Digital Records Management in Ukrainian Universities: Wartime Challenges and Sustainable Solutions

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Abstract. The experience of introducing electronic document-management systems (EDMS) at a Ukrainian higher-education institution is analysed. The main challenges and successes of implementing an EDMS are identified on the example of relocated to Kyiv Mariupol State University.

Key words: electronic document management systems, digitalisation, higher education institutions, Mariupol State University, iDoc platform, records management, information security.

INTRODUCTION

Today it is vital to focus on a topic that is not only relevant but also critically important for the effective functioning of higher-education institutions (HEIs) in Ukraine — the implementation of electronic document-management systems. The aim is not simply to review the experience of introducing such systems in Ukrainian HEIs, but also to show how the choice of a specific product plays a decisive role in this process.

Digitalisation is not merely a trend; it is a necessity. In a world where the speed of information exchange determines who survives in a highly competitive environment, electronic document management becomes a key element in optimising internal processes within HEIs. For educators this means reducing administrative workloads and increasing the transparency and controllability of documentation processes. The present study analyses the real-world experience of implementing an EDMS at Mariupol State University.

RESULTS

An EDMS is more than a technical solution; it is a new approach to document governance that completely changes the way we work with information. A crucial component of this process is the legal framework regulating electronic document management in Ukraine. It includes international standards (DSTU ISO series 30300) [1], Ukrainian laws and by-laws (the Laws of Ukraine "On Electronic Identification and Trust Services" No. 2155-VIII of 5 October 2017 [2]; "On Electronic Documents and Electronic Document Management" No. 851-IV of 22 May 2003 [3]; "On Information" No. 2657-XII of 2 October 1992; "On Access to Public Information" No. 2939-VI of 13 January 2011; "On Protection of Information in Information-Telecommunication Systems" No. 80/94-VR of 5 July 1994 [4]; "On the National Archival Fund and Archival Institutions" No. 3815-XII of 24 December 1993), as well as resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine ("On Approval of the Procedure for Working with Electronic Documents in Record-Keeping and Their Preparation for Transfer to Archival Storage" No. 1886 of 11 November 2014 [5]; "Certain Issues of Documenting Managerial Activity" No. 55 of 17 January 2018 [6]) and related recommendations that ensure system compatibility and compliance with global practice.

Case of Mariupol State University (Kyiv). Before the full-scale war that began in 2021, MSU already faced unique challenges linked to the specifics of its region [7]. Initially, the university chose the ASKOD system to automate document workflows. ASKOD offers extensive customisation options, allowing adaptation to the university's specific needs. It supports efficient management of all document types, including teaching materials, administrative orders, reports and contracts. The university received methodological support and guidance on organising its workflows, creating favourable conditions for successful implementation in a challenging regional context.

However, economic constraints and the Mariupol City Council's unwillingness to co-finance the ASKOD rollout compelled the university to adopt iDoc, a commercial, non-government EDMS developed in Dnipro.

Below are the advantages and disadvantages of iDoc in the context of its deployment at Mariupol State University (idoc.mu.edu.ua).

Advantages of iDoc EDMS include:

– iDoc consolidates all documents in one location, giving different structural units unified access to the information they need and eliminating the need for paper copies (centralized digital ecosystem).

– The system streamlines approvals, registers incoming and outgoing correspondence and tracks task execution, saving staff time (automation of routine tasks).

– Via the idoc.mu.edu.ua interface, users can work with documents regardless of their location — critical for remote work or crisis conditions (web-based access).

– Built-in safeguards include configurable access rights and data encryption to protect confidential information from unauthorised access (information security).

– iDoc integrates with other university information systems, maintaining a unified information space for all document types (seamless integration).

– Support for digital signatures makes documents legally valid without paper originals (qualified electronic signature).

Amongst disadvantages of iDoc EDMS we consider:

– Implementation and maintenance are expensive, and annual fees may rise unpredictably at the sole discretion of iDoc's management (high and unpredictable costs).

– Considerable financial and time investments were required for system customisation and staff training (resource-intensive deployment).

– Ongoing user training is essential, and some employees initially resisted the new technology, affecting early results and necessitating additional change-management efforts (training burden and resistance to change).

– In the initial stages, slow technical support led to system downtime and extra time spent resolving issues (technical-support delays).

Overall, deploying iDoc at Mariupol State University delivers substantial benefits that optimise document workflows and enhance managerial efficiency. At the same time, drawbacks such as high implementation costs and staff resistance require careful, strategic mitigation.

General findings are: technical limitations and the need for continuous staff training persist; organizational and HR issues are acute, and successful implementation demands effective change management and strong leadership support; cybersecurity remains paramount in an era of digitalisation and hybrid warfare.

Thus, introducing electronic document management is a complex process that requires a systemic approach. Universities that have already taken this step demonstrate impressive gains in managerial effectiveness and reduced administrative burdens.

In the coming years, EDMSs will continue to evolve, integrating with other information resources and adding new functions within a single digital ecosystem for HEIs. Further exploration of this topic is therefore highly promising.

LITERATURE

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