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CHALLENGES OF THE SYSTEM OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: UKRAINE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Abstract. Political responsibility as a form of social responsibility of political subjects for the consequences of their political activities is considered in the article. Individual and collective political responsibility is key to ensuring stability, transparency and efficiency of public authorities in Ukraine was established. The study of an important aspect of determining political responsibility, such as the existence of effective mechanisms for monitoring and reporting by public authorities is given attention. Recommendations for solving problems related to the definition of individual and collective political responsibility in Ukraine on the way to the EU are provided. Modern information technologies that have a positive impact on the development and strengthening of democracy in the country are covered. The principles of cooperation between the media and the state were systematized through a detailed description of the interaction between the press and the government. The role of the development of mass media in the public is emphasized as an expanded opportunity to participate more in political processes that affect the lives of Ukrainians. The factors influencing the need to provide society with information about the political process are generalized. The research uses both general scientific and special methods and approaches. The analysis of scientific sources provided the theoretical basis for the analysis of the political responsibility of public authorities, and contributed to the generalization of scientific approaches and theoretical concepts on the subject matter under study. The systemic and dialectical analysis allowed for a comprehensive study of the systemic nature of
administrative management and, in particular, public administration implemented by public authorities in Ukraine. Documentary analysis allowed us to analyze the legal framework, official reports and other documents related to political accountability in Ukraine. The methods of induction, deduction and forecasting were used to identify and substantiate the directions for improving the political accountability of public authorities.

**Keywords:** political responsibility, democracy, public authorities, modern information technologies, political process, Ukraine's European integration course.

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**ПРОБЛЕМИ СИСТЕМІ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ ВІДПОВІДАЛЬНОСТІ ОРГАНІВ ПУБЛІЧНОЇ ВЛАДИ: УКРАЇНА ТА ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИЙ СОЮЗ**

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто політичну відповідальність як форму соціальної відповідальності суб'єктів політики за наслідки своєї політичної діяльності. Встановлено, що індивідуальна та колективна політична відповідальність є запорукою забезпечення стабільності, прозорості та ефективності діяльності органів державної влади в Україні. Приділено увагу дослідженню такого важливого аспекту визначення політичної відповідальності, як наявність ефективних механізмів моніторингу та звітності органів державної влади. Надано рекомендації щодо вирішення проблем, пов'язаних з визначенням індивідуальної та колективної політичної відповідальності в Україні на шляху до ЄС. Висвітлено сучасні інформаційні технології, які позитивно впливають на розвиток і зміцнення демократії в країні. Систематизовано принципи співпраці ЗМІ та держави через детальний опис взаємодії преси та уряду. Підкреслено роль розвитку засобів масової інформації в розширенні можливостей громадськості брати більшу участь у політичних процесах, які впливають на життя українців. Узагаліно фактори, що впливають на необхідність забезпечення суспільства інформацією про
політичний процес. У дослідженні застосовано як загальнонаукові, так і спеціальні методи та підходи. Аналіз наукових джерел дозволив отримати теоретичну базу дослідження щодо політичної відповідальності публічної влади, а також сприяв узагальненню наукових підходів та теоретичних концепцій, за досліджуваною проблематикою. Системний та діалектичний аналіз дозволив всебічно дослідити системний характер адміністративного управління і, зокрема, публічного адміністрування, що реалізується публічною владою в Україні. Документальний аналіз дозволив проаналізувати нормативно-правову базу, офіційні звіти та інші документи, пов'язані з політичною відповідальністю в Україні. Методи індукції, дедукції та прогнозування використано для визначення та обґрунтування напрямів удосконалення політичної відповідальності публічної влади.

Ключові слова: політична відповідальність, демократія, державна влада, сучасні інформаційні технології, політичний процес, євроінтеграційний курс України.

The problem statement. Modern Ukraine is a democratic state where public authorities play a crucial role in shaping political, economic and social life. The significant importance of political power requires not only its effective functioning, but also the establishment of control and accountability mechanisms. One of the key aspects of this process is political accountability of the public authorities. Political accountability is one of the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law. It implies the ability of citizens to control the actions of government officials, as well as their obligation to bear the consequences for their decisions and actions. In Ukraine, the issue of political accountability has become particularly relevant in the context of reforming society and strengthening democratic institutions, as well as obtaining the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union. That is why political accountability of public authorities in Ukraine has important tasks aimed at ensuring effective and responsible work of the government.

Overview of recent research and publications. Ukraine has numerous experts who deal with the issues of political responsibility, such as researchers such as L. Balutska [1], T. Bevz [2, 3], Y. Melnyk [4], V. Melnychenko [5], V. Spivak 6], I. Khaldai [7] and others.

The purpose of the study (task statement). The purpose of the research is to substantiate the problem of determining the individual and collective political responsibility of public authorities in Ukraine, as well as to highlight the peculiarities of the role of the media in shaping the political responsibility of Ukrainian politicians. In addition, the relevance of the study is determined by Ukraine's European ambitions and its desire to integrate into the European political space. Taking into account the standards and norms existing in Europe, the analysis of
political accountability will help Ukraine to get closer to the best European standards and practices.

**Research results.** Political accountability is forward-looking and is an important tool for influencing political behavior. In the past, there was an interpretation of political responsibility that included three aspects: real, prospective and retrospective. However, modern views are supportive of the idea that political responsibility is mainly prospective and is the responsibility of the people for their state. A politician voluntarily seeks power to assume responsibility. His negative responsibility to the society can be realized in a coercive form. The political responsibility of the people consists of the responsibility of every citizen of the state as a representative of his or her people. Any person as a "political person" bears a certain political responsibility and has a close connection with the political authorities of his or her country, because he or she elected its representatives. He or she also experiences the results of the activities of this government because of his or her choice. Therefore, a conscious citizen will definitely use the active right to vote and will not sell his or her vote. To paraphrase a famous statement by A. de Saint-Exupéry [8], we can say that a citizen is forever responsible for the person he or she elects. That is, every citizen is responsible for his or her state. Therefore, the political responsibility of a citizen is also total.

Individual and collective political responsibility are key concepts for ensuring stability, transparency and efficiency of public authorities. In Ukraine, the problems of defining these types of responsibility are important, as the country is actively developing and striving for integration with the European Union [9].

Meanwhile, defining the limits of individual and collective responsibility of public authorities in Ukraine is problematic, as the legislation does not contain a clear and unambiguous definition of these concepts. This can lead to different interpretations and ambiguities in determining responsibility for the actions of public authorities.

Another important aspect of determining political accountability is the existence of effective mechanisms for controlling and reporting by public authorities. These mechanisms should ensure not only the detection of violations of accountability, but also the proper punishment of the perpetrators. Public authorities have a large number of resources and powers at their disposal, which are intended to implement the strategic goals of the state. However, the absence of clear legislative regulation of political liability may lead to violations and insufficient accountability for the actions of public authorities.

In order to ensure responsible activities of public authorities and increase public trust in the government, it is necessary to develop and implement control and reporting mechanisms. They will help to identify violations and avoid negative consequences for the state and its citizens.
One of the most effective mechanisms is internal control, audit and monitoring of public authorities. These mechanisms ensure the detection of liability violations and their timely termination, which contributes to the effective operation of government agencies and maintaining public trust in them. Thus, the introduction of effective control and reporting mechanisms is an important step in the development of responsible activities of public authorities in Ukraine. In this regard, the development of the system of internal control, audit and monitoring of public authorities is extremely important. These mechanisms will allow timely detection of violations and avoidance of negative consequences for citizens and the state as a whole.

The political responsibility of individual actors means that politicians, including public officials in the public authorities, as well as citizens participating in political activities, are responsible for the consequences of their political activities. Collective subjects of political responsibility may include various political institutions, where political decision-making can be both collective and individual. Only when the circle of persons involved in decision-making is defined and personally identifiable, can we talk about political responsibility. It is unacceptable to discuss the political responsibility of the people, the electorate and abstract elites. The object of political responsibility is society, since politics is intended to regulate social relations. The essential characteristics of political responsibility of political figures are determined by their goals and objectives, which they solve at the stages of gaining and using public power. At the stage of gaining public power, which is carried out through elections, the main actors are political parties, candidates and voters.

In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, the value content and content of party programs and projects should be determined by the obligation to respect and protect human and civil rights and freedoms and the principle of constitutionalism. Political parties should also be politically accountable to voters for the professionalism, preparation for managing the affairs of the state, moral and ethical qualities of their proposed candidates for elections and for appointment to political positions in the public authorities.

Civic political responsibility should be based on a clear understanding of the decisive role of politics in the everyday life of a citizen. At election time, a politically responsible voter should make a prudent decision about his or her participation or non-participation - as a form of protest - in a particular election, as well as about which party and candidate he or she will vote for. Civic political responsibility is an indicator of the level of not only political but also general culture of a citizen. Fostering political responsibility and political culture as an integral part of a citizen's general culture should, it seems, be one of the most important tasks of modern education.
At the level of the national political institutions of public power, the president in the presidential and mixed (semi-presidential) forms of government, the national parliament and the government are the following. Political institutions of public authority are primarily responsible for observance, protection of human, civil rights, freedoms, and adherence to the principle of constitutionalism in making political decisions and implementing actions to manage the affairs of society and the state. They also bear political responsibility for the political, economic and social consequences of their decisions and actions for citizens.

In the parliament, the government and similar public authorities at the regional and local levels, political and managerial decisions that may have political implications are made collectively. The President and senior officials of public authorities at the regional and local levels make political and managerial decisions personally.

Legislative and representative bodies of public authorities at all levels bear political responsibility for observing and protecting human and civil rights and freedoms and the principle of constitutionalism in making political decisions and actions to manage the affairs of society and the state. They also bear political responsibility for the political, economic and social consequences of their decisions and actions for citizens.

The government is also responsible for the economic, social and political consequences of its actions and decisions. Decisions are made collectively at government meetings. If these decisions lead to negative consequences for citizens, the government bears collective political responsibility. The resignation of the government or its individual members may be a measure of accountability.

Public associations also bear some political responsibility for their actions. One of their functions, in addition to religious ones, is to influence the policy pursued by the public authorities in the field of activity and competence of the public association through legislatively or institutionally regulated lobbying. Moreover, based on the results of such lobbying, public associations should face political responsibility.

To solve the problems associated with determining individual and collective political responsibility in Ukraine, we recommend developing and implementing a set of measures, including the recommendations presented in Table 1.
Table 1

Recommendations for solving problems related to the definition of individual and collective political responsibility in Ukraine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Developing clear criteria and procedures for determining individual and collective political responsibility</td>
<td>[10, 11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strengthening the role of public control and ensuring access to information on the activities of public authorities</td>
<td>[12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Implementation of European standards and practices of political accountability, including the establishment of independent control bodies, improvement of the system of administrative responsibility and enhancement of the role of the public in controlling the activities of public authorities</td>
<td>[13, 14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ensuring continuous education and training of civil servants on ethics, rules of conduct and principles of political responsibility</td>
<td>[15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conducting regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the political accountability system in order to identify problems, adjust policies and improve the effectiveness of the accountability system</td>
<td>[16, 17]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compiled by the authors

In this context, civic associations bear political responsibility for conducting civic control and its results. At the same time, public control external to the public authorities serves as an important and effective measure of forcing political responsibility of its bodies, organizations and officials.

In Ukraine, there are significant problems in determining the individual and collective political responsibility of public authorities, which can lead to violations of the law, abuse and mismanagement. The implementation of the recommended measures, as well as the use of positive European experience, can help improve the quality of public administration and strengthen trust in the institutions of power in Ukraine.

Thus, individual political accountability refers to the personal responsibility of a civil servant or politician for his or her actions or inaction [18]. However, in the Ukrainian context, there is a problem of blurring the boundaries between individual and collective responsibility due to the strong influence of political parties on public administration [19, 20]. Collective political responsibility refers to the responsibility of public authorities as a whole, not individuals. In Ukraine, the problem lies in the lack of a clear legislative definition of the limits of collective responsibility, as well as in insufficient control by citizens and independent bodies.
In his book "Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis", the English researcher Wayne Parsons seeks to explore the evolution of political processes related to the development and implementation of public policy [21]. He introduces the concept of non-institutional actors such as business, advocacy groups, media, and citizens who are actively or passively involved in policymaking and implementation.

Ukrainian experts in the field of public administration, such as S. Teleshun [20], C. Sytnik [22], I. Reiterovych [23], also share Parsons' opinion and consider public policy as the activities of public authorities based on public coordination mechanisms aimed at achieving socially significant goals and solving important social problems through the involvement of political parties, stakeholders, media, citizens' associations, and social movements. In other words, public policy is a purposeful activity aimed at addressing issues of public concern.

Researchers such as D. Stromberg and D. Snyder [24] identified a number of factors that influence public policy through the media. These factors include differences in access to the media by different social groups, active transmission of political content, and the publication of certain news and stories. Media content can influence public policy by providing the public with important information in the run-up to elections. This can influence collective behavior and decision-making during the voting process. However, there is a risk that politicians may benefit disproportionately from government programs, which may be inappropriate. If the media fails to cover certain issues, it may lead to inadequate information for voters, which may make their choice more difficult. What the media report can influence the ongoing political process and the promises made by politicians during election campaigns [21, с. 48–49].

Also, should note that according to the researchers, modern information technologies and the media have a positive impact on the development and strengthening of democracy in the country. That is, these technologies:
- create new ways of interaction between public authorities and the public;
- help reduce society's dependence on traditional media, which can edit information to suit their purposes. This allows citizens to have access to a wider range of opinions and perspectives, which contributes to broadening their horizons and raising their awareness;
- contribute to the openness and transparency of political institutions and politics in general;
- the opportunity to participate in the discussion of social and political issues becomes available to a wide range of people [4, с. 113–114].

In this case, they can create distrust of politicians and negatively affect the political opinion of citizens. The media also have a significant impact on society, its condition and development. They can promote or hinder development. For a
closer look at the media, let's take the Law of Ukraine "On Information" [25], as an example, of 31.03.2023 No. 2657-XII, which states that the media are means intended for the wide dissemination of printed or audiovisual information in order to reach the largest audience.

The principles of cooperation between the media and the state should include the basic principles shown in Figure 1.

The media should prioritize the interests of citizens and society over any other interests, including financial ones

The media should self-organize on the basis of professional ethics of journalists and adhere to European standards of media activity

The media should facilitate the participation of citizens in political life by providing conditions for them to receive complete, reliable and timely information about the activities of government bodies and officials

Media should comply with the law and participate in its improvement

The media should cooperate with the state in protecting the economic and other interests of the national media industry

Figure 1. Principles of media cooperation with the state

* Compiled by the authors on the basis of materials [25]

The forms of information dissemination allow for prompt informing of a wide audience about events and phenomena both in the world and in a particular country or region. In addition, the media can mobilize their influence to perform special social functions.

Let us take a closer look at how the press and the government interact. Today, control over the media is based on the principles of respect for constitutional law, equality and independence of these social institutions, rather than on hierarchical subordination and subordination to the political leadership. During transitional periods, the role of the media is particularly important, as without their active work it is impossible to ensure mass support for socio-political changes. Transparency is a prerequisite for the media, as well as for the parliament.

The media is an important tool for communication between the government and citizens, disseminating timely and official information, including laws and regulations. They ensure that the will and requirements of the government are communicated. On the other hand, the media also act as a means of feedback, as they collect people's opinions and judgments on various aspects of life.
Currently, a new branch of modern Ukrainian journalism has emerged - parliamentary journalism, which has its own specific functions, methods, requirements, knowledge system and professional responsibilities. The media and communications have become one of the main factors in improving the efficiency of the political and administrative system and taking into account public opinion in making management decisions.

In a democratic state, the media express the interests of the people and civil society, not the government. In contrast to authoritarian regimes, where the press effectively merges with the government and becomes a mechanical conductor of its policies, in a democratic state, the media should act as independent from the government and should express the diverse voices and interests of the public. This is important for ensuring the development of democracy and creating conditions for effective interaction between the government and the public.

Ensuring access to information: the media can provide the public with the necessary information to enable them to critically evaluate the actions of the authorities and draw their own conclusions. For example, the Ukrainian online media outlets Ukrainska Pravda and Interfax-Ukraine regularly publish news and analytical materials on various spheres of life, allowing the public to stay informed and make demands on the authorities [26].

In 2022, there were significant changes in news consumption: the consumption of TV, radio, press and Internet sites (mostly TV) decreased, and the news audience shifted mainly to social media. In general, the use of traditional media - television, radio and print media - has been systematically declining throughout the measurement period (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Use of news for information from 2015 to 2022](image_url)

* Compiled by the authors on the basis of materials [26]
Nevertheless, thanks to the development of mass media, the public has more and more opportunities to participate in political processes that affect their lives. Decisions are no longer limited to a small group of politicians, but affect all Ukrainians. Thanks to the work of the media, society can follow parliamentary debates, government activities, and the interaction between different sectors of the economy. The media influence the formation of citizens' attitudes towards current politics and the political process. The media is an important tool of socialization that helps to familiarize citizens with the norms and principles of a democratic system. Publicizing information about the activities of political structures removes the aura of sanctity and excessive secrecy from politics. This can lead to a change of government, dismantling of traditional diplomacy and transformation of the status system.

In our view, in order to develop the political and legal culture of citizens, it is necessary to ensure a continuous flow of information about the political process, which for many reasons should be available to the entire society. Three factors influence this (Table 2).

Table 2
Factors influencing the need to provide the public with information about the political process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first factor</th>
<th>Internal competition between media outlets that generates awareness</th>
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<tr>
<td>The second factor</td>
<td>Internal conflicts in political structures that can be resolved through the influence of the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The third factor</td>
<td>The development of new technologies, particularly in the field of broadcasting, allows for many live broadcasts, and the media become a platform for political action, including crisis discussions, negotiations, and public protests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compiled by the authors on the basis of materials [27, 29]

But this can also lead to a distortion of reality, as information overload complicates the perception of events, which can lead to misunderstandings and unexpected outcomes. For example, an overemphasis on conflicts in politics can lead to a negative assessment of democracy, which can affect the willingness to change the government. In addition, the media can distort the picture of events, especially if there are no other sources of information, and this can influence the decisions of politicians.

The media are an important means of government influence on the formation of public opinion, which is a state of public consciousness that reflects the reaction
of different social groups to events and processes of social reality, including the political sphere. Public opinion reflects the common and individual interests of different social groups participating in the political process. This political institution is important for the exercise of power and political responsibility of Ukrainian politicians [28].

**Conclusions and further research perspectives.** The research was conducted on the current state and problems of the political accountability system in Ukraine and the European Union. The study shows that both countries face significant challenges and important aspects related to the political accountability of their public authorities. In the context of Ukraine, the analysis analyzed the level of development of the political accountability system and identified existing problems. These include corruption, lack of transparency and unreliability of information, insufficient effectiveness of control mechanisms and insufficient accountability of high-ranking officials. These problems have a negative impact on the country's democratic development and cause citizens to distrust political institutions. As for the European Union, it was found that the system of political accountability has already reached a high level of development. However, there are still problems that require attention, such as the lack of democratic legitimacy of European institutions and the lack of direct communication between citizens and EU representatives. There is also a need to strengthen control mechanisms and ensure effective accountability of EU institutions to citizens. Thus, the study shows the need to further improve the system of political accountability in both Ukraine and the European Union. This can be achieved by improving legal regulation, strengthening control mechanisms, ensuring transparency and openness of political processes, and raising awareness of citizens about their rights and responsibilities in the context of political accountability. Such measures will help strengthen democratic values and increase public trust in public authorities.

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