

Ukraine on the path to integrated spatial planning: Slow progress hampered by Russia's full-scale invasion

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How to cite:

Lozynskyy, R., Pantyley, V. Slyvka, R., & Zakutynska, I. (2026). Ukraine on the path to integrated spatial planning: Slow progress hampered by Russia's full-scale invasion. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, 73(73): 133-148.
<http://doi.org/10.12775/bgss-2026-0030>

Abstract. This article examines the introduction and specific practices of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine in the context of its European integration course, administrative-territorial reform, and martial law imposed as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion. It outlines the theoretical foundations of an integrated approach to spatial development, which ensures the holistic development of territories by combining various economic sectors, social issues, and environmental protection. It analyzes the current spatial planning system in Ukraine, its institutional features, and key challenges. Four periods of integrated spatial planning implementation are identified: the pre-2014 period within the post-Soviet spatial planning model; 2014–2020, characterized by European integration and decentralization; 2020–2022, when the formalization of integrated spatial planning tools began; and the post-February 24, 2022 period, defined by the challenges of the full-scale war. Finally, the article characterizes the current tools of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine and discusses its future in the context of post-war national reconstruction.

Article details:

Received: 23 March 2026
Revised: 11 September 2026
Accepted: 29 September 2026

Key words:

geography, planning & development, integrated planning, Ukraine, Russian invasion, comprehensive spatial development plan, concept of integrated spatial development

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, spatial planning has become a key tool for the development of European countries, facilitating the coordination of economic, social, and environmental priorities with rational land use, thereby fostering sustainable development. For Ukraine, which has committed to a path toward European integration, transitioning from a fragmented approach to an integrated spatial planning system that meets European Union (EU) standards is of paramount importance. In this context, recent reforms in the state's spatial planning system since the early 2020s—particularly the introduction of comprehensive spatial development plans and concepts for the integrated development of local communities based on spatial analysis, public participation, and forecasting—have the potential to lay the foundation for Ukraine's successful integration into the European space.

However, the development of an integrated spatial planning model in Ukraine has been slow from the outset. Institutional weaknesses, a shortage of qualified personnel, imperfect legislation, and inadequate coordination across administrative levels have hampered the implementation of modern planning approaches. While several laws and regulations in the field of spatial planning have laid the groundwork for positive change, their practical execution has been constrained by financial limitations and resistance to changing established practices. Consequently, early integrated planning tools in selected cities and communities, developed with the support of European organizations during the 2010s, proved to be insufficiently effective.

The situation became significantly more complex following the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The hostilities resulted in extensive infrastructure destruction, mass population displacement, shifting spatial priorities, and an urgent need to rebuild entire regions. Under these conditions, pre-war plans to implement integrated spatial planning tools were temporarily suspended. It was not until 2025 that communities resumed their efforts to implement them. The experience of pioneering communities demonstrates that integrated planning in Ukraine has become a vital mechanism for post-war reconstruction and national adaptation to unprecedented challenges. It synthesizes safety, recovery, and sustainable development objectives, ensures the efficient allocation of resources, and aligns national practices with European standards.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the process of introducing integrated spatial planning in Ukraine within the context of European integration,

administrative-territorial reform, and the ongoing Russian full-scale invasion. To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following tasks: 1) analyzing the historical and ongoing stages of integrated planning implementation; 2) describing modern spatial planning tools; and 3) identifying the key limitations, challenges, and prospects for integrated spatial planning in Ukraine under martial law and during the post-war recovery phase.

2. Theoretical and methodological basics

According to the contemporary literature, integrated spatial development refers to inclusive spatial planning that integrates various sectors (such as land use, transport, infrastructure, environment, and socio-economic policy) and levels of administration to pursue a coherent, long-term, and multidimensional spatial policy. Key elements of integrated development include cross-sectoral coordination, public participation, multi-level planning, and the consideration of functional areas (e.g., city-regions) (Markowski & Drzazga, 2023).

Integrated spatial planning encompasses three critical dimensions: vertical, horizontal, and territorial integration. Vertical integration involves cooperation among different tiers of government, including local, regional, national, and international authorities. Horizontal integration focuses on collaboration between diverse policy sectors and departments within a single municipality. Territorial integration involves regional cooperation and partnerships between neighboring municipalities (Institute, 2026).

The concept of integrated spatial development emerged at the intersection of urban studies, spatial planning, geography, and public policy. It integrates diverse development sectors—such as the economy, transportation, ecology, and social infrastructure—into a unified coordinate system based on a spatial approach. In the European tradition, spatial planning is viewed not merely as a technical tool for land and building management, but as a crucial mechanism for reconciling public and private interests, balancing economic growth with environmental conservation, and bridging the gap between core and peripheral areas.

The theoretical foundation of integrated planning lies in the principles of sustainable development and polycentricity, as articulated in key European Union documents, notably the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999) and subsequent ESPON studies. These documents emphasize the importance of multi-level governance, which

requires coordination among supranational, national, regional, and local institutions. Consequently, spatial planning has become an indispensable tool for shaping state-level territorial development policy.

3. Literature review

The theoretical foundations of integrated spatial development are thoroughly explored in the work of Kuciński et al. (2002), which examines the context and significance of integrating spatial development within the Polish urban planning system. In the monograph Nowak et al. (2022), Nowak, Śleszyński, and Legutko-Kobus discuss the chronic challenges associated with the Polish planning system, such as legal imperfections, regulatory inconsistencies, and difficulties in protecting spatial order.

Several prominent trends and research topics can be distinguished in the contemporary literature on integrated development and spatial planning:

- **Integration of sectoral policies:** Extensive research analyzes how to combine spatial planning with transport, energy, and environmental policies (e.g., concepts linking spatial planning with energy planning for the energy transition) (Stoeglehner, 2020). These studies indicate a pressing need to create tools that combine spatial data with investment decisions in the energy sector.

- **Planning of functional areas and metropolises:** Scholarly work in this area focuses on analyzing the dynamics of urban and metropolitan development and developing tools to shape them effectively (Porczek & Werner, 2025).

- **Implementation and effectiveness of spatial policies:** A growing body of literature evaluates not only theoretical concepts but also the practical effectiveness of spatial policies and their corresponding assessment tools (Li et al., 2022).

Systematic literature reviews show that the implementation of integrated spatial planning has become a central focus: developing a sound concept is insufficient; the capacity for its execution, monitoring, and evaluation is what ultimately determines success. Studies identify four main dimensions of evaluation:

- **Policy reviews and case studies:** Descriptions and evaluations of planning tools at various administrative levels (national, regional, local);

- **Spatial methods, GIS, and modeling:** Modeling development scenarios, analyzing spatial accessibility, and identifying potential development zones (Zwirowicz-Rutkowska & Michalik, 2016);

- **Integrated local planning:** Studies at the level of Poland and other European nations discuss methods of local development management through integrated urban and rural development plans (Śleszyński et al., 2012; Nowak & Blashke, 2020; Ćwiklińska-Ziomek, 2022; Lechowska, 2022; Nowak et al., 2022; Markowski & Drzazga, 2023).

- **Local strategies and public participation:** Research on local planning emphasizes the indispensable role of stakeholders and participatory mechanisms in developing acceptable and feasible development plans.

Poland possesses a highly developed, multi-level planning system (such as the National Spatial Development Concept / NSDC 2030, which was in force until 2020, alongside local planning tools). However, implementing an integrated approach faces significant organizational and institutional barriers, particularly regarding inter-level coordination, financing, and administrative competencies. The National Spatial Development Concept 2030 (KPZK, 2030) was repealed in 2020 with the entry into force of the Act on Spatial Planning and Development. The repeal aimed to adapt the Polish planning system to changing socio-economic and spatial conditions. Currently, the only nationwide strategic document remaining in force is the Strategy for Responsible Development (SOR). Although a new integrated document—the 2050 National Development Concept—was planned to replace KPZK 2030, it has not yet been finalized.

Despite having a well-developed and formal spatial planning system backed by robust legislation and multi-level planning documents, Poland's planning practice reveals several persistent issues. These include low coverage of local plans in many municipalities, document fragmentation, a lack of coordination across administrative levels, and limited financial and human resources to execute integrated planning processes. In a specialized case study of Łódź, the OECD highlighted both promising practices and the urgent need for institutional reforms to improve the coherence of land-use policies. National legal analyses and academic publications also point to major legislative reforms scheduled to take effect by the end of 2025, which are expected to significantly transform spatial planning tools and processes in Poland.

One of the most prominent themes in contemporary literature is the integration of spatial and energy planning. Locating renewable energy installations, EV charging infrastructure, planning heating networks, and developing spatial strategies to reduce emissions require robust integration between energy data and planning tools (Pezzagno et al., 2024). The absence of such integration delays energy investments and heightens

the risk of local conflicts. Recent studies highlight the rapid development of spatial energy planning concepts and emphasize the need for adaptive, cross-sectoral frameworks (Osorio-Aravena et al., 2020).

Comparative analyses of Poland's spatial planning system with other European countries—specifically Ukraine and Belarus—have been conducted by Nowak (2023) and Nowak et al. (2021, 2023a). The monograph *Spatial Planning Systems in Central and Eastern European Countries* provides a comprehensive comparative review of planning systems in Poland, Romania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and other regional nations, focusing on integration across administrative levels and planning sectors (Nowak et al., 2023b). Furthermore, Nowak et al. (2022) examined the role of local spatial plans in CEE countries, emphasizing their institutional significance and highlighting regional differences in planning systems. Polish literature consistently underscores the necessity of adapting integrated planning tools to local conditions, stressing the role of local stakeholders, participatory mechanisms, and linkages to local development policies (Tölle, 2014; Nowak et al., 2021).

A review of the literature reveals several critical research gaps:

- **The implementation gap:** While numerous theoretical concepts of integrated planning exist, there is a lack of empirical research documenting successful implementation models and the scalability of these solutions.

- **The need for integrated spatial-energy-transport tools:** Few tools successfully integrate spatial data with energy and transport planning, which is vital for the energy transition and climate resilience.

- **Limited international comparative studies:** There is a clear need for broader comparative studies contrasting Central and Eastern European experiences with OECD practices in land management and multi-level coordination.

- **Lack of empirical case studies:** More empirical studies are required to document the specific pathways and practical challenges of implementing integrated plans in cities and regions.

- **The need for interdisciplinary research:** Research combining GIS, scenario modeling, policy analysis, and public participation remains underdeveloped.

- **Evaluating impact on sustainability:** Studies assessing how the integration of spatial, energy, and transport planning impacts climate and sustainable development goals remain sparse.

Unlike the Polish and broader European scientific traditions—where integrated spatial development is treated as an institutionalized, multi-level policy with established implementation and evaluation

mechanisms—Ukrainian scientific discourse is still in its conceptual and applied infancy. Ukrainian researchers primarily focus on the fragmentation of planning and strategic documents, weak coordination between spatial, socio-economic, and land-use decisions, and the limited institutional capacity of local self-government bodies. For instance, Lysiak (2021) highlights the lack of systematic integration among the structural elements of local development documents, which leads to lost economic potential and low adaptability of urban systems. Similar challenges are identified in studies evaluating Ukraine's decentralization reform, which point to a persistent gap between the declared goals of integrated development and actual local management practices (Siryk et al., 2021). Consequently, Ukrainian research largely focuses on adapting European approaches to the unique conditions of post-socialist transformation and reformed territorial governance.

Simultaneously, contemporary Ukrainian literature is gradually developing an applied and methodological dimension of integrated community development, enriching the European discourse with analyses of crisis and conflict contexts. Oleksiuk et al. (2021) justify the formation of integrated development concepts based on structural modeling of communities' endogenous potential, accounting for natural resources, industrial infrastructure, and socio-cultural factors. In terms of practical prerequisites, Lysiak, Gabrel, and Khromyak (2022) emphasize that land resource inventories, digital cartographic bases, and geoinformation technologies (GIS) are essential for successful spatial integration. Under the conditions of full-scale war, Ukrainian scholars focus on the escalation of institutional, demographic, economic, environmental, and security risks (Dub, 2023), viewing the concept of integrated development as a fundamental management tool to prevent strategic documents from becoming purely declarative (Keretsman, 2023).

4. Results

4.1. The current spatial planning system in Ukraine

The spatial planning system in Ukraine was historically shaped by its Soviet urban planning legacy, which defined planning as a highly centralized and predominantly technocratic process. General plans (master plans) for settlements served as the primary tool for territorial management, taking the form of rigid development schemes designed to ensure industrial output and centralized administrative control over the spatial organization of society. Under this model, there

was virtually no mechanism for addressing community needs, implementing flexible strategies, or achieving cross-sectoral integration.

Following the declaration of independence in 1991, Ukraine was confronted with the critical task of reforming the Soviet urban planning framework to align with a market economy and democratic governance. In 2000, the Law of Ukraine 'On Planning and Development of Territories' (in force until 2011) was enacted, establishing a multi-level system of territorial planning documentation. This law defined the primary categories of urban planning documents, including general plans, detailed plans of territories, and regional/district planning schemes. However, a genuinely integrated approach to spatial development was virtually absent at this stage, although the legislation did include an article on the 'Comprehensive Development of Territories' (Law, 2000).

A subsequent milestone was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine 'On Regulation of Urban Development Activities' in 2011, which streamlined planning procedures and simplified the development of urban planning documentation (Law, 2011). Nevertheless, this legislation faced criticism for being overly oriented toward the interests of developers and failing to adequately integrate environmental, social, and regional dimensions. The absence of a mandatory link between urban planning documents and socio-economic development strategies left spatial planning highly fragmented. Since its adoption, the 2011 Law has undergone approximately 70 amendments; its contemporary version now incorporates provisions on integrated spatial planning and development tools introduced in the early 2020s.

Despite these legislative evolutions, the Ukrainian spatial planning system requires deeper structural changes. Some scholars argue that Ukraine needs a reform of 'complete renewal' (Lozynskyy et al., 2024). However, given the current geopolitical and socio-economic situation, such a total overhaul remains unlikely in the short term. Ongoing reforms are hampered by personnel shortages, severe financial constraints, slow adoption of digital technologies, and weak cross-sectoral coordination. Consequently, many planning documents remain largely declarative, and adopted innovations have only been partially implemented in practice.

4.2. Stages of integrated planning implementation

Ukraine initiated reforms to align its spatial planning system with international, particularly European, practices relatively late. Practical steps toward updating

spatial planning tools and improving the legislative framework began in the mid-2010s. This transition was heavily stimulated by the Association Agreement with the European Union, which catalyzed reforms in regional policy and territorial planning. Consequently, the discourse around the integrated spatial development of Ukraine and its subnational regions gained prominence. However, this momentum was subsequently slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and virtually halted following the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022.

The introduction and evolution of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine can be divided into four distinct stages (Table 1):

- Stage I (Until March 2014): Extending up to the signing of the political part of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU;
- Stage II (March 2014 – June 2020): Characterized by the execution and near-completion of Ukraine's administrative-territorial reform;
- Stage III (June 2020 – February 24, 2022): Extending from the formalization of local spatial planning tools to the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion;
- Stage IV (February 24, 2022 – Present): Defined by the conditions of martial law and the challenges of wartime and post-war reconstruction.

During *Stage I* (until March 2014), the concept of integrated spatial planning began to diffuse among planning professionals and within progressive municipalities that were adopting innovative governance practices. However, at the national level, there was a profound lack of strategic understanding regarding the implementation of integrated planning, which was compounded by political uncertainty regarding Ukraine's geopolitical trajectory—specifically, the choice between integration with the Russian Federation or association with the European Union. It was only after the Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent signing of the political part of the Association Agreement with the EU in March 2014 (and its economic part in June 2014) that the implementation of integrated spatial planning emerged as a key state priority (Association Agreement, 2014).

On an experimental basis during this first stage, Lviv became the first Ukrainian city to adopt an integrated development concept in 2011, focusing specifically on its central historic core. Developed jointly by the Lviv City Council, GIZ, and the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building, and Urban Development (BMVBS), the concept targeted the UNESCO-protected historic area of the city. The document integrated key thematic areas, including

Table 1. Stages of implementation of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine

Stage	Time Frame	Key Events and Facts
<i>Stage I</i>	Until March 2014 (signing of the political part of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union)	• The idea of integrated spatial planning spreads among spatial planning experts and in cities where innovative management and planning ideas are taking hold. • The 'Integrated Concept for the Development of the Central Part of Lviv' is developed in 2011 (in cooperation with GIZ and BMVBS).
<i>Stage II</i>	March 2014 – June 2020 (from the signing of the political part of the Association Agreement to the completion of the administrative-territorial reform)	• Signing of the Memorandum of Intent on Cooperation between Cities in Ukraine and Germany in the Spirit of the Leipzig Charter 'European Cities on the Path to Sustainable Development' (2016). • Implementation of the project 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine'. • Concepts for integrated spatial development are developed for Zhytomyr, Poltava, Vinnytsia, and Chernivtsi (in cooperation with GIZ). • Concepts for the integrated spatial development of 30 amalgamated territorial communities are developed (Canactions School with the support of U-LEAD with Europe). • The project 'Integrated Development of Cities in Ukraine II' is launched.
<i>Stage III</i>	June 2020 – February 24, 2022 (from the local spatial planning reform to the beginning of the full-scale invasion)	• A comprehensive spatial development plan for the territorial community is introduced as a mandatory tool (June 2020). • The State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027 is approved, prioritizing integrated development (August 2020). • The 'Integrated Development Concept: Lviv 2030' (2021) is developed (in cooperation with GIZ). • Pilot projects for comprehensive plans are launched in the Pischyn and Rohan communities in the Kharkiv region (with the support of the USAID Agricultural and Rural Development Program). • The project 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine II' is extended.
<i>Stage IV</i>	February 24, 2022 – Present (under martial law and wartime/post-war reconstruction)	• Approval of the Procedure for Forming the Concept of Integrated Development of the Territorial Community (November 2022). • Approval in Kyiv of the 'Concept of Integrated Development of the Podilskyi District of the City until 2030' (November 2022, in cooperation with GIZ). • Comprehensive spatial development plans are developed: Medzhybizh community (October 2024); Rohan community (April 2025); Pischyn community (April 2025); Solonytsivska community (August 2025). • Concepts for the integrated development of the Drohobych, Stryi, and Truskavets communities are developed in 2025 (UN-Habitat project 'Towards inclusive and sustainable urban recovery in Ukraine'). • Ukraine joins the New Leipzig Charter on Urban Development at the Ukraine Recovery Conference (#URC2024 in Berlin). • The project 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine II' is extended.

Source: own elaboration

cultural heritage conservation, housing, public spaces, transport and technical infrastructure, tourism, local commerce, education, and social services (Concept-Lviv, 2011). The document was also illustrated with numerous schematic maps reflecting the current state and development prospects of urban space and its components, such as open and green spaces, children's and sports playgrounds, and cultural tourism sites (Figs. 1-2).

During **Stage II** (March 2014 – June 2020), Ukraine's European integration trajectory accelerated the introduction of integrated planning tools at the local level. However, this process was structurally complicated by the ongoing administrative-territorial reform. The outdated Soviet administrative structure remained in place, characterized by fragmented local councils that lacked the demographic and economic scale to address complex economic, social, and environmental issues. Furthermore, the legacy of Soviet over-centralization persisted, leaving the European principle of subsidiarity largely unimplemented. The administrative-territorial reform carried out between 2015 and 2020 fundamentally altered this structure by establishing consolidated territorial communities (hromadas), which roughly correspond to the Local Administrative Units (LAU) level within the EU.

A defining feature of this second stage was the close cooperation between Ukrainian municipalities and European development organizations. A pivotal milestone occurred on March 22, 2016, with the signing of the Memorandum of Intent on Cooperation between Cities of Ukraine and Germany in the Spirit of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (Charter, 2016). Subsequently, the German federal government commissioned the project 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine,' implemented by GIZ. This initiative aimed to enhance local living standards and support decentralization by applying integrated urban planning models in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Poltava, and Chernivtsi from 2016, and in Lviv from 2018 (Forum, 2018). These efforts culminated in the adoption of several municipal concepts, such as the 'Concept of Integrated Development of Zhytomyr until 2030' (2018), and similar 2030 concepts for Poltava (Fig. 3), Vinnytsia, and Chernivtsi (approved in 2018–2019).

Concurrently, in 2018–2019, the U-LEAD with Europe program, in partnership with the CANactions School, facilitated the creation of spatial development concepts for 30 newly consolidated territorial communities (Canactions, 2018) (Fig. 4). However, the practical implementation of these concepts was severely disrupted in 2020 by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of prolonged quarantine restrictions (Results, 2018).

During **Stage III** (June 2020 – February 24, 2022), a critical legislative shift occurred with the introduction of a new, mandatory spatial planning instrument at the local level: the comprehensive spatial development plan for the territory of a territorial community. This tool was legally formalized in June 2020 through the Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Land Use Planning' (Law, 2020). The development of the first comprehensive plans commenced shortly thereafter. Notably, the Pischyn and Rohan communities in the Kharkiv region participated in a pilot project supported by the USAID Agricultural and Rural Development Program (AGRO), presenting their initial findings on February 7, 2022. State projections indicated that approximately 600 territorial communities (representing 40% of the country's municipalities) were expected to develop these plans between 2022 and 2024 (Pilot Project, 2022). At the strategic level, the approval of the State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027 in August 2020 represented the first formal inclusion of integrated spatial development in national and regional planning policies (State Strategy, 2021). The strategy established 'ensuring the integrated development of territories' as a key operational goal. International cooperation also persisted during this period, marked by the launch of the 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine II' project (2019–2025) funded by Germany and Switzerland (Project, 2025). Under this framework, Lviv adopted its 'Integrated Development Concept: Lviv 2030' in 2021 (Concept – Lviv, 2021).

During **Stage IV** (February 24, 2022 – Present), Ukrainian territorial communities experienced an unprecedented and profound disruption of their spatial organization due to the full-scale Russian invasion. The massive destruction of urban areas, housing, and critical infrastructure fundamentally altered national spatial priorities. Spatial planning acquired an existential importance: the security of citizens, the speed of reconstruction, and the country's broader economic resilience became directly dependent on the quality of spatial governance. In this highly volatile environment, communities have had to adapt, balancing basic municipal services with urgent security and humanitarian interventions. Given that a substantial portion of Ukrainian territory fell under occupation, the statutory deadline for communities to develop mandatory comprehensive spatial plans was officially postponed to January 1, 2028, for non-frontline areas, and to three years post-war for frontline municipalities (Decentralization, 2025). Additionally, for national security reasons, public access to various urban planning databases and geodata remains restricted, particularly in areas hosting strategic industrial enterprises.

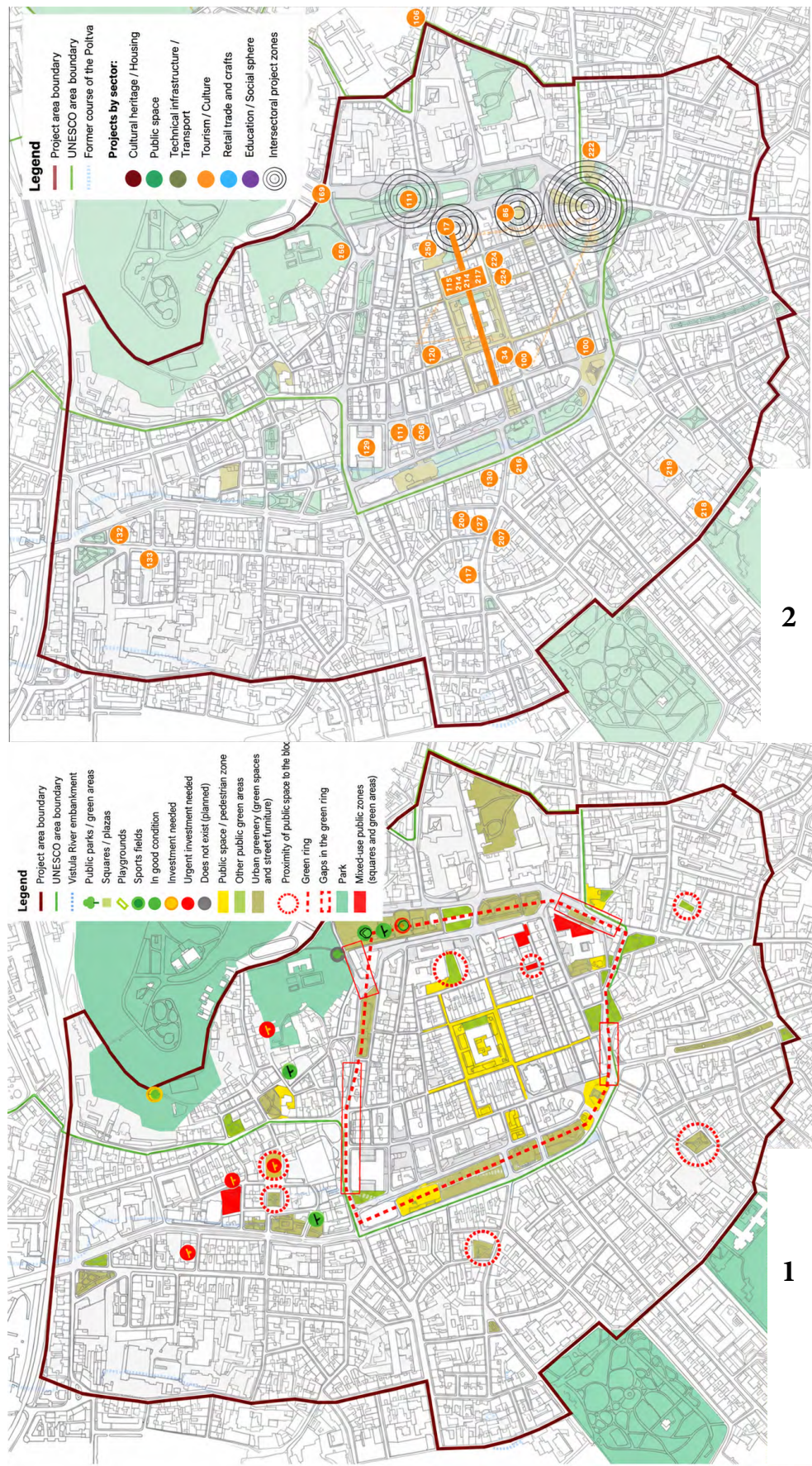


Fig. 1, Fig. 2. Examples of maps from the "Integrated Concept for the Development of the Central Part of Lviv" (2011). Left: "Open and green spaces, children's and sports grounds within the scope of the Concept"; right: "Projects in the fields of tourism and culture"
Source: based on Concept - Lviv, 2011

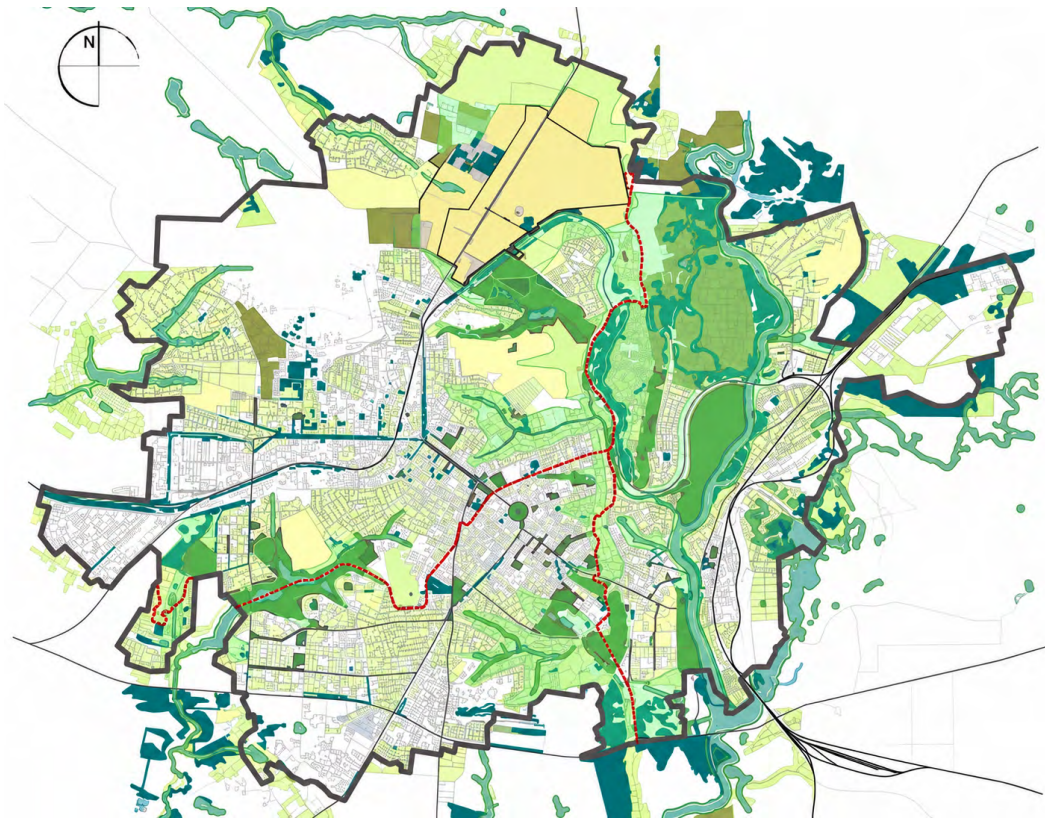


Fig. 3. Example of a map from the Concept for the Integrated Development of Poltava until 2030 (2018).
 Map of green areas and public spaces in Poltava
 Source: based on the Concept for the Integrated Development of Poltava until 2030 (2018)

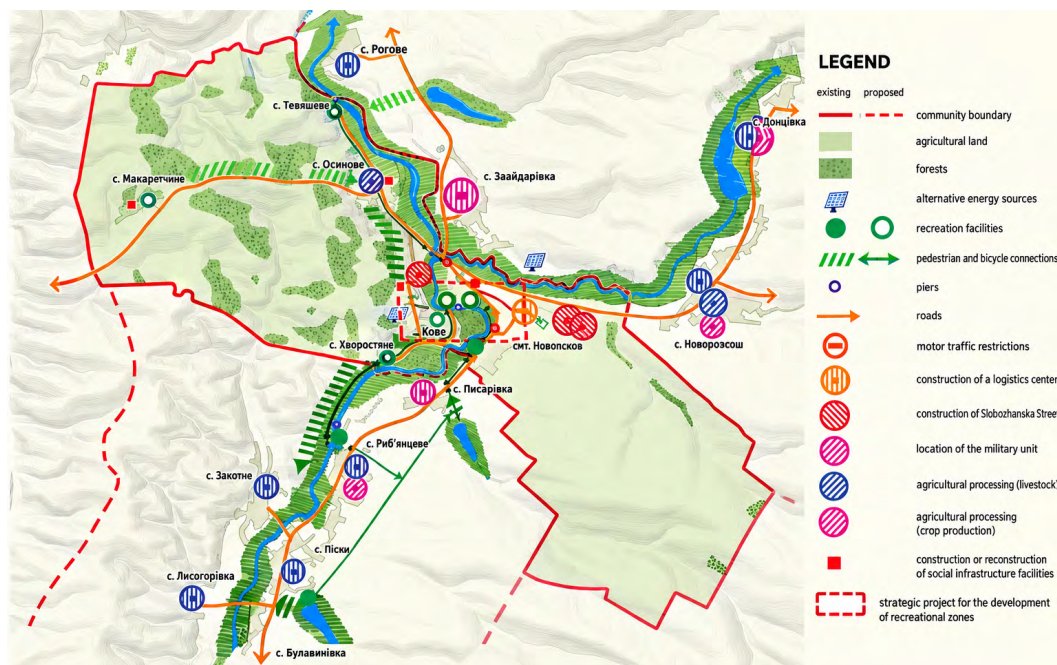


Fig. 4. Example of a map from the Concept of Integrated Development of the Novopokrov United Territorial Community. Scheme of integrated development of the Novopokrov community
 Source: based on Concept, 2018

Despite these formidable obstacles, active planning efforts resumed once Russian forces were repelled from northern and northeastern regions. In November 2022, the State approved the 'Procedure for Forming the Concept of Integrated Development of the Territory of a Territorial Community' (Procedure, 2022a). That same month, the Kyiv City Council approved the 'Concept of Integrated Development of the Podilskyi District until 2030'—marking the first implementation of such an integrated tool at the sub-municipal district level (Concept – Podilskyi District, 2022). To align planning with wartime realities, several new recovery instruments were introduced, including the Program for Comprehensive Restoration of the Region/Territory (Procedure, 2022b) and regional and municipal plans for recovery and development (Resolution, 2023). International collaboration also rebounded. In June 2024, during the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin, Ukraine formally joined the New Leipzig Charter on Urban Development (Recovery Conference, 2024). This was followed in October 2025 by the launch of the GIZ-implemented 'Integrated Urban Recovery in Ukraine' (JGURA) project, co-financed by Switzerland, which focuses on modernizing Ukrainian cities in compliance with EU sustainable standards (JGURA, 2025).

4.3. Integrated spatial planning tools

By the end of 2025, the Ukrainian legislative framework formalizes two primary integrated planning documents at the local level: (1) the comprehensive spatial development plan (a mandatory spatial planning and land-use tool), and (2) the concept of integrated development of a territorial community (a strategic planning document).

The *comprehensive spatial development plan for the territory of a territorial community* defines the spatial organization, functional land-use zoning, and primary directions for developing public services, transport networks, engineering infrastructure, civil protection, and environmental conservation networks. It serves as an instrument that combines urban planning documentation with land management and land-use documentation under national law (Law, 2011; Law, 2020). It aims to balance public, communal, and private interests by integrating the development of settlements with territories outside their formal administrative boundaries. The document includes detailed sections on functional zoning, transport mobility, landscape planning, and utility infrastructure (Procedure, 2021).

The process of developing comprehensive plans was resumed in 2024; however, as of the end of August 2025, only a few territorial communities in Ukraine

had approved comprehensive spatial development plans, including the Medzhybizh community (October 2024), and the Rohan (whose integrated landscape plan is mapped in Fig. 5), Pischyn, and Solonytsivska communities in the Kharkiv region (approved between April and August 2025) (Comprehensive Plan, 2025). Several dozen other territorial communities are currently developing their respective plans.

In *contrast, the concept of integrated development of a territorial community* is primarily a strategic planning instrument. It outlines long-term, multi-sectoral development priorities and serves as the primary conceptual foundation (input data) for developing subsequent spatial planning and land-use documents, such as the comprehensive plan (Law, 2011; Law, 2020). It acts as a planning 'bridge,' translating high-level community strategies into concrete spatial and land-use decisions, while deeply engaging citizens through participatory mechanisms (Melnichuk et al., 2022). The concept mandates a detailed multi-sectoral analysis, strategic goals, and implementation action plans. It may also incorporate specific sectoral plans, such as sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP), local climate resilience strategies, waste management plans, and energy efficiency programs (Procedure, 2021). As of late 2025, pilot concepts have been successfully developed for the Drohobych (illustrated by its spatial structure scheme in Fig. 6), Stryi, and Truskavets communities in the Lviv region under the UN-Habitat project 'Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Recovery in Ukraine,' funded by Germany (Concept – Drohobych, 2025). Concepts are currently being developed for dozens of other territorial communities.

4.4. Problems with the implementation of integrated spatial planning

Despite significant legislative progress, several major structural barriers hinder the effective implementation of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine:

- **Regulatory Imperfections and Fragmentation:** While several landmark laws have been enacted, they remain poorly harmonized. The lack of coordination between spatial planning, land-use, environmental, and budgetary legislation frequently leads to legal conflicts, complicating the integration of various planning tiers and slowing down the transition to modern, European-aligned approaches.
- **Institutional Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination:** Planning responsibilities are divided among central, regional, and municipal levels, but an effective, institutionalized system of

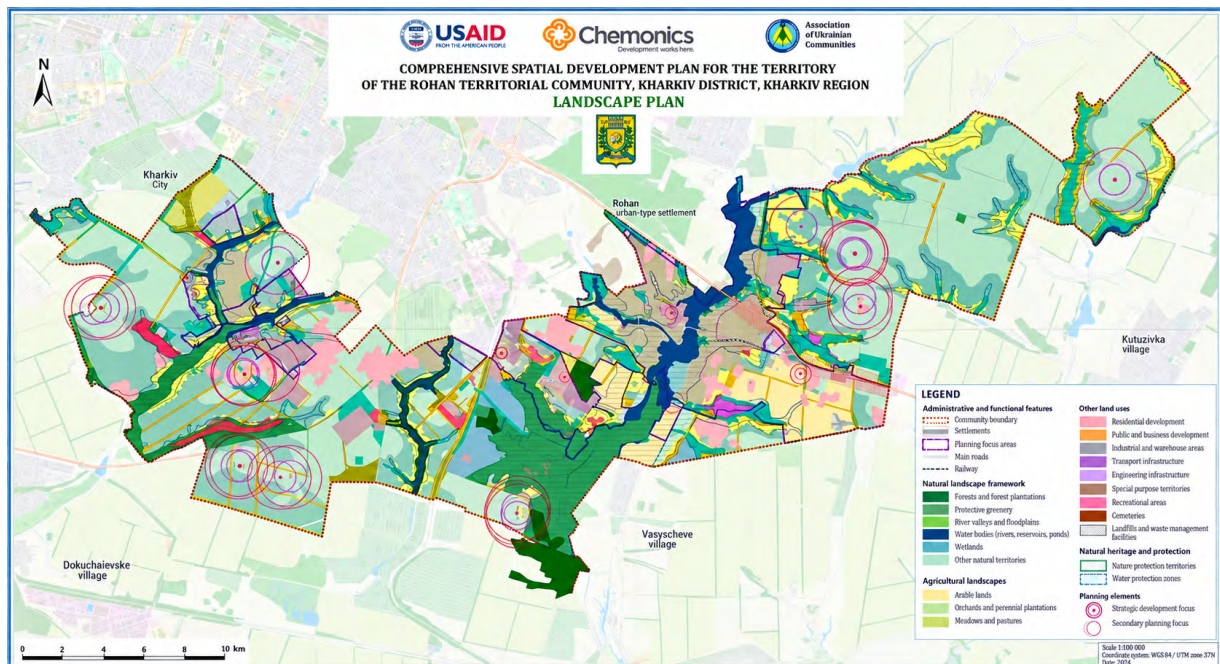


Fig. 5. Example of a map from the comprehensive spatial development plan for the Rohan settlement community in the Kharkiv district of the Kharkiv region. Landscape plan for the Rohan community
Source: based on Comprehensive Plan, 2025

vertical and horizontal coordination is lacking. As a result, various levels of government often operate in isolation from one another, leading to the duplication of functions or gaps in territorial governance. The absence of stable interregional institutions capable of coordinating development at the supra-local level only exacerbates the problem. While there are isolated successes—such as the adoption of the 'Strategy for the Development of the Lviv Agglomeration for the Period until 2027' by 18 municipal communities in late 2023—these efforts remain the exception (Strategy – Agglomeration, 2025). This Lviv strategy, focusing on municipal cohesion and regional mobility, assumed heightened urgency due to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to the Lviv region during the war (Lozynskyy et al., 2023).

- **Severe Deficit of Qualified Personnel:** Local authorities face a critical shortage of specialists skilled in modern planning methodologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), scenario modeling, and big data analytics. Although several leading Ukrainian universities (in Kyiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Lutsk, and Ivano-Frankivsk) have launched progressive spatial planning curricula under the 'Geography and Regional Studies' specialty, the formal professional scope of these graduates remains poorly defined at the national

level, creating a gap between academic qualifications and local needs (Lozynskyy & Zakutynska, 2025).

- **Acute Financial Constraints:** Developing comprehensive plans and integrated development concepts is highly capital-intensive, requiring extensive digital mapping, geodata collection, and participatory workshops. For most rural and economically depressed communities, these costs are prohibitive. This financial strain has been severely-exacerbated by the war. Municipalities face increased local expenditures, and a significant portion of local revenues has been redirected to national defense. By 2025, some communities in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions voluntarily allocated between 20% and 33% of their annual municipal budgets to national military and defense needs (Communities – Lviv, 2025; Communities – Ivano-Frankivsk, 2025), leaving very limited resources for local development initiatives.
- **The Declarative Nature of Planning Documents:** Many developed plans are treated as formalistic exercises, drafted primarily for regulatory compliance or to satisfy international grant requirements, with little connection to actual implementation or municipal monitoring. A striking example of this challenge occurred within the Lviv Agglomeration. Despite the 2023 adoption of the development strategy, a sharp conflict

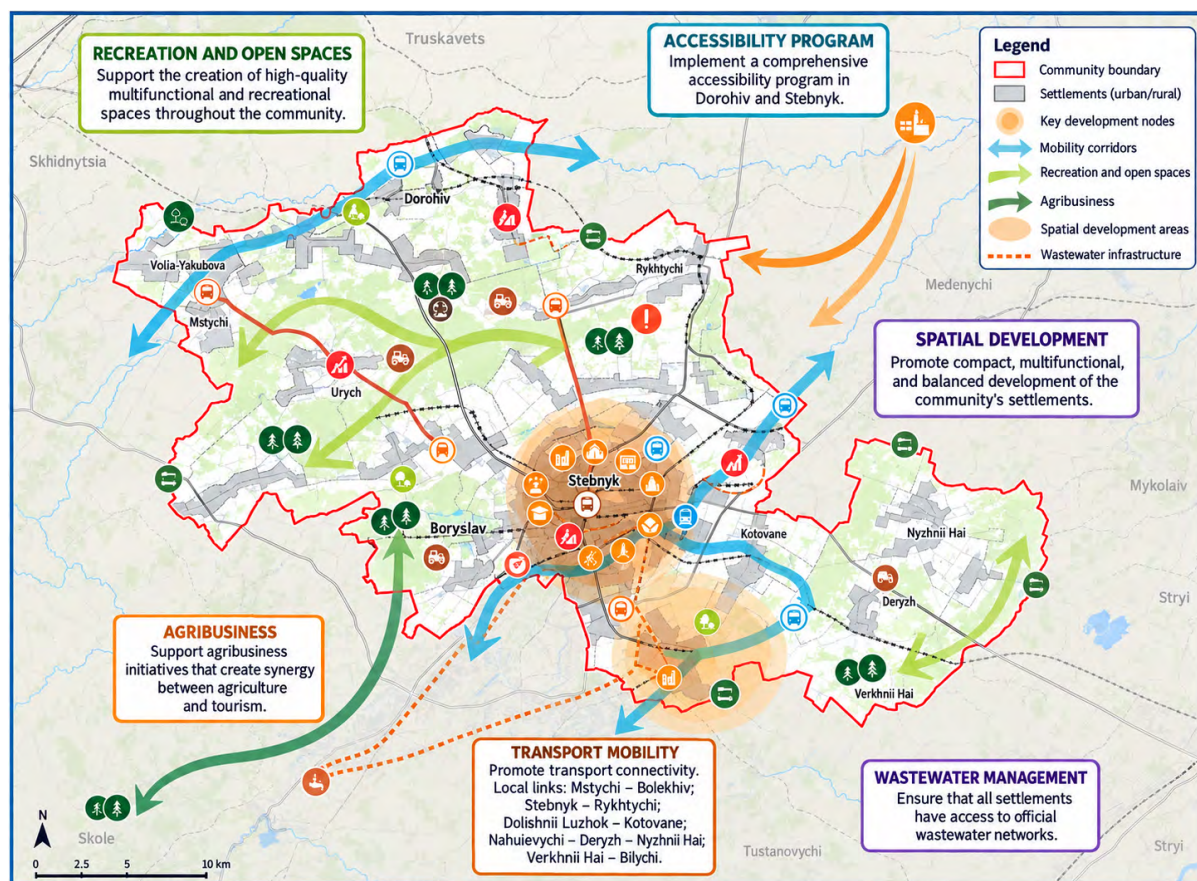


Fig. 6. Example of a map from Concepts for the integrated development of the Drohobych urban territorial community. Spatial plan for the integrated development of the Drohobych community
Source: based on Concept - Drohobych, 2025

erupted in 2025 between the Lviv City Council and the neighboring Sokilnyky Village community. Sokilnyky unilaterally approved a massive residential development project (847,500 m² to house 10,000–15,000 residents) directly adjacent to Lviv's administrative boundary and a strategic facility—the Lviv Danylo Halytskyi International Airport. This sparked severe disputes regarding infrastructure overload, traffic congestion, and airport flight safety, exposing the weakness of collaborative municipal planning mechanisms (LMR, 2025).

Consequently, without major reforms, integrated spatial planning risks losing its function as an effective tool for managing development, becoming a mere formality. This situation not only undermines local confidence in planning practices but also increases Ukraine's developmental lag behind European standards. Overcoming these barriers requires stronger political will, robust institutional reforms, and sustained strategic support from both the state and international development partners.

5. Conclusions

Modern integrated spatial planning represents a powerful strategic mechanism for balancing economic, social, and environmental goals. The European experience confirms that an integrated planning paradigm is essential for fostering regional cohesion and sustainable growth, rendering it a key benchmark for Ukraine's European integration.

Ukraine has achieved substantial progress in laying the legal foundations for this transition, notably through the introduction of comprehensive spatial development plans and integrated development concepts. However, the practical rollout remains constrained by severe institutional, financial, and educational bottlenecks, alongside a persistent tendency toward declarative planning. This creates a high risk of lagging behind contemporary international spatial management standards.

The full-scale war has emerged as a historical turning point. While highlighting systemic vulnerabilities, the crisis has simultaneously demonstrated that robust spatial planning is essential for national

survival, efficient resource allocation, and post-war reconstruction. Ultimately, the future trajectory of integrated spatial planning in Ukraine will likely unfold along one of three scenarios:

1. The Optimistic Scenario: Characterized by accelerated European integration, systemic institutional reforms, and rapid legislative harmonization. This path would establish a modern, digitized spatial management system, but is challenged by the ongoing war, potential domestic administrative inefficiencies, and external political friction.
2. The Realistic Scenario: Based on gradual, uneven progress under tight financial and human resource constraints. Under this scenario, the transition will span years, with 'rear' western regions (e.g., Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Lviv) progressing much faster than war-torn eastern and southern regions, heavily relying on targeted international aid.
3. The Pessimistic Scenario: Defined by delayed reforms, weak political will, and institutional stagnation, leading to fragmented, chaotic, and interest-driven reconstruction that exacerbates regional inequalities.

Ultimately, Ukraine stands at a critical juncture. Choosing a path toward modern, sustainable, and integrated spatial governance will determine the country's recovery success, territorial resilience, and competitiveness within the European space for decades to come. If the state can successfully mobilize resources, establish vertical and horizontal coordination, and adopt digital technologies, spatial planning will become the bedrock for a modernized, European Ukraine. In this context, the Russian full-scale invasion, despite its tragic nature, could serve as a catalyst for modernization, transforming spatial policy into an instrument of sustainable, European-aligned development.

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