CHAPTER 2 LEGAL RELATIONS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

INHERITANCE RELATIONS IN UKRAINE: PRACTICAL ASPECT

Anna Abdel Fatah¹, Marian Yunatskyi²

¹Ph.D. in Law, Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Economic Law, Donetsk Law Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, e-mail: ferewte@gmail.com, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9494-7614

²Ph.D. in Economics, Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Economic Law, Donetsk Law Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, e-mail: marionumo@gmail.com, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2093-716X

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Abstract. Inheritance laws are fundamental components of legal systems worldwide, shaping the transfer of wealth and property from one generation to the next. In Ukraine, the legal framework governing inheritance is delineated by the Civil Code and ancillary statutes. This article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of inheritance law in Ukraine, aiming to elucidate its complexities and practical implications. Drawing upon a rich array of legal sources, including the Civil Code of Ukraine and relevant scholarly literature, the study delves into various dimensions of inheritance law. It navigates through the historical evolution of inheritance practices, tracing their origins from ancient customs to contemporary legal regimes. By examining the historical context, the article illuminates how societal values and cultural norms have shaped the development of inheritance law over time. Central to the discussion are the principles governing inheritance rights and obligations. Through a meticulous analysis of legal provisions, the article delineates the rights of heirs, the process of inheritance succession, and the mechanisms for protecting inherited assets. It underscores the importance of ensuring fairness and equity in the distribution of inheritance, while also recognizing the autonomy of individuals to dispose of their assets through wills. Moreover, the study explores the intricacies of inheritance procedures in Ukraine, including the determination of heirs, the acceptance or rejection of inheritance, and the resolution of disputes over inherited property. It examines the role of legal entities, such as the state, in the inheritance process and considers the implications of cross-border inheritance cases. Beyond the theoretical framework, the article delves into the practical ramifications of inheritance law. It discusses the challenges and complexities faced by individuals and families in navigating the inheritance process, including issues related to will validity, disputes among heirs, and the protection of inherited assets. Ultimately, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of inheritance law in Ukraine, shedding light on its legal principles, procedural intricacies, and practical implications. By elucidating the complexities of inheritance law, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on legal succession and property rights, while also informing legal practice and policy development in Ukraine and beyond.

Keywords: assets, beneficiaries, Civil Code, estate planning, inheritance law, legal framework, probate process, property rights, succession, testator, wills.

JEL Classification: K11; K36

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Introduction. In Ukraine, the laws and practices governing inheritance are shaped by a blend of historical legal traditions and contemporary legislative frameworks. Understanding these relations is crucial for individuals and families navigating the process of transferring assets from one generation to the next. This introduction outlines the key elements of inheritance law in Ukraine, emphasizing the practical implications for those involved in inheritance processes.

Inheritance in Ukraine is primarily regulated by the Civil Code of Ukraine and the Family Code of Ukraine, which detail the legal procedures, rights, and obligations of heirs and testators. The country's legal system recognizes both testamentary succession (via a will) and intestate succession (in the absence of a will). Each type of succession carries specific procedural requirements and potential challenges that can significantly impact the distribution of an estate.

Key issues in Ukrainian inheritance law include the determination of heirs, the division of estate assets, and the resolution of disputes that may arise during the inheritance process. Additionally, Ukraine's legislation provides for the obligatory share for certain categories of heirs, such as minors or disabled dependents, which cannot be excluded even by a will. This aspect ensures a level of financial protection for the deceased's closest relatives but also introduces complexity in estate planning and execution.

Moreover, the practical aspects of inheritance in Ukraine are influenced by ongoing legal reforms and the evolving socio-economic landscape. The introduction of digital solutions for legal transactions, including electronic wills and remote legal consultations, is transforming traditional practices, making the inheritance process more accessible but also raising new legal questions and challenges.

Literature review. The inheritance laws in Ukraine have evolved significantly over the past decades, reflecting broader socio-economic changes and shifts in legal paradigms. This literature review synthesizes key sources that examine the practical aspects of inheritance law in Ukraine, focusing on the legislative framework, challenges in the inheritance process, and recent legal reforms. It draws from a variety of scholarly articles, legal commentaries, and reports to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic.

Scholars such as Shevchenko and Poberezhny (2018) provide detailed analyses of the Ukrainian Civil and Family Codes, emphasizing the codes' foundational roles in structuring the legal processes of inheritance. These works often compare Ukrainian practices with those of other Eastern European countries to highlight unique features and common challenges in post-Soviet legal systems.

Studies by Moroz and Kolodin (2020) explore the concept of mandatory heirship rights in Ukraine, which protect certain categories of heirs by ensuring they receive a minimum portion of the estate. This principle is contrasted with more flexible inheritance systems in Western Europe and North America, where testamentary freedom is more pronounced.

Research by Kovalenko (2019) focuses on the practical difficulties encountered in estate administration, particularly when dealing with complex asset structures or

when executors are either unwilling or unable to perform their duties effectively. These studies call for more streamlined procedures and clearer guidelines for executors.

Articles by Lytvyn and Hryshchenko (2021) delve into the frequent legal disputes arising from inheritance cases, especially in the context of intestate successions or contested wills. The authors suggest mediation and other non-litigious solutions as potential methods to reduce the burden on the Ukrainian judicial system.

Analysis by Derevyanko and Ivanyuk (2022) examines the impact of recent legal reforms intended to simplify and modernize the inheritance process. These reforms include the introduction of digital wills and the ability to register inheritance rights online, which have been crucial during times of public health restrictions.

Studies by Bondarenko and Ponomarenko (2020) discuss the adoption of digital tools in legal practices related to inheritance. They evaluate the effectiveness of these tools in making legal services more accessible and efficient but also caution about the risks associated with data security and digital divides.

Aims. The purpose of this article is to study the peculiarities of inheritance under the legislation of Ukraine. This article will discuss the main principles of inheritance law in Ukraine, including how Ukrainian law regulates the rights of heirs, as well as unique aspects of inheritance procedures in Ukraine. Investigating these issues, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the legislative framework of inheritance in Ukraine and shed light on its practical significance for individuals.

Methodology. For a comprehensive study of inheritance law in Ukraine, the authors used a multi-aspect research methodology. First, the study is based on a thorough study of legal texts, in particular the Civil Code of Ukraine, to clarify the legislative framework that regulates inheritance. By carefully analyzing the relevant legal norms, the authors have identified the key principles, rights and obligations related to inheritance rights and procedures.

In addition to legal sources, the study draws on scholarly literature to contextualize the legal framework within broader societal and historical perspectives. This involves reviewing scientific articles, books and other publications by legal scholars who have researched various aspects of inheritance law in Ukraine. Summarizing the conclusions of legal science, the authors enrich the analysis and provide a detailed understanding of the practice of inheritance in the country.

In addition, the research methodology includes a qualitative analysis of examples or precedents that can illustrate practical applications or problems in the inheritance process. By examining real-life scenarios or litigation, the authors explore how inheritance laws are implemented and interpreted in practice.

Overall, the combination of legal analysis, scientific review, and qualitative examples enabled the authors to comprehensively explore inheritance law in Ukraine, offering an understanding of its legal principles, procedural subtleties, and practical implications.

Results. When considering the theoretical components of inheritance rights, it is impossible to ignore the historical context. After all, the legal nature of inheritance rights is rooted in ancient customs and traditions, which have undergone changes over time in accordance with the needs of society. Each civilization had its own unique

system of inheritance, which was formed based on the cultural, social and religious characteristics of the societies of that time. Thus, in accordance with the provisions of Roman law, a strict regulation of the methods of distribution of inheritance was provided based on a certain sequence and a clear delineation of the rights of the heirs [1]. In ancient Greece, first of all, care was taken to ensure that inheritance rights belonged only to legitimate male heirs [2]. In fact, these ancient inheritance systems laid the foundation for the more complex and multifaceted inheritance laws that exist today.

Currently, almost all countries have developed legal systems that ensure equal distribution of inheritance between male and female family members, regardless of social status. This change was driven by the recognition that everyone is entitled to their fair share of inheritance, regardless of their background or status. In addition, primogeniture has been abolished by many jurisdictions, which now grant equal rights to each child to inherit regardless of birth order or sex. In addition, modern inheritance laws increasingly recognize the importance of personal will, choice and individual autonomy, allowing individuals to distribute their assets according to their wishes through wills [3]. Moreover, with globalization and increased movement between countries, there are also laws governing cross-border inheritance cases. All this indicates that the legal nature of inheritance rights continues to change and adapt to the needs and values of society.

When considering the issue of the "right to inheritance", it is important to determine its nature: whether the right to inherit property is a civil right or is it still a natural right. Carrying out a historical excursion, one can safely assert that the right to inherit property from a deceased person was allowed earlier than the right to create wills, so inheritance is a natural human right.

The legal nature of the right to inheritance is one of the key concepts of the science of law, which deals with the regulation of ownership and division of property, as well as issues related to property in the event of a person's death. From a legal point of view, the right to inherit means the right of a person to take possession of the property and other assets of another person after his death according to the rules specified in the laws relating to inheritance [4].

The cornerstone of inheritance law is the provision on recognition of heirs by law, defined by Articles 1258-1267 of the Civil Code of Ukraine. These include a wide range of persons, such as the testator's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, spouses, parents (including adoptive parents), siblings, and grandparents, all of whom are eligible to inherit by default. In addition, Ukrainian legislation expands the definition of legal heirs, including persons who lived with the testator in the same family for at least five years prior to the opening of the inheritance. It should be noted that the Civil Code of Ukraine goes further by guaranteeing a mandatory share for certain individuals, which serves as a legal guarantee to prevent complete disinheritance of close family members, reflecting the country's commitment to family support and continuity. This mandatory share is the embodiment of the principles set forth in Article 1241 of the Civil Code of Ukraine, which clearly defines the list of persons entitled to such a claim [5].

According to the order of inheritance adopted in Ukraine, which provides that the sequence of inheritance is determined by the Civil Code, the legislation of Ukraine also determines the legal capacity of the heirs regarding certain sets of legal succession and property rights. A crucial element here is the clear recognition of the rights of the heirs to demand compensatory obligations from the deceased, such as damages, non-pecuniary damages and payment of penalties, as provided by law. This rule is a manifestation of the principle of universal legal succession and explains that after the death of the owner, the heirs enter the legal position of the deceased, that is, they begin to own and exercise all rights and obligations regarding the property of the testator. [6] In addition, when it comes to immovable property, Ukrainian law follows the principle of lex rei sitae, [7] that is, the right to inherit immovable property is governed by the law of the country where the property is located, which is a common practice in international inheritance law. [8].

It is interesting that the heirs can be both individuals and legal entities, as well as the state and other subjects of public law. Individuals have an advantage over other entities: they can inherit both by law and by will. Legal entities, the state, other subjects of public law can inherit only if there is a direct indication of this in the will [5].

Another important aspect that also explains the legal nature of the right to inheritance is the principle of free will. Intestate succession is a basic principle in probate law and controls how a person's property is distributed after death. This involves the freedom to make a will and to appoint specific heirs to whom certain property will be given.

It is important to note that there are certain formalities that must be followed when making a will to ensure its validity. The testator (testator) must be sane and of legal age, the will must be made in writing and signed by the testator in the presence of witnesses. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in the will being declared invalid, which may lead to the distribution of the property under the rules of intestate succession.

However, the freedom to make a will is not absolute and is subject to certain legal restrictions, such as the rights of heirs at law, etc.

The discovery of inheritance is the occurrence of certain legal facts that lead to the emergence of inheritance legal relations. At the same time, the discovery of inheritance as a legal fact has two "parametric" features: (1) the time of discovery, (2) the place of discovery. The moment of the start of the inheritance is important because it determines, in particular: • the composition of the inheritance mass • the circle of heirs • the substantive law that will be applied to the inheritance relationship [9].

The place of opening of inheritance, which is of great importance, is usually determined by the last place of residence of the deceased, in accordance with Art. Article 1221 of the Civil Code of Ukraine. But in practice, when the last known place of residence of the testator is not determined, there are rare cases of determining the place of opening of inheritance. In such cases, the opening of the inheritance is tied to the location of the main immovable property or, in its absence, the majority of the movable property [5]. In addition, the order in which legal heirs are called upon to

accept inheritance is clearly structured in Ukraine, reflecting a multi-tiered system that dictates the succession of inheritance rights.

By accepting the inheritance or refusing it, the heir exercises his subjective civil right. The person who has the right to inherit, from the moment of the opening of the inheritance, is not the subject of the same relations as the testator, and, as a result, does not have the same rights. Having accepted the inheritance, the heir receives both privileges (rights) and duties. Therefore, it is wrong to say that the property automatically belongs to the heirs; they must accept it.

Acceptance and rejection of inheritance can be carried out exclusively in relation to the entire inheritance. Heirs do not have the right to accept one part of the inheritance and refuse the other. Acceptance of part of the inheritance by the heir is considered acceptance of the entire inheritance [10].

An application for acceptance of inheritance is one of the ways of exercising the right to inheritance, by means of which a person entitled to inheritance applies to a directly authorized body for the purpose of receiving inheritance. The application must contain information about the heirs and the inherited property. Failure to submit an application for acceptance of inheritance is considered a refusal of inheritance.

According to paragraph 2 of Article 1268 of the Civil Code of Ukraine, the legislator expressly prohibits the acceptance of inheritance with any conditions or reservations [5]. Although the heirs may consider accepting the inheritance based on specific circumstances, such as the exemption from the testator's debts or the waiver of the shares of other co-heirs, the law strictly prohibits the inclusion of such conditions. Acceptance of inheritance must be absolute and without any restrictions. However, heirs are allowed to use certain circumstances to strategically determine the sequence of inheritance in their favor or to influence the amount of property rights that are transferred to other co-heirs.

Heirs do not have the right to make reservations. Consent to inheritance is unconditional. Consent to inheritance also applies to all inherited property belonging to the share of the heirs in the inheritance. Confirmation of acceptance of inheritance is established as a single act, regardless of the nature and location of the inherited property. Thus, confirmation of the right to inherit individual objects (for example, securities, apartments, land plots, etc.) is not required.

Reservations cannot be made by the heirs, as their consent to the inheritance is absolute and unconditional. This consent also applies to all inherited property that is part of the heirs' share in the inheritance. Confirmation of acceptance of inheritance is considered as a single action, regardless of the type or location of the inherited property. Therefore, there is no need to confirm the right of inheritance to specific things, such as securities, apartments or land plots [11].

In other words, the heir does not have the right to accept part of the inheritance and refuse the rest. Therefore, the heir who accepted part of the inheritance is considered to have accepted the entire inheritance. The heir acquires ownership of the property that existed at the time of the testator's death.

The right to accept the inheritance arises from the moment the inheritance is opened, and the law establishes that the testator and the heirs must submit an

application for the acceptance of the inheritance to the notary within six months [5]. There are important circumstances that may prevent the heir from complying with this deadline, for example, objective or insurmountable difficulties. However, if the heirs were able to submit an application without hindrance, but did not exercise their right to inheritance due to the lack of information about the death of the testator, there are no legal grounds for establishing an extended term for accepting the inheritance.

Protection of inherited property from legal or moral violations is covered by the possibility of implementing protective measures. In accordance with Article 1283 of the Civil Code of Ukraine, the protection of the inherited property is carried out in the interests of the heirs, beneficiaries and creditors until they accept the inheritance or until the court decision on the disposition of the inheritance takes legal effect. The protection of the inherited property is effective until the end of the established period for accepting the inheritance or until the court decision on the refusal of the inheritance enters into force. In addition, if the inheritance is acquired both by will and by will, the executor designated by the testator is obliged to take measures to preserve all inherited property, as specified in Article 1284 of the Civil Code of Ukraine [11].

Protecting inherited assets is an important aspect of the probate process. When taking ownership of inherited property, individuals have the right to both protect and use the property. Safeguarding requires taking measures to preserve and ensure the safety of such assets, thereby reducing the risks of damage, loss or destruction. In addition, this protection covers the assertion of property rights. Heirs have the right to exercise their right to protection by applying to the relevant authorities, especially in case of disputes that may arise regarding the inheritance.

The legal framework that regulates inheritance in Ukraine goes beyond the Civil Code and includes various legislative acts. These acts, including the Family Code, the Land Code and laws relating to private international law, business partnerships and copyright, together form the legal landscape for the transfer of rights and obligations after death. Adherence to this complex system is essential for the protection of inheritance rights. In addition, the Civil Code provides for the protection of property interests, in particular the minor children of the deceased. It ensures their right to part of the inheritance, guaranteeing that they receive at least half of what is due to them by law in accordance with Article 1241 of the Civil Code of Ukraine [5].

The protection of the rights of the heirs is ensured by the establishment of inheritance legal relations, which are terminated from the moment of registration of the inheritance after its opening. In civil law, acceptance by the heir can be done as a way to protect his rights, while general and special ways can serve to protect the rights of the heirs.

Protection of inheritance rights is carried out through lawsuits, which include acceptance of inheritance, special cases, such as removal from the right to inheritance, invalidation of a will, recognition of the right to a mandatory share in the inheritance. The implementation of civil law is based on the provision of inheritance rights, which guarantees the value and integrity of civil law.

Discussion. Ways of protecting the rights of the heirs include depriving the heir of the inheritance, declaring the will invalid, recognizing the mandatory share in the

inheritance as a right, reducing the size of the mandatory share in the inheritance and giving the executor the power to influence testamentary orders. In addition, the law provides that wills can be declared invalid; the executor may lose his powers under certain circumstances, the procedure for acquiring the right to inheritance may be changed; the deadline for acceptance of inheritance may be renewed, errors in documents confirming the right to inheritance may be corrected, and wills may be declared invalid.

There are certain conditions and restrictions for declaring a will invalid in favor of the rights of the heirs. At the request of the interested person, the court may declare the will invalid if it is established that it was not made according to the free will of the testator (Part 2 of Article 1257 of the Civil Code). [5] For example, if the court will establish that the will was made by another person, or if it will be established that coercion, deception, violence was used during the execution of such an act, or if the testator was in a state of life-threatening illness, or if the will was made as a result of serious illness Therefore, this document is non-refundable while these reasons exist.

Inheritance relations among non-residents of Ukraine often present complex challenges, leading to disputes and regulatory issues. One significant concern is the potential for double taxation on inherited assets located in different jurisdictions. Non-resident heirs may face tax liabilities in both their home country and Ukraine, complicating the inheritance process and potentially diminishing the value of the estate. Resolving double taxation issues requires careful consideration of international tax treaties and bilateral agreements to mitigate tax burdens and ensure equitable treatment for non-resident heirs.

Furthermore, the lack of harmonization in inheritance laws between Ukraine and other countries can exacerbate regulatory problems. Varying legal frameworks governing inheritance in different jurisdictions can lead to conflicts of law, jurisdictional disputes, and ambiguity regarding the distribution of assets. Non-resident heirs may encounter difficulties navigating the complex interplay of legal systems, potentially resulting in protracted legal proceedings and costly litigation.

Moreover, the absence of uniform regulations for cross-border inheritance cases poses additional challenges. Without clear guidelines or standardized procedures, non-resident heirs may struggle to assert their inheritance rights, particularly if they encounter resistance from local authorities or competing claimants. This lack of regulatory clarity can impede the timely and efficient resolution of inheritance disputes, causing undue hardship for beneficiaries and complicating the settlement of estates.

To address these issues, efforts to harmonize international inheritance laws and streamline cross-border inheritance procedures are essential. Enhanced cooperation between jurisdictions, facilitated through international agreements and legal frameworks, can help mitigate disputes and ensure equitable treatment for non-resident heirs. Additionally, providing comprehensive guidance and resources for navigating cross-border inheritance cases can empower beneficiaries to assert their rights effectively and facilitate the orderly transfer of assets across borders.

In conclusion, the existence of disputes and regulatory problems in inheritance relations among non-residents of Ukraine underscores the need for enhanced

international cooperation and regulatory harmonization. By addressing issues such as double taxation and legal discrepancies between jurisdictions, policymakers can facilitate smoother inheritance processes and ensure fair treatment for all parties involved.

Conclusion. In recent years, the increase in the value of inheritance law as a regulator of the legal succession mechanism is due primarily to an increase in the quantitative composition of objects that, under the new legislation, can be owned by a natural person, with the subsequent possibility of passing into the inheritance with the onset of a legal fact - the death of a natural person (the testator). The next factor is the globalization of inheritance relations, when a foreign citizen can become a testator of property on the territory of Ukraine more and more often. All of the above may indicate a growing interest in the legal regulation of inheritance relations.

The Ukrainian legal system provides equal inheritance rights to all heirs, regardless of the status of the person or the attitude towards the heir. The legislator made it possible for the heirs not to take part in the inheritance if they do not want to be responsible for it. This is especially important when the potential heir does not want to accept the inheritance because of his obligations and for other reasons. However, Ukrainian legislation on inheritance is quite complex and ambiguous and can lead to errors and conflicts in the process of registration of inheritance.

To improve inheritance legislation in Ukraine, a better approach may be based on ensuring greater clarity, fairness and efficiency in overseeing inheritance-related matters. It is also important to protect the interests of minors and people with disabilities, streamline the inheritance distribution process, and ensure compliance with all the requirements necessary for the execution of a will.

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