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# Documentary analysis of Ukraine's educational policy in the context of conflict: the case of the ban on training lawyers in law enforcement agencies

## Análisis documental de la política educativa de Ucrania en el contexto del conflicto: el caso de la prohibición de formar abogados en los organismos encargados de hacer cumplir la ley


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### Abstract

This article provides a documentary overview of the main regulatory and institutional changes that have characterised higher education policy in Ukraine in recent years, particularly in the context of the ongoing armed conflict and systemic reforms. Based on an analysis of laws, government decrees, strategic



documents and ministerial guidelines, the study identifies key priorities such as the digitisation of learning, strengthening university autonomy, internationalisation efforts, modernising education management and institutional resilience. Particular attention is paid to the ban on the training of lawyers in law enforcement and military higher education institutions, which is a typical example of the conceptual changes taking place in Ukrainian higher education. This political decision is seen in the context of efforts to harmonise legal education with European standards, increase academic transparency and consolidate legal training in civilian institutions. The aim of this article is to provide a thematic overview of recent policy changes from a normative and propositional perspective, without conducting an evaluative analysis of individual academic programmes or professional training outcomes. By focusing on both general trends and the specific case of legal education reform, the study contributes to a better understanding of how conflicting transformations intersect with long-term policy goals in Ukraine's higher education system.

**Keywords:** higher education in Ukraine, educational policy, legal education, higher education reform, academic independence, educational standards.

## Resumen

Este artículo ofrece un panorama documental de los principales cambios regulatorios e institucionales que han caracterizado la política de educación superior en Ucrania en los últimos años, particularmente en el contexto del conflicto armado en curso y las reformas sistémicas. Basándose en un análisis de leyes, decretos gubernamentales, documentos estratégicos y directrices ministeriales, el estudio identifica prioridades clave como la digitalización del aprendizaje, el fortalecimiento de la autonomía universitaria, los esfuerzos de internacionalización, la modernización de la gestión educativa y la resiliencia institucional. Se presta especial atención a la prohibición de la formación de abogados en instituciones de educación superior policiales y militares, que es un ejemplo típico de los cambios conceptuales que están teniendo lugar en la educación superior ucraniana. Esta decisión política se considera en el contexto de los esfuerzos para armonizar la educación jurídica con los estándares europeos, aumentar la transparencia académica y consolidar la formación jurídica en instituciones civiles. El objetivo de este artículo es proporcionar un panorama temático de los cambios recientes en las políticas desde una perspectiva normativa y propositiva, sin realizar un análisis evaluativo de los programas académicos individuales o los resultados de la formación profesional. Al centrarse tanto en las tendencias generales como en el caso específico de la reforma de la educación jurídica, el estudio contribuye a una mejor comprensión de cómo las transformaciones conflictivas se cruzan con los objetivos de políticas a largo plazo en el sistema de educación superior de Ucrania.

**Palabras clave:** educación superior en Ucrania, política educativa, educación jurídica, reforma de la educación superior, independencia académica, estándares educativos.

## Introduction

Reforming legal education in Ukraine is a complex and multifaceted process that is actively developing in the context of European integration and bringing the higher education system into line with European standards. Particular attention in this process is drawn to the issue of banning the training of lawyers in institutions of law enforcement agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereinafter - the Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Security Service of Ukraine (hereinafter - the SBU) and military higher educational institutions. This ban is related to the need to unify legal education, ensure academic independence and adapt educational programs to international and European standards (Law of Ukraine No. 1556-VII, 2014; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2024; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020).

The ban on training lawyers in law enforcement universities poses a number of challenges, including adapting the education system to new regulatory requirements, in particular, improving the quality of legal training, its compliance with international standards, and eliminating conflicts between the institutional specifics of law enforcement universities and the principles of academic education (Buhaichuk, 2022; Abroskin & Albul, 2021). The assessment of the state of reforms is confirmed by the official report of the



European Commission on Ukraine (European Commission, 2023), which emphasizes the critical importance of guaranteeing academic independence and integrating the education system into the European higher education space.

Over the past decade, legal education in Ukraine has undergone numerous transformations, reflected both in legislative acts (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2008; Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Order No. 673, 2020) and in conceptual documents (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020). At the same time, current research shows insufficient attention to the systematic analysis of the conflict between the special conditions of training in law enforcement agencies and the general requirements for legal education (Molchanov, 2021; Shemelynets, 2024).

Insufficient integration of law enforcement institutions into the national legal education system may lead to a shortage of highly qualified lawyers in law enforcement agencies and complicate the process of their professional integration into the labor market (Fact News, 2025). At the same time, in conditions of martial law and increased requirements for national security, the problem of improving legal training in law enforcement agencies becomes particularly urgent (Resolution No. 295, 2022).

Thus, the topic of the study is extremely relevant and requires a comprehensive analysis of regulatory and legal changes, European education standards and their impact on the system of training lawyers in the institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military universities. The results of this study will have practical significance for improving higher education policy in Ukraine and will contribute to ensuring effective legal education that meets the challenges of the time and international requirements.

The object of the study is the policy of higher education in Ukraine in the field of training lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and military higher educational institutions.

The subject of the study is conceptual shifts and regulatory changes related to the ban on training lawyers in these institutions, as well as their impact on the legal education system and professional training.

The research objectives of the study are:

To analyze the regulatory framework that regulates the training of lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and military educational institutions.

To identify the main conceptual changes in higher education policy that led to the ban on training lawyers in these institutions.

To consider the prospects for the development of the legal education system in the context of Ukraine's European integration requirements and to offer recommendations for improving educational policy in this area.

## **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

During the research of conceptual shifts in the policy of higher education in Ukraine regarding the ban on training lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military universities, the works of Ukrainian and foreign scholars were studied and analyzed. Despite the existence of individual studies, the topic of conceptual shifts in the policy of higher legal education in Ukraine - in particular in the context of the ban on training lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military universities - remains insufficiently covered and requires detailed scientific understanding.

At the same time, in the context of the topic under study, it is important to refer to the existing scientific discourse, which, although limited in scope, and approaches to assessing legal education in the context of reforms, are worthy of attention.

One of the most conceptually rich sources is the analytical work of Posylnyi (2024), in which the author clearly emphasizes the need to bring legal education in Ukraine into line with European Union standards. The author emphasizes that training lawyers in institutions with special training conditions (such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and military academies) contradicts the principles of academic freedom, independence, and transparency, which are fundamental to the legal profession in democratic legal systems. This approach is fully consistent with the European vision of legal education as a sphere free from political or administrative influence. We share Posylnyi's view that systemic reform is impossible without demonopolizing the right to legal training, as well as without creating equal conditions for all higher education institutions.

At the same time, Buhachuk (2022) demonstrates a different approach in his publication, defending the right of departmental universities (in particular, the Ministry of Internal Affairs system) to train lawyers. The author argues this with the functional needs of internal affairs and the specifics of the service. Such a position, although it has a certain logic in the context of professional adaptation of personnel, does not take into account the global trend towards the unification of legal training for the civilian market and the need for a clear distinction between academic education and professional in-service training. We believe that such reasoning is insufficient to maintain the status of legal training in the institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as equivalent to academic.

Similar views on the gradual adaptation of the MIA institutions to the new requirements are also expressed by Abroskin & Albul (2021), who consider the transformation of higher legal education as gradual and organic. The authors try to integrate departmental HEIs into the framework of the Concept for the Development of Legal Education. However, we do not share the authors' optimism about the possibility of a full-fledged reform of legal education within structures subordinate to law enforcement agencies. Such subordination contradicts the basic principles of the legal profession, which should be based on independence of thinking and the absence of institutional pressure.

A more pragmatic, but still optimistic position is taken by Molchanov (2021), considering the prospects for the "efficiency" of the Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs after the implementation of the concept of the development of legal education. However, efficiency, in the author's understanding, is interpreted more as administrative functionality, rather than academic quality or compliance with international standards. According to the scientist, it is possible to increase the efficiency of the Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs after the implementation of the reform, but he does not provide a clear analysis of how these institutions can achieve academic independence or ensure quality comparable to leading law schools.

At the same time, Shemelynets (2023) draws attention to the problem of the contractual form of training in the MIA Higher Education Institutions, which is used not to train system personnel, but to allow graduates to enter the general market of legal services. This creates a distortion of competition, where students receive a law degree without guarantees of academic freedom and without compliance with uniform educational standards. The author analyzes the tendency to train "contract workers" in MIA higher education institutions, who subsequently work in the civilian sector. The author questions the effectiveness of such a model. We fully support the critical approach to the actual "export" of personnel from departmental higher education institutions to the general legal market. In our deep conviction, this distorts the logic of the distribution of legal personnel and market competition. In another study by Shemelynets (2024) on the compliance of legal training in departmental HEIs with European integration standards, the author provides empirical evidence of non-compliance with standards of transparency, quality, and independence of the educational process in the relevant institutions, which confirms the need for their transformation or complete abandonment of legal programs in such institutions.



Special attention is also paid to the analytical work of Hryshchenko et al. (2021), which examines the professional training of lawyers, its international models and the shortcomings of the national system. The authors justify the need for the unification of educational programs, the introduction of transparent assessment mechanisms and the autonomy of the educational process. Their position is close to the European model, which excludes the possibility of hybrid legal education under institutional control by law enforcement agencies.

An analysis of the contemporary academic and analytical discourse on the reform of legal education in Ukraine, particularly in terms of the functioning of educational programs in departmental institutions, demonstrates the presence of several key conceptual approaches. They differ significantly in their methodological basis, institutional guidelines, and value coordinates.

The first group consists of studies that consistently substantiate the incompatibility of the model of training lawyers in institutions with special training conditions with modern European educational standards. Such works include the studies of Posylnyi (2024), Shemelynets (2023, 2024), etc. The main theses of these authors boil down to the fact that legal education by its very nature requires adherence to the principles of academic freedom, open access, independence of the teaching staff and student self-government - principles that cannot be implemented in the conditions of hierarchical and power-based institutions. Such institutions, being integrated into the system of power structures, by their nature determine the official dependence of the educational process on political, departmental or corporate expediency, which directly contradicts the essence of the legal profession in a democratic society. The position of this group is reasoned, conceptually balanced and consistent with international recommendations. It forms a systemic critical platform to justify the complete abandonment of the practice of training lawyers in departmental educational institutions.

The second group of works (Buhaichuk, 2022; Abroskin & Albul, 2021; Molchanov, 2021) represents a pragmatic, technocratic approach that focuses on improving the existing system without radically revising its legitimacy. Within this approach, the institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs system are considered as a necessary tool for ensuring the industry's needs for lawyers with specific training, and legal education is considered as a means of forming a "loyal", institutionally adapted specialist. The authors of these works emphasize the modernization of programs, the integration of modern teaching methods, and the development of the internal quality of the educational process, without touching on the problems of autonomy, impartiality, or openness. This approach has limited heuristic value, as it does not offer a conceptual solution to the conflict between departmental interests and the public nature of the legal profession. In addition, it often ignores the challenges associated with the opacity of access to the profession, institutional closure, and insufficient compliance with European criteria for legal education.

To summarize, we can draw the following conclusions:

The current model of training lawyers in the institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, and military academies is incompatible with the principles of democratic legal education, in particular in terms of independence, ethical autonomy, social responsibility, and interdisciplinary application of legal knowledge.

Technocratic approaches to modernizing departmental legal programs do not resolve conceptual contradictions, as they leave aside the fundamental question of whether these institutions should train lawyers at all, or whether their function should be limited to in-service training within their competence.

The commercialization of educational services in departmental universities further deepens the structural crisis of legal education, creating shadow mechanisms for access to the profession and undermining public trust in the legal training system.



In light of Ukraine's European integration commitments, as well as in view of the recommendations of the European Commission and the Venice Commission, the ban on training lawyers in law enforcement and military higher education institutions is seen as an inevitable and justified step that will create institutional conditions for the formation of an independent, ethically responsible and competitive legal community.

Thus, the further transformation of legal education should be based on a fundamental distinction between specialized in-service training and academic legal education, with a clear priority for the latter as a universal path to the legal profession in a democratic state governed by the rule of law.

## Methodology

The methodological basis for studying the problem of banning the training of lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military higher educational institutions was formed on the basis of the complex application of a number of scientific methods, each of which provided a deep and comprehensive analysis of the tasks set and contributed to the development of substantiated conclusions. In particular, the comparative legal, formal legal method, policy analysis method, empirical method and analysis method were used.

The comparative legal method, which consists in comparing legal norms, institutions and practices of different legal systems to identify common, distinctive and development trends, allowed for a systematic analysis of the compliance of domestic legislation and practice of organizing legal education with common European standards, in particular on the basis of Commission Regulation (EU) No 317/2013 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 912/2013 (European Commission, 2013a; 2013b), which regulate the classification of educational programs and the methodology for generating statistical data in the field of education in the European Economic Area. Thanks to the application of this method, significant discrepancies were identified between Ukrainian regulatory acts, such as the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (Law of Ukraine No. 1556-VII, 2014), Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs No. 62 (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2008), Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 673 (2020) and Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 295 (2022), and European requirements for transparency, accreditation and unification of educational programs. It was found that preserving the specifics of training in departmental institutions weakens Ukraine's integration into a single European educational space.

The policy analysis method allowed us to consider strategic documents and concepts related to the reform of legal education in Ukraine, including the Draft Concept for the Development of Legal Education (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020), the Manifesto for the Development of Legal Education (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020), as well as draft legislative acts and recommendations of international organizations (OSCE, G7, USAID). This method contributed to the identification of trends towards the academization, unification and democratization of legal education, as well as a critical understanding of the policy of preserving individual law schools with their own law programs. The policy analysis showed that such isolation creates risks of fragmentation of the legal labor market, weakens the quality of training and reduces their competitiveness, which contrasts with European trends of integration and unification of educational standards. As a result of the application of this method, recommendations were formulated for changing educational policy towards the integration of law schools into the national educational space.

The formal-legal method made it possible to conduct an in-depth analysis of the regulatory legal acts of Ukraine that regulate the activities of higher education institutions with specific training conditions, in particular the Regulations on Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2008; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2022), the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (Law of Ukraine No. 1556-VII, 2014), Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 673 (2020) and Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 295 (2022). The use of this method made it possible to clearly identify regulatory conflicts and contradictions, as well as to identify gaps in the regulation of issues of accreditation of educational programs, the right to conduct educational activities and the formation of educational and qualification levels, which actually keep these higher education institutions in the status of isolated structures, failing to receive the necessary guarantees of



academic autonomy and recognition of the national and international community. Such analysis confirmed the need to revise the current regulatory acts in order to harmonize the legal field regulating specific legal education in the system of law enforcement agencies.

The empirical method, which consists of collecting, processing and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data and allows to substantiate or refute hypotheses, to verify theoretical provisions in practice, was based on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from the reports of the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine (2019), international OSCE studies, Democracy Justice Reform analytics, official statistical reports of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the European Commission (European Commission, 2023). This method made it possible to verify hypotheses about the inefficiency of the legal training system in institutions with specific training conditions, to identify disparities between budget expenditures and performance, and to outline problems with compliance with international accreditation standards. Empirical data confirmed the conclusions about the need to reform the education system in these institutions, to ensure greater transparency and accountability, which in the future will contribute to improving the quality of specialist training.

This study adopts a qualitative documentary approach, based on the analysis of national legislation, institutional policies, and ministerial strategies on higher education in Ukraine published between 2020 and 2023.

Thus, the comprehensive use of these methods made it possible to analyze the regulatory, organizational, and political aspects of the problem and to form well-founded conclusions and recommendations for reforming legal education in Ukraine, focused on European integration and improving the quality of specialist training.

## Results and Discussion

The process of reforming legal education in Ukraine has become particularly relevant in the context of the country's European integration aspirations, which involve a deep transformation of educational approaches in accordance with European Union standards. One of the most controversial aspects of this reform is the question of the feasibility of training lawyers in higher education institutions with specific learning conditions - in particular, in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military educational institutions.

The issue of transforming legal education in Ukraine, particularly in the context of higher education institutions with special training conditions, is extremely relevant in the context of the integration of the Ukrainian legal system into the European educational and legal space. The existing system of training lawyers in law enforcement agencies demonstrates a number of deep contradictions between the requirements of a functional, disciplinary-hierarchical approach and the pan-European standards of academic education. In particular, the modern model of legal education in departmental HEIs contradicts the key provisions of the Bologna Process, ISCED-2013 standards and the European Standards for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG), in particular in terms of academic freedom, mobility, university autonomy and openness of the educational process (Eurostat, 2013). Training lawyers in such institutions takes place in conditions of limited external quality assessment, low level of transparency, inaccessibility to the broad labor market outside the law enforcement agencies, which generally undermines both trust in such diplomas and the effectiveness of the system of training specialists itself (OSCE, 2009).

Against the backdrop of the state policy of legal education reform, which since 2024 declares the unification of legal educational programs in all types of higher education institutions, regardless of ownership or subordination, the question of the expediency of the existence of separate legal programs in law enforcement institutions arises. However, such a transformation is complex and contradictory: on the one hand, there is an objective need for personnel for the security and law enforcement sector, on the other hand, preserving the departmental model of education does not allow ensuring compliance with the



requirements of ESG and the European higher education space. Thus, a conflict arises between the needs of the industry and academic standards, which is the fundamental problem of the study. The lack of clear transformation mechanisms, the lack of empirical research on the impact of such changes, as well as weak coordination between the ministries of education, justice and law enforcement agencies – create a risk both for the stability of the legal education system and for the functioning of security sector institutions.

In this context, a number of scientific hypotheses are put forward. First, the existing model of training lawyers in the Higher Educational Institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security Service of Ukraine contradicts the principles of academic autonomy, mobility and accreditation, which makes it impossible to internationally recognize such educational programs. Second, even under the conditions of functional justification of such programs, their isolation from the general education system deepens the gap between the theory of law and its practice, and also preserves departmental approaches that do not meet the principles of European legal culture. Third, the elimination or transformation of these programs without taking into account the personnel needs of the relevant bodies threatens a significant shortage of lawyers in the security sector. Fourth, under the conditions of developing an effective model of interdisciplinary cooperation, it is possible to combine a civilian academic core and industry specialization, which will ensure not only educational quality, but also applied efficiency.

Within the framework of the study of conceptual shifts in the policy of higher legal education in Ukraine in the direction of banning the training of lawyers in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military universities, it is advisable to analyze both the international and national regulatory and legal framework that regulates the relevant educational processes. Retrospective and comparative legal study of the acts of the European Union, as well as Ukrainian legislation, allows us to establish contradictions between current practice and the declared goals of reforming legal education in accordance with European standards.

European Commission (2013a; 2013b) Regulations No. 317/2013 and No. 912/2013 set out the imperatives of unification of educational classifications, as well as the requirements for transparency of statistical indicators regarding education and vocational training systems. They are the regulatory framework for ensuring academic integrity, openness of data on curricula and the effectiveness of specialist training. In the context of legal education, these acts actualize the requirement to bring the training of lawyers into line with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), which provides for the public, academically verified and competitive nature of educational programs. Institutions with special training conditions (in particular, those subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine or the Ministry of Defense) do not provide such conditions, which contradicts the imperatives of European integration in the educational sphere.

Instead, internal regulations, in particular the Regulations on Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, 2008), establish the functioning of educational institutions with a narrow departmental status, the main task of which is to provide personnel for the internal affairs bodies. These institutions, by their nature, do not comply with the principles of academic autonomy, publicity and universality required by the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (Law of Ukraine No. 1556-VII, 2014). It is this law that declares the rights of applicants to equal access to quality education, academic freedom and quality assurance through independent accreditation. At the same time, law enforcement higher education institutions mostly remain outside the scope of effective external quality control of educational programs. In addition, it is worth noting that in accordance with clause 6-1, part 1, article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" - a higher education institution with specific training conditions – a state-owned higher education institution that carries out training of cadets (students, students) and adjuncts at certain levels of higher education for further service in middle and senior positions of the National Police of Ukraine, command staff in order to meet the needs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the central executive body implementing state policy in the field of civil protection, the central executive body implementing state policy in the field of execution of criminal penalties.

Particular attention should be paid to the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science (Order No. 673,





2020), which establishes a list of specialties, access to which is additionally regulated - in particular, legal. This creates a legal basis for strengthening the regulation of access to the legal profession based on accreditation and transparency. However, the current situation demonstrates that some institutions that train lawyers operate in a non-accredited field or undergo exclusively internal supervision, which contradicts the essence of this regulatory act.

The issue is further updated by the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No. 295 of March 16, 2022, which, despite wartime conditions, does not abolish the obligation to accredit, but only adapts the mechanisms to the crisis context. This confirms that even in wartime conditions, the state recognizes the importance of ensuring educational quality, and therefore, training lawyers in unaccredited or closed programs contradicts state policy.

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that the existing legislative framework – both national and European - lays a systemic foundation for reviewing the role of institutions with special training conditions in the legal education system of Ukraine. It provides for mandatory accreditation, openness and civil control as the principles of training lawyers, and therefore the contradictions in the form of functioning of educational programs in institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and military academies need to be resolved through the gradual withdrawal of these institutions from the sphere of general professional legal education. This will meet Ukraine's obligations within the framework of European integration, but will also contribute to the establishment of academic integrity, professional mobility and the formation of an open, independent and competitive legal community.

Statistical data indicate a significant proportion of law students studying in law enforcement agencies. In particular, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2025), in 2023, more than 22 thousand applicants studied in the specialty 081 "Law" at higher education institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, of which more than 65% were on state orders. In turn, according to the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine (2019), the financing of these institutions exceeded 1.4 billion UAH annually, while the effectiveness of the costs raised doubts due to limited access to the legal market for graduates and their further professional segregation.

The European Commission in its Report on Ukraine (2023) clearly emphasizes the need to ensure academic independence and structural separation of legal training from institutionally dependent power formats. Think tanks, in particular Democracy Justice Reform and USAID, in their reports (DeJure Foundation, 2020a; DeJure Foundation, 2020b; G7 Support Group for Ukraine, 2024) emphasize the need to transform the content of legal education, which should be based not on training executors, but on the formation of legal specialists capable of implementing the principles of the rule of law. Thus, the Manifesto for the Development of Legal Education (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020) states that departmental educational institutions are not focused on the formation of lawyers capable of critical thinking, but on the education of executors of official instructions, which contradicts the basic values of European legal education.

This problem becomes particularly relevant in conditions of martial law, when the quality of educational programs is further complicated by procedural changes, in particular, in accordance with Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 295 of March 16, 2022 (2022), which allows simplified accreditation in wartime, which can further reduce the academic quality of training in military higher education institutions.

Against this background, the Concept of Legal Education Reform (Judicial and Legal Newspaper, 2024; European Commission, 2024) and the Concept of Legal Education Development (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020) propose a systematic rethinking of approaches to training lawyers, including the gradual elimination of legal programs in law enforcement agencies and the transition to cross-disciplinary academic education based on the Bologna Process and ESG (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). These documents provide for the creation of a unified approach to training lawyers, regardless of further specialization, which makes it impossible to operate a "parallel system of



legal education” in departmental structures.

Therefore, the problem of the functioning of law programs in higher education institutions with special learning conditions is not only a part of domestic educational policy, but also an object of international monitoring, critical analysis and legal regulation. Its solution requires a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach taking into account legal, administrative, financial and political factors, which is the subject of this study.

The state of legal education in Ukraine, in particular in the field of training specialists in higher education institutions with specific training conditions (the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine, military academies), reveals a complex of systemic contradictions between the requirements of the national security sector and the pan-European standards of academic education. The training of lawyers in law enforcement agencies is carried out in conditions of disciplinary subordination, functional subordination of the educational process to departmental interests, which contradicts the principles of academic autonomy, freedom of teaching and critical thinking – the key principles of the Bologna Process and the European Standards for Quality Assurance in Education (ESG).

In connection with the adoption of a number of conceptual documents (National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, 2024), the vector of state policy is focused on the unification of legal education within a single legal space, which calls into question the advisability of maintaining legal programs in law enforcement higher education institutions.

At the same time, the lack of a clear mechanism for implementing such changes, the low level of adaptability of relevant educational institutions, and the lack of a generalized scientific analysis of the consequences of such transformations create significant risks, including:

violation of staffing of internal affairs bodies and the security sector;  
the formation of a shortage of practically-oriented lawyers;  
worsening imbalance between departmental education and civil academic jurisprudence;  
growing legal uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of diplomas of law enforcement graduates in the general legal labor market.

To address the outlined issues, a multi-level approach is proposed. At the regulatory level, it is advisable to adopt a separate law on legal education, which would provide for uniform requirements for all legal programs, regardless of the type of higher education institution, ensuring compliance with ESG, including external independent quality assessment and mandatory accreditation through national and European agencies. At the institutional level, it is optimal to either incorporate law programs of law enforcement higher education institutions into the structure of classical universities while maintaining their specialization in security jurisprudence, or to create separate educational and practical centers of an applied type, such as the Fachhochschule in Germany. At the same time, it is necessary to develop mechanisms for civil-industry cooperation, where security sector practitioners could participate in the training of students in civilian higher education institutions. At the personnel level, a targeted state order should be introduced for law faculties with subsequent mandatory employment in the Ministry of Internal Affairs/SBU/Armed Forces of Ukraine, which will allow maintaining a balance between the quality of education and personnel needs. It is also advisable to introduce mechanisms of dual education with the distribution of theoretical training in classical higher education institutions and practical training - on the basis of law enforcement agencies.

Thus the reform banning legal education within law enforcement and military institutions in Ukraine represents not only an administrative decision but also a profound reorientation of the conceptual foundations underlying professional and academic legal training. This policy reform has important implications for the future configuration of Ukraine’s legal education system, intersecting with broader questions of academic integrity, institutional autonomy, and the professional identity of lawyers in a democratic society.



At the heart of the reform lies the imperative to distinguish between academic legal education and professional or in-service legal training. Academic education in law aims to instill foundational legal reasoning, critical analysis, and ethical reflection. It is grounded in university autonomy, scientific inquiry, and a commitment to universal educational standards, such as those laid out in the Bologna Process and ESG (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

By contrast, professional training within law enforcement institutions has traditionally emphasized functional adaptation, hierarchical discipline, and role-specific competence. While these are legitimate goals for institutions charged with state security and public order, conflating them with academic legal education distorts both spheres. It dilutes the theoretical and normative depth of academic curricula and compromises the impartiality and critical distance expected from legal professionals.

The Ukrainian policy reform asserts that the legal profession – especially under conditions of democratic transformation – requires its foundational training to be embedded in civilian academic settings. This shift reflects a broader European consensus: that legal education must be insulated from political or institutional subordination to maintain its autonomy, foster legal pluralism, and equip graduates for diverse roles in the justice system, academia, and civil society.

A key conceptual element of the reform is the reconfiguration of professional socialization pathways. Historically, many law graduates from police, secret service, and military academies have entered the general legal labor market, not remaining within their “parent” institutions. This has created a problematic dualism: graduates benefit from the prestige of a legal degree while being trained under non-academic, internally controlled regimes lacking transparent quality assurance. The reform seeks to eliminate this contradiction by redefining the purpose of legal programs within law enforcement institutions—not as gateways to the broader legal profession, but as specialized in-service programs tailored to internal agency needs.

Such a distinction aligns with international models, such as the German system, where Fachhochschulen or universities of applied sciences provide practical training, while theoretical instruction is reserved for fully accredited academic institutions. By following this model, Ukraine affirms the democratizing function of higher legal education: it becomes a public good, accessible under equal conditions, guided by meritocratic standards, and accountable to society—not merely to a specific power structure.

One of the most vital conceptual justifications for the reform is the necessity to de-politicize legal education. Departmental universities under the control of internal affairs ministries or military command structures inherently lack autonomy. Their curricula, staffing, and academic governance are influenced – if not determined – by institutional priorities that often conflict with the principles of transparency, open access, and critical pedagogy.

This structural dependence undermines the core values of the legal profession in a rule-of-law state: independence, impartiality, and accountability. The presence of legal education within such frameworks risks producing lawyers whose epistemic and ethical orientation is shaped by institutional loyalty rather than constitutional values or public service. Therefore, the relocation of legal education to autonomous civilian universities is not merely an administrative reshuffling but a foundational reassertion of the normative underpinnings of legal professionalism.

The reform also operationalizes a conceptual commitment to harmonization with European educational and professional standards. The ESG and ISCED frameworks require the legal profession to be built upon transparent, comparable, and quality-assured academic foundations.

The reform prioritizes:

Centralized and standardized accreditation;



Independence of academic programs from institutional hierarchies;  
External quality control;  
Academic freedom for both students and faculty.

These conditions are virtually unattainable within departmental educational structures. The reform thus embraces institutional isomorphism with European legal education systems, facilitating academic mobility, degree recognition, and professional equivalence across EU jurisdictions.

A legitimate concern accompanying the reform is the potential staffing shortfall in law enforcement and security institutions. However, the conceptual design of the reform already anticipates this. It proposes the development of dual-track training models, combining basic academic legal education in accredited universities with targeted, agency-specific professional training delivered post-graduation. This ensures that legal professionals serving in national security retain both professional competence and academic grounding.

Moreover, mechanisms such as targeted scholarships, mandatory public service contracts, and cooperative education agreements can be employed to align the output of civilian universities with sectoral needs – without compromising academic independence.

Ultimately, the Ukrainian reform marks a paradigm shift in the legal education ecosystem. It moves away from a fragmented, dual-track model toward a unified, academically grounded system. It clarifies the conceptual boundary between legal knowledge as a civic and intellectual pursuit versus legal training as an administrative function.

This shift resonates with global trends in higher education reform and supports Ukraine's broader objectives of European integration, democratization, and legal modernization. By elevating the standards and structure of legal education, Ukraine strengthens the foundations of its legal profession, enhances public trust in the justice system, and equips its future lawyers to act as guardians of the rule of law rather than as instruments of state apparatus.

## Conclusions

Analysis of the regulatory framework governing the training of lawyers in law enforcement institutions has shown the existence of a specific regulatory regime that allows for educational activities outside the single academic space. In particular, such institutions operated on the basis of internal departmental acts that limited their accountability to the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance and other bodies authorized to carry out external quality control of education. Despite the formal presence of specialty 081 "Law" in the list of licensed areas of training, the content of educational programs, the methodology of their implementation, access to scientific resources and institutional openness in many cases did not meet the criteria of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2013), the provisions of the ESG and the basic principles of the Bologna Process. The educational process in departmental HEIs did not provide for wide access to academic mobility, international cooperation, or independent scientific and methodological support, which, in aggregate, contributed to the formation of a closed model of legal training with reduced quality requirements.

The research revealed key conceptual changes in the state's educational policy, which became the basis for the termination of the training of lawyers in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service of Ukraine and the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Work on the concept of the development of legal education, as well as the implementation of European standards in the field of accreditation of higher education, highlighted the need to unify legal training within the civilian educational space. The results of external audits, including the conclusions of the Accounting Chamber and recommendations of international partners (USAID, European Commission), showed the absence of transparent quality assurance mechanisms, an insufficient practical component of educational programs, as well as significant discrepancies between the programs of departmental HEIs and the standards approved by the Ministry of



Education and Science. The political and administrative decision to gradually eliminate legal education programs in the security sector became a logical continuation of reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law, establishing the rule of law and the European integration of Ukraine.

The prospects for further development of the legal education system are determined, taking into account European integration obligations. Within the framework of this approach, the need for the final harmonization of educational standards with the provisions of the ESG, as well as the transformation of the model of training lawyers towards an open, academically autonomous and quality-controlled environment, is substantiated. The priority direction is the implementation of a dual education model, which involves obtaining basic legal education at universities that meet national accreditation criteria, with subsequent professional specialization in departmental training centers. Such an approach will ensure the unity of standards, avoid fragmentation of the educational field and create a basis for effective professional training of lawyers in the national security system. In addition, it is proposed to strengthen the role of the National Agency for Higher Education and Science in monitoring the quality of legal programs regardless of the form of ownership and departmental subordination of the institution, as well as the introduction of external international monitoring of educational standards in the field of law.

Overall, the results of the study indicate a critical need to move from a departmentally closed model of legal education to an open, European-oriented system based on quality, academic integrity, mobility, and transparency. Such an approach is consistent with Ukraine's long-term strategic priorities, in particular, strengthening democratic institutions, strengthening the legal foundations of the civil service, and establishing a single legal space in higher education.

Regarding further scientific research, we consider it appropriate to conduct a comparative analysis of legal education models in the law enforcement agencies of the EU and NATO countries.

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