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**РОЗВИТОК ТЕРИТОРІЙ УКРАЇНИ В РАМКАХ ПАРТНЕРСТВА З
ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИМ СОЮЗОМ**

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Анотація. Стаття присвячена перспективам розвитку територій України в рамках партнерства з Європейським Союзом (ЄС). Актуальність дослідження обумовлена сучасними викликами, такими як повномасштабна війна, економічні кризи та соціальна нестабільність, які вимагають нового підходу до управління регіонами. Метою статті є аналіз взаємодії України та ЄС у контексті регіонального розвитку та оцінка впливу євроінтеграційних процесів на соціально-економічний стан українських територій.

У дослідженні використано такі методи: системний аналіз для оцінки міжнародної взаємодії, компаративний підхід для вивчення досвіду ЄС у розвитку регіонів, та кейс-метод для аналізу конкретних прикладів співпраці українських міст і регіонів з європейськими партнерами.

Результати статті демонструють, що основними напрямками співпраці України та ЄС є впровадження програм транскордонного співробітництва, інтеграція до макрорегіональних стратегій, а також участь у міжнародних ініціативах, таких як Європейський альянс міст і регіонів за відбудову України. Зокрема, зазначено ефективність реалізації таких програм, як «Interreg Europe», а також важливість горизонтальних зв'язків між муніципалітетами для обміну досвідом і впровадження інновацій.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у комплексному аналізі сучасних викликів та можливостей для інтеграції України до європейських структур через розвиток регіонів. У статті вперше систематизовано ключові напрями міжнародного співробітництва, акцентовано увагу на ролі ініціатив з реконструкції країни в умовах війни.

Практична значущість роботи полягає у можливості використання отриманих результатів для розробки стратегій регіонального розвитку, зокрема в контексті залучення міжнародної допомоги та адаптації європейських стандартів управління до українських реалій.

Дослідження дозволяє зробити висновок, що ефективне партнерство з ЄС сприяє модернізації інфраструктури, підвищенню конкурентоспроможності регіонів та забезпеченню

стійкого економічного зростання. Однак реалізація цих перспектив потребує подальшого удосконалення політики та інтеграційних процесів на регіональному рівні.

Ключові слова: євроінтеграція, розвиток територій, партнерство Україна-ЄС, регіональна політика, сталий розвиток, міжнародна співпраця, соціально-економічний розвиток.

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DEVELOPMENT OF UKRAINIAN TERRITORIES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract. The article focuses on the prospects for the development of Ukraine's territories within the framework of partnership with the European Union (EU). The relevance of the research is determined by current challenges such as full-scale war, economic crises, and social instability, which necessitate a new approach to regional governance. The aim of the article is to analyze the interaction between Ukraine and the EU in the context of regional development and assess the impact of European integration processes on the socio-economic state of Ukrainian territories.

The study employs the following methods: system analysis to evaluate international cooperation, a comparative approach to study the EU's experience in regional development, and a case-study method to analyze specific examples of collaboration between Ukrainian cities and regions and European partners.

The results of the article show that the main areas of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU include the implementation of cross-border cooperation programs, integration into macro-regional strategies, and participation in international initiatives such as the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. In particular, the effectiveness of implementing programs like "Interreg Europe" and the importance of horizontal ties between municipalities for experience exchange and innovation introduction are highlighted.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in a comprehensive analysis of current challenges and opportunities for Ukraine's integration into European structures through regional development. For the first time, the article systematizes key areas of international cooperation, emphasizing the role of reconstruction initiatives under wartime conditions.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using the obtained results to develop regional development strategies, particularly in the context of attracting international aid and adapting European governance standards to Ukrainian realities.

The research concludes that effective partnership with the EU facilitates infrastructure modernization, enhances regional competitiveness, and ensures sustainable economic growth.

However, realizing these prospects requires further improvement of policies and integration processes at the regional level.

Keywords: European integration, territorial development, Ukraine-EU partnership, regional policy, sustainable development, international cooperation, socio-economic development.

Introduction. The development of Ukraine's territories within the framework of partnership with the European Union (EU) is one of the key directions of the state's European integration policy. The relationship between Ukraine and the EU largely depends on the global environment, which defines both challenges and opportunities for deepening cooperation. Global crises, wars, climate change, pandemics, and economic shocks influence the internal situation in both the European Union and Ukraine, as well as the pace of implementation of joint projects.

The full-scale war initiated by Russia against Ukraine has fundamentally changed the geopolitical situation, creating new challenges for international security and cooperation. This crisis has significantly affected the political, economic, and social stability of both Ukraine and Europe, while triggering increases in energy prices, a food crisis, and higher consumer goods costs. Some regions are witnessing growing social tensions, disillusionment, and the rise of populist and radical sentiments, which lay the groundwork for strengthening authoritarianism and "strong hand" ideologies [1]. These consequences complicate citizens' quality of life, exacerbate social inequality, and demand new approaches to territorial governance.

Under current conditions, partnership with the EU provides opportunities to address key issues in the development of Ukrainian territories. The attraction of financial, technical, and expert support from the EU contributes to infrastructure modernization, the implementation of European management standards, enhanced regional competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth. However, the success of these processes largely depends on Ukraine's ability to adapt its regional policies to current realities and incorporate European experience in territorial development.

Thus, the study of the prospects for the development of Ukrainian territories in the context of partnership with the EU is a relevant task that requires a comprehensive analysis of current challenges and opportunities for the effective implementation of European integration initiatives.

Objective. The purpose of the article is to explore the interaction between Ukraine and the European Union in the context of territorial development and to analyze the impact of European integration processes on the socio-economic development of Ukraine's regions.

Results. Ukraine's interaction with the EU in the context of territorial development is a crucial aspect of the country's foreign policy, shaping not only economic but also social progress. Since gaining independence, Ukraine has actively sought integration into European structures, reflecting its strategic goals and aspirations for stable development. The primary instrument of this integration has been the Association Agreement with the EU, signed in 2014, which opened new opportunities for cooperation in various areas, including the economy, ecology, and social issues. This agreement includes: political association: Regular high-level dialogue through annual summits to discuss key issues of agreement implementation; economic integration: The establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which opens new opportunities for Ukrainian businesses in the European market [8].

Ukraine's cooperation with the European Union in the field of territorial development encompasses a wide range of initiatives and platforms aimed at strengthening ties, integration, and recovery. The main areas of cooperation include:

1. Working Group on Ukraine at the European Committee of the Regions. Established in 2015, this group brings together representatives of EU institutions, Ukrainian

cities, and regions to discuss and implement regional policies. The group is chaired by Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, the Mayor of Gdańsk. Meetings are held twice a year in Brussels or Ukraine.

2. European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. This initiative, created in 2022, coordinates EU and Ukrainian efforts for the country's reconstruction. The Alliance was launched immediately after Ukraine was granted EU candidate status.

3. Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP). CORLEAP unites representatives of regional and local authorities from EU and Eastern Partnership countries, including Ukraine. The Ukrainian side actively participates in the meetings, and since 2023, the Chair of CORLEAP has been Tetiana Yehorova-Lutsenko.

4. EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Ukraine has participated in this macro-regional initiative since 2011, aimed at infrastructure, environmental, and socio-economic development. Ukraine chaired the EUSDR in 2021-2022, focusing on the decarbonization of the economy and the development of human capital.

5. Cross-border cooperation programs. Ukraine has joined EU programs such as *Interreg Europe* and *URBACT* and has signed financial agreements with programs like *Interreg NEXT 2021-2027*. These programs aim to support regional development through experience exchange and the implementation of best practices.

6. Opening of Ukrainian city representations in Brussels. Representations of cities like Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Lutsk, as well as associations of local authorities, actively operate within the European Committee of the Regions.

Ukraine also supports the idea of creating a new macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian region aimed at preserving the natural and cultural heritage of this unique area. All these initiatives contribute to Ukraine's integration into the EU, strengthening regional development, and ensuring a sustainable future.

An important mechanism for coordinating efforts between Ukrainian cities and European partners is the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, established in 2022. Launched at a pivotal moment when Ukraine was granted EU candidate status, the alliance underscores its strategic significance. It aims to unite the resources and expertise of EU and Ukrainian cities and regions for the effective reconstruction of the country.

Alliance participants are provided with opportunities to exchange knowledge, implement innovative solutions, and realize projects that promote sustainable development. Currently, several Ukrainian cities and regions have already received support from the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, including: Lutsk: In January 2024, the Lutsk City Council became an associate partner of the alliance, allowing the city to receive expert assistance and resources for reconstruction. Poltava: The Poltava City Council also joined the alliance, acquiring associate partner status, which opens new opportunities for collaboration in rebuilding infrastructure and social services. Kyiv: Actively involved in the initiative, particularly through the participation of local government representatives in international events related to recovery efforts. Vinnytsia: Engaged in the alliance's activities, representing the interests of Ukrainian cities at the international level.

This initiative opens new horizons for cooperation and support for recovery efforts amid the ongoing war. Additionally, the alliance remains open to new members, reflecting the growing activity of Ukrainian cities in the reconstruction process [12].

The key principles of the alliance include support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, promotion of European integration, and involvement of local authorities in the recovery process. The alliance advocates for sustainable development based on integrated planning and systemic approaches.

In its activities, the alliance plans to:

- Establish interaction mechanisms between EU and Ukrainian municipalities.
- Develop partnership programs for experience exchange.
- Ensure resources are available to support recovery efforts.

Collaboration with international organizations, such as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, is also a vital aspect of the alliance's work.

Thus, participation in the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine represents a significant step toward the country's integration into the European space and ensuring the sustainable development of territories amidst contemporary challenges.

A major stimulus for fostering international partnerships between Ukrainian communities and foreign municipalities was the International Local Government Unity Marathon, which brought together over 1,000 municipalities from 35 countries worldwide. In 2023, the Office of the President of Ukraine initiated the International Summit of Cities and Regions, creating new opportunities to establish horizontal connections among communities from different countries. Through international partnerships, communities gain access to practical knowledge and expertise in working with international programs, which enhances outcomes in infrastructure development, environmental protection, and economic growth.

Moreover, collaboration with foreign partners enables the preparation of grant projects and the attraction of investments through European development support programs. This fosters the expansion of economic ties, exchange of entrepreneurial expertise, and attraction of new investors. Such integration of local economies with EU markets facilitates the implementation of joint projects and innovative initiatives.

One of the most successful examples of Ukraine's cooperation with the European Union in the context of territorial development is the U-LEAD with Europe Program. The U-LEAD Program supports the development of local self-government in Ukraine, particularly through training activities for professionals involved in infrastructure restoration. It aims to enhance professional competencies in recovery planning, project management, and public engagement.

Participation in the program enables communities to develop recovery strategies that promote sustainable development and align with EU requirements, thereby advancing Ukraine's integration into the European space. One of the program's key achievements is the launch of an initiative that helps territorial communities design comprehensive recovery programs [6].

The program "Development of a Comprehensive Community Recovery Plan" exemplifies how strategic partnerships between Ukraine and the EU support local community development, assist during challenging times, and integrate European approaches into recovery and territorial planning.

This activity involves the integration of spatial planning, socio-economic development, and infrastructure solutions aimed at rebuilding communities. Expert support provided under the program allows for the creation of high-quality, structured documents that facilitate the attraction of international funding. Through this initiative, communities receive not only practical tools for recovery but also support in strengthening their institutional capacity.

This demonstrates how effective collaboration with the EU can drive territorial development, serving as a model for further integration of European approaches within the Ukrainian context.

The European Union is actively collaborating with the Ukrainian government to develop a Roadmap for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. This initiative represents a significant step toward Ukraine's integration into the EU, as it encompasses the implementation of key reforms, alignment with the EU acquis, and the promotion of energy

efficiency and digitalization. The primary goal of this roadmap is not only the restoration of infrastructure but also the creation of a resilient foundation for the country's sustainable development.

It is worth noting that twelve Ukrainian cities have already joined the European Commission's Smart Cities Challenge program, which aims to support sustainable development and innovation in urban environments. Among the cities leading this initiative are Chernihiv, Rivne, Kyiv, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, and others. This program provides expert support for developing Climate Neutrality Plans, including measures to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Cities will have the opportunity to implement innovative projects in the energy sector, improve energy data management systems, and introduce new technologies for sustainable development.

The Smart Cities Challenge also emphasizes the importance of cooperation between Ukrainian cities and European partners. Participation in this initiative allows Ukrainian municipalities to exchange experiences, gain access to resources and knowledge necessary for implementing energy efficiency and environmental sustainability projects.

Through this initiative, Ukrainian cities can not only rebuild their infrastructure after the war but also lay the groundwork for sustainable development in the future, a critical priority amid global climate change challenges. Moreover, over 105 Ukrainian territorial units have expressed interest in joining this initiative, reflecting the growing activity of cities in pursuing climate neutrality.

Participation in the program will enable these cities to integrate climate neutrality plans into their recovery strategies and ensure sustainable development in the face of challenges related to war and climate change [11].

Ukraine's interaction with the EU in the context of territorial development also involves active support for infrastructure recovery. Russia's aggression has caused significant damage to Ukraine's infrastructure, and its restoration requires intensive cooperation with the international community. According to the Second Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA2), prepared by the World Bank in collaboration with the Ukrainian government, the European Commission, and the UN in March 2023, direct damages caused to Ukraine after one year of war have exceeded 135 billion US dollars. The most affected sectors include housing construction (38%), transportation (26%), energy (8%), trade and industry (8%), and agriculture (6%). Ukraine's GDP fell by 29.2% in 2022. As of February 24, 2023, the country's reconstruction and recovery needs are estimated at approximately 411 billion US dollars, which is 2.6 times the current GDP. This includes building a modern, low-carbon, and resilient country with policies and standards aligned with the EU, i.e., a country ready to join the EU [7].

Currently, the most needed sectors include transportation, housing construction, energy, social protection and livelihoods, explosive risk management, and agriculture. Over 5 billion US dollars will be needed just for debris clearance and disposal. The report emphasizes the necessity of a phased approach to reconstruction and rehabilitation, with an additional 14 billion US dollars, or approximately 3.5% of the total estimated costs, to be allocated for implementing priority actions for 2023, in addition to already available funding.

Regarding Ukraine's energy sector, which has suffered severe losses in recent months due to direct attacks on energy infrastructure, RDNA2 estimates damages exceeding 10 billion US dollars. Approximately 12 million households have faced or continue to face limited access to electricity, drinking water, and heating. While it is crucial to restore basic energy supplies and related services as soon as possible, the document emphasizes the importance of the current political decisions in this sector in achieving long-term goals related to the economy, climate protection, and energy security. With the declared goal of "building back better," it is essential to keep in mind long-term priorities such as energy efficiency,

decarbonization, increasing the share of renewable energy sources, resilience to cyberattacks, and thoughtful nuclear energy planning. In other words, short-term objectives and immediate decisions should not ultimately hinder the achievement of long-term climate goals and the requirements related to Ukraine's EU accession process. Investments must be made in accordance with reforms in the areas of the rule of law and anti-corruption, as well as EU standards and principles related to the European Green Deal and digital transformation.

Seven key principles for the reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine were outlined in the Declaration of the Ukraine Reconstruction Conference held in Lugano, Switzerland, in July 2022. RDNA2 builds on these principles and adds additional elements, including the harmonization of Ukrainian legislation and standards with the EU acquis. At the conference, the Ukrainian government also presented a comprehensive recovery plan with an estimated cost of 750 billion US dollars, with specific goals to be achieved by 2032. Furthermore, participants made commitments to 12 goals, including the creation of a coordination platform, the promotion of innovative approaches to land reconstruction, and the engagement of the private sector and civil society. In December 2022, working groups composed of representatives from the Ukrainian government and international partners were established for each section of the recovery plan. The World Bank also established the Ukraine Reconstruction, Recovery, and Reform Trust Fund (URTF).

In 2022, the European Commission presented the document "Support for Ukraine's Recovery and Assistance." In this communication, the Commission identified four key areas for Ukraine's recovery: 1) the restoration of infrastructure, as well as digital and energy resilience; 2) continued modernization of public institutions; 3) strengthening the economic and social integration of Ukraine with the EU; 4) supporting economic and social revival through green and digital transformation. Considering that recovery may take over ten years and require significant financial resources, the Commission proposed a high-level overall strategic plan, "RebuildUkraine." The implementation of this plan will rest with the Ukrainian authorities, but it will be coordinated with the EU and other international partners. An important step is establishing clear interaction between the plan and reforms, as well as alignment with the EU acquis. The document emphasizes that the Ukrainian government has already created the National Reconstruction Council, and since 2014, the EU Working Group for Ukraine has been in place. According to the document, the Ukrainian government has expressed its support for the proposed "Rebuild Ukraine" recovery plan.

A key element of supporting Ukraine on its path to European integration and the recovery of territories affected by the conflict is the financial assistance provided by the European Union. In 2024, Ukraine expects to receive 16 billion euros under the Ukraine Facility program, which is part of a total budget of 50 billion euros allocated for financing the state budget, stimulating investments, and implementing reforms [9]. This program not only ensures economic stability but also contributes to the restoration of infrastructure, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the modernization of border checkpoints.

The main goals of the Ukraine Facility program include:

Financial support for the state budget: The program provides direct financial inflows to cover Ukraine's urgent budgetary needs, helping to stabilize the economy in the face of the challenges the country is facing.

Investment stimulation: The Ukraine Facility aims to attract both public and private investments through the provision of guarantees and blended financing, combining EU loans and grants. This is aimed at supporting the recovery of small and medium-sized enterprises and the development of infrastructure.

Technical assistance: The program includes technical support for the implementation of reforms necessary for Ukraine's integration into the EU. This includes capacity-building for authorities at all levels and support for civil society.

Implementation of reforms: The Ukraine Facility aims to implement key reforms across various sectors that will lay the foundation for the further recovery of the economy and Ukraine's integration into the EU. This includes the "green" transition, digital transformation, and other important areas.

Support for European integration: The program helps strengthen the ties between Ukraine and the EU, supporting processes that lead to Ukraine's full integration into the European space.

Thus, the Ukraine Facility serves as an important financial support mechanism aimed not only at the recovery of Ukraine's economy but also at its further integration into European structures. EU financial support also aims to create conditions for sustainable regional development in Ukraine, which is especially relevant in the context of implementing essential reforms in governance, anti-corruption, and human capital development. The Ukraine Facility program foresees funding for a number of specific reconstruction projects in Ukraine, focused on restoring infrastructure, supporting the economy, and implementing reforms. Specifically, 20% of the grants will be reserved for the needs of local and regional administrations, ensuring targeted support for the recovery of specific areas [10]. The first contracts under the Ukraine Facility program are expected to be signed by the end of spring 2025, allowing the implementation of these important projects to begin.

It should be noted that territorial cooperation between the EU and Ukraine holds particular significance in the context of implementing the local government reform in Ukraine. This reform has already made a significant contribution to consolidating local democracy and strengthening the overall administrative capacity of the country. For the reform to be successful, further steps are needed in line with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The local and regional authorities of the European Union can support their Ukrainian counterparts in further democratizing society. Cooperation could focus on improving the capacity of municipalities to carry out new responsibilities and enhance good governance, including transparency, combating corruption, and protecting media freedom. The ultimate goal of EU partners' support is to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union. The cooperation allows Ukraine to align its legislation with European standards and prepare for alignment with the EU's models of local and regional governance:

Cooperation with EU cities and regions ensures the transfer of knowledge to Ukrainian municipalities. The exchange of best practices, provision of benchmarks, and expertise are among the most important ways in which this cooperation can contribute to strengthening the administrative capacity of Ukrainian local government. This type of knowledge flow takes place during all projects carried out jointly by local and regional authorities.

Moreover, territorial cooperation can focus on developing the administrative capacity of local and regional authorities. Joint programs could focus on:

- Mutual learning and exchange of municipal staff;
- Broader activities in various formats, such as conferences (for example, the Eastern Partnership Local Leaders Forum organized by CEMR);
- Specialized seminars and training for elected officials and civil servants in municipalities (e.g., the Steps for Specialist training program conducted under the "U-LEAD with Europe" program);
- Campaigns to promote decentralization and accelerate municipal consolidation.

The potential of territorial cooperation for developing the capacity of Ukrainian local and regional authorities was significantly revealed during the implementation of the "U-LEAD with Europe" program, which specifically focused on the decentralization of Ukrainian municipalities.

Thus, Ukraine's interaction with the European Union in the context of territorial recovery and development is an important step towards integration into the European

community. Programs such as the "Smart Cities Challenge" and the Ukraine Facility open up new opportunities for Ukrainian cities, promoting the implementation of innovative solutions in energy, digitalization, and sustainable development.

The roadmap for Ukrainian cities, developed with the support of the EU, aims not only to restore infrastructure after the military conflict but also to create a foundation for sustainable development in the face of global challenges. Key aspects of this initiative include aligning with European standards, implementing reforms, improving social infrastructure, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The accelerated recognition of Ukraine's candidate status for EU membership serves as a strong political signal of support for the country's European path. It highlights the EU's readiness to assist Ukraine in its pursuit of European values and standards. Therefore, Ukraine's recovery will not only contribute to the stability and prosperity of the country itself but also strengthen security and stability throughout the region, laying the groundwork for Ukraine's future integration into the European community.

Conclusions. Ukraine's interaction with the European Union in the context of territorial development is crucial, especially amid the ongoing war. The EU is implementing several specific initiatives to support Ukraine's reconstruction, among which the following stand out: the Ukraine Facility, providing funding up to 50 billion euros for restoration and modernization; the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Ukraine's Reconstruction, established in 2022 to coordinate efforts between EU and Ukrainian cities; the "U-LEAD with Europe" program, which promotes local government development and enhances professional competencies in infrastructure restoration; the Roadmap for the Recovery and Reconstruction of Ukraine, which includes key reforms and energy efficiency; and the "Smart Cities Challenge" program, which supports the sustainable development of Ukrainian cities through innovative projects. These initiatives not only ensure the transfer of knowledge and best practices but also contribute to the development of administrative capacity in local governance, which is critically important in the context of decentralization and effective resource management. These initiatives enable communities to develop recovery strategies that meet European standards and attract international financial resources for projects promoting sustainable development and Ukraine's integration into the European space.

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