

Budonny Valentin,

cadet of the 1st year of the

Training Scientific Forensic Criminalistics Institute of the
National Academy of Internal Affairs, specialty «Law»

Language Adviser: **Volik O.V.,**

Senior Lecturer of the Language Training Department
of the National Academy of Internal Affairs

CURRENT ISSUES OF EXPANDING THE BARRIER-FREE SPACE IN UKRAINE

The development of a barrier-free environment is one of the priority directions of modern democratic states. It reflects the level of social responsibility, respect for human rights, and the practical implementation of equality principles. In Ukraine, the issue of accessibility has become especially relevant due to the consequences of military aggression, internal displacement, urban destruction, and the growing number of people with disabilities, veterans, elderly citizens, and other groups requiring inclusive conditions. Therefore, expanding the barrier-free space is not only a social initiative but also a strategic necessity for sustainable national recovery and European integration.

Barrier-free space means an environment where every person can freely move, communicate, study, work, receive services, and participate in public life regardless of age, health condition, physical abilities, or social status [1]. It includes physical accessibility of buildings, streets, transport, digital services, education, healthcare institutions, and administrative procedures. In a broader sense, barrier-free policy also covers the elimination of psychological stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes in society.

Ukraine has already taken important steps in this direction. In recent years, state authorities approved national strategies and programs aimed at improving accessibility. One of the key initiatives is the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030, which defines major principles and tasks for state institutions and local communities [2]. The implementation of this strategy contributes to harmonization with European standards and international obligations, particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

However, despite positive progress, many problems remain unresolved. First of all, a considerable part of residential buildings, educational institutions, hospitals, railway stations, and public offices still lack ramps, elevators, tactile signs, adapted toilets, or accessible entrances. In small towns and rural areas, the level of accessibility is significantly lower than in large cities. Public transport also often remains inconvenient for wheelchair users, parents with baby strollers, and elderly people.

Another urgent issue concerns digital accessibility. As Ukraine actively develops e-governance and online public services, websites and mobile applications must be understandable and usable for all citizens, including persons with visual or hearing impairments. Some electronic resources still do not meet international accessibility standards, which creates new barriers instead of removing them [3]. Therefore, the state should pay greater attention to inclusive digital transformation.

The consequences of the full-scale war have made the barrier-free agenda even more significant. Thousands of defenders and civilians received injuries that changed their mobility needs. Many people need prosthetics, rehabilitation, adapted housing, accessible transport, and opportunities for employment after treatment. Veterans returning to civilian life must feel that society is ready to support them through practical inclusion rather than formal declarations. Thus, barrier-free reconstruction of destroyed cities and infrastructure should become an obligatory principle of post-war recovery.

To solve these issues effectively, cooperation between the state, local self-government bodies, business sector, educational institutions, and civil society is required. New buildings should be designed according to universal design principles. Existing infrastructure must gradually undergo modernization. Municipalities should allocate sufficient funds for accessibility programs. Businesses can contribute by adapting workplaces, shopping centers, hotels, and service facilities. Universities should prepare specialists in inclusive architecture, urban planning, and social management.

Public awareness is equally important. Even the best infrastructure cannot ensure inclusion if discrimination and indifference continue to exist. Society must understand that barrier-free solutions benefit everyone: people with disabilities, temporarily injured persons, parents with children, tourists with luggage, elderly citizens, and many others. Accessibility should be considered not as a privilege for a minority but as a standard of quality life for all members of society.

In conclusion, expanding the barrier-free space in Ukraine is an urgent legal, social, and humanitarian task. It requires comprehensive reforms, sufficient financing, responsible governance, and active civic participation. The future of Ukraine should be based on equality, dignity, and accessibility. A truly modern European state cannot exist where barriers limit human potential. Therefore, the creation of a barrier-free environment must remain among the central priorities of national development.

References

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Verbitsky Bogdan,
cadet of the 3rd year of the
Training Scientific Forensic Criminalistics Institute of the
National Academy of Internal Affairs, specialty «Law»
Language Adviser: **Volik O.V.,**
Senior Lecturer of the Language Training Department
of the National Academy of Internal Affairs

RECORDING EVIDENCE DURING MARTIAL LAW: TECHNICAL MEANS

The recording of evidence in criminal proceedings has traditionally been regarded as a key element of forensic support for proof, consisting in the fixation of factual data in a legally prescribed form for their further use in the process of proving. Under the current conditions of martial law, this activity becomes particularly complex, as it is carried out in an environment of increased risks, limited access to crime scenes, and the need for rapid response to offenses, especially war crimes. Therefore, technical means of recording evidence are no longer merely auxiliary tools but have effectively become a central component of forensic activity [6].

From a general theoretical perspective, recording is defined as the process of fixing traces, objects, and phenomena that have evidentiary value by reflecting them in material or digital form [6]. According to the provisions of the criminal procedural legislation of Ukraine, in particular Article 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, the use of technical means of recording is mandatory in a number of procedural actions, and in other cases is carried out at the discretion of the investigator or upon request of the participants in the proceedings [4]. However, during martial law, these provisions undergo certain transformations due to the need to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of investigations.

Scientific literature emphasizes that under martial law, the use of accessible technical means becomes particularly important, even if they are not specialized forensic tools, such as mobile phones, portable video recorders, and unmanned aerial vehicles [1]. Such tools allow оперативно recording the situation at the crime scene, which is critically important in situations where there is a risk of destruction of evidence or the impossibility of repeated access to the object. At the same time, the issue of admissibility of such evidence arises, since their collection does not always comply with classical procedural standards [2].

Special attention should be paid to digital evidence, which in modern armed conflicts constitutes a significant part of the evidentiary base. The use