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## Social measures to prevent criminal offenses against the environment: a historical and critical analysis in Ukraine from 1991 to present

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### Abstract

The general objective of the research consists, on the one hand, in analyzing, from a critical and historical perspective, the legal framework that typifies the crimes committed against the environment in Ukraine, in a chronological period of 34 years, from 1991 to the present. On the other hand, social measures to prevent the commission of these crimes are discussed. Methodologically, it is a work developed because of the parameters of the historical method, with a predominance of documentary sources, such as: official documents, laws, press releases and scientific articles of high impact. The results obtained allow us to

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conclude that, beyond the romantic ecological discourses, the imperative need to defend the environment in the 21st century is becoming increasingly critical in view of the imminent risk of the collapse of human civilization due to poor management of natural resources.

**Keywords:** environmental crimes; ecological crimes; social prevention measures; historical analysis.

*Medidas sociales para prevenir los delitos contra el medio ambiente:  
un análisis histórico y crítico en Ucrania desde 1991 hasta la  
actualidad*

## Resumen

El objetivo general de la investigación consiste, por una parte, en analizar, desde una perspectiva crítica e histórica, el marco legal que tipifica los delitos cometidos contra el medio ambiente en Ucrania, en un periodo cronológico de 34 años, que va desde 1991, hasta la actualidad. Por la otra, se discuten las medidas sociales para prevenir la comisión de estos delitos. Metodológicamente, se trata de un trabajo desarrollado con base en los parámetros del método histórico, con un predominio de fuentes documentales, tales como: documentos oficiales, leyes, notas de prensa y artículos científicos de alto impacto. Los resultados obtenidos permiten concluir que, más allá de los discursos ecológicos románticos, la necesidad imperiosa de defender al medio ambiente en el siglo XXI se vuelve cada vez más crítica ante el riesgo inminente del colapso de la civilización humana, debido a una mala gestión de los recursos naturales.

**Palabras clave:** delitos ambientales; delitos ecológicos; medidas de prevención social; análisis histórico.

## Introduction

Without wishing to be prophets of disaster, the environmental situation of the planet in the 21st century is frankly alarming, with global warming and the greenhouse effect as the main threats that put human civilization at risk.

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the effects of climate change, such as rising global temperatures, loss of sea ice, and rising sea levels, are already clearly manifesting and, worse, are expected to intensify if drastic measures are not taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (NASA, 2024). This phenomenon affects ecosystems and, at the same time, has direct repercussions on human health and food security, which could lead to social collapse if effective strategies to mitigate these risks are not implemented. In the words of Diamond (2007), in the past other human civilizations have collapsed due to the mismanagement of their environmental resources:

Por colapso me refiero a un drástico descenso del tamaño de la población humana y/o a la complejidad política, económica y social a lo largo de un territorio considerable y durante un periodo de tiempo prolongado. El fenómeno del colapso es por tanto una forma extrema de los diversos tipos de declive más leves, y acaba siendo arbitrario establecer cuan drástico debe ser el declive de una sociedad hasta reunir las características adecuadas que nos permitan hablar de “colapso”. (Diamond, 2007, p. 23)

The current model of "unsustainable development" – in its Marxist or neoliberal variant – has led to an unprecedented environmental crisis. The lack of material harmonization between economic growth and environmental protection is constantly causing an accelerated deterioration of non-renewable natural resources. According to NASA (2021), it is imperative to adopt a sustainable paradigm that respects nature as a subject of rights and promotes the integral conservation of the Earth, beyond anthropic needs. Without a significant and radical shift towards more sustainable practices, humanity faces an uncertain future marked by natural disasters, mass displacement, and conflicts over scarce natural resources.

In view of these extremely urgent considerations, the objective of this research is to critically analyze the legal framework that typifies environmental crimes in Ukraine, from 1991 to the present. The formulation of this objective seeks to answer questions such as: What are the main laws regulating ecological crimes in Ukraine? How has the public perception of these crimes evolved in the last three decades? What impact has the Chernobyl disaster had on environmental legislation? And what social measures can be implemented to prevent these crimes in the current context?

Historically, Ukraine has faced significant challenges in its environmental legislation. Since independence in 1991, the country has developed a legal framework that seeks to protect its natural environment, but this has been clearly insufficient to address critical problems such as pollution and the excessive exploitation of resources. The Chernobyl disaster left an indelible mark on the national consciousness and highlighted the shortcomings of the existing legal system. Despite laws such as the Environmental Protection Act of 1995 (Herald of the Supreme Rada, 1995), legal gaps persist that make it difficult to apply them effectively in the twenty-first century, even more so when the country is immersed in a war caused by an invading force that does not respect the cultural and natural dimension of the country's life.

Since the enactment of the 1995 Environmental Protection Law, legal loopholes in Ukrainian environmental laws are notable. According to Haraschuk, Zelinska, Spasenko, and Shulga (2020), regulations are ambiguous and lack clear mechanisms for their implementation and supervision. This legislative reality has led to a culture of impunity where environmental crimes are common and rarely punished. Thus, although there are regulations on environmental protection, many

lack rigor and effectiveness, allowing violations to continue without significant consequences. Therefore, justifying this investigation is important in the current context, where even in times of war, effective measures must be established to prevent environmental crimes.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated existing environmental problems, creating an urgent need for strategies that not only protect the environment, but also strengthen social resilience. In the face of this complex conflict situation that has no foreseeable end, proposing a menu of options to address these challenges can be key when it comes to ensuring a sustainable future in the country, at least from a legal and political perspective.

However, due to its immanent complexity, the phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach configured by multiple lines of research. Emerging lines of research include the study of more effective legal mechanisms to prevent environmental crimes, as well as the analysis of the social and economic impact of such crimes on vulnerable communities. It also proposes to investigate how to integrate sustainable practices into public policies and, together, how to promote greater citizen participation in environmental protection. These areas are crucial to developing a comprehensive vision that addresses both the legal and social aspects related to environmental crimes in Ukraine.

This scientific article is divided into 5 connected sections: in the first, a bibliographic review was carried out on crimes against the environment from a legal and scientific perspective; in the second section, the methodological bases of the research are exposed; in the third, the results obtained are analyzed and discussed in a critical perspective, then, some social measures to prevent crimes against the environment are presented and; Finally, the main conclusions and



recommendations that arise from the combination of research and reflection are briefly presented.

## 1. Literature review on crimes against the environment from a legal and scientific perspective

In a free exercise of the history of ideas, it can be stated with some conceptual precision that, in recent decades, the philosophy of laws regulating environmental protection in Ukraine is based on the principle of sustainable development, which seeks to balance economic growth with the conservation of natural resources. In general, these laws aim to ensure a healthy environment for present and future generations, promoting the protection of biodiversity and the rational use of available resources. Likewise, the legislator seeks to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of human activities on the environment, establishing a rational legal framework that promotes environmental responsibility and citizen participation in decision-making. In this common thread, the integration of international and European standards is essential to strengthen this legal framework in Ukraine and align it with global best practices (The NFVF, 2025).

One of the most significant laws in terms of content and meaning is the Environmental Protection Law of 1995 (Herald of the Supreme Rada, 1995), which sets out the fundamental principles for environmental management in Ukraine. In a broad sense, this law regulates relations in the field of nature protection, the use and regeneration of natural resources, as well as ecological security. For the authors of this article, although it has been an important advance, its implementation has been limited due to its declarative nature and the lack of effective mechanisms to enforce its provisions. Otherwise, the law also faces criticism for not adequately addressing criminal liability for environmental

crimes, which has allowed many infractions to go unpunished or only have administrative sanctions.

In any case, in the first part of the law contained in its General Provisions, it is exhaustively established that:

**Article 1. The Aim of Legislation on Environmental Protection** The aim of legislation on environmental protection is to regulate relations in the sphere of protecting nature, utilization and regeneration of natural resources, maintenance of ecological safety, prevention and mitigation of the negative effects of economic and other activity on the environment, conservation of natural resources, the genetic pool of animate nature, landscapes and other natural complexes, unique territories and natural objects related to the historical and cultural heritage. (Herald of the Supreme Rada, 1995)

And then, to endorse these provisions, a broad and multifactorial legislative development is guaranteed, which contemplates in extensive:

**Article 3. Basic Principles of Environmental Protection** The basic principles of environmental protection shall be a) priority of the requirements of ecological safety, strict compliance with ecological standards, quotas and limitations as to the utilization of natural resources in pursuing economic, management and other activity; b) guarantee of ecological safety of the environment for the life and health of people; c) preventive character of measures in environmental protection; d) ecology-oriented material production on the basis of comprehensive solutions of environmental protection issues, utilization and regeneration of recoverable natural resources, wide introduction of the latest technologies; e) preservation of the special and species diversity and integrity of natural objects and complexes; f) scientifically substantiated coordination of ecological, economic and social interests of society on the basis of combining interdisciplinary knowledge of ecological, social, natural and technical sciences and forecasting of environmental conditions; g) mandatory examination by experts; h) transparency and democratism in adopting decisions, the implementation of which impacts on the environment, shaping in the

population and ecological awareness; i) scientifically substantiated standardization of the effects of economic and other activity on the environment; j) free general and payable utilization of natural resources for economic activity; k) imposition of fines for the pollution of the environment and deterioration of the quality of natural resources, compensation for damage caused by violation of legislation on environmental protection; l) solution of environmental protection issues and utilization of natural resources with due account of the degree of anthropogenic changes of the territories and the aggregate effect of factors negatively impacting on the environment; m) combination of measures for stimulation and responsibility in environmental protection; n) solution of environmental protection issues on the basis of broad cooperation between states. (Herald of the Supreme Rada, 1995)

As can be seen from the above quote, the 1995 Law on Environmental Protection of Ukraine establishes a basic regulatory framework for the management and conservation of the environment in the country. Its philosophy is based on the need to protect nature and ensure a healthy environment for present and future generations. Consequently, this law has as its main objectives the prevention of pollution, the conservation of natural resources and the promotion of sustainable development. In particular, the third article of this law highlights the fundamental principles that must guide human activity in relation to the environment, emphasizing the responsibility of both the State and citizens in the protection and improvement of the natural environment.

More specifically, the third article establishes that all citizens have the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment, which implies a collective duty to preserve it. It also underlines the importance of environmental education and public participation in environmental decision-making. However, despite its progressive approach for the time in which it was enacted, there are limitations in



its content, such as: not defining public policies that make this law a concrete reality at the service of nature and, also, a marked anthropocentric legal conception, typical of the historical moment in which it was enacted; a conception according to which nature is not, in its own right, an entity with a specific legal personality, as is the case, for example, with the Political Constitution of Ecuador (National Constituent Assembly, 2008), but an instrumentalized space for the human person.

Another key piece of legislation is the Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 2017, which seeks to ensure that potentially harmful projects and activities are assessed before they are passed. Essentially, this law establishes procedures to identify, prevent, and mitigate negative impacts on the environment. However, its application has been problematic; Many projects have circumvented this process due to legal loopholes and a lack of training for the responsible authorities. A reality that has led to situations where environmental impacts are significant and adequate corrective measures have not been taken. The law defines environmental impact as:

Definition of impact. The law defines "environmental impact" as any consequences of activities for the environment, including impacts on people, biodiversity, climate, air, water, etc.

Assessment process involves preparing impact reports, public discussions, analyzing information, and issuing reasoned conclusions by authorized bodies.

Public participation. The law ensures the right of the public to participate in the impact assessment, to express their remarks and suggestions. (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017a)

For its part, the Water Law (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017b) also plays an important role in protecting the environment by regulating the use and conservation of water resources. Broadly speaking, this law sets standards for

sustainable water management, but it faces challenges related to industrial and agricultural pollution that severely affect water bodies in Ukraine. Despite its ambitious objectives, in concrete historical reality its effectiveness is limited by a lack of coordination between the various government agencies in charge of its implementation and by insufficient community participation in water management.

Although international in nature, another document that should not be omitted from this review is United Nations Resolution 10/6 on "Preventing and combating environmental crime falling within the scope of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime" (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, S.f), which reaffirms that the Convention is a key instrument for strengthening international cooperation in the fight against environmental crime in general, recognizing its interrelationship with other forms of organized crime and corruption. The Convention seeks not only to prevent and punish these crimes, but also to protect affected individuals and communities, emphasizing the responsibility of States in implementing effective measures to address this problem.

In its aspiration to be the basis for the various national environmental legislations, the document also underlines the importance of a comprehensive policy that includes the investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes, as well as the laundering of money derived from these illicit activities. States parties are urged to adapt their national legislation to prioritize environmental crime and to establish appropriate sanctions that are dissuasive. At the same time, the strategic need for cooperation between different agencies and international organizations to address these challenges effectively is highlighted. For these and

other reasons, this document is a global call to action to confront environmental crimes within the framework of transnational organized crime, promoting a collaborative and multidimensional approach (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, s/f).

Finally, for its content, a prominent document is "Ukraine Country Environmental Analysis", which provides a comprehensive assessment of the legal and political system related to the environment in Ukraine. This analysis identifies key gaps in current legislation and proposes recommendations to improve the regulatory framework, emphasizing the importance of aligning national laws with European standards (The World Bank, 2016). This document is vital to understanding how to move towards more effective environmental management.

In summary, although Ukraine has established a considerable legal framework to protect its environment since 1991, it faces numerous challenges related to the effective implementation of these laws. Legitimate criticisms point to legal loopholes, lack of coercive mechanisms and deficiencies in public participation. The recent critical review of scientific literature reveals an urgent need for structural reforms that will enable Ukraine to meet its environmental goals and align with international standards, thus ensuring a sustainable future for its population and ecosystems.

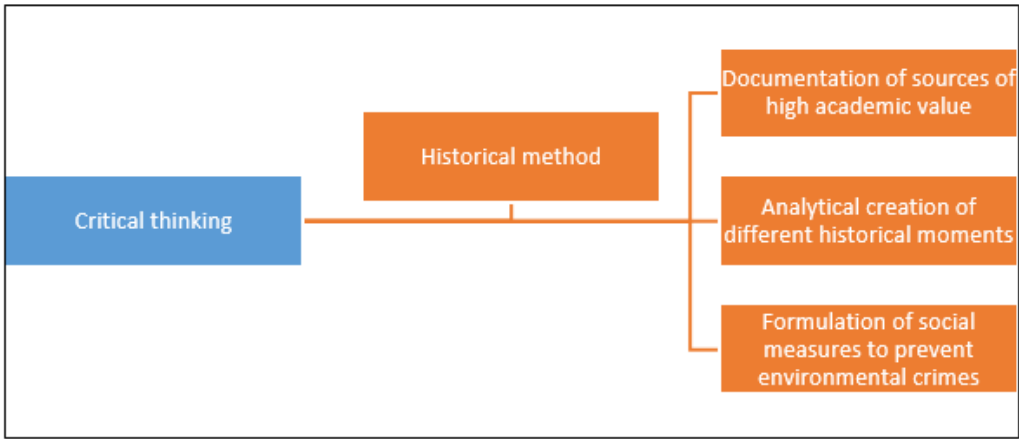
## 2. Methodology

Without engaging in demagoguery, critical thinking is useful in addressing contemporary environmental challenges, as it allows individuals and communities to evaluate information, identify biases, and make informed decisions. This

epistemological tool is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed through reflection, analysis, and evaluation of material and symbolic, natural, and cultural evidence (Wilman, 2023).

In the specific field of environmental advocacy, critical thinking promulgates the need to question unsustainable practices and policies that harm the natural environment. If critical thinking skills are developed, citizens can actively participate in the protection of the environment, promoting social change towards more sustainable and responsible practices. This approach from theory to organizational practice helps foster a culture of environmental responsibility that transcends individual actions and, under certain conditions, becomes a collective movement.

**Figure 1.** General methodological architecture of the research



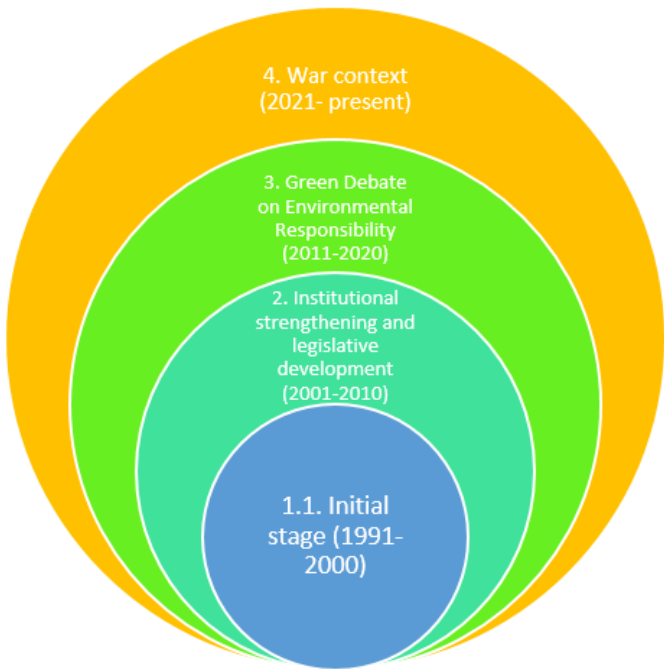
Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

In this epistemological framework, in the words of Fontana (1999), the historical method is a valuable tool for studying social measures aimed at preventing crimes against the environment, since it allows policies and actions to be contextualized over time in a delimited space. According to Esteban (2023), the historical perspective facilitates the understanding of how past decisions have influenced the current situation and, even more, how social responses have evolved in the face of environmental challenges. For these reasons, through historical analysis, patterns, trends, and lessons learned can be identified that inform future prevention strategies. The practical utility of the method therefore lies in its ability to reveal the dialectical interconnections between historical events, legislative changes, and social movements, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing environmental crimes in Ukraine.

The historical research on social measures to prevent environmental crimes in Ukraine was divided into several key stages. The first stage covers from 1991 to 2000, when the legal and political foundations were established after the country's independence. The second stage, from 2001 to 2010, focuses on the implementation of environmental laws and the creation of accountable institutions. The third stage, which runs from 2011 to 2020, analyzes the impact of significant ecological disasters and their influence on legislation. Finally, the fourth stage covers from 2021 to the present, where recent responses to environmental crimes in a context of war and climate crisis are evaluated. Each of these stages reflects significant changes in public and political perceptions of environmental protection and defined a differentiated public agenda.



**Figure 2.** Historical stages or moments of legal and institutional development for the prevention of environmental crime in Ukraine: 1991-present



**Source:** prepared by the authors (2025).

Each of the stages mentioned above has distinctive characteristics that deserve a detailed analysis. In the first stage (1991-2000), an initial focus was observed towards the creation of an environmental legal framework after the country's independence, but with limitations in its effective application due to the lack of resources and institutional experience. The second phase (2001-2010) marks a period of institutional strengthening and legislative development, although challenges related to corruption and lack of regulatory compliance remain. Meanwhile, in the third stage (2011-2020), ecological disasters such as the Chernobyl spill reignite the debate on environmental responsibility, leading to

stricter legislative reforms. Finally, in the fourth stage (2021-present), the war context highlights both the challenges and opportunities to implement innovative social measures that address crimes against the environment in adverse circumstances.

It should be noted that, to select the documentary sources that support this research, a rigorous criterion was used that prioritized official documents, relevant laws, updated press releases, specialized books, and high-impact scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals, in accordance with the social research parameters designed by Martin (2020). What was sought here was to ensure that the sources were publicly accessible and offer truthful and up-to-date information on the state of the environment in Ukraine and its legal frameworks. In addition, studies that include critical analyses of social policies implemented to prevent environmental crimes were considered. This criterion of documentary selection guarantees a solid basis for the historical and critical analysis proposed in this research.

However, the limitations inherent in such an investigation into social measures to prevent crimes against the environment are diverse. First, there may be a shortage of reliable data due to problems with information collection or lack of government transparency. At the same time, the unstable political context generated by the war can negatively influence the effective implementation of environmental policies and make it difficult to access relevant official documents. There is also a risk of bias in the selected sources if multiple perspectives are not considered or if certain types of information are prioritized over others. Finally, rapid changes in the political and social environment can quickly render some

findings obsolete, limiting their future applicability in a dynamic context such as the current one in Ukraine.

### **3. Analysis and discussion of results**

According to Walsh (1974), historical stages are defining moments in the development of political and legal ideas that reflect significant changes in the structure and functioning of a given society. These stages usually allow us to analyze how power relations have been affirmed, challenged, and transformed over time. In the context of Ukraine, the stages that define legal and institutional development in the creation of social measures to prevent crimes against the environment are urgent tools to understand the evolution of its legal framework and its impact on environmental protection, respectively. According to Scott's (2023) criteria, through the study of these stages, patterns and trends can be identified that inform current and future policies. Therefore, the historical-historiographical view is the key to understanding how past decisions have shaped the present and how they can prospectively influence the future.

Having clarified the above, the first stage, which spans from 1991 to 2000, is characterized by the dialectical transition of Ukraine to a sovereign state after the dissolution of the Soviet Union USSR. During this period, fundamental laws such as the Environmental Protection Law were enacted in 1991, which established basic principles for environmental management. However, as already mentioned, this legal framework faced significant challenges due to the lack of resources and institutional capacities typical of a State in political transition. For these and other reasons, at this historical moment environmental policies were commonly ineffective and lacked a systematic legal approach. Here, official

speeches emphasized the need to protect the environment, but concrete actions were limited, resulting in significant environmental deterioration during this decade.

Along the same lines, institutions such as the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources were implemented, although their capacity to enforce laws was restricted (Haraschuk, et al., 2020). In fact, the lack of coordination between various government agencies made it even more difficult to effectively implement environmental policies. In addition, the prevailing focus at this time at the international level focused on economic growth led to an unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, which exacerbated environmental problems. Despite initial efforts, this stage was marked by a lack of real commitment to environmental protection, which laid the groundwork for deeper problems in the decades that followed.

In this chronological order, the second stage, which runs from 2001 to 2010, is characterized by a conscious effort by the authorities to strengthen institutions and develop a more consistent legal framework for environmental protection. According to Trotsiuk and Hrabovsky (2023), during this period, key laws such as the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment and the Law on Air Protection were enacted, which established more rigorous procedures for assessing and mitigating the environmental impacts of industrial projects. However, while these laws represented significant progress, their implementation remained problematic due to corruption and a lack of adequate resources to monitor their effective enforcement.

In addition to the above, this stage saw an increase in official discourses on sustainability and environmental responsibility, driven by international

commitments and public pressure. At this time, institutions began to adopt more integrated approaches to environmental management, although significant challenges still existed in terms of inter-institutional coordination. Another aspect to highlight is the creation of educational programs on the environment which began to take shape, although its scope was limited. In any case, this stage marked a shift towards a more proactive approach to environmental legislation, but there was still much to be done to achieve effective implementation of the law, as Marszałek (2021) points out.

According to documents emanating from the Mission of Ukraine to the European Union (2021), the third stage spans from 2011 to 2020 and includes a period marked by intense ecological debates and growing public awareness of environmental issues in Ukraine. During this phase, additional laws were enacted that addressed specific issues such as sustainable water management and the protection of endangered species. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development<sup>5</sup> was adopted as a guiding framework for integrating environmental considerations into all sectoral policies. However, despite these legislative advances, problems persisted due to a widespread lack of effective

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<sup>5</sup> This strategy involved: “According to Annex XXX to the Agreement, Ukraine must adapt its legislation to 26 directives and 3 EU regulations in the following sectors:

1. Environmental management and integration of environmental policy into other sectoral policies.
2. Quality of atmospheric air.
3. Waste and Resources Management.
4. Water quality and water management, including the marine environment.
5. Nature protection.
6. Industrial pollution and man-made threats.
7. Climate change and protection of the ozone layer.
8. Genetically modified organisms” (Mission of Ukraine to the European Union, 2021, parr., 5-6)



implementation and economic interests that often prevailed over environmental considerations.

As this stage progressed, social movements emerged demanding greater government accountability in relation to environmental policies. According to The NFVF (2025), organized civil society nongovernmental organizations played a prominent role in advocating for reforms and informing the public about environmental violations. However, official speeches were not translated into concrete actions due to a lack of political will and insufficient resources to implement meaningful changes. In any case, this stage was fundamental in raising the profile of the environment in the Ukrainian public debate, but it also highlighted the contradictions between the proclaimed policies and their actual implementation.

Finally, as reported by the World Economic Forum (2022), the current stage (2021 to the present) is marked by the war context derived from the conflict with Russia, which has had profound implications for legal and institutional development in Ukraine. During this time, laws have been enacted aimed at strengthening environmental protection even in times of war; But the challenges are enormous due to the direct damage caused by the conflict to local ecosystems. The 1995 Law on State Environmental Control has been revised to adapt to this new reality, seeking to ensure that environmental regulations are applicable even during extraordinary situations such as the ongoing war, even if the results are not promising.

Figure 3. Historical stages or moments in social measures to prevent crimes against the environment

Stage	Laws	Institutions	Contributions	Contradictions
1991-2000	Environmental Protection Law	Ministry of Ecology	Initial establishment of the legal framework in environmental matters	Lack of resources and implementation of public policies
2001-2010	Environmental Impact Assessment Act	Creation of several government agencies	More robust legislative development	Corruption and lack of compliance
2011-2020	National Strategy for Sustainable Development	NGOs and social movements	Public awareness of environmental issues	Disconnection between discourse and action
2021-present	Law on State Environmental Control	New institutional reforms	Adaptation to war crises	Challenges in Implementing Environmental Protection During War

Source: prepared by the authors (2025)

In historical terms, despite the complexity of the current moment, there has been a renewed push towards international cooperation with the European Union and alignment with European standards in environmental matters. International

pressure has led Ukraine to commit to stricter legal reforms that seek to address both environmental crimes and improve the country's ecological resilience to future crises. However, legitimate concerns remain about how these laws will be implemented amid the current conflict and, even more, whether there will be enough political will to prioritize environmental protection over other urgent needs arising from the war and the national reconstruction process that follows (Marszałek, 2021).

#### **4. Social measures to prevent environmental crime: debates and proposals**

According to Bobbio (1985), social measures to prevent crimes against the environment are defined as collective political actions that involve communities, civil society organizations, individuals, the State, and the private sector. These measures seek to create a framework of shared responsibility where each actor assumes an active role in the protection of the natural environment. Here, intersectoral and intersubjective collaboration is the force to foster a culture of sustainability and respect for the environment. By integrating education, awareness-raising and community action efforts, effective mechanisms and practices can be established to prevent environmental crime while promoting sustainable development that benefits society. This multidimensional direction is the basis for addressing the complexity of the environmental problems facing Ukraine today, which also has an impact on the quality of its democracy (Sartori, 2009).

For the authors of this research, a key social measure is the creation of new alliances between the State and local communities to implement environmental

education programs. Under certain conditions of action and participation, these partnerships can facilitate the training of citizens on the importance of protecting the environment and the legal consequences of environmental crimes. According to Golovko, Kutsevych, Serediuk, and Bogdan (2020), when communities are involved in environmental monitoring, a culture of responsibility and participation can be fostered. Equally, these initiatives can include workshops and awareness-raising campaigns that use digital media to reach a wider audience, especially in times of war where resources are limited. This initiative not only empowers communities, but also creates a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the natural environment and mother earth.

Another important measure is to strengthen existing environmental legislation through reforms that include harsher penalties for environmental crimes. This involves reviewing laws such as the Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental Impact Assessment Act to ensure that they are effective and dissuasive in the light of current historical circumstances. The implementation of a more rigorous natural reality monitoring system is also essential when seeking to ensure compliance with these laws. Accordingly, public institutions should work in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop mechanisms that facilitate the reporting of environmental violations while simultaneously protecting whistleblowers. All indications are that proactive action in law enforcement can help restore public trust in state institutions while also demonstrating that they take environmental violations seriously.

In this regard, the document entitled *The environmental consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine*, authored by the European Parliament, establishes that the promotion of sustainable business practices is another crucial measure to

prevent environmental crime in Ukraine. Therefore, companies must be encouraged to adopt clean technologies and responsible practices that minimize their environmental impact. This can be achieved through tax incentives or government subsidies for those companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. In addition, fostering partnerships between businesses and local communities can result in joint projects that benefit both the local economy and the environment. Collaboration can include initiatives such as community recycling programs or ecosystem restoration, which not only improves the corporate image, but also contributes to social and environmental well-being (European Parliament, 2023).

Finally, it is important to strengthen collaborative networks between NGOs, government institutions and international actors to address environmental crime from a global perspective. These networks can facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, as well as provide additional resources for training and awareness-raising on environmental issues (European Parliament, 2023). International cooperation can also be key to addressing cross-border problems related to ecological crime, such as illegal wildlife trafficking or water pollution. By joining forces, actors committed to the environmental cause can create a common front against environmental crime and work towards sustainable solutions that benefit the entire region (World Economic Forum, 2022).

In short, the proposed social measures – building partnerships between the state and local communities, strengthening environmental legislation, promoting sustainable business practices, and strengthening collaborative networks – are essential to prevent environmental crime in Ukraine, including in a context of war. Taken together, these initiatives, on the one hand, foster greater awareness of the



importance of the environment and, on the other, promote transformative action where all social actors assume their responsibility for the protection of the natural environment and are not limited only to waiting for the work of the State. For these reasons, implementing these measures can contribute significantly to building a more sustainable and resilient Ukraine in the face of current and future environment-related challenges.

## Conclusions

Unfortunately, the adverse conditions of the war in Ukraine have had a devastating impact on the capabilities of the state, especially regarding national security and defense. In this complex scenario of national crisis, attention and resources that would traditionally have been allocated to environmental protection have been diverted to the war effort, resulting in a notable decrease in initiatives to address environmental crimes. As a result, environmental infrastructures have suffered significant damage, and the institutions responsible for their protection have been limited in their operational capacity (WWF, 2022). This process has led to an accelerated deterioration of ecosystems, with consequences that could be irreversible if urgent measures are not taken to restore and protect the natural environment. Thus, the war has not only exacerbated pre-existing environmental problems, but has also created new challenges that require immediate attention.

But what are the main laws regulating ecological crimes in Ukraine? As for the laws regulating environmental crimes in Ukraine, the Environmental Protection Law of 1995, the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, and the Law on Air Protection (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022) stand out. In their effect, both textual and contextual, these laws have succeeded in establishing a

basic legal framework for the protection of the environment, promoting the responsibility of companies and the State in the management of natural resources. Despite its contributions, its weaknesses include the lack of effective mechanisms for its implementation and a judicial system that commonly does not adequately sanction violations of these regulatory frameworks. Moreover, corruption and lack of resources have limited their effectiveness, leading to a culture of impunity in relation to environmental crimes. Despite these challenges, these laws represent an important step towards greater environmental awareness and action in the country.

How has the public perception of environmental crime evolved over the past three decades? The social perception of these crimes in Ukraine has evolved significantly over the past three decades. In the 90s, the social gaze was predominantly focused on economic growth and post-Soviet reconstruction, with little attention to environmental problems (World Economic Forum, 2022). However, as awareness of climate change and environmental degradation has grown in qualitative terms, so has public pressure to address these issues.

According to a report authored by Soldatiuk-Westerveld, Deen, and van Steenberg (2023), social movements and non-governmental organizations have played a crucial role in raising this awareness and demanding accountability from the government. In fact, in today's global world, there is a broader recognition of the interconnectedness between human well-being and environmental health, which has led to a greater demand for effective policies to prevent ecological crime and definitively overcome the anthropocentric paradigm.

In Ukraine's historical consciousness, the Chernobyl disaster has left an indelible mark with a direct impact on environmental legislation. This tragic

event, to say the least, not only revealed the failures in the environmental risk management of atomic energy, but also prompted significant reforms in public policies related to nuclear safety and disaster management. The response to the disaster led to increased regulation on hazardous waste management and the creation of specific laws to protect contaminated areas. However, despite these legislative advances, the effects of the disaster continue to be a priority problem in terms of public health and environmental protection. The experience gained after Chernobyl is still relevant to address other contemporary environmental challenges around the world.

In this order of ideas, for public policymakers and researchers in the environmental field in general, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive approach that contemplates both the immediate needs derived from the war conflict and the long-term strategies to restore the balance of the environment. Therefore, it is recommended to foster cooperation between different government sectors and non-governmental organizations to implement effective measures (political, legislative, and social) against environmental crimes. In addition, it is necessary to invest in environmental education to raise awareness among the population about their leading role in the protection of the natural and cultural environment in which they are immersed and in which they develop their identity. The creation of transparent mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the environmental impact of economic activities, within the framework of social control, is also key to ensuring effective accountability for the achievement of a true democracy.

Beyond romantic ecological discourses, the imperative need to defend the environment in the twenty-first century is becoming increasingly critical in the face of the imminent risk of the collapse of human civilization due to poor

management of natural resources (Diamond, 2007). Therefore, environmental degradation not only threatens specific ecosystems, but also endangers public health and social well-being globally. In the context of ongoing global warming, if decisive action is not taken to reverse this destructive trend, future generations will face catastrophic consequences that could include resource shortages, conflicts over water and food, as well as natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize concrete actions that protect our mother earth as the vital center of ecological and social balance for the development of all forms of life.

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