAM will apply, i.e. countries that are not members of the European Union. An exception may be countries that are participants in the European Union Emissions

Trading System or have an emissions trading system linked to the European Union.



Source: [2]

The key obligations under the regulation CBAM are:

1) obtaining the status of «authorized declarant» CBAM.

From December 2024, only authorized declarants have the right to import goods to the European Union market. Accordingly, manufacturers are required to submit an application, and the registration process itself will be carried out by the competent authority of the EU Member State. An account of the declarant with the necessary information will be created in the register.

2) submission of the declaration CBAM.

The declaration will be submitted for the first time in 2027 for 2026 through the register, indicating the quantity of each imported good, the total volume of greenhouse gas emissions, the total number of return certificates, a copy of the verification reports.

3) purchase of certificates CBAM.

The certificate corresponds to one tonne of embedded emissions¹ in imported goods.

The Regulation contains a number of annexes, which define: a list of emissions and greenhouse gases covered by the Regulation, and a list of products for which only direct greenhouse gas emissions will be taken into account (Annex I); third countries and territories excluded from the scope of the Regulation (Annex II); methods for calculating embedded emissions (Annex IV); requirements for accounting information (Annex V); verification principles and content on the verification of embedded emissions (Annex VI) [1].

The transitional period of implementation of CBAM is valid from October 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025, during which the importer only reports on the quantity of imported goods, the quantity of emissions. The full implementation of the regulation will begin on January 1, 2026.

Ukrainian producers also see the threat of hidden protectionism for European producers and are trying to achieve exemption from CBAM. As a result of a series of negotiations with the European Commission, a remark was made to its proposal for the CBAM Regulation about the special status of countries that are parties to the Association Agreements and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia), which provides for the exemption of electricity produced in these countries from paying CBAM.

The key challenges for Ukraine as it begins implementation CBAM are:

I. Technological requirements:

- The need to modernize industrial production.
- Active introduction of energy-efficient technologies.
- Optimization of production processes.

¹ Embedded emissions consist of direct emissions (emissions that are released during the production of goods) and indirect emissions (emissions from the production of electricity consumed during production processes).

II. Administrative burden:

- The need for additional reporting.
- The need for staff retraining and professional development based on international standards.
- Intensification of interaction with European authorities during registration and filing of declarations.

Additional costs:

- Need to implement acceptable emission monitoring systems.
- Costs for certification and verification.
- Increase in production cost.
- Fines for untimely delivery of goods due to illegality in the transport and logistics systems. of military operations on the territory of Ukraine.

The full launch of CBAM from 2026 will have an extremely negative impact on exports in the form of increased costs, reduced product competitiveness, forced reorientation to other markets, etc. According to GMK Center estimates, the total potential export losses for Ukrainian metallurgy in 2030 could amount to \$1.6 billion, in particular for the following types of products:

- rolled products – \$899 million;
- steel semi-finished products – \$558 million;
- pig iron – \$96 million;
- pipes – \$39 million;
- other products – \$25 million [3].

However, along with the challenges, such a tool can also provide opportunities and stimulate the formation and implementation of state policy, taking into account the international factor and long-term prospects, in particular:

1. Modernization of production.

Requires the introduction of modern innovative technologies into the production process, which will contribute to increasing energy efficiency and reducing the cost of production in the long term.

2. Increasing the level of competitiveness of goods.

Modernization of production will contribute to improving the quality of goods imported to the European market, which will open

access to new markets and improve the image of the manufacturer. Reducing emissions will also enable manufacturers to participate in various ecological projects, access to so-called «green credits» and attract foreign investments.

3. Strategizing activities.

Long-term activities require manufacturers to conduct an emission audit (assessment of the current state, identification of the main sources of emissions and development of a preventive monitoring and control system). In addition, efforts should be focused on training personnel in the CBAM specifics and features of reporting.

It is worth emphasizing the need to update the contractual framework taking into account the specifics of the CBAM and make appropriate adjustments to contracts. It is important to use the transitional period for adaptation, in particular to study the experience and best practices of European companies, invest in modern technologies and develop development strategies for several years ahead, this is especially important in wartime conditions and in the period of post-war reconstruction.

Thus, the Carbon Import Adjustment Mechanism will serve as a tool to encourage clean industrial production in countries that are not currently members of the European Union. However, for Ukraine, this is not just a regulatory mechanism, but a serious step towards modernizing production and improving state policy in the context of new internal threats and external challenges. However, for Ukraine, this is not just a regulatory mechanism, but a serious step towards the modernization of production, improvement of state policy in the context of new internal threats and external challenges. Considerate steps towards the implementation of the CBAM will help avoid unnecessary losses and provide an opportunity to bring companies to a new level through development and modernization.

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IMPACT OF THE WHISTLEBLOWER INSTITUTE ON PREVENTING TAX EVASION IN UKRAINE

Tax evasion is a serious threat to the economic security of the state. The problem becomes particularly acute in conditions of martial law, when tax revenues become critically important for ensuring defense capability and social stability. One of the effective tools for detecting violations of tax legislation can be the institution of whistleblowers.

In Ukraine, the institution of whistleblowers is regulated by the Law of Ukraine «On Prevention of Corruption», the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine (hereinafter – the CPC of Ukraine), indirectly – through the liability of payers and mechanisms for detecting violations by the Tax Code of Ukraine. In the tax sphere, a whistleblower is an individual who voluntarily reports possible facts of corruption or corruption-related offenses in tax legislation, if they become known to him during the performance of official duties or other legally prescribed activities. Whistleblowers in the tax sphere can be employees of tax authorities, auditors, lawyers or other individuals who have access to information about possible violations of tax legislation.

The legal status of a whistleblower, in accordance with Article 53-3 of the Law of Ukraine «On Prevention of Corruption», arises from the moment of reporting information about possible facts of corruption or corruption-related offenses of tax legislation, as well as other violations of the specified law. The legislator defines a number of rights guaranteed to such a person, which generally

form a multi-level system of legal protection of whistleblowers, although in practice it is not fully implemented [1].

In particular, a whistleblower has the right: to be informed of his rights and obligations under current legislation; to submit evidence to support the information set out in the report; to receive confirmation of acceptance and registration of his application by the authorized body; to provide explanations, testimony or refuse them; to use guaranteed free legal assistance in connection with the protection of his rights as a whistleblower; to demand compliance with the confidentiality regime or to report information anonymously; to receive security measures for oneself, loved ones, housing and property in the event of a real threat to life or health or to refuse them in writing; to demand reimbursement of expenses related to the protection of the rights of the whistleblower, including payment of attorney's services, court fees; to receive compensation in cases provided for by law; to use psychological assistance; to be exempted from legal liability if the report was made in good faith and in accordance with the law; to receive information about the progress and results of the inspection or investigation conducted upon his report.

Such a number of declared rights indicates the legislator's desire to create a comprehensive legal model of whistleblower protection, however, the effectiveness of its implementation in practice still remains low, which is associated with the imperfection of procedures, the lack of guarantees of real implementation of decisions, as well as the reluctance of authorities to create appropriate conditions for the safe disclosure of violations.

Despite the normative consolidation of the whistleblower protection institute in the current legislation, its implementation in law enforcement practice remains fragmentary and limited, notes O. Vasylenko [2].

We share the well-founded position of the Ukrainian scientist, because the effectiveness of the role of the whistleblower institute remains low today, which is due to the lack of an effective legal and institutional mechanism for protecting persons who report socially dangerous violations. In particular, the legislation does not

provide for proper regulation of issues related to: guaranteeing the anonymity of whistleblowers; mechanisms for recording the facts of reporting and verifying the reliability of the information provided; protection from persecution or repression by employers and state bodies.

In addition, currently, the law only provides for whistleblowers regarding corruption and corruption-related offenses in tax legislation (Order «On Approval of Methodological Recommendations on the Acceptance and Consideration of Reports of Corruption in the Bodies of the State Tax Service» (hereinafter referred to as the State Tax Service of Ukraine) dated 03.09.2020 No. 468) [3]. As a result, this creates a so-called «gap» in the system for detecting financial abuse, because it is whistleblowers within companies who are able to provide critically important information about tax evasion schemes.

It should be noted that paragraph 1.3 of the Methodological Recommendations on the Acceptance and Consideration of Reports of Corruption in the State Tax Service of Ukraine stipulates that reports to the State Tax Service of Ukraine and its territorial bodies are submitted through the Unified Portal of Whistleblower Reports, as well as internal and external reporting channels. Verbal reports are submitted by whistleblowers during a personal reception, as well as by telephone through the State Tax Service of Ukraine Contact Center [3].

Such reports, provided that the information contains factual data, are subject to preliminary consideration within a period of no more than 10 working days from the date of entering the information into the Unified Portal of Whistleblowers.

Unlike domestic legislation, in the legislation of the European Union countries, the term «whistleblower» refers to individuals who, working in an organization and learning about a violation, knowingly report it, understanding that they are guaranteed both an appropriate level of legal protection and motivation (Directive of the European Parliament and of the Union on the protection of persons reporting breaches of Union law [4], which

regulates common minimum EU standards for the protection of whistleblowers) [5].

The category of whistleblowers, according to the Directive, includes: – persons working in the private or public sector who received information in the course of their employment; – persons who report facts of violations that they received while in an employment relationship, but which have now ended; – persons who, at the time of filing the report, had not entered into an employment relationship, but information about the violation was received during the recruitment process or other negotiations preceding the conclusion of the contract [4].

The range of violations that a whistleblower can report is very wide, including the tax sphere. The main channels of reporting are: internal reporting (information is reported to a legal entity in the private or public sector), external reporting (information is reported to the competent authorities), public disclosure (information is reported in the public sphere) [4].

According to Article 7 of the Directive, before using external channels, countries should encourage reporting through internal channels in cases where the violations can be eliminated internally and the whistleblower is confident that there is no risk of retaliation.

However, there are exceptions. For example, the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the cases of «Heinisch v. Germany», «Guia v. Moldova», «Bucur and Toma v. Romania» state that if the whistleblower is sure that the violation about which he provided information will not be stopped, and the manager shows inaction, despite the fact that he is aware of the given facts, the matter will not be properly considered, the whistleblower is given the right to ignore internal channels and immediately provide a report through external channels [6].

Guaranteeing the protection of whistleblowers, according to Art. 6 of the Directive, is provided provided that: the information is true; the report is made through internal, external communication channels or by public disclosure.

The main criteria of the ECHR for the protection of whistleblowers' rights are: the use of special channels for the

disclosure of information; reliability of information; good faith; public (social) interest in the information that is made public; damage caused; severity of sanctions.

In addition, as evidenced by international practice and the decisions of the ECHR, any restrictions on the rights of whistleblowers in connection with their reports are defined as a violation of Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms insofar as it concerns the violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Thus, in 2008, in the decision in the case of «Gudja v. Moldova», the ECHR noted that under certain conditions, reporting on an offense should provide protection for the whistleblower. The Court recognized the danger of «deterrent effects» that may be caused by sanctions against the whistleblower, which, as a result, leads to the cessation of reports by other persons [6].

In order to ensure the full functioning of the whistleblower institute in the tax sphere of Ukraine, it is also advisable to take into account the positive experience of countries that already have a stable law enforcement practice in this area. As an example, let us consider the American model of institutionalization of whistleblowers, in particular in the field of tax control.

The United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) operates a specialized Whistleblower Office, which annually processes thousands of applications regarding alleged violations of tax legislation.

The legal basis for the activities of this body is the Tax Relief and Health Care Act (Tax Relief and Health Care Act, 2006), which introduced financial incentives for informants. In particular, persons who provided reliable information that contributed to the detection of tax abuses and the actual return of funds to the budget may apply for a reward of up to 30% of the amount reimbursed [7]. This approach, combined with proper legal and institutional support, has significantly increased the level of detection of complex financial schemes and fiscal offenses. According to official data from the US Internal Revenue Service, in 2024 alone, whistleblower reports revealed tax offenses worth 744.7 million

US dollars, which indicates the high effectiveness and economic feasibility of implementing such programs.

Thus, the regulatory consolidation of the whistleblower protection institute in Ukrainian tax legislation, its implementation in law enforcement practice remains fragmentary, declarative and limited in Ukraine, unlike in EU countries. The importance of protecting whistleblowers' rights lies in the fact that, in addition to the occurrence of negative consequences directly related to their work, the failure of the state to provide proper protection of whistleblowers' rights will contribute to the lack of desire of others to report on the misconduct of other persons, which harms both society and the state. That is, the key criterion for a whistleblower is the guarantee that the disclosure will be protected.

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NITRATE CONTAMINATION OF GROUNDWATER: A SEVERE ECOLOGICAL THREAT IN THE EU AND UKRAINE

Abstract

Nitrate contamination of groundwater represents a severe and escalating ecological threat in both the European Union (EU) and Ukraine. Primary contamination sources include intensive agricultural practices, the widespread use of nitrogen-based fertilizers, and inadequate management of organic waste from livestock farming. This study evaluates the current state of nitrate pollution in Ukrainian groundwater in comparison with EU trends and analyzes the challenges of implementing the EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) within the Ukrainian context. Monitoring data from four oblasts (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Poltava, and Khmelnytsky) reveal significant spatial and seasonal variability, with nitrate concentrations ranging from 2.3 to 890.0 mg/L and 33-65% of water sources exceeding the permissible limit of 50 mg/L. The findings underscore the urgent need for effective nutrient management, rehabilitation of monitoring systems, and the integration of educational and social instruments to mitigate nitrate pollution and protect public health.

Introduction

Nitrate contamination of groundwater is a persistent and growing environmental issue across the European Union and Ukraine. The problem stems predominantly from intensive agricultural practices, including the excessive application of nitrogen-based mineral fertilizers and inadequate treatment or disposal of organic waste from industrial livestock production. The declining efficiency of municipal wastewater treatment systems further exacerbates nitrate enrichment in groundwater (European Environment Agency [EEA], 2021).

This contamination poses well-documented risks to human health and ecosystems, notably through methemoglobinemia («blue baby syndrome») in infants and the eutrophication of aquatic environments. To mitigate these risks, the EU introduced the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) in 1991, designed to reduce nitrate pollution from agricultural sources. However, despite more than three decades of implementation, the Directive's overall effectiveness remains limited (European Commission, 2021). Data indicate that average nitrate concentrations in EU groundwater and the proportion of monitoring sites exceeding the maximum permissible level (50 mg/L) have not decreased significantly from 2000 to 2022, undermining progress toward the Directive's target of a 50% reduction in nutrient losses (EEA, 2024).

In Ukraine, groundwater nitrate pollution is equally widespread (Vystavna et al., 2017). The situation has been aggravated by the full-scale military aggression, which has disrupted national environmental monitoring and severely reduced funding. Although Ukraine has committed to transposing the EU Nitrates Directive into national legislation, implementation remains slow. The identification of nitrate-vulnerable zones (NVZs), a key step in Directive enforcement, is hindered by incomplete datasets and an extended timeline projecting completion only by 2036. These delays impede the adoption of critical water protection measures.

The general objective of this research is to outline effective pathways for implementing the Nitrates Directive in Ukraine

through educational, scientific, and social initiatives that promote the sustainable management of ecological and health risks.

Objectives.

This interdisciplinary study aims to:

- Generate new insights into the mechanisms of EU policy implementation under Ukrainian conditions.
- Assess nitrate concentrations in drinking water, particularly from shallow wells serving small rural communities.
- Develop scientifically based approaches for delineating NVZs.
- Propose strategies for reducing nitrate pollution through the promotion of best agricultural practices and improved sanitary management.

The EU Nitrates Directive and Challenges for Ukraine.

The EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) serves as a key regulatory framework for protecting water bodies from agricultural nitrate pollution. Its implementation requires Member States to identify NVZs and develop Action Programmes to control fertilizer application and organic waste management.

Ukraine faces several challenges in aligning with this framework:

- Regional heterogeneity: Significant differences in management capacity, climate, agricultural intensity, and the effects of warfare create uneven potential for Directive application.
- Financial and technical constraints: Implementing fertilizer-use restrictions often reduces short-term agricultural profitability, generating resistance among farmers.
- Monitoring deficiencies: The collapse of the sanitary-epidemiological surveillance system has resulted in a near absence of groundwater nitrate monitoring. Only limited, irregular surface-water assessments are currently conducted.
- Climate change: Prolonged droughts in southern and central Ukraine exacerbate nitrate accumulation in shallow groundwater, particularly in dug wells that serve as the primary drinking water source in rural areas.

These constraints highlight the urgent need to adapt the EU framework to Ukraine's socioeconomic and environmental realities.

Materials and Methods

Groundwater sampling and analysis were conducted according to the State Water Monitoring Program (Order of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, 20 January 2025, No. 84). A total of 42 wells used for drinking and domestic purposes were examined in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Khmelnytsky, and Poltava oblasts.

Samples were collected during April and September 2025 to capture seasonal variability. Nitrate concentrations were determined spectrophotometrically according to ISO 7890-3:1988 (Water quality – Determination of nitrate – Part 3: Spectrometric method using sulfosalicylic acid) using a UV-Vis OPTIZEN Alpha spectrophotometer. All measurements were performed in triplicate, and statistical analyses followed standard environmental data evaluation methods.

Results and Discussion

The results demonstrate substantial regional and seasonal variation in groundwater nitrate concentrations (Table). Measured values ranged from 2.3 to 890.0 mg/L, frequently exceeding the 50 mg/L drinking water standard (WHO and Ukraine drinking water standards).

Kyiv Oblast exhibited the highest nitrate concentrations, with up to 64.7% of wells exceeding the limit in spring. The most extreme pollution (890.0 mg/L) was recorded in Rosishky village near the Tetiivska community, Bila Tserkva district. Elevated levels in Chernihiv and Poltava indicate diffuse agricultural pollution, while moderate contamination in Khmelnytsky suggests localized sources.

Seasonal dynamics show generally higher nitrate concentrations in spring due to leaching during snowmelt and precipitation. In contrast, localized summer peaks, especially in Poltava, reflect ongoing fertilization and limited dilution during dry periods. These results confirm that nitrate pollution of rural aquifers in Ukraine is both widespread and persistent, posing significant threats to drinking water safety and public health.

The findings emphasize the necessity of integrated nutrient management, improved manure storage and wastewater control, and the restoration of national groundwater monitoring networks. Furthermore, harmonizing Ukrainian agricultural education with EU environmental standards is essential for developing sustainable practices at the farm level.

Table. Monitoring data and interpretation

Oblast	Number of water sources	Season (min-max content)		% of water sources where drinking water standards were exceeded		Interpretation
		Spring	Summer	Spring	Summer	
Kyiv	17	12,3 – 890,0	10,3 – 435,9	64,7	52,9	Extremely high in some wells, showing severe local contamination (likely agricultural)
Chernihiv	8	11,6 – 230,9	7,8 – 145,3	50,0	37,5	High variability; elevated but somewhat lower in summer
Poltava	6	5,6 – 156,3	4,0 – 180,0	33,3	66,7	Moderate to high; summer rise suggests leaching from fertilizers
Khmelnitsky	11	4,0 – 153,0	2,3 – 142,8	45,5	36,4	Generally moderate, still exceeding norms in some wells

Conclusions

Nitrate pollution remains a critical environmental and health issue in both the EU and Ukraine. The Ukrainian data reveal alarming exceedances of permissible nitrate concentrations, especially in rural regions dependent on shallow groundwater. While the EU has established institutional mechanisms under the Nitrates Directive, Ukraine faces systemic barriers – limited monitoring,

weak enforcement, financial constraints, and the disruptive impact of war.

Addressing these challenges requires not only technical and policy measures but also educational interventions that increase awareness among farmers, students, and local authorities. The adaptation of EU experience to Ukrainian conditions offers a viable pathway toward sustainable water resource management and the alignment of Ukraine's agricultural sector with European environmental standards.

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