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**Sustainable Education in Ukraine
Introducing the EU Language Policy Course
into the Ukrainian Curriculum**

**Zrównoważona edukacja na Ukrainie
Wprowadzanie unijnej polityki nauki języków
do ukraińskich programów szkolnych**

Abstract

This article describes the experience gained during the implementation of the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module “European Union Language Policy” (EULP) in Ukraine. Ukraine has chosen a course of EU integration, a decision that has significantly affected its political, cultural, and social life. Participation in Erasmus+ projects facilitates Ukraine’s rapid and effective introduction to EU sustainable education practices. The EULP project team consisted of Ukrainian and Lithuanian academicians who together developed the programme of the course, focusing on five target groups: graduate students, post-graduate students, high school teachers, researchers, and civil society representatives. The EULP’s sustainable and multidisciplinary approach combines linguistic and cultural competences necessary for Ukrainian citizens in view, joining the European Union in the future. Our observations demonstrate that

an increasing number of educational courses that combine professional training with expanding knowledge about the EU facilitate the process of reforming and integrating Ukraine into the common EU education area.

Key words: *European Union, sustainable education, Ukrainian higher education, language studies, EU integration.*

Abstrakt

Artykuł opisuje doświadczenia zdobyte podczas realizacji na Ukrainie (w ramach programu Erasmus+) programu "Jean Monnet" wpisującego się w politykę językową Unii Europejskiej (EULP).

Ukraina wybrała integrację z UE, a decyzja ta znacząco wpłynęła na życie polityczne, kulturalne i społeczne w kraju. Uczestnictwo w projektach Erasmus+ ułatwia Ukrainie szybkie i skuteczne wprowadzanie unijnych rozwiązań w zakresie zrównoważonej edukacji. Zespół projektowy EULP składał się z ukraińskich i litewskich naukowców, którzy wspólnie opracowali program kursu, skupiając się na pięciu grupach docelowych: studentach studiów magisterskich i podyplomowych, nauczycielach szkół średnich, badaczach i przedstawicielach społeczeństwa obywatelskiego.

Zrównoważone i multidyscyplinarne podejście w ramach EULP opiera się na rozwijaniu kompetencji językowych i kulturowych wśród obywateli Ukrainy w perspektywie jej wejścia do Unii Europejskiej. Z obserwacji Auterek wynika, że rosnąca liczba kursów, łączących przygotowanie zawodowe z poszerzaniem wiedzy o UE, ułatwia proces reformowania ukraińskiego szkolnictwa, a także jego integracji z europejskim systemem edukacji.

Słowa kluczowe: *Unia Europejska, zrównoważona edukacja, ukraińskie szkolnictwo wyższe, studia językowe, integracja z UE.*

In 2019, the Parliament of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, passed a law amending the Constitution of Ukraine. The amendments were to set the strategic course of the state for acquiring full membership in the EU and NATO. Now the preamble of the Constitution of Ukraine has wording on the European identity of the Ukrainian people. It also defines the irreversibility of the European and Euro-Atlantic course of Ukraine. As a result, much of modern Ukrainian political, cultural, and educational discourse is dedicated to various aspects of the European Union, European integration, European research within the scientific area, and the standards of European higher education. (Biskub & Danylchuk, 2019; Biskub & Danylchuk, 2020) Quality Education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals supported by the European Commission as part of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sustainability is a concept with multiple dimensions, environmental but also social, economic, and democratic. (*Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies...*, p. 9) Being the focus of global research for decades, the idea of integrated sustainable education began to gain attention in Ukraine through various Erasmus+ programmes only in 2014. Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (known as Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University until the change of its name in 2020) is located in the EU-Ukraine border zone, thus the demand for graduates with EU-related knowledge is high. From 2015-2020 Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (VNU) was involved in a number of educational projects that were supported by the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme: TEMPUS ATHENA (European University Association, 2015), MILETUS (Erasmus+, 2016), Jean Monnet Modules "EU Project Management" (EACEA, 2016), and "European Union Language Policy". (EACEA, 2017)

During these years, various fragments of EU-related studies were integrated into study courses at the faculties of Foreign Philology, International Relations, Psychology, and Law. A large number of graduate and post-graduate students, who chose these courses, demonstrated a growing interest and motivation to learn more about topics related to sustainable development, including cultural and linguistic diversity, gender equality, lifelong learning, and sustainable employability. We share the idea that sustainable education is much more than the transmission of sustainability-related knowledge and principles, it represents in its broadest sense "education for social transformation with the goal of creating more sustainable societies" (UNESCO, 2012, p. 12) and totally reflects the political and cultural goals of Ukraine.

The language policy of the European Union has always been at the center of many transdisciplinary studies. (Kuźelewska, 2014; Modiano, 2017) The sustainable and transdisciplinary approach that a course on EU language policy may offer will help to cover a larger number of beneficiaries and foster dialogue among various target groups responsible for Ukraine's integration into the common EU cultural, educational, and research space.

The added academic value of the European Union Language Policy course is exemplified by a growing interest in the implementation of EU related issues in the study syllabus of Ukrainian universities. The introduction of life-long learning is another important challenge which modern Ukrainian higher education has taken on. Thus, elements of the course will help to disseminate knowledge of EU language and communication policies among additional target groups responsible for European integration, state and local reformation and governing, and international cooperation. This approach

demonstrates that “learning does not only have a transformative potential at one level or within one sector of education, but across all forms (formal, non-formal and informal) and all levels (from early childhood to adulthood and into old age)”. (*Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies...*, p. 6) Transformed learning and training environments help us to integrate sustainability principles into education and training settings in Ukraine.

Introducing European Studies into advanced training courses for high school teachers from different cities of Volyn demonstrated the added academic value of such courses for the wide audience of school teachers from our region. Training for educators in adopting pedagogical approaches suited to sustainable development education, including active, participatory, deliberative, and learner centred methods helped to transform them as active agents of change. This approach can “result in empowering not only educators but learners too, so they can critically assess beliefs, values, and knowledge in order to create new knowledge together, aiming to radically transform education systems” (*Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies...*, p. 6) and aid further in the European integration of Ukraine.

Our first EULP course started in February 2018 with 110 third-year students of the VNU Applied Linguistics Department. The course was based on reshaped existing courses of Political Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, which also focused on critical thinking and language policy and language planning in Ukraine, the EU, and other English-speaking countries. Additional experiences were borrowed from or inspired by existing courses of Sociolinguistics and certain EU Studies (including history, structure, etc.) in the Faculty of International Relations.

For the best sustainability of the educational process, the course was introduced by an international team of qualified specialists in the areas of political, linguistics, language policy, and study planning. The leading professor and coordinator of the EULP Jean Monnet Project, Iryna Biskub, has a long teaching and supervising history, cooperating with our Polish partner – The University College of Applied Sciences in Chelm. Associate professor Marta Sydoruk has 10 years of experience in the management of EU projects and has a Ph.D. in International Relations. Two members of the project team represented our partner University in Lithuania – the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. Prof. Dr. Nemira Macianskiene and Prof. Dr. Violeta Kaledaite shared their unique national EU integration experiences.

The Lithuanian background is quite similar to the Ukrainian one. Both countries suffered from totalitarian communist occupation in the 20th century and were long imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain. In May 2004, Li-

thuania joined the EU and had to pass a large number of new norms and standards into their educational sector. Precise analysis, based on real-life evidence and some historical and geo-political similarities, added value to the project and our Lithuanian colleagues shared their experience with Ukrainian academicians and students during streaming of online lectures. For decades, the dominant foreign language studied at schools and universities in Lithuania was Russian. It is only in the late 1990s that English became the most popular language of education and to a certain extent became a means of Lithuanian “Westernization”. Later this process facilitated the country’s smooth integration into the cultural and educational environment of the European Union. We believe that the combination of various EU related study specialists in one project team better aided more precise illumination of the topics covered within the European Union Language Policy course. Cooperation with local and EU practitioners in the field of communications policy has provided better verification of results and possible areas of practical training for students and other beneficiaries.

For the teaching programme within the study module we suggested that main attention should be paid to developing competencies in the multidisciplinary structure of knowledge concerning the EU, its functioning, language, and communication policy, translation, and integrative development. Methodologically this was done by combining lectures on EU structures and organization with linguistically and culturally important topics such as English Studies, EU Communication Policy, and EU Multiculturalism.

“The current Anthropocene era indicates that the attitude towards the scientific development and integration phenomena and the relationship between their formation as well as changes are the basis and also the cause of gradual Anthropocene development. The detachment of science from the real processes of society and from anthropocentrism’s impact on the global system is an issue that should be addressed in the transdisciplinary perspective, in which the interest of disciplines and various human activities is associated with complex issues that need to be taken into account addressing specific issues”. (Salite et al., 2016, p. 147)

The programme of the EULP course consists of five modules, each of which provides students with necessary knowledge on:

1. EU History and Structure;
2. EU Language and Cultural Diversity;
3. Multilingualism;
4. EU Language Policy and Planning;
5. EU Communication Strategy.

The course also covers topics related to gender, race, and ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds, and refines students' multidisciplinary synergies, preparing them for their personal integration within the system of EU humanistic values and global sustainability. Developing problem-solving and equity competencies facilitates students' openness to civil society and their understanding of the crucial impact of EU communication strategies on the lifestyle of people in Ukraine. After the course, we encouraged students to participate in a questionnaire concerning the core values of the EU, the role of the English language in the EU and some other aspects covered during our lectures and seminars. For example, in 2018 65 Ukrainian students of the EULP course completed this questionnaire and demonstrated their order of priority of core European values. 39% of student-respondents consider Human Rights to be the most important EU value, Freedom and Equity being next on the list (chosen by 15% and 17% of respondents respectively). These data helped us a lot during the preparation of modules on intercultural communication and while reviewing the political correctness of the course, showing us what aspects of EU social and cultural life are shared most by Ukrainians.

In total, the developed EULP course addressed five target groups: graduate students, post-graduate students, high-school teachers, researchers, and civil society representatives. The longest course was offered to our graduate and post-graduate students. It included 15 lectures (30 academic hours) on the following topics: (1) the European Union: History and Geography; (2) Structure and Institutions of the EU; (3) Demographics of the EU; (4) Cultures and Languages of the European Union; (5) EU Language Policy: Official and Working Languages; (6) Multilingualism and Language Initiatives. EUROPA Language Portal; (7) English in the EU; (8) Regional, Minority, and Other EU Languages; (9) Languages in Education and Research; (10) Languages for Growth and Jobs; (11) Effective Cross-Cultural Communication and Political Correctness; (12) EU Communication Policy and Strategy; (13) EU Public Webpages; (14) Democracy, Dialogue, Debate; and (15) EU External Communication: Ukrainian Issues (Biskub et al., 2018). Ten academic hours were dedicated to five practical seminars that included informational visits to EU Centres, discussions, the preparation and writing of feedback essays, video filming, and tests. Collaboration with the local Informational Centre of the EU was established, students were introduced to its work and role in the implementation of EU communication strategy.

As quality education is one of the main pillars of social and cultural sustainability, each module ended with a written test which evaluated teaching results. Post-graduate students from the host institution and the re-

representatives of other partner Universities (Uzhhorod National University, The University College of Applied Sciences in Chelm (Poland) took part in the “International Scientific-Practical Conference EU-Ukraine: Communication Policy and Strategy” webinar and roundtables, demonstrating their knowledge of the European integration process and enhancing the visibility of the scientific results obtained within the EULP course.

VNU students who finished the course successfully received project accomplishment certificates. At the end of each course, participants’ feedback was gathered, analysed, and further published on the project’s web page. Foreign students were also among the graduates of the EULP courses, aiding to better dissemination of the results and supporting the internationalization of the Ukrainian higher education sphere.

High school teachers were also offered a training course in the form of monthly lectures on European Union Language Policy within the framework of specialized professional advancement courses delivered by the key staff members of the project. Separate studying modules of the course were introduced at the Volyn Regional Training Center for State Officials, facilitating the professional promotion of both groups of public administrators and civil society representatives. Our previous training experience bears testimony to the fact that the two abovementioned groups are strongly motivated to gain more knowledge on European Policy and Culture since modern teachers and state officials in Ukraine should be able to utilize various competencies related to sustainable development, the European system of values, linguistic and cultural diversity, gender equality, and other similar competencies.

Today the ‘EU-Ukraine Communication Strategy’ course has been added to the official curriculum of the VNU for third-course students of the Applied Linguistics Department. A scientific board has verified the methodological and didactic materials of the course and published them for the dissemination of materials among related faculties and specialties of the University. Separate topics of the course have been integrated into the EU related courses of other VNU departments and partner universities. This sustainable approach helps both to attract attention to EU related issues in the Ukrainian research and scientific community and prepare the norms and standards of Ukrainian higher education for further integration in the EU.

Information about the activities offered during the duration of the EULP course was widely represented on local TV, internet media, on the official websites of VNU, and the Department of Applied Linguistics’ website, stimulating knowledge of the European Union policy and culture among professionals and the general public. Online resources are open for use on the web

page of the Department, and help us gather feedback and improve the course. The page has sections for all the participants of EULP project-related activities and helped us in transition to an online form of studies during the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine.

The Conference "EU-Ukraine: Language Policy and Communication Strategy", part of the Jean Monnet Module plan, had to be held online as well. But this gave us an opportunity to invite more foreign speakers and possibly open new areas of EU language and culture studies in Ukrainian and partner universities. New challenges for EU education were discussed at the Conference, as introduced by the reports of Carlos Moreiro, professor of International Law at the University Carlos III (Madrid, Spain), entitled: "Ad Personam J. Monnet Professor of EU Law" and "Some Reflections About the EU After the COVID-19 Pandemic". (*EU After the COVID-19 Pandemics...*) Other topics discussed in this area focused on rethinking future sustainable education in Ukraine and the EU; national values and beliefs in the context of intercultural communication; and judicial communication in the European lingua-cultural area. The aspect of the interconnection of language and culture was covered by Dr. Tomasz Zygmunt, the Director of the Institute of Neophilology – The University College of Applied Sciences in Chelm, Poland. (*EULP Conference...*) Much attention was paid to EU – Ukraine communicative policy and strategy; such as the development of European Studies at the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and VNU projects funded by the European Commission and their connection to the introduction of sustainable education in Ukraine. Languages and literature were also in the focus of the Conference, being discussed in reports on the intercultural aspect of German-language literature for migrants; multicultural literature in the modern EU; teaching various accents of English in the ELT classrooms, and, of course, language in education and research.

The EULP project, as in the majority of EU Commission-funded Jean Monnet Modules, has promoted sustainable research and the teaching experience for young researchers, scholars, and practitioners in European Union issues. The course resulted in the publication of (rare in the case of Ukrainian linguistic science topics) academic research related to the EU including: (1) "European Identity: Values, Cultures, and Languages", (2) "English in the European Union: From Its Settling to Nativization", (3) "The Concept of Diversity in the EU", (4) "E-Participation in Ukraine as a New Form of Citizen – Government Communication", and (5) "E-Petitions: A New Ukrainian Experience in E-Democratic Communication". Additional dissemination of project results took the form of student' focus group research dedicated to

EU Language Policy. The group included 15 student-members and continues to work now. This includes three Master's Degree papers; "Academic English in the European Union: A Cognitive-linguistic Approach", "BREXIT in English Speaking Media Discourse of the EU and Great Britain", and "The English Language in the European Union: a Sociolinguistic Aspect", which were defended in 2018-2020.

School teachers' involvement added a large number of school students as final beneficiaries of the project and aided their better understanding of common European values and sustainable education goals. Teachers' feedback shows us the value of follow-up projects connected with the introduction of EU studies to the curriculum of Ukrainian schools.

Three roundtables were held dedicated to the topics covered in the EULP project: EU Language Diversity, EU Language Policy and Planning, and EU-Ukraine Communication Strategy. University students, postgraduates, academic staff, teachers, public administrators, civil society, and local government representatives were invited to participate in the roundtables. Our roundtables were also open to the general public, and meant to help local policy-makers, civil society activists, and academic communities build dialogue on EU values integration in Ukraine. Annual spring webinars with our partner universities are a good tradition of the VNU Applied Linguistics Department. We have included project-related issues in discussions with our colleagues, such as raising additional attention to EU related studies and sustainable development goals in Ukrainian academic and scientific society during the Webinar titled "EU Language and Culture Studies in Ukraine".

According to UNESCO, sustainable education "empowers learners to make informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning, and is an integral part of quality education". (UNESCO, 2014, p. 12). We believe that the EULP course has aided professional, academic, and practical collaboration between leading higher education establishments in the EU-Ukraine border zone and contributed much to the introduction of sustainable education in Ukraine.

The experience that students have gained within such international projects has helped them adapt and continue their education after the beginning of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine on February, 2022. Many renowned online grant courses started offering free online access to Ukrainians and this is one of the most basic and effective ways to support and motivate our students. Also, thousands of Ukrainian youths have entered universities in the countries to which they fled. We see this both as a success and a challenge

for the Ukrainian higher educational sector, as the number of internal applicants has predictably dropped this year. Various short-term and long-term exchange programs are now open for Ukrainians too. Numerous universities in the European Union have started offering a wide range of resident and non-resident scholarship programs for Ukrainian researchers. Supporting the work of Ukrainian researchers in this way and supporting previous grant experiences is extremely helpful for an applicant's success and academic confidence. (Danylchuk, 2022) It is also important to stress that courses like EULP introduce Ukrainian students and postgraduates to EU language policy and planning, providing them with the knowledge necessary for cooperation and mutual understanding. General information about EU history, structure, and demographics continues to broaden their vision of the EU and aids in a better understanding of EU sustainability goals. We believe that the outcomes will encourage students' better integration into EU academic and research communities, multicultural cooperation, and mobility.

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