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The Role of the Transformation of Public Legal Consciousness during Legitimation of the European integration of Ukraine

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Abstract

The transformation of public legal consciousness during the legitimation of the European integration of Ukraine is key in ensuring the legal system's effectiveness and determining the vector of further socio-economic development. The legitimation of European integration involves the implementation of state management and the implementation of information policy for the legitimacy of the vector of development based on the perception of socio-political opinion. The article aims to determine the level of development of public legal awareness during the European integration of Ukraine. The research employed empirical methods — surveys and forecasting. The work revealed a positive trend of the European integration of Ukraine and a positive perception of this process by society. The results regarding the negative trend of mass media perception at the level of 50% of public trust are interpreted, which requires improvement of the information policy. A promising direction for further research is conducting a correlational analysis based on the Trust in Media and the Rule of Law Index.

Keywords: European integration, legitimation, legal sociological survey, public administration, legal space, social transformation.

Introduction

The importance of transforming public legal consciousness during the legitimation of Ukraine's European integration is relevant and significant in modern geopolitical and socio-cultural changes, especially during the Russian-Ukrainian war. The key problematic factor of European integration is the possibility of integrating the economic and legal systems. According to Skrypniuk et al. (2022), the European integration of Ukraine requires a deep analysis of the

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strategic direction of the legal, social, and cultural aspects of foreign policy. In this context, the transformation of legal consciousness is a crucial factor influencing the perception and implementation of European standards and norms.

The European integration of Ukraine covers not only economic and political aspects but also the implementation of democratic standards, legal reforms, protection of human rights, and the basics of freedom of speech. Protsiuk et al. (2023) noted that legal integration requires an effective approach to management in the public system of Ukraine. Going through a period of intense transformations, Ukrainian society faces challenges related to adopting new legal principles and adapting to European standards.

It is important to understand and analyse these aspects to determine the further path of Ukraine's European integration efforts. Ultimately, studying this topic is strategically important for understanding and maintaining stability, democracy, and the rule of law in Ukraine in its striving for European integration. Contradictions and conflicts accompany this process, as different population groups may have different views on European integration. Mistrust of information institutions can create challenges for the objective perception of legal and European integration processes and the formation of appropriate legal awareness. The study aims to determine the level of transformation of public legal consciousness during European integration.

Research Objectives

- 1. Determine the perception of legal consciousness in the process of its legitimation based on the experience of European countries.
- 2. Calculate the weighted average values regarding the perception of the current legal policy and the attitude of local authorities towards this process.
- 3. Develop three projected scenarios regarding the transformation of legal consciousness based on the obtained research results. How do sociocultural factors influence the transformation of public legal consciousness during the legitimation of Ukraine's European integration?

Materials and methods

Research Design

The research design involves a comprehensive approach that includes quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. The first stage provided for the collection and analysis of data to assess changes in the legal consciousness of society and their impact on the European integration process. The second stage is

the public opinion survey, a fundamental research element. It provides quantitative data on the population's attitude toward European integration processes and changes in the legal system. The final stage involved an analysis of the results to identify the respondents' awareness of European integration processes, their opinions and expectations from these processes, and the level of trust in various institutions, including the mass media.

Methods

The study employs a survey and forecasting methods. The questionnaire includes the following questions: 1. Attitude towards European integration. 2. Level of legal awareness. 3. Impact of legal awareness on everyday life. 4. Trust in mass media. It was suggested to rate each question according to the following indicators: Very important, important, very positive, very negative, unimportant. The validity of the questionnaire correlates with the content and issues of the European integration process. The reliability is determined by the legislation by interviewing public representatives of the state machinery.

The process of transformation of social, legal consciousness and the peculiarities of its legitimation were analysed by using a sociological survey. The analysis of answers through mathematical calculations established the applied results of the survey, which are reflected in the current legal consciousness.

Sample

The sample consists of 200 employees of state administrations who were involved in describing the transformation of legal consciousness. The sample was selected based on the regional distribution of functioning state administrations in the regions controlled by the government of Ukraine. Using the sample made it possible to consider practical cases of legal awareness in public administration bodies. The gender distribution was proportional, with the same number of women and men aged 25 to 60 years.

Instruments

The main tools for conducting empirical research are several methods and tools for processing the received answers. This approach made it possible to determine the general tendency of the respondents' attitude to each of the aspects of the study, to European integration, a transformation of legal consciousness, influence on everyday life and trust in the mass media. For a more detailed analysis, numerical values are assigned to each category of answers. This involved assigning values from 1 to 3, where each number corresponded to the response's degree of importance or positivity.

First, the method of weighted averages was used to analyse the results of the sociological survey. This approach determined the general tendency of the respondents' attitude to each of the aspects of the study, to European integration, a transformation of legal consciousness, influence on everyday life, and trust in the mass media. The values from 1 to 3 were assigned, where each number corresponded to the response's degree of importance or positivity. This approach made it possible to carry out a quantitative analysis of answers, turning qualitative answers into quantitative indicators, contributing to a more accurate and objective study of the dynamics of public opinion.

Three development scenarios were elaborated using the obtained data: optimistic, realistic, and pessimistic. Each of these scenarios was based on different assumptions about possible changes in legal awareness based on current trends and forecasts.

Ethical criteria

Ethical criteria included the assessment of the degree of influence of European integration and the country's attitude to the process of its legitimation and the main means of its spread in the Ukrainian space. Such criteria as the attitude to the mass media and trust in public administration formed practical experience regarding one's activities in the context of European integration.

Literature review

According to Brooks and Bürgin (2021), transforming public legal consciousness is accompanied by strengthening European integration and aggravation of geopolitical conflicts. This opens new opportunities for Ukraine regarding international security and cooperation. Samsin et al. (2021) believe that strengthening the legal framework will effectively contribute to the Ukrainian cultural and legal environment. Protsiuk et al. (2023) agree with that, as these processes open the way for harmonising legislation with European standards while preserving national peculiarities. According to Becker and Gehring (2023), integration into the European legal space requires significant legislative initiatives. Pidorycheva (2020) notes that such an effective policy will allow Ukraine to integrate more effectively into European legal and economic structures.

Maidanyk (2020) emphasises that developing a democratic culture is key to the implementation of European standards in the legal system of Ukraine. The importance of this aspect cannot be overestimated in the context of strengthening the democratic institutions of Ukraine. According to Anghel and Jones (2023), an essential aspect of European integration is the development of fair and effective legal mechanisms. Reznik et al. (2021) confirm this thesis, indicating the

consequences of developing mechanisms that will contribute to greater justice and protection of human rights in Ukraine. Kroitor (2018) focuses on the role of power and knowledge in shaping legal consciousness through working with mass media and choosing a general political vector. Zabolotnyi and Ocheretiana (2021) determine that this approach provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of how the government affects legal changes and public perception. The approach of Savelyev and Smalyuk (2019) emphasises the need to deconstruct outdated legal norms and practices. Shchur (2021) notes the importance of political citizen participation in the legal reform processes, as citizen involvement in discussions and decision-making strengthens democracy and the rule of law.

According to analytical results obtained by Kravchuk (2021), the transformation of legal consciousness is a result of political struggle and discourse. According to Kindzerskyi (2021), this trend is confirmed by political discourse and its struggle, as they form the basis for new legal realities and standards. Beschastnyi et al. (2019) consider the legal transformation process as part of the historical development of society, which can reflect essential changes in legal consciousness. Shevtsova and Shvets (2021) focused on the influence of economic conditions on forming legal consciousness, as economic conditions often determine how a country's legal system develops and reforms.

Walker and Koshiw (2022) interpret Fukuyama's view of the end of history in the context of the global adoption of democratic and legal norms as one of the negative factors in the formation of the transformation of legal consciousness. According to Liashenko et al. (2020), the global adoption of democratic and legal norms may reflect the goal of these transformations. Yepur (2020) indicates the role of modernisation in transforming legal consciousness, which has one of the most significant impacts depending on the level of reforms and integration into the global European space. Poroshenko (2019) confirms this practice, indicating a modernisation process that significantly affects the development of legal institutions and approaches to legislation. Rudyi et al. (2021) analyse the impact of mass media on the understanding of law and legal consciousness as an identifier of how society perceives and evaluates legal changes.

Protsiuk et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of imagination and creativity in forming new legal ideas and institutions, which can play a key role in transforming legal consciousness to establish common European values. So, the researchers determined the prospects of the vector of European integration and the possibility of improving the legal framework for its implementation.

Results

The effectiveness of the state machinery, public administration, and the development of legal consciousness among the population is important for understanding the transformation of public legal consciousness in legitimising the European integration of Ukraine. The foreign experience of Albania and Georgia shows the complex process of joining the European Union, which requires countries to constantly improve legal regulation and optimise their legislation to align it with the organisation's standards. The analysis of the percentage ratio of different answers determined how attitudes towards European integration are changing, how legal awareness is changing in response to European integration processes, and what impact these changes have on the citizens' everyday lives.

A sociological survey was conducted to analyse the attitude of Ukrainian society to the European integration process and determine their legal awareness. Table 1 provides the obtained results.

Table 1. Results of a sociological survey of respondents

Answers	Attitude towards European integration	Transformation of legal consciousness	Impact on everyday life	Trust in media
Important	44.5%	34.2%	30.4%	10.2%
Very	25.5%	24.6%	36.7%	11.2%
important				
Very	10.2%	14.5%	20.9%	42.6%
negative				
Very positive	12.6%	10.2%	8.4%	5.6%
Unimportant	7.2%	16.5%	4.6%	30.4%

Source: created by the author

Table 1 data of this survey indicates a positive attitude towards European integration but also emphasises that a significant part of society sees great weight and importance in it. Regarding the transformation of legal consciousness, 34.2% consider it important, and interpreting such results indicates a positive attitude toward social processes. A total of 24.6% consider it very important. The interpretation indicates readiness for active social and political actions to support these processes. The understanding of the public perception of European integration, the transformation of legal consciousness, the impact of these processes on everyday life, and trust in mass media in Ukraine, according to

official data of Detector Media, was determined. The trust rating was 30%, so it is crucial to analyse the results of surveys that reflect the percentage of respondents' answers.

The most problematic is the issue of trust in mass media: 42.6% of respondents expressed a very negative attitude, and 30.4% consider trust in mass media to be completely unimportant. This reflects a critical attitude towards the media space in the country and indicates a high level of mistrust in the information provided by the mass media.

The obtained data are key to understanding how society evaluates the importance and impact of European integration processes and legal reforms and testify to the challenges facing media institutions in connection with the low level of trust in them.

The conducted analysis gives grounds to conclude that the level of legal awareness is high. Still, there are some problems in public administration regarding the effectiveness of the state machinery and trust in the media.

We can calculate the weighted average to specify the weight of the answer to each question. Table 2 contains numerical values for each answer.

Table 2. Results of the calculation of the weighted average indicator according to the received answers of the respondents

Question	Weighted average	
Attitude towards European integration	2.207	
Transformation of legal consciousness	2.038	
Impact on everyday life	2.216	
Trust in media	1.438	

Source: created by the author

The results show that European integration has a significant impact on everyday life, and it is necessary to form new values in society for further European integration.

The survey shows that attitudes towards European integration are generally positive, with a weighted average of 2.207. This reflects awareness of the importance of European integration processes for Ukraine. A positive attitude towards European integration can be due to the hope of improving the economic situation, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting Ukraine's international integration. European integration must act not only as a foreign policy guide but also as a catalyst for internal reforms.

The transformation of legal consciousness has a weighted average of 2.038, which indicates a moderately positive attitude. This shows that although society understands the importance of changes in the legal sphere, this process is perceived with certain reservations. Effective transformation of legal consciousness is key to creating a stable legal system that will support European integration processes.

The weighted average of 2.216 for the impact of European integration and the transformation of legal consciousness on everyday life indicates that citizens feel the real impact of these processes on their daily affairs. This can mean increased business opportunities, improved quality of life thanks to European standards, and more excellent legal protection. The impact on everyday life is an important indicator because it directly reflects the changes taking place in society.

This may indicate problems with the objectivity and quality of information disseminated by mass media and a general mistrust of media institutions. In the context of European integration and legal transformation, this can create challenges for an effective communication process, as public support and understanding of these processes are critical.

Three different scenarios — Optimistic, Realistic and Pessimistic — will be used to create a forecast for the transformation of legal consciousness for the coming years (2024-2027). Each scenario will represent different possible trajectories of the development of legal consciousness in Ukraine. The criteria of each scenario can be displayed as follows, which will be reflected in the legal situation in Ukraine as a final result:

- 1. Optimistic scenario involves that reforms are moving quickly and effectively, leading to a significant improvement in legal awareness.
- 2. Realistic scenario reflects moderate progress in the transformation of legal consciousness, considering current trends and possible obstacles.
- 3. Pessimistic scenario reflects a situation in which reforms slow down or fail, resulting in minimal or negative progress in legal awareness.

The vector of further development of legal awareness for each scenario will be forecasted for 2024-2027 based on Table 1, which is based on the results of the conducted survey and considering the dynamics of the development of legal awareness in Ukraine. A possible error of 5-10% will depend entirely on the legal status of Ukraine, the further development of the war, socio-economic conditions, etc.

A chart of scenarios will be built from the perspective of 2024-2027 in the context of further geopolitical challenges and the transformation of legal consciousness during the legitimation of Ukraine's European integration.

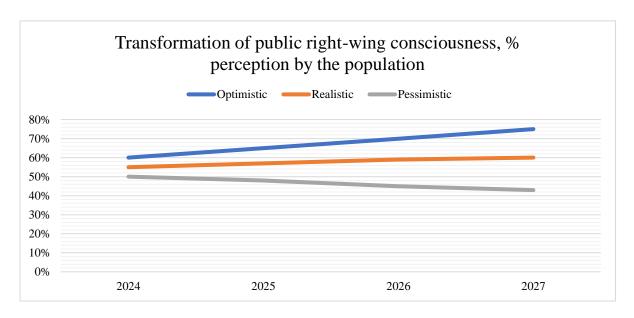


Figure 1. Scenarios of the transformation of public legal consciousness during the legitimation of European integration

Source: created by the author

The forecast in Figure 1 gives grounds to determine that the optimistic scenario assumes that the reforms will be carried out efficiently and quickly, resulting in significant yearly improvements in the legal awareness of society. The key influencing factors are the optimisation of public administration through the implementation of digital governance, the use of innovative technologies, the development of the economy, and the end of the war. Values increase from 60% in 2024 to 75% in 2027, reflecting significant progress in this area. A slight gradual increase from 55% in 2024 to 60% in 2027 is forecasted. The pessimistic scenario suggests that reforms are delayed or fail, leading to a decline in legal awareness. The aggravation of the political and economic crisis and the negative development of the war in Ukraine in the following years may be influencing factors. This scenario shows values falling from 50% in 2024 to 43% in 2027, reflecting potential difficulties and challenges.

Therefore, the survey results emphasise the importance of transforming legal consciousness in the context of legitimising the European integration process. A positive attitude towards European integration and a moderately positive attitude towards legal changes indicate society's openness to reforms. Awareness of these aspects is key to developing effective strategies that will contribute to the successful integration of Ukraine into the European space.

Discussion

The results of the transformation of public legal consciousness have positive values, which corresponds to the results (Anghel & Jones, 2022), which indicated the effectiveness of legal reforms in Ukraine. The data on the important developments were obtained: about 60% of the respondents pointed to the high impact of forming common values and building the legal field in Ukraine, which will significantly develop in the following years. The study of Håkansson (2021) indicates excellent results regarding the effectiveness of the European integration process. Skrypniuk et al. (2022) showed results similar to our research, confirming the cultural and legal vector of Ukraine's development towards European integration. A moderate scenario indicating 40-50% confirms the gradual transformation of consciousness because of the number of problematic aspects in the state machinery regarding the openness of business functioning and the general social condition of the population.

The available results of the study indicate a high role in transforming public legal consciousness in the context of legitimating the European integration of Ukraine, which, according to the average positive indicators, are 30% and 28%, respectively. The obtained results are reflected in a theoretical analysis conducted by Rudyi et al. (2021), which identified similar trends during the formation of Ukrainian legal consciousness to ensure its legitimation. The analysis of the survey confirms the results of Khoma and Vdovychyn (2020), who indicate the importance of a mass information campaign and education for raising citizens' awareness regarding European integration and determining the impact of educational initiatives on public opinion regarding European integration. It is important to note that the level of mistrust in mass media fluctuates at 50-60%, which can be higher in field studies. Such a negative factor indicates the need to optimise information campaigns and create a legal information space.

Results of the study by Zabolotnyi and Ocheretiana (2021) determined the impact of political changes on the perception of the legal system in other post-communist countries. Ukraine went through several political complications and geopolitical challenges, reflected by the events of 2003-2004 and 2014-2015. It can be noted that the projected data coincide with statistical data presented in studies (Kachur & Kozin, 2022), which demonstrate a positive trend in the growth of support for European integration among citizens of Ukraine and other countries.

The administrative segment of Ukraine fully supports the current vector of development, which is important for legitimising the European integration process. This approach is also defined in the study by Walker and Koshiw (2022), which confirms the importance of forming public administration based on the

rules of the EU countries. Issues of information channels and media have a decisive influence on the formation of citizens' consciousness, and this is reflected in the results of research conducted by Yakoviyk et al. (2022), which emphasises the role of mass media in influencing public opinion. Weighted averages at 1.5-2.1 indicate a more positive perception of European integration in modern conditions than in previous years. The course of the further development of the war and the support of Ukraine from the European countries remains important. According to the research of Brooks and Bürgin (2021), fluctuations also occur in European countries' policy regarding the general functioning and integrity of economic cooperation systems.

Therefore, analysing the role of transforming public legal consciousness during the legitimation of Ukraine's European integration points to the need for effective management by state bodies. However, there is a need to improve the work of mass media and strengthen the effectiveness of legitimation at the level of management bodies. This practice will help enhance sentiments regarding European integration, legitimacy, and significance in the current conflict.

Conclusion

The obtained results give grounds to conclude that the attitude of Ukrainian citizens towards European integration and the transformation of legal consciousness is mostly positive but with significant differences of opinion. These data confirm that legal transformation and European integration are significant for Ukrainian society, but they also note the need to strengthen trust in information institutions. The transformation of public legal consciousness plays a decisive role during the legitimation of Ukraine's European integration, as it stimulates profound changes in citizens' perceptions and assessments of European values, norms, and rules. Raising the legal consciousness of the population, which includes understanding the importance of the rule of law, human rights, and civil responsibility, is key to the successful integration of Ukraine into the European space.

The survey that was conducted, which focuses on the transformation of legal consciousness in Ukraine, revealed a significant positive impact on legitimising European integration. The survey results showed that Ukrainians are increasingly aware of the importance of European values, legal norms, and principles of democracy. This shows the growing acceptance and internal support of the idea of European integration among citizens. Raising legal awareness is critical for the further development of democratic institutions in the country and for ensuring stability and progress in the European integration process.

Recommendations

The results of the calculations reveal the variety of perceptions regarding European integration and aspects of legal transformation. For future researchers examining this topic, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Investigate the role of educational initiatives in enhancing legal awareness and support for European integration among different demographic groups.
- Examine the impact of media and communication strategies on shaping public attitudes towards legal reforms and European integration.
- Explore the relationship between regional differences within Ukraine and the variance in legal consciousness and support for European integration.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing legal institutions in fostering a culture of legality and trust towards the European integration process.
- Analyse the potential barriers to transforming legal consciousness and suggest strategies to overcome these challenges for a smoother integration process.

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