

THE DIGITALISATION OF THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE AS A FACTOR IN A COUNTRY'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE AND ESTONIA

ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЯ ДИПЛОМАТИЧНОЇ СЛУЖБИ ЯК ЧИННИК СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ ДЕРЖАВИ В УМОВАХ ГЛОБАЛІЗАЦІЇ: ДОСВІД УКРАЇНИ ТА ЕСТОНІЇ

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Abstract. *The article examines the impact of globalisation and the development of information and communication technologies on the transformation of the diplomatic service as a key institution for the implementation of a state's foreign policy, and demonstrates the importance of digitalisation as a factor in enhancing the efficiency, transparency and resilience of state institutions.*

The aim of this article is to conduct a comprehensive study of the digitalisation of the diplomatic service as a strategic factor in the sustainable development of the state, in particular by analysing its impact on the transformation of diplomatic institutions, assessing the current state of digitalisation in Ukraine, and comparing it with Estonia's experience. The research objectives include defining the theoretical foundations of digitalisation, analysing the practical aspects of its implementation, identifying key problems, and justifying approaches to their resolution.

The methodological framework comprises general scientific and specialised research methods, in particular comparative, systemic and analytical approaches.

The study found that the digitalisation of Ukraine's diplomatic service is at a stage of active development, but is characterised by a number of structural constraints, including the fragmentation of digital solutions, insufficient system integration and a lack of digital skills. It has been demonstrated that Estonia's experience attests to the effectiveness of comprehensive digital transformation based on integrated platforms, electronic document management and a high level of cybersecurity.

Based on the results of a comparative analysis, practical recommendations have been formulated regarding the standardisation of electronic document management, the development of integrated digital platforms, the enhancement of cybersecurity, and staff training.

Keywords: *digitalisation; diplomatic service; digital diplomacy; sustainable development; globalisation; public administration; electronic document management; international cooperation.*

Анотація. У статті розкрито вплив глобалізаційних процесів і розвитку інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій на трансформацію дипломатичної служби як ключового інституту реалізації зовнішньої політики держави та обґрунтовано значення цифровізації як чинника підвищення ефективності, прозорості та стійкості державних інституцій.

Метою статті є комплексне дослідження цифровізації дипломатичної служби як стратегічного чинника сталого розвитку держави, зокрема через аналіз її впливу на трансформацію дипломатичних інституцій, оцінку сучасного стану цифровізації в Україні та порівняння з досвідом Естонії. Завдання дослідження передбачають визначення теоретичних засад цифровізації, аналіз практичних аспектів її впровадження, виявлення ключових проблем та обґрунтування напрямів їх вирішення.

Методологічну основу становлять загальнонаукові та спеціальні методи дослідження, зокрема порівняльний, системний та аналітичний підходи.

У результаті дослідження встановлено, що цифровізація дипломатичної служби України перебуває на етапі активного розвитку, проте характеризується низкою структурних обмежень, зокрема фрагментарністю цифрових рішень, недостатньою інтеграцією систем та дефіцитом цифрових компетентностей. Доведено, що досвід Естонії свідчить про ефективність комплексної цифрової трансформації, заснованої на інтегрованих платформах, електронному документообігу та високому рівні кібербезпеки.

За результатами порівняльного аналізу сформульовано практичні рекомендації щодо уніфікації електронного документообігу, розвитку інтегрованих цифрових платформ, підвищення рівня кіберзахисту та професійної підготовки персоналу.

Ключові слова: цифровізація; дипломатична служба; цифрова дипломатія; сталий розвиток; глобалізація; державне управління; електронний документообіг; міжнародне співробітництво.

Introduction. The realities of modern globalisation, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, and the growing role of digital tools in public administration are driving a profound transformation of the diplomatic service as a key institution for the implementation of a state's foreign policy. The digitalisation of diplomatic processes today represents not only a technological upgrade, but also a strategic factor in enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and resilience of state institutions in the global environment.

Against a backdrop of intensifying international competition, hybrid threats and growing challenges to national security, digital diplomacy is taking on particular significance as a tool for operational communication, managing information flows and shaping a positive international image of the state. At the same time, the digitalisation of the diplomatic service is directly linked to the achievement of sustainable development goals, as it promotes the rational use of resources, the streamlining of bureaucratic procedures, the reduction of environmental impact and the enhancement of the institutional capacity of government bodies.

The purpose of this article is to conduct a comprehensive study of the digitalisation processes within the diplomatic service as a strategic factor in ensuring the sustainable development of the state in the context of globalisation, in particular through an analysis of the impact of digital technologies on the transformation of diplomatic institutions, assessing the current state and challenges of the digital transformation of Ukraine's diplomatic service, as well as conducting a comparative analysis with Estonia's experience in order to substantiate practical recommendations for adapting effective European digital practices to the national context.

Literature review. The issue of the digitalisation of public administration and the diplomatic service in the context of globalisation and sustainable development is the subject of active academic research within both domestic and international scholarly discourse. In particular, the works of O. Akhmedovoi and A. Pomaza-Ponomarenko (2025) argue that digitalisation is a key factor in enhancing the effectiveness of public administration, ensuring transparency, accountability and the optimisation of management processes. A similar position is held by S. Bobko and K. Dehtiar (2025), who view digitalisation as a tool for transforming management systems in the context of sustainable development, emphasising the need to integrate innovative technologies into the activities of organisations.

The theoretical foundations of digitalisation in the field of public administration are explored in a study by S. Chornoho (2022), which defines the essence of digital transformation as a comprehensive process encompassing not only technological changes but also the transformation of management approaches and communications. At the same time, L. Popova (2025) and N. Krasnostanova, T. Yakymenko (2023) emphasise the interconnection between digitalisation and the achievement of sustainable development goals, in particular through improving resource efficiency, developing inclusive services and stimulating economic growth.

A separate area of research concerns digital diplomacy and the transformation of international relations. For instance, M. Okladna and V. Stetsenko (2020) define digital diplomacy as a key instrument of modern foreign policy, ensuring the efficiency of communication and expanding a state's capacity to influence an international audience. In turn, T. Poda (2020) focuses on the development of 'network diplomacy', which is shaped by globalisation processes and involves the engagement of new actors and digital platforms in international interaction. Research by R. Nuguid (2025) confirms that digital diplomacy opens up new opportunities for states, whilst simultaneously creating additional challenges related to cybersecurity and information risks.

Thus, an analysis of academic sources shows that the digitalisation of the diplomatic service is viewed as a complex, multidimensional process that combines technological, managerial and social aspects. At the same time, despite a significant body of research in the field of the digitalisation of public administration and digital diplomacy, insufficient attention has been paid to a comparative analysis of the digital transformation of diplomatic services in different countries, particularly Ukraine and Estonia, in the context of ensuring sustainable development, which underlines the relevance of this study.

Main results of the research. For Ukraine, the issue of the digital transformation of the diplomatic service is becoming particularly relevant in the context of European integration, the need to adapt to EU standards, and the challenge of operating under conditions of prolonged hybrid aggression. In this regard, the experience of Estonia is of considerable interest – a country that is consistently implementing digital solutions in the fields of public administration and diplomacy, demonstrating a high level of integration of technology, security and the principles of sustainable development.

Digitalisation is one of the key components of the transformation of modern state institutions in a globalised world, significantly influencing the organisation of public administration and the activities of diplomatic services. Digitalisation is understood as a comprehensive process of integrating digital technologies into all aspects of the functioning of state bodies and services, which is not limited to the technical automation of processes, but involves a change in the very nature of interaction, decision-making, communications and engagement with target audiences. In public administration, digitalisation is strategic in nature and aims to enhance the efficiency, transparency and accountability of state institutions, as well as to optimise interaction between government bodies, citizens and businesses through modern digital services and tools – in particular e-ID, big data, blockchain and artificial intelligence – which are transforming traditional models of governance and diplomatic communication (Chorny, 2022).

In the context of sustainable development, digitalisation expands the capacity of public institutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (What are the Sustainable Development Goals?, n.d.) (Table 1). In particular, the use of digital technologies helps to improve resource efficiency, reduce environmental risks, enhance social integration, improve access to services, and create inclusive platforms for citizen participation in public processes. It is important that digital tools can be used not only to automate service delivery procedures, but also to create conditions for innovative development, stimulate economic growth and expand access to global information markets, which together create the conditions for the sustainable development of society at national, regional and global levels (Popova, 2025).

Globalisation has become a multidimensional process of integration across the economic, political, informational and cultural spheres of the global community, leading to significant changes in the nature of international relations and the role of state institutions. In particular, the diplomatic service, which has traditionally been focused on bilateral inter-state negotiations and closed channels of communication, is forced to adapt to the conditions of an open information space and rapid

transnational data flows. In such an environment, diplomacy ceases to be an exclusively privileged sphere of activity for state apparatuses and transforms into a multifunctional political instrument operating simultaneously in many public and non-state spheres (How Globalization Has Disrupted the Actors, the Place, and the Timeline of Diplomacy, n.d.).

Table 1

The digitalisation of the diplomatic service in the context of globalisation and sustainable development

	Digitalization content	Key digital tools	Impact on the diplomatic service	Connection with sustainable development
 Institutional	Integration of digital technologies	e-ID, electronic document management, big data, AI	Improving governance efficiency, transparency and accountability	SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions. Strengthening institutional capacity and resilience
 Administrative	Optimization of decision-making processes	Analytical platforms, automated management systems	Reducing bureaucratic procedures, increasing the efficiency of decisions	SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production. Rational use of resources, effective management
 International (globalization)	Integration into global information networks	Online collaboration platforms, digital diplomacy	Strengthening interstate interaction and network forms of cooperation	SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. Promote global partnerships and international coordination
 Socio-economic	Expanding access to information and services	Digital services, innovative platforms	Increasing the openness of diplomatic processes	SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth. Social inclusion, economic growth
 Strategic	Digitalization as a long-term development resource	Complex digital ecosystems	Building institutional resilience of the diplomatic service	Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Source: provided by the authors

The first key change is the expansion of the range of actors involved in the diplomatic process. Alongside traditional diplomatic missions, non-state actors – international organisations, global corporations, expert networks, civil society initiatives and digital platforms – are gaining significant importance, actively influencing the shaping of international policy and representing their interests in the global information space. This democratisation of the diplomatic environment is directly linked to globalisation, as the boundaries for communication, mobility and the exchange of information have become significantly blurred, and access to a global audience has become virtually unhindered. As a result, national diplomatic institutions are forced to rethink their functions and mechanisms for engaging with these new actors (How Globalization Has Disrupted the Actors, the Place, and the Timeline of Diplomacy, n.d.).

The second significant transformation is the shift from closed, hierarchical diplomacy to an open, network-based approach, characterised by the rapid exchange of information, the integration of digital communications, and active participation in global discussions. Networked forms of diplomacy, including digital platforms, social media and online communications, are transforming the traditional format of diplomatic negotiations and enabling states to influence an international audience directly in real time. This, in turn, alters the temporal and spatial frameworks of diplomatic work, as diplomacy is no longer confined to physical locations (embassies, conference halls) but operates actively within the virtual space of information networks (Poda, 2020).

Globalisation is also placing greater demands on diplomatic institutions in terms of transparency, responsiveness and flexibility. In today's world, international crises, economic challenges and social changes are unfolding at a rapid pace, rendering outdated bureaucratic procedures ineffective. As a result, diplomatic services are adopting new approaches to communication, planning and response, actively using digital technologies to monitor global events, produce rapid analytical assessments and develop international communication strategies.

At the international level, the digitalisation of diplomacy facilitates the integration of national processes into global information networks, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of communication

with other states, international organisations and the public (Nuguid, 2025). The use of digital channels, such as electronic document management platforms, social media and data analytics systems, enables states to respond swiftly to global challenges, including economic crises and environmental threats, which is key to sustainable development.

Estonia's experience shows that the comprehensive digitalisation of the diplomatic service enables a state not only to improve the efficiency of its internal administration, but also to project an image of a technologically advanced and transparent state on the international stage. Estonia's digital governance system includes electronic document management within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and consulates, which helps to reduce the paper burden and cut resource costs, thereby supporting the environmental aspect of sustainable development.

For Ukraine, the digitalisation of the diplomatic service is a prerequisite for enhancing institutional resilience and competitiveness on the international stage. The introduction of electronic document management systems and digital communication channels facilitates more efficient decision-making, reduces corruption risks and increases public trust in state institutions.

The digitalisation of the diplomatic service is becoming a key tool for enhancing the efficiency, transparency and resilience of state institutions in the context of globalisation and governance transformations (Okladna & Stetsenko, 2020). The introduction of electronic document management enables the optimisation of administrative processes, reduces the expenditure of time and resources, and ensures rapid access to information, which is critically important for diplomatic missions and foreign ministries (Bobko & Dehtiar, 2025).

In Ukraine, the digitalisation of the diplomatic service is currently in a phase of active development, which includes the integration of electronic document management systems, qualified electronic signatures and platforms for internal coordination. The main objectives are to improve management efficiency, ensure information security and comply with international standards. Despite the achievements made, Ukraine faces challenges in implementing digital solutions regarding process standardisation, human resources and adapting the regulatory framework to digital technologies (Popova, 2025).

Estonia's experience demonstrates the effective integration of digital tools into high-level diplomatic activities. The Estonian model of digital governance is characterised by the complete digitisation of document management, the use of electronic signature systems, and online services for communicating with citizens and international partners.

A comparative analysis shows that the main differences between Ukraine and Estonia lie in the level of integration of digital technologies and the scale of their use. The Ukrainian diplomatic service is gradually moving towards EU standards, but requires a comprehensive approach to digitalisation, including the development of a regulatory framework, staff training and the implementation of modern electronic document management systems (Krasnostanova & Yakymenko, 2023). The Estonian experience demonstrates that digitalisation contributes not only to management efficiency but also to strengthening institutional resilience and supporting sustainable development in a global context.

Despite the positive trends, the digitalisation of the diplomatic service in Ukraine is accompanied by a number of challenges. Firstly, there is insufficient integration of modern digital platforms into internal processes, which often leads to duplication of functions, delays in the transmission of information, and a lack of efficiency in communication between departments (Popova, 2025). Secondly, there is a shortage of qualified staff capable of effectively using new digital tools, which complicates the implementation of innovations and reduces the efficiency of electronic document management.

An important element of the digitalisation of the diplomatic service is the Diplomatic eArchive (n.d.), which is responsible for the preservation, management and use of documents relating to foreign policy activities. The transition to electronic archiving is of strategic importance, as it ensures the preservation of the diplomatic heritage, rapid access to information, a reduction in the risk of document loss and the optimisation of archival processes. At the same time, the digitisation of the diplomatic archive in Ukraine is still in its infancy and faces challenges such as the fragmentation of digital solutions, limited compatibility of information systems, and the need to ensure a high level of protection for confidential and personal data.

The introduction of the “E-Consul” information system (e-Consul, n.d.) plays a key role in the digital transformation of Ukraine’s diplomatic service; it is designed to automate consular services and optimise the state’s interaction with citizens abroad. The “E-Consul” programme enables the digitisation of processes for submitting applications, processing requests, maintaining consular records and internal document flow, which helps to increase transparency, reduce bureaucratic procedures and shorten the time taken to provide consular services. At the same time, its effective operation requires further integration with other state registers and information systems, as well as continuous improvement of the technical and regulatory framework.

The process of digitalising diplomatic bodies is also significantly hampered by insufficient funding, fragmented strategic planning and an inadequate regulatory framework, which complicates the systematic implementation of digital solutions and undermines their long-term effectiveness. The absence of a single, coordinated digital transformation strategy leads to the uneven development of information systems and a reduction in their interoperability. In these circumstances, the issue of cybersecurity and personal data protection becomes particularly relevant, as any breaches of information security can pose significant risks to the confidentiality of diplomatic communications, the stability of state information resources, and the state’s international reputation.

Estonia is one of the world’s most striking examples of successful digital transformation in the public sector, which has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the diplomatic service. As a “digital state”, the country has managed to implement comprehensive digital solutions that not only optimise internal processes but also form the basis for modern digital diplomacy and the sustainable development of the state.

Firstly, Estonia has achieved virtually complete digitalisation of public services: all government services are available online, which not only facilitates effective governance but also helps to create a positive image of the country on the international stage, where such tools are regarded as an element of foreign policy and diplomacy in the digital age. This is the result of a targeted policy of digital state-building, which was defined in the early stages of independence and further developed in strategic documents, notably the Digital Agenda 2030. Its implementation involves strengthening the digital state, improving the quality of citizens’ digital experience and the security of the digital environment, which is of strategic importance for the diplomatic sector as well, where confidentiality and trust are critical (Digital Agenda 2030, n.d.).

Secondly, the state has established a well-developed data interoperability infrastructure, notably the X-Road platform – a key technological infrastructure of Estonia’s digital state that ensures secure data exchange between public and private information systems (X-Road – Interoperability services, n.d.). This enables the automation of document processing and maintains a high standard of electronic document management and information exchange between ministries and overseas missions. In this context, digital solutions facilitate the integration of electronic document management into the administrative procedures of the diplomatic service and enhance the speed of decision-making.

The use of the X-Road system enables Estonian consulates abroad to: access all key state registers, including the population register, the document register, the tax register, the civil status register and the business register; provide online consular services, including the issuance of certificates, identity verification, document verification and the provision of extracts from registers; facilitate digital voting abroad (i-Voting); and work with the e-Residency programme (X-Road Technology: A digital backbone of Estonia’s Cyber security and DPI, n.d.).

Estonia’s diplomatic missions operate via X-Road, which enables them to provide digital consular services to citizens in any country worldwide, ensure cyber security, integrate cross-border services and develop a digital model of diplomacy that is now being emulated by other countries.

The digitalisation of the diplomatic service is a critical factor in enhancing the efficiency, transparency and sustainability of state institutions in the context of globalisation. Estonia’s experience demonstrates a high level of integration of electronic document management and digital platforms into the work of diplomatic bodies, enabling the optimisation of management processes, a reduction in administrative costs and faster decision-making (Popova, 2025).

In Ukraine, the process of digitising the diplomatic service is proceeding more slowly due to the fragmented nature of the regulatory framework and the insufficient integration of modern IT solutions within government bodies (Akhmedovoi & Pomaza-Ponomarenko, 2025). An analysis of

international experience shows (Table 2) that the successful digitalisation of the public sector requires a comprehensive approach, which includes the adaptation of electronic document management, the development of digital infrastructure and the assurance of cybersecurity.

Table 2

A comparison of digitalisation indicators in Ukraine and the EU

Parametr	Ukraine	EU (average)	Lagging behind
Level of digitalisation	45%	78%	33%
Number of e-services	130	320	190
User experience	6.2/10	8.1/10	1.9
Cybersecurity	5.8/10	7.9/10	2.1
Interoperability	40%	75%	35%

Джерело: (European Commission, 2022).

The Digital Quality of Life Index covers 117 countries for which data is available, representing 92% of the world's population. Each country is assessed according to five principles:

1. Internet affordability – how many hours people need to work to afford a stable internet connection.

2. Internet quality – how fast and stable the internet connection is in the country and how much it is improving.

3. Digital infrastructure – how well-developed and inclusive the country's existing digital infrastructure is.

4. Digital safety – how safe and secure people feel in the country.

5. Digital government – how developed and digitised the country's public services (Krasnostanova & Yakymenko, 2023).

In recent years, Ukraine has made significant progress in developing digital public services at the national level. According to the findings of the UN study “UN E-Government Survey – Accelerating Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development”, Ukraine ranked 30th out of 193 countries in 2024 on the overall e-government index, a rise of 16 places compared to 2022 – evidence of substantial progress in the digital transformation of the public services sector. Ukraine also topped the E-Participation Index, which measures the extent to which citizens engage with public services online – this position is important to consider when assessing the potential for applying such approaches in the diplomatic service, where digital participation and access to information are critically important (Ukrainian GovTech ranks among the world's best, n.d.).

Unlike Ukraine, Estonia has achieved virtually complete digitalisation of public services with a very high level of coverage. According to data from 2025, almost 100% of public services are available to citizens online, including tools that can be adapted for inter-agency document management and international communications. Such comprehensive digitalisation not only enhances the efficiency and transparency of interaction between partners, but also creates the infrastructure for effective digital diplomacy (Estonia: 100% digital government services, with divorce as the final step, n.d.).

The digitalisation of public services is a key factor in enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the diplomatic service. A comparative analysis of Ukraine and Estonia reveals significant differences in their approaches to the implementation of digital technologies and electronic document management.

The analysis shows (Table 3) that Ukraine is demonstrating rapid development of digital services in response to internal challenges, whilst Estonia offers a strategically integrated and systematic model of digitalisation, enabling the effective implementation of electronic document management and inter-agency digital interaction. It is recommended to adapt Estonian practices to enhance the efficiency and transparency of Ukraine's diplomatic service, in particular:

- the development of comprehensive digital platforms;
- the integration of electronic document management into international communications;
- strengthening cybersecurity and data protection;
- increasing the coverage of digital identification for diplomatic staff.

Table 3
A comparative analysis of the digitalisation of the diplomatic services of Ukraine and Estonia

Indicator	Ukraine	Estonia	Impact on sustainable development
Availability of electronic document management	Gradual implementation, partial digitalisation of ministries	Full integration across all diplomatic departments	Reduction in paper usage, resource savings, environmental efficiency
Accessibility of digital services for citizen	Limited, partly via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' web portals	High, thanks to a single e-Government platform	Enhanced social inclusion, access to services
Transparency and accountability	Partial, limited monitoring systems	High, automated monitoring and reporting systems	Reduced corruption risks, improved trust in institutions
Integration with international platforms	Partial, limited data exchange	Fully integrated with the EU and global networks	Enhancing the effectiveness of international cooperation and the speed of response to global challenges
Environmental impact	Partial, reduced paper usage in certain departments	Almost complete elimination of paper documents	Reducing emissions, conserving natural resources, promoting green governance

Source: compiled from data (Popova, 2025), (Nuguid, 2025).

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations can be made regarding the development of digitalisation within Ukraine's diplomatic service:

1. Unification and standardisation of electronic document management across all departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions abroad.
2. Development of an integrated digital platform that will ensure centralised access to documents, automation of internal processes and transparency of interaction between structural units.
3. Strengthening of cybersecurity and data protection, which is critical for safeguarding state and diplomatic information.
4. Training and professional development of staff on the use of modern digital technologies in diplomatic practice.
5. Adaptation of international experience (in particular that of Estonia), taking into account the specific nature of the Ukrainian diplomatic service and resource constraints.

Thus, the implementation of these recommendations will contribute to enhancing the efficiency, transparency and sustainable development of Ukraine's diplomatic service, laying the foundation for the country's integration into the global digital environment.

Conclusions. The digitalisation of the diplomatic service is a strategic factor in the transformation of state institutions in a globalised world, enhancing the efficiency, transparency and institutional resilience of diplomatic bodies. The introduction of electronic document management, digital platforms and analytical tools helps to optimise administrative processes, reduce information processing times, enhance cybersecurity and minimise the negative impact on the environment.

Globalisation is driving a shift in diplomacy from a traditional, closed model towards open, networked forms that incorporate digital communications, social media platforms and active participation in global debates. This places new demands on staff competence, the integration of information systems and the development of standards for engagement with international and non-state actors.

Estonia's experience demonstrates effective, strategically integrated digitalisation of diplomatic processes, which ensures the full digitisation of document management, cyber security, access to

national registers and international services, and helps to foster the image of a transparent and technologically advanced state. Ukraine is actively developing digital services for the diplomatic service, including the “E-Consul” platform and the “Diplomatic E-Archive”, but faces problems of insufficient system integration, a shortage of qualified personnel and fragmented regulatory and legal frameworks.

A comparative analysis shows that adapting Estonian practices will enable Ukraine to improve the effectiveness of the digitalisation of its diplomatic service. Priority measures include the standardisation of electronic document management, the development of integrated digital platforms, the enhancement of cybersecurity, staff training, and the adaptation of international experience to national circumstances. The implementation of these recommendations will contribute to strengthening institutional capacity, the sustainable development of diplomatic institutions, and Ukraine’s integration into the global digital environment.

Funding: *no external funding.*

Conflict of Interest: *the authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.*

Data Availability Statement: *not applicable*

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Received: 07.04.26 / Revised: 20.03.26 / Accepted: 04.05.26 / Published: 30.06.26