

DCFTA, A SMALL (NEXT) STEP TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

The trade part of the association agreement signed on 27 June 2014 (signed by the President of Ukraine, Petr Poroshenko) between the European Union and Ukraine, the so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), entered into force on 1 January 2016. This is another step on the road to bring Ukraine closer to the European Union, which was fought for by Euromajdan. This is not just a free trade agreement. It opens markets, gives full access to the EU market for Ukrainian goods, provides fair competition and a basis for bringing Ukrainian norms and standards, as well as European norms and standards, closer together.

The Association Agreement, which concerns the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), is the main instrument for bringing the EU and Ukraine closer together. This agreement is a sign of support for the strengthening of political ties, as well as the strengthening of economic ties and respect for common European values. The DCFTA created an area in which Ukraine's foreign trade relations and economic development were modernised by opening markets (European for Ukrainian goods and vice versa), harmonising laws, standards and regulations (Ukraine had to commit itself to introduce about 60% of the legal regulations in force in the European Union) [1].

It should be noted that the signing of this agreement and future cooperation is welcomed by the representatives of the European Union. The President of the European Commission, Jean Juncker, has expressed his opinion as follows: "Determination is a virtue. Today, despite many challenges, we have achieved our goal. With the entry into force of the Association Agreement, the EU is fulfilling a promise it made to our Ukrainian friends. I would like to thank all those who contributed to this: those who stood at Majdan and those who are working hard to change the country for the better. This day is the holiday of our continent [4]. The Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, who is the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said: "We have finally achieved what we have been working on in recent years, closer ties between the European Union and Ukraine. This means closer ties between our citizens, a larger market, more opportunities for business and entrepreneurs, more intensive exchange of experience, information and expertise. This shows that we share the same objectives and that Ukrainians can count on the support of the European Union and cooperation in the years to come" [4]. Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, made an important comment on this issue: "It is the next generations of Ukrainian citizens who will reap the fruits of the association with the EU. But the first concrete results of the implementation of the agreement are already visible. Ukrainian exports to the EU have increased and the EU has confirmed its position as Ukraine's main trading partner. Recent reform efforts have been unprecedented, but there is still much to be done, such as continuing the fight against corruption. The European Union will support Ukraine's reform efforts in both substantive and financial terms" [4].

In view of the above opinions and comments, it should be noted that the European Union treats Ukraine as an equal partner with other states. In addition, by doing so, it is unwaveringly supporting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial unity. The European Union also supports the Ukrainian authorities in the area of institutional and economic reforms in order to use the maximum potential of our eastern neighbour and to bring the greatest benefits to both Ukrainians and other trade partners in the area of international trade [2, p. 51].

By signing the Association Agreement, Ukraine undertook to carry out structural reforms that include the democratization of the country, including human rights, the rule of law and trade and sustainable development [3, p. 79]. Additionally, Figure 1 shows the areas of cooperation within the DCFTA.

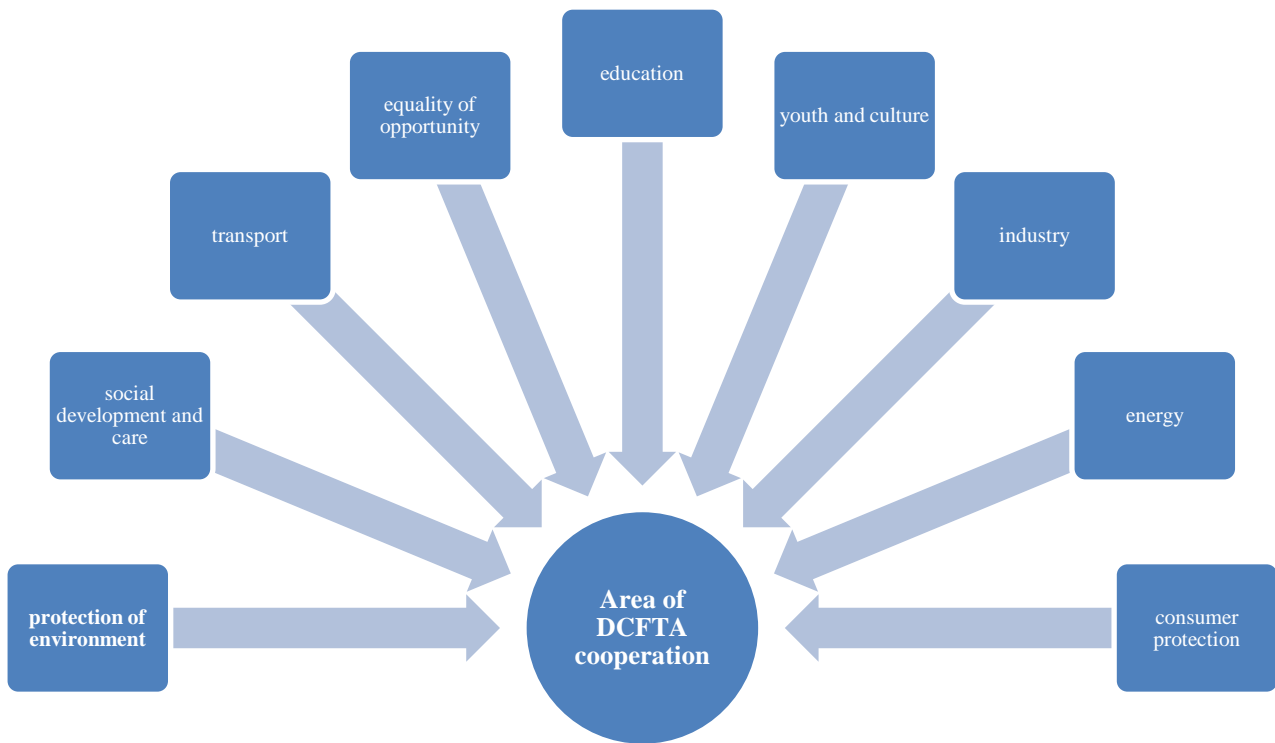


Figure 1. DCFTA areas of cooperation

Origin: *Unia i Ukraina bliżej*, https://ec.europa.eu/poland/news/170901_ue_ukraine_pl (9.04.2019).

This is an opportunity to modernise the Ukrainian economy, which is also beneficial for European, including Polish, enterprises. The European road of Ukraine did not take place without incurring costs.

The Russian Federation is a key aspect of the problem being addressed. On 1 January 2016, on the day of the entry into force of the trade agreement previously blocked by Russia, Russia declared a trade war on Ukraine by introducing an embargo on food products and customs duties on goods of Ukrainian origin. According to Russia, the DCFTA will damage its economic interests.

In summary, the Association Agreement does not contain any information about the possible prospect of Ukraine's accession to the European Union, although in the preamble to this document, there are such terms as "European aspirations" or "European choice" of this country, choosing a pro-Western policy. Despite this, Western countries are reluctant to see Ukraine in the structures of the European Union, because they believe that they may not fulfil the appropriate conditions, among others, in institutional and financial terms. The EU must be stronger, more stable and more efficient before it becomes larger. Perhaps any talks will start in the long term (10-15 years).

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