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ENSURING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES IN THE WAR CONDITIONS IN UKRAINE

Abstract. The article analyzes the specifics of the process of ensuring the quality of public services in the conditions of war in Ukraine. It is emphasized: 
a) that among the effective tools for improving the quality of public services in territorial communities, it is worth highlighting the cooperation of territorial communities; 
b) that such a tool as the involvement of the NGOs in the processes of ensuring the quality of public services and solving urgent problems in the community should, especially today in the conditions of war, become not something peripheral, unimportant for the local self-government body in Ukraine, but a priority in the work, become an integral part the process of developing a local policy for the development of territories and post-war reconstruction.

However, in addition to the involvement of citizens in the organizational and management processes of the sustainable development of residential areas, the level of cohesion of all interested parties, their initiative, and activity, both in terms of a single administrative-territorial unit as part of a territorial community, and the country as a whole, is important.

The competent involvement of human resources is the key to reengineering many processes of ensuring the quality of public services at the community level in the context of sustainable development. It can be – organization of permanent work with service recipients, conducting sociological surveys (consideration and analysis of claims and wishes, study of demand for services provided); regular internal audits of the effectiveness of the service quality system - checking the competence of the employees themselves for knowledge of legislation and many other methods, as well as the well-known - monitoring and evaluation. In addition, at the level of communities, there is a need to implement methods of monitoring the legality of decisions of local self-government bodies and the quality of public services provided to the population.

Keywords: public administration, decentralization, local self-government, cooperation of territorial communities, human resources, territorial development, sustainable development, quality, financial stability, reconstruction, digitalization.
ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ПУБЛІЧНИХ ПОСЛУГ В ТЕРИТОРІАЛЬНИХ ГРОМАДАХ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ

Анотація. У статті аналізується специфіка процесу забезпечення якості надання публічних послуг в умовах війни в Україні. Наголошено: а) що серед дієвих інструментів підвищення якості публічних послуг у територіальних громадах варто виділити співпрацю територіальних громад; б) залучення громадських організацій. Щоб цей інструмент залучення ГО як до процесів забезпечення якості публічних послуг, так і до вирішення нагальних проблем у громаді, особливо сьогодні в умовах війни, не став чимось периферійним, неважливим для місцевого самоврядування, важливо зробити його пріоритетним у роботі, невід’ємною частиною процесу розробки місцевої політики розвитку територій та стратегій післявоєнної відбудови.

Проте, окрім залучення громадян до організаційно-управлінських процесів сталого розвитку територій, рівень згуртованості всіх зацікавлених сторін, їх ініціатива та активність, як в умовах єдиної адміністративно-територіальної одиниці, так і територіальної громади та країни в цілому є важливим. Грамотне залучення людських ресурсів є запорукою реінжинірингу багатьох процесів забезпечення якості публічних послуг на рівні громади в контексті сталого розвитку. Це може бути – організація постійної роботи з отримувачами (замовниками) публічних послуг, проведення соціологічних опитувань (розгляд та аналіз претензій та побажань, вивчення попиту на надані послуги); регулярні внутрішні аудити ефективності системи якості публічних послуг - перевірка компетентності самих співробітників на знання законодавства і багато інших методів, а також відомі - моніторинг і оцінка, що є ключовими у процесах забезпечення якості публічних послуг. Крім того, на рівні громад є необхідність впровадження методів контролю за законністю рішень органів місцевого самоврядування та якістю надання населеню публічних послуг.

Ключові слова: державне управління, децентралізація, місцеве самоврядування, співпраця територіальних громад, людські ресурси, територіальний розвиток, сталий розвиток, якість, фінансова стійкість, реконструкція, цифровізація.

Problem Statement. Against the background of numerous disasters, wars, political and other conflicts, climate change, demographic and existing socio-
economic problems, which have only deepened in the realities of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, it is quite difficult to talk about sustainable development and financial stability in Ukraine.

So, the Decision of December 14, 2023 by the European Council "decision on the start of negotiations on the accession of Ukraine and Moldova to the EU" [1] is a huge step forward, which preceded certain transformations both in the field of public administration and in the field of public services. In the Report of the European Commission, which was prepared and presented in the fall of 2023, regarding the progress of reforms in Ukraine, the achievements of decentralization and the need to complete this reform after the war, the role of municipalities in the organization of voluntary territorial defense, the reception of internally displaced persons, the restoration of basic social services" [2, P.13-14].

However, ensuring ubiquity throughout the country and ensuring the quality and availability of public services is a complex, multifaceted and painful problem. In addition to existing disparities in the provision of public services, there are undoubtedly other problems that are directly related to the processes and algorithms of providing services of appropriate quality to the community.

**Analysis of Recent Studies and Publications.** Domestic scientists (Y. Kuts, V. Tymoshchuk, V. Plyusch, O. Kovryga, D. Sukhinin and others), whom analyzed the policy of ensuring the quality of public services in Ukraine, in their thematic studies alongside the phrase «public services» very often use other terms as well as: «state services», «state-administration services», «management services», «executive services», «public-administration services». In scientific sources, you can find, including, quite different classification of public services. Among others, the one that considers social, state, municipal, administrative services as components of public services.

**The purpose of this academic paper** is to analyze the specifics of the process of ensuring the quality of public services in the conditions of war in Ukraine.

**Presentation of the Basic Material.** Since independence, in Ukraine, including due to digital solutions and decentralization processes, there have indeed been several important and unusual events and modifications in the field of public administration and provision of public services:

1. Rethinking the role, tasks and functions of local self-government bodies.
2. Change in approaches and principles in the implementation of local self-government bodies' own and delegated powers by state authorities.
3. Creation of digital platforms and web resources, overloading and reengineering of some management processes at the level of territorial communities in Ukraine and in general in the system of local self-government bodies and their representative bodies, presented today (and this is clearly
defined in regulatory documents and the Constitution) as village, settlement, city, district and regional councils.

Elucidation of the essence and nature of public services began at the time of Independence. Among the parameters and characteristics of a public service, the following are distinguished: «public nature of this, responsibility and establishment of guarantees for its provision, high social significance" [3, P. 57].

For our part, we would also add to this list - such mandatory and integral aspects as the openness and responsibility of local self-government bodies involved in providing and ensuring the quality of public services at the level of territorial communities in Ukraine.

The basic criterion at the basis of the classification of public services is the criterion «depending on the entity providing these services». Therefore, the following services are distinguished by the subject of provision (authorized subject) [4]:

state - provided by state authorities (mainly executive), state enterprises, institutions, organizations, as well as local self-government bodies in order to fulfill the powers delegated by the state at the expense of state budget funds;

municipal - provided by the local self-government bodies, as well as by executive authorities and enterprises, institutions, and organizations in order to fulfill the delegated powers of the local government at the expense of the local budget.

The European approach to the classification of public services also differs, but the basis is the criterion «by public importance», according to which: services of general interest and services of general economic interest [5].

The first category includes water supply, energy supply and waste removal, health care, social services, education and even the post office. Their peculiarity is that they cannot be governed by normal market (private identical as in business or commerce) rules, since this would mean that the weak and needy always lose. Services of general economic interest mainly include any permitting actions, licensing of certain types of economic activity. The specified services are vital (socially significant) for the residents of communities, in our opinion, precisely because of the significant impact on the social well-being and well-being of residents of certain territories (rural/village, urban communities).

Currently, the financing of the processes of providing services in the communities is done at the expense of the state or local budgets (administrative service centers, for example, from the local budget). Local self-governing bodies along with the expansion of individual powers and the range of public services received powers and the range of services, were given the opportunity to increase local budgets and implement large-scale infrastructure projects (construction of roads, modernization of schools, hospitals, kindergartens, arrangement of sports grounds, street lighting, etc.). It was assumed that the resources involved in the development of the communities.
At the same time, local self-governing bodies constantly face new difficulties and challenges. Thus, as a result of military actions of the Russian Federation, gross violations of international law, numerous destructions of residential/non-residential buildings, districts, territories, damage to social and industrial infrastructure, human losses, in many communities there was a decrease in the quality of services, a complete or partial loss of the ability to provide them. At the same time, the degree of worsening of the situation with the provision and quality assurance of public services depends on how affected a specific community is.

Conditionally, the following categories can be distinguished:
- conditionally affected communities, which during the full-scale invasion were not subjected to rocket and other attacks, but have a significant flow of internally displaced persons, which places a significant burden on the city's infrastructure;
- affected communities;
- communities located near the front line;
- communities in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;
- communities already from the de-occupied territories.

Each of the five categories requires its own territorial development strategy, which will be based on a thorough analysis of the situation in the community (context), the needs of the population (primary or secondary, vital, socially significant). We believe that this approach will work well for post-war reconstruction planning. That is, it is best to determine priorities in providing and ensuring the quality of public services, rank the needs of citizens and classify them relative to the category of citizens (natural and legal entities, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, etc.) at which this or that public service is aimed. In today's realities and due to the lack of finances in the section of communities and services, nothing bad happens.

In the Methodology for the Formation of Capable Communities, such communities were considered to be «communities of villages (villages, towns), which, as a result of voluntary association, are able to independently or through the relevant local self-government bodies ensure the appropriate level of service provision, in particular in the field of education, culture, health care, social protection, housing and communal services, taking into account human resources, financial support and infrastructure development of the corresponding administrative-territorial unit» [6].

Under the condition of rational use of resources, the ability of institutions to provide high-quality and affordable services at any level (state, regional or local) acts as a measure (criterion) of the effectiveness of the work of public authorities, more precisely, we are talking about the ability of authorities within the limits of resources, institutional and legal framework (rules of the game) to arrange a barrier-free space for a certain residential area of different groups (categories) of people,
comfortable conditions for the daily work of individuals and legal entities, including entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, scientific communities, various associations, including international ones, a sufficient level of comfort and service, which is a criterion for assessing the quality of life of residents of a specific territory.

Speaking about the legal framework, we should note that we fully positively evaluate the adoption in 2021 of the Law of Ukraine No. 1689-IX «On the peculiarities of the provision of public (electronic public (EPP)) services» as a basis for regulating relations between the subjects of the application and provision of PP (EPP) [7]. It should be noted that this was preceded by many years of discussions in scientific and expert circles, including regarding the use of the experience of Great Britain, which has a law of the same name on Public Services.

From our point of view, the quality of public services is among the indicators that show how effective the community is at a certain stage of its development. However, quality is not a constant indicator, but rather a dynamic one. There is even in scientific sources such a concept as "Variability of quality - the quality of service provision cannot always be the same because it depends on many factors, and the assessment of quality can depend on both objective and subjective factors, quality can be affected difficulties in the service provider's work and the client's personal attitude to the situation" [8].

It should be noted that there are the following spheres in which digital spheres are most actively integrated: social; communal economy; - health care; public services. Of course, taking into account the different degree of digital skills of the population in territorial communities, for example rural ones, it is important at the level of local self-government bodies to develop a program that will contribute to increasing literacy among the population and their involvement in the life of the community.

In fact, the quality of life of the population, the level of well-being and the quality of services for residents reflect not only the ability of local authorities to fulfill their own and state-delegated powers, but also affect the further development and post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian territories, which is extremely relevant in the context of modern challenges and the war in Ukraine.

Public participation in improving the quality of public services at the community level should also not be underestimated. It can be – organization of permanent work with service recipients, conducting sociological surveys (consideration and analysis of claims and wishes, study of demand for services provided); regular internal audits of the effectiveness of the system of service quality - checking the competence of the employees themselves for knowledge of legislation and many other methods.

Our position is that within the community, all residents of the community play a certain role (passive/active) in solving problems in the field of ensuring the quality
of public services, and by cooperating within the framework of individual projects or programs, they can achieve a significant effect, which will allow to reduce time, save and so limited resources and effectively solve this or that current problem or group of problems in the sector of administrative, social or housing and communal services.

In the end, the European integration movements of Ukraine require highly qualified local self-government officials, maximum interest in the result, people-centeredness and client-orientation in matters of providing and ensuring the quality of public services. Human resources, under the condition of high professionalism of local self-government officials (POMS), were and remain a determining criterion of the organizational capacity of the TG. First of all, we are talking about the presence or absence of professional personnel with strategic thinking skills, appropriate use and multiplication of internal/involved resources (financial, informational, etc.), formation of methods, tools and principles that take into account the specifics of a specific territory.

Undoubtedly, the topic of the development of personnel potential and the role of personnel in the implementation of the main functions in the work of local self-government bodies has long been in the focus of the attention of domestic scientists and practitioners and has repeatedly been the subject of discussion at various platforms and international scientific and practical conferences. Along with this, the specifics of personnel issues at the community level, in terms of involvement in the processes of ensuring the quality of public services, remain understudied.

**Conclusions.** Thus, if the level of profit and competitiveness depends on the effective management of the quality of services in business, then for local self-government bodies, for any community, the provision of affordable services and ensuring their quality is fundamental not only due to the financial and economic aspect, it is also trust in the authorities, and important effective communications and partnership in the formation of local policies for the sustainable development of territories and post-war reconstruction of war-affected territorial communities.

In our opinion, it is insufficient and not objective to measure the efficiency of local self-government bodies, focusing only on the quantitative indicators of public services provided in the community. It is necessary and justified to use such tools as assessment and monitoring at the level of each community.

Despite the existence of many problems and challenges for the development of territories in Ukraine, the process of increasing economic potential at the level of territorial communities continues at the expense of grants, state support, and cooperation of territorial communities. Such a form of cooperation as community cooperation has long proven itself even during the active phase of the decentralization reform in Ukraine, because it allows two or more communities to maximally accumulate joint projects or created public-private enterprises with great
potential for improving management processes, in particular, managing the quality of services.

Euro-integration shifts of Ukraine require local self-government officials (LSGs) to be highly qualified, maximally interested in the result, people-centered and client-oriented in matters of providing and ensuring the quality of public services. Human resources, under the condition of high professionalism, were and remain a determining criterion of organizational capacity.

We believe that today local government organizations (this is especially acutely felt in the conditions of the war with the Russian Federation) are aware of all the risks in case of disregard of public interests, dissatisfaction, failure to respond to the needs of community residents, business requests and NGOs, or due to violation of the legal rights and freedoms defined in the Constitution of Ukraine.

The first among the risks is the loss of trust on the part of citizens, because regardless of who provides public services, in the final analysis it is the LSGs who are responsible and associated among citizens as being responsible for the quality of public services public services. Convinced that trust in the authorities is based on this, the image of local self-government officials is formed.

Involvement of the public in the evaluation of the processes of providing and ensuring the quality of public services should not be declarative, but concrete, practical, since the residents of the community themselves are directly interested in receiving quality services, timely and in full. All this, combined with the implementation of digital solutions and technologies at the community level, should lead to certain positive results and sustainable development.

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