

RESEARCH ARTICLE



The Case of REDU Project: Aligning Results with Displaced Universities' Needs and the Future of Ukraine

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Abstract

This article intends to look into the practice of implementation of the EU project «Reinventing displaced universities: enhancing competitiveness, serving communities» (hereinafter referred to as REDU project) targeting displaced universities from Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as other EU projects, with the purpose to promote the project; draw lessons from project implementation under multiple crises; hypothesize on the future of this and other educational projects during wartime and post-war period in Ukraine; provide recommendations and facilitate national and international discourse on reviewing existing approaches to design and implementation of international projects in the field of higher education. The article provides background information on REDU project and its beneficiaries — displaced universities; outlines changes that took place in internal and external contexts during project lifecycle and amendments that followed; summarises lessons learned from two and a half years of implementation of the REDU project; and develops recommendations on the revision of methodology and approaches to educational project design and implementation. The article argues that international educational projects are and will continue to be powerful tools for higher education modernization, as well as drivers of social transformations. To be effective and resilient during the war, as well as during Ukraine's post-war recovery and reconstruction, the projects are to become more flexible, allowing for more autonomy in the decision-making by the project team and more diversity with regard to project activities and services, outputs and outcomes, beneficiaries and target groups. While reinstating the need to modify international projects' design, rules and procedures, the authors argue that Ukrainian HEIs and academic communities themselves should be ready to change and adapt to new circumstances, respect flexibility, practice diversity. Besides, to be able to contribute to national recovery, Ukrainian HEIs should collaborate with a broad circle of partners, review and upgrade their social mission, in collaboration with other HEIs and non-academic partners apply accumulated or generated knowledge, expertise and research capacity for the benefit of their own institution, partners and consortia, communities and nation.

Introduction

Ukrainian higher education institutions (hereinafter referred as HEIs), higher education sector at large, Ukrainian society as a whole are facing numerous challenges caused by Russian Federation aggression, occupation and devastation of Ukrainian cities and territories, damages and destruction of critical, educational and other social infrastructure.

Among numerous hardships and problems, faced by Ukrainian universities, other HEIs, relocation of institutions, displacement of staff and students seem most significant because it affects university «hardware» and «software» simultaneously: undermines institutional capacity; deprives of space for teaching and learning, communication with students and colleagues, professional development, community engagement; ruins professional and social relationships, impacts mental health.

Keywords:

displaced universities, international educational projects, flexibility, diversity, resilience, university social mission, post-war recovery

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In dealing with multiple crises in higher education, different stakeholders — national and international, academic and non-academic — will have to act jointly and take measures that simultaneously will be changing HEIs, society and its citizens (Feuer et. al., 2013; Milton, Barakat, 2015). World Bank (2022), World Economic Forum (2022), other international organizations promote «a holistic resilience agenda» (World Economic Forum, 2022a) for contemporary VUCA world (n.d.).

The «holistic resilience agenda» will be suitable for Europe and the EU, as Europe today, following the words of Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is «a world of radical uncertainty» (European Union, 2022), and needs to prioritise «flexibility and resilience» (ibid.).

The main characteristics of uncertain VUCA world are turbulence and unpredictability. Living in it demands change, adaptation and modernization in all spheres of social life (Colenso, 2005), which is achieved via education and social interaction. As limited social interaction leads to the lack of shared values, which in turn leads to social disharmony and civil unrest (a theory of «parallel lives») (Flint, Robinson, 2008), it is the task of education systems to facilitate social activities and engagement within and beyond educational institutions, especially universities (Dzimińska et al., 2018; Kantzara, 2016; Mozgin, 2019). Therefore, universities are envisaged as social agents, growth points, triggers of social change (Dworkin, 2019; Nesterova, 2020) that take a proactive position in preparing different social actors for unpredictable and fast-changing world.

International educational projects are a powerful tool enabling transformation of Ukraine's higher education sector and impacting society at large, which was proved by many years of international technical assistance projects. For instance, a chain of Jean Monnet projects under EU Erasmus+ Programme: Jean Monnet Module «Social Cohesion in Education and Governance: European Studies» (SCEGES); Jean Monnet Project «EU Values of Diversity and Inclusion for Sustainable Development» (EVDISD); Jean Monnet Chair «Social and Cultural Aspects of EU Studies» (SCAES) is being implemented in Ukraine's higher education, focusing on social cohesion and sustainable development, promoting social innovations and disseminating best EU practices.

Today, international educational projects are to become a tool assisting Ukrainian universities to fulfil their social mission: «to take a quantum leap to reinvent higher education as a basis for building a safe, more just, democratic and sustainable world» (UNESCO, 2022:3), as well as ensure HEIs' survival and recovery in the midst of frustration, hardships and challenges amassing as a result of Russian — Ukrainian war.

This article intends to look into the practice of implementation of the EU project «Reinventing displaced universities: enhancing competitiveness, serving communities» (2020) (hereinafter referred to as REDU project) targeting three displaced universities from Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as other EU projects mentioned above. The REDU project was initially conceived as a tool for rethinking and reinventing beneficiary universities and transforming them into centres driving social, intellectual, economic and cultural development of local communities where they had been relocated. While outlining the project lifecycle, from its inception, amendment under the influence of COVID-19 pandemic, suspension after the occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and another amendment after the resumption, the article simultaneously attempts to draw lessons for the future of this and other projects being implemented by Ukrainian HEIs during wartime and post-war period with **the purpose to raise awareness of the fact that conventional projects need to adjust to the changing environment together with the rest of the current VUCA world.**

Accordingly, the following **objectives** are to be achieved:

- to promote the project «Reinventing displaced universities: enhancing competitiveness, serving communities» as a tool for rethinking and reinventing displaced universities from Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine;

- to outline amendments that have taken place so far and hypothesize on the future of this and other educational projects during wartime and post-war period in Ukraine;
- to provide recommendations and facilitate national and international discourse on reviewing existing approaches to design and implementation of international projects in the field of higher education.

The article falls into three sections:

- Section 1 provides background information on REDU project and its beneficiaries — displaced universities, outline changes that took place in internal and external contexts during project lifecycle and amendments that followed.
- Section 2 captures lessons learned from two and a half years of implementation of the REDU project and hypothesizes on its future, as well as the future of other educational projects implemented by Ukrainian universities in the changing environment during wartime and post-war recovery.
- Section 3 summarizes recommendations to REDU project beneficiaries, the Ukrainian higher education community and international funders on the revision of methodology / approaches to educational project design and implementation.

Findings

1. The tale of REDU project

With the beginning of the first phase of Russian Federation aggression in 2014, 18 higher education institutions were relocated from Donetsk and Luhansk regions and obtained the status of displaced universities. With the current span of aggression in February 2022, another 25 Ukrainian HEIs have been relocated (Вокс Україна, 2022). It may happen that this number is not final: while the occupation continues more territories can be lost to the enemy, triggering further HEIs' relocations.

HEIs relocated in 2014 left behind premises, educational infrastructure (laboratories, libraries), staff, and students as not all university teachers and students were ready to flee (some displaced HEIs still have illicit clones operating under the same name on the territories occupied by RF in 2014¹).

It took displaced universities a while and significant financial and expert support from the international community to re-establish themselves and become operational. It was obvious that capacity undermined by hostilities and displacement could not be restored fully and that competitiveness of each displaced university was reduced compared to the pre-war period.

In 2018, the European Commission launched the Programme «EU Support to Displaced Higher Education Institutions in the East of Ukraine» (European Commission, 2018) and announced the Call for projects targeting displaced universities (hereinafter referred to as DUs). The consortium of five partners, including the Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences, British Council Ukraine, and three displaced universities: Donetsk State University of Management, Luhansk National Agrarian University, Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University, has won the grant for implementing the project «Reinventing displaced universities: enhancing competitiveness, serving communities». The project relied considerably on international (UK) expertise and the involvement of trainers and experts from a renowned training agency Advance HE.

The Call for the programme «EU Support to Displaced Higher Education Institutions in the East of Ukraine» was announced in December 2018, potential beneficiaries were to submit Concept Notes by 29.01.2019; successful participants were informed of pre-selection results in March 2019 and were invited to submit full applications by 15.05.2019. Final results of the Call were never announced formally; the expert was hired by the EU Delegation to Ukraine (the

¹For example:

- Донецький національний технічний університет (<http://donntu.ru>);
- Луганський державний педагогічний університет (<http://lgpu.org>).

contracting authority in this Programme) to assist project teams with finalization of their applications and all pre-selected projects were awarded grants in the last quarter of 2019 — first quarter of 2020.

REDU project has signed Grant Contract with the European Commission in April 2020, 15 months after the announcement of the Call.

The project has set the goal to raise the attractiveness and competitiveness of three partner DUs, raising their profiles among local communities and nationwide. This goal is to be achieved via three specific objectives:

1. to upgrade partner DUs' infrastructure for high-quality student services and dynamic community engagement;
2. to enhance their institutional capability, good governance, T&L excellence, and internationalization enabling university leadership, staff, and students to better respond to challenges faced by DUs, local communities, Donetsk and Luhansk regions;
3. to boost social responsibility of partner DUs by involving academic community into solving social, economic, environmental, cultural, or other issues.

Project activities encompass:

- institutional audit of DUs, including self-evaluation and sight visits;
- visit to UK HEIs for the best practices and knowledge exchange;
- creating co-working areas at each DU;
- delivery of trainings focusing on university governance & autonomy, T&L excellence and quality assurance, internationalization, English language competence development, student self-government, community engagement;
- upgrading institutional development strategies, design of institutional development strategies' implementation plans and monitoring matrixes;
- upgrading curricula and piloting of new/upgraded courses;
- knowledge sharing and multiplication of acquired skills via student-to-student, academic staff-to-academic staff, administrative staff-to-administrative staff cooperation within and among DUs;
- enhancing university-community engagement, delivery of services for communities;
- international conference on community engagement and dissemination of best practices on students and academic staff participation in university governance, T&L excellence, internationalization.

The project was to run for three years and result in:

- enhanced institutional capacity and competitiveness of three partner DUs;
- higher quality of education and student services;
- intense knowledge sharing within each DU community, and inter-university cooperation among partner DUs, among them and other DUs, as well as within higher education sector at large;
- sustainable and mutually beneficial engagement with local communities.

Since the inception of the Programme in 2018, when the rules for REDU project were set, the internal and external context for project implementation have changed significantly and several times. The above have affected project content and lifecycle.

The launch of the project coincided with COVID 19 pandemic; many project activities were interrupted or postponed by the quarantine that was several times announced by the Government of Ukraine. During the pandemic, REDU project mainly focused on construction and refurbishing of co-working areas at each partner DUs, which was the «infrastructure» element of the project. In March — April of 2021, the intense training sessions were delivered by the Institute of Higher Education staff on the topics of quality assurance, excellence in teaching and learning, internationalization, good governance and building research capacity. In summer and autumn of 2021, workshops to boost students' activism and trainings in English teachers' competence development were successfully delivered by British Council — Ukraine.

The first project report was submitted in July 2021, following the General conditions applicable to European Union-financed grant contracts for external actions (European Union,

2018) and revealed significant delay in numerous project activities due to the pandemic and quarantines. REDU consortium took the decision to solicit project extension. Amendment of the project and preparation of addendum, its concordance with project manager at the EU Delegation is a lengthy procedure. The addendum was completed in December / January and sent for approval to the EU Delegation to Ukraine but was never formally approved.

The active phase of Russian aggression in February 2022 has affected REDU project for the second time. Cities where partner DUs were located are either under Russian occupation, like Mariupol, Severodonetsk, Starobilsk, or very close to active hostilities zone, like Sloviansk or Kostiantynivka that are constantly under enemy fire. DUs' facilities, including co-working areas constructed and refurbished with financial support of REDU project, are damaged or ruined to the ground.

In March 2022, the project was postponed for three months and resumed on consent of all partners in July 2022. Considering the circumstances: the second relocation of displaced partner universities, damage or destruction of constructed and refurbished co-working areas, loss of contact with local communities, new amendment of the project and addendum were needed. Some project activities were cancelled (for instance, the study visit to UK universities); new components were added to match the current situation: Digital University was introduced to enable teaching and learning, university governance and communication between staff and students scattered all over Ukraine and abroad. Amended project logical framework matrix is presented in [Table 1](#).

The preparation of the second addendum started in July 2022, several rounds of consultations with the EU Delegation to Ukraine followed; in November, the second addendum has not yet been formally approved and signed.

Alongside with changes in external context, considerable changes affected the consortium. Donetsk State University of Management experienced a takeover and was merged with Mariupol State University that was not a displaced university at the moment. The merger brought together Mariupol State University that was fully integrated with and «owned» by the local community, had support of local government and politicians, and Donetsk State University of Management — a displaced university with robust leadership and high level of internationalization, growing competitiveness and dynamic development. Lack of transparency in the decision on merger and differences in institutional cultures instigated some Donetsk State University of Management staff to retire and seek employment at other institutions.

Two other REDU partners: Luhansk National Agrarian University and Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University were merged by the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Though both displaced, these two institutions have had different profiles and relocation experiences: Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University — a classic research university moved to the city of Severodonetsk in 2014 and was steadily building capacity, upgrading its profile, attracting international partners and engaging with the local community. Luhansk National Agrarian University was initially relocated to the city of Kharkiv and in 2018 returned to the East of Ukraine, when part of its staff was already lost to numerous higher education institutions of this large scientific and industrial metropolis of Ukraine. Luhansk National Agrarian University obtained the status of a network agrarian higher education institution for Donetsk and Luhansk regions; it was scattered in 5 different locations (Starobilsk, Sloviansk, Kostiantynivka, Illinivka, Vesele) and used information management system FossDoc for university operation, governance, and communication.

The decision on merger was an unpleasant surprise for both partner universities that amalgamated under the aegis of Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University while Luhansk National Agrarian University stopped to exist, some of its leadership and staff retired.

Currently, with the Russian-Ukrainian war going on and Donetsk and Luhansk regions under occupation, it is impossible to forecast new changes in internal and external contexts and whether the REDU project will need another amendment. Yet, it is possible to draw lessons from the implementation of the REDU project under conditions of radical uncertainty, and facilitate expert and public discourse on the need to review current and future educational

Table 1. REDU project logical framework and activity matrix

	Results chain	Indicator	Source and mean of verification	Assumptions
Impact (Overall objective)	To raise attractiveness and competitiveness of co-applicant DUs by enhancing their institutional capability, good governance, T&L excellence and internationalization	Sustain the number of students at co-applicant DUs Sustain number of applicants for co-applicant DUs' enrolment Increase in the types of community engagement initiatives per HEI (community engagement projects, student projects, learning services, other services, open events, public hearings etc.	United State E-Database on Education Co-applicant DUs' Admission Commissions' Reports Co-applicant DUs' web-sites and social media Project reports	Not applicable
Outcomes (Specific objectives)	<p>1. To enhance co-applicant DUs' infrastructure for quality student services and dynamic community engagement</p> <p>2. To build capacity of co-applicant DUs enabling their leadership, staff and students to better respond to challenges faced by DUs, local communities, Donetsk and Luhansk regions</p> <p>3. To boost social responsibility of co-applicant DUs by involving academic community into solving social, economic, environmental, cultural or other issues</p>	<p>1.1. Digital University is operational and provide services for different groups of co-applicant DUs</p> <p>2.1 % of positive assessment of institutional development strategies' implementation by co-applicant DUs' external and internal stakeholders</p> <p>2.2. # of student projects, research projects that respond to challenges faced by co-applicant DUs</p> <p>2.3. Upgraded curricula require student participation in community engagement (research, or service learning, or community project)</p> <p>3.1 Increase in the number of staff and students who participate in community engagement projects</p> <p>3.2. Increase in the number of partnership agreements with representatives of communities that improve social, cultural, economic, environmental situation</p> <p>3.3. Number of ongoing sustainable community engagement projects by co-applicant DUs</p>	<p>Statistics and e-data</p> <p>Project documentation Feedback (evaluation) forms Modernized syllabi</p> <p>Project documentation DUs' documentation Lists of participants DUs' websites Photos Local media, social media, regional, national media</p>	<p>Community partners are interested in cooperation with DUs, growth of their business, civic activism, and community development</p> <p>International state-of-the-art expertise will facilitate and boost university-community cooperation</p> <p>University-community cooperation will advance beyond traditional collaboration (e.g. internships). Instead, other, mutually beneficial forms of cooperation, like responsible research and innovation, community-based learning etc. will be explored</p>

Results chain	Indicator	Source and mean of verification	Assumptions
Outputs			
1. Improved infrastructure of the co-applicant DUs allowing for innovative and partnership-based administration and teaching practices	1.1. Access to modernized facility for independent study and research 1.2. Increase in the number of workstations for students and staff 1.3. Increase in the number of non-academic services for students	Project and universities' documentation	Co-applicant DUs have sufficient staff to implement project activities DUs' staff and students are actively involved in the university development
2. Enhanced competence of co-applicant DUs' staff and students enabling them to provide good governance, contribute to T&L excellence and internationalization of HE	2.1. Increase in the number of staff and students who have enhanced their competences within project activities 2.2. Increase in the level of knowledge before and after training	List of participants Project documentation Evaluation forms Self-evaluation questionnaire	Co-applicant DUs have already established working relations with authorities, civil society, employers and entrepreneurs
3. New Co-applicant DUs' institutional development strategies launched and available for internal and external stakeholders	3.1. # of institutional development strategies discussed with co-applicant DUs' internal and external stakeholders, approved and launched 3.2. Number of external stakeholders involved in co-applicant DUs' institutional development strategies discussion 3.3. Number of staff and students aware of the new co-applicant DUs' institutional development strategies	DUs' documentation DUs' web-sites Minutes of meetings List of stakeholders Project documentation Attendance register	
4. Enhanced quality of education in co-applicant DUs due to modernized syllabi capable to meet the current challenges of local communities, enforcement of T&L excellence, good governance and internationalization	4.1. # of syllabi upgraded in line with current challenges of local communities 4.2. # of students who take upgraded courses during the project implementation 4.3. Level of student satisfaction on completion of upgraded course	DUs' documentation Project documentation List of participants Modernized syllabi Students' feedback	
5. Active role and stronger impact of co-applicant DUs' students and staff on implementation of institutional development strategies, university good governance, T&L excellence, internationalization ensured	5.1. Level of milestones achievement of institutional development strategies approved by DUs 5.2. Increase in student participation in student self-government projects 5.3. Increase in international mobility of students and staff	DUs' institutional development strategies Monitoring of KPIs Project documentation DUs' documentation DUs' web-sites Social media	

Results chain	Indicator	Source and mean of verification	Assumptions
6. Contribution to social and economic recovery due to project resources and outputs and extending services to different groups of stakeholders	<p>6.1. # of co-applicant DUs' initiatives (student projects, research projects, social projects, learning services, other events)</p> <p>6.2. Over 60% of participants of the initiatives are highly satisfied</p> <p>6.3. # adult learners who take part in learning services of co-applicant DUs</p>	<p>Project documentation</p> <p>DUs' documentation Evaluation questionnaires of participants</p> <p>Social media</p>	
<p>1.1. Conducting of institutional audits at co-applicant DUs, including self-evaluation and sight visits; 1.3. Design of the institutional development concepts; 1.5. Creating Digital University in each co-applicant DU</p> <p>2.1. Development of criteria and selection of trainees to take part in trainings; 2.2. Preparing training curricula with the focus on university governance & autonomy, T&L excellence and quality assurance, internationalization, English language competence development, student self-governance; 2.3. Development of training materials and design of certification requirements and procedure; 2.4. Training delivery and certification of trainees</p> <p>3.1. Establishing strategic groups at each co-applicant DUs; 3.2. Training for leaders of strategic groups; 3.3. Conduct of strategic sessions; 3.4. Drafting of institutional development strategies; 3.5. Broad discussion of drafts for institutional development strategies with stakeholders (internal and external); 3.6. Finalization and approval of institutional development strategies; 3.7. Design of institutional development strategies</p> <p>4.1. Upgrading curricula (new or updated courses) (in line with Bologna principles, business requirements, civil society expectations); 4.2. Development of teaching materials; 4.3. Publication of students' guides; 4.4. Development of e-evaluation form to collect and analyse students' feedback; 4.6. Piloting of new/upgraded courses</p> <p>5.1. Multiplication of new knowledge and skills via student-to-student; academic staff-to-academic staff, administrative staff-to-administrative staff cooperation; 5.4. English language capacity development of academic staff; 5.5. Support of students' services</p> <p>6.1. Conducting of a workshop on community engagement; 6.2. Assessment of community learning needs; 6.5. International conferences on community engagement for DUs not participating in the project, as well as other interested universities</p> <p>7.1. Training on project implementation; 7.2. Coordination meetings; 7.3. Quality monitoring of the project results; 7.4. Information about the project at sites; 7.5. Publications about the project; 7.7. Project reporting, audit and evaluation</p>	<p>Means:</p> <p>Personnel: technical staff, administration staff, managerial staff, academic staff, trainers, evaluators, construction workers</p> <p>Equipment: construction equipment and machinery, computers and office supplies, telephones</p> <p>Materials: stationery, construction materials</p> <p>Premises of DUs</p> <p>Expertise — national and international — in institutional and human resource development.</p>	<p>Co-applicant DUs continue to operate</p> <p>Co-applicant DUs' impact on society is preserved and increases</p> <p>Co-applicants DUs demonstrate ability to make a digital breakthrough</p> <p>Co-applicants DUs demonstrate ability to be active in renovation of Ukraine</p>	

Source: internal project documentation .

projects, EU and non-EU, to be designed and implemented in Ukraine during VUCA wartime and post-war period.

2. Lessons learnt

While the situation in Ukraine, Europe, and the world is changing, project rules and procedures remain intact and rigid.

The rigidity of project procedures inhibits decision-making, and slows down project implementation. For instance, one of the rules for the Programme «EU Support to Displaced Higher Education Institutions in the East of Ukraine» reads that projects cannot last longer than 36 months, while COVID 19 several quarantines have delayed project activities for months. The decision to extend the project due to the pandemic and military aggression was granted by the European Commission in Brussels, took long, and demanded a lot of reasoning from beneficiaries, though the rationale for project extension was evident to both sides — the contracting authority and the recipient.

Another rule prohibits spending project money on humanitarian support²; therefore, in March 2022, when staff and students of displaced universities fled occupied territories, were scattered all over Ukraine and Europe deprived of housing, belongings, classrooms, and gadgets for online teaching and learning, project money were not used to provide for the immediate needs of project beneficiaries.

In case of REDU projects, the COVID 19 pandemic was the Black Swan; university mergers, increase in prices and fluctuation of exchange rate, and finally, Russian military aggression, occupation, and relocation of displaced universities were Grey Swans (Pretty, 2021). Risk analysis is a formality of this and other educational projects. Both the donor and beneficiaries were aware of the potential risks of Russian aggression, further occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions; but if these risks had been voiced out during project preparation, REDU and other projects of the Programme EU Support to Displaced Higher Education Institutions in the East of Ukraine would hardly be awarded the grants. The risk of launching and implementing the project in a highly volatile environment was ignored at the inception phase; today, rigid rules and procedures impede project progress.

Rigidity of REDU project is also revealed in project planning and methodology that gives preference to SMART, i.e., quantitative indicators, which in many cases do not testify to project progress, nor demonstrate achievement of project objectives.

Finalization of the project application took five months — from September 2019 till the end of January 2020 — and was carried out under supervision and in consultation with the expert specifically hired by the EU Delegation to Ukraine for this purpose. In case of REDU project, the efforts on application refinement were basically focused on the development of LFM and designation of measurable indicators, most of which, if not all, were quantitative.

The project lifecycle is three years; considering that preparation and finalisation of the project took longer than 12 months, project development team is to plan all project activities and calculate the costs four years in advance. This resulted in difficulties when the project started: the costs of construction materials, refurbishing and construction works, preparation of construction and engineering documentation increased, exchange rate fluctuated, which required substantial financial management proficiency and cautious decision making.

Project methodology is rooted in LFM and result chain, which in principle is a rational and feasible approach. What is not workable, is that all LFM indicators should be measurable and therefore quantitative.

The search of quantitative indicators was the most difficult part in LFM preparation as the project aims to change attitudes and institutional culture, disseminate new ideas, like knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange, promote university social responsibility and community engagement, enhance shared leadership etc. Some indicators, most of which were proposed by the external expert, did not measure what they intended to measure. For example:

² Information from internal project correspondence with the EU Delegation to Ukraine.

- increase in the level of knowledge of DUs' staff after trainings do not testify to enhanced capacity of staff and students to deliver excellence in teaching and learning, good governance, internationalization;
- open access to co-working areas (9 working hours 6 days per week) do not guarantee innovative teaching and management practices.

«Increase in international mobility of students and staff» as the indicator of their more active role in internationalization has turned out pointless once the pandemic broke out in Europe in March 2020 and cancelled international mobility for the whole year.

With the start of military aggression, many numeric indicators have become irrelevant: increase in the number of applicants to enter DUs; increase in the number and types of community engagement initiatives and number of staff and students engaged; increase in the number of partnership agreements with external stakeholders etc.

The work of several months turned out to be futile: partly, because social responsibility, commitment, student and staff support of university — community engagement, richness of students' experience are difficult to measure in numbers; partly, because of fast-changing environment that overturns plans and predictions. Meanwhile, REDU project team is to explain to the EU Delegation to Ukraine (the contacting authority) and justify each change in project indicators and workplan and wait for approval, which requires time, mental effort, and emotional strain.

While rigidity, formality and precisionism slow down project implementation, it is important to identify those aspects that make this project viable and resilient. Broad visionary project objectives, flexibility and diversity come to the core.

Flexibility refers to the intention of all five initially and now four project partners to cooperate and change, while adapting to circumstances: face-to-face trainings were substituted by online training events; funding allocated for the study visit to the UK that was postponed several times due to the pandemic and finally cancelled with the beginning of war, is to finance digitalization of DUs, enhancing efficiency of teaching and learning, university governance, communication. Project workplan has been changed several times to adjust to the schedule of trainers and trainees; training curricula (modules on internationalization, community engagement, university governance) were adapted to new circumstances after aggression, occupation and second relocation.

Partly, project flexibility is rooted in diversity, partly in visionary project objectives. Broadly formulated overall objective and specific project objectives allow for:

- diversification of activities targeting different audiences: students, academic and administrative staff, university leadership and governing bodies;
- variety of potential project clients and beneficiaries: DUs as institutions, DUs' students and staff, local communities, higher education experts, higher education sector at large;
- different modes of delivery of training events: offline and online;
- multiplication of good practices via knowledge sharing covering university teaching and learning, internationalization, university governance and leadership, community engagement, student self-government and civic activism and others.

In future, diversity of educational projects should be enhanced, considering university social mission and the need of higher education to contribute to society, on the one hand, and a wide spectre of societal needs resulting from war damages, physical and psychological traumas, social, economic, technological, environmental, and other recovery challenges, on the other hand.

Lessons learnt from other EU projects: Like the REDU project, the above-mentioned Jean Monnet projects (SCEGES, EVDISD, and SCAES) set broad visionary goals of augmenting social cohesion and inclusion in educational communities and among different social and professional groups; developing and testing social models for sustainable community development and intercultural competence enhancement; piloting social innovations and facilitating dialogue within universities and between universities and civil society; contributing to trust and social cohesion. The survey of social cohesion in educational communities and

Investigations of its enhancement were launched in the framework of Jean Monnet Module SCEGES implementation (Nesterova et. al, 2019). Relevant for societies at risk common in contemporary VUCA world, SCEGES, EVDISD, and SCAES projects' practices and approaches could be transferred to and multiplied in informal and civic education, adding to sustainability and societal wellbeing (Svyrydenko et. al., 2022).

Unlike the REDU project, these Jean Monnet projects provide more flexibility, more autonomy in decision-making and immediate modifications, which allows for smoother implementation and faster adaptation to multiple crises and challenges that Ukraine is facing today.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Globally and in the EU, international financial aid and technical assistance is delivered via programs and projects, both have established themselves as powerful tools and drivers of change, but not without shortcomings. For Ukraine's post-war recovery and reconstruction, including modernization and reforms of higher education sector, it is important to review rules and procedures of the above programs and projects before funding flows en masse arrive in Ukraine. Rigidity obstructs project implementation, therefore programs and projects' regulations, procedures and rules should allow for more flexibility (agility), diversity and modifications as a response to changes in external and internal contexts.
2. To be viable and resilient, projects in higher education sector should focus on broad visionary objectives benefitting HEIs, their students, staff, higher education sector in general, and simultaneously consider interests of numerous stakeholders: employers, expert and professional groups, civil society, local communities, as well as Ukrainian society at large.
3. Alongside with revision of international technical assistance rules and procedures, in order to fully fit with recovery process, Ukrainian HEIs and academic communities should be ready to change and adapt to new circumstances, respect flexibility, practice diversity.
4. To be able to contribute to national recovery, Ukrainian HEIs should collaborate with a broad circle of partners, sustain the previous relationship and enter into new consortia, participating in projects and programmes as new opportunities appear, new needs or threats evolve etc.
5. The «massive task» of recovery has committed numerous partners, global and national, to contribute to recovery, which accentuates the issues of effectiveness and utility of international financial aid and technical assistance. In addition to conventional requirements, like principles of The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness or respect of conditions set by donors and partners, projects and programs aimed at Ukraine's post-war recovery should incorporate principles of the Lugano Declaration specifically formulated for this phase of Ukraine's transformations: partnerships, democratic participation, multi-stakeholder engagement, inclusion etc., possibly other principles and values developed by professional communities and civil society groups committed to fast recovery, modernization and reimagining Ukraine.
6. We live in a complex, unpredictable social reality associated with traumas, losses, and damages; simultaneously, needs and challenges are emerging that could be associated with opportunities and benefits and pave the way to fundamental social transformations. At this difficult time, Ukrainian HEIs should review and upgrade their social mission, in collaboration with other HEIs and non-academic partners apply their expertise and capacity for the benefit of their own institution, partners and consortia, communities, and nation.
7. It is obvious that existing rules and procedures of EU educational projects, possibly other EU projects, would not be shattered by this article only. But it is important to raise the issue of the need to change existing practices and rules, adapting them to the volatile, uncertain, and complex world of today. The above is especially relevant for Ukraine where the circumstances (external and internal contexts) change so fast and cover people (human and

intellectual capital), institutions, environment, legal-regulatory framework, policies, and funding.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Кейс проєкту REDU: узгодження результатів із потребами переміщених університетів та майбутнім України

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Анотація

У статті розглянуто процес імплементації проєкту ЄС «Відродження переміщених університетів: посилення конкурентоспроможності, підтримка громад» (далі — проєкт REDU), спрямованого на підтримку переміщених університетів Донецької та Луганської областей, з метою промоції проєкту REDU, осмислення майбутнього цього та інших освітніх проєктів, що реалізуються в Україні під час війни; узагальнення уроків з його імплементації в умовах множинних криз; а також підготовлено пропозиції для започаткування дискурсу на вітчизняних та міжнародних майданчиках про необхідність перегляду існуючих підходів до дизайну та впровадження міжнародних проєктів у сфері вищої освіти в умовах сучасного нестабільного, невизначеного, складного VUCA світу, який постійно перебуває у стані трансформацій. Стаття розкриває історію проєкту REDU, надає інформацію про його бенефіціарів — переміщених університетів; описує перебіг подій, що вплинули на внутрішній і зовнішній контексти проєкту та призвели до необхідності суттєво змінити його. Аналізуючи уроки двох з половиною років впровадження проєкту REDU, враховуючи досвід реалізації інших європейських проєктів, зокрема напряму Жана Моне, автори доходять висновку про необхідність перегляду методології дизайну та планування подібних проєктів, правил та процедур, що регулюють їх впровадження.

У статті стверджується, що міжнародні освітні проєкти є та залишатимуться у майбутньому потужним інструментом модернізації вищої освіти та драйверами суспільних трансформацій. Але для більшої ефективності та стійкості під час війни та повоєнного відновлення України, проєктні правила та процедури мають стати більш гнучкими, надати більше автономії в ухваленні рішень проєктним командам, а самі проєкти практикувати розмаїття щодо видів проєктної діяльності та заходів, результатів та наслідків, бенефіціарів та цільових груп. Відстоюючи необхідність ревізії та модифікації дизайну, правил та процедур міжнародних проєктів, автори одночасно вважають, що українські ЗВО та академічні спільноти так само мають бути готовими адаптуватись до нових обставин, практикувати гнучкість, плекати розмаїття. Крім того, щоб зробити вагомий внесок у національне відновлення, українські ЗВО повинні співпрацювати із багатьма стейкхолдерами, посилити соціальну місію, у партнерстві із академічними та неакадемічними партнерами застосовувати накопичені та згенеровані знання, досвід та дослідницький потенціал на користь власної інституції, задля блага партнерів, громад та нації.

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Ключові слова:

переміщені університети, міжнародні освітні проєкти, гнучкість, розмаїття, стійкість, соціальна місія університету, повоєнне відновлення

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