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IMPLEMENTATION OF EU VALUES IN TRANSITIONAL DEMOCRACIES: EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Alina Iovcheva,

e-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3065-748X>

*Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University,
Ukraine, 54003, Mykolaiv, 68 Desantnykiv, 10*

Abstract

This article examines the features of implementing EU values in transitional democracies, with a focus on Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. It aims to explore the challenges and successes of these countries in adopting European values and democratic principles, as well as to analyse the impact of such implementation on their social and political development.

Drawing on existing literature and case studies, the article explores the historical and political experience of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova on the way to the implementation of EU values, including their transition from Soviet-style governance to democratic systems.

The analysis highlights the role of political instability, corruption, judicial reforms, and cultural factors in shaping the implementation of EU values, as well as the importance of civil society and EU engagement in promoting democratic reform. In particular, the article emphasizes the role of mentality in shaping public attitudes towards democracy and the rule of law. In particular, the article emphasizes the role of mentality in shaping public attitudes towards democracy and the rule of law. Overall, the article argues that successful implementation of EU values is crucial for the future of democracy and economic development in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. And, that a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is necessary to overcome the challenges that stand in the way.

The Russian–Ukrainian war, which began in February 2022, has become a global challenge and a threat to the entire democratic concept of Europe. Today, it is clear that the military conflict in Ukraine is a fierce confrontation between democratic and traditional values. Accordingly, Ukraine’s victory will be a fundamental determinant in strengthening and developing European values in the region. That is why, realising this, the EU and most democratic countries are trying to support Ukraine in this struggle in every possible way.

Keywords: European Union, European Values, democratic transit, post-communist transformation, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova

ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЯ ЦІННОСТЕЙ ЄС У КРАЇНАХ ПЕРЕХІДНОЇ ДЕМОКРАТІЇ: ДОСВІД УКРАЇНИ ТА РЕСПУБЛІКИ МОЛДОВА

Аліна Іовчева,

e-mail: alina.iovcheva@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3065-748X>

*Чорноморський національний університет імені Петра Могили,
Україна, 54003, Миколаїв, 68 Десантників, 10*

Анотація

У науковій статті розглядаються особливості впровадження цінностей ЄС у перехідних демократіях на прикладі України та Республіки Молдова. Стаття має на меті дослідити виклики та успіхи цих країн в контексті імплементації європейських цінностей та демократичних принципів, а також проаналізувати вплив такого впровадження на їх соціально-політичний політичний розвиток.

Спираючись на існуючу літературу та тематичні дослідження, у статті досліджується історичний та політичний досвід України та Республіки Молдова на шляху до впровадження цінностей ЄС, їх перехід від радянського стилю управління до демократичних систем.

Аналіз підкреслює роль політичної нестабільності, корупції, судових реформ і культурних факторів у формуванні впровадження цінностей ЄС, а також важливість участі громадянського суспільства та ЄС у просуванні демократичних реформ. Зокрема, у статті наголошується на ролі менталітету у формуванні суспільного ставлення до демократії та верховенства права. Зокрема, у статті наголошується на ролі менталітету у формуванні суспільного ставлення до демократії та верховенства права. Загалом стверджується, що успішне впровадження цінностей ЄС має вирішальне значення для майбутнього демократії та економічного розвитку в Україні та Республіці Молдова. А, також, що для подолання викликів, які стоять на цьому шляху, необхідний комплексний та багатогранний підхід.

Російсько-українська війна, яка почалася в лютому 2022 року, стала глобальним викликом і загрозою для всієї демократичної концепції Європи. Сьогодні зрозуміло, що військовий конфлікт в Україні – це жорстке протистояння демократичних і традиційних цінностей. Відповідно, перемога України стане фундаментальною детермінантою у зміцненні та розвитку європейських цінностей у регіоні. Тому, розуміючи це, ЄС і більшість демократичних країн намагаються всіляко підтримувати Україну в цій боротьбі.

Ключові слова: Європейський Союз, європейські цінності, демократичний транзит, посткомуністична трансформація, Україна, Республіка Молдова

Problem statement. The relevance of this research lies in the fact that the process of democratization and European integration is an on-going issue for many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, and requires constant attention and analysis. No doubt during last 30 years the current geopolitical situation due to the prolonged tensions between Russian Federation and the West, the implementation of EU values in Eastern Europe was particularly important to stabilize and to make a security of the European region. The annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine since 2014 have only deepened the confrontation between authoritarian and democratic models of European development. However, the situation has significantly escalated since February 2022.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has determined that today the effectiveness of democratic transit in the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe, in particular Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, is the main criterion for the viability of the civilizational concept of Europe in the future. Values became the ideological basis of the war in Ukraine and thus categorically determined that they are not vague concepts of the existence of society, but clear principles and priorities that regulate the foreign and domestic policies of the state, determine the development of democratic institutions, and affect the security and quality of life of society. Today, Ukraine and Moldova, as neighbouring countries with shared historical, cultural, and economic ties, provide a valuable case study for understanding the challenges and opportunities of implementing EU values in transitional democracies.

It is on the example of these two countries, which are trying to transform their forms of government and state structure towards democracy and, at the same time, are most acutely experiencing destabilizing pressure from the Russian Federation, we can:

- analyze the threats posed to democratic values by authoritarianism in the modern world;
- identify the most effective tools to protect the value paradigm of democratic Europe;
- develop the most effective model of democratic transit for the Eastern Partnership countries.

Analysis of research and publications. The issues raised in this research have been studied in various dimensions by foreign and domestic authors. However, it should be noted that the areas of scientific research were mainly related to general scientific fields, such as history, sociology, axiology, transitology, etc.

Thus, the scientific analysis of the role of values in social transformations was carried out by such authors as M. Weber (Weber, 1947), T. Parsons (Parsons, 1968), M. Rokeach (Rokeach, 1973), G. Hofstede (Hofstede, 1984), S. Irwin (Irwin, 2003) etc. The research of these authors is currently considered the basis of the axiological paradigm of transition processes.

The issues of transitology were directly addressed by G. O'Donnell (O'Donnell, 1994), J. Linz (Linz, 1998), A. Stepan (Stepan, 2000), D. Rustow (Rustow, 2008) etc. Their works examined various aspects of political transitions that began to resonate with issues of political development, the creation of an effective system of government, and positive social dynamics. However, their work was mainly based on the examples of Southern European countries.

After the collapse of the socialist camp in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the formation of newly independent states in the Eastern European region, the academic community began to actively study the processes of post-communist transformation. In particular, the analysis of the post-Soviet transit was studied by K. Dawisha (Dawisha, 1997), C. Haerpfen (Haerpfen, 2002), A. Meleshevich (Meleshevich, 2007) etc.

The big part of this researches focuses on the experiences of transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Ukraine and Republic of Moldova. Some notable scholars in this field include M. Lupu (Lupu, 2010), K. Wolczuk (Wolczuk, 2016), R. Nalbandov (Nalbandov, 2014), S. Grecu (Grecu, 2015), W. Preussen (Preussen, 2022) etc. There are also Ukrainian and Moldovan researchers who have conducted research on democratization in their respective countries. Such as G. Bădescu, P. Sum, E.M. Uslaner (Bădescu, Sum & Uslaner, 2004), O. Radchenko (Radchenko, 2009), O. Lutsevych (Lutsevych, 2013), Y. Sakhno (Sakhno, 2019), Yu. Kotlyar, M. Lyamar, V. Ahieieva-Karkashadze (Kotlyar, Lyamar & Ahieieva-Karkashadze, 2022), R. Całus, M. Kosienkowski (Całus & Kosienkowski, 2018), A. Bulvinskyi (Bulvinskyi, 2017), E. Korosteleva (Korosteleva, 2016) etc.

However, it should be fairly noted that the study of the role of values in the context of democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, in particular Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, is still neglected by researchers. This, in turn, determines the novelty of this study.

Primary purpose. The analyse aims to analyse the factors that hinder or facilitate the implementation of EU values in these countries. It explores the historical, cultural, and

socio-economic contexts that shape the process of democratization and European integration in Ukraine and Moldova. Also examines the role of various actors, including civil society, media, political elites, and external actors such as the European Union, in shaping the implementation of the West European values in these countries.

Theoretical background. Over the past 30 years, the number of states that define themselves as democratic has increased more than three times that has led to a steady trend of transition to democracy in the modern world. Currently, there are many studies that identify the types of transition from authoritarianism to democracy, national peculiarities of the transition, challenges and risks of such democratic transformations, and external and internal factors that influence the transition.

The transition to a democratic form of government in Eastern Europe began only in the second half of the 1980s after the weakening and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. The “third wave” of democratization that swept through the countries of Central and Eastern Europe marked the beginning of a new stage of development in the region and was called “post-communist transformation” (Huntington, 1991). The main goal of the transition processes that took place in these countries was the gradual transformation of the totalitarian-authoritarian system of government with all its institutions, structures, and social relations into a democratic management system. Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova were no exception. After gaining their independence, both countries prioritized the complete transformation of their socio-political systems towards democracy. However, the concept of post-communist transformation had many peculiarities that made the classical model of democratic transitions not always effective. Studying the democratic transitions in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in the context of historical retrospective, we can determine that these features were as follows:

- communist nomenclature that became part of the structure of governing bodies of independent newly formed states;
- the historical experience of regulating all socio-political processes as part of large state formations (the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union);
- the ideological gap between the political elite and society, which has repeatedly led to mass protests and revolutions throughout the history of Ukraine’s and the Republic of Moldova’s independence;
- the population’s loyalty to corruption and the patronage-client system of state governance;
- fragmentation and inconsistency of reforms;
- preference for a strong institution of presidential power, instead of prioritizing parliament;
- prevalence of gender stereotypes in society;
- a judicial system dependent on the institutions of power;
- weak anti-communist opposition, etc.

As you can see, the vast majority of the identified positions relate to the behavioural and cognitive features of the perception of society. Therefore, in this context, it will be relevant to talk about the value paradigm, which plays a key role in shaping the behavioural strategy of both an individual and society as a whole. A large number of socio-psychological studies confirm the idea that values are at the deepest level among the decision-making levers, since they determine the ideological beliefs of individuals and the motivation of their actions (Hofstede, 1984). According to the famous American sociologist T. Parsons, people turn to values to finally justify their actions (Parsons, 1968). However, it is fair to say that despite the large number of studies in the field of value and behavioural characteristics, the consideration of values in contemporary political thought as a fundamental factor determining the effectiveness or, conversely, ineffectiveness of democratic transitions is insufficient. At the same time, values in the context of political system transformation determine the outcome of the creation or reform of political institutions, shape the content, logic and specifics of their functioning. Therefore, a

qualitative democratic transition is impossible if only formal institutions of political power are built, while the value component is completely ignored. After all, any effective democracy is based on democratic European values, which are institutionalized in the norms of law through laws. And the first step and fundamental basis for the democratization of the state should be a targeted state policy aimed at implementing democratic values in the public consciousness and creating a critical mass of citizens with their own democratic value system in the process of socialization and resocialization.

However, according to Ukrainian researcher O. Radchenko, the transformation of the value paradigm from authoritarian to democratic is not linear. The author proposes to consider the process of value transit as a spiral, in which traditional values are the basis, and the emergence of democratic values is associated with the challenges of the surrounding circumstances. This, in turn, leads to the circulation of values in favour of new ones, which gradually take the place of traditional ones in the basis of state-building processes (Radchenko, 2009).

Therefore, looking in more detail at the value component of democratic transitions in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, we can note that the political regime that began to take shape in these countries after independence resembled a formal democracy with attributes of conservatism. This type of political governance was characterized by:

- the dominant role of the state as the initiator and implementer of democratic reforms;
- mostly formal democratic institutions, which in practice broadcasted an authoritarian approach to public administration;
- loss of value regulators: old social values were no longer relevant, and new (democratic) ones were not yet enshrined in the public consciousness (Radchenko, 2009).

In addition, from the very beginning of Ukraine's and the Republic of Moldova's independence, they, according to experts, were caught in the background disagreements over the region's geopolitical vectors. The first vector determines the foreign policy ambitions of Russia, which, as the main carrier of the traditional value paradigm, has been actively confronting the paradigm of open democracy in Western Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The second vector is the direction of the democratic EU and NATO countries that possess significant strategic potential and are also interested in expanding their influence and interests. Moldova, Ukraine, and a number of other post-Soviet states are located on the border of these two value systems, which has long influenced the two-vector nature of their foreign policy.

The European Union, which was finally institutionalized in 1992 (Maastricht Treaty), was practically not involved in the political transformations of the newly independent states for the first decade of its existence. Instead, it was concerned with establishing effective cooperation between member states, developing economic cooperation, and stabilizing the internal organizational infrastructure of the Association. It was only in the early 2000s that a number of strategies, initiatives and programs began to function for supporting institutional, legal and administrative reforms in the countries of the former Soviet Union (except for the Baltic states), with the aim of further strengthening human rights, enhancing the role of civil society and promoting democratic values. As a response to the EU's impetus to establish cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine and Moldova have finally declared the priority of a pro-European foreign policy, which could logically lead to a change in the architecture of power in the region. The change in priorities was also reflected in the value orientations of the population. For example, since the early 2000s, support for the national democratic ideology has been growing among Ukrainian citizens. At the same time, the desire of Ukraine and Moldova for functional ties with the EU, and as a result, the expansion of the EU's legal borders in the future, has damaged the geopolitical borders that Russia has built in the post-Soviet space. According to Russia's foreign policy vision, the political boundary of its influence had to coincide with the legal borders demarcated and legalized in security and economic agreements between post-Soviet countries after 1991. Therefore, the prospect of Ukraine and Moldova's economic integration with the EU was perceived as a

violation of these borders and, therefore, a violation of Russia's legitimate geopolitical interests (Wolczuk, 2016).

The struggle for spheres of influence in the region has led to aggressive encroachments by Russia on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Thus, in March 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula. In April of the same year, a military conflict on eastern Ukraine was started. In 2016, the process of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic's accession to the Russian Federation began. On February 24, 2022, a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began, which caused a crisis in the security concept of the entire European region. All of these cases have brought to the forefront of Ukrainian society the process of rethinking the freedom values, independence, security and the state. Thus, opinion polls have shown that Ukraine has accelerated the formation of national self-identification and the creation of a Ukrainian political nation. Compared to 2011, the percentage of people who are ready to defend their country has increased significantly on 56.9% (Svitove doslidzhennia tsinnosti v Ukraini, 2020: 113).

In 2020, a fifth of respondents saw the main goal of the state and society as ensuring the country's reliable defence capability. This was up from 2.9% in 2011. In the dichotomous pair of "freedom–equality", Ukrainians chose freedom (63.7% vs. 23.6%), and in the pair of "freedom–security" – 65.9% in favour of security (Svitove doslidzhennia tsinnosti v Ukraini, 2020: 116). Already in 2020, 82.2% identified themselves as Ukrainians by nationality and were proud of it (Svitove doslidzhennia tsinnosti v Ukraini, 2020: 39).

In April 2022, this percentage rose to 92% (Ideological markers of the war, 2022). A 2013 poll showed that 38% supported EU integration. By 2014, this figure had risen to 50-60% and changed little in subsequent years. In the first days of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the figure increased from 68% to 86%, and then continued to grow, reaching 91% in early April (European Pravda, 2022).

In the Republic of Moldova, the situation was a little bit different. There was a certain duality in public perception of the country's foreign policy vector. This was due to two factors:

1. Creation of the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) in January 2010, which was seen as a tangible alternative to the EU. The idea of rapprochement with the then Eurasian Customs Union (from January 1, 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union – EEU) was actively promoted by pro-Russian political forces in Moldova. The EEU was presented as an association similar to the EU, based on the European integration model, but at the same time – more modern and resilient to economic crises, and more adapted to Moldova in terms of religion and culture. The propaganda actively exploited the sentiments about the Soviet past that were still present among a large number of Moldovan citizens. Narratives about the ECU (EEU) focused on the prospect of mediocre economic benefits.

2. Negative stereotypes about the EU, which were disseminated as part of the campaign to promote the ECU (EEU) in Moldova by the Russian media. Pro-Russian political parties also actively spread negative myths about the EU. The low level of awareness among Moldovans about the EU was a perfect breeding ground for propaganda imposed by pro-Russian forces (Całus & Kosienkowski, 2018).

However, despite this, positive dynamics were observed in the value perception of Moldovan society. Thus, in March 2015, public support for European integration in the Republic of Moldova was 40%. In March 2022, this percentage was 61%. Public opinion has also changed regarding who is Moldova's main foreign policy partner. In March 2015, 58% of respondents identified Russia as the primary partner. In 2021, 74% of Moldovans already identified the European Union as their main economic and political foreign policy partner. However, despite the different attitudes of Moldovan society towards the country's foreign policy vector, the value concept has always been clearly perceived positively by the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, 75% of respondents in 2017 identified human dignity as the highest priority of state policy and the functioning of society.

Today, after more than a year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the attitude towards European values in Ukrainian society can be clearly observed (Fig. 1).

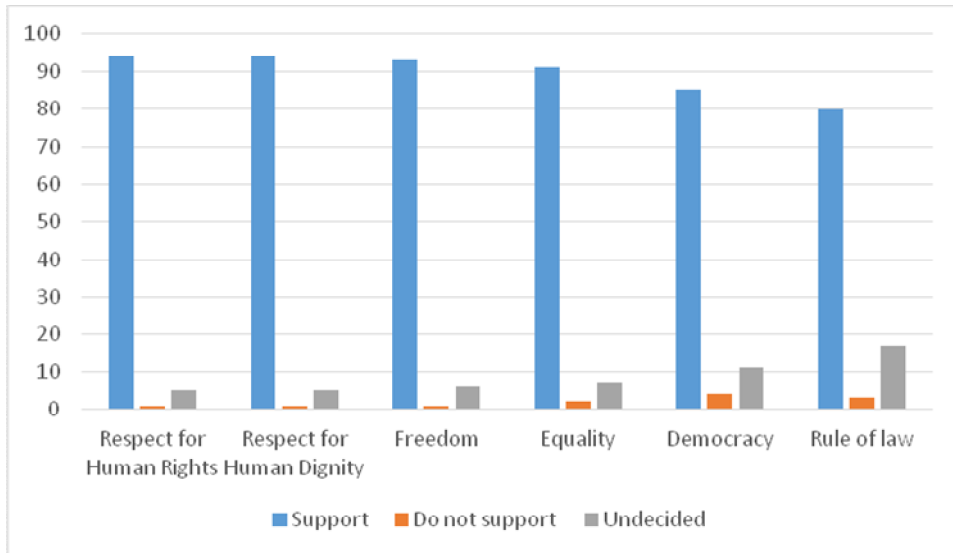


Fig. 1. Attitudes of Ukrainian citizens towards the EU's core values (September 2022) (Gradus, 2022)

Positive dynamics of perception are observed even in issues related to gender equality and the rights of LGBT minorities, which were quite stereotyped and unpopular in Ukrainian society. Surveys conducted in 2016 and 2022 show that in 6 years, the number of people who have a negative attitude towards LGBT people in Ukraine has decreased by half (from 60.4% in 2016 to 38.2% in 2022) (Osadcha, 2022). This, in turn, is evidence of the transformation of Ukrainian society towards equality and openness.

Similar trends in supporting democracy and strengthening cooperation with the EU since the beginning of the Russian–Ukrainian war have been observed in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, in January 2023, the Summit for Democracy and Moldova Commitments, which published the results of a sociological survey of Moldovan society on the vision of the state policy priorities to strengthen democracy in the country, was held (Fig. 2).

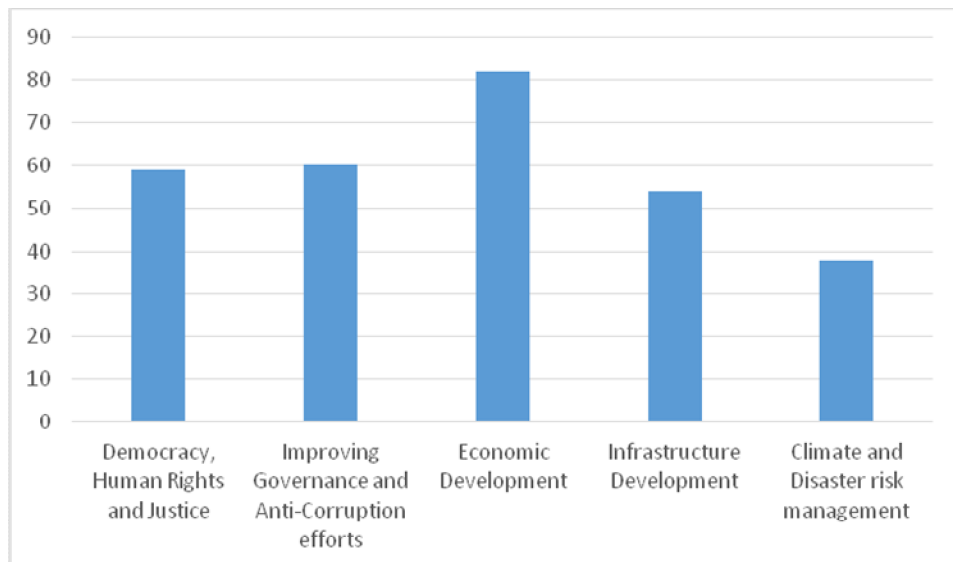


Fig. 2. Rank of the areas that should be priorities for the Moldovan government in terms of strengthening democracy (January 2023) (IDEA, 2023)

As we can see, the graphs of the latest social studies in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova show that Russian military aggression has made the issue of strengthening the democratic value paradigm more relevant than ever. In support of this thesis, the Swedish researcher, K. Casas-Zamora, states that Russia's military aggression has drawn "attention to the importance of preserving democracy" and the world society understands "that the lack of democracy is a problem for global peace". That is why, in the context of Russia's attack, all democratic countries have united to defend their values. Nevertheless, the economic outlook for the future is less positive, the researcher notes. He concludes that the economic crisis caused by the war in Ukraine will put pressure on democracies, which will become a new challenge for the entire democratic world (Preussen, 2022). This view is confirmed by Ukrainian researchers Y. Kotlyar and M. Lyamar, who argue that Europeans are now facing a choice of what to protect at first: their values or their economies. And today, the EU is firmly on the defensive of their democratic values, including the freedom and independence of their own countries (Kotlyar et al., 2022).

Another fundamental aspect of the implementation of democratic values in the socio-political sphere of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova is to understand the role and functions of socialization actors in the formation and implementation of democratic values EU in these countries. In the context of the research topic, it is proposed to consider the role of such actors as political elites, civil society, media, and foreign policy partners (in the context of this research – the European Union):

1. Political elites play a largely executive-institutional function in the process of disseminating EU values. They are responsible for shaping the legislative and law enforcement systems, they are also obliged to support freedom of speech, media independence and equality before the law, they have influence on economic and social reforms, and they can format public opinion and culture. For a long time after Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova gained independence, the political elites of both countries were more of an obstacle to the implementation of the democratic value paradigm in these states than a support.

The post-communist pro-Russian political elite has largely contributed to the strengthening of conservatism and traditionalism in Ukrainian and Moldovan societies. The high level of corruption and the patronage-client system of state governance determined the nominal nature of socio-political reforms and the functioning of democratic institutions. Over time, the circulation of political elites led to the renewal of state power executives. However, the priority for Moldovan and Ukrainian politicians was primarily to retain power that prompted them to use pro-European rhetoric and implement some EU reforms for electoral purposes. Today, after more than 30 years of independence, the official position of Ukrainian and Moldovan politicians finally clearly declares the pro-European vector of development of both countries. The EU's value paradigm is the basis for building a domestic policy strategy. Virtually all legislative initiatives and socio-political reforms are implemented in line with Western European values and principles.

2. Civil society is considered an extremely important component of any democratic regime. It is the most effective tool for consolidating society around a certain idea, broadcasting the interests and demands of the population to the government, improving the quality of civic culture, holding public discussions and debates, etc. Firstly, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists can defend human rights and freedom of speech, monitor elections and ensure that democratic values are upheld in society, promote European values and a culture of dialogue, tolerance and understanding of ethnic and religious differences, encourage the authorities to implement democratic reforms, etc.

It should be noted that in authoritarian and totalitarian systems, such as the Soviet Union, the phenomenon of civil society is either deformed in content or absent at all. Therefore, building an effective civil society sector in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova began only after these countries gained independence. In turn, civil society was entrusted with the mission of scaling up democratic, EU values to the masses. Almost all European

programmes for building and strengthening democracy were aimed at supporting the activities of the public sector. At the same time, the growing number of NGOs was unable to reach a large segment of society, resulting in low rates of citizen engagement – 5% and 4% in Ukraine and Moldova, respectively. As of 2021, only 21% of Ukrainians and 22% of Moldovans felt trust in NGOs in their countries (Bădescu, Sum & Uslander, 2004).

This number is critically low and makes it clear that Ukrainian and Moldovan civil societies are still in the process of being formed. However, despite this conclusion, it is Ukrainian and Moldovan people have become the main source of pro-European sentiment in both countries, linking European integration can improve their socio-economic future.

3. The media is the most important actor in disseminating democratic values in society. Throughout the independent history of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, there have been periods of increased censorship and suppression of freedom of speech. This trend was observed even during the first decade of the 2000s. However, despite this, the media actively disseminated independent information, including through social media. Today, there are quite successful cases of media activity in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova that contribute to the strengthening of human rights protection, freedom and the dynamics of democratic transformation. For example, it can be mentioned the AGORA media platform, which actively covers human rights, public procurement transparency and anti-corruption measures in the Republic of Moldova, or the Hromadske.ua media project, which is an independent online publication that promotes democratic and European values in Ukraine.

4. The European Union plays the role of the main initiator and donor in the process of spreading democratic values in transitional democracies, in particular in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. As mentioned earlier, in the first decade of its existence, the EU was not particularly active in intervening in the process of socio-political transformations in post-Soviet countries. However, in the early 2000s, the Union intensified the vector of Eastern European cooperation and launched a number of policies, programmes and initiatives aimed at accelerating and making more effective the political transition in the post-socialist countries, and supporting the internal stability of young democratic regimes.

Examples include the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership policy, technical assistance programmes such as TACIS, MEDA, INOGATE, etc. On the one hand, the EU did provide financial support for democratic development and reforms in Ukraine and Moldova. However, on the other hand, it was trying to avoid a political confrontation with Russia, which openly opposed the integration of both countries into the EU. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, intensified the EU's efforts to support democracy in the Eastern European region. Today, the EU uses various tools to spread its values in Ukraine and Moldova.

They include, first of all, military support for Ukraine, which today is the flagship of the struggle for freedom and democracy; financial support for various projects that promote European values, including democracy, human rights, civil society development, transparency and the fight against corruption; implementation of experience and knowledge exchange programmes between Ukraine, Moldova and EU countries through educational exchange programmes (Erasmus+ Ka1); concluding cooperation agreements and treaties that oblige the adoption of European standards in the socio-political sphere; supporting independent media in Ukraine and Moldova and developing European culture in in both countries, in particular through support for art projects and events, etc.

Conclusions. Thus, the study proves that the effectiveness of any democratic transit is directly related to the spread and consolidation of relevant (democratic) values and mass political orientations in society. That is why the implementation of the EU value paradigm, which in the modern world is a measure of democracy, is a top priority for transition countries, including Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. The Russian–Ukrainian war, which began in February 2022, has become a global challenge and a threat to the entire democratic concept of Europe. Today, it is clear that the military conflict in Ukraine is a fierce confrontation between democratic and traditional values. Accordingly,

Ukraine's victory will be a fundamental determinant in strengthening and developing European values in the region. That is why, realising this, the EU and most democratic countries are trying to support Ukraine in this struggle in every possible way.

At the same time, the key recommendations for the implementation of EU values in Ukraine and in the Republic of Moldova are the following:

- continuation of reforms and improvement of legislation that promotes democracy, human rights, minority protection and the fight against corruption;
- developing and supporting dialogue between European and national political elites on the understanding and implementation of European values in the political and legal systems of the countries;
- actualization of the role of civil society in promoting the implementation of EU values, ensuring more active participation of various NGOs in the reform process and its further monitoring;
- improvement of the dialogue between the public and political elites, active involvement of NGOs in the decision-making process;
- strengthening media freedom and independence to ensure broad access to information and developing of critical thinking in society.

The implementation of these and other provisions will ensure the quality implementation of European values in Ukraine and Moldova and contribute to the development of strong, democratic and rule-of-law states in the Eastern European region.

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