

RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: ESG IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Monograph

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2024

UDC 37(477)
Ra715

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Resilient and Sustainable Future: ESG in Higher Education : Monograph /
Ra715 Edited by Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Versal, Nataliia Tkalenko. Riga, Latvia :
Baltija Publishing, 2024. 300 p.

ISBN 978-9934-26-507-5

DOI: 10.30525/978-9934-26-507-5

UDC 37(477)

CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT | 3 |
|----------------------|---|

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| INTRODUCTION | 6 |
|--------------------|---|

PART 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1. Key concepts of resilience and ESG principles within the context of higher education

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Versal, Nataliia Tkalenko, Mariia Balytska</i> | 8 |
|---|---|

Chapter 2. Assessment of ESG/SDGs introduction in HEIs

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Anzhela Ignatyuk, Nataliia Versal, Nataliia Tkalenko, Mariia Balytska, Nataliia Prykaziuk, Olena Prokofieva</i> | 36 |
|--|----|

PART 2. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT OF ESG IN UNIVERSITIES

Chapter 3. Green university initiatives for a sustainable future: a case study of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Olena Pochaievets, Vasyi Erastov, Nataliia Versal</i> | 84 |
|--|----|

Chapter 4. Integrating environmental sustainability into education and practices of Chernihiv Polytechnic National University

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Anatoliy Prystupa, Olha Melnyk, Serhii Tsybulia, Nataliia Buialska</i> | 99 |
|---|----|

PART 3. SOCIAL ASPECT OF ESG IN UNIVERSITIES

Chapter 5. Gender, freedom and education in the era of war

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Nataliia Kutsmus, Inna Semenenko</i> | 121 |
|---|-----|

Chapter 6. Inclusion, cooperation projects and professional education resilience during the wartime: Ukrainian dimension

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Marian Tripak, Maryna Voloshchuk, Oksana Palyliulko</i> | 142 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 7. Social dimensions of university resilience: a case study of I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University | |
| <i>Sofia Husak, Oksana Shevchuk, Mykhaylo Korda, Arkadii Shulhai</i> | 162 |
| Chapter 8. Sustainable educational platform for regional recovery and social development: a case study of integrating educational initiatives and community projects | |
| <i>Tetiana Shestakovska, Olena Mykhailovska</i> | 180 |
| PART 4. | |
| GOVERNANCE ASPECT OF ESG IN UNIVERSITIES | |
| Chapter 9. Ethical leadership and governance: examining the role of governance structures in advancing ESG principles at Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University | |
| <i>Denys Zagirniak, Dmytro Matuzko</i> | 194 |
| Chapter 10. Implementation of the Governance principle on the example of Alfred Nobel University | |
| <i>Oxana Bayer, Alina Yudina</i> | 212 |
| Chapter 11. Governance aspect of ESG in Lutsk National Technical University during the war | |
| <i>Olena Kuzmak, Oleh Kuzmak</i> | 224 |
| Chapter 12. Maintaining academic quality at frontline universities in wartime | |
| <i>Iryna Murenets, Olena Parkhomenko, Olena Iarmosh</i> | 239 |
| Chapter 13. Compliance management system in Ukrainian higher education institutions: implementing and transforming | |
| <i>Nataliia Shalimova, Anna Fomenko</i> | 275 |

Chapter 11.

Governance aspect of ESG in Lutsk National Technical University during the war

Olena Kuzmak¹ and Oleh Kuzmak²

Introduction

University resilience and effective wartime management are critical for several reasons. In the conditions of war, higher education institutions face numerous challenges that require rapid adaptation, mobilization of resources, and coordinated management work. War threatens continuous learning because students and teachers may be forced to leave their homes, change their residences, or join the country's defense. A sustainable university with effective management can provide distance learning, use online platforms, and support access to educational resources for all students regardless of their location. Military actions cause stress, anxiety, and other psychological problems in students and university employees. Effective management includes providing psychological support, organizing consultations, and ensuring the safety of all participants in the educational process. The stability of the university allows it to continue scientific research and support laboratories and scientific projects that are important for the recovery and development of the country.

Governance During War: Challenges and Adaptation

The stability of the university and its effective management during the war are necessary to preserve the continuous educational process, support the mental and physical health of the community, preserve scientific potential, fulfill social responsibility, and ensure financial stability. They facilitate adaptation to new conditions, help the university overcome

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challenges, and contribute to the country's recovery and development. And ESG is the university's sustainability roadmap.

Lundy et al. (2022) note that a well-designed plan to promote environmental sustainability is one element of a broader ESG strategy that can make a higher education institution attractive to students, faculty, and staff who want to be associated with a purposeful organization. Kmetz (2024) writes that ESG in higher education is critical for institutions to effectively address environmental and social issues, increase their attractiveness, and ultimately foster a broader culture of sustainability in the education sector. Prazian & Prykhodko (2023) insist that high-quality education is a priority because it will help society cope with the new level of challenges and even existential climate threats.

The mission of the Lutsk National Technical University (LNTU): “the formation of a highly educated and nationally conscious generation of Ukrainian citizens by providing conditions for the self-realization of students and employees in the process of their joint educational, scientific, and innovative activities, quality training of highly qualified specialists – leaders in the field of transport, production and technology, architecture, construction and design, agricultural sciences and ecology, educational and food technologies, mechanical and electrical engineering, digital, computer and information technologies, automation and electronics, instrumentation and telecommunications, management and administration, mathematics and statistics, social welfare, psychology and pedagogy, humanities and social-behavioral sciences, journalism, civil security, service, international relations and law” (Development strategy LNTU, 2021). The strategic goal of LNTU: is the creation of a powerful, highly competitive, free, and comfortable educational and scientific space, an innovative “growth pole” of Volyn, which will implement the “education-science-business-government” formula.

The war was a great shock and challenge for the university management and students. Immediately after the declaration of martial law, studies at the university were suspended and students were sent on forced vacations for their safety, but teachers and the university administration did not leave the walls of the university and began global work to help the army and refugees who came en masse to Lutsk.



The first days were extremely difficult emotionally because the realization that a full-scale war was taking place was difficult to accept. The plans for 2022 at LNTU were not at all as the terrible reality turned out to be. In 2021, the university gained quite a speed of development, and the stoppage of all development projects was perceived very painfully. Therefore, they did not stop but reoriented and mobilized to help the Armed Forces from the first day of the full-scale invasion.

Two weeks after the invasion of the Russian Federation's troops, the administration decided to resume distance learning, after the adoption of the law "On the organization of labor relations under martial law". Based on this, the LNTU felt the need to make changes to the internal rules of the LNTU, in particular in terms of reducing the length of working hours for all categories of employees by 6 hours a week. Under the roof of the Lutsk National Technical University, a powerful synergy of scientists, businessmen, and government officials emerged. LNTU became a center that united the strength of teamwork, where everyone occupied his niche and faithfully performed tasks that were not typical for him until now, professors, along with teaching, got to the machine tools and began to make items needed for the army, female teachers began to sew ammunition, shoes for the military, weave nets and other necessary things. The staff of LNTU will continuously contribute to the needs of the Armed Forces, which made it possible to purchase off-road vehicles, thermal imagers, sights, quadcopters, generators, batteries, and other necessary items. In the conditions of military aggression in Lutsk, the National Technical University, in addition to educational, research, international, project, and educational work, also took an active position in helping the Armed Forces.

LNTU became a center of volunteerism. What did they do, what areas of assistance did they provide, and with whom did they cooperate? We tackled everything that could bring victory closer: logistics; a collection of food, medicine, and necessary things for fighters and injured citizens; tailoring of ammunition and production of high-quality plates for body armor; provision of food for displaced persons and military personnel; production of camouflage nets; repair of drones, chargers and cars for the Armed Forces; fundraising and many charity projects. From the first days, the scientists of our HEI changed their business suits to uniforms

and began to work with machines. Through joint efforts, it was possible to produce about six thousand armor-piercing plates for high-quality body armor, which were immediately handed over to the soldiers at the front. Workshops of LNTU worked on producing anti-tank hedgehogs, heaters, and repairing cars for the Armed Forces. In addition, LNTU manufactured portable charging stations and repaired drones and quadcopters. A significant amount of special sapper equipment – boarding hooks – has been developed and manufactured with partners. However, despite the difficult times and uncertainty for our country, the university, believing in the victory of Ukraine, continued to work to the maximum. In one of the buildings, a volunteer center of the National Technical University was created, where they received, packed, and sent goods for those who needed them almost 24 hours a day. Our scientific and pedagogical workers and students abroad in the spring of 2022 provided much help. They transferred thousands of tons of cargo with clothes, food, and hygiene products to the National Technical University through European volunteer centers (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1. LNTU produces products for the Ukrainian army

| Products | Photo |
|-------------------|---|
| Military helmets |  |
| Military clothing |  |

| Products | Photo |
|--------------------------|---|
| Anti-tank hedgehogs |  |
| Molotov cocktails |  |
| Heating tools (burzuyki) |  |
| Buggies made by students |  |

Among all of these, LNTU has expressed maximum support to colleagues from the East of Ukraine. Donetsk National Technical University scientists, who had to leave their homeland for the second time, were protected.

It was decided to consolidate and move one of the faculties of our university to another building and to provide an educational building for Donetsk University so that they could carry out their activities. This is how the slogans were born, which became the main motivators for the entire information campaign this year: “With faith in ZSU, choose LNTU” and “Invincible because they are educated.” Currently, LNTU works on a mixed form of education, and the availability of shelters and the effective use of information and computer technologies make it possible to organize a high-quality and safe educational process. Educators have their own front. The experience of organizing wartime training, alongside the heroic work of the Armed Forces, testifies to the indomitability of our nation.

During 2023, the following activities were carried out:

- Reconstruction of LNTU's educational and laboratory building into a dormitory for internally displaced persons (with the support of the Lutsk City Council under the NEFCO program; the cost of the project is about 1.6 million euros).
- Capital repair (thermo-modernization) of the main building.
- Project “Reconstruction of the educational and laboratory with adaptation into the digital development platform “DIGITAL INNOVATION SPACE (DISpace)” was started, and as part of the project, thermal modernization was completed – the project “Reconstruction of the educational and laboratory building B-Z with adaptation to the creative hub “Art Tech” was started.
- Current repairs: classrooms, sanitary rooms, and rooms for living in a dormitory.
- Reconstruction of shelters.
- Veteran hub “LNTU Veteran Hub” was created. The organization of the Center for Veteran Development “LNTU Veteran Hub” based on LNTU will allow the establishing coordination, methodical support and organization of programs aimed at social adaptation and promotion of employment of servicemen, veterans of the war, and members of their families. Also, short-term courses of scientific and professional retraining and measures for social and psychological adaptation for the specified categories of persons will be organized.

Impact of ESG on LNTU Resilience

Among the components of the Governance ESG aspect at LNTU, the presence of an effective academic council and supervisory board plays an important role. Thus, Lutsk National Technical University has an effective supervisory board, the purpose of which is to contribute to solving promising tasks of the development of LNTU, attracting financial resources to ensure the university's activities in the main directions of development and exercising control over their use, effective interaction of the university with state bodies and local self-government bodies, the scientific community, socio-political organizations and subjects of economic activity in the interest of development and improvement of the quality of educational activity and competitiveness of higher education institutions, implementation of public control over university activities, etc. In 2023, it was updated. The Academic Council of the university did not stop working, initially in a remote format, and from September 2022 in an in-person format, which adopted the necessary regulations, resolutions, and development strategies for the university's activities and ensuring the quality of the educational process during martial law.

To ensure the implementation of ESG even under martial law, considering the dynamic development of science and education, educational components are systematically updated at LNTU, accompanied by innovative methods for teaching disciplines. In particular, the use of business cases, business games, situational tasks, brainstorming, brainstorming, lecture discussions, and team games to increase the level of soft skills (personal characteristics that allow a person to interact in a team when solving any work issues successfully, students of higher education. Motivational retreats and business forums are organized for the winners, to which successful individuals and well-known graduates of the National Technical University are invited, who, by their example, motivate young people for continuous self-development and improvement. Numerous trainings, including by certified trainers, contribute to the deepening of theoretical knowledge and the acquisition of practical skills of a modern specialist. Accreditation was conducted in an online format. In general, the dynamics of the contingent of LNTU students compared to last year increased by 2 983 people due to an increase in the number

of students with a master's degree in higher education by 717 people and an increase of 2 169 people with a bachelor's degree. In addition, to ensure the quality of the educational process in martial law conditions, monitoring groups from faculties were formed at the University, whose members monitor the quality of educational classes, module control, etc. The most important issues of the organization of the educational process were discussed at the Academic Council of the University, the rectorate, and the academic councils of the faculties, and were discussed at industrial meetings.

Ukraine is in dire conditions of the Russian Federation's military aggression, which also led to the forced displacement or departure of people abroad, and managerial decisions in the field of personnel management, despite their adoption in conditions of uncertainty and risks, should be oriented not only to the preservation of existing achievements and results activities but also to preserve professional personnel and intellectual potential. The formation, preservation, and development of personnel potential are determined by an effective personnel strategy, which is a certain model, general line, and vector of personnel potential management. To ensure the quality of higher education and improve the organizational and methodological support of the educational process at the National Technical University. In 2023, great attention was paid to ensuring the successful functioning and development of the university in matters of recruitment, training, and strengthening of the university's personnel scientific and pedagogical potential – the main condition for its effective activity.

As a result of the implementation of a set of measures, qualitative changes occurred in individual components. The number of scientific and pedagogical workers with scientific degrees and academic titles increased, the share of people with scientific degrees and scientific titles in the scientific and pedagogical staff exceeded 90 %, and for doctors of science, and professors it was more than 13.22 %. At the Lutsk National Technical University in 2023, work was constantly being carried out to create and improve the regulatory framework, strengthening the university's personnel potential. To carry out self-assessment of the competencies of teachers, optimize the improvement of their qualification level, and guide

professional development in 2023, the Methodology of self-assessment of general and professional competencies of research and teaching staff of Lutsk National Technical University was developed and the content of own pedagogical activities and/or job duties was approved. In 2023, regardless of the state of war, scientific and pedagogical workers' professional activity and creativity increased the university's intellectual capital. Therefore, in 2023, LNTU acquired 44 security documents and submitted 41 applications for obtaining security documents in cooperation with the State Department of Intellectual Property of Ukraine.

Development of the International Potential LNTU During the War

Despite the difficult political situation and military aggression, during 2023, the development of international potential continued in areas such as grant and project activities, preparation and submission of packages of project documents to tenders, and development of partnership relations. In 2023, the university continued the implementation of three ERASMUS+KA2 projects on the development of the higher education potential of the program, one ERASMUS+KA2 Youth Partnership project, one Academic collaboration in the Baltic Sea region project, one project financed by the European Union body, the European Institute of innovations and technologies: development of innovative potential for higher education, and received additional financing for two new projects with the participation of LNTU. In April 2023, LNTU joined the partners in the implementation of the project “Cybersecurity of critical infrastructure of Ukraine”, which is financed within the framework of the international cooperation program USAID in Ukraine – Economic development (Program to support the development of a competitive Ukrainian economy).

LNTU in the ratings (Table 11.2):

- TOP 20 Ukrainian higher education institutions (18th place among Ukrainian higher education institutions included in the rating) and 103rd position among Eastern European higher education institutions.
- Webometrics Ranking of World Universities – 54th place out of 300 higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- uniRank University Ranking – 58th place among 193 higher education institutions of Ukraine.

- SciVerse Scopus – 103rd place among 204 higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- EduRank – 55th place among 169 higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- EduRank – 55th place among 169 higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- Ukrainian National H-index Ranking – 139th place among 435 higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- Consolidated ranking of universities of Ukraine – 53rd place among 239 higher education institutions of Ukraine.

Table 11.2. Place of LNTU in international rankings

| Rating | The position of the university in the rating | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2022 | 2023 |
| <i>QS World University Rankings</i> University rankings for the Global Study of Education and Science. | The university entered the top 15 higher education institutions of Ukraine and the top 300 higher education institutions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. | The university ranks 18th among higher education institutions of Ukraine and 103rd among higher education institutions of Eastern Europe. |
| <i>Webometrics Ranking of World Universities</i> Ranking of world universities by the level of their presence in the network | 60th place out of 312 higher education institutions of Ukraine | 54th place out of 300 higher education institutions of Ukraine |
| <i>uniRank University Ranking</i> Ranking of universities by popularity on the Internet | 76th place out of 184 higher education institutions of Ukraine | 58th place out of 193 higher education institutions of Ukraine |
| <i>Universities on Social Media</i> Ranking of universities by popularity in social networks | Facebook: 83rd place out of 146 higher education institutions of Ukraine Instagram: 74th place out of 113 higher education institutions of Ukraine YouTube: 116th place out of 132 higher education institutions of Ukraine | Facebook: 67th place out of 165 higher education institutions of Ukraine Instagram: 47th place out of 97 ZVO of Ukraine YouTube: 88th place out of 165 higher education institutions of Ukraine |

| Rating | The position of the university in the rating | |
|---|--|---|
| | 2022 | 2023 |
| <i>U-Multirank</i> The ranking of universities is aimed at interested students and stakeholders. | 44th place out of 93 higher education institutions of Ukraine | – |
| <i>Scopus</i> Ranking of universities to track the citation of articles published in scientific publications | 99th place out of 195 higher education institutions of Ukraine | 103rd place out of 204 higher education institutions of Ukraine |
| <i>EduRank</i> An independent international ranking based on the number of articles cited and the number of publications | – | 55th place out of 169 higher education institutions of Ukraine |
| <i>Ukrainian National H-index Ranking</i> The rating is aimed at evaluating scientific productivity | – | 139th place out of 435 higher education institutions of Ukraine |

Source: Report of the rector of LNTU (2023)

Improving the Quality of Educational Activities LNTU to Ensure ESG Principles

In 2024, to improve the quality of educational activities and comply with ESG principles, the Strategy for the Development of the Internal System of Quality Assurance of Higher Education of Lutsk National Technical University for 2024–2029 was developed, discussed, and supported by the Academic Council of the University. The successful implementation of the strategy depends on the effectiveness of the internal system procedures to ensure the quality of higher education at LNTU, which will improve the quality of education and competitiveness, attract additional resources, and increase the accessibility of education. The University has a department for quality assurance of the educational process, licensing, and accreditation, which

ensures the implementation of policies and procedures of the internal system of quality assurance of higher education at the University, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of educational programs, prevention and detection of academic plagiarism in scientific works of LNTU employees and students of higher education, including the creation and operation of an effective system for the prevention and detection of academic plagiarism, generalization and dissemination of positive international and domestic experience in educational innovation for internal quality assurance, conducting surveys of all stakeholders of the educational process.

In recent years, LNTU has implemented several significant measures to enhance the quality assurance system for higher education:

- Establishment of Department for ensuring the quality of the educational process, licensing, and accreditation.
- Development and implementation of internal regulations of quality assurance system.
- Introduction of a monitoring system of educational programs.
- Implementation of the Platform for conducting surveys.
- Creation of NPP rating of the departments.
- Introduction of a system and mechanisms for ensuring compliance with academic integrity principles, including plagiarism checks.
- Creation of the Quality of Education page on the University's website.
- Ensuring the publicity and transparency of information through the publication of educational programs, the results of surveys of stakeholders of the educational process, checks of works for plagiarism, etc.

At the same time, developing LNTU's quality assurance requires constant changes. Priority directions for the development of the internal system of ensuring the quality of higher education for LNTU are defined in the strategy:

- Ensuring the quality of education.
- Enhancing the quality of teaching.
- Creating an effective digital educational environment.
- Strengthening quality management.
- Promoting excellence in research.
- Ongoing improvement of the quality assurance system.

Improving the internal system of quality assurance of higher education is intended to increase the level of educational programs and the effectiveness of teaching and ensure the compliance of educational processes with international standards and the needs of the labor market. An important component is increasing student satisfaction by creating favorable conditions for learning, taking into account feedback, and improving the quality of the educational process.

The implementation of the Strategy for the improvement of the internal quality assurance system will increase the efficiency of the Lutsk National Technical University, create a more comfortable environment for the interaction of participants in the educational process, ensure a high level of training of graduates and advanced training of employees, strengthen international cooperation, ensure the compliance of educational programs with modern requirements of the labor market, implement innovative teaching and management methods, increase student and faculty satisfaction, and strengthen the university's reputation both nationally and internationally. The strategy for developing the internal quality assurance system of higher education of the Lutsk National Technical University is a fundamental step towards achieving high standards of educational activity, promoting the development of scientific research, and increasing the competitiveness of graduates in the labor market. Implementing this strategy requires the active participation of all university stakeholders and continuous improvement based on feedback and analysis of results.

Conclusions

Effective university management is also a key aspect, which includes implementing transparent mechanisms for managing the quality of education, raising the professional level of administrative staff, and using modern monitoring tools. Integrating research activities into the educational process, involving students in research activities, and supporting innovative projects will improve the quality of education. An important aspect is the continuous professional development of teachers through the organization of training, academic mobility, and motivational programs.

Active interaction with employers and other stakeholders will allow for considering the labor market's needs in educational programs and creating partnerships with businesses and public organizations. Ensuring the transparency and openness of the educational process through regular disclosure of information, involvement of all interested parties in decision-making, and conducting independent audits will contribute to increasing the quality of higher education in Ukrainian universities. This, in turn, will improve their reputation, attractiveness to students and scientists, and will also increase the chances of graduates for successful employment and career development.

Lutsk National Technical University (LNTU) has demonstrated remarkable resilience during the ongoing war in Ukraine. Despite the challenging circumstances caused by the Russian Federation's military aggression, LNTU has maintained its commitment to education, infrastructure development, and social responsibility. The university has preserved its educational and research activities and adapted to new realities by implementing innovative teaching methods, upgrading facilities, and supporting displaced individuals and veterans. Its continuous operation of the Academic Council and Supervisory Board ensured strategic decision-making. At the same time, efforts to modernize educational infrastructure, such as creating the "DIGITAL INNOVATION SPACE" and "Art Tech" hub, reflect LNTU's focus on future growth. The "LNTU Veteran Hub" development and the implementation of programs to support veterans and internally displaced persons show the university's commitment to social responsibility and community support. LNTU's sustained participation in international projects and strategic alliances, such as Erasmus+ and USAID, has allowed the university to enhance its academic offerings, strengthen its research capabilities, and maintain a competitive edge. Implementing a comprehensive internal quality assurance strategy, even under martial law, emphasizes LNTU's dedication to upholding high standards of education and governance. Overall, LNTU's actions during the war reflect a robust and adaptive governance structure prioritizing innovation, social responsibility, and continuous improvement, ensuring the university's sustained growth and relevance in adversity.

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