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LIFELONG LEARNING AS A STRATEGIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN A VUCA WORLD

VUCA-world (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) refers to an environment with high variability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, which requires organizations and professionals to adopt a different logic of decision-making and competence development. In scientific and practical discourse, the VUCA concept has become widespread thanks to the works of N. Bennett and J. Lemoine [1], who emphasize each of the four components requires different management responses (vision for V, understanding for U, structuring for C, experimentation for A). This approach shifts the focus from static “personnel development plans” to a dynamic system of lifelong learning (LLL) as a key mechanism for business adaptability and sustainability.

International organizations define LLL as a continuous process that encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout a person’s life. The OECD [5] emphasizes that LLL should begin in childhood and continue into adulthood, encompassing formal educational institutions and non-institutional forms, to respond to the “state of constant change” in the labor market.

UNESCO recommends that states and employers create mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of the outcomes of all forms of learning, as well as establish intersectoral governance and sustainable financing of LLL – from policies to program quality.

Moreover, today's labor markets are experiencing massive shifts in skill demand. According to WEF's Future of Jobs 2023 [2], employers expect that over the next five years, 44% of the core skills that will be in demand in the market will be cognitive (analytical and creative) and technological literacy [3].

McKinsey research confirms a long-term trend: by 2030, the time spent on applying advanced technological skills will increase by ~50% in the US (and ~41% in Europe), and the demand for IT/programming may increase by up to 90% from the 2016 level. Accordingly, the competitiveness of companies depends on the ability to quickly increase and update the skills of their staff [4].

From this perspective, LLL represents a strategic advantage, i.e., the “ability to learn faster than competitors,” which provides the following benefits:

1. Adaptability in VUCA. When environmental parameters change faster than planned cycles, those organizations that deploy “continuous learning loops” will benefit – from rapid diagnosis of “skill gaps” to targeted upskilling/reskilling and operational validation of effects in processes.

2. Compression of “time-to-skill” as a KPI. If 44% of skills are subject to shifts, the speed of mastering new competencies becomes a competitiveness metric no less than time-to-market. The advantage is gained by organizations that: (a) have skills maps (skills taxonomy), (b) use performance data to personalize learning, (c) recognize the results of informal learning (badges, RPL), (d) integrate learning directly into work processes (learning in the flow of work).

3. Linkage with national and regional policies. The EU, through the Pact for Skills, is stimulating large-scale partnerships between the state, business and training providers for upskilling/reskilling in the context of digital and green transitions. By 2030, 25+ million people have been declared to be trained, and as of May 2025, 6.1 million workers trained under the Pact were reported [5].

Thus, Lifelong learning ceases to be a “social option” and becomes the core of competitive strategy in the VUCA world. For companies, the strategic advantage lies in the ability to diagnose gaps faster than competitors, deploy modular programs and measure the impact of learning on business results. For the state, it lies in creating conditions where lifelong learning is easy, recognized and economically justified for all parties.

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INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING ECONOMIC SECURITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the current conditions of globalization, national economies face increasing risks associated with political, economic, and technological transformations. The growth of international trade, intensified competition, and integration processes create new challenges for ensuring the economic security of the state. In this context, national institutions play a crucial role, forming the normative, regulatory, and organizational framework for protecting the country’s economic interests and ensuring the stability of foreign economic relations.

Economic security in the context of globalization requires the implementation of innovative risk management mechanisms that integrate state, corporate, and inter-institutional practices. Among these, chambers of commerce and industry are particularly significant, acting as intermediaries between state authorities, businesses, and international partners, thereby contributing to the creation of a security-oriented environment [1, p. 249–254].

National institutions perform a range of functions aimed at enhancing the stability and transparency of economic processes. Special attention should be given to the development of innovative cooperation mechanisms, which include the digitalization of management processes, the creation of electronic platforms for online consultations and dispute resolution, as well as the integration of sustainable development principles into economic security management systems.

Globalization trends create new challenges for economic security, including political instability, trade barriers, sanctions, and digital threats. In this environment, innovative risk management mechanisms become critically important.

A particular area of importance for economic security is the development of tourism destinations through innovative risk management approaches. For instance, dark tourism, as a promising sector of international tourism, requires