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УДК 070(477)+07:378]:378.014.25

DOI <https://doi.org/10.28925/2524-2644.2023.152>

**DESTIN-ATION INTEGRATION:
ВПЛИВ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОГО ПРОЄКТУ
DESTIN (2018–2022) НА УКРАЇНСЬКУ
ЖУРНАЛІСТИКУ ТА МЕДІАОСВІТУ**



**DESTIN-ATION INTEGRATION:
THE IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN DESTIN
PROJECT (2018–2022) ON UKRAINIAN
JOURNALISM AND MEDIA EDUCATION**

ABSTRACT. *DESTIN: Journalism Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity, and Professionalism* was an Erasmus+ funded project involving twenty partners across Europe and Ukraine that aimed to transform the environment for journalism in Ukraine by working with university departments, employers, and other key stakeholders to ensure that higher education programmes better matched the needs of students, the media sector, and democratic society more generally. Between November 2018 and November 2022, it led to the development and implementation of twenty new and revised BA and MA programmes in journalism and media at ten Ukraine universities; seventeen online ‘media literacy’ courses aimed at the Ukrainian public; ‘National Methodological Guidelines’ for BA and MA Journalism programmes shared with Ministry of Education and Science; creation of the Ukrainian Forum for Educators in Media and Journalism; and a dual-diploma Polish-Ukrainian MA programme in journalism, launched in September 2022. This essay will report on the project’s goals, activities, achievements, impact, and legacy and underline the value of education for both improving the quality of journalism and preserving democratic values, particularly during a time of war.

Keywords: *journalism, media, universities, students, Bologna Process, Ukraine, war.*

АНОТАЦІЯ. *DESTIN: Журналістська освіта для демократії в Україні: Розвиток стандартів, доброчесності та професіоналізму – це проєкт, що фінансувався Erasmus+ за участю двадцяти партнерів з Європи та України та мав на меті змінити середовище для журналістики в Україні шляхом співпраці з факультетами університетів, роботодавцями та іншими ключовими зацікавленими сторонами. Метою було зробити так, щоб програми вищої освіти краще відповідали потребам студентів, медіа-сектору та демократичного суспільства в цілому. У період з листопада 2018 року до листопада 2022 року реалізація проєкту призвела до розробки та впровадження двадцяти нових і переглянутих програм бакалавра та магістра з журналістики та медіа в*

десяти українських університетах. Також було розроблено та реалізовано: сімнадцять онлайн-курсів з «Медіаграмотності», орієнтованих на українську громадськість; «Національні методичні вказівки» для програм бакалаврату та магістра журналістики, надані Міністерству освіти і науки; проведений Український форум освітян медіа та журналістики; польсько-українська магістерська програма з журналістики з подвійним дипломом, започаткована у вересні 2022 року. У цій статті розповідатиметься про цілі, діяльність, досягнення, вплив і спадщину проекту. Підкреслено цінність освіти як для покращення якості журналістики, так і для збереження демократичних цінностей, особливо під час війни.

Ключові слова: журналістика, медіа, університети, студенти, Болонський процес, Україна, війна.

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DESTIN: *Journalism Education for Democracy in Ukraine: Developing Standards, Integrity, and Professionalism* began in November 2018 as a three-year Erasmus+ funded KA2 Capacity Building in Higher Education project. Its goal was to help transform journalism education in Ukraine: first by raising the quality of BA and MA degrees in journalism and media, second and more broadly, by improving 'media literacy' across Ukrainian society. It involved twenty partners based in Ukraine, the UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, and Austria, a mix of university departments and professional organisations. It was led by Bath Spa University in the UK, but most partners were based in Ukraine: ten university journalism and media departments, the Ukrainian Association of Students, Hromradske Radio, and the Ministry of Education and Science. The remaining six partners were based in the EU and UK: three universities/higher education institutions, two professional associations, and a quality assurance organisation.

In 2018, when the DESTIN project began, few needed reminding about how vital a free press is for a successful democratic society. By 2023, this truth will be even clearer. Journalists, of course, are a crucial component in this, but whether in Ukraine or elsewhere, they are not born as journalists; they are 'made' – that is, they have to *learn* relevant skills, practices, and methodologies. Consequently, their training at university (through undergraduate or postgraduate degrees) and during their careers (through professional courses and workshops) is vital to ensure that the media sector as a whole remains informed, engaged, and effective. Before DESTIN was even planned, the need to improve journalism education in Ukraine was clearly recognised. As early as 2010, there was already a mismatch between the needs of a rapidly

growing and changing journalism and media sector and the number and quality of journalism and media graduates from Ukraine's universities (Rozvadovsky, c.2010). A report by Media Detector on the state of journalism education in Ukraine specifically highlighted weaknesses in the knowledge and skills of graduates, poor resources and infrastructure in university journalism departments, little international engagement, and a lack of confidence in the degree programmes among students and employers (Dutsyk & Shutov, 2016). Little wonder that the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine identified the reform of journalism education as a national priority for curriculum development.

More generally, Ukraine itself has been working to align its higher education system with European practices for almost two decades. It has been a full member of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area since 2005, meaning that it has committed to structural reforms of Higher Education on the basis of shared key values: freedom of expression, autonomy for institutions, independent student unions, academic freedom, free movement of students and staff and so on (European Commission, 2020; Kremen, 2017). The DESTIN project explicitly aligned with the goals of the Bologna process as it aimed to make Ukraine's higher education system for journalism more compatible with European norms, strengthen the relevant quality assurance mechanisms, increase international opportunities for students and staff, and improve employability for journalism graduates.

The DESTIN project did not emerge from a vacuum. In part, it drew on the strong institutional ties that the lead institution, Bath Spa University, had been building with Ukrainian universities

for many years, especially Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and Sumy State University. It also built directly on the work of an earlier project, *ALIGN: Achieving and Checking the Alignment between Academic Programmes and Qualifications Framework*, which was funded by the EU's Tempus programme and ran from 2013 to 2016. The purpose of that project was to support the alignment of university programmes in Armenia, Russia, and Ukraine with European and national qualifications frameworks (ALIGN, 2016). ALIGN did not focus on any single subject area, but no fewer than six of the partners involved in that project would join DESTIN, bringing their knowledge, experience, and collaborative spirit: in Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Sumy State University, and the Ukrainian Association of Students; in Poland, Adam Mickiewicz University; in Ireland, the Institute of Art, Design and Technology; and in the UK, Bath Spa University.

The continuity between the ALIGN and DESTIN projects proved crucial and underlined the value of developing strong, sustainable relationships between universities across the European Higher Education Area. DESTIN itself combined these two separate aims of greater alignment of Ukraine's higher education system with European standards and improved journalism education in Ukrainian universities and recognised how they depended on one another. Curricular alignment is meaningless unless it has 'buy-in' from universities, faculty, students, employers, and other stakeholders; similarly, reforming journalism education cannot be as successful if it only focuses on minor changes to the curriculum. To quote the ALIGN project itself: the processes of alignment are often challenging for any university, involving technical changes (as the use of common nomenclature for awards), conceptual changes (as in understanding student-centred learning), and cultural changes (as in the developing a university community in which everyone has a role and responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of courses). (Hyland et al., 2017).

Journalism education is a particularly interesting subject to reform in this way. Journalism is a very vocational subject with a strong relationship with a distinctive professional sector, so the Bologna

Process's focus on improving employability is particularly relevant: better-trained students are better qualified for jobs and, in turn, should do those jobs better. However, journalism education cannot be taught just in the lecture halls. Students need knowledge, of course, but they also need skills, cultural awareness, work-based learning, and professional training – all elements that would be expected in a journalism or media department in a European university. Journalists need to be excellent communicators; they must be self-directed and self-motivated; they should be comfortable moving between multiple disciplines; and they have to work together with others as well as work on their own. Increasingly, too, they need to be technologically adaptive and able to work effectively across different media platforms.

Journalists also need to have principles. As the project title indicated, DESTIN focused not just on 'standards' but also on 'integrity and professionalism'. Journalists need to understand, embody, and promote the central values of the EU (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights), and DESTIN's approach was here informed by two key professional associations: the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) and the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA). The project drew specifically on the guidance of EJTA's 'Tartu Declaration' (2020), which not only outlined the core competencies and skills of journalists but also identified the underlying principles and values of journalism itself:

Members of the European Journalism Training Association educate or train their students/participants from the principle that journalists should serve the public by:

- providing an insight into political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions,
- stimulating and strengthening democracy at all levels,
- stimulating and strengthening personal and institutional accountability,
- stimulating and strengthening an open and respectful public conversation,
- strengthening the possibilities for citizens to make choices in societal and personal contexts while:
- feeling responsible for the freedom of expression,
- respecting the integrity of individuals,
- being critical of sources and independent of vested interests, using customary ethical standards.

There was an important international context to all this as well. Prior to COVID and the Russian invasion, Ukrainian university students of any subject and at any level were among the least internationally mobile of any country in the European Higher Education Area, and Ukrainian universities were among the least international in terms of their students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020). Yet, no matter where you are and no matter the story, journalism must be understood in a global context: small pebbles can make large ripples. So not only do journalism students need opportunities for international mobility, but university departments themselves also need to strengthen their own international relationships. This, again, was something that DESTIN sought to improve.

To achieve all this – to produce journalism graduates with the knowledge and skills to succeed in an increasingly global media landscape – DESTIN needed to assemble seven key elements:

1. **Open-minded university departments of journalism and media** who were willing to think about how to improve their degrees, courses, and classes and how to place students at the centre of the learning process;
2. **Teaching staff with the time, support, and commitment** to develop – and maintain – the skills, knowledge, and approaches required;
3. **Sufficient institutional resources** to provide students with specialist equipment and dedicated spaces;
4. **Trusted relationships** between students, university departments, and employers to ensure they have a shared understanding of the value and content of a degree in journalism and media;
5. **Effective quality assurance processes** for evaluating and improving teaching that would allow degrees to be able to adapt rapidly to the changing needs of students, employers, and wider society;

6. **External funding** (especially to support elements 2 and 3);

7. **A shared vision and a commitment to work together** to achieve it.

DESTIN's shared vision and commitment were no accident. It was a response to the external factors already mentioned, that is, Ukraine's ongoing educational reforms and the challenges facing journalism and journalism education in Ukraine, but it also depended on a judicious mix of expertise and experience as well as a good deal of careful planning. ALIGN had identified six potential partners, but they alone were not enough. DESTIN gathered together ten Ukrainian journalism and media departments willing not only to learn new approaches and change their practices but also to put in the time, effort, and resources to reform their programmes; three key Ukrainian-based stakeholders able to provide insights about students, employers, and national policy (Ukrainian Association of Students, Hromdradske Radio, and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine); selected European partners with expertise in pedagogical training and with experience of reviewing, reforming, and evaluating degree programmes in line with European standards and approaches, some of whom also had distinctive and successful journalism and media programmes of their own (Adam Mickiewicz University, Bath Spa University, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, and Linnaeus University); specialist European organisations dedicated to ensuring the quality of university and professional training of journalists and media professionals (EJN, EJTA, and the FoJo Media Institute based at Linnaeus University); and a partner with considerable experience in ensuring quality assurance on multi-national and multi-partner projects (World University Services, Austria). Tables 1 and 2 list partners and their roles and the project work packages.

Table 1.

Partners in DESTIN

Partner	Country	Role
1	2	3
Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities	Ukraine	
Adam Mickiewicz University	Poland	<i>Led work-package 4</i>
Bath Spa University	UK	<i>Project lead: Led work packages 1 and 10</i>

<i>Continuation of Table 1</i>		
1	2	3
Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy	Ukraine	
Ethical Journalism Network	UK	
European Journalism Training Association	Netherlands	
Hromradske Radio	Ukraine	
Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Ireland	<i>Led work-package 3</i>
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	Ukraine	<i>Led on work-package 9</i>
Linnaeus University	Sweden	
Mariupol State University	Ukraine	
Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine	Ukraine	
Sumy State University	Ukraine	<i>Led on work-package 6</i>
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	Ukraine	<i>Lead Ukrainian Partner; led work packages 2 and 5</i>
Ukrainian Association of Students	Ukraine	
Ukrainian Catholic University	Ukraine	
Uzhhorod National University	Ukraine	
World University Services Austria	Austria	<i>Led work-package 7</i>
Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University	Ukraine	<i>Led work-package 8</i>
Zaporizhzhia National University	Ukraine	

Table 2.

DESTIN's Work-packages

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Work-package lead</i>
<i>Preparation</i>		
1	Preparation	Bath Spa University
<i>Development</i>		
2	Curriculum audit and action plan	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
3	European curriculum design: principles and practices	Institute of Art, Design and Technology
4	Curriculum models: European models of journalism	Adam Mickiewicz University
5	New/Revised curriculum, evaluation, and National Guidelines	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
6	University outreach online 'Media Literacy' courses	Sumy State University
<i>Quality Plan</i>		
7	Quality management: monitoring and evaluation	World University Services Austria
<i>Dissemination & Exploitation</i>		
8	Dissemination and participation	Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University
9	Sustainability	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
<i>Management</i>		
10	Project Management	Bath Spa University

It is a testament to the strength and resilience of the DESTIN partners, especially those in Ukraine, that despite the twin horrors of a global pandemic and a brutal invasion, the project nonetheless completed nearly everything that it set out to do in 2018 and even, in certain ways, went beyond the original goals. It took a year longer than planned, but its achievements are remarkable by any measure. Most notably, it designed *and* launched 20 new and revised BA and MA journalism and media degree programmes across Ukraine, meaning that hundreds of students have already benefitted from the project: in 2021/22, 601 BA and 255 MA students enrolled in programmes that DESTIN had directly shaped; in 2022/23, 494 BA and 244 MA students enrolled.¹ There is no better testament to the hard work of DESTIN's Ukrainian university partners and the dedicated support of the other partners. Students are already beginning to graduate, and what they have learned—and how they have learned it—will shape their own professional practices and outlook. Over the coming years, these degree courses will not merely establish themselves but also improve in response to student evaluations, departmental reviews, and employer consultation.

The process of such major curriculum reform began with the establishment of dedicated Curriculum Development Teams (CDTs) at each Ukrainian university partner at the start of the project. Each undertook a careful audit and evaluation of their existing degree programmes as well as consulted extensively with students, employers, and other local stakeholders. They participated in a series of focused pedagogical training sessions organised by DESTIN, as well as several international fact-finding trips to learn about European models of journalism education. Each new or revised degree programme had to undergo the slow, complicated, and necessary institutional process of planning, designing, reviewing, and approval; to help with this, DESTIN organised expert panels to provide detailed 'peer reviews' of each proposed programme using the official criteria issued by the Ukrainian National Agency for Quality Assurance (NAQA) in 2019 (which in turn had been based on European Qualifications Framework (EQF) standards). These

panels confirmed that the new/revised programmes had incorporated principles and practices from the project documentation and training, and for each university, they provided detailed and candid recommendations for ensuring greater alignment with both the EQF and NAQA. All the new/revised programmes were approved by their universities and began receiving students in 2020/21; seven have since been accredited by NAQA.

At individual universities, this process led to lasting institutional change: simplified internal procedures, improved internal communication and transparency, greater departmental confidence and resilience; and increased professional development opportunities for staff, enabling them to improve their knowledge and skills and extending their national and international networks; improved internal communication and transparency; strengthened 'student-centred' practices; regularised use of student feedback; and regularised stakeholder involvement in curriculum development. The student experience was significantly improved through better quality teaching, access to specialist equipment, participation in the project activities, increased internship opportunities, greater visibility for their work, and enhanced employability. Universities engaged with future students, employers, schoolchildren, and the wider public; they involved 24 local and regional authorities, over 50 local schools, over 70 local employers and organisations, and over 70 media outlets. Agreements (many focusing on student placements) were signed with over 60 Ukrainian newspapers, news agencies, radio and TV stations, and media companies.

Collectively, the experience of curriculum reform also directly informed the production and publication of 'National Methodological Guidelines for the Content, Development and Implementation of the Bachelor's and Master's Study Programmes in Journalism' (Bezchotnikov et al., 2021), which focus on the content, development, and implementation of the BA and MA programmes in journalism. Drawing on analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from Ukrainian professional associations, student associations, and employers in the field of journalism, they affirm the academic and professional values and standards

¹ The decline in BA numbers between 2021/22 and 2022/23 reflected the broader challenge of recruiting students following the Russian invasion.

needed to demonstrate competencies in the area of journalism, such as EQF, NAQA, and the official standards in BA and MA journalism as issued by the Ministry of Education and Science (MESU) in 2019 and 2022. They were co-drafted by all the Ukrainian university partners, under the leadership of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, in consultation with the MESU and informed by feedback from the EU partners. In 2023, MESU distributed the Guidelines to every university in Ukraine.

The project provided new specialist equipment and software for the Ukrainian university partners to improve the quality of teaching, with several setting up new 'media labs' as a result. (Sadly, some of this equipment has been destroyed by Russian aggression.) The departments held 'Open Days' aimed at future students to promote their new degree programmes, which was a new concept for many Ukrainian universities; these were so successful that every partner is continuing to hold them annually or more frequently. A new Ukrainian Forum for Educators in Media and Journalism was established, the first such network of its kind in Ukraine, creating a new space and framework for continued discussion, collaboration, and sharing of good practices among journalism departments. All ten of DESTIN's Ukrainian university partners were founding members, and the Forum affiliated with the European Journalism Training Association in December 2021, the first time EJTA had affiliated with a consortium rather than individual organisations. In the final weeks of the project, project partners Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland) and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv launched a new dual-diploma MA programme in 'New Media and Communications Technologies' and began recruiting its first cohort of students.

DESTIN has another goal that was also driven by a commitment to fundamental European values. While better-trained journalists will ultimately make for a better quality media sector, the readers, listeners, and viewers of journalism also need to be better educated about the media they encounter. There is an urgent need, especially in the face of Russian aggression, to strengthen media literacy and democratic values in Ukraine, and the project launched seventeen online media literacy courses

aimed at non-specialist audiences in Ukraine. Prepared by the Ukrainian university partners using DESTIN equipment, each is a self-paced online course with text, images, videos, and quizzes, taking on average c.30 minutes to complete, and topics include hate speech, fake news, news manipulation, and gender stereotyping. These courses, hosted by Sumy State University, are freely available via the project website.

Like any good piece of journalism, the story of DESTIN is much more than its headline or lede. The project, and particularly the Ukrainian partners, encountered enormous challenges with the pandemic and war, and yet its achievements are legion. Its impact and legacy – locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally – are already impressive and will only continue to grow as students graduate and become journalists, as the courses develop, as the pedagogical confidence of staff grows, as the universities improve their internal processes and align closer to European practice, as journalism departments at other Ukrainian universities adopt the Methodological Guidelines, as the Ukrainian Forum for Educators in Media and Journalism begins its collaborative work, as new dual-diplomas are developed, as the public's media literacy improves, and as Ukraine re-emerges stronger and more democratic following the war. To quote one of our Ukrainian colleagues in her address at DESTIN's final conference in October 2022:

If I were told to draw journalism, I would draw it as a tree where the roots are education, the trunk is practice, and the branches are various opportunities that journalism offers people (getting information, understanding the situation, showing how to learn about the world, entertainment...). Take away one of these components, and you will render the other ones useless. Today, one can often hear that education is not that important. Just work hard, and you will know everything that a journalist needs. It is a good thing that not everyone thinks that way. The DESTIN project brought together people who know and believe that education is the root that helps the most powerful trunk withstand the strongest storm. Its main goal is to contribute to the development of the European model of journalistic education in Ukraine because Ukraine is Europe (Gabor, 2022).

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Надіслано до редакції: 11.06.2023 р.