

NATIONAL RESILIENCE AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN UKRAINE: THE EXPERIENCE OF KROK UNIVERSITY

Iryna Rybak,

*PhD in Political Science, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism,
Director, Adult Education Department, KROK University, Kyiv, Ukraine,
E-mail: RybakIV@krok.edu.ua*

In the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, education has become not only a humanitarian sphere but also one of the key components of national resilience and the country's post-war recovery. In contemporary European discourse, lifelong learning is understood as a strategic instrument for enabling society to adapt to crisis-driven transformations, sustain human capital, strengthen social cohesion, and support democratic development.

The challenges of war have profoundly transformed Ukraine's education system. According to UNESCO and UNICEF, as of 2025 more than 4,000 educational institutions in Ukraine had been damaged or destroyed, while millions of pupils and students continued their studies in distance or blended formats [1]. Approximately 345,000 Ukrainian schoolchildren are studying abroad while remaining within the Ukrainian education system, and more than one million children continue to receive education primarily online.

At the same time, the war has accelerated the development of digital educational technologies, hybrid learning formats, psychological support, and new models of adult education. With the support of international partners, Ukraine is implementing programmes aimed at ensuring continuity of learning, expanding digital accessibility, and developing adaptive competences.

In the contemporary European Education Area, lifelong learning is regarded as one of the key instruments for strengthening competitiveness, social cohesion, and national resilience. It represents a strategy for lifelong human development that enables society to adapt to economic, technological, and social change, and it forms an important element of human-capital policy and societal resilience [2].

According to the 2025 Education and Training Monitor, adult participation in learning in the European Union stood at 28.5% in 2024 according to EU Labour Force Survey data, while the Adult Education Survey recorded an EU average of 39.5% in 2022. These figures remain below the EU policy targets of 47% participation by 2025 and at least 60% by 2030 [3; 4; 5]. Current European approaches to lifelong learning focus on learner-centred education, flexible learning pathways, micro-credentials, digital inclusion, reskilling and upskilling, soft-skills development, psychological well-being, and community resilience. Sweden provides a particularly illustrative example: according to Eurostat, it has one of the highest adult participation rates in education among EU countries, and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) identifies Sweden as an EU leader in lifelong learning [6].

In European discourse, resilience is understood as the capacity of a society not only to respond to crisis but also to transform itself through education, innovation, and cross-sectoral cooperation. For this reason, universities are increasingly assuming the role of community-support centres, platforms for professional adaptation, institutions of social recovery, and agents in the development of a culture of resilience. For Ukraine, adult education has acquired particular importance under the conditions of full-scale war and deep social transformation. The war has become a catalyst for new models of adult education and professional adaptation. Ukrainian researchers note that, after the beginning of the full-scale war, demand for non-formal education and short-term certificate programmes increased by more than 40%, while distance learning became the principal form of access to education for a significant share of the adult population [7].

An important direction of public policy has been the renewal of the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022-2032 in response to the challenges of war and the needs of post-war recovery. The updated governmental strategy emphasises lifelong learning; continuity of the educational process; the digital transformation of education; the development of blended and distance learning; support for the psychological resilience of participants in the educational process; the integration of micro-credentials; and the strengthening of universities as centres of societal resilience and Ukraine's post-war recovery [8].

The experience of KROK University demonstrates the implementation of contemporary European and national approaches to lifelong learning through continuing professional development and professional-growth programmes, short-term certificate programmes, international educational projects, the development of a digital educational environment, support for the psychological resilience of participants in the educational process, the integration of formal and non-formal education, and the creation of an inclusive and adaptive educational space for learners of different age groups.

The practices of KROK University confirm that a contemporary university can function not only as an educational institution but also as a social centre for cultivating a culture of resilience, professional mobility, and societal adaptability. In this sense, the university becomes an important institutional factor in national resilience, social adaptation, and the post-war recovery of Ukraine.

The educational cases of KROK University demonstrate the potential of modern adult-education models as instruments for supporting human potential, professional mobility, psychological resilience, and the formation of a culture of adaptability under conditions of global crises and wartime challenges [9].

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