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KEY DIRECTIONS OF INTEGRATION INTERACTION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of the main directions of integration interaction between Ukraine and the European Union. **The purpose of the article** is to identify the key areas of cooperation and analyze their impact on the socio-economic development of Ukraine in the context of European integration; coverage of interaction and cooperation between the EU and Ukraine in the context of Russia's large-scale invasion. **The scientific novelty** lies in a comprehensive analysis of the current state and prospects for deepening integration processes between Ukraine and the EU, taking into account new challenges and opportunities. **Conclusions** of the article emphasize the importance of strategic partnership with the EU for Ukraine and identify priority areas for further integration. At the present stage, the deepening of integration cooperation between Ukraine and the EU is characterized by the transition from candidate status to the direct process of accession negotiations. At the same time, the implementation of the Association Agreement and sectoral integration continue. Despite the difficult circumstances caused by the war, Ukraine demonstrates determination in its European aspirations, and the EU confirms its readiness to support this process.

Key words: integration interaction, European Union, Ukraine, european integration, areas of cooperation, security coordination, humanitarian cooperation, sectoral cooperation.

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ОСНОВНІ НАПРЯМКИ ІНТЕГРАЦІЙНОЇ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ МІЖ УКРАЇНОЮ ТА ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИМ СОЮЗОМ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню основних напрямків інтеграційної взаємодії між Україною та Європейським Союзом. **Метою** статті є визначення ключових сфер співробітництва та аналіз їхнього впливу на соціально-економічний та політичний розвиток України в контексті євроінтеграції; висвітлення взаємодії і співробітництва ЄС та України в умовах російського широкомасштабного вторгнення. **Наукова новизна** полягає у комплексному аналізі сучасного стану та перспектив поглиблення інтеграційних процесів між Україною та ЄС з урахуванням нових викликів та можливостей. **Висновки** статті підкреслюють важливість стратегічного партнерства з ЄС для України та визначають пріоритетні напрямки подальшої інтеграції. На сучасному етапі поглиблення інтеграційної взаємодії між Україною та ЄС характеризується переходом від статусу кандидата до безпосереднього процесу переговорів про вступ. Паралельно триває імплементація Угоди про асоціацію та галузева інтеграція. Попри складні обставини, спричинені війною, Україна демонструє рішучість у своєму європейському прагненні, а ЄС підтверджує готовність підтримувати цей процес.

Ключові слова: інтеграційна взаємодія, Європейський Союз, Україна, євроінтеграція, напрямки співробітництва, безпекова координація, гуманітарна співпраця, секторальне співробітництво.

Problem statement. Ukraine's integration into the European Union is one of the strategic priorities of the country's foreign policy. The signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU was an important step on this path, opening up new opportunities for political dialogue, economic cooperation and legislative approximation. However, deepening integration processes requires a comprehensive analysis of key areas of interaction, identification of potential barriers, and setting priorities for further development of cooperation. In the context of geopolitical instability and internal transformations in Ukraine, effective integration cooperation with the EU is of particular relevance for ensuring sustainable development and strengthening national security. The deepening of integration cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union is a complex and multifaceted process aimed at bringing Ukraine and the EU closer together in the political, economic and social spheres. At the present stage, this process is of strategic importance for Ukraine, determining its foreign policy course, internal reforms and the fight against russian aggression.

Analysis of recent research and publications. An analysis of recent research papers and publications shows a significant interest of researchers in the issues of Ukraine's European integration. To prepare this article, we analyzed the EU regulations, documents and analyses of the EU Council [2–7; 10; 18–19], as well as studies by foreign and Ukrainian experts. Considerable attention is paid to the analysis of the impact of the Association Agreement on various spheres of the economy, political system, security and defense coordination in the works of Ukrainian researches Y. Kostiuchenko [14], K. Solodkova, D. Boichuk [17], and the growing need for search and exchange of legal data is highlighted by D. Syrota, A. Khrebtova, and A. Ivanov [16]. O. Shpakovych and O. Batrymenko [22] address the issue of adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to EU norms in their works; V. Kravchenko, Y. Zhalilo [13], O. Shnyrkov [21], V. Chuzhykov [12] study the problems and prospects of Ukraine's sectoral integration into the EU; V. Heets, T. Ostashko [8; 11] and others analyze the role of civil society in the processes of European integration in strengthening democratic institutions. However, there is a need for a more comprehensive study of the main areas of integration cooperation, taking into account the new challenges posed by Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine and the need for post-war reconstruction.

The purpose of the article is to identify and analyze the main areas of integration cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to identify the key areas of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, analyze the current state of integration processes in each of the identified areas, assess the impact of integration cooperation on the socio-economic development of Ukraine, and determine the prospects and priority areas for further deepening of integration between Ukraine and the EU.

Summary of the main material. Integration cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union covers a wide range of areas that can be divided into several main categories. Political dialogue and cooperation in the security sector. This area includes regular high-level consultations, cooperation within the framework of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy, information exchange, and coordination of actions in the field of foreign policy. Cooperation in countering hybrid threats and strengthening cybersecurity is of particular importance.

In the context of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Joint Security Commitments between the EU and Ukraine signed on June 27, 2024, were an important step towards establishing defense coordination between the EU and Ukraine [18]. The main areas of support and cooperation with the EU were financial assistance, in particular, the European Union provided significant financial resources through the European Peace Fund for the purchase and transfer of weapons, military equipment, and ammunition to Ukraine. In addition, a special Fund for Assistance to Ukraine was established to expand the scope of military support [6].

The EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) provides training to Ukrainian military personnel to improve their interaction with the armed forces of EU member states [1]. The EU has launched a program of joint procurement of arms and ammunition for Ukraine, which helps to optimize costs and speed up the delivery of necessary military equipment [7]. The EU provides funding to support the defense industry of both Ukraine and EU member states to increase production capacity and ensure a stable supply of weapons and ammunition. The European Union is working on mechanisms to use frozen Russian assets to finance Ukraine's reconstruction and support its defense capabilities [14, p. 199].

Economic integration is one of the key areas and envisages Ukraine's gradual integration into the EU internal market. An important role is played by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which provides for liberalization of trade in goods and services, harmonization of technical standards, sanitary norms, and cooperation in customs regulation. The DCFTA provides for the gradual elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to mutual trade in goods and services, and approximation of Ukraine's regulatory legislation to EU standards in various sectors of the economy. Ukraine is actively involved in various EU programs and initiatives, including joining the Single Market program and the Connecting Europe mechanism, integration into the EU energy system (ENTSO-E), and the conclusion of an aviation visa-free regime.

Sectoral cooperation covers cooperation in specific economic sectors and areas of public life, such as energy, transport, agriculture, and environmental protection. Important and necessary are the following: integration of energy markets, including synchronization of energy systems, liberalization of the gas and electricity markets, energy efficiency and development of renewable energy sources; liberalization of transport; integration of digital markets, including removal of barriers to online trading, harmonization of rules in the field of electronic communications and data protection; approximation of regulatory requirements in the financial sector to EU standards, development of cooperation between financial institutions; adaptation to EU standards in the field of agriculture and food industry, development of rural areas; creation of a favorable investment climate to attract both foreign and domestic investments, which is important for modernizing the economy and stimulating economic growth.

Strengthening Ukraine's institutional capacity for effective implementation of European norms and standards is one of the priority areas of European integration. Harmonization of legislation and implementation of European standards in these areas is an important element of integration. Deepening integration requires Ukraine to implement systemic reforms in various areas, including judicial reform, anti-corruption, public administration reform, economic liberalization, human rights and the rule of law. Public administration reform, anti-corruption, judicial reform, and the rule of law are of particular importance.

The approximation of Ukrainian legislation with the legal norms of the European Union is a key condition for deepening our cooperation with European associations and their member states. This process lays a solid foundation for Ukraine's future accession to the EU and actually accelerates our European integration. Ukraine is particularly interested in bringing its legislation in line with EU requirements. The European Union, for its part, attaches great importance to the protection of European values, including democratic principles and human rights, and considers their protection to be an important component of bilateral relations with non-EU countries. In the process of harmonization, certain provisions of the EU legislation are actually implemented into the legal system of another state that has its own principles of functioning, different from the European ones.

It is worth noting that when implementing harmonization, Ukraine should also take into account the fact that this process is unilateral, since it does not involve mutual steps on both sides to harmonize their legal norms, but only changes in Ukrainian legislation in order to harmonize it with the norms of EU law. In fact, Ukraine cannot in any way influence the rulemaking process in the European Union system [22, p. 153]. Recommendation on harmonization of EU law with national legislation of Ukraine in the areas of democracy, rule of law, human and civil rights, respect and protection of minorities – approval of the National Program for the Adaptation of Ukrainian Legislation to the Law of the European Union. The second recommendation for the harmonization of Ukraine's national legislation with EU acts is to include the issues of democracy, the rule of law, human and civil rights and ensuring respect for and protection of minority rights in the priority areas of harmonization of Ukrainian legislation [22, p. 153].

Cooperation in the EU has led to a growing need to search for and exchange legal data generated at the level of regions and member states and circulated at the European level. This need is largely met by the availability of legal information in digital format and the active use of the Internet. Despite the growth of legal information in electronic form, its exchange is significantly complicated due to differences between national legal systems and differences in technical solutions used to store and present legislation on national web resources. This creates obstacles to effective interaction between the information systems of national and European institutions [16, p. 58–59]. Given the European integration course of Ukraine and its EU candidate status, the integration of legal databases with the European Union is of particular importance to Ukrainian scholars and is considered one of the key areas of research, as such integration is a prerequisite for Ukraine's full integration into the EU [16, p. 62].

Humanitarian cooperation and cultural exchange are aimed at strengthening people-to-people contacts, supporting cultural initiatives, cooperation in education and science, and providing humanitarian aid. Ukraine is actively involved in various EU programs and initiatives, including participation in the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programs. The active participation of Ukrainian students, teachers, researchers and educational institutions in the Erasmus+ program provides opportunities for education, internships, exchange of experience and cooperation in education, training, youth and sports, while the continued reform of the Ukrainian higher education system in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process contributes to improving the quality of education, academic mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications in Europe.

In 2015, the Ukrainian Association of Professors and Researchers of European Integration (APREI) was established, which is actively working on reforming higher education, developing European studies, spreading European values and internationalizing education in Ukraine, bringing together professionals from the academic and public sectors who seek to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union. "The Association's efforts are aimed at creating a more modern, inclusive and dynamic professional environment

for Ukrainian educators and civic activists who specialize in promoting European integration processes in Ukraine and providing them with opportunities to present their experience and achievements to a wider audience at the national and international levels” [23]. The key activities of the Association include the dissemination of objective and professional information about the European Union, which will help raise awareness of the Ukrainian society about the European Union and European integration processes: projects “Intercultural Europe: Diversity and Social Cohesion”, “Wider coverage of European integration in teaching and research”, “EU-Eastern Partnership: Supporting a new generation of researchers in European Studies”, “EU-Eastern Partnership: Future ways to enhance joint initiatives” [23].

Within the framework of cooperation between universities, partnerships between Ukrainian and European universities are being developed, joint educational and research projects and double degree programs are being implemented; the study of the languages of EU member states in Ukraine and the Ukrainian language in the EU is being encouraged, which contributes to better mutual understanding and intercultural communication; favorable conditions are being created for the mobility of students, teachers and researchers between Ukraine and EU countries.

Involvement of Ukrainian artists, cultural institutions and organizations in EU programs such as Creative Europe, exchange of exhibitions, festivals, and literary translations promotes international cooperation, exchange of experience, and promotion of Ukrainian culture in the EU and European culture in Ukraine. Joint projects with the EU are being developed to preserve, restore, and promote Ukraine’s cultural heritage, as well as to familiarize the European community with its richness. Promoting the exchange of information and content between Ukrainian and European media, supporting projects aimed at increasing media literacy and countering disinformation is being deepened. Co-production of films, participation in film festivals, support for film education, and promotion of Ukrainian cinema in Europe open up new prospects for cultural European integration.

In 2014, the Association Agreement was signed [19], which entered into force in 2017 and is a key instrument of Ukraine’s European integration. This document envisaged the creation of a free trade area to facilitate economic integration and trade growth; political association aimed at bringing political systems closer together, cooperation in security and foreign policy; sectoral cooperation in many areas, including justice, home affairs, transport, energy, environment, education, science and technology; and approximation of Ukrainian legislation to EU legislation in various areas.

Despite significant progress, the integration process remains complex and lengthy. The full-scale russian invasion has made significant adjustments, but it has also reinforced Ukraine’s aspirations for EU membership. The European Commission has recommended starting accession talks with Ukraine, but the negotiation process could take several years and will depend on Ukraine’s ability to continue reforms and fulfill the necessary criteria. Deepening integration cooperation with the EU is a strategic choice for Ukraine aimed at strengthening its independence, stability and prosperity, as well as its eventual return to the european family.

Granting Ukraine the status of an EU candidate country in June 2022 was an important political step that demonstrated the recognition of Ukraine’s European perspective. In order to move further on the path to membership, Ukraine has to fulfill a number of political, legislative, and economic criteria known as the Copenhagen criteria [3]. This was a powerful political signal of support for Ukraine’s European choice, especially in the face of full-scale russian aggression.

After receiving the candidate status, the European Commission set a number of conditions that Ukraine had to fulfill in order to start accession negotiations. These conditions included reforms in the following areas: the judiciary, including the Constitutional Court; the fight against corruption and money laundering; the implementation of anti-oligarchic legislation; the harmonization of media legislation with the european one; and the protection of national minority rights. Ukraine has demonstrated significant progress in implementing these recommendations.

On December 14, 2023, the European Council decided to open negotiations with Ukraine on accession to the EU. On June 25, 2024, the first intergovernmental conference is held in Luxembourg, officially launching the negotiation process. The focus is on addressing current threats to Ukraine’s security, primarily as a result of russian aggression. The importance of the European Union’s support for Ukraine is significant, which is manifested in the imposition of economic restrictions on russia, financial assistance and military support under various cooperation programs.

The full-scale russian aggression is the main challenge to Ukraine’s European integration, creating significant economic and social difficulties. The accession negotiation process will be long and complex, requiring Ukraine to continue reforms and adaptation to european standards. Despite the war, Ukraine’s political will to join the EU remains strong, and its European partners reaffirm their support for the process. There are different forecasts on the timing of Ukraine’s accession to the EU, but most experts agree that it will take a considerable amount of time, possibly by the end of this decade or later.

Conclusions. Integration cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union is a multifaceted and dynamic process that covers a wide range of political, economic, social, cultural, defense and security aspects. Strategic partnership with the EU plays a key role in ensuring Ukraine's sustainable development, strengthening its democratic institutions, and improving the living standards of its citizens. The main areas of integration cooperation at the current stage are political dialogue and security cooperation, economic integration, sectoral cooperation in key sectors, institutional cooperation and development, as well as humanitarian cooperation and cultural exchange. The European Union's military-technical cooperation with Ukraine helps to strengthen the defense of the Ukrainian army and its ability to withstand Russian aggression. The EU continues to provide comprehensive support to Ukraine, including in the areas of security and defense. The partnership between the EU and Ukraine in this area is a key factor for maintaining stability and security on the European continent.

Further deepening of integration requires Ukraine to implement systemic reforms aimed at adapting national legislation to EU norms, strengthening institutional capacity, fighting corruption, and creating a favorable business environment. In the context of post-war recovery, EU support will be crucial for Ukraine's successful European integration. At the current stage, integration cooperation between Ukraine and the EU is taking place in the context of a full-scale war, which has made significant adjustments to the priorities and forms of cooperation. The EU provides Ukraine with unprecedented political, economic, financial and military support. The process of granting Ukraine the status of an EU candidate has intensified, which opens up new prospects for deeper integration.

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