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## ENSURING THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION IN TIMES OF WAR: GUIDELINES AND INITIATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the problem of functioning of Ukrainian education during the period of martial law. The analysis of international organizations dealing with the problems of protection of education, ensuring its quality and accessibility in crisis situations is made. The emphasis is placed on the fact that the international community recognizes education as an inalienable human right which must be ensured under any circumstances, even in the context of military conflicts, and this determines the key trends in the activities of international organizations in the context of supporting Ukrainian education. It is noted that the violation of the right to education guaranteed by national legislation and international acts determines the need to find new innovative solutions for the development of education, a qualitative rethinking of the content and format of education, timely and effective response to the challenges of today associated with the transformation of relations and connections between the subjects of the educational process. The article analyzes domestic and international initiatives to protect Ukrainian education, ensure its quality and accessibility for all participants in the educational process, and organize education for internally displaced persons and Ukrainian refugees abroad. Some examples of international support for Ukrainian education, as well as for children and youth, educators and scientists in the framework of educational initiatives and projects are presented. It is emphasized that international support for the development of mechanisms to protect Ukrainian education, ensure its accessibility to all participants in the educational process, and create conditions for the quality provision of educational services under martial law is extremely valuable for the development of our country, which makes it necessary to study the experience and effective practices of international support for Ukrainian education during the russian-Ukrainian war.

**Keywords:** international organizations, international support, education in wartime, access to education, quality of education, educational initiatives and projects.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Current globalization challenges, epidemics and pandemics, military conflicts, including the large-scale russian-Ukrainian war, are raising the issue of rethinking the vision of education, transforming it, and building effective solutions for functioning in today's rapidly changing world. Shifting the emphasis to the need to modernize education and revising the key guidelines for its development is one of the important activities of the international community. One of these steps is the adoption by the European Union of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and Beyond (2021-2030) (2021). This innovative strategy aims to further develop education and training in EU member states on the basis of openness, dialogue and synergy. One of the priorities of this strategy is the need to improve the quality of education, as well as

to ensure equality, inclusion and success for all citizens in education, transforming lifelong learning, ensuring mobility, and digitalizing education and training (Council Resolution, 2021).

After the events of the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014), Ukraine launched structural reforms in the education system to integrate it into the European educational space. In particular, new legislation in the field of education is being created that defines the European integration course of national education and its synchronization with EU standards. The Laws of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014), "On Education" (2017), "On Complete General Secondary Education" (2020), and the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Reforming General Secondary Education "New Ukrainian School" for the period up to 2029 (2016) are in line with the key approaches and principles of education in the European Union. Over the past decade, Ukrainian education has made significant changes in the structure and approaches to the organization of the educational process in educational institutions, bringing them in line with European standards and values, in particular in the context of the quality of education.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, led to an intensification of the European integration orientation of Ukrainian education. The right to education, violated by the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) and guaranteed by international acts, justifies the need to find new innovative solutions for the development of education, a qualitative rethinking of the content and format of education, timely and effective response to the challenges of our time related to the transformation of relations and connections between the subjects of the educational process.

In these difficult times, the support of the international community and assistance in developing mechanisms to protect Ukrainian education, ensure its accessibility to all participants in the educational process, and create conditions for the quality provision of educational services under martial law are invaluable for Ukraine. The developments on these issues are extremely valuable for the development of our country, which makes it necessary to study the experience and effective practices of international support and protection of Ukrainian education during the russian-Ukrainian war.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW, GENERALIZATION OF MAIN STATEMENTS**

The issue of transformational approaches to education during the period of martial law, in particular, the study of mechanisms of international support and recommendations of the international community to protect Ukrainian education, its accessibility and quality preservation in the extremely difficult conditions of war, requires additional scientific and applied analysis and the formation of qualitatively new conclusions, which creates reasonable and objective grounds for this scientific research. In this research, the author's analyzes international assistance and support for Ukrainian education, the educational and scientific community, children, youth and their parents who found themselves in crisis situations as a result of the russian-Ukrainian war.

A study of the scientific literature gives grounds to summarize some approaches to the problems of organizing Ukrainian education in wartime and its international support. In particular, N. Nychkalo, O. Ovcharuk, V. Hordiienko, & I. Ivaniuk (2022) studied the organization of Ukrainian education under martial law, highlighted domestic and international initiatives for the education of temporarily displaced persons and Ukrainian refugees, revealed the peculiarities of organizing the education of children, youth and adults in the temporarily occupied territories and abroad, outlined the main areas of support from international organizations, including UNESCO, UNICEF, the European Commission, and others, governments and citizens of foreign countries, and civil society organizations to help Ukrainians during the russian-Ukrainian war.

O. Lokshyna, O. Glushko, A. Dzhurylo, S. Kravchenko, O. Maksymenko, N. Nikolska, & O. Shparyk (2022) outlined the key guidelines of the international community for the organization of Ukrainian education in the realities of war, identified the priority areas of activity of international and non-governmental organizations to ensure the continuity of education in times of war and the inclusion of

refugees and internally displaced persons in the educational process in educational institutions, and described the support of the European Union for the integration of Ukrainian children and youth into the education systems of EU member states.

O. Denysiuk, N. Tytarenko, V. Tkachenko, T. Dron, L. Londar, H. Tereshchenko, & O. Anisimova (2022) studied the peculiarities of the functioning of preschool, general secondary, vocational and higher education institutions in the context of the large-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, revealed the mechanisms of international support for Ukrainian refugees to ensure continuity of education, and identified the key areas of international assistance in organizing Ukrainian education in times of war.

T. Hubanova (2023) revealed the peculiarities of the functioning of educational institutions during the period of martial law, identified the key guidelines for transformational changes in the organization of the educational process during the war, studied the mechanisms of international support for educational projects in Ukraine, outlined the main areas of international cooperation in the field of education and the activities of international organizations to support Ukrainian youth and attract them to the European labor market.

E. Nikolaiev, G. Riy, & I. Shemelynets (2023) highlighted the range of problems and challenges faced by the education system due to the consequences of the war, outlined international guidelines for the functioning of Ukrainian education in the context of war, provided up-to-date information on the state of the Ukrainian higher education system in the context of war, its priority and long-term needs, which require assistance from partners and expanded cooperation between Ukrainian and foreign educational institutions to respond effectively.

These approaches do not limit the multidimensional nature of the problem of the functioning of Ukrainian education in the context of war and its support by the international community. This study is based primarily on the processing of open sources of information, such as scientific publications, current regulations, and publications on the official websites of the authorities that develop and implement public policy in the field of education.

### 3. DISCUSSION

On February 24, 2022, as a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, martial law was introduced by Presidential Decree № 64/2022, which led to radical changes in all spheres of public life, including education (On the introduction of martial law, 2022). The introduction of the martial law regime has actualized the need to address a number of priority tasks regarding the format of the educational process, ensuring the continuity of education, ensuring the safety of participants in the educational process, and at the same time maintaining the quality of education and its accessibility to citizens. In accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on State Guarantees in the Conditions of Martial Law, Emergency or State of Emergency" dated 15.03.2022 № 2126-IX1 (2022), the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017) was supplemented with Article 571 "State Guarantees in the Conditions of Martial Law, Emergency or State of Emergency". This article defines the guarantees for students and employees to organize distance learning or any other form of education that is the safest for participants in the educational process. In order to implement these guarantees, the educational authorities were empowered to make operational decisions on the content and format of the educational process under martial law.

Issues related to the protection of education, ensuring its availability for citizens in conditions of military conflicts, as well as the restoration of the educational process and its quality after the end of hostilities are the subject of close attention and study by various international organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), Interagency Network for Education and Emergencies (INEE), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Peace Research Institute (PRIO),

Global Coalition to Protect Educational Institutions from Attacks (GCPEA ) etc. (UNICEF, 2017; GIZ, 2004; INEE, 2010; UNHCR, 2019; PRIO, 2020; GCPEA, 2022). The recommendations of these organizations are based on a wide range of military conflicts, including international and internal conflicts within countries. As international experience shows, the role of education in wartime is of particular importance. For example, the Safe Schools Declaration, an intergovernmental political commitment of 114 states developed within the UN framework to protect education from the effects of armed conflict, emphasizes that “the education system can help protect children and youth from death, injury and exploitation by offering a clear schedule and stability, it can alleviate the psychological impact of armed conflict and provide access to other vital services...” (Safe Schools Declaration, 2015).

The documents of international organizations – the Safe Schools Declaration, the Minimum Standards for Education, and the Action Plan on What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Military Use – define the need to implement a comprehensive government strategy for the optimal functioning of the education system in crisis situations (Safe Schools Declaration, 2015; INEE, 2010; GCPEA, 2016). This strategy covers such key areas of activity as monitoring attacks on participants in the educational process and educational infrastructure, implementing alternative forms of providing educational services, adapting the content of education to wartime conditions, supporting educators, providing them with safe working conditions, professional development and the acquisition of security competencies, cooperation with local communities and international organizations dealing with issues of education in emergency situations, military conflicts and protracted crises (Tab. 1) (Education in the realities of war, 2022, pp. 16-19).

Tab. 1

*International organizations working to ensure the right to quality and safe education in crisis situations*

<b>№</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Information about activities</b>
1.	The UN Refugee Agency	an agency of the UN system that saves lives, protects rights and builds better futures for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people
2.	Norwegian refugee council (NRC)	a non-governmental Norwegian humanitarian organization that works to protect the rights of people affected by forced displacement
3.	The Refugee Research Network (RRN)	an organization established to support an international network of researchers and research centers to study refugee and forced migration issues, as well as to engage policy makers and practitioners in finding solutions for refugees and displaced persons
4.	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)	an international organizational coalition that operates in the field of education in emergencies and conflict
5.	InterAgency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	an international agency whose members work in national and international non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, ministries of education to ensure the right to quality and safe education for all those living in emergency and crisis situations
6.	Education Cannot Wait (ECW)	a global foundation that deals with education in emergency and crisis situations, as well as financing the education of children and youth affected by the crisis
7.	Global Partnership for Education (GPE)	a global foundation that works with governments to engage children and youth in national education systems, helps to strengthen capacity and resources to meet the education needs of refugees

The European Union works closely with all key international organizations that support education in emergencies and protracted crises. The EU is implementing the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), including support to the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund and the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The EU is a major contributor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which prioritizes support for education systems, including in countries affected by protracted crises (Education in the realities of war, 2022, p. 17). In the Council Recommendation on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (2018), the EU reaffirms its vision of education as an inalienable human right that must be ensured in all circumstances. Education is defined as the main means of helping and realizing the full potential of children and youth, strengthening personal resilience, contributing to community and national resilience, achieving sustainable development and building peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies (Education in emergencies and protracted crises, 2018).

Based on these key principles, the European Commission is implementing a number of measures to support and protect Ukrainian education, as well as to help refugees who were forced to leave Ukraine due to Russia's brutal invasion (European Commission, 2022). These include: financing school and vocational education, as well as pre-school education and childcare through EU cohesion funds, the Erasmus+ program and the European Solidarity Corps; establishing EU educational solidarity groups with Ukraine to identify the needs of Ukrainian children and support host Member States, educating students on equal terms, and helping to define educational policies; providing refugees with access to Ukrainian language educational materials, online resources and courses, including for teachers through the School Education Gateway (SEG) platform; support for young people, educators and scientists through access to EU programs and exchange programs (Nychkalo, 2022, p. 23).

With the outbreak of a full-scale war, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine initiated the creation of an international coalition whose main goal is to engage a wide range of Ukrainian partners in protecting Ukrainian education in the face of Russian aggression and restoring it in the postwar period. The platform for communication with international partners is the Sectoral Working Group "Education and Science", as well as thematic subgroups by policy areas and individual cross-cutting priorities. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has developed a Concept Plan for the functioning of the education system, research and innovation in Ukraine during martial law and the period of the country's recovery. Together with the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, project proposals have been outlined to address the problems of Ukrainian education during the wartime and postwar periods. Particularly, five key priorities remain unchanged: ensuring the sustainability and continuity of education; creating safe conditions for learning and teaching; psychological support for participants in the educational process; restoring educational infrastructure; and implementing reforms and qualitative transformations at all levels of education (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022).

As part of international cooperation, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the public union "Osvitoria" in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) created a platform on education during the war "Together to Education" – <https://osvitanow.org/>. This is a unique initiative aimed primarily at supporting educational institutions, educators, parents and students of education. It is aimed at protecting the rights of every child, creating opportunities for continuous learning and supporting the educational process, improving the physical and mental health of participants in the educational process. "Learning together" provides support for education in three key areas: providing children and teachers with the tools and materials they need for unimpeded access to high-quality, safe and child-oriented education; creating a safe educational environment; strengthening the emotional resilience of children and their families, which will help them cope with difficulties and improve their well-being. On the website, educators and parents can familiarize themselves with information about education in Ukraine and abroad during martial law,

various educational opportunities, download expert materials, safety instructions, lessons and working materials on mine safety, psychological and social support, as well as nutrition, hygiene, immunizations developed for children of different ages, etc. (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Screenshot of the page <https://osvitanow.org/>

International support for Ukrainian education in times of war is provided by the Swiss-Ukrainian project Decentralization for the Development of Democratic Education (DECIDE), which is implemented in Ukraine by the DOCCU NGO. The DECIDE project aims to support educational reforms and decentralization processes to implement an effective system of educational management in Ukrainian communities. The project coordinates and implements international education quality standards and assists refugees abroad in realizing their academic potential. Thus, the project participated in the creation and development of the content of the EducationUaBot educational chatbot in Viber and Telegram, which contains information on the organization of education in the context of war in Ukraine and abroad for all participants in the educational process. The DECIDE project, in cooperation with UNESCO and UNICEF, provided technical support to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment in conducting a national multi-subject test, including technical assistance in developing the terms of reference for the national electronic examination system and creating its prototype. In addition, the project participated in the development of a platform about the education system in Ukraine for the international education community – <https://emergency.mon.gov.ua/>. On the site, you can learn about education levels, download curricula, and learn about the humanitarian needs of educators and educational institutions (Fig. 2).

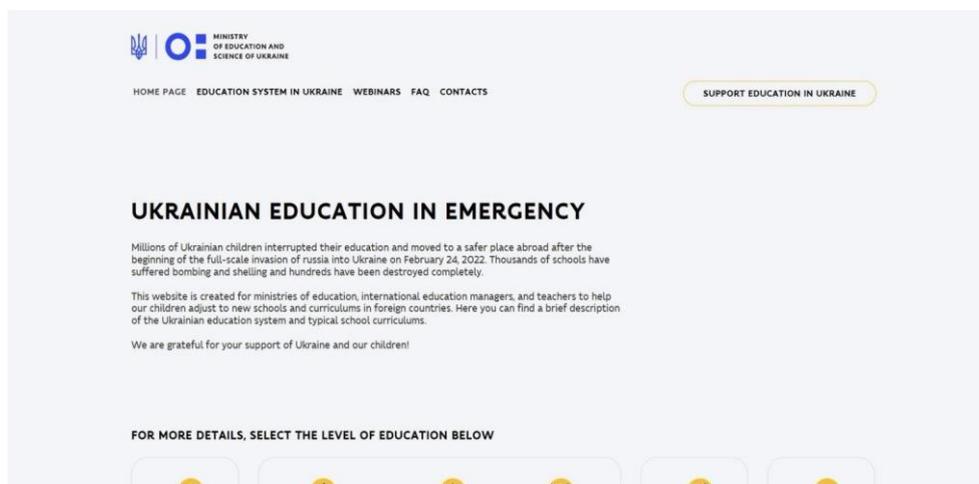


Fig. 2. Screenshot of the page <https://emergency.mon.gov.ua/>

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission has launched the European Research Area for Ukraine (ERA4Ukraine) portal – <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>. This portal provides information and support services to Ukrainian scientists who are forced to go abroad because of the war. It brings together initiatives at the level of the EU, individual countries, and non-governmental organizations. The website provides information on diploma recognition, current vacancies, social assistance, and job and housing offers for scientists and their families. The portal brings together more than 600 centers and 43 national portals in EU member states and countries associated with the Horizon Europe program. Each member state and associated country has a national portal that lists support services for Ukrainian refugees. Other European Union initiatives are aimed at providing access to the Science4-Refugees program within the EURAXESS initiative. It provides refugees with access to the European Research Community and the MSCA Researchers at Risk program, as well as opportunities for internships, part-time and full-time work, etc. (Fig. 3).

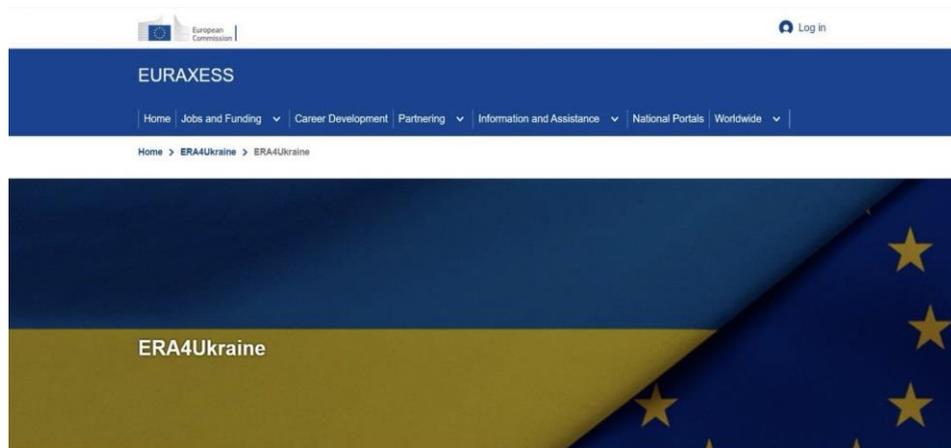


Fig. 3. Screenshot of the page <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN), together with ESN Ukraine and with the support of the EU, has created a new platform Study for Ukraine, which provides information on educational opportunities and support programs for Ukrainian students and researchers. The “Education” section contains step-by-step instructions on how to apply for higher education and scholarships for Ukrainian youth in 17 EU member states (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Screenshot of the page Study for Ukraine

To support Ukrainian refugees in the EU, the electronic platform EPAL (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) was created – <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/>, and the Erasmus+ register of educational and training personnel was launched to assist Ukrainians fleeing Russian aggression in

obtaining education. This register covers adult education, vocational education and training, general education at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels, including pre-school education and care. The registry allows teachers, trainers and experts, as well as other educators who are ready to work abroad in educational and training institutions, to register their profile. This profile allows searching for professionals with the relevant skills and competencies needed to support Ukrainian refugees (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Screenshot of the page <https://lepale.ec.europa.eu/>

Online education in the form of mobile applications, open educational resources and open online courses, such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), opens up flexible opportunities for different categories of Ukrainian refugees abroad – <https://www.mooc.org/>. These are public, widely accessible, distance learning courses with the use of distance technologies, unlimited interactive participation of users, and open access to the Internet. They allow for discussions in social networks, serve to exchange information between communities of students and teachers, and enable online assignments. The most popular online courses in the world are Coursera ([www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org)), edX ([www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org)), XuetangX ([www.xuetangx.com](http://www.xuetangx.com)), Udacity ([www.udacity.com](http://www.udacity.com)), and Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)) (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Screenshot of the page <https://www.mooc.org/>

Undoubtedly, the educational initiatives and projects presented here, developed with the assistance of and in cooperation with international organizations and partners, are not limited to this research and do not cover all aspects of the multifaceted support for Ukrainian education by the international community.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The key idea of the international community is the imperative of education in times of war – education is a fundamental element of development and the full realization of human rights and freedoms. In order to ensure the safety and protection of educational actors, the international community has developed numerous guidelines, standards and tools that create the basis for the protection and continuity of education in emergencies and hostilities. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has violated fundamental human and civil rights, including the right to education. The introduction of the legal regime of martial law in Ukraine has actualized the need to address a number of priority tasks regarding the format of the educational process, ensuring the continuity of education, guaranteeing the safety of participants in the educational process, maintaining the quality of education and its accessibility to citizens. To this end, a number of legal acts were adopted and the educational system was adapted to function in a war. Initiatives and projects aimed at protecting education, ensuring its quality and accessibility for participants in the educational process, and organizing education for internally displaced persons and Ukrainian refugees abroad play a significant role in maintaining sustainability. In today's difficult conditions, it is important to develop and study the experience of cooperation with international organizations, conduct joint research, and implement educational projects to support Ukrainian education in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

This study does not exhaust all aspects of the problem. Further research is needed on the problem of cooperation and involvement of international partners in the development of continuing education, creation of a safe educational environment, and provision of psychosocial support to participants in the educational process both during the war and during the period of post-war recovery of Ukraine.

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Лійчук Любомира, Цюняк Оксана, Воробець Олексій. Забезпечення якості та доступності освіти в умовах війни: орієнтири та ініціативи міжнародної спільноти. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 11 (1) (2024), 39-49.

Статтю присвячено проблемі функціонування української освіти в період дії правового режиму воєнного стану. Здійснено огляд міжнародних організацій, які займаються проблемами захисту освіти, забезпечення її якості та доступності в умовах кризових ситуацій. Підкреслено, що міжнародна спільнота

визначає освіту невід'ємним правом людини, яке повинно бути забезпечене за будь-яких обставин, навіть в умовах військових конфліктів, що й визначає ключові тенденції діяльності міжнародних організацій в контексті підтримки української освіти. Зауважено, що порушене гарантоване національним законодавством і міжнародними актами право на освіту визначає необхідність пошуку нових новаторських рішень щодо розвитку освіти, якісного переосмислення змісту та формату навчання, вчасного й ефективного реагування на виклики сьогодення, які пов'язані з трансформацією відносин і зв'язків між суб'єктами освітнього процесу. Проаналізовано вітчизняні та міжнародні ініціативи щодо захисту української освіти, забезпечення її якості та доступності для всіх учасників освітнього процесу, а також організації навчання внутрішньо переміщених осіб й українських біженців за кордоном. Наведено окремі приклади міжнародної підтримки української освіти, а також дітей та молоді, освітян і науковців у рамках реалізації освітніх ініціатив та проєктів. Наголошено, що міжнародна підтримка з розроблення механізмів захисту української освіти, забезпечення її доступності для усіх учасників освітнього процесу, створення умов для якісного надання освітніх послуг в умовах воєнного стану є надзвичайно цінною для розвитку нашої держави, що актуалізує необхідність дослідження досвіду та дієвих практик міжнародної підтримки української освіти під час російсько-української війни.

**Ключові слова:** міжнародні організації, міжнародна підтримка, освіта в умовах війни, доступність освіти, якість освіти, освітні ініціативи та проєкти.