

# Internalization of European Values Through Learning History and Culture of Europe in Times of War

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**Abstract:** *Implementation of European Values through education is increasingly debated by policy makers and experts in the field. In Ukraine the correlation between national and European identity has been significantly challenged by the war and migration. In this context it is crucial to assess both the achievements and weaknesses in values formation and to focus on reinforcing those which need further support. This article explores effectiveness of teaching European history and culture in fostering democratic values and European identity particularly under wartime conditions, using the National University "Chernihiv Colehium" as a case study. The empirical bases includes surveys conducted between May 2023 and October 2024 in Chernihiv region of Ukraine, covering 1,200 respondents, followed by a comparative analysis based on nationwide surveys on values and identity. The findings confirm that students, engages in courses oriented in European culture and history demonstrate a significantly higher level of internalization of European values, especially equality, freedom, justice and human dignity, compared to the general population. However, the article argues the necessity for greater institutional support: development of national regulations for teaching European history and culture, adoption of sectoral standard for training history teachers, modernization of educational programs and creation of new methodological resources that ensure the preservation of European dimension in historical education. While emphasizing fundamental European values, particular attention should also be paid to promoting gender equality, cultural and linguistic diversity and pluralism.*

**Keywords:** *Ukraine; European values; identity; history education; wartime learning; Erasmus+.*

**How to cite:** Keda, M., Haponenko, D., Diatlov, V., Kondratiev, I., & Solomenna, T. (2025). Internalization of European values through learning history and culture of Europe in times of war. *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, 17(4), 713-736.  
<https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/17.4/1076>

## Introduction

The concept of European values (EV) is an integral part of European identity and plays a key role in uniting the European community on shared cultural pillars. The principles of democracy, freedom, tolerance, respect to human rights serve as the basis for the peaceful development of European civilization and are enshrined in fundamental documents of the European Union (EU).

In recent years due to the war waged by Russia against Ukraine, historical education has become an increasingly significant strategic tool for common security policy and for countering hostile manipulations with tragic civilizational consequences. By distorting historical facts and exploiting cultural heritage, the Russian leadership seeks to justify its aggression against Ukraine. The European Union's recognition of this issue resulted in the European Parliament's adoption of the Resolution on Russia's disinformation and historical falsification (European Parliament, 2025). The awareness of the role of history and culture of Europe in shaping the common identity has led to growing attention of EU institutions toward education policies, despite education generally falls beyond the competence of the EU. In recent years strategic policy documents on common education policy have increasingly emphasized the need to strengthen the "sense of European identity" (Alexiadou & Rambla, 2023; European Commission, 2017).

The integration of European values into education through the teaching and learning of European history and culture, in the context European integration of Ukraine, contributes to strengthening European identity, which today is a crucial characteristic of human capital. However, it is important to remember that the formation of values is a dynamic process. In times of war and migration crises approaches to education and perceptions of values change (Kostenko, 2022; Korostelina, 2023). Therefore, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of established European values, identifying trends in their transformation, and assessing public perception can provide clear data for the deliberate and strategic planning of relevant educational policies. Higher education institutions play a key role in this process.

The new conception of reforming history education in Ukraine's secondary schools (MESU, 2024b) has also placed on the agenda the revision of approaches to teaching European history and culture in higher education. The noticeable trend of reducing the share of world history in the newly synthesized school history curriculum poses several risks, one of which is the potential loss of a significant portion of the content related to European

civilization. To prevent this, it is essential to identify the most crucial value-based aspects that require special attention and hold strategic significance for the development of the Ukrainian nation in line with the European way of life.

Furthermore, the new educational conception intensifies one more challenging issue: understanding the correlation between European and national identities. In Ukrainian society there is a tendency to view these categories as mutually exclusive. However, they are not contradictory, but they are complementary and reciprocally reinforcing. The study conducted by the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTe, 2024) found that fostering a "sense of European identity" is considered by European teachers to be nearly as important as "promoting national pride". At the same time, Ukraine exhibits a clear imbalance between its geopolitical situation and the pace of implementing education policy in the field of European history and culture. The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science in its strategic plan until 2027 justifiably declares the strengthening of national identity as one of the top priorities for the nearest future (MESU, 2024a). However, in our view, the European identification discourse in this document requires a more explicit presentation.

The societal significance of integrating EV by means of historical education was recognized by Ukrainian researchers at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They emphasized that history as a discipline is instrumental in understanding the interconnections between European countries. One of the most important functions of historical education is shaping historical consciousness, which fosters the consolidation of countries by uniting them around shared values, norms and traditions (Onufriienko, 2007; Korostelina, 2013). Since 2014, with Ukraine's clear pro-European development vector and the onset of military confrontation with Russia, an increasing number of publications have emerged on the topic of EV in education. Recent studies particularly stress that while maintaining and strengthening Ukrainian national identity in education, it is crucial to integrate it as much as possible into European and global educational and academic spaces (Marynchenko, 2021). However, perceiving the pro-European dimension as a replacement or an alternative to national identity has resulted in negative anti-European sentiments and biases. Therefore, further explanatory work is needed to clarify that Europe does not impose its identity but rather demonstrates its advantages, strengths and weaknesses, fostering the adoption of core values through critical thinking.

The analysis of foreign academic literature and regulatory frameworks proves that in recent years European educational programs are deliberately

strengthening the European dimension in history teaching (Dinç, 2022). This initiative aims to foster a sense of common identity among students by emphasizing Europe's political, social, economic and cultural knowledge, alongside the values of humanism, democracy, and tolerance. Therefore, in organizing value-based education in Ukraine, it is also appropriate to present national identity as an integral part of the broader European identity, especially in current war circumstances.

**The aim of this publication** is to examine the level of internalization of fundamental European values among representatives of higher education involved in studying and teaching European-focused courses during wartime. The study is based on the example of T.H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium" (NUCHK), one of the key educational centers in the region, which was under occupation in 2022. The research objectives include identifying the level of EV perception and formation among the participants of the relevant European studies courses, with further analyses of how these are represented in the broader context among the population of Chernihiv Region and Ukraine. The study has yielded new data that refine existing indicators specifically for the education sector of border regions, and allow the tracing of the dynamics of EV under wartime conditions. This, in turn, provides a clearer understanding of the challenges associated with the implementation of value-based education at the currant stage and helps to specify its further trajectory.

## Hypotheses

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian Federation has become a powerful factor of national unity and civic consolidation. Previous tensions (political, social, linguistic) have significantly diminished in relevance in circumstances of collective resistance. At the same time, sustained support from the European Union and Unites States has contributed to a growing public consciousness on the necessity of further integration with the EU and NATO.

We assume that this shift has influenced the internalization of EV, especially in war affected regions. The war has intensified public demand for dignity, justice and solidarity – core values of democratic societies. However, the complexity of European integration and value formation requires deliberate educational efforts to explain and promote these principles. In this context, we set out to measure the level of EV internalization among the general population of Chernihiv region and compare it to the results among participants of the specialized educational courses in European Studies in order to evaluate the effectiveness of such targeted practices.

*Hypothesis 1 (primary)* – participation in educational courses on European history and culture results in a significantly higher level of internalization of European Values among students and teachers, compared to general population of the region.

*Hypothesis 2 (secondary)* – the application of innovative teaching methodologies in wartime conditions (such as historical simulations, case studies, elevator pitches and integration of war-related and heritage topics) enhances identification with European values and contributes to the formation of Europeanness.

## Literature review

The importance of integrating EV into Ukraine's higher education system has been repeatedly highlighted in domestic scientific literature and research. Particular attention has been given to aspects such as the growing indicators of European and Ukrainian identity in Ukrainian history education (Kassianov, 2022), the perception of the EU in relation to human capital development under wartime conditions (Zaloznova & Azmuk, 2022, Kruhlov & Tereshchenko, 2023), the assessment of the effectiveness of EV implementation by educators (Spitsynet al., 2024), the necessity of identity-based training for history teachers (Korostelina, 2023), the current level of integration of EV into the curricula and pedagogical activities of higher education institutions in Ukraine (Nesterova, 2019), the formation of EV among international students (Chernyakova, 2022) etc. A survey conducted in 2021 across Ukrainian higher education institutions (Tupakhina et al., 2024) explored the value orientations of Ukrainian students, identified key challenges and highlighted best practices for integrating EV within Ukrainian universities. A considerable number of relevant domestic publications is presented in collective monographs (Tupakhina et al., 2021), didactic materials (Shevchuk et al., 2020; Nesterova et al., 2021) and conference proceedings of various levels (Podkupko, 2021) although these publications tend to priorities practical-oriented reflections and methodological guidance over systematic empirical or theoretical analyses.

The full-scale war in 2022 has significantly reshaped discourses on European values and identity. Surveys of students at European universities (including those in countries not directly threatened by war, such as Belgium, Germany and France) identified that attitudes toward Europe and European integration have become more positive after Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Steiner et al., 2022). Meanwhile, global scholarship increasingly emphasizes the effectiveness of interventions in educational programs aimed at fostering EV through history and culture, including engaging with cultural heritage and

diversity (Schachner et al., 2024) and strengthening European identity at a subconscious level through everyday practices (Brand et al., 2024). The academic community has also responded to the shifting geopolitical realities with a number of publications dedicated to the dynamics of national and European identity among Ukrainians in the context of war (Kostenko, 2022; Akaliyski & Reeskens, 2023; Kalinicheva & Bulvinska, 2023; Onuch, 2023; Kuzio, 2024).

The analysis of primary sources and scholarly publications on the implementation of EV through the teaching and learning of European history and culture has demonstrated clear progress in the field, while revealing that significant gaps remain. First, there is limited empirical research which systematically assess how European history and culture courses shape specific values in context of the conflict. Second, existing studies often treat value formation abstractly, without linking it to specific pedagogical practices. Moreover, while scholars debate, which values should be emphasized, there is insufficient analyses of how curriculum reforms, such as reducing world and European history content, may weaken value-based education.

The study contributes to the field by addressing these gaps. It offers original empirical data from war-affected region and evaluates the impact of both curriculum content and adapted teaching methodologies on the internalization of specific European values, thereby situating itself at the intersection of value education, identity formation and crises pedagogy.

## Methodology

### *Research design*

For the preparation of the publication, both theoretical and practical research methods were employed.

**Desk research** facilitated the analysis of current regulatory documents governing the implementation of EV in European education in general and in Ukrainian higher education system in particular, including through the teaching and learning European history and culture. This method was also used to analyze the results of sociological studies on the formation of EV among the Ukrainian population and the evolution of these indicators during the war. The conducted analysis refined the objectives of the **empirical part of the study**.

The study envisaged two quantitative sociological surveys, conducted using the same research tools. The surveys targeted participants of educational courses and adult population of the Chernihiv region. To examine the effectiveness of teaching of European-oriented courses in fostering core European Values among representatives of the higher education sector these

courses were delivered to a broad academic audience, including students, schoolteachers and academic staff of the Chernihiv region. Upon finalization of the courses, the participants were asked to complete the structured questioner. The research was conducted during martial law at the T.H. Shevchenko National University “Chernihiv Colehium”, one the major educational institutions of the regions that experienced military occupation in 2022.

The survey questionnaires were designed according to the results of analyses of the latest relevant researches, EU cultural policy documents, Eurobarometer and Eurostat approaches to the survey concerning level of identities in Europe. The measurement of individual values was conducted using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means the value is not important at all and 5 means the value is very important. The results are presented using average coefficients.

### ***Methods of data collection***

The survey of the participants of the educational courses was conducted using **face-to-face and online questionnaires** via the Google Forms platform. The population survey in Chernihiv region was carried out through combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews, as well as questionnaires administrated via the Google Forms. The use of mixed survey methodology was necessitated by the inability to ensure the safety of interviewers in the border areas affected by active hostilities.

### ***Study sample***

Total sample for the study consisted of 1,200 respondents.

Special target group for the first survey comprised 400 participants engaged in European studies-related educational disciplines within the framework of the EU Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project “Studying Europe: Educational Dimension” (SEED). This group included undergraduate students of NUCHK, doctoral students in the field of humanities, as well as university lecturers and secondary school teachers from Ukraine who attended professional development courses within the project. The survey period spanned from May 2023 to October 2024 (Haponenko & Keda, 2024b).

The second survey was conducted among the adult population of the Chernihiv region, covering 800 respondents. The multistage proportional stratified sampling method was used with gender, age and type of settlement quotas applied at the final stage of selection. The confidence interval was 95 % ( $t = 1.96$ ), with a margin of error not exceeding  $\Delta = 3.5\%$ . When designing the sampling strategy special consideration was given to changes in the population structure, caused by forces migration. The survey period spanned from May to June 2023 (Haponenko & Keda, 2024a).



### ***Analytical framework***

The study employs a conceptual approach. Given the variability, ambiguity, and tensions in the interpretation of the concept of "European values" (Weymans, 2023), we consider it logical and appropriate to examine it within the broader context of European identity as its cluster components. Academic literature debates the criteria for measuring "Europeanness", while the concept "European values," due to its specific substantive content, offers a set of clear criteria for measurement. For this study we adopted the list of values as they are enshrined in the EU's foundational documents, specifically in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, where it is stated that EU is founded on the following values: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights (including the rights of persons belonging to minorities). Alongside such values as pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and gender equality, these principals form the foundation for the shared coexistence of all member states within the EU (Scharfbillig et al., 2021).

By internalization of European values we refer to the extent to which individuals not only understand and perceive this values, but actively accept them as guiding principles in their personal, civic and political lives (Furnham, 2001).

The obtained results enable identification and comparison of differences in the formation of EV between the population of Chernihiv Region and the participants of European studies courses. Moreover, comparing the obtained data with the indicators of nationwide sociological studies allows for distinguishing the specific features of EV formation, as well as European and Ukrainian identity, among the population of Chernihiv Region, considering its strategic importance as a border region of Ukraine, where active hostilities are ongoing.

### **Limitations**

The study is representative of the population of only one region of Ukraine (although one of the largest) and higher education participants who attended special educational courses, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions and Ukraine as a whole.

Between February and April 2022 approximately 80% of the Chernihiv region was under Russian occupation, and following its liberation, armed conflict continues at several border communities. This significantly affected the formation of environmental consciousness among both – the general population and the educational community.



Data collection was conducted at a single point in time, therefore, the results reflect the situation during a specific period and can not capture subsequent changes on long-term trends.

## Results

The sense of Europeaness among Ukrainians has been gradually increasing since the country gained independence. In 2005, only 12% of Ukrainians totally identified as Europeans, whereas by 2023, this figure had doubled. Overall, as of 2023, more than half of Ukraine's population reported feeling European to some extent (Razumkov Center, 2023), while trust in the EU was highest among young people across all age groups (Sociological Group "Rating", 2023). Among those who fled to EU due to the full-scale war, this indicator was even higher, reaching 81% (Keda, 2025).

The formation of such high indicators is primarily driven by Ukraine's consistent state policy aimed at restoring its national identity within the European context (Onuch, 2023; Kuzio, 2024). A strategic dimension of this policy is the active role of the education sector in fostering the integration of EV at all levels. However, ongoing reforms in history education, particularly the reduction of European history and culture components, have created a pressing need to strengthen those values that remain underdeveloped in society. In this context, the role of history teachers becomes particularly significant. As Davies (1996) emphasized, history teachers do not merely educate pupils **about** Europe but also **for** Europe, guiding them in developing critical thinking, constructive tolerance and the ability to engage with European norms in the future. This perspective underscores the broader impact of historical education on identity formation and value-based learning. Empirical evidence further highlights the pivotal role of history teachers in shaping national identity. Research on pro-European and pro-Russian narratives reveals that, on the eve of the annexation of Crimea, history teachers from different regions of Ukraine conveyed contrasting historical interpretations, which, in turn, influenced students' perceptions of Ukraine's geopolitical orientation (Korostelina, 2013).

To develop frameworks which illuminate the value-based thinking of the participants of the European-oriented courses, educators involved in implementing European studies projects at NUCHK have continuously experimented with new methods, forms, and tools for teaching European history and culture since 2015. In addition to traditional lectures and seminars, innovative methods such as learning-through-doing, historical modeling, simulations of the European Parliament decision-making, case studies, and European quizzes have been employed.

The onset of full-scale military conflict in February 2022 posed a serious challenge to the educational process and international academic cooperation. However, under extreme circumstances, the need for integrating European values – democracy, human rights, solidarity, and the rule of law – into the educational process became even more urgent. One of the greatest challenges was maintaining the learning process amid a humanitarian crisis in a partially occupied region. Nonetheless, the difficult decision to resume classes during the blockade of Chernihiv in April 2022 provided crucial support to students, allowing them to engage in discussions on European integration challenges, information security, disinformation and propaganda influence, and the protection of cultural heritage during wartime. Particular emphasis was placed on how the enemy manipulated historical and cultural heritage for political purposes, violating international law and justifying aggression. In general, in response to the challenges of war, educators at NUCHK implemented a range of innovative teaching methodologies, among which were:

- learning-through-doing approach (ex., historical simulation of Ukraine-EU Summit with role-play and modeling of EU institutions' decision-making processes);
- interactive and practical formats (case-studies on European culture, EU migration and security policies, Euroquizzes, elevator-pitch presentations, adapted to war-time conditions);
- value-based courses design, where key EV were embedded into special thematic modules with critical comparison of EU norms and those of authoritarian systems;
- student-led cultural research (projects on destruction and preservation of cultural heritage, discussions on manipulation of history and identity in propaganda contexts).

For instance, the academic discipline **"Perspectives on European Civilization"** was aimed to provide undergraduate students with a comprehensive understanding of the past, present and future of European civilization by examining cause-and-effect relationships, which form the foundation of the historical process. A significant aspect of the course was the exploration of Ukraine's potential for European integration. Among other topics, students developed an understanding of democracy as a fundamental EV, the civilizational diversity of the world and Europe, the challenges of European identity, and the specific characteristics of European thinking. When analyzing major global issues, particular attention was given to the development of human capital as the most significant resource. Special

emphasis was also placed on such narratives as the idea that the holistic formation of individuals is impossible without adherence to the principles of equality and freedom, while the pursuit of justice and the rule of law serves as a cornerstone of human society, and that the intensive development of the economy is unattainable without the inviolability of private property, just as the advancement of society is inconceivable without the primacy of democracy.

The course **"EU Foreign and Security Strategy"** introduced key characteristics of a unified Europe as a global actor in the contemporary world. It was designed for doctoral students in humanities – individuals with established basic knowledge of the core principles of European society, where EV hold a fundamental position. Their conceptualization was examined through the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), with a particular emphasis on dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, and the rule of law. The turbulence of global political processes, coupled with the EU's growing influence as a global player, particularly in light of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, has underscored the need to strengthen the EU's security and defense policies. Throughout the course, students explored the role of EV in shaping the EU's foreign policy agenda, including the protection of democracy, respect for human life, freedom, justice, equality, and non-discrimination – all of which define the value-based framework of international relations at various levels of partnership. Practical applications of these values were examined through case studies such as the EU's sanctions policy, the Temporary Protection Mechanism, adjustments to migration policy, and the EU's participation in international judicial institutions. The principles of equality, solidarity and non-discrimination serve as the foundation for the EU's international engagement and partnerships. Students were also encouraged to develop an awareness of the complexities of a globalized world, marked by intensified migration processes, an increasing demand for intercultural dialogue, and the necessity of tolerance toward cultural and linguistic diversity.

The course **"Fundamentals of Sociology and Political Science"** was designed not only to equip students with core theoretical knowledge but also to foster their understanding of key European and democratic values. It explored the advantages of modern information societies, whose high level of development is impossible without respect for civil rights and freedoms, equal opportunities and the principle of justice. As a result, the social structure of such societies evolves toward an increasing share of the middle class, which in most EU countries constitutes over 50% of the total population. A particular focus was placed on contemporary global ideologies. The course

examined liberalism, conservatism, and social democracy – political traditions that prioritize the protection and promotion of European and democratic values. A central component of this discourse was the topic "Democracy," which was explored in its full complexity and multidimensional nature. Democracy was analyzed in contrast with authoritarianism and totalitarianism, characterizing the type of state and its political system; as a form of governance based on the principles of equality; and as a value-driven ideal, ensuring freedom, equality, human rights and respect for minority rights. Throughout the course, the students were provided with the examples of social and political transformations across EU countries, illustrating how these changes were driven by the development, enforcement and protection of fundamental European and democratic values. Additionally, the course emphasized the importance of adopting these best practices within contemporary Ukrainian society.

The challenges of war resulted in adaptation of educational strategies, including new approaches, allowing students to present their projects even with minimal technical resources. The destruction of historical monuments and cultural centers prompted a reassessment of the role of European heritage and the necessity of its preservation and so students participated in a historical simulation of the Ukraine-EU Summit, where discussions focused on the protection of cultural heritage and the humanitarian issues of war. Students actively contributed to debates on the key challenges facing the cultural sector, presenting their own research on destroyed monuments and potential strategies for their restoration. The educational process extended beyond academic learning, serving also as a form of psychological support, allowing students through communication with lectures to gain a better understanding of the situation within the country and on geopolitical arena.

To assess the level of EV formation following these courses taught during the wartime, the empirical study was conducted. To measure the extent to which EV were internalized by participants, we first examined how respondents identified themselves. In response to the question "Do you consider yourself European?", 66.5% of the participants totally or partially agreed, 19.5% responded negatively, and 14% were undecided. Among residents of Chernihiv Region, 59.7% identified as Europeans, 24.4% did not consider themselves European, and the remaining 16% selected the response "Difficult to say." So, in both cases, the majority of respondents self-identified as Europeans.

However, a significantly different pattern emerged when respondents were asked to prioritize their identification as Europeans versus Ukrainians. Among the participants of educational courses, 50.5% stated that they primarily

identified as Ukrainians (54.6% in the region), while 24.2% felt more Ukrainian than European (28.5% in the region). Additionally, 22.7% identified equally as both Ukrainian and European (15.4% in the region), whereas only 2.6% felt more European than Ukrainian or totally European (1.4% in the region).

These findings indicate a high level of self-identification with Ukrainian national identity, which is unsurprising considering that the war has fostered national cohesion around the civic identity. At the same time, identification as European is also at a significant level. Notably, among participants in the educational courses, pro-European sentiments were higher in both cases.

However, where respondents' views aligned most closely was in their support for Ukraine's accession to the EU, with differences in responses falling within the margin of a statistical error – 80.8% versus 81.9%. Furthermore, when compared to the same indicator among university students across Ukraine (Tupakhina et al., 2024), the level of support among respondents who participated in European-focused courses was significantly higher.

As the findings evidence, respondents' answers varied to some extent. Among participants in educational courses, the top three EV included equality (4.8), freedom (4.7), and both justice and respect for human dignity (4.6). In contrast, the population of Chernihiv Region ranked respect for human dignity the highest (4.7), followed by freedom and justice (both 4.6), and equality along with respect for human and minority rights (both 4.4). Regarding the relatively low perceived importance of pluralism as a European value, we believe that this can largely be attributed to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept itself (Haponenko & Keda, 2024a).

Overall, it is worth noting that the perception coefficients of EV among educational courses participants were higher, indicating the positive impact of selected academic disciplines and professional development courses on the formation of these values. At the same time, several factors should be highlighted that, in our view, influence the perception of EV as a whole. First, age of respondents plays a crucial role. 78% of the participants of educational courses were young people aged 18 to 24, raised at the period of independence of Ukraine. In contrast, the respondents of Chernihiv Region primarily belong to the older generation that experienced both the hardships of the 1990s and the Soviet past. This historical background explains why respect for human dignity holds such significant importance for them. Second, Russia's military aggression has placed values such as equality, freedom and justice at the forefront of public consciousness. Third, restrictions on civil rights and freedoms due to the enforcement of the Law "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" have also influenced the hierarchy of values. As a result, values such as

non-discrimination, gender equality, cultural and linguistic diversity have taken a back seat. The latter is further shaped by Ukraine's societal and governmental rejection of Russian cultural heritage.

**Table 1.** EV perception index (created by the authors)

European Values	Participants of the educational courses of NUCHK	Residents of Chernihiv Region
Equality	4,8	4,4
Freedom	4,7	4,6
Justice	4,6	4,6
Respect for human dignity	4,6	4,7
Respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities	4,5	4,4
Protection of private property	4,4	4,3
Democracy	4,3	4,3
Tolerance	4,3	4,2
Solidarity	4,2	4,3
Rule of law	4,1	4,2
Non-discrimination	4,1	3,9
Equality between women and men	4,1	3,9
Cultural and linguistic diversity	4	4
Pluralism	3,4	3,1

The results of a nationwide survey on the perception of EV among Ukrainian students, encompassing all levels of education and both humanities and technical specializations, indicate that values such as dignity and personal freedom, although supported by over 60% of respondents, did not make it into the top five. Additionally, only 32% identified the rule of law as a key value (Tupakhina et al., 2024:28). In contrast, our study demonstrates that these values rank among the top five priorities for those studying and teaching European history and culture.

Thus, a comparison of the authors' sociological findings (Table 1) with nationwide survey data provides grounds to assert that participants in European studies courses exhibit a generally higher degree of European identity. They prioritize equality as a core value, declare higher levels of tolerance and gender equality, yet, like Ukrainian society as a whole (Onuch, 2023; Akaliyski & Reeskens, 2023; Kuzio, 2024), place less emphasis on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as pluralism in the context of war.

## Discussion

The study on the promotion of European values within the student community in Ukraine revealed that one of the main challenges in this process is the absence of a unified, systematic approach across institutions. Many higher education institutions engage in activities on an ad-hoc basis, rather than implementing sustained, strategic initiatives, which limits the long-term impact on students. Moreover, students from peripheral universities generally have fewer opportunities to engage in activities that promote European identity, such as academic exchange programs, EU-funded courses, educational workshops, and cultural events (Tupakhina et al., 2024). Thus, in Ukraine's border regions, the active integration of EV into higher education through teaching and learning of European history and culture becomes particularly crucial. This process is largely driven by grass-root initiatives, which serve as a vital complement to state-led efforts. Against the backdrop of increasing European identity among the Ukrainian population during the war (Onuch, 2023; Keda, 2024) and ongoing reforms in history education, it is essential to understand how the learning and teaching of European history and culture contribute to the formation of fundamental European values.

As of today, in addition to state institutions, the implementation of EV in higher education institutions in Ukraine is actively supported by three major associations: AREVE (Association of Researchers of European Values in Education), APREI (Ukrainian Association of Professors and Researchers of European Integration), and UAES (Ukrainian Association of European Studies). These associations, located in different parts of Ukraine and covering almost the entire country, play a crucial role in the academic and educational landscape by engaging in both collaborative projects and individual initiatives. Largely due to their efforts, Ukraine can take pride in a number of innovative European-oriented courses in history and cultural studies, developed within the framework of European-funded projects and implemented through EU programs. In the field of culture and creative industries, the Creative Europe program has also had the significant impact, while for research initiatives in both cultural studies and history, the Horizon Europe program remains the most critical, as it is directly focused on scientific research.

At the same time, in the field of EU history and culture, as well as in the promotion of its values in higher education, one of the most effective programs is Erasmus+, particularly its specialized Jean Monnet component, directly aimed at stimulating European integration discourse, enhancing excellence in European integration studies, engaging higher education institutions in research on integration processes, and disseminating knowledge about the EU beyond academia, thereby bringing the idea of a united Europe



closer to the broader public. Between 2021 and 2024, 15 Jean Monnet projects of different types directly related to EV were implemented in Ukraine. Since 2001, the authors have identified 111 Erasmus+ projects that, to varying degrees, have contributed to the formation of EV among students of Ukrainian higher education institutions. Researchers emphasize the significant role of Jean Monnet projects in integrating EV into Ukraine's post-war reconstruction (Kalinicheva & Bulvinska, 2023; Tupakhina et al., 2024). They also highlight that the consolidation of the West around shared liberal-democratic values is one of the key preconditions for victory over the aggressor (Todorov, 2020). According to research (Steiner et al., 2022), students in European universities demonstrated greater adherence to EV in the immediate aftermath of the invasion compared to youth in European countries before the war (Becuwe & Baneth, 2021).

The integration of EV into higher education in Ukraine through the teaching of European history and culture is regulated by the requirements for educational programs set by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance. One of the key documents governing teacher training is the Higher Education Standard (for sector-specific specializations). However, as of the time of the article preparation, the Higher Education Standard for specialization 014.03, which is directly focused on training history and civic education teachers responsible for transmitting EV to future generations, has not yet been approved in Ukraine. This is particularly significant considering that, in the context of war, history serves not only as a powerful tool for shaping both national and European identity among students but also as a tool of manipulating historical memory (European Parliament, 2025). History education is one of the primary instruments used by Russia to impose deceptive narratives and devalue Europe. This is evident in the introduction of a new Concept of Teaching the History of Russia, implemented in the national curriculum as of September 1, 2023. This framework establishes history as a mandatory subject for all, including non-humanities specializations, and its content completely reflects and justifies the key narratives underpinning the Russian Federation's aggressive foreign policy.

Our analysis is interesting in light of current political and social debates in Ukraine on the issues of correlation of national and European identities. Recently, nearly all across the Europe there has been a resurgence of nationhood and national identity, raising the question of how education systems and curricula are addressing this shift (Sautereau & Faas, 2022). It is clear that Ukraine makes national identity and national history a core topic in educational curriculum. At the same time, new concerns for history education in Ukraine arise from the newly approved "Conceptual Foundations for the

Reform of History Education in the General Secondary Education System" (2024). According to this document, the proportion of world history is reduced to 30% relative to Ukrainian history, which will account for 70% of the curriculum. Although the Concept consistently emphasizes the necessity of aligning Ukrainian history with European processes, several challenges emerge regarding the effective implementation of this proportion. Since European history is now only a fraction of the 30% allocated to world history in general, ensuring adequate coverage of EV becomes increasingly challenging. The document highlights Ukraine's civilizational affiliation with Europe and emphasizes the importance of forming EV. However, a potential weakness is the limited time available in the curriculum for the comprehensive development of all values.

Therefore, in the modernization of education and teacher training programs, it is essential to focus on the most critical values, identifying those which are underrepresented and require additional attention. The development of new didactic materials is a long-term process that takes years. Moreover, the future educators responsible for this task are the students currently studying to become history and civic education teachers. Therefore, it is imperative to equip them now with the skills to preserve the European dimension amid contemporary innovations, ensuring its adaptation and reinforcement in response to current challenges.

A noticeable decline in values such as tolerance and gender equality in contemporary Ukrainian society requires particular attention, regarding that these concepts are also an indirect indicator of democracy. In measuring the social capital of any society, tolerance serves as one of the key indicator – greater tolerance facilitates reconciliation both within and between societies. Strengthening tolerance is also crucial in light of the challenges facing Ukrainian state during the war. It plays a fundamental role in ensuring future reconciliation and in addressing projections of possible increasing presence of non-Ukrainian ethnic elements within the country.

Ukraine is not an exception when it comes to relatively low level of tolerance, as many EU countries face the same issue. At the same time, the EU actively develops research and best practices that Ukraine can draw upon. For instance, in a study on teaching democracy and tolerance in secondary schools, the authors distinguish three components of tolerance that characterize interactions between people at different levels: interpersonal relations, tolerance toward different social and cultural groups, and tolerance in the form of an inclusive society. They further emphasize the need to reinforce tolerance by promoting concepts with more positive connotations,

such as appreciation, pluralism, and respectful engagement, which are strengthened by social and cultural diversity in schools (Veugelers et al., 2017).

Across Europe and particularly within the EU, numerous supranational institutions are already working to improve the quality of history education and align it with the EU's development priorities. This effort is led by organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, EUROCLIO, the International Society for History Didactics, the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe etc. For Ukraine, as it advances its European integration, studying and adopting Europe's accumulated expertise in this field remains a crucial objective. In this regard, it is important to focus on optimizing and diversification of the forms and methods of teaching European history and culture. Researchers have already pointed out that lectures and seminars alone are insufficient, emphasizing the need for innovative teaching practices. These should be enriched with simulation games and courses on the fundamentals of intercultural communication, aimed at promoting multiculturalism and linguistic diversity, special attention should also be given to identity-based training for history teachers (Korostelina, 2023; Chernyakova, 2022; Tupakhina, 2024).

Thus, the war has not only created challenges for the educational process but has also heightened the relevance of EV, underscoring the importance of cultural and historical heritage and its presentation through education. Consequently, decisions regarding the new sectoral standard and, accordingly, new educational programs for training history and civic education teachers must necessarily take into account the significance of the European component. After all, European values form the foundation of Ukraine's European integration, and relegating European-oriented courses to the periphery of the educational curriculum may weaken their role and result in the progressive marginalization of European values and European identity in the future.

## Conclusions

The Ukrainian population currently demonstrates high levels of European identity, which is the result of both Ukraine's consistent state policy and targeted interventions in the teaching of European history and culture. The formation of European values takes place through a dual process: a top-down approach (initiatives led by the government) and a bottom-up approach (initiatives of academic and educational institutions, primarily supported by EU-funded programs and projects). At the same time, students and educators enrolled in courses on European history and culture demonstrate a higher level of EV internalization compared to the general Ukrainian population. The

priority values for them include equality, freedom, justice, respect for human dignity, human rights, and minority rights. However, one of the key challenges remains the need for greater state involvement in integrating these values into the education system, as the imbalance between Ukraine's European integration progress and its practical approaches to reforming history education and teaching European values remains evident. While reforms are still ongoing, it is crucial to recognize that the growing emphasis on European studies in Ukraine's educational landscape presents a unique opportunity to strengthen democratic principles and civic consciousness. By incorporating best practices from European education systems, Ukraine can further align its history curriculum with the broader European intellectual tradition.

The most pressing tasks in this regard include developing a clear methodology for teaching European history and culture, adopting a sectoral standard for training future history teachers, updating educational programs, and creating new methodological resources that ensure the preservation of the European dimension. While the focus should remain on fundamental European values, special attention should be given to promoting gender equality, cultural and linguistic diversity and pluralism. At the same time, it is crucial to develop critical thinking skills, the ability to assess European values in various contexts, and an understanding of their complementarity with national identity. Ultimately, a well-balanced and modernized approach to history education will not only safeguard the role of European values in Ukrainian society but also contribute to Ukraine's sustainable integration into the European community.

**Statement on the Use of AI Tools** | *The article includes content that was created using DeepL Translator (AI based language tool) for improving readability and language of specific paragraphs. The authors carefully reviewed and edited the translated content to ensure accuracy and consistency with the manuscript.*

**Funding** | *The article was prepared within the project "Studying Europe: Educational Dimension" (SEED), N 101085480—SEED—ERASMUS-JMO-2022-HEI-TCH-RSCH).*

**Conflict of interest** | *The authors declare no conflict of interest.*

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