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RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND UKRAINE

The work is **aimed** at examining the evolution of relationship between the European Union and Ukraine. The **relevance of the topic** is caused by the chosen direction of Ukraine's development towards democracy which needs to be defended currently against Russian aggressors.

The analysis of the literature demonstrated that Ukraine began to build relations with the EU immediately after she gained independence in 1991. The relations between Ukraine and the European Union (at that time the European Communities) were initiated in December 1991, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, that presided over the Community, announced in his letter the official recognition of Ukraine's independence[3].

In 1994, the Agreement on partnership and cooperation between the EU and Ukraine was signed, to enter into force in 1998. Based on this agreement, the Action Plan was adopted in February 2005, which defined the program of political and economic reforms and priorities for the near and medium term.

In 2007, the EU and Ukraine agreed that the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in many respects no longer meets the requirements of the times and the development of relations between them. Therefore, a new, larger document is needed. In March 2007, negotiations began on a new agreement, which was later called the Association Agreement. In order for Ukraine to better prepare for its further implementation, the parties adopted the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda, which replaced the mentioned EU-Ukraine Action Plan.

The political part of the Association Agreement was signed on March 21, 2014. The economic part of the agreement was signed on June 27, 2014. Signing of the Association Agreement became the most important event in the 20-year history of relations between the EU and Ukraine. In terms of its volume and thematic coverage, it was the largest international legal document concluded by Ukraine in her history[5].

The Agreement ensured political association of Ukraine with the European Union and deep integration of Ukraine into the common internal market of the EU. In other words, Ukraine became homogeneous with the EU in terms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the level of functioning of state institutions and the nature of relations between the state and society.

Since the spring of 2014, Ukraine has been implementing an ambitious reform program aimed at stabilizing the economy and improving the standard of living of its citizens. Priority reforms include combating corruption, reforming the judicial system, constitutional and electoral reforms, improving the business climate and increasing the level of energy efficiency, as well as public administration reform, including decentralization measures.

According to A. Åslund and T. Becker, "the cooperation with the EU that Ukrainians generally attach the most importance to is the EU's visa freedom, which was introduced in 2017. This means that Ukrainians can spend 90 days in an EU country without applying for a special permit" [1].

Since the beginning of the full scale war in Ukraine the EU countries have proved to be devoted supporters of Ukrainian people. On June 23, 2022, the European Council at the summit in Brussels decided to grant Ukraine the status of a candidate country for membership of the European Union. The Former Prime Minister of Lithuania and now

member of the European Parliament Andrius Kubilius, who is deeply involved in Ukraine, suggested that Ukraine can become a full member of the EU in 2029 [6]. His his evaluation is based on the best past experiences of EU accession. Besides, the EU has worked out a joint Marshall Plan for Ukraine's reconstruction. A central element of the reconstruction process “should be Ukraine's entry into the EU, and this should not only be a reconstruction but a modernization of the entire Ukrainian state and economy”[1].

To sum up, all mentioned above testify to the fact, that the relationship between Ukraine and the EU have seen a steady progress, leading the country to such a development of the state, which is based on European values and ensures sovereignty, stability, economic growth of Ukraine.

References:

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