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RELOCATED UNIVERSITIES IN UKRAINIAN COMMUNITIES: EXPERIENCE AND PROSPECTS

Development of territorial communities in Ukraine under modern conditions is one of the key priorities of state policy. Communities act not only as administrative units, but also as centers of social, cultural, and economic life. They shape local infrastructure, determine the quality of services, and create conditions for the development of human potential. Education in this context plays a leading role, as it is the factor that directly influences social cohesion, mobility, and the competitiveness of the population.

Higher education institutions are an important element of the community ecosystem. They provide training of specialists, stimulate scientific development, and support cultural and economic processes. The presence of a university or academy in a city often becomes a decisive factor in its development, attracting young people, investments, and partnership projects. That is why the destruction of educational infrastructure and the

forced relocation of universities during the war became not only an educational but also a serious socio-economic challenge for territorial communities. Relocated higher education institutions (HEIs) became a symbol of the resilience of Ukrainian education, as even under the most difficult conditions they managed to preserve the educational process and scientific activity.

As a result of the full-scale war in Ukraine 4 296 educational institutions suffered from bombings and shelling. 399 of them were completely destroyed [1]. In the sphere of higher education, at least 63 universities and academies sustained significant damage [2]. These losses painfully affected not only student and teaching staff, but also communities that lost important centers of intellectual and educational life. This means the loss of academic buildings, laboratories, dormitories, and sometimes the entire material and technical base.

The relocation of HEIs became one of the largest challenges for Ukrainian education. Universities that found themselves under occupation or in combat zones had to urgently organize their work in new cities [3].

One of the first examples was Donetsk National University, which relocated to Vinnytsia back in 2014. A similar fate befell Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, which temporarily operated in Starobilsk and later relocated to Poltava. Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University, after 2014, operated in Sievierodonetsk, but with the start of the full-scale invasion, it had to find a new location – today it operates in Kamianets-Podilskiy and Kyiv. Mariupol State University lost most of its buildings during hostilities in the city, but managed to restore the educational process in Kyiv. A similar situation occurred with Tavria V. I. Vernadsky National University, which after the occupation of Crimea was transferred to Kyiv, and after 2022 expanded its activity through online formats and cooperation with international partners [4].

In total, in 2022–2023, more than 40 higher education institutions were relocated, where about 54 000 students continue to study and about 7 000 teachers work. For many of them, “double migration” is characteristic – first due to the events of 2014, and then due to the invasion of 2022 [5].

Relocated universities became integration centers for new cities. They bring intellectual capital, attract international grants, and create educational and scientific hubs. For students, this means access to education even in crisis conditions; for teachers, the opportunity to preserve their professional status. At the same time, communities received additional human resources, new partnerships, and economic activity.

On the other hand, there were problems with providing dormitories, the lack of proper material and technical base, and limited resources for conducting practical classes. All this requires comprehensive state support.

At the same time, adaptation to new conditions contributed to the active implementation of distance learning technologies, strengthening cooperation with local communities and other universities. HEIs became more flexible in managing the educational process, which is important in the context of modern higher education reforms.

Relocated universities require systemic support from the state and international partners. For their effective functioning, it is necessary to focus on the following tasks:

- restoration and modernization of material and technical base, creation of new laboratories and academic buildings in host cities;
- provision of housing, dormitories, and social guarantees for students and teachers;
- development of digital infrastructure and implementation of modern educational technologies, in particular hybrid learning;
- attracting international assistance, grants, and academic mobility programs to support students and scholars;
- integration of relocated HEIs into local communities, which can contribute to regional development and reduce social tensions;
- improvement of the legal framework regarding the status of relocated universities, their accreditation, and financing.

The experience of relocated universities in Ukraine demonstrates the extraordinary resilience and adaptability of the education system under crisis conditions. Despite the destruction and loss of material base, higher education institutions managed to preserve their main functions – teaching, research, and fostering student youth. In the future, their development should be based on reforms in governance, financing, and integration into the European educational space. Relocated HEIs can become catalysts for the modernization of the entire education system of Ukraine, forming new models of university autonomy, partnership, and social responsibility.

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