



Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Higher Education Institutions: the Alfred Nobel University Model

Victoriia Sokolova,
Higher Educational Institution “Alfred Nobel University”, Ukraine
e-mail: sokolova.v@duan.edu.ua
Nataliia Shpak,
Higher Educational Institution “Alfred Nobel University”, Ukraine
e-mail: nataliia.shpak@duan.edu.ua

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INTRODUCTION

The full-scale war has significantly increased the need for innovative approaches to youth employment, entrepreneurship, and economic resilience in Ukraine. Higher education institutions can play an important role in addressing these challenges by moving beyond traditional education and becoming active elements of regional entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems. This paper examines the experience of Alfred Nobel University (ANU) in Dnipro in developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem that connects higher education, young entrepreneurs, business organisations, civil society, and international partners. ANU – 35th in Entrepreneurial Spirit and 67th in Technology Development and Application in the World University Rankings for Innovation Foundation (WURI) 2025. The Strategy of ANU 2025–2030 identifies practice-oriented education and support for student entrepreneurship, the development of entrepreneurial skills, and the creation of a university business incubator as priority areas for development.

RESULTS

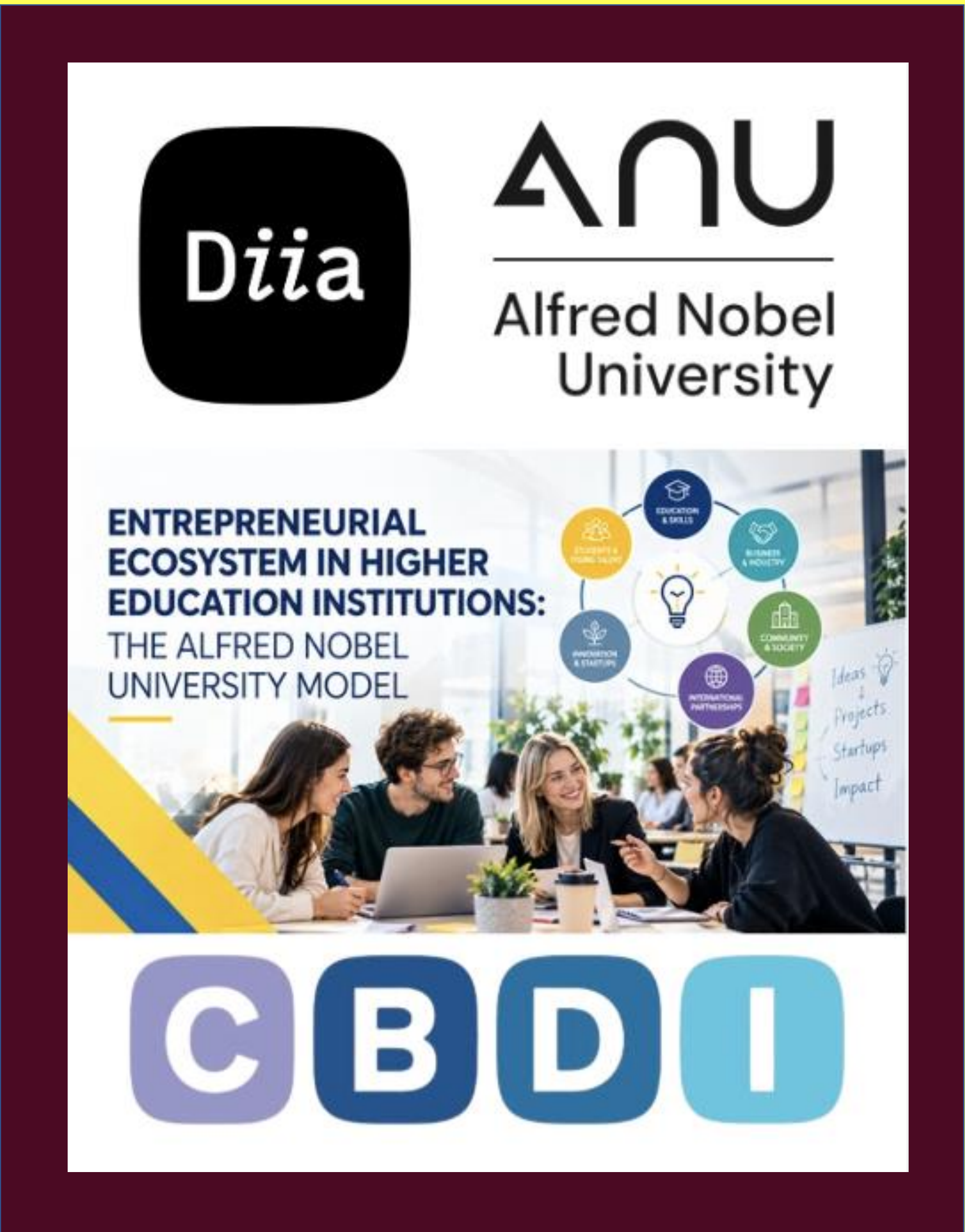
The analysis focuses on ANU’s engagement with entrepreneurship-oriented initiatives and programmes. Among them are "Diia. Business", "Young Entrepreneur", University Business School, as well as initiatives that cover over 6,710 entrepreneurs, community representatives and other target groups, who participated in educational programs, consultations, accelerators, trainings, seminars and public events during the period of 2026; Within the framework of the BLOOM project, 36 events were held in 2.5 months, which covered over 796 participants, of which 500 were unique; 55 women received support in the "Bold" program, three of whom became semi-finalists of the national competition, and one participant received a grant of 1.5 million hryvnias; 40 leaders and representatives of territorial communities of the Dnipropetrovsk region received training in the UNDP Circular Economy program; 270 individual consultations, 5 educational and partnership events on digitalization, artificial intelligence, export, marketing, financial literacy, grant financing and business development were held; The practice of assessing the digital maturity of enterprises and providing individual recommendations for digital transformation was introduced. "Career Elevator: Career, Freelance and Entrepreneurship Centers for the Restoration of Ukraine in Pereshchepinsk Community"; 590 people in Kryvyi Rih Territorial Community. "Career Elevator: Career, Freelance and Entrepreneurship Centers for the Restoration of Ukraine in Kryvyi Rih Territorial Community"; 380 people in Pereshchepinsk Community. The study demonstrates how a combination of educational, mentoring and practical initiatives can support the development of entrepreneurial competences and transform students and young people from passive recipients of education into active participants in innovation and economic recovery.

METHODOLOGY

The study combines a qualitative case study approach to examine the institutional model of the ANU entrepreneurial ecosystem with quantitative indicators that reveal the content of the model’s effectiveness. Particular attention is given to activities aimed at strengthening entrepreneurial skills, leadership, innovation, project development and women’s participation in entrepreneurship. A qualitative case-study approach is used to analyse the institutional model, stakeholder engagement mechanisms and outcomes of these initiatives. The study identifies several key elements of an effective university-based entrepreneurial ecosystem: integration of entrepreneurship into educational activities; practical learning and mentoring; cooperation with business and external entrepreneurial initiatives; support for youth and women; and international networking. Such an approach creates opportunities for knowledge exchange, innovation and business development while strengthening the University’s contribution to regional resilience and recovery.

CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION AND NOVELTY

The study concludes by proposing directions for further development of the ANU entrepreneurial ecosystem through international cooperation, particularly with Estonian higher education and innovation stakeholders. The study also identifies opportunities for developing joint research initiatives and future Horizon Europe projects focused on entrepreneurship, innovation, inclusive economic development and university–business cooperation.



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