**Strategy for the Development of Judicial Education in Ukraine**

**for 2021-2025**

**General provisions**

The Strategy for the Development of Judicial Education in Ukraine for 2021–2025 (hereinafter – the Strategy) defines the purpose, strategic directions, and main tasks to guide the activities of the National School of Judges of Ukraine.

The development of the Strategy is due to the need to adapt to the changes taking place in the modern globalized world, and is aimed at improving the quality and competitiveness of education under new socio-cultural conditions.

The national strategy outlines the main ways of implementation the conceptual ideas and views on the development of education as defined in the Concept of National Standards for Judicial Education.

**The current state of development of judicial education**

In Ukraine, legal regulation of the functioning of the judicial education system is ensured, as well as the right of a judge to improve their professional level and to undergo appropriate training (and the duty of the judge to systematically develop professional skills, to maintain their qualifications at the proper level, necessary to exercise the authority.

The National School of Judges of Ukraine, as the only state institution with a special status within the justice system responsible for training highly qualified personnel for the judiciary and conducting research activities, consistently implements the main tasks defined in Article 105 of the Law of Ukraine "On the Judiciary and the Status of Judges" and, for this purpose, carries out the following activities:

1. **special training for candidates for the position of judge;**
2. **training of judges, including those appointed to administrative positions in courts;**
3. **periodic training of judges to improve their qualifications;**
4. **conducting training courses, as determined by the qualification or disciplinary body, for the professional development of judges who have been temporarily suspended from administering justice;**
5. **training of court staff and enhancement of their qualifications;**
6. **conducting scientific research on improving the judicial system, the status of judges, and the administration of justice;**
7. **studying international experience in the organization and functioning of courts;**
8. **providing scientific and methodological support for the activities of courts, the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine, and the High Council of Justice.**

**Since its establishment and the beginning of its operations, judicial education has undergone a process of profound modernization.**

The Concept of National Standards for Judicial Education, developed in 2014 and implemented over six years, which established the main requirements for the content and organization of training activities for judges and candidates for the position of judge at the National School of Judges of Ukraine (NSJU), along with the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of the National School of Judges of Ukraine for 2016–2020, contributed to achieving the set goals and objectives regarding the professional development of judges and the institutional development of the institution.

The training of judges and candidates for the position of judge is carried out according to unified requirements, involving judges from all instances and jurisdictions. It is systematic, comprehensive, and practically oriented, based on innovative methodological approaches considering three dimensions — knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values.

The training process is aimed at ensuring continuity in learning, maximum consideration of the educational needs and aspirations of the judicial corps, and the introduction of educational innovations. In recent years, the catalogue of trainings for judges has been significantly expanded, and their topics are constantly updated.

The training of highly qualified judicial personnel is aimed at ensuring the rule of law in the administration of justice, maintaining consistency in judicial practice, and aligning with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

In December 2019, a high-level international regional conference developed and adopted the Kyiv Recommendations on the Content and Methodology of Judicial Education concerning the application of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and the execution of its judgments.

In 2017–2018, the National School of Judges of Ukraine conducted special training (initial judicial training) for 665 candidates for the position of judge. The training of future judges was carried out according to an innovative curriculum developed with consideration of the best international practices. Its goal was to develop practical skills and abilities in the application of the law and the conduct of court hearings, as well as to strengthen the candidates' theoretical knowledge in a practical context.

The training of future judges was conducted in the format of trainings using interactive learning methods and was combined with internships in courts and visits to prosecution offices, pre-trial investigation bodies, and bar associations.

For the first time, the system of special training introduced a mentorship (coaching) program. Each future judge was assigned an individual mentor judge (coach) who shared professional experience and practical "insider" knowledge of the judiciary, helped develop practical judicial skills, and planned, organized, and supervised the internship process.

The educational doctrine of the National School of Judges of Ukraine also included two orientation training courses for the winners of the competition for vacant positions at the Supreme Court in 2017 and 2019. These courses were aimed at providing knowledge and developing the skills necessary for the proper performance of duties by judges of the cassation instance. The goal was to help judges understand the fundamentally new role of a judge of the highest judicial body and cassation court as introduced by the judicial reform.

In 2019, an orientation training course was also held for newly appointed judges of the High Anti-Corruption Court. The course is directed to strengthen the competence of judges in matters of combating corruption, laws, procedures and best international practices. It also focused on developing skills for managing complex cases, collegial work, and enhancing the ability to withstand political and other forms of pressure.

Between 2016 and 2020, the dynamics of training of court staff significantly increased. This growth resulted from a higher frequency of training events and the introduction of new and relevant topics such as human resource management, communication, and the functioning of the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System.

Distance learning formats in judicial education have seen significant development. In addition to face-to-face trainings, the educational process now includes the use distance learning platforms featuring a catalogue of online courses.

New alternative learning formats have been developed and implemented in the educational process for judges and candidates for the position of judge, including interactive lectures, workshops, educational videos, videolectures, videoconferences, and webinars.

To strengthen the teaching capacity of the National School of Judges of Ukraine (NSJU), a team of judicial trainers for face-to-face and distance training courses has been formed, and the quality of training has been improved. A reserve of trainers is also being prepared.

To actively support the process of judicial qualification evaluation and the conduct of competitions for filling vacant judicial positions, a structural unit—the “Testological Center”—has been established and institutionalized. The Center has prepared over 35,000 test questions for anonymous written testing and 100 practical tasks.

At the same time, current realities, the development of legislation and national judicial practice, the adaptation of best European standards, as well as the educational demands and needs of the judiciary, necessitate the further improvement of judicial education.

Currently, a key task is to expand the range of topics and the variety of formats of educational products, ensuring greater flexibility and dynamism in their application. It is also essential to develop skills in distance and online training, improve training-based and alternative forms and methods of judicial education — particularly with regard to judges’ right to choose training based on their individual needs. These efforts should build upon existing experience and take into account current trends and rates of development of educational innovations, globalization processes and development of the information society.

**Main problems and challenges**

The development of the judicial education system under current conditions requires a critical reassessment of achievements and a focused efforts and resources to on solving the most pressing problems. Among the most relevant challenges are:

* incomplete implementation of judicial reform;
* staffing shortages in the courts of first and appellate instances, as a result- excessive workload for current judges;
* low public trust in the judiciary;
* insufficient level of legal culture;
* problems related to judicial independence and impartiality;
* excessive formalization of procedural legislation;
* problems of access to justice and enforcement of court decisions;
* slow implementation of informatization in the judicial system.

**Purpose, strategic directions/goals and main tasks of the Strategy**

The purpose of the Strategy is to improve the standards and quality of judicial education in accordance with the requirements of innovative sustainable development of society and to ensure the professional and personal development of judges taking into account individual needs.

High-quality judicial education is a necessary condition for the administration of justice based on the rule of law, ensuring everyone's right to a fair trial, guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, and international treaties, the binding consent of which has been granted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

Modern judicial education is a guarantee of the democratic development of society and the rule of law, the restoration of the highly significant role of the court.

The modernization and development of judicial education must acquire a proactive, continuous nature, flexibly respond to the processes taking place in Ukraine and the world.

The strategy for the development of judicial education must adequately respond to modern social challenges, as well as integration and globalization processes, ensure proper training of judges to maintain and improve their qualifications (knowledge, skills and abilities) depending on the judges' work experience, the level and specialization of the court, and also taking into account their individual needs.

The strategic directions for the development of judicial education should be:

* institutional development of the National School of Judges of Ukraine;
* development of National Standards of Judicial Education;
* reforming initial judicial education (special training of candidates for the position of judge);
* using the latest forms and methods of training in judicial education;
* introducing a mentoring institute for newly appointed judges;
* developing a comprehensive training program for employees of the Judicial Security Service (JSS).

**Main directions of implementation of the Strategy**

1. **Institutional development of the National School of Judges of Ukraine**

Comprehensive strengthening of the potential of the National School of Judges of Ukraine involves:

* studying and implementing the experience of judicial schools of the EU and North America in training judges and candidates for the position of judge;
* implementing international legal standards for training judges;
* further developing the scientific and methodological component in judicial education;
* reformatting the educational doctrine to meet the individual needs of judges;
* ensuring the creation of conditions for the development of modern teaching aids (scientific and methodological, electronic, technical, information and communication, etc.), the electronicization of the educational process;
* deepening international cooperation, in particular regarding the implementation of the best foreign experience of taking into account a comprehensive integrative approach in training courses for judges and candidates for the position of judge.

1. **Development of National Standards of Judicial Education**

Improvement of National Standards of Judicial Education provides for:

* constant updating of the content of judicial education based on a competency-based approach depending on the experience of judges, the level and specialization of the court, as well as taking into account their individual needs;
* taking into account in the development and teaching of training courses three dimensions (knowledge, abilities and skills, values and attitudes), in particular, increasing the weight of the value component and taking into account the social context of the administration of justice;
* ensuring the innovation of judicial education;
* implementation of systems for monitoring the quality of judicial education and improving the system of regular assessment of judges based on the results of training;
* strengthening the scientific and methodological support of the educational process and developing the psychological component in the training of judges and candidates for the position of judges;
* improving the system of training, retraining and ongoing training of judicial trainers.

1. **Reforming initial judicial education (special training of candidates for the position of judge)**

Reforming initial judicial education (special training of candidates for the position of judge) includes:

* Updating the Special Training Program for judicial candidates;
* Improving the legal and regulatory framework for the special training of judicial candidates;
* Expanding internship opportunities for judicial candidates in partner institutions;
* Implementing language learning modules (English, French, German) into judicial education, as well as renewing and deepening relevant language skills;
* Expanding the tools and formats of special training by incorporating best international practices.

**4. Use of innovative forms and methods of training**

The use of innovative forms and methods of training includes:

* Expanding the variety of training topics, including the introduction of interdisciplinary and interagency training practices (for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, assistants, etc.);
* Introducing new training formats;
* Developing distance (online) training;
* Promoting and more widely using real-time (online) training activities, including the implementation of blended learning (a combination of in-person and distance formats);
* Creating an online catalog of available training courses and enabling participants to choose from them;
* Developing standardized requirements and methodological recommendations for conducting online training and seminars;
* Designing individual modular training programs based on specific needs;
* Using new forms of training, such as individual or group meetings with victims after a certain period of time, participation in resocialization programs, and joint projects and programs with justice-friendly institutions;
* Developing training courses based on a comprehensive, integrative approach that recognizes the traumatic and other impacts of violence on victims, offenders, families, involved individuals and institutions, as well as the community.

**5. Introduction of the mentoring institute for newly appointed judges**

The introduction of a mentorship institute for newly appointed judges includes:

* Legislatively regulating the mentorship mechanism, including the content, methodology, and organization of mentorship within the courts;
* Developing methodological recommendations for the selection of judge-mentors;
* Training judge-mentors at the National School of Judges of Ukraine, including the development of relevant methodological and training materials;
* Optimizing the workload of judge-mentors.

**6. Development of a comprehensive training program for Court Security Service (CSS) Personnel**

The development of a comprehensive training program for Court Security Service (CSS) personnel includes:

* Identifying the training needs of CSS personnel;
* Introducing local regulations on the content and organization of CSS personnel training;
* Developing training courses for CSS personnel;
* Preparing trainers (instructors) for CSS personnel.