

**URBAN
SKILLS**



Built Environment Professionals: University Education in Ukraine



Built Environment Professionals: University Education in Ukraine

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

Thematic paper series

This paper is one of nine drafted in 2025 by national entities in Ukraine as part of a UN-Habitat-commissioned collection entitled *Thematic Paper Series Informing Urban Recovery Approaches in Ukraine*, comprising:



Urban Governance

- Citizenship: Urban futures in Ukraine
- Municipal Governance Issues in Ukraine
- Decentralization and Recovery: Local Recovery Planning in Ukraine



Urban Land

- Land and Property Issues in Housing and Urban Development in Ukraine



Urban Planning

- Spatial Planning in Ukraine



Urban Housing

- Housing Provision and Outcomes in Ukraine
- Tracing the Path of Social Housing Policy in Ukraine



Urban Skills

- Built Environment Professionals: Education and Practice in Ukraine
- Built Environment Professionals: University Education in Ukraine

Executive summary

This paper seeks to examine the past, present, and future trajectory of urban development and planning education in Ukraine, recognising its critical role in the country's urban recovery and long-term development. Placing built environment education in the broader context of the ongoing conflict, post-Soviet transformation, and societal change, we highlight the role higher education has to play in shaping the knowledge, skills, and capacities needed for Ukraine's urban future.

Urban planning education in Ukraine has been shaped by a combination of historical legacies, institutional reforms, and external shocks. The Soviet system left a strong imprint, prioritising technical and design-oriented approaches while limiting interdisciplinary thinking and conceptual development. Reforms in higher education and urban planning since Independence in 1991 have generally been gradual, while the ongoing war has placed unprecedented pressure on universities, to adapt rapidly to ongoing uncertainty, disruption, and resource constraints.

In recent years, the field has experienced notable expansion and diversification. While architecture remains the dominant discipline, urban studies has emerged as a fast-growing—though still relatively small—area of study. This growth reflects broader societal dynamics, including decentralisation reforms, increased civic engagement, and expanding international cooperation. However, the absence of a formally recognised “urban studies” speciality continues to constrain the development of interdisciplinary programmes, which are widely acknowledged as essential in addressing the complexity of contemporary urban development.

Structural challenges affecting the sector identified in this report include institutional rigidity in accreditation and programme development, a shrinking student population, and a growing faculty crisis driven by low salaries, limited career incentives, and migration of academic talent. Inequalities between institutions and limited capacity also hinder universities' ability to innovate in response to emerging needs. Collaboration between universities and external stakeholders—such as local authorities, professional communities, and government bodies—remains underdeveloped and informal.

Despite these constraints, universities have demonstrated impressive resilience and agility in maintaining and developing programmes under extreme conditions. Private and alternative educational initiatives are gaining traction, offering greater flexibility and more practice-oriented learning. Efforts to internationalise education, including increased use of English-language instruction, are taking root. Professional communities and public forums are also contributing to knowledge exchange and debate, even if their formal influence on education systems remains limited.

Universities are playing an evolving role as active contributors to urban recovery. Beyond their traditional educational function, they are also platforms for civic engagement, applied research, and innovation. Through partnerships and practical initiatives—such as student-led projects and community-based research—universities can directly support reconstruction efforts and strengthen local capacities. Realising universities' full potential in this is contingent on reduced administrative burdens, increased resources, and more structured frameworks for collaboration.

Urban development and planning education in Ukraine is in a transitional phase, moving from fragmented, legacy-driven systems toward more adaptive, interdisciplinary, and internationally connected models. This transition remains incomplete and uneven, shaped by both enduring structural constraints and the disruptive effects of war. Strengthening the sector will be essential to equip future professionals with the skills and experience needed to guide Ukraine's recovery and urban transformation.

Key priorities for further research include deeper analysis of post-war educational needs, the role of universities in reconstruction processes, and pathways for integrating Ukrainian higher education alongside the existing European system. Interdisciplinary programme development, faculty capacity, and establishing mechanisms for sustained and consistent collaboration between academia and practice, are all areas for further investigation. Addressing these issues will be critical to ensuring that urban education in Ukraine can effectively contribute to a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking urban future.



Recovery planning workshop with map annotation © UN-Habitat Ukraine, 2024

CONTENTS

Executive summary	VI
General introduction to the thematic paper series	X
Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Urban development and planning education evolution: the Ukrainian context	4
Graduate competencies, dual education, Continuous Professional Development, and public and private education.....	17
Interdisciplinary and inter-university collaboration, and professional communities	22
Impact of war and the role of universities	29
Conclusions.....	32
References	34
Annexes	36

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Timeline of key legislative shifts and institutional changes in urban planning and higher education, and civil initiatives influencing the evolution of education for the built environment	4
Figure 2: Expanding and Evolving Focuses of Education for the Built Environment	8
Figure 3: Centres of University Urban Development and Planning Education (total, Bachelor's, and Master's students)	10
Figure 4: Urban Forums as a Platform for Professional Dialogue on Urban Education Development	11
Figure 5: Trends in distribution of study programmes and student enrolment across categories	13
Figure 6: Bachelor's and Master's programme enrolment trends by speciality: Architecture and Town Planning/Building and Civil Engineering	14
Figure 7: Universities offering Urban Development and Planning programmes by category: 1–Architecture, 2–Engineering, 3–Urban Studies	19
Figure 8: Higher education standards by specialities relevant to urban development and planning programmes.....	22

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABU – Academy of Builders of Ukraine
AESOP – Association of European Schools of Planning
AUU – Alliance of Ukrainian Universities
BMZ – German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
CPD – Continuous Professional Development
CUS – Centre for Urban Studies
ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
GIZ – German Agency for International Cooperation
GIS – Geographic Information Systems
HEI – Higher Education Institution
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
KNEU – Kyiv National Economic University
KNUCA – Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture
KSE – Kyiv School of Economics
NAQA – National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NUAU – National Union of Architects of Ukraine
RDNA – Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
SALAR International – Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions
TSNUK – Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
UNESCO-UIA – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation - International Union of Architects
USESCS – Unified State Electronic System in the Construction Sector
UAA – Ukrainian Academy of Architecture
USEDE – Unified State Electronic Database of Education

General introduction to the thematic paper series

Four years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – and close to 12 years since the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and City of Sevastopol in 2014 – war continues to inflict untold suffering on the Ukrainian people.¹ Hostilities since 2022 have caused widespread damage and destruction to Ukraine's built environment – from housing, utilities, and transport networks, to social infrastructure and cultural assets. In this compound crisis of urban systems, many cities have shifted focus from long-term development to continuous emergency repair and risk management. Most recent estimates put the cost of reconstruction and recovery at 587.7 billion USD – a figure that has grown year on year since 2022.² The sector incurring highest damage in dollar terms is housing: 14 per cent of the national housing stock, affecting some 3 million households, has been damaged or destroyed, requiring 61.1 billion USD for reconstruction and recovery needs.³ As at January 2026, around 3.7 million people have been displaced within Ukraine since 2022, with a further 5.8 million now refugees outside the country. This comes in the context of an earlier wave of conflict-related disruption and displacement from 2014.⁴

In a country that is 70 per cent urban by population,⁵ Ukraine's cities are central to both crisis and recovery. Total recovery and reconstruction needs are spatially concentrated in frontline areas and major urban oblasts.⁶ Urban centres are 'facing both supply constraints and high demand from displaced populations'.⁷ There is an urgent and pressing imperative to respond to impacts on the built environment and critical infrastructure amidst

large-scale humanitarian need. Even as hostilities continue and despite funding constraints, the Ukrainian Government has a strong ambition to 'build back better' - including a desire to revitalize existing towns and neighbourhoods through area-based approaches that support local-level investment and contribute to recovery,⁸ as flagged by the most recent Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment 5.⁹ The Assessment also highlighted that effective recovery planning requires reforms that enhance the institutional and technical capacity of the country's public sector to prepare, implement and monitor investment projects.¹⁰ Strengthened data collection and research is identified as one of the main priorities for a durable recovery.¹¹

Addressing the challenges now facing Ukraine demands a long-term analytical perspective stretching back even earlier than 2014 – to factor in Soviet and post-Soviet structural legacies that continue to fundamentally shape the conditions, constraints, and opportunities facing contemporary urban recovery planning. In particular, Ukraine's post-1991 transition produced privatized housing systems with fragmented ownership and maintenance backlogs, aging and underinvested infrastructure, deindustrialized urban economies and shrinking city dynamics, evolving decentralization reforms, and an increasingly mobilized civil society with expectations for democratic governance.

In this historical context, national, sub-national and sectoral recovery strategies need to be developed and implemented in ways that also embed measures to build capacity within the built environment professions.

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- 1 In terms of mortalities, hostilities since 2022 have also left over 15,000 civilians dead, and injured over 41,000 others. (OHCHR, 2026).
 - 2 World Bank Group; Government of Ukraine; European Commission; United Nations (2026)
 - 3 The most recent Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment 5 indicates that 74% of total damage since 2022 occurred in 4 sectors: housing (requiring 61.1 billion USD for reconstruction and recovery needs over the 10-year period 2026–2035; transport (40.3 billion USD); energy (24.8 billion USD); commerce and industry (19.2 billion USD). (Government of Ukraine, World Bank Group, European Commission & United Nations, 2026 p24). As the report notes, 'The total needs include expenses related to rebuilding with improved standards (...) and account for inflationary pressures' (World Bank Group; Government of Ukraine; European Commission; United Nations, 2026 p30).
 - 4 Ukraine already had the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Europe as at July 2021, with over 1.4 million people fleeing (Mikheieva & Kuznetsova, 2023 [for IOM]).
 - 5 World Bank Group (n.d.) (2023 figures)
 - 6 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026 p27)
 - 7 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026 p24)
 - 8 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026 p54)
 - 9 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026)
 - 10 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026, p11)
 - 11 World Bank Group, Government of Ukraine, European Commission, United Nations (2026, p42)

The war has affected the availability of Ukrainian expertise within urban development, which was already scarce pre-war. This presents a real risk to the Government's widely supported aim to build back better. While several organizations have emerged to support capacity development in Ukraine on urban and territorial development and management, access to contextually relevant knowledge and best practices on these issues is still limited.

In response to urban recovery needs, UN-Habitat collaborates with the Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, providing strategy and policy advice. In line with its mandate to promote socially and environmentally sustainable and resilient towns and cities, UN-Habitat supported a variety of not-for-profit and public Ukrainian entities to produce thematic documents on nine inter-related aspects of Ukraine's built environment. Each document considers the historical context and key issues of each topic in relation to urban recovery, presenting authors' valuable understandings of the respective topic.

Under the theme **Urban Governance**, the document *'Citizenship: Urban futures in Ukraine'* examines how civic participation and citizenship may interplay with inclusive and democratic urban recovery processes. The document *'Municipal Governance Issues in Ukraine'* identifies institutional and administrative features as well as opportunities and constraints affecting municipalities' capacity to engage with recovery. The document *'Decentralization and Recovery: Local Recovery Planning in Ukraine'* assesses how historic decentralization reform has shaped the role of local self-government bodies in planning and implementing recovery. Under the theme of **Urban Land**, the document *'Land and Property Issues in Housing and Urban Development in Ukraine'* covers the evolution of land ownership and property rights issues including in terms of their criticality to reconstruction and housing redevelopment. Under the theme of **Urban Planning**, the document *'Spatial Planning in Ukraine'* sets out the planning environment and associated frameworks guiding coordinated spatial reconstruction across national, regional, and local levels. Under the theme of **Urban Housing**, the document *'Housing Provision and Outcomes in Ukraine'* examines mechanisms through

which housing is financed, delivered, and regulated, and is complemented by the document *'Tracing the Path of Social Housing in Ukraine'* which explores the evolution of social housing and implications for expanding affordable housing provision. Under the final theme, **Urban Skills**, the document *'Built Environment Professionals: Education and Practice in Ukraine'* assesses the professional capacity available to plan, design, and implement urban reconstruction, while the document *'Built Environment Professionals: University Education in Ukraine'* evaluates higher education systems preparing future built environment professionals for reconstruction and urban development.

While many documents on recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine start from accounts of damage from 2014 and 2022, this series takes a longer perspective, actively exploring the selected themes across the Soviet and post-Soviet transition and reform periods.

Collectively, the series conveys the voices of academics, practitioners and civil society activists from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, representing local expert knowledge and experience rooted in the Ukrainian context. They offer a multi-dimensional diagnostic foundation and common language to inform evolving and multi-level discussions on the country's urban challenges and opportunities, as well as options for the future and how Ukraine might achieve them. In particular, the series aims to contribute to the continuing processes of decentralization and democratization. If decisions about towns and cities are to be driven locally and with context sensitivity, a wider literacy and shared understanding regarding the built environment, including its planning and management, is needed. The thematic documents respond to this need, increasing the availability and accessibility of knowledge on urban topics, and providing extensive references for further reading. UN-Habitat hopes the series will serve as a knowledge resource for policymakers, local officials, practitioners, development partners, researchers engaged in Ukraine's urban recovery, as well as general readers; and will contribute to recovery discourse, processes and outcomes that are context-appropriate, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

Introduction

Although essentially universal, Built Environment Education must also adapt to the specific conditions and constraints of its context. Urban development, planning and education systems all vary from country to country, whilst political and legal reform, together with societal changes can significantly affected the shape of professional education. Education relating to the built environment is also inherently multifaceted, encompassing diverse trends and practices across a vast range of fields including architecture, urban planning, environmental design, civil engineering, urban management, urban studies, and more.

This paper looks at education in Ukraine relating to the country's urban development and planning. We look at the factors shaping this field, and present the national context through its evolution, ongoing experimentation, and external upheavals, to demonstrate how Ukrainian urban planning education transforms, renews, and adapts. With this in mind, we studied the challenges already tackled, those currently being addressed, and the emerging issues that may soon gain significance.

While Ukrainian architecture and civil engineering education has long-standing traditions and well-established schools spanning multiple generations, urban studies is a new field in the country: its traditions, benchmarks, standards, and, most importantly, institutions are still developing. In higher education, the field faces the familiar challenges of post-Soviet transition, the ongoing armed conflict, and societal demands for higher quality.

The initial stage of our research revealed an extremely low level of interest among Ukrainian scholars toward the issues of urban development and planning education. We saw in itself as being indicative of the need for greater investigation into the state of urban-related education in Ukraine.

Rather than providing exhaustive or detailed scrutiny, this paper reflects the authors' perspectives based on their experiences developing, implementing, and managing study programmes and participating in public discussions on urban education in Ukraine. The paper also draws on insights from interviews with key figures and practitioners in education around Ukraine's built environment.

We describe the history of the inclusion of urban development and planning in higher education, analyse available data on existing study programmes, and trace the trends and evolution of higher education in this field. While working on this paper, we focused on whether higher education around the built environment in Ukraine is prepared to confront the challenges of urban evolution amid the ongoing conflict in the country and subsequent post-war recovery.

This thematic paper provides an overview of the evolution and current state of urban development and planning education in Ukraine while focusing on the challenges shaping the field. Opening with an overview of the research methodology and its limitations, it proceeds to outline the development of urban planning and education in Ukraine, exploring the legacy of the Soviet system, reforms in both urban planning and higher education, broader societal changes, emerging urban initiatives, the expansion of relevant education beyond architecture and civil engineering, and patterns of spatial diversification. In addition, it highlights professional dialogue and the events that have contributed to shaping urban-related education and the understanding thereof.

The paper then examines the current state of the professional field, analysing study programme statistics, key challenges in faculty development, gaps in graduate competencies, perspectives on the language of instruction, and the strengths and limitations of both public and private higher education while also addressing dual education and the importance of continuous professional development. Finally, it further explores the constraints imposed by formal standards and specialities, as well as opportunities for international accreditation and interdisciplinary collaboration, also considering the role of professional communities in education, the profound impact of the ongoing war on urban education, and the role of universities as a resource for national recovery and urban development. In conclusion, we reflect on the key findings and outline potential directions for future research.

Methodology

SUMMARY OF APPROACH

The methodology of this study is three-pronged: synthesising information from expert interviews; analysing data on higher education in architecture, urban planning, civil engineering, and urban studies; and conducting desk research.

This research has its limitations. First and foremost, access to data was limited. It was impossible to get data on the number of students studying abroad (demographic data considered sensitive under martial law) or any 1990s data, the documents from those years not being available in digital form. Also, almost no data is currently available on higher education institutions pre-dating the implementation of the Unified State Electronic Database of Education (USEDE). Time constraints made it problematic to carry out deeper research, while the ongoing conflict was also a complicating factor, affecting experts' availability.

There is little existing research on this paper's specific subject. While academic papers and analytical reports on the general challenges of Ukrainian higher education touch upon some related aspects, publications and media tend to overlook the topic of higher education relating to the built environment in the country.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

We conducted twelve online semi-structured in-depth interviews spanning 45–60 minutes with representatives of higher education institutions, employing institutions, and professional communities (see Annex for questionnaire and list of experts). The experts were selected based on institutional representation and their availability (not everyone was available, given the short time frame for research).

The data for quantitative analysis was sourced from the 2010–2023 annual statistical bulletins of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine ("Key Performance Indicators of Higher Education Institutions in Ukraine" and "Higher Education in Ukraine") and the 2018–2024 open data on the number of students and study programmes from the USEDE.¹²

For the purpose of this study, all urban development and planning programmes from the USEDE were grouped into three broad categories: Architecture, Engineering, and Urban Studies.

THREE ACADEMIC CATEGORIES

The Architecture category primarily includes programmes with names closely matching the official Architecture and Urban Planning speciality (*Архітектура та містобудування* in Ukrainian, literally translated as Architecture and City Building, which could cause terminological confusion). Other common programme names, particularly at the master's level, include Urban Planning, Architectural Environment Design, Architecture and Urbanism, Architecture of Urban Spaces, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Landscape Design. Building architecture, structural engineering and other similar programmes were excluded from the analysis.

The Engineering category is mostly covered by representatives from Urban Development and Economy programmes (the title in Ukrainian *Міське будівництво та господарство*, literally translates as Urban Construction and Economy; the lack of unified translation and terminology once again presents a challenge), alongside other programmes such as Transport Technologies (Urban Transportation), Urban Transport Logistics, Smart Transport and Logistics for Cities, and Urban Engineering Networks. Although study programme names may or may not specifically include the term "urban", civil engineers taking part in these courses are employed in urban contexts. Still, this paper focuses on the programmes that train professionals, which are critically important to decision-making in urban development and planning settings. Similarly, water, energy supply, communications, and many other engineering practitioners, who are undoubtedly essential to the functioning of the city (like the economic, financial, or social services and environmental professionals featured in the following category), are not included in the analysis unless their study programmes specifically focus on cities and urban environments.

¹² <https://info.edbo.gov.ua>

In the Urban Studies category, programme names vary widely, including Urban Studies (both *Урбаністика* and *Урбаністичні студії* in Ukrainian), Urban Study and Planning, Urban Studies and Regional Development, Urban Economy and Urban Studies, Urban Management, City Management, Urban Studies and Post-War Reconstruction, Urban Studies, Urban Planning, and Sustainable Spatial Development, Urban Ecology, and even Cultural Studies, Cyberculture,

and Cultural Urbanism. These courses have been developed with Geography, Economics, Management, Ecology, and Cultural Studies specialities in mind. Study programmes in several other specialities (e.g., Sociology, Public Administration, History, and others) may include Urban Studies as individual courses or elective blocks. However, they generally focus more on their specific field of study than urban development and planning.



War-damaged university building, Mykolaiv © Jane Zh / Shutterstock

Urban development and planning education evolution: the Ukrainian context

The evolution of Ukraine's Urban Development and Planning Education has been complex. Over time, multiple concurrent factors which have impacted both the state and higher education in this field. The post-Soviet transition, the subsequent development of related legislative frameworks, the emergence of communities around some initiatives, democratisation, and the decentralisation reform, have all had major impacts.

By the early 1990s, multiple powerful educational centres had entered a new era in Ukraine. Still, they had to overcome the challenges of societal transformations and reliance on the Soviet planning and education system, as well as navigating unpredictable changes to university admissions procedures and teaching systems.

Urban planning and higher education in transition

In Ukraine, documents relating to spatial planning are officially termed "city-building documentation" (*містобудівна документація* in Ukrainian). The legal framework also introduces the notion of "planning of territories" — distinct from "territorial planning" and closely tied to the construction and development processes as outlined in Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of City Planning Activities". Meanwhile, terms like "spatial development", "spatial planning", and "spatial policy" have only just begun to appear in professional and policy contexts over the past decade.

The Law of Ukraine "On Education" (1991), established to replace the former Soviet-inherited education system, set out only a general framework for higher education. Several phases of reforms followed, implemented not instantaneously but gradually over time. According to the Presidential Decree "On the Main Directions for the Reform of Higher Education in Ukraine" (1995), higher education was in a deep crisis, manifesting in a catastrophic lack of funding, brain drain in faculty and academia, declining interest in fundamental education, reduced educational standards, and a shortage of textbooks, manuals, and other teaching resources. It thus recognised profound systemic reform was required to preserve higher education's potential, and the need to strengthen state support for priority areas of education and science, and align the system with the latest global developments¹³. These priorities have generally remained relevant throughout all subsequent reforms.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, both the system of higher education and the classification of specialities underwent multiple changes (Fig. 1). In the second half of the 1990s, a multi-cycle system of professional education was introduced, along with the qualification levels of junior specialist, bachelor, specialist, and master.

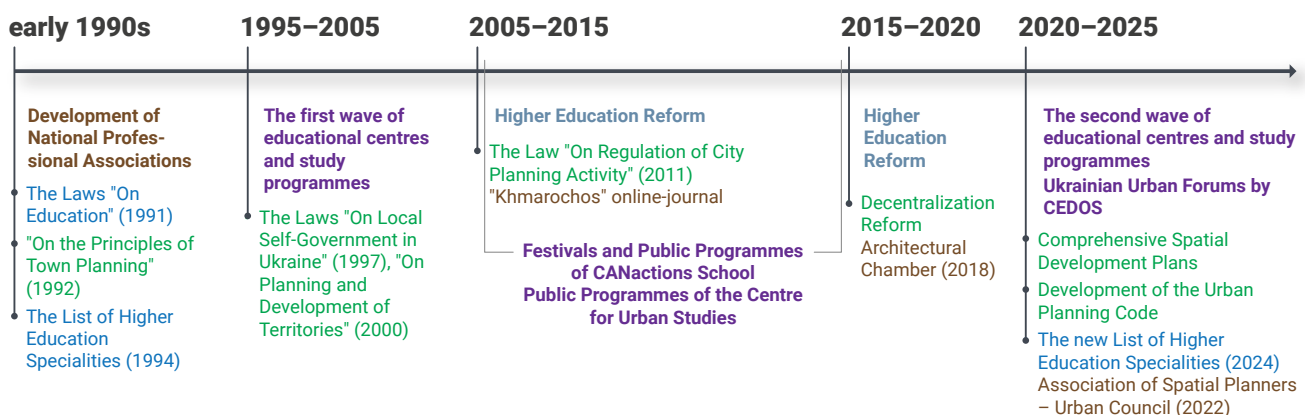


Figure 1: Timeline of key legislative shifts and institutional changes in urban planning and higher education, and civil initiatives influencing the evolution of education for the built environment

¹³ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/832/95#Text>

Regarding specialities, Architecture was designated as a separate field, while Urban Development and Economy as a discipline was incorporated into Engineering. Within the field of Architecture, Theory and History of Architecture, Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture, and Architectural Environment Design were introduced as specialities. Three years later this revised list narrowed to three specialities: Architecture of Buildings and Structures, Urban Planning, and Architectural Environment Design.

The next phase of reform launched with Ukraine's accession to the Bologna Process in 2005, bringing about a standardised system of qualification levels: junior specialist (incomplete higher education), bachelor (basic higher education), specialist and master (complete higher education).

The new classification was introduced at the bachelor's level first, defining a broader field of Construction and Architecture with two main directions – Construction and Architecture. The specialist and master's levels followed a few years later, consolidating the field into Construction and Architecture, with Construction (including Urban Development and Economy) and Architecture (including Urban Planning and Architectural Environment Design) as sub-fields.

Another set of changes was implemented in the mid-2010s with the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014), which introduced a new model of qualification levels: junior bachelor, bachelor,

master, and doctor of philosophy. Like before, the implementation of those changes was gradual, with the last admission to specialist and junior specialist programmes in 2016 and 2019, respectively.

A major restructuring led to Architecture and Construction being merged into a single field of study, with only two specialities: 191 Architecture and Town Planning (*Архітектура та містобудування*, renamed G17 in 2024) and 192 Building and Civil Engineering (*Будівництво та цивільна інженерія*, G19). This detailed overview provides insight into the persistent reclassification of specialities and the ongoing changes that significantly complicate the positioning of study programmes

Qualification framework

In 2017, educational and qualification levels were harmonised with the National Qualifications

Framework. As a result, study programmes are now developed and implemented per these education levels and within the established list of fields of knowledge and specialities. There are ten education levels, four of which correspond to higher education: the initial level (junior bachelor, Level 5 under the National Qualifications Framework), the first level (bachelor's degree, Level 6), the second level (master's degree, Level 7), and the third level (educational and research/educational and creative—PhD, Level 8).

The Law "On Higher Education" (2014) also introduced procedures for accrediting study programmes through the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAQA) according to higher education standards for specialities and education levels, however this mechanism only became operational at the end of 2019. The NAQA was established by the decision of Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers in 2015. The development of higher education standards began in 2016, but the first approvals did not happen until the end of 2018. Most standards were approved only in the period 2018–2024, although for some specialities, standards were never fully developed (e.g., for Building and Civil Engineering, bachelor-level standards were available). Approval of a new list of specialities in 2024 (On Amending the List of Fields of Knowledge and Specialties for Training Higher and Professional Pre-Higher Education Seekers (2024)), further complicated the process, as the need arose to redevelop standards for updated specialities. This process has just started under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which selects the members of relevant committees through a competitive process, develops regulations on the development of standards, and arranges expert examination of the standards.

Legislative and regulatory documents relating to built-environment planning have also evolved. Throughout 2023–2024, over 300 experts worked on the concept of the Urban Planning Code. Expected to change the rules for urban development, the Law on Urban Planning Code entered its drafting phase in 2025. The resulting Code will establish four stages of urban development (spatial planning, design, construction, and operation of real estate) and five agents of urban development (residents, professionals, local self-government, developers, and authorities) (Rybalska, 2025). The most significant changes pertain to the flexibility of urban planning documentation, investment protection, urban planning decentralisation, and implementing European urban development and spatial planning best practices.

Multiple working groups were established to develop the concept of the Urban Planning Code, including one focusing on education, helping to demonstrate educators' involvement in drafting the Code, and ensure integration of an educational component. This collaborative work on the concept for the Urban Planning Code also helped to connect and unite participants, who continue to champion their shared interest in education beyond the initiative. For example, a chat room with over 200 working group members has been set up to enable a coordinated rapid response to the challenges of protecting educational specialities from unsubstantiated changes and resolving professional certification issues.

The working group leader Hanna Bondar believes industry professionals will definitely feel the changes brought about by the new Code, noting that many felt government priorities and policies were at odds with the wishes of those working in the industry (Rybalska, 2025). Many architects have been unable to validate their work experience due to a lack of commissions, forced displacement, loss of business, or joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine, resulting in their professional certificates being revoked. Urban planners have been affected even more, being unable to confirm their professional experience as there are currently no procedures or mechanisms agreed by the concerned ministry for them to do so (Rybalska, 2025).

Soviet legacy

Because of the unclear distinction between education covering architecture, and urban planning, development, and management, these fields are often lumped together. Their lack of recognition as separate specialisations is probably the most critical issue inherited from the Soviet past. Tackling this issue is critical to further cooperation with European institutions.

The burden of the Soviet legacy is so extreme that it affects education, management, mindset, and study programmes on every level, something seen across many former Soviet countries. Ideologically, the previous perspective on education disintegrated, making way for the growing influence of neoliberal thought. Socially, dismantling the welfare system led to attempts to introduce different Western models of social support. Economically, the shift from a planned economy to a market-driven approach eroded educational infrastructure. Culturally, Soviet traditions were replaced by diverse expressions of national and

regional identities. Structurally, countries that once shared similar educational frameworks diverged, each pursuing its path for restructuring (Želvys, 2018).

Some experts voice the pessimistic conclusion that hardly any transformations have happened in the last decades. *"I see no change... Reviewing the study programmes at one university felt like a déjà vu,"* said Dr Svitlana Shlipchenko, Head of the Centre for Urban Studies. The situation is not so stark everywhere though, with some higher education institutions having adapted while others remain reluctant to change. This reluctance is often compounded by lacking capacity, which prevents meaningful reforms and adjustment to evolving educational demands.

Another part of the Soviet legacy in urban development and planning education is the tradition of focusing on hard skills but paying much less attention, if any, to such things as sociology, anthropology, history, and heritage. As Urban Reforms' Oleksandra Naryzhna noted, Ukrainian education *"provides basic hard skills, and good ones, meaning architects are proficient in working with space and familiar with software... However, difficulties arise when it comes to ideas because the conceptual foundation is still very weak... Hard skills alone can only get one so far. Artificial intelligence is emerging, and it will replace those skills. Moreover, it seems our education limits one's ability to think one way or another."*

Transformation in urban planning and education

Shifts in the legislative framework and the requirements for urban planning documentation compel education to change, particularly when it comes to curricula/courses and, to a much lesser extent, competencies. However, the complexity of urban planning legislation, and of developing comprehensive spatial development plans under the stringent requirements currently in place, was something highlighted in expert interviews. As Professor Olena Oliynyk, Vice President of the National Union of Architects of Ukraine, said: *"The legislation was destroyed, master plans are either non-functioning or non-existent... There is no basic urban planning documentation in our country. The requirements for it are in a state of constant flux. What can we teach our students?"*

As to whether education influences urban planning reforms, findings for this paper suggest it mostly does not. As Prof. Oliynyk explained: *"Architects are generally excluded from this process right now... We tell our*

students how it should be, but it is still a huge process that needs to be built essentially from scratch, and it should start with the systematic restoration of not just urban planning education but our country's entire urban planning system."

Societal changes and emerging urban initiatives

Hanna Palekha, Head of the Association of Spatial Planners—Urban Council, explains how challenging the decentralisation reform is. It *"has influenced the demand for new specialists. This reform specifically led to an increased demand for experts in community spatial planning. However, universities failed to adapt to this change promptly, and communities often have to hire professionals who lack relevant education."* It is not about professionals from specific specialities but those ready to develop and implement urban planning documents at the local community level with a new mindset.

Another major change occurred in public discourse, which has become increasingly urban-oriented. The shift manifested in the emergence and proliferation of specialised media, such as *Urban Studies* (2012), *Khmarochos* (2014), *MistoSite*, *Pragmatika* (2018), and, finally, *City* (2016), the peer-reviewed academic journal.

New urban development and planning study programmes started to appear in the late 2010s as a response to these changes. However, this transformation did not happen overnight and resulted from a series of preceding events. The initial impetus came from counteractive and proactive initiatives and movements in cities, with the former aiming to preserve urban qualities by resisting change and the latter pursuing their vision for the urban environment (Mezentsev et al., 2017). These initiatives varied widely from protests opposing specific construction projects (and insisting on the protection of historic buildings) and tree felling in parks, to efforts focused on developing cycling infrastructure, restoring decaying heritage, installing anti-parking bollards, and creating more comfortable public spaces.

Urban activism surged after 2014, focusing on rethinking public space design, preserving cultural heritage, and introducing smart transportation solutions. Many cities launched festivals, such as the Maisternia Mista (Urban Workshop) urban culture festival, as well as forums and other events dedicated to promoting liveable cities¹⁴.

City Councils in Lviv, Kyiv, and Vinnytsia also began to embrace urbanism as a means of learning from best practices. Lviv City Council established its Urbanism Department and later the Institute for Spatial Development. The Department of Urban Planning and Architecture of the Kyiv City State Administration invited former Bogotá mayor Enrique Peñalosa to Ukraine. Vinnytsia City Council enlisted the help of Swiss urbanist Urs Thomann to develop a comprehensive strategy for urban transportation and spatial planning (Bobrova & Verbytskyi, 2018). International experts' involvement and visits to Ukraine became essential to stimulating the professional community and sparked dialogue around the need for innovation in urban development and planning education. Also, they helped advance the field by introducing new expertise and approaches highly relevant to contemporary urban challenges.

In 2009, Lviv authorities joined forces with GIZ ([Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit](#)) to develop the central part of the city. Later, GIZ expanded its cooperation with the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine to produce integrated urban development strategies for Poltava, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi, Lviv, and Kyiv's Podil¹⁵ neighbourhood (Bobrova & Verbytskyi, 2018). As Oleksandr Korotkykh, Chief Architect of Vinnytsia City Council's Spatial Development Agency, said, *"Integrated urban development is highly promising and progressive. This document was the first to introduce a different approach... in terms of its level, presentation, and understanding of the topic, as well as its focus on exploring possible scenarios. It embraces change and improvement whenever changes occur... It creates*

14 e.g.: https://kyivcity.gov.ua/news/maysternya_mista_20_bezpeka_ta_staliy_rozvitok_7_veresnya_u_stolitsi_vidbudetsya_urbanistich-niy_festival; <https://city-adm.lviv.ua/news/society/public-sector/297765-majsternya-mista-2023-najtsikavishi-podiji-ekskursiji-ta-kvest-iz-podarunkami>; <https://zt-rada.gov.ua/?pages=19031>

15 Vinnytsia: <https://2021.vmr.gov.ua/SiteAssets/Lists/IntegratedUrbanDevelopment/Default/Концепція%20інтегрованого%20розвитку%20Вінниця%202030.pdf>
Zhytomyr: https://zt-rada.gov.ua/files/upload/all/2025/Економіка/kontsiptsiia_compressed%20%281%29.pdf
Poltava: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fAvjT0JkAztkmHBF95WX5vFX0HeO2Qvh/view>
Kyiv's Podil neighbourhood: <https://cedos.org.ua/news/opublikovano-konczepczyu-integrovanogo-rozvytku-podilskogo-rajonu-kyyye-va-2030/>

opportunities to engage experts, promotes European ideas of urban development and participation... It offers a completely new way of looking at cities”.

University education supported discussions on new approaches and visions for urban development but proved largely unresponsive to them, remaining confined mainly to standardised study programmes. Here, it is important to clarify that the higher education remains notably conservative, even though some educational initiatives are relatively progressive. As a result, new educational platforms emerged to meet the demand for new educational formats addressing present-day challenges and developments—particularly CANactions School and the Centre for Urban Studies (a research centre established in 2015 that focuses on public programmes, publication activities, education and research; in 2019, it signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, enabling the development and launch of an Urban Studies and Spatial Planning Master’s programme at the Urban and Spatial Planning Faculty in 2021), which introduced public programmes, diverse public events, architectural festivals, workshops, and summer schools.

Collaboration with European foundations was essential in promoting new ideas and approaches. Between 2012 and 2018, the Heinrich Böll Foundation funded four editions of the Urban Studies series: *Anatomy of the City*, *City and Renewal*, *(Dis)Satisfaction with Public Spaces*, and *Urbanism and Feminism*, as well as the CUS’s other educational and public activities.

CANactions School for Urban Studies invited European lecturers and opinion leaders, such as Jan Gehl, a Danish architect and urban design consultant, to Kyiv as part of their educational initiatives focusing on strategic urban planning and design, environmental and landscape planning, city branding, urban sociology, and project management (CANactions, 2021).

Meanwhile, other educational initiatives also appeared. Within the Initiative for the Development of Think Tanks in Ukraine, a certified free online course titled *Urbanism: A Contemporary City* was launched, targeting municipal council employees, urban activists, city residents, public figures, students, and researchers. Developed by experts from Cedoss (Centre for Society Research) and the Centre for Urban Studies, the course covers the principles and strategies of urban development and governance, public spaces, urban mobility, and opportunities for citizen engagement in city

management (Urban Studies, 2018). Such initiatives “significantly energised the [educational] space, filling it with new knowledge and ideas” and “expanded the capacity for public education,” Oleksandra Naryzhna of Urban Reform noted.

Expanding education beyond architecture and civil engineering

In the early 1990s, built environment education in Ukraine focused on two fields—architecture and civil engineering. Over time, a third focus emerged—urban studies (Fig. 2). Initially individual programmes were somewhat experimental, but quickly gained recognition among professional practitioners. The growing demand for professionals in various aspects of urban development and planning beyond architecture and engineering, has seen the number and diversity of such programmes increasing. However, our analysis of the courses reveals that these three components share multiple common focuses, with some courses being borrowed or transferred from one field to another. As a result, there has been a gradual but noticeable convergence.



Figure 2: Expanding and Evolving Focuses of Education for the Built Environment

The need to develop and introduce new study programmes was driven by the growing importance of cities and urbanised areas as key centres of economic activity and spatial transformation on the one hand, and by the rising demand for urban planning experts following decentralisation reform on the other hand. In 2018, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK) launched its Urban Studies and Urban Planning bachelor's programme, followed by the Urban Studies and Regional Development master's programme the following year. Meanwhile, V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University introduced its Urban Studies programme, and the Kharkiv School of Architecture began offering its Architecture and Urbanism programme.

The developing trend towards interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches was another sign of the times. In the Urban Studies domain, it manifested in educational and research activities expanding beyond the confines of conventional urban planning, accompanied by the efforts to design interdisciplinary curricula that integrate multiple research areas. Urban Economics and Urban Management programmes were launched, as well as the BA in Urban Economics and Urban Studies at Kyiv National Economic University and the MA in Urban Studies and Spatial Planning at Kyiv National University of Architecture and Construction.

As one of the interviewees mentioned, the role of the leader gains importance when it comes to critical changes, such as establishing a new BA in Urban Economics at a stagnating post-Soviet university. As city finances expert Professor Vitaliy Pylypiv recalled: *"I started working at KNEU (Kyiv National Economic University) in 2016. At our department, we began thinking about how to preserve our profile and identify something that truly has prospects for the coming years. We monitored developments in Western universities and, after lengthy debates, arrived at Urban Studies, Urban Economics ... We launched the programme that same year"*.

Although only a short time has passed, one can already make some initial assessments. Some programmes show tangible results (e.g., graduates' career paths, their professional impact, and employability in general). In contrast, the influence of others is not yet noticeable in the labour market and professional landscape. As Oleksandra Naryzhna mentioned about the BSc in Urban Studies and Planning at TSNUK: *"I have the opportunity to observe the impact of the programme through the students. It seems to me this*

represents a new level of quality in city analysis and understanding," while some other programmes *"have not yet manifested itself in the field. Perhaps in five years, we might see something."* However, there are also those that *"seem to have been more of a commercial venture for the university."* In other words, stepping beyond standard programmes has not yielded results in all cases. A significant factor here is who implements the study programmes, how they are carried out, and the competencies they provide—or fail to provide—to students. We will discuss this in the following sections.

Spatial diversification

By the early 1990s, several centres of urban education had formed in Ukraine, such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, Dnipro, and Poltava. Later, as Professor Bohdan Cherkes, the long-time Head of the Lviv Polytechnic's Institute of Architecture, metaphorically put it: *"Institutes started popping up like mushrooms after the rain... architecture faculties opened all over the place"*. He attributes that to the financial factor, among other things: universities became financially strained, many specialisations were no longer attractive to students and could not sustain themselves financially; meanwhile, architecture and later design started generating income. In other words, commercial interest and market demand for professionals able to produce villas and interiors reflecting "the new rich" and for catchy naming were, to some extent, a motivating factor. *"While in the early 1990s there were 5–7 architecture schools, now we have 25–30, which is a lot,"* he said.

The new educational centres emerged in several waves. The first wave dates back to the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Urban-centred architecture and civil engineering programmes appeared in Uzhhorod, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, and Dublyany in the Lviv Oblast. The second wave happened in Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi, Lutsk, Mariupol, Kramatorsk, Kherson, Chernihiv, Ternopil, and Cherkasy in 2017–2024. New programmes were launched at public universities, most of which had previously only offered construction-focused programmes, now complemented by architecture and urban development ones. Between these two waves, new programmes were launched only in Sumy. The second wave expanded beyond architecture and engineering, opening a new avenue for urban studies programmes in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Irpin in the Kyiv Oblast. The occupation of Ukrainian cities and destruction of their physical fabric led to the relocation of architectural schools—Donbas National Academy of

Civil Engineering and Architecture first relocated from Makiivka to Kramatorsk, and now to Ivano-Frankivsk, Azov State Technical University from Mariupol to Dnipro, Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University to Kropyvnytskyi, and Kharkiv School of Architecture to Lviv.

Today, institutions across 21 cities in Ukraine, including two in the suburbs of Kyiv and Lviv, offer urban development and planning programmes (Fig. 3). However, Professor Yurii Palekha notes that: *"although the number of higher education institutions is increasing, this does not necessarily lead to positive outcomes. Ensuring a proper level of education requires a qualified academic workforce with relevant experience and expertise. It is essential to support those institutions that have established academic schools and traditions."*

Between 2014 and 2021, many architecture, urban planning, and urban development departments saw structural changes. Many underwent renaming or

merging, resulting in nearly every major regional university having an architecture or planning department. However, experts interviewed here have been sceptical of the quality of education these provide, pointing out the lack of development towards European best practices, and of foreign knowledge. Where faculty from overseas are present, this is likely coupled with a lack of understanding of Ukraine's specific context, they felt. It was also felt that institutions' attempts at reforms often just scratched the surface rather than appreciably revising curricula and adapting to European standards. In particular, it was emphasised that institutions in Ukraine's regions struggled to ensure an adequate level of teaching due to the shortage of faculty with the necessary knowledge and experience. However, some interviewees argued that given the acute lack of high-level urban planning education in Ukraine generally, providing a basic understanding was a necessary and valuable first step, with the potential to stimulate diversity in approaches and perspectives on the issue.

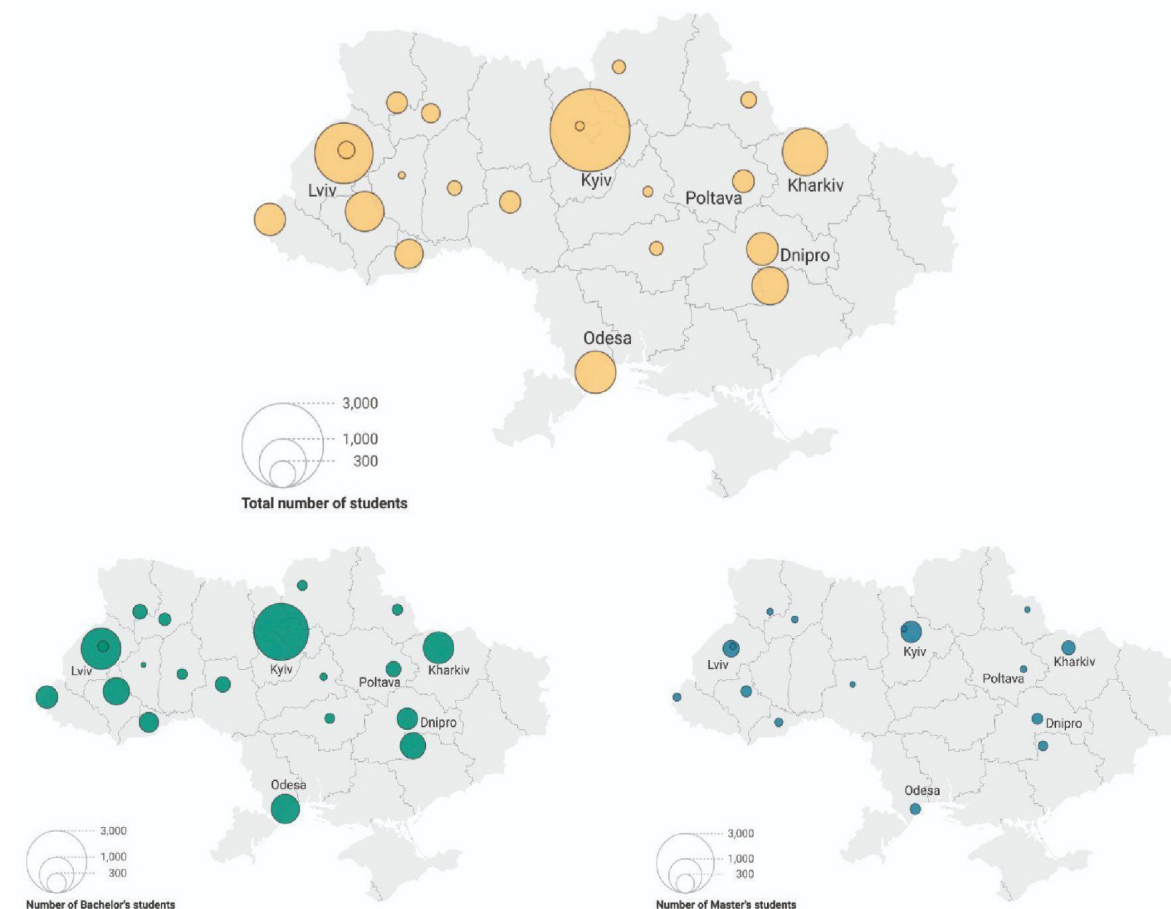


Figure 3: Centres of University Urban Development and Planning Education (total, Bachelor's, and Master's students)
Source: USEDE (February 2025 data)

Professional dialogue and urban education

Aside from official professional communities, informal networks play a significant role in public discussions.

In 2024, Kyiv hosted a round-table discussion entitled Urban Education in Ukraine: Challenges and Prospects, which focused on urban education's current state and future directions. Participants explored urban studies programmes' key priorities, the field's notable challenges, collaboration prospects, and further development opportunities. The discussion highlighted a few key issues: strengthening interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral connections, fostering cooperation among universities, building stronger ties between academia and professional communities, and ensuring that study programmes are led by qualified instructors with practical experience in their respective fields. Discussions on collaboration among educational institutions covered dual-degree programmes, internal academic exchanges, summer schools, and other crucial topics (Discussion ..., 2024b).

Urban forums have emerged as a new, stable platform for communication, networking, experience exchange, and learning, bringing educators and urban practitioners together and providing them with spaces for mutually beneficial dialogue (Fig. 4).

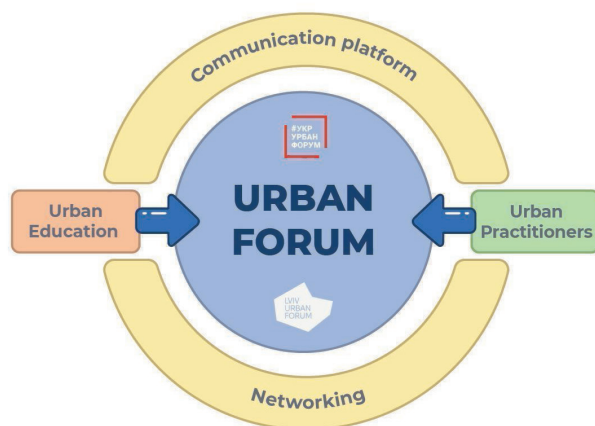


Figure 4: Urban Forums as a Platform for Professional Dialogue on Urban Education Development

Initiated and organized by Cedos with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Ukrainian Urban Forum has become a key venue for discussions on contemporary urban development and the future of

Ukrainian cities¹⁶. Each instalment of the annual event is dedicated to a hot topic of the day and often sparks fruitful public discussions afterwards. With its 2024 theme—Society and Space—the forum addressed the relationship between Ukrainian cities' social and spatial development and strategies for building an inclusive and sustainable urban future. In addition, it included a special session on the challenges and prospects of urban education.

As a continuation of the previous discussions, a panel discussion titled The Future of Cities in Ukraine: Main Roads and Dead Ends of Urban Education was held at the 2024 Ukrainian Urban Forum, focusing on three main themes (Discussion..., 2024a): the diversity of study programmes and academic freedom and how to balance the constraints of specific specialities while leveraging the potential of academic freedom by complementing programmes with interdisciplinary courses; graduates' contribution to society, i.e., what they can offer to urban spaces and the potential barriers they may face; and academic connectivity, how we envision the interaction between study programmes, the development of joint interdisciplinary programmes, and inter-sectoral initiatives, and whether we should remain within our fields, preparing narrowly specialised professionals, or promote a broader, interdisciplinary approach to education (Discussion ..., 2024a).

The discussions yielded some important conclusions (Discussion ..., 2024a). First and foremost, it was emphasised that any discussion about education should begin with the values it upholds and the transformations it must undergo: education should focus on developing relationships between communities and society as much as fostering economic development. Therefore, the primary rationale behind a study programme should be its benefit to society. Universities must train a new generation of change agents, equipping them with a broad range of competencies—from urban planning to urban design and technologies—to navigate the complex space where many essential professions for urban development do not yet exist. The curriculum must include courses that provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills, like executing individual and group projects to create comfortable cities where people want to live. Working

16 <https://cedos.org.ua/ukr-urban-forum/>

on projects that are practically significant and do not have simple solutions is crucial to teaching students to make decisions in complicated situations and influence the development of cities. Internal mobility among Ukrainian universities is also essential to letting teachers exchange knowledge and experience and enabling improved education quality for students.

In 2023–2024, Lviv City Council's Department of Architecture and Spatial Development partnered with SALAR International and a GIZ-funded project to establish the Lviv Urban Forum and foster a dialogue on best practices in urban development. The event brought renowned international and Ukrainian architects, urban planners, and urbanists together with mayors, city council representatives, chief architects, researchers, urban activists, and students.

Discussions on the challenges and prospects of urban education during urban forums have helped enrich revised study programmes with new ideas and topics. However, we believe the most significant outcome has been the ongoing dialogue established between faculty members and among students from different universities beyond the events themselves. Participants in this dialogue have not only started hearing and understanding each other better (especially across different fields of education such as architecture, civil engineering, and urban studies) but also developed collaboration. Specifically, this thematic paper is itself a result of such interaction. The exchange of ideas during the forums led to new initiatives, such as the current discussions about creating an association of urban studies programmes or inter-university joint activities at the World Urban Forum.

International scientific forums and conferences have also played a vital role in fostering dialogue between Ukrainian and international scholars, enriching academic discussions and driving the creation of new programmes about the built environment beyond the confines of traditional architecture and civil engineering. A notable example is the Seventh International Conference on Urban Geography of Post-Communist Countries held in Kyiv and Dnipro in 2017, which brought together 120 urban scholars from over 20 countries. Besides facilitating knowledge exchange,

the event stimulated discussions, leading to Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv developing its innovative Urban Studies and Planning programme. Designed in response to the evolving urban planning and development needs, the programme reflects an effort to expand the academic framework beyond conventional education, providing students with interdisciplinary insights.

Such international forums have helped expand academic networks, allowing Ukrainian scholars to connect with partners from professional schools abroad and fostering the academic mobility of staff and students in urban planning and development. This exchange of ideas and approaches in urban education has influenced the development of more relevant programmes in Ukraine, shaping curricula to address today's urban planning and development challenges.

Current state: talent oversupply or shortage?

All study programmes in Ukraine are developed according to a standard template¹⁷ and approved through internal university procedures, culminating in their validation by the University Senate and uploading to the Unified State Electronic Database of Education.

During the final year of the first cohort of students, the programme goes through accreditation to assess the institution's ability to meet higher education standards (which are developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine separately for each speciality) and deliver the declared learning outcomes. Overseen by the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA), this process involves evaluating¹⁸ the programme's quality, implementation, and the educational activities of the institution.

Because of the resources and effort required for the national accreditation process, some programmes continue to operate under the existing university accreditation of specialities instead of passing accreditation separately. As a result, study programmes currently fall into three categories: a) accredited, b) running under other accredited specialities, and c) non-accredited (if the first cohort of students has not yet graduated).

17 https://erasmusplus.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Rozroblennya_osv_program.pdf

18 https://naqa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Наказ_686_від_15052024_доопрацьований_1.pdf

Study programme statistics

A brief web search for the keywords “urban planning”, “architecture” or even just “urban” as an adjective yields dozens of study programmes in all kinds of higher education institutions across Ukraine. Given the current demographic situation and forecasts, it would seem likely that there would be heated competition between universities for students. However, this does not seem to be the case.

Specialised courses in particular – focusing on architecture, urban planning, economics, management, or geography – do not overlap with each other or compete for the dwindling pool of students.

Dr Mykola Trehub, Vice Rector at the Kyiv School of Economics, emphasised that *“Since 2021, numerous study programmes in civil engineering, construction, architecture, geography, and other fields of knowledge have emerged, all relating to issues of spatial planning, urbanism, or restoration in one way or another. However, when it comes to high-quality study programmes, they are truly scarce.”*

The distribution between three broad categories of urban development and planning education is uneven (Fig. 5): 69% of students are in Architecture programmes (30 Bachelor’s and 33 Master’s programmes), 26% are in Engineering programmes (13 Bachelor’s and 19 Master’s), and only 5% are in Urban Studies (6 Bachelor’s and 11 Master’s). Traditionally, graduates of Bachelor’s programmes would enter Master’s programmes in the same field. The introduction of cross-disciplinary admission in recent years has changed the situation, especially for Master’s programmes in Urban Studies where graduates from a vast range of degrees are now applying.

Between 2018 and 2024, the number of Urban Studies programmes has tripled, from a modest base of five to a respectable 15. At the same time, student enrolment for these courses has grown four-fold. More established courses have seen more modest growth over the same period with enrolment for Architecture up 17% (from 1946 to 2218), while the number of Engineering programmes increased by almost a half (from 18 to 26). However, student enrolment in Engineering has experienced only minimal growth of 3% (1054 to 1081).

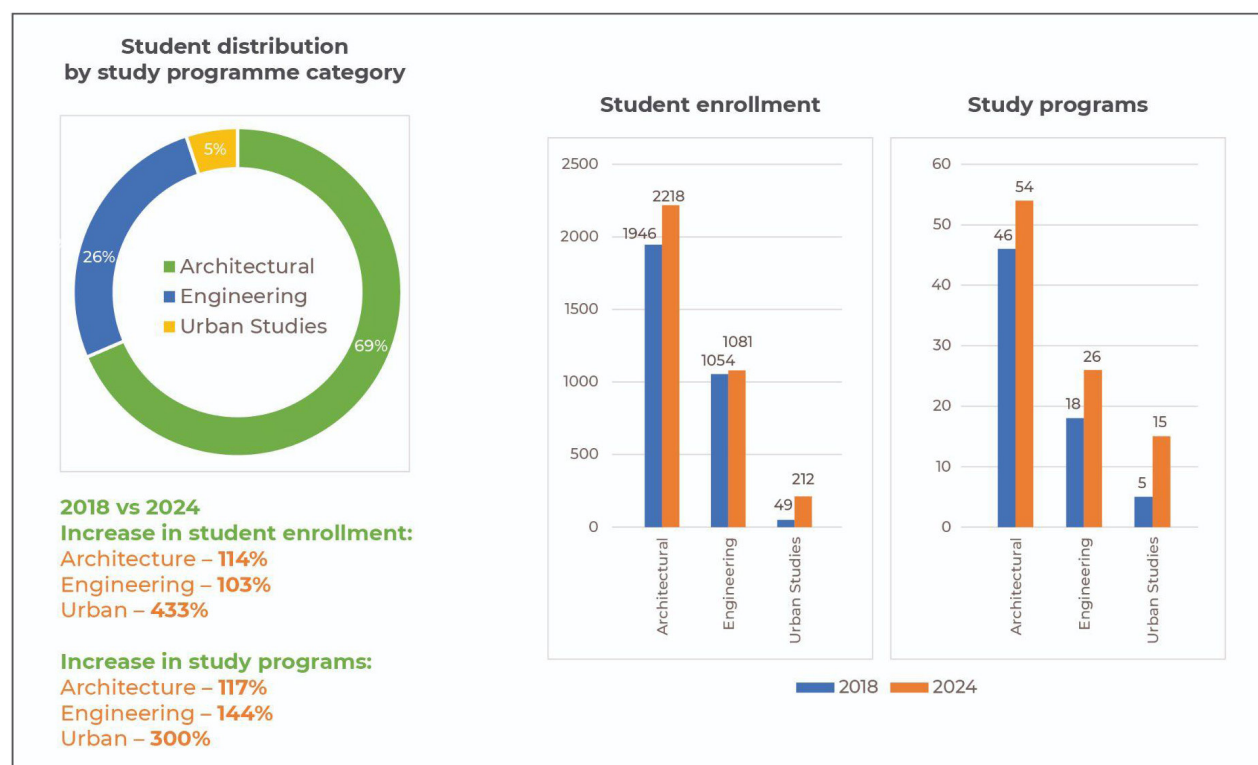


Figure 5: Trends in distribution of study programmes and student enrolment across categories
 Source: Authors’ calculations based on USEDE data

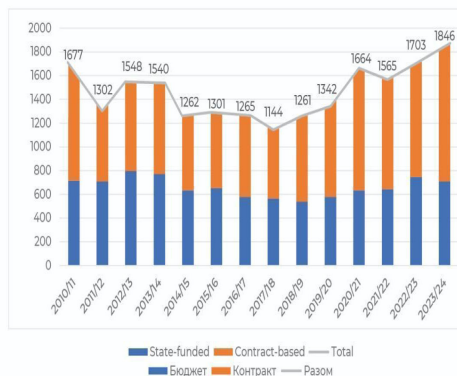
Looking further back, the increase in student numbers since the 1990s has been significant. According to Professor Cherkes, in the early 1990s: “75 students entered Lviv Polytechnic’s Architectural Faculty annually, while now the number is around 500; the total number of students has grown from 350 to 2,000.” This growth can be explained by the expansion of enrolment opportunities beyond the fixed number of state-funded places, as institutions have been allowed to admit fee-paying students and set tuition fees independently (Fig. 6).

The common denominator for each new study programme is the rise of interest among students in the first one to three years after launch. The further dynamics are more challenging to explain, relating to programmes’ quality and the health of the education

market. Here, the factors worth mentioning are the growing interest in Urban Studies, changing public discourse, and generational changes. In general, however, changes in student numbers across all programmes can be apportioned to demographic reasons (Ivanchenko & Levantovych, 2023).

Urban education is about research, communication, and collaboration (Shabranska, 2025), and students’ choice of a particular city or region for studying architecture, urban planning, or urbanism will be influenced by the activity of the respective professional communities in each place, and the dynamism of professional life there. Lviv, Kyiv, Dnipro, and Kharkiv are popular locations with students in these subjects, though the 2022–2024 trends demonstrate a drop in student numbers in Kharkiv for obvious reasons.

NUMBER OF BACHELOR'S STUDENTS ENROLLED: ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING
КІЛЬКІСТЬ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ ВСТУПИЛИ НА БАКАЛАВРСЬКІ ПРОГРАМИ: АРХІТЕКТУРА ТА МІСТОВБУДУВАННЯ



NUMBER OF MASTER'S STUDENTS ENROLLED: ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING
КІЛЬКІСТЬ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ ВСТУПИЛИ НА МАГІСТЕРСЬКІ ПРОГРАМИ: АРХІТЕКТУРА ТА МІСТОВБУДУВАННЯ



NUMBER OF BACHELOR'S STUDENTS ENROLLED: BUILDING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING
КІЛЬКІСТЬ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ ВСТУПИЛИ НА БАКАЛАВРСЬКІ ПРОГРАМИ: БУДІВНИЦТВО ТА ЦИВІЛЬНА ІНЖЕНЕРІЯ



NUMBER OF MASTER'S STUDENTS ENROLLED: BUILDING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING
КІЛЬКІСТЬ СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ ВСТУПИЛИ НА МАГІСТЕРСЬКІ ПРОГРАМИ: БУДІВНИЦТВО ТА ЦИВІЛЬНА ІНЖЕНЕРІЯ



Figure 6: Bachelor's and Master's programme enrolment trends by speciality: Architecture and Town Planning/Building and Civil Engineering

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine data for 2010–2023 (*Key Performance Indicators of Higher Education Institutions in Ukraine and Higher Education in Ukraine statistical yearbooks*)

Are there enough professionals?

"I believe there are very few specialists. Especially in the field of urban planning, there is a significant shortage... It is a political and strategic issue. We first need to create and restore the urban planning sector in the country... We lack specialists, and of course, they will need to be trained... Very few professionals are graduating, and they are highly narrowly specialised."

— Prof. Olena Oliynyk, Vice President of the National Union of Architects of Ukraine,

The situation with urban development and planning professionals is challenging. Many universities deserve credit for the quality of education. Meanwhile, the shortage of professionals has led to relaxed requirements and, consequently, lower expectations for graduates in the field, as well as rushed headhunting of students—sometimes as early as two years before graduation. *"The employment rate among our students is quite high, starting from the senior years. Almost all of them have managed to find jobs independently. Occasionally, I come across some vacancies, but hardly anyone is interested since they are already employed,"* said Dr Liubov Apostolova-Sossa, Head of the Urban Economy Department at Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture.

State policies have also contributed to the lowering of professional standards in the field of urban development and planning. Considering the changing professional landscape, where the primary client role shifted from the state to the city (or hromada) or even to international aid offices, the only viable alternative in this case was going freelance. That could not fill the market, as Dr Apostolova-Sossa points out: *"In reality, state policy has led to a situation where most major players—institutions that upheld a particular school or tradition—have found themselves almost on the brink of ceasing their activities because of regulatory issues. In contrast, individual entrepreneurs have adapted and survived well in such circumstances, forming a pool of experts moving from one project to another. Nevertheless, a significant demand for personnel remains."*

Professor Vadim Vadimov, Director of the Educational and Research Institute of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Land Management at the Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic National University, also points out that the availability of professionals in urban development and planning in territorial communities (hromadas) is: *"very low... professionals in these positions are working completely outside the scope of their qualifications. Over time, they gain practical skills, but they simply lack the knowledge required to address strategic tasks, current issues, and purely professional matters."*

Moreover, it is impossible to talk about the alignment between specialist training and market needs in Ukraine. Hanna Palekha, Head of the Association of Spatial Planners—Urban Council, emphasises that: *"there is no official demand for experts in spatial planning, urban mobility, ecology, and city management. As a result, universities prepare generalists instead of addressing the cities' real challenges. Why? The demand for professionals has not yet formed because the state has not yet defined clear qualification requirements for urban planners... The market itself does not generate clear requests because there is no systemic urban policy. Ukraine still lacks a strategic vision for how cities should be developed, and there is no systematic approach to spatial planning in hromadas. As a result, hromadas often do not understand what experts from various fields they need to involve, and they are guided only by what 'has been done in the [Soviet] past'."*

Interviews revealed that Ukraine faces a shortage of experts in transport modelling and sustainable urban mobility, GIS analytics, and urban management, as well as urban engineers specialising in water and gas supply, electricity, and heating.

Faculty challenges

The quality of education at institutions depends on many factors, but the internal attitude towards change is crucial. Appetite for change can be seen in the establishment of new programmes as much as in changes to existing ones. How are they adjusted to reality? Are they amendments to the student's expectations? Do institutions regularly collect feedback and act on it? Some universities are doing so, such as Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and the Kyiv School of Economics, particularly through their urban studies programmes. However, not all feedback is adequately processed or leads to programmes being adjusted.

State requirements often keep people without a PhD out of the classroom. It is a complex issue for higher education in Ukraine as a whole, as successful accreditation of study programmes requires meeting specific criteria of the teaching staff's compliance with licensing requirements¹⁹. These requirements often lead to the need to involve academic specialists with formal qualifications (e.g., a certain number of scientific articles or monographs published in the last five years or membership in various committees of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine) instead of professional practitioners who may not meet the required academic criteria. Even new programmes can be greatly affected by the lack of skilled teachers and faculty requirements which restrict the hiring of working professionals from the sector as staff.

The problem has a multiplier effect. Without an influx of new teaching staff who themselves have recent practical experience in the field, there is a danger the existing faculty talent pool – already often characterised as underpaid, lacking up-to-date expertise and skills, and short of motivation to develop professionally – may stagnate even further. At the same time, the pressures and demands for teaching hours and scientific performance are intensifying. Underpayment and bureaucratic burden are often cited as crisis factors in the Ukrainian educational system. Burdened with excessive bureaucratic work, teaching

staff may lack the energy and financial resources necessary to support their own continuing education and professional development. It is hard to find individuals willing to teach for relatively modest pay, with educators receiving salaries that are well below those available to industry professionals.

“An urban planner working on urban development documentation will earn more than a professor within a few years of graduating. This raises a fundamental question: what incentive is there for young, ambitious individuals to pursue a teaching career under such conditions?” Dr. Apostolova-Sossa asked rhetorically.

Formerly regarded as prestigious and desirable, an academic career has lost its appeal among today's youth—very few consciously take this path. Generational change is never easy, but it is even more challenging in Ukraine. A peculiar retirement culture and a sharp decline in social status after the cessation of professional activity complicate the shift, making it even harder to attract young scholars. Generational change is inevitably happening, bringing a shift in mindset, while the effects of war, brain drain, and growing intellectual exchange with the European academic community, reinforce the ongoing transformation. Together, these factors are reshaping perspectives in the field and driving profound changes in society.

¹⁹ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1187-2015-%D0%BF#Text>

Graduate competencies, dual education, Continuous Professional Development, and public and private education

What graduate competencies are lacking?

To address this complicated question, we start with Professor Vadimov's opinion. Through his students' participation in the Erasmus+ academic mobility programme and feedback from host professors, he *"was pleasantly surprised to find that, during the implementation of the European Erasmus+ student mobility programme with leading European universities, our students know much more and can do much more."* This suggests that the stereotype of Ukrainian students being behind their counterparts from European or American universities knowledge- and skills-wise is a misconception. Their mutual communication observed by the authors also corroborates this point.

However, Ukrainian built environment education has several shortcomings, the most prominent relating to the country's Soviet legacy. Some disciplines are still taught the way they were several decades ago or are overly theoretical. As Oleksandra Naryzhna of Urban Reform reflects: *"Students are often 'programmed' through imposed stereotypes and a bit of Soviet or post-Soviet dreams."*

Another significant flaw is the narrow focus of professionals' training and the lack of some competencies. Hanna Palekha points out that: *"...most programmes at state universities still do not take into account today's trends, e.g., digital technologies in urban planning, climate adaptation, and integrated planning... It is necessary to update study programmes according to current challenges—digitisation, environmental adaptation, mobility, economic management, and urban policy."* She also notes that graduates of study programmes are often not ready to work in interdisciplinary teams and lack the necessary skills.

This shortcoming is related to another—the lack of a comprehensive approach to workforce development. *"The connection between education and specialist training should be based on real market challenges. However, the market in Ukraine is only now being formed and is directly dependent on the needs of cities and territorial communities. These needs determine the demand for certain specialities and competencies. At the same time, the state provides the tools for addressing these challenges... [However] the state has not defined a clear list of competencies urban planning*

graduates should have. Legislative changes occur without a mechanism for incorporating them into study programmes, and graduates acquire knowledge that may be outdated by the time they finish their studies," Hanna Palekha emphasised.

Many programmes were designed for the conditions of stability and certainty, which explains their inflexibility and failure to account for the specifics of a contemporary society characterised by turbulence, complexity, uncertainty, and an inability to foresee the distant future.

Summarising experts' reflections, several areas of specific knowledge and competencies can be identified as weak points in Ukrainian study programmes:

- Deep knowledge of regulatory and legal documents in architecture and urban planning (although it is important to remember that the legislative framework is imperfect, and the urban planning process in Ukraine is partially "frozen")
- Skills in data search and analytics, monitoring statistics, GIS analysis, and producing reports
- Ability to conduct field research using methods such as surveys and participatory observation
- Ability to engage in discussions, considering value aspects and human-centeredness

"Students at universities are taught how to build high-rises. No one teaches them how not to build high-rises," Professor Olena Oliynyk notes, *"We must train our urban planners and architects to design for people who will live there and ensure convenience for the residents—not for some investors who need to recoup their money, but for the people who will live and continue living there... In our country, it is only in a few universities, thanks to the initiative of certain professors, that the goals of sustainable development are studied... we have to achieve them by 2030, but we have done nothing yet. Half of the students have no idea what this is, how it is happening, and how it is reflected in urban planning."*

Programmes do not feature modules dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals due to a lack of instructors with the necessary expertise and the challenges of developing a new curriculum specifically for this.

Language of instruction

Most study programmes are taught in Ukrainian, which is understandable given the faculty's and students' linguistic competencies.

The opinion of interviewees was that higher education should include English-language study programmes, at least at the Master's level, expanding opportunities for student exchange through academic mobility programmes, creating opportunities for international students to come to Ukraine, and strengthening cooperation with foreign partner universities. *"For a graduate to have the opportunity to work in any European country, they must have some vocabulary, a framework for communication... These are at least the minimum standards for knowing architectural concepts. Teaching in English is the first step towards making our education international,"* Professor Oliynyk noted.

The "Urban Studies and Postwar Reconstruction" programme at the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) is taught predominantly in English—this is a part of the institution's corporate culture. Professor Pylypiv shared his experience of instruction in English and Ukrainian at KSE and Kyiv National Economic University. Teaching undergraduates in English is unrealistic, he said, but working with English-language sources is essential (and often is the only option, as the lack of Ukrainian translation of the key textbooks creates many obstacles for students and faculty). He invests a lot of time into making working with English texts easier for students, preparing abstracts and key takeaways from the papers. In the graduate programme, Professor Pylypiv teaches directly in English. Is it effective? He says it depends on the topic: *"Partially, yes, as terminology is discussed and aligned with the Western standards of understanding urban economics and urban processes, avoiding outdated concepts. However, when it comes to discussing recent events, legislative changes, or regulations, it sometimes complicates things... and there is often a strong desire to explain them in Ukrainian."*

In addition to the general foreign language proficiency requirements, this has presented the challenge of introducing English-language or bilingual (Ukrainian/English) courses to help students master international fundamental field-specific terminology. However, such initiatives have not become widespread, primarily due to the shortage of qualified instructors capable of delivering these courses at the required level.

Public and private education: strengths and shortcomings

Most programmes are currently offered by public universities, and the students are state-funded. In recent years, however, the demand for study programmes in private universities has been increasing, potentially following the Ukrainian perception that they offer higher-quality educational services.

Private universities are praised for their advantages, including flexibility, and respecting faculty's time - the bureaucratic demands on teachers is much lower, enabling faculty to focus on teaching. *"From the perspective of academic and methodological preparation, it is significantly easier. The process is much simpler—just five pages of a syllabus, focusing solely on what makes sense, and that is it. This level of adaptability is much better and more accommodating for instructors, as the paperwork in traditional state universities can be utterly exhausting,"* Professor Pylypiv recounted.

The anticipated advantages of private universities include greater flexibility in faculty recruitment, competitive salaries (while still incomparable to the salaries for professionals outside the education sector, they are higher than in state universities), superior material and technical resources, more lenient requirements for course methodological support, better campus infrastructure, and significantly more support staff.

Another factor pointed out by the experts is the positive pressure from students, who are motivated to study because they have paid for it. State-paid education is still perceived as "free". However, one of the private universities' most important—and perhaps less obvious—advantages lies in their tolerance for failure, the freedom to experiment with study programmes and curricula, flexibility in forms of educational activities, and more. One potential risk of this freedom and curiosity in experimenting is difficulties in meeting the accreditation criteria, but this can be mitigated. This provides an opportunity for academic innovation within private universities, which is far harder for public universities to emulate.

Other advantages of private educational institutions include the involvement of renowned foreign architects, urban planners, and urbanists in delivering lectures and conducting practical sessions, where they share their professional experiences with students.

Public Universities continue to lead

Despite what many contributors saw as overly onerous bureaucracy within the public universities, these institutions remain the leading providers of higher education around the built environment, accounting for 93% of all urban development and planning programmes and 91% of students enrolled. The highest proportion of students in private universities is in urban studies programmes—15%, while the lowest is in architecture programmes—7.5% (Fig. 7). This can be explained primarily by the fact that conventional architectural programmes offered by public universities have a large number of accredited places and well-established positions in the education services market. In contrast, private universities tend to be more competitive in offering innovative Master's programmes in Urban Studies and Urban Management.

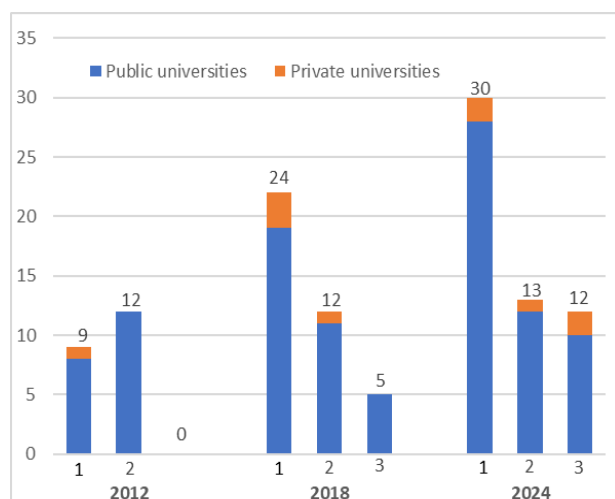


Figure 7: Universities offering Urban Development and Planning programmes by category: 1—Architecture, 2—Engineering, 3—Urban Studies

The key advantages of public universities are their scale of training, continuity, established academic schools, and experience in teaching and education. These universities have a long history of discussing and improving study programmes and collaborating with a broad network of employers where graduates work. Universities typically establish agreements with designated internship providers, where students are

regularly placed to develop and refine their practical skills, including participation in interdisciplinary teams implementing applied projects. Consequently, they offer extensive opportunities for students seeking internships.

Public universities have established strong, long-term ties with international partners and actively participate in collaborative research projects globally. They maintain an extensive network of agreements with foreign universities that fosters academic mobility for both faculty and students, particularly through the Erasmus+ programme. This facilitates the exchange of innovative ideas, the modernisation of teaching methods, and the enhancement of language competencies, especially in English. In parallel, Ukrainian academics actively engage in the international academic community by offering original courses at universities abroad, thereby promoting Ukrainian expertise in urban development and planning. Professor Bohdan Cherkes from Lviv Polytechnic National University teaches the course “City and War” at the Vienna University of Technology²⁰, for example, while one of the authors of this paper delivered a course on “Post-Socialist Urban Development” at the Faculty of Human Geography and Spatial Planning at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań²¹.

At the same time, experts highlight the risks of staff at public universities being poaching by their private counterparts, while some faculty members may teach courses at both public and private institutions.

Learning through practice and dual education

There is a common stereotype that education in Ukraine is disconnected from practice, that knowledge acquired at universities is not practically relevant, and key skills are only gained in the workplace. Weak connections between higher education institutions and businesses are generally considered one of the main flaws of the Ukrainian educational system (Bondarchuk et al., 2022). As Ms. Naryzhna pointed out: “Employers’ requirements are currently low. Everyone expects to train them internally. There is no trust in education whatsoever.” We would say it is very much case-dependent, and leadership could have a critical impact.

20 <https://urbanism-tuwien.at/en/lehre/course/lecture-and-exercise-city-and-war>

21 <https://wgseigp.amu.edu.pl/wiadomosci/wydarzenia/otwarte-wyklady-online-prof.-kostyantyna-mezentseva-taras-shevchenko-national-university-of-kyiv>

Often, it is up to the people who design and run the programmes (reliant on their connections, soft skills, personal networking, and understanding of the job market) to build relationships with employers.

Another aspect of this problem is the learning conditions and who is teaching. A study programme might include advanced courses and provide the acquisition of all necessary competencies, but disruptions caused by war, such as the suspension of classes, physical damage to campuses, forced relocation—even whole cities becoming unliveable—can totally undermine the educational process. Not every higher education institution faces the same challenges, but the effects of war profoundly shape learning conditions and outcomes.

Oleksandra Naryzhna expressed concern that: *“Not all of our lecturers are developing. Sometimes, there is a good department where things are discussed and developed, but this is more of an exception than the rule in Ukraine... Advanced practices, good architectural planning, and urban offices are also an exception in Ukraine right now... Moreover, the question is where should the changes happen—in education or in practice? Of course, education should be progressive and change.”* Involving practitioners in teaching is seen as highly beneficial, however, they are usually required to have the same academic qualifications as university lecturers, as established by licensing conditions, creating a barrier to their involvement. Professor Vadimov suggested *“creating a system of private lecturers and private professors to involve professionals... without burdening them with certain qualification requirements.”*

Dual education (an education model built on close collaboration between educational institutions and business that combines academic learning with practical, hands-on experience in a workplace setting) is viewed as a viable and desirable option for future development, particularly in light of the brain drain and the demand for professionals in recovery projects. Professor Yuriy Palekha, Deputy Director for Research at Ukrainian State Research Institute of Urban Design “DIPROMISTO”, explained: *“Having dual education is essential, as training urban development professionals involves practical contact and the study of experience.”*

Mykola Trehub noted that over the past five to seven years, students have increasingly entered the workforce as early as their second year of study. By

their fourth year, nearly all those seeking employment are already working, which makes it increasingly difficult for employers to find available candidates. Employers are aware of this shift and are adapting accordingly. In this context, dual education presents a unique opportunity for companies to cultivate highly skilled professionals during their Bachelor’s studies. Dr Trehub elaborates: *“There is a unique opportunity to cultivate an outstanding professional over the course of the Bachelor’s programme. There’s no need for retraining after graduation, or for expecting professional experience from a fresh graduate—because that experience begins as early as the second year, in parallel with their education... Dual education works particularly well for those who are eager to work and become excellent practitioners.”*

Professor Oliynyk also believes that the system of combining education and employment should exist. However, she raised the question of managing it: *“... There needs to be a balance point so that neither side interferes with the other... And honestly, I must say, we have not yet found a rational middle ground in terms of training, whether there should be more practical or scientific solutions.”* However, dual education is not yet a well-integrated practice within Ukraine’s higher education system, and there is currently no consensus or even notable discussion on the matter.

Continuous Professional Development: growing beyond study programmes

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) aims to support lifelong learning, enhance workforce adaptability, and strengthen sector-specific capacities. In Ukraine, CPD is increasingly gaining recognition as a tool for enhancing professional competencies in a changing professional environment and as a response to the urgent need for up-to-date skills and knowledge amid the limitations of traditional study programmes, ongoing urban planning reforms, and war-related challenges. It encompasses a broad scope—from certified courses and short-term training modules to mentorship programmes. While CPD primarily targets the professionals who completed their formal education some time ago, it also allows recent graduates to continue learning, particularly when they encounter skill gaps early in their careers as they transition into practical roles. CPD involves assessing professional needs, aligning content with practical demands, and ensuring accessibility through online and hybrid formats.

CPD mechanisms include mostly independent educational platforms, with implementation often depending on collaboration between NGOs and international partners and employers making ad hoc contributions. Universities are less actively involved in this process.

The success of an architect, urban planner, or urban researcher's career depends on personal qualities, the ability to analyse information, and their level of critical and spatial thinking. Developing these skills in practical situations remains a weak point, although formal education standards address this to some extent. Therefore, personal qualities and skills acquired through self-education are essential for a professional career (Shabranska, 2025).

Most experts agree that Ukraine lacks continuous professional development and rapid professional retraining programmes. *"Universities do not have the mechanism for quickly adapting study programmes to meet real challenges. There are no professional development programmes for current experts forced to work in new conditions,"* Hanna Palekha said. Rapid retraining programmes are not part of the traditional academic system. They aim to address emerging challenges and provide professionals with the necessary skills to adapt to evolving work conditions. This raises the question of whether universities should implement such programmes. Oleksandra Naryzhna emphasised that universities should focus on study programmes at this stage, while: *"independent centres can accumulate this practice as a quick response."* Universities could potentially take on this role, but the bureaucratic procedures required of public universities means they cannot adapt as quickly as those in the private sector, Naryzhna added.

An ecosystem approach could further enhance the effectiveness of these programmes by fostering collaboration among various stakeholders,

including universities, government bodies, territorial communities, and the private sector, ensuring a more integrated response to the challenges at hand. This is currently still more of an exception than the norm, but there are examples of universities being involved in designing and implementing certification programmes for professional development.

As part of the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities project, a Spatial Planning for Territorial Communities programme has been developed and introduced (Programmes, 2025). This implementation of a professional development programme has revealed several challenges. Participants' varying competencies and experience complicate effective learning, as instructors have to balance basic material for less experienced participants with advanced content for those with more expertise. Additionally, the differences between communities in size, location, and administrative status lead to widely varying needs and expectations. Communities are also often at different stages of preparedness when it comes to urban planning documentation—lacking the most up to date versions of documents, or having incomplete or outdated materials—significantly impacting their ability to integrate new knowledge and apply it effectively. The lack of qualified professionals in many communities further exacerbates the challenge, as these communities often rely on external experts and face difficulties involving the relevant staff. Also, while participants appreciate the theoretical input provided by universities, there is a strong demand for more practical training, highlighting the need for a balanced curriculum. Lastly, many territorial community representatives want expanded content, requesting extra topics beyond spatial planning to enhance their competencies and productivity. These experiences underscore the need for tailored, flexible programmes that address both the diverse needs of communities and the practical demands of urban planning (Sherenkovskyi et al., 2024).

Interdisciplinary and inter-university collaboration, and professional communities

HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS: ATOMISATION AND FORMALISM

In Ukraine, higher education standards establish mandatory requirements for programme scope, competencies, and learning outcomes, which are applicable to all higher education institutions. Dedicated specialist courses and modules allow students to deepen their knowledge in particular area, with students able to tailor their educational path to their particular interests by selecting these elective course blocks.

The standards do not define specific courses that a student must take, but the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and other assessment procedures establish clear lists of competencies and learning outcomes that a graduate

must achieve. Accordingly, the accreditation of curricular programmes for specialities and education levels aims to verify their full compliance with these requirements. In practice, these lists of competencies and learning outcomes are directly incorporated into study programmes, having the knock-on effect of limiting flexibility, and reducing opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and the acquisition of cross-cutting knowledge and skills.

CONVERGENCE

Looking at the competency standards for the three priority specialist areas already identified-Architecture, Engineering, and Urban Studies (Fig. 8)-Architecture and Town Planning is the speciality that aligns most closely with the requirements for training urban development and planning professionals.

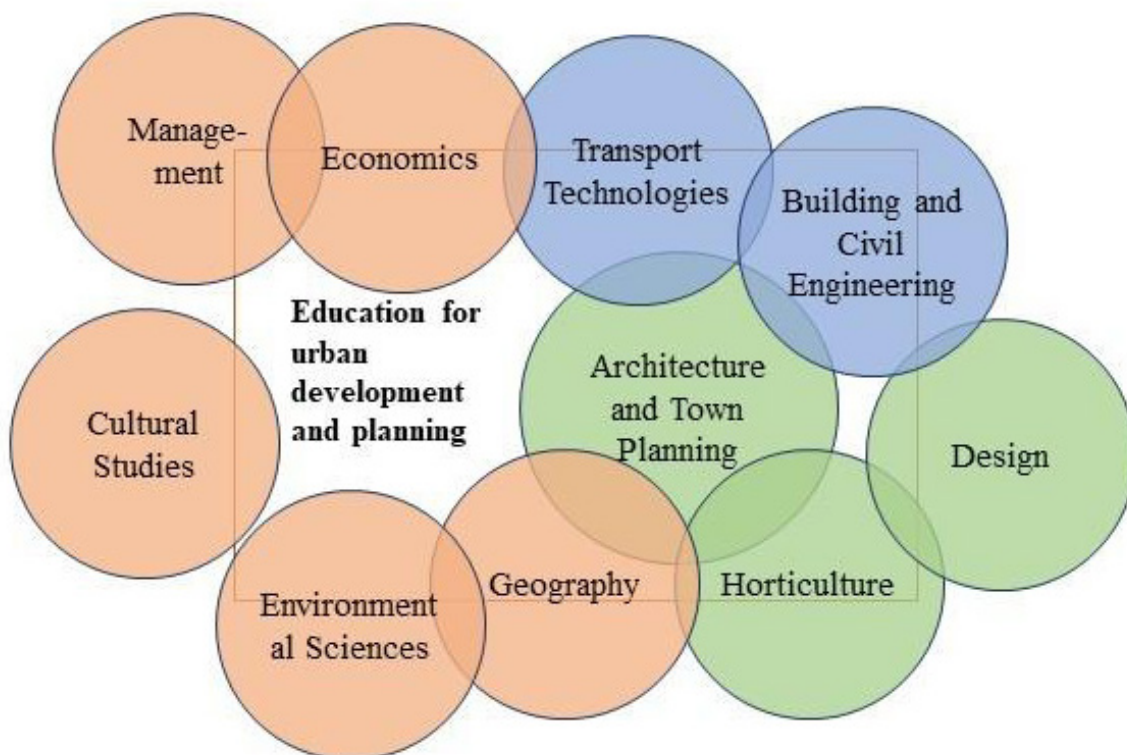


Figure 8: Higher education standards by specialities relevant to urban development and planning programmes

According to its standards²², the subject covers residential, civil, communal, industrial, and other buildings and structures, architectural and urban planning complexes, landscaping objects, garden and park architecture, monumental and decorative applied arts, as well as the territories of administrative and territorial units and settlements (or parts thereof), the reconstruction and restoration of architectural and urban planning structures, and the activities related to their creation. Virtually all specialised (professional) competencies and learning outcomes focus expressly on training the relevant specialists with an understanding of the fundamentals of the theory and history of architecture and urban planning, theoretical foundations of architectural design, and the requirements of legislation and building code. In addition, these specialists must be able to analyse, develop, and implement architectural and urban planning solutions with due regard to socio-demographic, national-ethnic, natural-climatic, and engineering-technical factors and sanitary, safety, energy-saving, ecological, and techno-economic requirements, as well as organize the development of architectural and urban planning projects, among other things.

However, these standards do not cover all the necessary knowledge and skills to comprehensively understand cities, their development, and the specifics of management and planning. Some Master's programmes in the Architecture category have been introduced under other specialities, e.g. Horticulture and Design. The Horticulture curriculum includes the ecosystems of urban areas, squares, parks, forest parks, and botanical gardens, i.e., it is directly related to urban space²³. The standard outlines the acquisition of several essential competencies and learning outcomes, including the organization and implementation of urban monitoring, inventory of horticultural objects, natural and cultural landscapes, the planning (or restoration) of urban spaces, the design of landscape architecture projects, restoration and reconstruction of urban

landscapes, cultural heritage, design of public spaces, streets, and pedestrian zones, and more.

SPECIALISATION

The Design speciality encompasses the design in industrial, domestic, public, and socio-cultural spheres²⁴. The competencies and learning outcomes provide only partial knowledge and skills in urban development and planning, particularly with regard to the ability to conceptualise design projects while considering functional, technical, technological, ecological, and aesthetic requirements.

The next group of standards regulates Engineering specialities. Building and Civil Engineering covers technologies, buildings, and engineering structures, as well as the processes of designing, creating, operating, maintaining, and reconstructing them²⁵. This speciality places more emphasis on actual construction. The competencies and learning outcomes partially contribute to developing the knowledge and skills required for urban development and planning specialists, e.g., the understanding of residential area design principles, project evaluation for compliance with the urban area design principles, infrastructure and urban economy objects (as defined by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine standard).

Another Engineering speciality—Transportation Technologies—covers a multitude of transport systems and technologies, and urban transportation systems fit well here. However, the standard does not directly address urban transport or, more specifically, urban mobility and cycling infrastructure development. Among the necessary competencies and learning outcomes from the urban planning standpoint, they offer data collection, analysis and forecasting of transport system operation parameters and indicators with due regard to external environmental influences, transport flow management, and leveraging advanced information technologies and GIS to ensure effective

22 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vyshcha/standarty/2020/06/17/191-Arkitekt.mistobud-bakalavr-VO-zatv.stand.01.11.pdf>
<https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/2022/05/10/191-Arkht.ta.mistbud.mah.418-09.05.2022.pdf>

23 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/2020/03/206-sadovo-parkova%20gospodarstvo-M.pdf>

24 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/12/21/022-dizayn-magistr.pdf>

25 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vyshcha/standarty/2021/03/19/192-Budivn.ta.tsyvil.inzhener-bakalavr-VO.18.01.pdf>

interaction between various transport types²⁶. A particular focus is made on transport modelling.

Among the specialities grouped under the Urban Studies category, Geography has the standards with the strongest focus on cities. Its scope covers the relationships between the natural environment and human activity, landscape natural and socio-spatial systems, spatial processes, and forms of spatial organization²⁷. The spatial perspective on the city largely overlaps with this. Furthermore, a number of competencies and learning outcomes involve acquiring knowledge and skills related to urban development, including knowledge of urban development and planning legislation fundamentals and sustainable development goals, the ability to explain spatial organization and the globalization, regionalization, and urbanization process, apply interdisciplinary approaches to critically address urban development issues, use GIS technologies to solve specific applied scientific problems in urban development, participate in territorial (spatial) planning, develop programmes, strategies, and urban development plans, conduct professional evaluations, carry out geo-ecological and socio-economic examination and monitoring, and assess possible risks and socio-economic and environmental consequences of decisions in urban development.

The standards for other specialities are only partly focused on urban development and planning competencies. For example, the Economics speciality deals with contemporary economic processes and phenomena, the regularities of the functioning and

development of socio-economic systems, which potentially encompass the socio-economic system of a city²⁸. The standards define relevant competencies and learning outcomes related to the ability to collect, analyse, and process statistical data, explain economic and social processes and phenomena, identify economic issues, determine key trends in socio-economic and human development, and more. Management covers the management of organizations and their subdivisions, which do not formally align with the concept of a city (since a city is unlikely to be considered an organization, although it does function as an ensemble of various organizations). However, in terms of competencies and learning outcomes, it aims to train city management professionals to choose and use management concepts, methods, and tools, develop and manage projects, and make decisions under unpredictable conditions, justify them, and ensure their implementation²⁹.

Ecology studies ecosystems, anthropogenic impact on the environment, and optimisation of natural resource use³⁰. This speciality provides skills and learning outcomes for narrower experts who can be involved in urban planning, e.g., the application of interdisciplinary approaches to solve environmental problems and perform environmental expert assessments. Cultural Studies deal with cultural processes, socio-cultural institutions, and practices that ensure the formation of cultural norms and values³¹.

Each study programme must meet all the requirements specified in the higher education standards for the corresponding speciality. Other competencies

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- 26 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/2022/Standarty.Vyshchoyi.Osvity/Zatverdzeni.Standarty/01/31/275-Transp.tekhn-za.vyd-bak.31.01.22.pdf>
<https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/2022/Standarty.Vyshchoyi.Osvity/Zatverdzeni.Standarty/01/31/275-Transp.tekhn-za.vyd-mah.31.01.22.pdf>
- 27 https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vyshcha/standarty/2020/07/10/106_Heohrafiya-bakalavry-1.pdf
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- 28 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/2021/07/28/051-Ekonomika-bakalavry.28.07-1.pdf>
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- 29 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/2019/07/12/073-menedzhment-magistr.pdf>
- 30 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/12/21/101-ekologiya-magistr.pdf>
- 31 <https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vishcha-osvita/zatverdzeni%20standarty/2021/07/28/034-Kulturolohiya-bakalavry.28.07-1.pdf>
<https://mon.gov.ua/static-objects/mon/sites/1/vyshcha/standarty/2020/10/02/034-Kulturolohiya.mahistr.pdf>

can be acquired through elective courses. This formalisation of procedures complicates the study programme accreditation process. Since Urban Studies is not a separate speciality, it often overlaps with programmes under other specialities. For example, the Urban Studies and Spatial Planning programme is implemented under the Building and Civil Engineering speciality, Architecture and Urbanism—under Architecture and Town Planning, and Urban Studies and Planning—under Geography.

As a result, it takes overcoming some barriers to implement study programmes that address standards in strictly defined specialities: *"We have quite a few study programmes. Nevertheless, they are unlikely to be considered urbanistic in the sense usual for Western urban studies because we have to design study programmes within the framework of a particular speciality. There is competition within the speciality, however, especially for educated students,"* explained Professor Roman Lozynskyi

Professor Vadimov emphasised the need for experts: *"who will have synergistic knowledge, combining land management, economic and social issues, spatial planning that overlap with specific territories having certain geographical properties. We do not actually have professionals of this kind... Architects and heads of departments in territorial communities say that they lack professionals."*

International accreditation

Currently, no Ukrainian programme in architecture, urban planning, civil engineering, urban studies, or spatial planning is certified by AESOP (Association of European Schools of Planning) or validated by UNESCO-UIA (International Union of Architects). However, three Ukrainian schools have become associate members of AESOP, which can be considered a positive development: the Educational and Scientific Institute of Architecture, Construction, and Land Management of the National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic", the Urban and Spatial Planning Faculty of the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture (KNUCA), and the Khmelnytskyi National University's Faculty of Engineering, Transport, and Architecture. Unlike full membership, which may be granted to a European school running a Spatial Planning programme that meets AESOP's core curriculum criteria, associate membership is for schools offering planning courses or modules. Still, associate members are involved in

AESOP activities and benefit from its services. Another positive sign is the inclusion of Ukrainian representative Olena Oliynik in the UNESCO-UIA Validation Commission, as well as the availability of the Ukrainian edition of the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education (UNESCO-UIA ..., 2022) that outlines the school accreditation conditions and requirements.

The risk of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance not recognising international accreditation presents an additional challenge, as not all accreditation agencies are included in the list of recognised bodies. Moreover, this list itself is not firmly established.

Interdisciplinarity and inter-university collaboration

One way to overcome the narrowness of the standards regulating speciality subjects is to develop interdisciplinary programmes. However, there are currently few built environment-related programmes in Ukraine, as the accreditation procedure for such programmes is even more complex and not fully regulated.

The trend towards interdisciplinarity emerged in the social sciences and humanities at the turn of the 21st century, manifesting across various fields, but perhaps most vividly in urban studies where its challenges became more visible and critical.

In principle, interdisciplinary and intersectoral connections in urban education enable universities to prepare professionals capable of understanding the city and comprehending all the processes occurring within it, from economic and social to spatial. These are experts who can solve various problems and develop strategies for the restoration and development that cities need while working in interdisciplinary teams. Foreign experience confirms that interdisciplinarity expands graduates' potential. However, in Ukrainian university education the interdisciplinary approach is currently underdeveloped. Creating an interdisciplinary study programme and getting accreditation for it is a challenge in itself. However, there is also a sense that comprehensive urban education will not produce professionals who can grasp all the necessary processes, that it is important to have strong core competencies and to work in multifaceted, interdisciplinary teams where each member understands, respects, and complements the others.

Interdisciplinary failures

"One of the key challenges is that we lack a well-developed interdisciplinary approach. We are aware of international experience, which shows that interdisciplinarity expands opportunities for graduates. We also know from our own experience that developing an interdisciplinary educational programme is difficult. But trying to understand the city—without incorporating interdisciplinarity—is a futile endeavour," explained Professor Roman Lozynskyi

This being the case, there are only limited specific instances of cross-sectoral and inter-institutional collaborative practices we can consider. For instance, during the Impact of War Lab, students from the Urban Studies and Planning programme at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv collaborated with their peers from the Urban Strategies and Design programme at the University of Edinburgh³². Truly interdisciplinary programmes are more of an exception, though, for example the MA programme for Urban Studies and Postwar Reconstruction at KSE and MSc one for Urban Studies and Spatial Planning at KNUCA (IMPACTS ..., 2023).

In this regard, it looks promising to deepen inter-university and interdisciplinary interaction within academic mobility programmes, e.g., under the international Erasmus+ academic exchange programme or between Ukrainian universities in the fields of architecture, urban planning, and urban studies (Mezentsev et al., 2024). Academic mobility enhances competencies by exposing students to diverse approaches, methodologies, and best practices from other countries. This experience fosters a broader understanding of urban challenges and solutions while encouraging cross-cultural collaboration and knowledge exchange. Inter-university cooperation may include dual degree programmes, thematic summer schools, and joint research projects for students.

Experts also raised the issue of broad versus narrow specialisation in study programmes. They agreed that at the Bachelor's level, programmes should be broader, while at the Master's level, they should be more specialised, with consideration of interdisciplinary needs. These must include separate interdisciplinary projects or courses. This is the approach currently used in Ukraine.

There is still no official recognition of the profession of "spatial planner" in Ukraine. Within the Unified State Electronic System in the Construction Sector, the specialisation "urban planning documentation development" falls under the profession of "architect." However, spatial planning is a broader field that requires not only architectural expertise but also an understanding of economic, environmental, and social dimensions. In response to these challenges, universities have begun launching new study programmes in urban planning, spatial planning, and spatial development. At the same time, informal spatial planning education—backed mainly by international organizations—has gained traction.

Professor Vadimov emphasised that the current synergistic effects of interdisciplinary collaboration are extremely limited. As a tool for its activation and harmonisation, he suggests creating (or restoring) an interdisciplinary scientific and educational methodological centre for universities, *"where we could synchronise our efforts and continue advancing the development of our specialists."*

Professional communities and education

Key professional communities in Ukraine were established and registered as independent entities in the early 1990s, having previously come under the umbrella of all-Soviet associations. During this period, the National Union of Architects of Ukraine (NUAU), the Ukrainian Academy of Architecture (UAA), and the Academy of Builders of Ukraine (ABU) were all registered, along with some other industry-related organizations, such as the Ukrainian Geographical Society and the Sociological Association of Ukraine.

According to NUAU's Statute³³, among the primary missions are the free development of creative directions and schools in architecture, the protection of authors' rights, the preservation of historical and natural environments, cultural development, and aesthetic education of the public. It also aims to foster international cooperation among architects and improve architectural education in Ukraine. The Union's key activities involve organizing exhibitions, competitions, and discussions on architectural projects and urban development issues, participating in Ukraine's public and political life, and recognising architects' contributions to the field.

32 <https://www.globalurbancollaborative.org/impacts-of-war-lab>

33 <http://nsau.org/%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b0%d1%82%d1%83%d1%82-%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%b0%d1%83/>

NUAU entered a new stage when the Architecture Chamber of Ukraine was established within its structure in 2018, bringing together all certified architects. According to its Regulations³⁴, the Architecture Chamber aims to promote the realisation of architects' social role, ensure the high quality of architecture and urban planning services, and protect society from the potential negative consequences of certified architects' unprofessional behaviour. However, its key function has been the certification of architects, enabling their listing in the Unified State Electronic System in the Construction Sector (USESCS), which grants them the right to develop urban planning documentation. Nonetheless, in recent times, the Union's certification function has been transferred to the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development and higher education institutions.

According to the USESCS, there are approximately 4,500 certified architects in Ukraine, a critically low number-in 2024 Poland had 13,700³⁵. NUAU's largest branches are in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Dnipro, and Odesa.

Among all certified architects, 76% are NUAU members. However, a new requirement introduced by the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development has created challenges in verifying professional experience through USESCS. In practice, only those who managed to upload their projects to the USECS system could confirm their work experience, which is relatively few in wartime. Those without registered projects could have gotten verification from NUAU, but the Union's access to the necessary database is currently blocked. As a result, 40% of architects were unable to confirm their professional experience through USESCS, resulting in a significant risk of losing specialists, as illustrated by an NUAU member survey (Bozhok, 2025).

In 2022, the Association of Spatial Planners—Urban Council was established within NUAU with a mission to bring together certified architects involved in urban planning documentation production and the professionals working in urban development, spatial planning, and urban studies³⁶ to foster the exchange of

ideas and shape visions for a high-quality, ecological, and comfortable built environment supporting Ukraine's sustainable development. Among its more concrete objectives is supporting the professional certification of experts to ensure high-quality planning solutions.

Established in 2011, the Confederation of Builders of Ukraine is the construction sector's largest professional community with over 900 collective members. Its mission includes coordinating members' activities, addressing urgent issues, and promoting free enterprise and competition in urban development³⁷. Among the Confederation's key tasks are developing a system of professional training, supporting career development, and enhancing the qualifications of industry professionals.

Expert view on the role of professional communities

Experts have differing views on the role of professional communities in education based on their involvement and engagement in activities. Some emphasise their function in facilitating international programmes, organizing conferences, workshops and seminars, and creating new opportunities. Professor Vadimov noted that the activities of such organizations are vital: *"Why? Because they help focus on interdisciplinary research topics that individual universities in Ukraine cannot fully address. They enable the exchange of knowledge... Similar structures exist for geographers, sociologists, economists, and urban planners, but interdisciplinary communication is lacking."* To address this problem, the National Union of Architects of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Geographical Society organized a joint conference in 2023, signing a Memorandum of Cooperation, which became a key event for knowledge exchange among urban development experts from different fields. While this memorandum only sets the framework for now and has not yet resulted in any practically oriented outcomes, discussions at this stage focus on the prospects of jointly organizing events on non-formal and informal education, developing and updating content, and improving study programmes.

34 <http://nsau.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Полож-про-архит-палату-НКАУ-останній-варіант.pdf>

35 Polish Chamber of Architects (Architects' Council of Europe, 2024)

36 <http://nsau.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE-%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%86%D1%96%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D1%8E-%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%BD-%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F.docx>

37 <https://kbu.org.ua/ustanovchi-dokumenty>

"Since the government does not ensure the development of urban planning, professional associations organize training programs themselves, offering practical learning opportunities for students, integrating international expertise, and securing grant initiatives. They provide alternative education where universities cannot quickly update their curricula... NUAU organizes conferences, workshops, and other events, bringing best practices to help architects and urban planners adapt to the challenges of Ukraine's reconstruction," Hanna Palekha noted, at the same time, highlighting that there was

scope for much greater involvement of professional communities in reforming the sector.

Other experts pointed out that professional communities are facing general exhaustion and burnout due to the ongoing war. While there is informal discussion and consensus on the critical role of education in the profession's survival, this does not translate into active participation in shaping study programmes.



Destroyed lecture hall in a war-damaged Ukrainian university © Seneline / Shutterstock

Impact of war and the role of universities

THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND PLANNING

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has affected all aspects of life, disrupting everyday routines, and prompting a re-evaluation of many things, including education, presenting universities with numerous new challenges and difficult choices.

The full-scale invasion led to some irreversible changes in higher education. Many university buildings are damaged or destroyed, some higher education institutions have had to relocate indefinitely, some faculty and administrative staff members have joined the armed forces, and many face mental health issues. One obvious change is that cities have found themselves the focus of attention. Irpin, Bucha, Izium, Kharkiv, and Mariupol became case studies of urban destruction (e.g., Gentile, 2023; Kliuchko et al., 2024; Mezentsev & Mezentsev, 2022) as well as the subjects for countless recovery plans.

One consequence of the war is the large number of people who have been internally displaced that choose universities in safer regions to relocate to. Cities formerly considered as educational centres have experienced a significant, potentially irreversible decline. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the cases of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Kharkiv, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhya are close to the front line, suffer from incessant shelling, and experience enormous destruction. Higher education institutions in these areas are trying to adapt but remain focused on survival.

PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO UNIVERSITIES

Figures from the UN's fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA5) published in February 2026³⁸, show that between February 2022 and 31 December 2025, an estimated 7.1 per cent of the education infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, worth USD 13.9 billion in total. Total recovery and reconstruction needs in the education and science sector are estimated at USD 33.5 billion. "...impacts have curtailed people's access to education and skills training services, disproportionately affecting girls and populations in rural areas... needs include the reconstruction of educational institutions, as well

as the costs of restoring in-person education and providing pedagogical and psychosocial support to mitigate learning losses." (Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, 2026).

One of the most concerning effects of the war on higher education in Ukraine, is that those who typically demonstrate high academic performance are the ones choosing to pursue education abroad. While this trend is not universal, how students' migration intentions will change once the war ends remains uncertain. Some young, qualified professionals may choose not to return to Ukraine for various reasons.

If people who have been displaced internally integrate into local communities, they may stay permanently or pursue other options, such as returning to their home regions or moving elsewhere. In this context, assessing the demand and supply of urban development experts in specific regions and cities is extremely challenging.

Another significant impact is the departure of qualified lecturers abroad, where they may find employment, potentially leading to them not returning to Ukraine.

It is a sensitive issue, and each side has its perspective. I can only assess the results. Hopefully, we will manage to preserve the potential. Here, support is needed. In 5–10 years, we might face a huge problem of staff shortages," said Professor Yuriy Palekha of the State Research Institute of Urban Design.

This comment seems particularly prescient, especially when considered alongside demographic projections, which point to a looming shortage of students and professionals in the job market (Ivanchenko & Levantovych, 2023).

A recent survey conducted by NUAU revealed that 40% of architects had changed their profession or field of activity during the war (the results remained unpublished as of April 2025, but Божок 2025 offers some general comments). As Hanna Palekha of the Association of Spatial Planners summarised: *"Has the war changed the urban planning market? Yes, of course, it has. Has the war cast doubt on the very logic of urban planning? Yes... The conditions under which decisions about city development were previously made no longer exist. Planning development 10–20 years ahead has become impossible because there is no understanding*

38 <https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/P514499-22f93f3a-4278-42bc-b907-db9553d12069.pdf>

of these areas' future." A similar situation occurs in education, which, she said: *"trains professionals for conditions that no longer prevail. University programmes still focus on standard urban planning, which is no longer relevant. The professionals undergoing training now do not have the necessary competencies for reconstruction."*

NEW PLATFORMS EMERGING

In response to this situation, new expert platforms have emerged, such as the Ro3kvit Urban Coalition, fueled by a huge influx of foreign projects and expertise. However, foreign expertise is just a tiny part of the solution, as it seldom contributes to teaching. Guest classes are still not very much a tradition in Ukrainian higher education, and only a partial knowledge transfer is possible.

One of the critical impacts of the war is closer engagement between faculty and students in practical projects. Urban Reforms' Oleksandra Naryzhna explained: *"Now everyone understands that it's time to think. And, of course, a new demand for development has emerged. Then, the question arose: How? And we don't know. Then the issue of education came up. And now there is a demand for education... [what is happening] here in Ukraine right now, I believe, is that most of the experiments happening in the world are taking place here in Ukraine. And they will continue to take place."*

As a result of the extensive destruction of cities and internal displacement, Ukraine is undergoing a unique process of reconstruction unlike anything seen before. This unprecedented situation is driving the search for innovative solutions and new approaches to urban renewal and development. Ukrainian education holds the potential to be a key part of these innovative solutions.

Dr. Shlipchenko of the Centre for Urban Studies highlighted the impact of the pandemic and its destructive effect on the ability to develop team working and professional skills among the students: *"First, the pandemic and then the full-scale war delivered serious setbacks to all of this. Skill-building should be in-person; it must occur in the studio environment. That is where people truly learn how to work as a team," she said.*

In the context of the war's impact, it is important to reflect on the meaning of recovery, which is sometimes narrowly interpreted as merely the physical reconstruction of destroyed buildings. Yet recovery goes far beyond rebuilding infrastructure. Here, it is again essential to highlight the importance of an interdisciplinary approach—one that is capable of addressing the multifaceted nature of challenges and shaping a more sustainable and integrated vision for the future.

UNIVERSITY AS A NATIONAL RECOVERY RESOURCE

We believe that universities' primary role in recovery is to help avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Academia presents an engine to learn from others, to bring knowledge from around the world as well as from within the country, and to help Ukrainian reconstruction plans develop and live. University education might be the most powerful tool available. As Professor Bohdan Cherkes, formerly of Lviv Polytechnic National University, put it: *"Ukraine cannot be rebuilt without universities because they are, first and foremost, centres of hope. Also, universities train the professionals needed to reconstruct Ukraine, particularly urban development specialists. Without this training, nothing will happen."*

As Ukraine confronts the challenge of reconstructing cities devastated by war, it is critically important to train industry specialists, and universities must rise up to the challenge, providing the knowledge and expertise needed to address urgent urban issues while ensuring the long-term success of urban regeneration and development.

"The role of universities has never been solely educational; they have always been scientific centres. And now they have become ... major coordination hubs," NUAU's Olena Oliynyk pointed out. And Hanna Palekha did not see universities as separate, self-sufficient entities: *"Universities play a grand role, but they are part of the orchestra... It is the professional community, universities, NGOs, and donors—they all form one story, which will not work, will not play out, will not take off if there is no conductor."*

The third mission of universities is to actively participate in community life and expand their potential beyond traditional academic boundaries. This requires

direct engagement in urban life and the community, with opportunities for involvement in the city-making process, and for students to actively visit specific communities for field research and develop their own recovery projects. Such experiences enable students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings and acquire new, relevant skills. As part of an Alliance of Ukrainian Universities project titled Enhancing Community Capacity For Reconstruction Through Piloting Their Interaction With Universities, students conducted research in the Kharkiv Oblast's Lozova Urban Community.

"Direct involvement in the community is an important scientific contribution to the city where the university is located. It is students' direct involvement in urban life, where term papers deal not with abstract things but with particular stories of specific places. The involvement in this process could generate interest in learning from those who seek this education."

**- Oleksandr Korotkykh,
Vinnytsia City's Spatial Development Agency.**

"Education cannot be detached from real-world challenges. Instructors should not merely deliver lectures but actively engage in developing new approaches to reconstruction. It is essential to establish research centres that collaborate with real communities and create innovative solutions," emphasised Hanna Palekha, while Oleksandr Korotkykh stressed that:

"Universities could develop a dedicated information resource focused on the territory, grounded in their own research... This could serve as an additional lever for engaging in urban projects."

LACK OF ENGAGEMENT

Despite the desperate and ever-growing need for knowledge and vision production, the experts we interviewed pointed to a lack of engagement in practical tasks. *"The role of universities in recovery is insignificant: I see no practical involvement, except for some isolated initiatives... The first problem is leadership. The leader sets the direction, finds resources, and does many other things. The second problem is the lack of resources, which is also due to the first one. Indeed, there are not enough of them, and people are immersed in the work so bureaucratic that it leaves no way to think of recovery,"* noted Kyiv National Economic University's Professor Pylypiv.

An important ingredient of university education beyond the war is training experts capable of quickly adapting and responding to societal challenges, tangibly contributing to improving urban spaces, and solving complex social, economic, environmental, and spatial problems that contribute to creating liveable cities. One example is Barrier-Free Map: A City Without Limits: Shevchenkivskyi District, a project conducted in cooperation with the Shevchenkivskyi District State Administration of Kyiv and the LUN City NGO, during which urban studies students monitor the accessibility of urban spaces and develop recommendations for resolving the identified issues.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to advance discussion on the evolving and contemporary drivers shaping the future of Ukrainian urban development and planning education. We knew when we started this would raise many questions, but few simple answers. Each dive into the issues and reflection on each expert interview convinced us that the topic of higher education relating to the built environment, and the broader production and transfer of knowledge in the sector, deserves far more than a single article. Nevertheless, we endeavoured to weave together the various problems without losing ourselves in the details.

As we began outlining a timeline with key milestones, we realised it could stretch across several pages. So many pivotal events have occurred that have shaped the course of education for urban development and planning in Ukraine through legislative changes in higher education and urban planning, the professional community's response, and the academic environment. Ultimately, the internal discussions allowed us to establish priorities and consider the timeline not as a sequence of events but rather as an array of long-term processes that overlap and intersect over time.

Limitations

This work does not claim to be all-encompassing, every research has its limitations – in this particular case we could have carried out many more interviews and collected and analysed even more data for a more granular picture of the subject and we acknowledge that certain aspects may have been overemphasised while others remain underdeveloped.

Further research priorities are seen in the areas of post-war education, post-war reconstruction, and beyond so that Ukrainian education may one day become a fully recognised and integrated part of the European Union's education eco-system. However, there are many uncertainties along this path, including both internal and external obstacles, which it is important to address and study in detail now to prevent new problems later.

However, there are some clear main trends in the evolution of urban development and planning education in Ukraine that we would like to stress.

Ongoing Evolution

Education for urban development and planning in Ukraine has evolved under the heavy influence of

its Soviet legacy, which emphasised technical and design-oriented “hard skills” while largely neglecting interdisciplinary and conceptual approaches. Since our country's independence in 1991, higher education has undergone slow and fragmented reform, struggling to replace old models with modern frameworks suited to contemporary urban needs. Terminological and legal inertia is also evident: the Soviet-derived term *mistobuduvannia* (city building) still dominates, while contemporary concepts like “spatial planning” or “spatial policy” have only recently entered the professional and academic vocabulary and remain largely absent from official legislation and study programmes.

Universities are going through a transformational experience of adjusting to planning and maintaining study programmes in times of extreme uncertainty and numerous challenges.

Since the late 2010s, Ukraine has seen a significant expansion in study programmes related to urban development and planning. While architecture remains the dominant field—accounting for 69% of students in relevant programmes—Urban Studies has become the fastest-growing category despite still representing just 5% of enrolments. This expansion reflects broader social trends: decentralisation reforms, grassroots urban activism, and international collaborations.

Ongoing Challenges

The key challenges are well-known—apart from the ongoing armed conflict, Ukraine suffers from a brain drain, a shrinking pool of potential students, institutional constraints and capacity limitations, inequality in potential, and a Soviet legacy which continues to shape ways of working, mindsets, and teaching culture. Institutional rigidity—especially in bureaucratic and accreditation processes—makes it difficult for universities to innovate or adapt programmes to rapidly changing needs. A growing faculty crisis is also evident, driven by low salaries, a lack of career incentives, and the ongoing emigration of talent.

Professional communities contribute to advancing specialised education and fostering knowledge exchange. However, their influence on formal education remains limited. Public discussions, like those held during the Ukrainian Urban Forum, begin to address deeper issues of interdisciplinarity, educational values, and the evolving role of universities in shaping the

future of Ukraine's cities. However, these remain a networking platform rather than institutions with an established impact.

Nonetheless, we witnessed how universities showed examples of resilience, agile management and strategic approaches. Amid previous-mentioned challenges, several innovative trends have emerged. Private and alternative educational initiatives are gaining momentum, offering more flexible, student-oriented environments with better responsiveness to real-world urban challenges. Teaching in English is seen as one way to respond to challenges in the educational sphere. Although it remains a relatively rare practice, it is increasingly seen as a necessary condition for internationalisation and academic mobility.

Collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches

Despite their growing popularity, interdisciplinary approaches to urban planning education in Ukraine face significant structural barriers. The country currently lacks a formally recognised speciality in “urban studies,” which forces institutions to shoehorn such programmes into other categories like architecture, geography, or civil engineering. Although interdisciplinary education is widely seen as essential to preparing professionals for the complexities of urban development and planning, actual examples of interdisciplinary programmes remain limited.

The launch of several urban studies programmes, stronger cooperation between universities, and a healthier academic community, all indicate growing capacities within higher education. Currently, there is limited but growing collaboration between

universities and sector stakeholders in Ukraine, including professionals, local authorities, and ministries, to address the pressing challenges of urban reconstruction and development. However, despite some positive examples, the full potential of these collaborations has yet to be realised, highlighting the need for more structured and sustained partnerships.

Collaboration does not exclude competition, especially in the current demographic situation. Students are choosing the best programmes available to them, and not only within Ukraine. Greater cooperation between Ukrainian higher education institutions in research and education services could improve their competitiveness and strengthen their position in attracting students.

Ukrainian universities are increasingly viewed as vital actors in the country's post-war recovery. Their potential lies not just in training professionals but as hubs for civic engagement, community research, and innovation. Through involvement in practical projects—like monitoring the accessibility of the urban environment in Kyiv or student-led recovery planning in war-torn communities—universities can directly support local development and help build a more resilient urban future. However, this role is currently hampered by a lack of resources and excessive administrative burdens.

As Urban Reforms' Oleksandra Naryzhna put it: *“We cannot afford to have less education now. We need to explore different formats more. We need more than professionals. We need experts with a new, civic mindset.”*

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Annexes

Annex 1: List of interviewees

Liubov Apostolova-Sossa, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, Head of the Department of Urban Economy, Guarantor of the Urban and Spatial Planning Master's Programme

Bohdan Cherkes, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Professor at the Department of Visual Design and Art, Dean/Director of the Faculty/Institute of Architecture and Design (from 1991 to 2024)

Oleksandr Korotkykh, Vinnytsia City Council's Municipal Enterprise "Spatial Development Agency," Principal Architect

Roman Lozynskyi, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Head of the Department of Geography of Ukraine, Guarantor of the Urban Studies, Urban Planning and Sustainable Spatial Development Master's Programme

Oleksandra Naryzhna, Head of the NGO "Urban Reforms," First Vice-Rector of Kharkiv School of Architecture (2018–2021)

Olena Oliynyk, National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture, Professor of the Department of Architectural Design, Vice-President of the National Union of Architects of Ukraine

Hanna Palekha, Head of Association of Spatial Planners—Urban Council of NUAU

Yuriy Palekha, Ukrainian State Research Institute of Urban Design "DIPROMISTO" named after Yuriy Bilokon, Deputy Director for Research, Vice-President of the Ukrainian Geographical Society

Vitalii Pylypiv, Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman, Professor of the Department of Regional Studies and Tourism

Svitlana Shlipchenko, Head of the NGO "Centre for Urban Studies," Associate Professor at the Department of Urban Economy, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture

Mykola Trehub, Kyiv School of Economics, Vice-Rector for Educational Innovations, Deputy Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Union of Certified Engineers and Land Surveyors

Vadim Vadimov, National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic," Director of the Educational and Research Institute of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Land Management

Annex 2: List of interview questions

Block 1: Evolution and current state of education for urban development and planning in Ukraine

- What key changes have occurred in Ukrainian education in your field of work over the past decades?
- Is there competition in the educational services market in the field of urban development and planning?
- Are there enough educational programmes, or is there an oversupply? Are there regional disparities in the availability of education?
- What is your opinion on the launch of new study programmes at universities where such education did not previously exist?
- How would you assess the availability of English-language study programmes in Ukraine?
- Do you plan to launch new study programmes or develop new courses? What new programmes would you propose? (if applicable)

Block 2: Graduate competencies, dual education, Continuous Professional Development, and public and private education

- Are there currently enough professionals in your field?
- Do graduates' knowledge and skills meet employers' expectations?
- What is lacking to ensure quality training and unlock graduates' potential?
- Have you encountered problems in recruiting teaching staff? (if applicable)
- Dual education: are HEIs and employers ready for it?
- Which universities/study programmes are your current employees graduates of?
- What is the situation with Continuous Professional Development in your field?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of training professionals at public and private universities?

Block 3: Interdisciplinary and inter-university collaboration, and professional communities

- What is more effective—narrow specialisation or interdisciplinary programmes, competition among schools or joint inter-university courses?
- How effective can interdisciplinary study programmes in urban development and planning be?
- What role do professional communities play in training specialists at universities? Can you give positive examples of collaboration?

Block 4: Impact of war and the role of universities

- How has the war affected the quality and scale of education for urban development and planning?
- How has the number of applicants and students changed? Or: Has there been a change in the number of graduates who wish to work in your organization?
- How has the war impacted the HEI's teaching staff?
- What is the role of universities in the national recovery process and urban reconstruction?

THEMATIC PAPER

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