

The problem of European integration and relations with the European Union in public discourse in Ukraine following the Revolution of Dignity

Europe has a special place in the imagination of ordinary Ukrainians and plays an important role in contemporary political discourse in Ukraine. In this article I will discuss the changes in and the specific nature of the discourse on Europe and European integration in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014) based on polls of Ukrainian public opinion. The aim of this article is not to analyse in a comprehensive way European issues in the public discourse of Ukraine, but to show the current status and changes that have taken place after 2014.

Key words: European integration, public opinion, the revolution of dignity, Ukraine

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Introduction

The concept of integration with the European Union has become one of the key points of discussion in Ukrainian politics, as well as an important element of Ukrainian foreign policy and contemporary political discourse in general.¹ For this reason, the attitude of Ukrainians towards the priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy, in particular towards membership of the European Union, as well as the perception of Europe by Ukrainian citizens, should be considered an extremely important issue. In particular after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014 and Russian aggression in Crimea and in Donbass, the issue of relations with the European Union has become one of the main reference points for almost all the dominant political forces in Ukraine.

The European Union and, more broadly, Europe have been attributed a number of meanings in various discourses in Ukraine, with the social, geographical and cultural aspects often being dominated by political issues. The concept of "Europe" is often used to address such diverse and ambiguous issues as Ukrainian civilisation and cultural affiliation, or Ukrainian national identity.

The concept of European integration often becomes an object of symbolic struggle in Ukrainian public discourse. It is an important reference point for developing Ukrainian national identity – by considering Europe as a value or by rejecting it.² Ukrainian anti-Europeans are building their own identity as opposed to European integration, referring to other symbolic centres, such as Moscow, which introduces the concept of the "Russian world."

The positive picture of the European Union, which is largely based on stereotypes of high living standards and prosperity in European countries, is dominant in Ukrainian public opinion. We can speak about the mythologizing of Europe as an archetype of a social system and cultural community.³ Ukrainian media pay much less attention to issues related to the functioning of the European Union and to the problems facing EU institutions.

Many studies⁴ on relations between Ukraine and the European Union were developed in Poland and abroad before the Revolution of Dignity. Some authors, as Wojciech Stankiewicz,⁵ believe that Ukraine was not yet fully ready to join European structures, which was due to its internal political and economic problems. Rafał Sadowski⁶ considered that Kyiv would have to make a strategic decision and choose the direction of

1 *Droga do Europy: opinie ukraińskich elit*, ed. I. Sariusz-Skapska, Warszawa 2004; O. Polegkyi, *The media and political discourse in post-communist Ukraine*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Wrocław/University of Antwerp, 2015.

2 *Sny o Europie*, ed. O. Hnatiuk, Kraków 2005.

3 M. Zolkina, *European integration of Ukraine: experience of yesterday for development of tomorrow*, "Public Opinion" 2013, No. 13.

4 W. Baluk, *Ukraińcy wobec integracji europejskiej*, "Komentarze/Polityka" 2013, No. 2.

5 W. Stankiewicz, *Proces integracji Ukrainy z Unią Europejską*, "Nowa Polityka Wschodnia" 2013, No. 2, pp. 27–53.

6 R. Sadowski, *The prospects for the EU-Ukraine free trade agreement*, "OSW Commentary" 2012, No. 94.

economic and, as a consequence, geopolitical integration.⁷ Even more attention was paid to these questions after 2014.⁸ Magdalena Karolak-Michalska⁹ has examined the importance of European integration from the perspective of the internal situation in Ukraine and its regional and political diversity. The topic of cooperation between Ukraine and Europe was examined in geopolitical terms, in the context of rivalry between the West and Russia.¹⁰ Nevertheless, there are no broader analyses that are devoted to changes in public discourse and in Ukrainians' attitudes to the EU, and to Ukraine's European integration after the Revolution of Dignity.

It is often assumed in colloquial language that integration with the European Union is one of the basic categories of Ukraine's foreign policy, which requires no further explanation. Some aspects of European integration are becoming the subject of electoral rhetoric, which does not care about the clarity of language and the meaning of basic concepts. On the contrary, some concepts may be deliberately misused by Ukrainian politicians for political purposes.

Conceptualisation of European integration in Ukrainian political discourse

Traditionally, the conceptualisation of European integration and the associated choice of Ukrainian foreign policy takes place in Ukrainian public discourse within the framework of geopolitical confrontation, civilisational choice and as the instrument of internal change. The conflict between Europe (the West) and Russia is the meta framework for the first two approaches.¹¹

Within the geopolitical confrontation, the European aspirations of Ukraine are primarily determined by relations between the EU, the US and Russia. Ukraine appears here only as an object of geopolitical struggle between world leaders and an instrument of their foreign policy. Ukraine is often referred to as a buffer zone between Russia and Europe or the West. The problem of Ukraine's geopolitical position is related to the debate about the civilisation and the part of the world that Ukraine belongs to. In this context, the independence of Ukraine is directly related to its being released from under Russian influence.

7 M. Shmelova, *Wielowektorowość w polityce zagranicznej Ukrainy: próba bilansu*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2008, No. 2, pp. 31–51.

8 A. Datsenko, K. Zuba, *Europejska polityka Ukrainy*, "ETE Working Paper" 2018, Vol. 4.

9 M. Karolak-Michalska, *Podziały regionalne społeczeństwa ukraińskiego w kontekście członkostwa Ukrainy w Unii Europejskiej*, "Studia Wschodnioeuropejskie" 2017, No. 6, pp. 79–96.

10 R. Zięba, *Ukraina jako przedmiot rywalizacji między Zachodem a Rosją*, "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne" 2015, No. 3, pp. 5–26; A. Makarychev, *Regionalism and Identities in the Common Neighbourhood: European and Russian Discourses*, "EU-Russia Papers" 2013, No. 10; B. Woźniak, *Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa: udawane rozszerzenie czy niedoceniany instrument?*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2007, No. 3, pp. 77–89.

11 O. Polegkyi, *Framing of European integration in Ukrainian Media Discourse*, "Central European Journal of Communication" 2016, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 180–196.

Within the framework of European integration as a civilisational choice, the “European” topic has become dominant in Ukrainian discourse, mainly as a way of confirming autonomy from Russia. This framework mobilises discourse about feeling part of European civilisation and the Ukraine’s long European tradition, which was lost under the Russian domination.

For supporters of the European perspective of Ukraine, Europe is a valuable reference point. Ukraine’s independence was inextricably linked to the sense of its Europeanness. From this perspective, Europeanness was perceived as a determinant of Ukrainian identity and emphasised the organic autonomy of Ukraine from Russia and its unnatural separation from Europe for the centuries of Russian domination.

Within the framework of European integration as an instrument of internal change, the cooperation with the EU is an opportunity to modernise Ukraine. Accession to the EU means joining a “club” with higher standards in the political, social and economic sphere. For Ukraine, this is a way to modernise its economy and overcome technological backwardness. Full membership of the European Union is the ultimate goal of the Ukrainian path towards a completely independent, developed and democratic state. This framework is also often used for internal political struggle. To deny it, Ukraine is presented as a market for low-quality products, a source of cheap natural resources and cheap labour and a “dustbin” for Europe.

In the post-Soviet period, Ukraine’s relations with the European Union went through several phases. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Ukrainians believed that the tightening of links with Europe and with the United States would provide Ukraine with protection against an unpredictable Russia. For Ukrainian Democrats, a “return to Europe” meant rejecting communism and the heritage of centuries-old Russian domination. However, the problem was that in the first years of independence the West still considered Ukraine as a country dependent on Russia and did not develop its relations with Ukraine as an important ally.¹²

As Kataryna Wolczuk suggests, given that economic issues played an ambivalent role, it was primarily geopolitical and security reasons which led Ukrainian politicians from 1991 to take advantage of Ukraine’s location in Europe and seek membership in European institutions such as the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Recognition of independence and then Euro-Atlantic integration as an inherent objective of foreign policy,

was largely a response to Russia’s difficulties in accepting Ukrainian sovereignty, fuelled by doubts about the legitimacy and vitality of independent Ukraine.¹³

However, even after the Orange Revolution of 2004, Ukrainian political elites did not have the will to carry out coherent internal reforms in line with European standards. At the same time, the EU’s attitude towards Ukraine was very uncertain. On the EU

¹² P. Kubicek, *The history of Ukraine*, Westport–Connecticut–London 2008, p. 157.

¹³ K. Wolczuk, *Ukraine and its relations with the EU in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, “Chaillot Paper” 2008, No. 108, p. 90.

side, there was no explicit recognition of Ukraine's "Europeanness". The perception of Ukraine as European only in terms of geography, but non-European in political and cultural terms, was deeply rooted in Europe.¹⁴

The situation changed after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014, when Euro-Atlantic integration became an inevitable option for Ukraine. Ukrainian elites, as well as the majority of the population have undoubtedly expressed their willingness to connect with Europe, and the declarations of accession to the EU have become an integral part of programme statements of almost all large political parties. The consensus on closer integration with the EU was, however, accompanied by a dispute over the optimal strategy for achieving this goal. Orientation in internal and foreign policy towards the EU is for Ukraine principally a matter of national security, and perhaps even a matter of surviving as a state in the situation of open aggression by the Russian Federation.

At the same time, Ukraine has not received from the EU a clear signal about the prospects of EU membership. The political crisis, armed conflict with Russia and the non-implementation of a comprehensive reform strategy have further reduced these opportunities, at least for the forthcoming future. The European Union was not ready to promise even potential membership. As Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations, said in 2005: "The door is neither open nor closed."¹⁵ However, European support for Ukraine and cooperation between them in various areas is currently reaching the highest level since Ukraine gained independence.

Ukraine-EU relations in the opinion of Ukrainians before the Revolution of Dignity

The level of support for both major directions of Ukraine's foreign policy – Europe and Russia – depended to a large extent on the political situation in the country. Regional differences in foreign policy orientation result from differences in political orientations, history, *etc.*, but also from the "politicisation" of decisions on foreign policy and struggles within various political groups.

The support for the idea of European integration among Ukrainians has been uncertain for many years. According to public opinion polls from 2006–2010, relations with Russia were largely considered as the main priority of Ukraine's foreign policy, but 2011 was to become a year of change.¹⁶ This trend was reversed and in the subsequent years the attention of Ukrainian public opinion turned to the EU.

¹⁴ "National Security & Defence" 2008, No. 1.

¹⁵ Quoted from: *Don't know much about geography*, "Financial Times" 25 January 2005, <https://www.ft.com/content/cf8de352-6f09-11d9-94a8-00000e2511c8> (online access: 8.10.2019).

¹⁶ M. Zolkina, *European integration of Ukraine: experience of yesterday for development of tomorrow*, "Public Opinion" 2013, No. 13.

The results of a survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre¹⁷ show a continuous domination of supporters for Ukraine's EU membership over its opponents since 2011. In October 2011, their number was 51.2% and 30.3% respectively. When asked about the choice between the European Union and the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, 43.7% of Ukrainians have opted for EU membership, and 30.5% for the Customs Union.

In the same year, the majority of Ukrainians (54.6%) characterised relations between Ukraine and the EU as unstable; a minority (15.4%) considered them as bad, and only 14.3% described them as good. These results can be explained primarily by the assessment of the pace of European integration by Ukrainian citizens: 13% of respondents described it as null and 47.8% as low. Interestingly, this opinion was shared both by people who supported Ukraine's integration with the EU and those who did not.

Public opinion largely linked the instability in Ukraine-EU relations with the incoherent European integration policy of the Ukrainian government. Most Ukrainian nationals considered this policy as inconsistent (55.2%), non-transparent (59.5%), ineffective (62.6%) and incomprehensible to the general population (62.1%). 46.5% of respondents also believed that the Ukrainian government's policy was also misleading for EU Member States. In answering the question why the EU was interested in Ukraine, respondents pointed to the Ukrainian workforce (48.9%), energy transit to EU countries (48.6%), the Ukrainian market for EU goods (46.8%) and Ukraine's natural resources (46.6%). To a lesser extent, Ukrainians believed that the EU was interested in Ukraine's intellectual and scientific potential (26%); in reducing Russia's influence (20.3%); in the import of Ukrainian goods (15.6%); in the joint fight against illegal immigration, international crime and terrorism (15.5%); in strengthening security and stability in Europe (13.4%); in the military potential of Ukraine (11.2%) and in Ukrainian culture, tradition and history (6.1%).¹⁸

Ukrainians' attitude towards the priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy has changed over recent years, especially under the influence of events from the Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression. According to the Razumkov Centre,¹⁹ in 2015 half of the respondents (51%) believed that relations with the European Union were a priority for Ukraine. Relations with Russia should be a priority in the opinion of 11% of Ukrainians, with other countries (not indicated in the list) and other (except Russia) countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – 6%, with the United States – 3%. In 2007, according to Razumkov Centre, 41% of respondents prioritised relations with Russia, 31% with the EU, 7% with other CIS countries, 1% with the United States. At the same time, 41% of respondents assumed that European integration could not be a unifying idea for Ukrainians. This was the opinion of 34% of people in 2015 (27% in December 2006), and 24% did not answer (27% in December 2006).

17 M. Kapitonenko, O. Shamshur, V. Chalyi, *Ukraine and EU: Challenges that Loom Ahead*, Washington 2012, p. 5, http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/kapitonenkoetal_ukraineeu_feb12.pdf (online access: 17.9.2019).

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ukrainian Identity: Changes, Trends, Regional Aspects*, "National Security & Defence" 2016, No. 3–4, pp. 13–14.

Changes in the perception of European integration after the Revolution of Dignity

After the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014, the situation has changed significantly. According to a nationwide opinion poll carried out in August 2018 by the Ilk Kucheriv Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and the International Institute of Sociology in Kyiv,²⁰ the data are as follows (data collected by other research institutions are similar²¹): most people (52%) believe that Ukraine should become a EU member, about one third (34%) do not agree with this, and 15% cannot decide. There are regional differences in the approach to EU membership. In the west and in the centre of Ukraine, the majority (79% and 58%, respectively) is in favour of integration, while respondents from the southern and eastern Ukraine do not share European aspirations (58% and 57%).

Table 1. Do you think that Ukraine should become a member of the European Union? [in %]

	2006	2009	2012	2013	2014	2018
Yes	43.7	42.8	42.1	48.0	47.5	51.5
No	35.9	32.9	38.6	35.9	36.6	33.7
It's hard to say	20.4	24.3	19.3	16.1	15.9	14.8

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

As regards Ukraine's foreign policy orientations, the majority of nationals (51%) support Ukraine's accession to the European Union (the highest number in the west – 80%, in the centre of the country – 58%), and only 11% believe that Ukraine should join the Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Every third person (33%) is of the view that Ukraine should join neither the EU nor the Eurasian Union. The latter option is most supported by the inhabitants of the east (54%) and south of the country (48%).

The main advantages of EU membership are: raising the standard of living (38%), supporting the fight against corruption (27%) and the free movement of people within

20 *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019).

21 *Portreti regioniv: pidsumki. Zvedeni dani, porivnial'nii analiz mizh oblastiami*, 2018, http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/portreti_regionov_itogi_svodnye_dannye_sravnitelnyy_analiz_mezhdu_oblastyami.html (online access: 17.9.2019); *Social and political attitudes of the residents of Ukraine: April 2018*, Kyiv 2018, <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=764&cy=2018&page=6> (online access: 10.1.2019); T. Petronenko, *Which direction of integration Ukraine should choose: the European Union, the Customs Union or not joining any of the unions*, Kyiv 2016, <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=655&page=2> (online access: 10.1.2019).

the Member States (26%). Every fifth citizen expects Ukraine’s membership of the EU to support young people’s access to European universities (21%). 26% of respondents believe that Ukraine will not derive any benefits from EU membership.

Table 2. Which union should Ukraine join? [in %]

	2010	2013	2014	May 2014	December 2014	December 2015	June 2017	October 2017	August 2018
The European Union	38.1	46.4	40.4	50.5	57.3	55.8	56.8	49.3	50.7
The Eurasian Economic Union	48.8	35.7	38.5	21.4	16.3	13.1	7.8	10.8	10.9
None	-	-	-	17.4	-	-	25.5	26.3	32.5
It's hard to say	13.0	17.8	21.1	10.6	26.5	31.1	9.9	13.5	5.9

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

It is worth noting that perception of the key benefits of EU membership and their importance has changed over time. In the years 2005–2015, 35–40% of respondents considered that free movement of persons abroad was one of the key advantages of EU membership, while in 2018 – this was only 26%. Probably because a visa-free regime has been launched.

Expectations as to free access for young people to European universities have also decreased: in 2015 such potential benefits of EU membership were indicated by 34%, in 2018 – only by 21% of respondents. There was also a slight increase in the number of sceptics who do not expect any benefits for Ukraine from membership in the European Union: the lowest number was in 2005 and 2007 (14% and 16% respectively), in 2011 this figure increased significantly – to 28%, then decreased, but not significantly: 22% in 2015, 26% in 2018.

There are regional differences in the assessment of the benefits of EU membership. The further east of Ukraine you go, expectations fall – while 52% of people in the west have indicated an increase in their standard of living, such an answer was given by 40% in the centre, and only by 27% and 26% in the south and east of the country. The free movement of people is an advantage expected by 31% of inhabitants of the west of Ukraine, 30% of inhabitants of the south, 28% of the centre and by only about 5% of people living in the east of the country. The same is true for expectations regarding the possibility of studying at European universities and the prospects for combating corruption as a result of EU membership. 53% of inhabitants of eastern Ukraine, 36% of the southern part of the country, 22% of its central part and 8% of the western Ukraine do not see any benefits in membership.

According to respondents, emigration would be the main negative consequence of Ukraine’s membership of the EU. The percentage of people fearing this phenomenon has increased dramatically – from 33% in November 2015 to 46% in August 2018. People

are also worried about the likelihood of an influx of foreigners and migrants (26%) and “selling the country” (24%). There are also concerns that EU membership will worsen relations with Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (18%); in 2015, 28% of respondents had such concerns. Other negative consequences mentioned by the respondents include deterioration of living standards (16%) and unemployment (16%).

Table 3. What benefits would you expect if Ukraine became a full member of the EU?
[maximum 5 answers, in %]

	2005	2007	2011	2015	2018
Improvement in the standard of living	30.8	33.0	28.0	36.8	38.1
Improvement in availability of goods	18.7	8.8	16.1	10.3	10.4
Free movement of persons	39.2	35.4	34.7	38.6	26.1
Free access for young people to higher education	25.5	19.0	24.3	33.7	21.3
Democratisation	17.1	13.0	13.7	12.6	14.5
Increase in national security	7.8	6.7	7.5	20.8	15.9
Assistance in the fight against corruption	-	-	-	-	27.0
Moving the state towards European civilisation	19.0	17.7	16.1	18.8	15.8
Development of the Ukrainian economy	19.1	15.0	13.3	-	18.9
Greater credibility in the international arena	17.5	11.0	11.2	17.3	9.8
Financial assistance	13.0	8.8	9.7	12.6	7.2
I have no expectations	14.4	15.7	27.7	22.0	25.9
It's hard to say	17.3	16.3	11.6	11.6	7.2

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

Perception of the potential negative consequences of Ukraine's accession to the EU is also regionally differentiated. Most people fearing emigration live in the south (58%), fewer in the centre (47%) and in the east (43%), with the lowest percentage being in the west of the country – only 33%. The risk of “selling the country” is most worrying for the inhabitants of southern (38%) and eastern regions (30%), while those living in the central and western part of the country are much less worried about it (20% and 13% respectively). The fear of rising unemployment is more common in the south (21%) and least common in the west of Ukraine (9%).

In the opinion of Ukrainians, the biggest obstacle to Ukraine's membership of the European Union is corruption (43%), insufficient economic development of the country (38%) and low standard of living (28% compared to 36% in November 2015). 21% of respondents believe that the war in Donbass is also an obstacle (27% in 2015). Another 17% consider the problem of democracy and human rights in Ukraine to be an obstacle.

Table 4. What could be the negative consequences of Ukraine's accession to the EU?
[maximum 5 answers, in %]

	2005	2007	2011	2015	2018
Loss of national sovereignty	18.8	12.6	9.7	11.0	14.1
Increase in crime rates	9.1	9.9	10.1	6.4	6.7
Increase in drug addiction, spread of AIDS, etc.	15.9	17.1	14.0	14.7	8.9
Spread of Western mass culture	21.5	11.2	11.2	11.3	7.6
Decrease in living standards	18.3	9.5	16.7	16.5	16.0
Unemployment	21.1	10.2	17.5	18.2	15.8
Emigration	32.9	26.7	31.1	33.1	45.5
Inflow of foreigners, "sale of the country"	28.6	30.9	22.0	-	-
Inflow of foreigners and immigrants	-	-	-	-	26.6
"Sale of the country"	-	-	-	-	23.8
Increase in social inequalities	16.1	10.8	12.3	14.5	12.6
Deterioration of relations with Russia and CIS countries	24.7	19.8	22.5	27.5	18.0
Other	1.4	2.0	0.9	1.7	0.6
None	6.0	13.2	16.3	16.8	15.0
It's hard to say	20.2	17.5	16.0	16.0	11.2

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

Table 5. What is the biggest obstacle to Ukraine's membership of the European Union?
[maximum 5 answers, in %]

	2007	2011	2015	2018
Insufficient economic development of Ukraine	51.8	34.5	41.3	37.7
Problems with democracy and human rights in Ukraine	17.6	22.6	19.8	17.4
Low standard of living in Ukraine	48.0	32.4	36.4	27.5
Corruption	-	-	43.2	42.5
Position of EU Member States that do not wish Ukraine to join the EU	12.9	18.7	22.0	11.6
Position of the leaders of the Ukrainian state who are not really coming out to meet the EU	6.2	17.6	14.6	10.0
Reluctance of Ukrainian citizens	13.4	8.9	6.7	4.2
Reluctance of EU Member States to spoil relations with Russia	-	-	-	6.2
War in Donbass	-	-	27.0	21.0
No obstacles, Ukraine is ready for it now	1.3	5.0	2.9	1.6
Ukraine does not need to become a EU Member State	17.2	14.5	10.5	13.5
Other	-	0.9	0.9	0.7
It's hard to say	11.0	11.2	8.6	6.6

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

In the opinion of respondents, to accelerate reforms in Ukraine, first of all the EU must increase its pressure on the Ukrainian authorities (28%). Respondents also believe that this will be favoured by a more open prevention of Russia's actions by the EU and its Member States (16%). The vast majority of respondents (60%) believe that Ukraine should continue pro-European reforms, even if the EU does not anticipate Ukraine's membership within a specified period. 39% of the above mentioned respondents consider these reforms to be necessary above all for Ukraine, while 21% believe that Ukraine has no choice but to proceed towards European integration, regardless of membership. At the same time, 17% of respondents claim that Ukraine does not need "European reforms," and in the opinion of 7% of respondents the country should turn towards integration with the Eurasian Economic Union with Russia. 15% of respondents have no opinion in this regard.

In regional terms, the greatest consensus is on the need for pro-European reforms regardless of the perspective of EU membership – such an opinion is expressed by the inhabitants of the west (78%) and the centre (67%) of Ukraine, but by far fewer of those from the east (48%) and south (38%) of the country.

Table 6. Is it important for Ukraine to continue pro-European reforms, even if the EU does not provide the country with the perspective of membership? [in %]

	2018
Yes, because these reforms are needed primarily for Ukraine	39.3
Yes, because Ukraine has no other choice but to move on to European integration, regardless of membership	20.8
No pro-European reforms needed	17.4
On the contrary, integration into the Eurasian Economic Union with Russia should be pursued	6.8
Other	0.6
It's hard to say	15.0

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

The number of Ukrainians who consider themselves to be Europeans is gradually increasing (44% compared to 38% in June 2017), but there are also still more people who do not consider themselves to be Europeans (48%). The most visible European identity is shown by the inhabitants of the west of Ukraine (61%) and its central part (51%), while the least visible European identity is presented by the inhabitants of the south (28%) and the east (22%) of the country.

When asked about what Ukrainians need to feel European, 46% of respondents indicated a level of material well-being, 34% – a sense of legal protection, 21% – respect for the values of democracy and human rights, and 17% – a sense of freedom.

Introduction of a visa-free regime in contacts with EU countries is important for 48% of respondents and this number increased over the year (in June 2017 it was 39%, in December – 46%). In regional terms, the introduction of visa-free regime in contacts with the EU is particularly important for residents of the west of the country (74%), of its central part (48%), less for residents of the south (29%) and the east (33%) of Ukraine.

Table 7. How important is the introduction of a visa-free regime to EU countries? [in %]

	November 2015	December 2016	June 2017	December 2017	August 2018
Very important	22.9	16.3	10.1	14.1	16.4
Generally important	33.7	28.0	28.6	32.2	31.9
Not very important	19.3	21.3	23.8	24.3	23.2
It doesn't matter	17.4	28.2	33.7	25.0	23.8
It's hard to say	6.6	6.3	3.8	4.4	4.8

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

Over the past year, a significant increase was noted in the number of Ukrainians with a new biometric passport, which ensures visa-free travel to EU countries. In June 2017, only 7% of Ukrainians had a biometric passport, in October 2017 almost twice as many – 13%, and in August 2018 – 24%. Most holders of these new passports inhabited the west of Ukraine – 41%, while 18% of new passports holders lived in the centre and east of the country and 14% in the south. In addition, the number of citizens who do not have a passport has slightly dropped during the year – from 66% in June 2017 to 60% in August 2018.

Table 8. Do you have a passport [several answers possible, in %]

	June 2017	October 2017	August 2018
I have a new biometric passport	6.9	12.6	23.5
I have an old passport with valid Schengen visas	8.5	6.3	7.0
I have an old passport but without a valid Schengen visa	19.6	14.8	9.8
I do not have an international passport	66.0	66.2	59.8
It's hard to say	-	0.3	1.3

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

The mobility of Ukrainians to EU countries has increased slightly over the past year: from 12% in October 2017 to almost 17% in August 2018. During the last 2 years, inhabitants of the western part of the country have often travelled to the EU (34%), while inhabitants of the central (12%), southern (10%) and eastern (8%) part of Ukraine have travelled to the EU far less frequently.

Table 9. Have you travelled to EU countries during the last two years? [in %]

	October 2017	August 2018
Yes	11.8	16.6
No	87.8	82.6
It's hard to say	0.4	0.8

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

A readiness to travel to EU countries in the near future has also increased. In October 2017, 19% of respondents declared their intention to go to the EU over the next year, while in August 2018 this was 24% of respondents. As in the case of mobility, more willing to travel to the EU are inhabitants of the west of Ukraine (39%) and to some extent of its central part (24%), less willingness to travel is shown by people from the south (17%) and east (11%) of the country.

Table 10. Do you intend to travel to EU countries next year? [in %]

	2017	2018
Yes	19.1	24.4
No	67.8	62.8
It's hard to say	13.1	12.8

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

Tourism is the main purpose of travel to the EU (61%, compared to only 49% of respondents intending to travel to the EU for this purpose in October 2017). Many Ukrainian citizens currently travel to the EU for employment (27%), for business purposes (24%), and there are also a lot of people visiting relatives (20%).

In the "Rating" Sociological Group's 2017 survey, 17% of respondents indicated that relatives had been employed abroad during the previous 6 months, and 11% – that their

families included permanent employees abroad. At the same time, 70% of respondents had not worked abroad during this period, and 2% did not answer this question. The highest percentage of people whose relatives have experience in working outside their home country is noted among the inhabitants of the western region (especially in Zakarpattia). The presence of family members working abroad was mentioned relatively more often by rural residents and people with higher incomes. 65% of respondents indicated that they did not want to change their country of residence. At the same time, 27% of people indicated that they were planning to emigrate. Of all those who wanted to leave, half were people under the age of 35. Most of those who expressed their willingness to leave Ukraine were noted among the residents of northern regions of the country (Zhytomyr Oblast, Sumy Oblast, Kyiv) and of its western regions (Zakarpattia, Ternopil and Chernivtsi Oblast). 50% of respondents described Ukraine as the preferred country for their children, one fourth would choose European countries for their children, 7% – the USA, 3% – other countries, and only 2% would choose Russia. 13% were not able to answer this question.

Table II. If you are travelling to EU countries, for what reason are you travelling?
[several answers possible, in %]

	November 2015	October 2017	August 2018
Leisure (tourism)	50.9	49.4	60.8
Business travel	11.2	17.8	24.1
Visiting relatives	12.7	10.7	19.6
Medical treatment	7.3	0.4	5.6
Training, traineeship	7.1	2.7	7.8
Employment abroad	24.1	16.8	26.6
Other	2.3	0.4	0.5
It's hard to say	21.4	16.0	2.7

Source: *Yevropeis'ka integratsiia u vimiri gromads'koi dumki*, 2018, <https://dif.org.ua/article/evropeyska-integratsiya-u-vimiri-gromadskoi-dumki> (online access: 12.1.2019)

Conclusions

The geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians have evolved very much during the recent years, especially under the influence of the events of the Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression in Donbass and Crimea. For quite a long time, the general view of the

two main political and cultural orientations in Ukraine dominated: the pro-European or pro-Western one and the pro-Russian one, which was most often perceived as anti-Western. This division has definitely simplified a more complex reality. We can, however, conclude that after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014 the pro-European discourse has become dominant and now the vast majority of the population has pro-European aspirations.

The topic of European integration is strongly related to the mechanisms of developing the Ukrainian national identity. The issue of identity is one of the most visible divisions in Ukrainian society and is a constant source of conflicts that affect the orientation of citizens in foreign policy. As noted in previous studies,²² in spite of some regional determinants of political attitudes, the main dividing lines in Ukrainian society are based not so much on regional differences, but mainly on generational, social and, above all, value differences. One can rather argue that there is a rivalry between the “Soviet mentality” and values that include typical Soviet and now Russian narratives in terms of history, identity, geopolitical orientation and “Ukrainian mentality” – with all the differences and contradictions.

The situation after the Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression became much more complicated.²³ War and armed conflict have always played an important role in redefining national identities because they require national unity and mobilisation, but at the same time they deepen the division in society and focus on the image of the enemy and notions of “others.” A negative image of Russia plays a key role in creating a Ukrainian national identity for certain part of society, serving as a unifying threat. For Ukrainian nationalists, Russia as the former imperial centre has become the primary source of “negative identity.” Since the image of Russia is different in different regions of Ukraine, it has been effectively used by various political forces to manipulate mass consciousness, especially during and after the Revolution of Dignity.

An analysis of public opinion polls shows that Ukrainians mostly have a positive attitude towards the EU and even idealise Europe. However, the low level of knowledge and awareness about EU institutions, EU rules and problems related to the process of European integration is a challenge. At the same time, Ukraine is uncertain of its future in Europe. The causes of uncertainty include both external factors – the influence of Russia and the weakness of the European Union, as well as internal factors – historically shaped political and cultural differences within Ukrainian society.

22 O. Polegkyi, *Identities building in post-communist Ukraine: post-imperial vs. post-colonial discourses*, “CFE Conference Papers” 2015, No. 7, pp. 169–191.

23 G. Pop-Eleches, G.B. Robertson, *Identity and political preferences in Ukraine – before and after the Euromaidan*, “Post-Soviet Affairs” 2018, No. 34, pp. 107–118.

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Problem integracji europejskiej i stosunków z Unią Europejską w dyskursie publicznym na Ukrainie po rewolucji godności

Europa zajmuje szczególne miejsce w wyobraźni zwykłych Ukraińców oraz odgrywa ważną rolę we współczesnym dyskursie politycznym na Ukrainie. W niniejszym artykule omówię zmiany i specyfikę dyskursu na temat Europy oraz integracji europejskiej na Ukrainie po rewolucji godności (2013–2014) na podstawie badań opinii publicznej ukraińskiego społeczeństwa. Celem artykułu nie jest całościowa analiza problematyki europejskiej w dyskursie publicznym na Ukrainie, lecz pokazanie stanu obecnego i zmian, które zaszły po 2014 r.

Słowa kluczowe: integracja europejska, opinia publiczna, rewolucja godności, Ukraina