

## STRATEGIC GOAL 5

*Implementation of the Sustainable Development Policy of UzhNU aimed at achieving institutional and environmental sustainability, social inclusion and gender equality. Development of a regional lifelong learning system*

Due to the resource and economic crisis currently experienced by most countries, including Ukraine, as well as the general deterioration of population health and environmental pollution, there is an urgent need to consider sustainability as the main priority in the development of society and all its spheres, including education, which has the role of an anticipatory factor in building the value and worldview foundations of a society of sustainable development.

Today, sustainable development strategy is the leading strategy for the further existence of post-industrial society. There is no reasonable alternative to sustainable development, and the global community is taking steps towards transitioning to a new development strategy in the 21st century. Ukraine lags behind other countries in this process. Accelerating this process can be achieved through the formation and functioning of a new education system - **education for sustainable development**.

This stimulates the renewal of priorities in the development of educational, scientific, innovative, economic, social, and ecological spheres of life at UzhNU in the face of unpredictability. Education is one of the priorities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the European Union's Sustainable Development Strategy.

**Education for sustainable development entails the following changes in the learning process:**

*For academic staff*, it involves transitioning from knowledge transmission to creating conditions for active learning and practical experience.

*For students*, it involves transitioning from passive acquisition of knowledge to active seeking, practical comprehension.

*For the university administration*, it involves changes in resource utilization, implementing sustainability and democratization principles in management, and fostering dialogue with stakeholders.

**An educational environment is created where it is possible to:**

- Express and defend one's own point of view.
- Make conscious choices between alternatives.
- Take responsibility for one's choices and anticipate their consequences.
- Listen to and understand others.
- Learn to respect democratic decisions.

- Resolve conflicts in a civilized manner.

Learn to negotiate and collaborate. **The Policy of Resilience and Sustainable Development** of UzhNU (hereinafter - Policy) was approved by the Academic Council on February 21, 2023 [4]. University departments are recommended to implement the provisions of this document in their activities.

According to the Sustainable Development Policy of UzhNU, alongside its mission in education, scientific research, and innovation, it is of significant importance as a center for:

1. *Preservation and development of human and social capital.*
2. *Formation of leadership potential.*
3. *Strengthening civil society.*
4. *Cultivation of civic culture and tolerant behavior, eradication of discrimination against different groups.*
5. *Socio-economic development.*
6. *Environmental security of the region.*
7. *Ensuring stability and sustainability in regional development.*

The policy is grounded in the application of a comprehensive set of principles of substantive, functional and organizational nature, including:

- Adherence to democratic values and freedoms, equality, justice, democracy, the rule of law, egalitarianism (equality of rights and opportunities), respect for human dignity, accessibility, non-discrimination, and tolerance.
- Systemic, inclusive, and broad active and meaningful engagement of women, men, and all stakeholders in the implementation of the Policy.
- Objectivity and substantiation in identifying sustainable development issues, compliance with international norms and commitments, optimal problem-solving approaches, and orientation towards the best international standards and practices in education.

In implementing this Policy, Uzhhorod National University will embrace sustainable development practices and promote its principles at the local, regional, national and international levels, which will involve the integration of economic, social, gender, environmental and cultural responsibilities with educational, scientific and research, innovative and security aspects. This comprehensive approach necessitates the identification of the key components of the policy, namely: **1) Educational; 2) Scientific research and innovation; 3) Economic; 4) Social; 5) Ecological; 6) Organizational.**

1. The implementation of the educational component of the Policy involves directing the educational process towards the development of competencies related to rational and responsible attitudes towards the natural environment, as well as the harmonious development of economic and social spheres.

Among the innovations in this section of the Policy that should be considered when forming the Strategic Development Plan of the university, the following are particularly important:

- Introduction of educational innovative technologies, implementation of gender-sensitive approaches, experience of social inclusion for persons with disabilities and other less mobile groups of people, and the development of life-long learning for adults.
- Conducting gender assessment of educational programs and working programs of the disciplines, developing practical recommendations for integrating gender aspects into the content of educational and research programs.
- Ensuring a unified approach based on the ideas of sustainable development in the development of educational programs at all levels, with mandatory consideration of professional standards, defining criteria for assessing acquired competencies and qualifications in two aspects: 1) integration of sustainable development issues into existing educational programs, curricula, content of educational events, etc.; 2) introduction of new educational programs, courses, including proposals in elective course catalogs.
- Implementing effective methods and practices of working with people with disabilities and special needs in general, to change the perception of this category of individuals in society.

2. The implementation of the scientific, research and innovative component of the Policy primarily involves:

- Development and funding of fundamental and applied research on sustainable development issues.
- Conducting scientific and applied research adhering to the principles of interdisciplinarity, gender approach, social inclusion and social orientation of research results.

3. Among the measures of the economic component of the Sustainability Policy that should be emphasized when forming the Strategic Development Plan of UzhNU are:

- Diversification of funding sources for educational activities of the university as the basis for academic autonomy and a necessary condition for upgrading the infrastructure to provide quality educational services and conduct scientific and applied research.
- Ensuring autonomous electricity and heating supply to university buildings, continuing the policy of thermal modernization and energy efficiency.

4. When implementing the measures of the social component, special attention should be given to the following points of the Policy:

- Ensuring equal rights and creating equal employment and professional growth opportunities in the university, particularly for women, parents with children, and persons with disabilities, increasing the representation of women in decision-making positions in the university.
- Facilitating access to quality education for individuals from vulnerable population groups and disadvantaged categories (orphans and children deprived of parental care, persons with disabilities, combatants, persons with disabilities resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war, etc.).

5. Among the measures of the ecological component, priority should be given to the following when forming the Strategic Development Plan:

- Development of existing and initiation of new ecological oriented scientific research and development directions with an interdisciplinary nature, addressing the current needs of society.
- Fostering a balanced approach to consumption values and resource conservation among students and university staff.

6. The organizational component of the Policy focuses on integrating sustainability principles into the management activities of the higher education institution (HEI). When forming the Strategic Development Plan of the university, the priorities of the Policy should be used in making management decisions, particularly in the areas of personnel provision, finances, campus development, provision of additional services, infrastructure development, equipment and procurement.

Therefore, in the process of implementing the Policy's priorities that will be considered in the formation of UzhNU's Strategic Development Plan, it is important to establish a foundation of sustainability as significant shared values and mobilize resources at all levels to activate sustainable development ideas.

*Indicators of the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy of sustainable development are formulated in detail by its developers [4].*

Due to the significance of lifelong learning for adults, as mentioned in the educational component of the Policy, particular attention should be dedicated to it in the Strategic Plan.

**Cities and regions as learning entities are a widespread concept in European regional policies in the field of education and science. It is the learning regions that become important sources of innovation and economic growth, acting as ‘ac-**

**cumulators’ of ideas and knowledge, providing support for the surrounding environment and infrastructure that enhance this flow of knowledge and ideas.**

Lifelong education is increasingly seen as an effective factor in organizing regional development and as a factor of competitiveness for both individual territories and the state as a whole. The formation and implementation of competitive advantages contribute to accelerated growth in both the economic and social spheres. Under these conditions, the idea of learning cities and regions serves as a marker of successful economic development of a region, the development of its human potential, and the basis for regional political programs.

Considering that many EU countries, including Hungary, Romania, Poland and Slovakia, have significant experience in this field, it is planned to study and generalize their practices for implementation in Ukrainian universities. We believe that research on the mentioned issues will provide answers to the challenges faced by Ukrainian universities, including issues of educational quality, the integration of the knowledge triangle components, and the training of qualified personnel.

**The recognition of the importance of lifelong education for human development led to the modernization of European education policies in the early 21st century. The Lisbon Summit of the Council of Europe in March 2000 adopted the ‘Memorandum on Lifelong Learning’. The Memorandum emphasized that lifelong education should become the main political program of civil society, social unity and employment.**

**On December 18, 2006, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted Recommendations 2006/962/EU on ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning’. Key competences are defined here as necessary for all citizens for personal fulfillment and development, active civic life, social cohesion and employment opportunities.**

General language skills, literacy and knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies are essential foundations for learning, and learning for the acquisition of knowledge encompasses all educational activities. **The benchmark frameworks include critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving skills, risk assessment, decision-making skills, and the ability to manage emotions constructively. All of these are important for all eight key competences [9].**

In modern conditions, due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the occupation of parts of Ukraine's eastern territories, distance learning, particularly online education, becomes of particular importance for our country. The latest forms of education, which provide the opportunity to prepare for exams, acquire contemporary knowledge and qualifications, can play a crucial role in this process.

An important direction for the implementation of modern technologies in educational processes is the use of electronic textbooks, which have a high potential for improving the quality and effectiveness of learning. However, in order to widely implement electronic learning materials, it is necessary to develop unified state standards for electronic textbooks, taking into account the possibilities of interactivity and the presentation of multimedia content.

The experience of leading countries in Europe and the United States indicates the importance of strategic partnerships and collaboration between vocational education and training institutions and regional development organizations. This allows for the elimination of duplication of training and education in the same specialties and the ‘overproduction’ of professionals not in demand in the labor market.

It is important to remember that three global trends will influence the **development of informal education** in the future. The first trend is the growth of the so-called gigonomics (Gig Economy), which manifests itself in an increasing number of people preferring self-employment over traditional employment. The second global trend is related to the modern individual's aspiration for individual self-realization. The third trend involves the decentralization of the global education market. Present consumers of educational services now have the autonomy to decide what, when, and how they want to learn. Distance education based on information technology allows for accommodating these tendencies. It is also worth noting the increasing role of informal online education for career growth. It can be argued that in the future, this form of learning will allow individuals to acquire the necessary level of proficiency in each discipline based on the demands of their profession.

**The implementation of the basic principles of lifelong education, as formulated in the Charter of European Universities on Lifelong Learning, in the activities of UzhNU necessitates the development of a concept of a ‘Learning Region’ in collaboration with government authorities and local self-government.**

**An example of this can be seen in the Strategic Development Plan of Sumy National University. In such concept, it is advisable to include:**

- Responsive adaptation to changes in economic and social needs, development of marketing strategies for promoting relevant educational services in the labor market, search for social partners, service clients and sources of funding.
- Strengthening the social aspect of higher education by providing vulnerable groups, social and other minorities with opportunities for admission, education and completion of studies.
- The need for anticipatory modernization of the professional development system using alternative models of professional and personal growth, namely:

- Activation of the university's participation in programs:
  - Enhancement of qualifications for civil servants and employees of local self-government bodies.
  - Enhancement of qualifications that correspond to the interests of united territorial communities.
  - Enhancement of qualifications for employees of other educational institutions.
- Development of innovative thematic programs for qualification enhancement on each department, based on the educational and scientific direction of the department's activities, particularly commissioned by employers.
- Establishment of business incubators for aspiring entrepreneurs, consultation centers for professionals seeking to enhance their qualifications, and international certification centers with the organization of relevant educational courses, based on the Science Park of UzhNU.
- Creation of educational centers in leading enterprises and institutions of the region for corporate training and qualification enhancement programs.
  - Creation of opportunities for learning and acquiring education for various groups and as wide age categories of the population as possible, including school graduates, adults, elderly people, unemployed individuals and persons with disabilities.

This should include:

- Diversification of educational services offerings to encourage a wide range of population segments to obtain modern competencies in business, law, IT, ergonomics, language, medicine and other fields.
- Establishment of university units, commissioned by employment centers and other state and local structures, to address the social adaptation of military personnel, combatants and citizens with disabilities through educational programs.
- Implementation of international experience in forming a lifelong education and qualification enhancement system for andragogues (organizers of adult learning).
  - Transformation of the university's postgraduate and professional education center into an interdisciplinary center for professional retraining, enhancement of professional education and adult education. Its activities should include:
    - Development of partnerships at the local, regional, national and international levels to implement relevant educational courses.
    - Promotion of involving external experts with innovative teaching and training experience in implementing popular educational programs for the population.

- Expansion of service delivery forms with appropriate orientations, such as distance learning, training sessions, discussion forums, short-term courses and self-preparation.
- Conducting independent research on the ‘Lifelong Education’ program, including the study of international experience.
- Ensuring the continuous improvement of postgraduate education quality by flexibly utilizing and effectively combining various forms of education [7].

The implementation of lifelong education tasks at UzhNU based on the concept of a ‘Learning Region’ will be facilitated by the following formats of educational, scientific and regional development integration:

- Collaboration with research organizations of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, ministries and government agencies, as well as scientific and educational institutions of other ownership forms.
- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the academic community of UzhNU and economic entities, entrepreneurial activities and the socio-cultural sphere of the region in the knowledge and technology transfer process.
- Institutional interaction with regional bodies of executive power, local self-government, and civil society.