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**LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATION COMPETENCE OF THE SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE OF UKRAINE AS A  
PRECONDITION FOR IMPLEMENTING EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION  
STANDARDS**

**МОВНА ТА ІНТЕГРАЦІЙНА КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ КЕРІВНОГО СКЛАДУ  
ДСНС УКРАЇНИ ЯК УМОВА ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЇ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ  
СТАНДАРТІВ ЦИВІЛЬНОГО ЗАХИСТУ**

*The article examines the role of the language and integration competence of the senior management of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in implementing European civil protection standards, an issue closely tied to Ukraine's participation in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The author argues that command of a foreign language at the B2+ level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) constitutes a*

*functional precondition for the full participation of service managers in UCPM training programmes, expert exchange activities and international emergency response operations. The study defines the content of the integration competence of an SES manager, which combines language training, knowledge of UCPM procedures and tools, experience of inter-agency and international cooperation, and the capacity to represent the position of the service within the European Civil Protection Pool. A comparative analysis of the experience of Central and Eastern European states makes it possible to identify the patterns underlying the successful integration of language training into the human-resource systems of civil protection services. A significant gap is established between the regulatory requirements of the Association Agreement and the actual level of language competence among SES managers. The article proposes conceptual directions for developing a system of language and integration training for the service's senior management in cooperation with the UCPM Knowledge Network.*

**Keywords:** *public administration, civil protection, State Emergency Service, EU Civil Protection Mechanism, UCPM, language competence, CEFR, integration competence, European integration.*

*У статті розкрито роль мовної та інтеграційної компетентності керівного складу Державної служби України з надзвичайних ситуацій у процесі імплементації європейських стандартів цивільного захисту, що пов'язано з участю України в Механізмі цивільного захисту Європейського Союзу (Union Civil Protection Mechanism, UCPM). Автор доводить, що володіння іноземною мовою на рівні B2+ за Загальноєвропейськими Рекомендаціями з мовної освіти (CEFR) становить функціональну передумову повноцінної участі керівників служби в навчальних програмах UCPM, заходах обміну експертами та міжнародних операціях реагування. У роботі визначено зміст інтеграційної компетентності керівника ДСНС, яка поєднує мовну підготовку, знання процедур та інструментів UCPM, досвід міжвідомчої й міжнародної взаємодії, а також спроможність представляти позицію служби в межах Європейського резерву цивільного захисту. Компаративний аналіз досвіду держав Центрально-Східної Європи дав змогу виявити закономірності успішної інтеграції мовної*

*підготовки в систему кадрового забезпечення служб цивільного захисту. Установлено суттєвий розрив між нормативними вимогами Угоди про асоціацію та реальним рівнем мовної компетентності керівників ДСНС. Запропоновано концептуальні напрями розбудови системи мовної та інтеграційної підготовки керівного складу служби у взаємодії з Мережею знань UCPM.*

**Ключові слова:** *публічне управління, цивільний захист, ДСНС, Механізм цивільного захисту ЄС, UCPM, мовна компетентність, CEFR, інтеграційна компетентність, європейська інтеграція.*

Problem setting. The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has substantially changed the conditions in which the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) operates. Missile strikes against civilian infrastructure, the destruction of energy facilities, large-scale fires, mine hazards and the evacuation of the population of front-line regions have created a fundamentally different operating regime for the service. Today the SES works simultaneously under a constant security challenge and within intensive international cooperation, which was not previously characteristic of an emergency response body [1; 4].

This cooperation unfolds primarily within the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), of which Ukraine became a full participant after ratifying the relevant Agreement at the end of 2023 [6]. Through the Mechanism the state has received, since 2022, a considerable volume of international assistance, which has become one of the largest operations in the history of the UCPM. At the same time, Ukraine has gained access to the structured system of European civil protection: the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, the UCPM training programme, the European Civil Protection Pool, and the system of expert exchange [15; 16; 17]. Membership in this system raises new requirements for the senior management of the SES.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of the language and integration competence of managers in the field of civil protection lies at the intersection of several research areas. The foundations of public administration in civil protection and of the security of socio-economic

processes are laid in the works of S. M. Dombrovska, A. L. Pomaza-Ponomarenko and O. I. Kriukov [7; 8]. The organizational and legal aspects of implementing the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in Ukraine are addressed in joint studies by A. L. Pomaza-Ponomarenko, D. Taraduda and S. H. Poroka [9]. Questions of the European-integration transformation of the SES, including adaptation to EU civil protection standards, have been considered by the author in earlier publications [10; 11; 12; 13]. The conceptual basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed by the Council of Europe and systematized in the works of B. North, N. Figueras and J. Trim [14; 18]. The organizational foundations of the UCPM training programme, the structure of the courses for training Mechanism experts, and the principles governing the European Civil Protection Pool are reflected in the documents of the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and in the materials of the UCPM Knowledge Network [15; 16; 17]. Despite these contributions, a coherent conception of the integration competence of the SES senior management, one that would combine language training, knowledge of UCPM procedures and readiness for international cooperation, has not yet been formed.

**Paper objective.** The aim of the article is to substantiate the conceptual foundations of the language and integration competence of the senior management of the SES of Ukraine as a precondition for implementing European civil protection standards, to define the functional requirements for such competence within the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and to formulate directions for developing a corresponding training system, drawing on the experience of Central and Eastern European states.

**Paper main body.** In peacetime, the service's international cooperation was limited to occasional bilateral contacts and episodic participation in exercises. Today, the issue is the embeddedness of the Ukrainian service in a permanently operating EU civil protection network. This means the regular involvement of SES managers in coordination activities, operational meetings, UCPM training courses, expert exchanges and joint response operations. These functions cannot be performed without an adequate level of language training,

knowledge of UCPM procedures, an understanding of the principles of European security governance, and the ability to defend the service's position in an international environment.

An analysis of the current state of human-resource provision in the SES reveals a marked gap between these requirements and the actual level of managerial training. The language competence of a significant part of the senior management, especially at the middle level (heads of units, territorial bodies and operational rescue services), remains insufficient for full participation in the UCPM training programme. Requirements regarding command of a foreign language are set out in the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU [5], in the Code of Civil Protection of Ukraine [2], in the Regulation on the SES [3], and in the action plan for reforming the service, yet they are not backed by systemic mechanisms of language training. The European Commission also draws attention to this gap in its 2024 report on Ukraine [20]. As a result, while formally a participant in the UCPM, Ukraine obtains limited opportunities to involve its own managers in the European training and expert-exchange system, which narrows the strategic potential of this area of cooperation.

The problem is not confined to the language dimension. It is complex in nature and concerns a broader category, designated in this study as integration competence. This refers to the ability of an SES manager to interact functionally with partners within the structures of European civil protection. Such interaction requires not only language skills but also knowledge of UCPM procedures, an understanding of the principles of coordination within the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), the ability to work with standardized operating procedures, and experience of participation in multilateral activities [15]. Language competence here is the precondition for the remaining components: without command of English as the working language of the UCPM, the other skills remain unrealized. It is precisely because of this connection that language competence and the broader integration competence should be considered within a single conceptual field.

The significance of the problem is reinforced by the practice of implementing the UCPM in the states of Central and Eastern Europe. The

experience of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Estonia shows that the successful integration of a national civil protection service into the Mechanism requires a systemic approach to the language and integration training of managers from the moment of accession. Countries that confined themselves to formal participation without investing in personnel remained on the periphery of the Mechanism and did not obtain its full range of benefits. For Ukraine, which is participating in the UCPM on an unprecedented scale under martial law, the issue of personnel integration becomes especially acute.

Substantiating the conceptual foundations of the integration competence of the SES senior management requires defining three interrelated aspects: the content of the category itself and its structural elements; the place of the language component in this structure and the means of its measurement; and the functional linkage of integration competence to the procedures and activities of the Mechanism. These aspects are inseparable from one another. Considering language competence apart from its functional purpose loses managerial meaning and reduces it to general educational considerations, whereas describing the Mechanism's procedures without regard to personnel requirements remains an organizational declaration.

We define the integration competence of an SES manager as a complex professional characteristic that ensures the manager's ability to function fully within the professional environment of European civil protection. It comprises four interrelated components. The first, the language component, denotes the ability to communicate effectively in English in the professional contexts of civil protection. The second, the procedural component, presupposes knowledge of the principles, tools and algorithms of UCPM operation, including the mechanisms for activating the Mechanism, coordination through the ERCC, and the formats for involving national experts and response modules [15; 16]. The third, the coordination component, lies in the ability to work in a multilateral environment with representatives of the civil protection services of other states, international organizations and the European Commission. The fourth, the contextual component, denotes an understanding of the principles of European security governance, the legal frameworks of the Mechanism, and the specifics of the interaction between civil protection and other security sectors of the EU.

In isolation, none of the components is sufficient. Procedural knowledge without language is not realized in communication with partners; coordination skills without an understanding of context yield only formal interaction; and language training without knowledge of procedures does not allow a manager to work productively at the activities of the Mechanism.

The language component occupies a special place in the structure of integration competence, since it is at once the most measurable of its elements and the precondition for all the others. To assess language competence in the European professional environment, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe and adopted as a standard benchmark in the EU, is used [14]. The framework structures language competence across six levels, from A1 to C2, describing each through a set of functional characteristics, that is, what a person is able to do with the language in various communicative situations. For participation in the Mechanism's training programmes, the minimum working benchmark is level B2, which enables a person to take part in complex professional discussions, work with normative and technical texts, and set out their own position in a structured form. Middle-level managers who represent the SES in multilateral operations or attend specialized courses should aim for level C1, which provides professional autonomy in the language environment. For senior management, which defends the state's position on international platforms and conducts negotiations, the expected level is C1+ or C2.

The CEFR level in itself does not equate to integration competence. The language framework measures the general ability to communicate but does not cover the professional specifics of civil protection. In practice, an SES manager deals with normative and technical vocabulary (the classification of emergencies, categories of response modules, procedures for activating the Mechanism), with operational protocols (standardized operating procedures, communication algorithms within the ERCC), and with international-legal terminology (host-nation support, the European Civil Protection Pool, the expert exchange programme). Mastering these elements is possible only through specialized language training oriented toward the professional context, rather than through general language education. For this reason,

current European practice combines general language courses (under the CEFR framework) with the specialized courses of the Mechanism, which are conducted in English and which simultaneously build both professional knowledge and professional-contextual language competence [17]. This approach is more effective than studying the language separately and subsequently mastering the procedures, since it reproduces the real environment of the manager's future work.

The functional linkage of integration competence to the procedures of the Mechanism can be traced in specific managerial situations. The head of an operational rescue service taking part in international modular exercises communicates with the module commanders of other countries in real time, works through a shared response scenario, and adheres to standardized operating procedures. The head of a territorial department of the SES receiving international assistance through the Mechanism interacts with the experts of EU civil protection teams, provides host-nation support under agreed protocols, and reports within established formats. An SES representative in a working group of the Civil Protection Committee takes part in discussions, formulates the national position and proposes amendments to documents. Each of these situations requires the simultaneous combination of language, procedural, coordination and contextual competences, and the absence of even one of them noticeably reduces the effectiveness of participation and, consequently, the strategic gain Ukraine derives from membership in the Mechanism.

The interaction with NATO in the area of civil-military cooperation also deserves separate attention for the SES. Although the basic framework for the service remains the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, under conditions of full-scale war a significant part of the SES's operations takes place in direct contact with military structures, in particular during joint activities with NATO partners. For those managers involved in civil-military coordination, an additional role is played by the NATO standard STANAG 6001, the main instrument for measuring language competence in the Alliance's military environment [19]. Orientation toward this standard ensures interoperability with partners and opens to the relevant category of managers access to the Alliance's language

training system, coordinated by the NATO Bureau for International Language Coordination (BILC). It is methodologically important to distinguish between the two frameworks. The CEFR is the principal standard for the general body of SES senior management oriented toward the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, whereas STANAG 6001 serves as an additional standard for the segment of managers engaged in civil-military coordination with NATO. This distinction removes methodological confusion while meeting the needs of both functional segments.

The transition from conceptual foundations to practical recommendations requires reliance on the experience of states that have already passed through the stage of integrating their civil protection services into the Mechanism. This experience is valuable for Ukraine for two reasons. First, at the moment of accession the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had a personnel situation partly similar to Ukraine's: a limited pool of specialists with established language competence, the absence of a settled practice of participation in multilateral operations, and the need to reform the service structure and train senior management simultaneously. Second, over the two decades following accession these states developed different models of integration, the success of which can be assessed by the actual level of their participation in the Mechanism's activities, their presence in coordination structures and the volume of expert exchange.

Poland took the path of institutionalizing language and integration training at the level of a specialized unit of the State Fire Service with a delegated function of international cooperation. This unit operates as the single coordination centre for the participation of Polish experts in the Mechanism's activities and at the same time accumulates the language training of managers, the processing of course materials, and the preparation of experts for the European Civil Protection Pool. The advantage of the model lies in the formation of a stable core of personnel that regularly interacts with European structures, maintains language proficiency through constant practice, and gradually expands the circle of managers involved in international activity through internal mentoring. The Czech Republic chose a different model: the language training of senior management is integrated into the system of

training and retraining within a specialized academy, while participation in the Mechanism's activities is regarded as a natural continuation of career advancement for those who have reached a defined level of competence. This model gives language training a systemic character tied to the stages of a career and rules out a situation in which participation in international activities depends on the random selection of individuals with the requisite language level. Estonia focused on the concentrated training of a small group of managers with a high language level, aimed at the fullest possible use of the opportunities of membership. Despite a personnel resource limited by the size of the country, Estonia achieves levels of participation in the Mechanism comparable to those of much larger states, precisely owing to the quality of the selected pool.

All three models share a number of fundamental features. They combine general language training (under the CEFR) with specialized professional courses conducted in English that build professional-contextual language competence. Each of them is institutionalized at the level of a specific unit or educational institution and does not depend on the episodic activity of individuals. They all provide for regular practice through participation in international activities as a means of maintaining the competence acquired, and they are synchronized with the system of career advancement, which links the personnel and international policy of the service [17].

In view of this experience and Ukraine's specifics, it is appropriate to outline several conceptual directions for developing a system of language and integration training for the SES senior management. The first direction lies in institutionalizing training at the level of a separate structural unit or programme within the National University of Civil Protection of Ukraine, with the corresponding functions delegated to it. The episodic training of individuals, even on a considerable scale, does not create a stable professional environment and does not ensure the transfer of experience between generations of managers. An institutional anchor here is a necessary condition of systematic effort [10; 11].

The second direction provides for differentiating training by category of senior management. Top-level managers who represent the SES at the

international level require level C1+ or C2, with an emphasis on negotiation, public speaking and defending the state's position. Middle-level managers involved in coordinating international operations require level B2+ or C1, with an emphasis on the professional terminology of civil protection, operational protocols and multilateral coordination. Tactical-level managers who interact directly with international experts at the site of response require a functional level of B1 or B2, with an emphasis on the terminology of operational response and the ability to conduct professional dialogue under stressful conditions. Such differentiation makes it possible to use resources rationally while setting realistic objectives for each segment.

The third direction lies in integrating language training with specialized professional courses conducted in English. The practice of the Mechanism shows that its courses themselves perform the function of professional-language training, simultaneously building procedural knowledge and consolidating language competence in a professional context. The involvement of SES managers in the courses of the Civil Protection Knowledge Network is at once a component of training and its principal functional task [17]. This approach eliminates the artificial division between language and professional training, which often reduces the effectiveness of both.

The fourth direction concerns synchronizing language and integration training with the system of career advancement and the personnel policy of the SES. The level of language competence should become one of the criteria for filling managerial positions, above all those that involve international interaction, while the service's investment in training a manager should be accompanied by the expectation of that manager's further participation in international activities. Only under this condition does language and integration training cease to be an additional burden and become a natural element of professional development. Elaborating these directions into specific managerial mechanisms, in particular in the form of a coherent model of personnel training for the senior management of the security sector, constitutes a promising direction for further research, which the author is developing within a broader dissertation project [13].

Conclusions. The study conducted provides grounds for formulating a number of interrelated propositions concerning the language and integration competence of the senior management of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in the context of implementing European civil protection standards. Ukraine's participation in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism generates new functional requirements for SES managers that markedly exceed traditional notions of personnel provision for a peacetime civil protection service [6]. These requirements cannot be met without an adequate level of language and broader integration competence that enables a manager to function fully within the European professional environment.

The integration competence of an SES manager emerges as a complex professional characteristic comprising four interrelated components: language, procedural, coordination and contextual. None of them is self-sufficient, and their complementarity is a condition for the manager's effective participation in international civil protection activities. The language component occupies a special place in this structure, since it is at once the most measurable and the precondition for realizing the rest. The study substantiates the appropriateness of using the CEFR as the principal instrument for measuring the language competence of the SES senior management [14], with the additional use of the NATO standard STANAG 6001 for those managers engaged in civil-military coordination with the Alliance [19]. This distinction ensures methodological clarity and corresponds to the functional specialization of individual segments of the senior management.

The systematization of the experience of Central and Eastern European states has revealed three basic models of integrating language and integration training into the human-resource systems of civil protection services: the model of a specialized coordination unit (Poland), the model of integration with an academic system of professional training (the Czech Republic), and the model of concentrated training of a high-quality personnel pool (Estonia). The common features of the effective models are the combination of general language training with specialized professional courses, institutionalization at the level of specific structural units, regular practice through participation in international activities, and synchronization with the system of career

advancement. These features serve as a benchmark for developing a corresponding training system in Ukraine.

Four conceptual directions for developing a system of language and integration training for the SES senior management have been formulated: institutionalizing training at the level of a specialized unit or programme of the National University of Civil Protection of Ukraine; differentiating training by category of senior management with reference to specific levels of language competence; integrating language training with the specialized professional courses of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism; and synchronizing training with the system of career advancement. Implementing these directions will ensure the functional conformity of the SES senior management with the requirements of participation in the European civil protection system and will increase the strategic gain Ukraine derives from membership in the Mechanism. Elaborating these directions into a coherent model of personnel provision for the senior management of the security sector constitutes a prospect for further scholarly inquiry, which the author is developing within a broader dissertation study. The practical value of the proposed propositions lies in the possibility of applying them in shaping the personnel policy of the SES, planning the language training of managers, and preparing managerial decisions on Ukraine's cooperation with international partners in the field of civil protection.

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