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DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN UKRAINE AND LITHUANIA

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Development of European Integration Processes in Ukraine and Lithuania

Lesia KOTSUR[1], Vitalii KOTSUR[2]

Abstract

The relevance of the topic is due to the strategic importance of European integration for Ukraine at the current stage of development and the need to study the experience of Lithuania, which has successfully passed this way. Increasing geopolitical challenges and the need for systemic internal transformations make the study particularly timely. The purpose of the study is to investigate the main stages, factors and features of European integration of Ukraine and Lithuania in 1990-2021, the object of the study is the processes of European integration of the two countries. The methodological basis of the study is the comparative-analytical, systematic and historical-logical methods based on the analysis of scientific publications and official reports. The study found that Lithuania has made rapid progress due to policy stability, consistency of reforms and high public support. Ukraine is characterized by wave-like processes of support, slowdown of reforms due to political instability and external challenges. The article identifies key legislative and institutional transformations in both countries and forecasts the development of Ukraine's European integration based on the Lithuanian experience. The practical significance lies in the possibility of using the results of the study to formulate the European Integration 2030 strategy and improve the communication policy of government agencies. The proposed recommendations will contribute to strengthening coordination between state institutions and civil society, which is an important condition for Ukraine's successful progress towards full EU membership.

Keywords: European integration; Ukraine; Lithuania; integration processes; institutional reforms; legislative changes; comparative analysis; external factors; public support; development prospects.

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Introduction

In the current context of globalization and growing geopolitical instability, European integration processes are of particular importance for countries seeking to establish themselves as full participants in the European political, economic and security space. Ukraine and Lithuania are vivid examples of post-Soviet states that, having regained their independence, have identified European integration as a priority for their development. However, the pace and nature of this process differed significantly. While Lithuania became a member of the EU in 2004, Ukraine is still at the stage of implementing association agreements and forming its candidate status. This contrast attracts the attention of researchers and calls for a detailed comparison of the integration models of the two countries. The scientific literature shows that scholars pay considerable attention to this topic. (Borovyk *et al*. 2024; Korzh, 2024; Yara, 2024 and Roman *et al.,* 2023) reveal the legal and economic foundations of Ukraine's European integration and emphasize the importance of harmonizing legislation. (Lavdas, 2024; Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024; Mykhaylyk *et al.,* 2023) focus on the Lithuanian experience and its applied value for Ukraine. The role of the socio-cultural dimension of integration and public support is studied in detail by (Vizniak, 2024; Vaidelytė *et al.,* 2024), and (Shvets, 2024), while information policy as a factor of European integration is analyzed by (Leshyk, 2024; Romtsiv & Levchuk 2023). The issue of economic recovery in the context of external threats is covered by (Landesmann *et al.* 2024; Soloviova and Fomin, 2025). However, despite the large number of studies, a number of gaps remain, including the lack of a systematic comparison of not only macro-level indicators but also institutional approaches and the effectiveness of integration policy in the dynamics. The issues of adapting the Lithuanian experience in the context of ongoing external threats and internal instability in Ukraine remain insufficiently studied. The role of regions in shaping the national strategy of European integration and practical mechanisms of interinstitutional coordination have not been studied.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to study the key stages and factors of European integration of Ukraine and Lithuania in 1990-2021, to identify common and distinctive features of these processes, to characterize legislative and institutional changes, and to assess the prospects for further development of Ukraine's European integration, taking into account the experience of Lithuania. The objectives of the study include: to conduct a comparative analysis of integration processes; to identify factors of influence; to analyze legislative and institutional transformations; to identify common features and differences; to formulate practical recommendations for Ukrainian governmental and civic institutions.

Literature Review

A significant number of scientific works covering both legal and economic and social aspects have been devoted to the European integration processes of Ukraine and Lithuania. In particular, the legal prerequisites for integration are studied by (Korzh, 2024; Borovyk *et al.,* 2024), and (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024), who focus on harmonizing the legal framework and building institutional capacity. The role of economic policy and financial literacy in the development of integration processes was studied by (Roman *et al.,* 2023), (Prykaziuk & Savitskyi, 2022), and (Landesmann *et al.,* 2024). Innovative aspects of development and the impact on the socio-economic sphere are considered in (Tropina & Yevtushenko, 2023; Belova & Yaroshchuk, 2024), and tax policy in the context of European integration is studied by (Roman *et al.,* 2023). A significant contribution to the study of judicial reforms and anti-corruption initiatives in the context of European integration was made by (Yara, 2024; Voloshchenko, 2024; Leshyk, 2024).

The impact of foreign policy factors and the international environment on the pace of integration is examined by (Lavdas, 2024; Landesmann *et al.,* 2024), and (Soloviova & Fomin, 2025), who emphasize the importance of external support. The regional and cultural dimension of integration is analyzed by (Vizniak, 2024; Shvets, 2024; Puzyrova, 2022). The historical aspect and comparative analysis of the paths of Lithuania and Ukraine are presented in (Mykhaylyk *et al.,* 2023; Martseniuk, 2017; Shulga, 2020). The social consequences of migration processes and the integration of migrants from Ukraine in Lithuania are studied in (Skučienė et al., 2023; Vaidelytė et al., 2024), which also emphasize the need to develop a "return migration" strategy. Special attention is paid to information policy in the context of integration in (Leshyk, 2024), while (Romtsiv & Levchuk, 2023) emphasize the role of public administration in these processes.

In general, the authors of the studies (Borovyk *et al.,* 2024; Tropina & Yevtushenko, 2023; Soloviova & Fomin, 2025; Lavdas, 2024) agree on the complexity of integration for Ukraine compared to Lithuania due to external threats and internal barriers, but emphasize the potential and importance of further research to improve state support policies, institutional training, and strengthen communication with civil society. In addition, (Modi *et al.,* (2024) provide an analysis of socio-demographic trends in EU countries that may affect the migration policies of Ukraine and Lithuania. The peculiarities of overcoming crisis phenomena and economic recovery in the context of war are studied in (Landesmann *et al.,* (2024). The issues of state policy in the field of bioeconomy and adaptation of European experience are covered by (Belova & Yaroshchuk, 2024), emphasizing the importance of the environmental component of integration.

A separate study by Shulga (2020) is worth mentioning, which focuses on the policy on national minorities in Lithuania and possible lessons for Ukraine. The problems of tourism development in the context of European in-tegration

are discussed in Puzyrova (2022). Martseniuk (2017) adds value to the study by revealing the military-political cooperation between Ukraine and the Baltic states as one of the components of European integration. Also, Leshyk (2024) reflects the importance of information policy in the success of integration processes. Romtsiv and Levchuk (2023) emphasize the importance of the participation of top government bodies in European integration policy, which should also be taken into account in further research.

The security, political, and informational dynamics on European aspira-tions conditioned the integration processes in Ukraine and Lithuania from 1990 to 2021. In his work, Primush et al. (2023) indicate that information wars play an important part in shaping public opinion, destabilizing the processes of democratic transfor-mations especially in Ukraine's way to the EU. Chmyr et al. (2023) further elaborate on Ukraine's measures taken during the periods of political transition in countering informa-tional aggression. Similarly, Kussainov et al. (2023) consider anti-corruption mechanisms in the EU's financial sector, providing a broader institutional view of transparency support that technologies such as AI can provide (which reflect what can help Ukraine align with European standards). Kryshtanovych et al. (2022) stress the security dimen-sion of EU integration by assessing counterterrorism efforts and the necessity of the governance among the member states. Finally, Oliinyk et al. (2022) con-trast Western countries' criminal policy frameworks in order to evaluate the directions Ukraine should be taking in order to strengthen its legal and eco-nomic security systems in adapting to EU models. The studies presented here-in collectively give critical background on which to understand the difficulties and the strategic answers engaged in the Eurointegration trajectories of post-Soviet states.

Shulha (2018) highlights Ukraine's achievements in the field of European integration, focusing on the regulatory aspect of cooperation with the EU. The author emphasizes the need to harmonize national legislation with European standards, which is a key factor in Ukraine's further progress on this path. The Razumkov Center's Analytical Report (2022) provides a comprehensive assessment of the realities and prospects of Ukraine's European integration, highlighting both positive developments and challenges, including the slow pace of reforms and domestic political instability. The publication is a valuable source of practical analysis and statistical data. Molotchko (2024) addresses the conceptual and terminological analysis of European integration processes, clarifying the essence of key concepts related to Ukraine's integration into the EU. Her approach helps to systematize the scientific discourse, contributing to a better understanding of the topic among researchers.

Prykhodko (2019) focuses on the historical development of Ukraine's European integration course. He examines the stages of formation of this vector from the moment of independence to the present, pointing out the influence of external political actors. Dudkevych's (2021) dissertation deepens the understanding of the political dimension of Ukraine's European integration. The author analyzes the

practices of implementing the European integration policy, paying attention to its institutional implementation and political rhetoric. Masyk (2020) and Moskaliuk (2023) consider the experience of the Baltic States as a benchmark for Ukraine. The first author identifies the key stages of the integration process in the Baltic States, while the second author reveals the preconditions and mechanisms for implementing the Euro-Atlantic course. Both emphases are useful for comparative analysis of integration paths.

Sydoruk (2017) analyzes the peculiarities of the Baltic states' accession to the EU, focusing on the foreign policy vector and the transformation processes in these states. This study is of practical importance for the development of Ukraine's strategy for the European course. Internews Ukraine (2022) outlines the role of the parliament in the European integration process, emphasizing the need for its institutional capacity to effectively legislate for reforms that meet European requirements. Kotsur et al. (2023) provide a comparative analysis of the foreign policy impact on European integration and nation-building in Ukraine and Lithuania, emphasizing the importance of international factors in the transformation processes of both countries. Finally, the European Commission (2025) provides an example of practical management of integration processes on the example of Lithuania, in particular in the context of migrant integration policy. This experience may be useful for developing relevant strategies in Ukraine.

Thus, the literature review demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the European integration process and the different emphases in research: from legal and economic aspects (Borovyk *et al.,* 2024; Roman *et al.,* 2023; Yara, 2024) to socio-cultural, information and management approaches (Leshyk, 2024; Shvets, 2024; Vizniak, 2024). However, previous studies did not pay sufficient attention to a comprehensive assessment of Ukraine's institutional capacity in the wartime and post-war periods and did not cover the mechanisms of regional integration into the national European integration strategy. These issues remain open and require further research.

Methodology

The study was conducted by the author in 2023-2024 on the basis of a comparative analysis of legal acts, official government reports of Ukraine and Lithuania, and analytical materials of the European Union. The method of systematic analysis was used to study the legal, economic and socio-cultural aspects of European integration. The method of comparative and historical analysis allowed the author to assess the stages of development of integration of both countries in the temporal dynamics. The empirical basis was formed by scientific publications analyzed using the content analysis method (Semenets *et al.,* 2021; Lavdas, 2024; Mykhaylyk *et al.,* 2023). In addition, the method of generalization and forecasting was used to assess the prospects for further development of Ukraine's integration processes,

taking into account the experience of Lithuania (Soloviova & Fomin, 2025; Roman *et al.,* 2023). Data processing and tabulation were carried out using MS Excel and Google Sheets office software.

Results

European integration processes for Ukraine and Lithuania have become a key vector of political, economic, and legal development in the period from 1990 to 2021. Despite different starting conditions, both countries demonstrated a desire to deepen cooperation with the European Union and adapt their internal systems to European standards. Lithuania, as a Baltic state, went through this process much faster and gained EU membership in 2004, while for Ukraine this process remains ongoing and complex. In the context of this study, it is important to analyze the key stages of European integration of Ukraine and Lithuania, identify common and distinctive features, and determine the factors that influenced the success or slowdown of these processes.

Below is a comparative table of the key stages of Ukraine's and Lithuania's European integration in 1990-2021 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Key Stages of European Integration of Ukraine and Lithuania (1990-2021)

Parameter	Ukraine	Lithuania
The first steps	1994 - signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU (Semenets et al., 2021).	1995 - signing of the Association Agreement and the beginning of the negotiation process (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).
Key documents	2014 - signing of the Association Agreement with the EU (Yara, 2024).	2003 - signing of the EU Accession Agreement (Lavdas, 2024).
EU membership	None, candidate country status as of 2022 (Soloviova & Fomin, 2025).	Since May 1, 2004, it has been a full member of the EU (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).
Reforms	Attempts to implement judicial, anti-corruption, financial, and administrative reforms (Yara, 2024; Roman et al., 2023).	Comprehensive reforms in the legal, economic, and political spheres implemented by 2004 (Lavdas, 2024).
Influence of external factors	Russia's armed aggression, economic crises, and political instability (Landesmann et al., 2024).	Favorable environment in the Baltic region, NATO membership since 2004 (Lavdas, 2024).

Public support	A variable that increased during the Revolution of Dignity and after 2014 (Vizniak, 2024).	High public support for integration (Vaidelytė et al., 2024).
Impact on the economy	Partial adaptation of legislation, continued high dependence on exports outside the EU (Borovyk et al., 2024).	Integration into European markets and stable economic growth (Lavdas, 2024).
The role of education and culture	The growing role of experience exchange and integration into European educational and cultural programs (Shvets, 2024).	Active participation in Erasmus+ programs, cultural initiatives with the EU (Vaidelytė et al., 2024).

Source: created by the author based on (Borovyk et al., 2024; Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024; Landesmann et al., 2024; Lavdas, 2024; Roman et al., 2023; Semenets et al., 2021; Shvets, 2024; Soloviova & Fomin, 2025; Vaidelytė et al., 2024; Vizniak, 2024; Yara, 2024)

The comparative analysis shows that Lithuania, thanks to political stability, focused reforms, and high public support, managed to become an EU member in 2004. Ukraine, on the other hand, is making significant progress toward European integration, but faces numerous external and internal obstacles. Lithuania's experience may be useful for Ukraine in implementing systemic reforms, overcoming bureaucratic barriers, and consolidating the efforts of the government and civil society on the path to full EU membership.

Let us consider the main factors that influenced the pace and nature of integration processes in Lithuania and Ukraine.

For Lithuania

– *Political stability and commitment of the government.* Since regaining its independence, Lithuania has been consistently moving towards EU and NATO membership. Government initiatives have been aimed at adapting legislation to EU norms as soon as possible and creating a transparent legal system (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).
– *External support and favorable international environment.* Positive political and economic influence from the neighboring Baltic states and Poland, as well as active support from the EU in the form of technical and financial assistance, contributed to rapid progress (Lavdas, 2024).
– *High level of public support.* Since the early 1990s, Lithuanian society has been unequivocally in favor of integration with Europe, which has allowed the authorities to implement even complex reforms without significant resistance (Vaidelytė *et al.,* 2024).

– *Rapid implementation of reforms.* Lithuania has implemented a comprehensive reform of the public administration, finance, judiciary, and business environment in a short time, which was positively assessed by European institutions (Lavdas, 2024).

For Ukraine

– *Political instability and changes in the foreign policy vector.* Frequent changes of governments and priorities, oscillations between European integration and focus on cooperation with Russia have significantly slowed down Ukraine's progress towards EU membership (Korzh, 2024).
– *Impact of external threats.* The armed conflict in Donbas since 2014, the annexation of Crimea, and the constant threat from Russia complicate the implementation of reforms and hinder stability (Landesmann *et al.,* 2024).
– *Lack of a clear strategy and consistency in reforms.* Ukraine has demonstrated a fragmented approach to reforming its administrative, legal, and judicial systems, which has led to a lack of sustainable results (Roman *et al.,* 2023).
– *Low level of financial and institutional support.* Unlike Lithuania, Ukraine received support from the EU sporadically and under strict conditions, which made it difficult to implement large-scale projects (Semenets *et al.,* 2021).
– *Public activity grew in waves.* Public support for European integration increased during socio-political crises (e.g., the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity), but often remained uneven (Vizniak, 2024).

Legislative and institutional changes are key indicators of a country's readiness for European integration. In the case of Lithuania and Ukraine, this process had significant differences in pace and consistency. Lithuania quickly and consistently reformed its legislation and created effective institutions that met the requirements of the European Union. Ukraine, on the other hand, made reform attempts with periods of slowdown or rollback under the influence of political instability and external factors. The main legislative and institutional changes in both countries in the context of European integration are presented in Table 2 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Legislative and Institutional Changes in Ukraine and Lithuania in the Context of European Integration (1990-2021)

The direction of change	Ukraine	Lithuania
Legislative harmonization	Gradual approximation of legislation to EU standards in trade, justice, finance, and security (Semenets et al., 2021; Yara, 2024).	Comprehensive adaptation of national legislation to the requirements of the acquis communautaire (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).

Judicial reform	Reform of the judicial system with a focus on judicial independence and the fight against corruption (Yara, 2024).	Establishment of an independent judicial system in line with EU standards (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).
Anti-corruption initiatives	Introduction of NABU, NAPC and e-declaration system (Yara, 2024).	Systemic anti-corruption measures at the early stage of integration (Lavdas, 2024).
Civil service reform	Introduce new competitive procedures and civil service standards (Roman et al., 2023).	Changing the principles of civil service in line with European standards (Lavdas, 2024).
Institutional structures	Establishment of the Government Office for European Integration and coordination bodies under the Cabinet of Ministers (Korzh, 2024).	Establishment of the National Council for European Integration and creation of specialized agencies (Lavdas, 2024).
Economic reforms	Foreign trade liberalization, currency regulation, and banking system reform (Borovyk et al., 2024).	Accelerated economic reform and integration into the European market (Lavdas, 2024).
Educational changes	Adaptation of educational programs to the Bologna Process (Shvets, 2024).	Implementation of European education standards and active participation in Erasmus+ programs (Vaidelytė *et al*., 2024).

Source: Created by the author based on (Borovyk et al., 2024; Korzh, 2024; Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024; Lavdas, 2024; Roman et al., 2023; Semenets et al., 2021; Shvets, 2024; Vaidelytė et al., 2024; Yara, 2024)

The analysis shows that Lithuania has implemented targeted, systemic legislative and institutional changes in close coordination with the European Union, which allowed the country to successfully complete the European integration process and become a full member of the EU in 2004. Despite a number of important steps in legislative harmonization, judicial and anti-corruption reforms, Ukraine continues to face challenges in implementing systemic changes due to the influence of external factors and internal political instability. The success of Ukraine's further European integration efforts will depend on the consistency of reforms, the effectiveness of institutions, and active cooperation with European partners.

The European integration processes of Ukraine and Lithuania in 1990-2021 were characterized by common aspirations to join the European space, but were accompanied by different approaches, pace and results. The comparison allows us to identify not only similar trends but also fundamental differences related to internal political conditions, the level of preparation of the legislative framework, and the influence of external factors. The main common and distinctive features of Ukraine's and Lithuania's European integration are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Common and Distinctive Features of the European Integration Processes of Ukraine and Lithuania (1990-2021)

Criterion	Common features	Distinctive features
Political aspiration	Both countries declared a course toward European integration in the 1990s (Mykhaylyk *et al*., 2023; Vizniak, 2024).	Lithuania followed a stable course of integration, while Ukraine periodically changed its vector (Korzh, 2024).
Legislative changes	Harmonization of national legislation with EU norms (Semenets *et al*., 2021; Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024).	In Lithuania, the process was systematic and consistent, while in Ukraine it was uneven and influenced by political fluctuations.
Institutional transformations	Establishment of bodies to coordinate European integration processes (Korzh, 2024; Lavdas, 2024).	Lithuania quickly formed effective institutions, while in Ukraine, the implementation of functions was often poor.
Public support	Public support and participation in pro-European initiatives (Vizniak, 2024; Vaidelytė *et al*., 2024).	In Lithuania, support is consistently high; in Ukraine, it is wave-like, associated with political crises (Vizniak, 2024).
Influence of external factors	Focus on European integration as part of foreign policy (Lavdas, 2024; Soloviova & Fomin, 2025).	Lithuania acted in a favorable international environment; Ukraine was under strong pressure from Russia (Landesmann *et al*., 2024).
Key result	Both countries have signed basic agreements with the EU (Yara, 2024; Lavdas, 2024).	Lithuania has been an EU member since 2004; Ukraine has candidate status as of 2022 (Soloviova & Fomin, 2025).

Source: created by the author based on (Korzh, 2024; Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024; Landesmann et al., 2024; Lavdas, 2024; Mykhaylyk et al., 2023; Semenets et al., 2021; Soloviova & Fomin, 2025; Vaidelytė et al., 2024; Vizniak, 2024; Yara, 2024)

A comparison of Ukraine's and Lithuania's European integration pro-cesses shows that both countries shared a common desire to integrate into the European community and implemented reforms aimed at meeting European standards. At the same time, as mentioned above, Lithuania managed to achieve the result due to the stability of its policy, consistency of reforms, and favorable external conditions. Ukraine, on the other hand, continues to move towards European integration, facing internal problems and external threats. Further progress will depend on the country's ability to ensure systematic changes and stable implementation of its European integration policy.

Ukraine is currently at a difficult but important stage of European integration. An analysis of the experience of Lithuania, which successfully completed its path to EU membership in 2004, allows us to identify the main factors that can help Ukraine overcome the existing challenges. Prospects for further development of Ukraine's European integration depend on the systematic nature of reforms, efficiency of public administration, public support and stable international coo-peration. Assessing these prospects is possible by comparing key indicators of reforms and adaptation of institutional structures, as well as extrapolating successful approaches implemented in Lithuania.

To assess the prospects for the development of Ukraine's European integration, the author used a comparative and analytical method based on empirical data on the pace of implementation of European integration reforms, the level of public support and EU financial assistance. A model was also used to compare the dynamics of adaptation of legislation and economic indicators of Ukraine and Lithuania at the same time intervals (5, 10 and 15 years after the start of active integration).

Below is a graph that demonstrates the prospects for Ukraine's European integration, taking into account the experience of Lithuania (Figure 1).

The analysis of the presented data demonstrates a clear positive dynamics of European integration processes in Lithuania over 15 years: the level of reform implementation increased from 65% in 5 years to 98% in 15 years, and public support increased from 72% to 80%. At similar stages, Ukraine is lagging behind: the actual implementation of reforms in 5 years was 48%, with a projected increase to 62% in 10 years. However, the projected indicators for Ukraine, subject to the adaptation of the Lithuanian experience, indicate the possibility of reaching 95% of the level of reform implementation in 15 years, which demonstrates an optimistic trend. The indicators of projected public support in Ukraine also show a gradual increase - from 58% to 75% in 2029. The overall dynamics indicate the potential for accelerated development of Ukraine, provided that the policy is stable, reforms are systematic, and effective communication with the population is maintained.

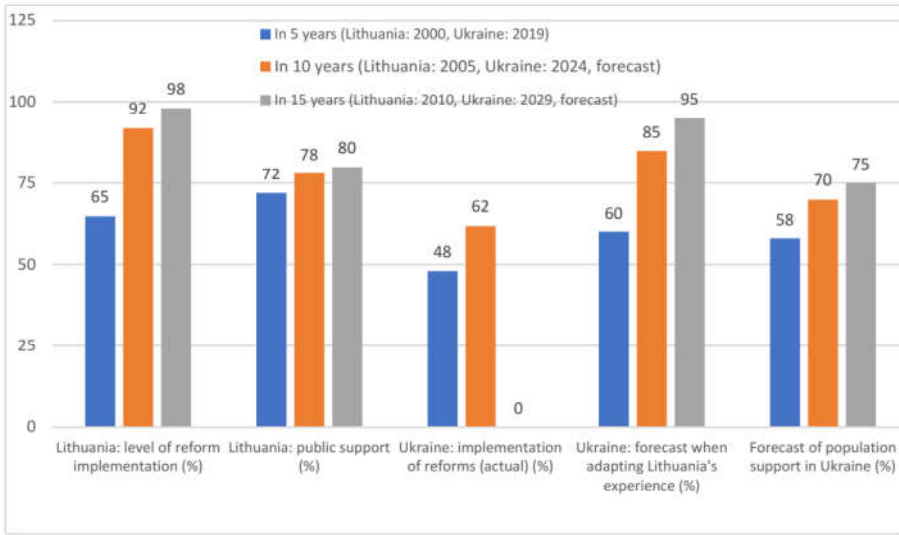


Figure 1. Comparative Dynamics of Key Indicators of Lithuania's European Integration and Forecast Indicators for Ukraine (in percentage of implementation of appropriate reforms and level of public support)

Source: created by the authors based on (Korzh, 2024; Lavdas, 2024; Landesmann et al., 2024; Roman et al., 2023) Semenets et al., 2021; Soloviova & Fomin, 2025; Vizniak, 2024; Yara, 2024)

Lithuania's experience demonstrates that the key prerequisites for success are the stability of the political course, the continuity of reforms, and the active involvement of civil society. For Ukraine, it is important not only to continue harmonizing its legislation with European law, but also to systematically implement judicial, anti-corruption, and administrative reforms. Based on comparative data, it can be predicted that if the Lithuanian experience is consistently adapted to Ukrainian realities, the level of implementation of key reforms in Ukraine could reach 85-95% over the next 5-10 years, and public support will increase to 75%. This will become the basis for Ukraine's further progress towards full EU membership.

Let us consider practical recommendations for Ukrainian governmental and civic institutions to improve the efficiency of European integration progress, taking into account the experience of Lithuania:

– *Ensure stability and consistency of state policy in the field of European integration.* Lithuania's experience shows that the most important factor in successful integration is a steady course regardless of changes in government or political fluctuations (Lavdas, 2024). In Ukraine, it is advisable to enshrine the strategic direction of European integration in law and create an independent coordinating body with clear powers.

– *Intensify inter-institutional and international cooperation.* It is recommended to expand cooperation with European agencies, involve Lithuanian experts in consultations, and create joint projects with EU institutions to accelerate the exchange of experience (Kotsur & Kotsur, 2024; Vaidelytė *et al.,* 2024).
– *Enhance transparency and communication with civil society.* Ukrainian authorities should increase public awareness of European integration processes and the results of reforms. This will help increase trust and support from the population (Vizniak, 2024).
– *Ensure systematic implementation of anti-corruption and judicial reforms.* It is necessary to complete institutional reforms in the areas of justice and anti-corruption, as these steps are key criteria for successful rapprochement with the EU (Yara, 2024; Borovyk *et al.,* 2024).

Discussion

The research findings confirmed the hypothesis that the main factors of successful European integration are the stability of the political course, systematic reforms and effective public administration, as clearly demonstrated by the example of Lithuania. Ukraine, despite similar starting conditions and ambitions, demonstrates slow progress in this direction, which, in our opinion, is due to political fluctuations, external aggression, and inconsistent internal reforms. In particular, the results of our study are consistent with the position of researchers such as (Yara, 2024), who emphasizes the importance of judicial reform and the rule of law for integration. (Borovyk, Golovach, and Makharnyets, 2024) share a similar view, pointing to the need to improve the legal framework and combat economic crimes. At the same time, in our opinion, insufficient attention is paid to the role of the public sector and communication between the government and society, which we consider a critical factor based on (Vizniak 2024)'s data on the growth of public support for effective information policy.

However, the position of Landesmann et al. (2024) emphasizes that external factors (armed conflict, economic crises) make Ukraine's integration processes extremely difficult, unlike Lithuania, which operated in a favorable international context. We partially share this opinion, but we believe that even in the presence of external challenges, Ukraine could demonstrate a higher level of performance through internal consolidation, which is confirmed by the study by (Mykhaylyk *et al.,* 2023), which emphasizes the importance of political will and interagency coordination. Compared to (Lavdas, 2024), who emphasizes the role of institutional maturity and external support in Lithuania, the Ukrainian experience reveals significant gaps in institutional implementation of policies. This indicates the need not only to create coordinating bodies, but also to strengthen their functional autonomy and accountability.

Thus, the findings generally confirm our hypothesis, but point to the need for further research to study mechanisms for improving the effectiveness of communication between the state and civil society, as well as to assess the institutional capacity of Ukrainian government structures in the face of persistent external threats. The limitation of our study is that it is based mainly on official sources and analytical publications, while the study of the actual practice of implementing reforms at the regional level requires separate research. The practical application of the results obtained is possible in the development of strategic action programs of the Government of Ukraine, including through the involvement of international experts and the experience of Lithuania as one of the most successful examples of integration into the European space.

Conclusion

A study of the peculiarities of European integration of Ukraine and Lithuania in the period 1990-2021 has revealed key patterns that are of fundamental importance for the formation of Ukraine's modern integration strategy. The results demonstrate that the success of European integration is determined not only by political aspirations, but primarily by the systematic nature of reforms, institutional stability and communication with civil society. The novelty of the analysis lies in comparing the dynamics of integration processes and assessing their projected implementation, taking into account the experience of Lithuania. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using these results to improve Ukraine's European integration strategy and to formulate specific government decisions.

Comparison with the planned results showed that the pace of reforms in Ukraine remains lower than expected due to a number of internal and external factors. At the same time, positive developments in the harmonization of legislation and a gradual increase in public support have been identified, which is in line with the strategic vector of development. The main limitation of the study was the impossibility of obtaining full empirical data on the implementation of reforms at the local level, which requires additional field research. It was also noted that some aspects of institutional effectiveness cannot be fully quantified due to the lack of standardized indicators.

It is recommended to develop a state program "European Integration 2030" that will include not only legislative changes, but also institutional training, active participation of regions, and development of educational and cultural platforms. It is also advisable to intensify the dialogue with the public through regular consultations, public forums, and information campaigns. The main directions for further research in this area should be the analysis of mechanisms for increasing institutional resilience and the development of an adaptive model of communication "government - society - international partners" for countries with increased security risks. We also see promise in studying the practices of involving

Lithuanian experts in the development and implementation of Ukrainian reforms as a tool for accelerated integration into the European space.

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