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THE MAIN DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN AMALGAMATED COMMUNITIES

Abstract. The research was conducted within the framework of the complex scientific project “Public Administration and Local Self-Government” of the National Academy of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine on the topic of research work “Formation of the National Resilience in Ukraine in the Conditions of Socio-Economic Turbulence”, which emphasizes its relevance and connection with scientific programs, plans, and topics.

The main directions of improving the quality of the public services in the amalgamated communities (AC) are identified. It has been found out that defining the directions of improving the quality of the public services in AC influences the formation of a new administration paradigm, which is especially relevant

in the context of the global goals of the sustainable development. It is argued that the “quality of the public services” indicator should be considered as a separate indicator for assessing the capacity of an AC. In this context, the author’s vision of the definition of the “strong institutions at the level of local authorities” is presented, which is offered to understand from the point of view of the ability of the institutions and organizations to properly perform the tasks in the field of assurance of the quality of the public services.

The importance of monitoring the needs and expectations of the AC residents, as well as the introduction of innovative approaches and methods in the quality management system of the public services, ensuring effective communication with the public, is emphasized. It is emphasized that conducting on a continuous basis the assessment and quality control of the public services in the amalgamated communities, on the one hand, can contribute to positive changes in the system of quality management of the public services at the local level, on the other, given the lack of systematic steps and developments in the field of public services, on the contrary, act as an irritant to the head of the AC.

Keywords: public services, quality of the public services, evaluation and quality control of the public services, quality improvement, directions of improving the quality of the public services in the amalgamated communities.

ОСНОВНІ НАПРЯМИ ПІДВИЩЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ПУБЛІЧНИХ ПОСЛУГ В ОБ’ЄДНАНИХ ТЕРИТОРІАЛЬНИХ ГРОМАДАХ

Анотація. Дослідження проведено в рамках комплексного наукового проекту “Державне управління та місцеве самоврядування” Національної академії державного управління при Президентові України за темою науково-дослідної роботи “Формування національної резил’єнтності в Україні в умовах соціально-економічної турбулентності”, що підкреслює її актуальність та зв’язок з науковими програмами, планами і темами.

Визначено основні напрями підвищення якості публічних послуг в об’єднаних територіальних громадах (ОТГ). З’ясовано, що визначення напрямів підвищення якості публічних послуг в ОТГ впливає на формування нової управлінської парадигми, що особливо актуально в контексті глобальних цілей сталого розвитку. Аргументовано, що показник “якість публічних послуг” слід розглядати як окремий індикатор оцінки спроможності ОТГ. У цьому контексті представлено авторське бачення дефініції поняття “сильні інституції на рівні органів місцевої влади” (англ. *strong institutions*), що пропонується розуміти з позиції спроможності установ та організацій належним чином виконувати завдання у сфері забезпечення якості публічних послуг.

Зазначено про важливість моніторингу потреб й очікувань мешканців ОТГ, а також впровадження в роботу системи управління якістю публічних послуг інноваційних підходів та методів, забезпечення ефективної комунікації з громадськістю. Акцентовано увагу на тому, що проведення на постійній основі оцінки та контролю якості публічних послуг в об’єдна-

них територіальних громадах, з одного боку, може сприяти позитивним зрушенням в системі управління якістю публічних послуг на місцевому рівні, з іншого, враховуючи відсутність системних кроків та напрацювань у сфері публічних послуг, навпаки, виступати подразником для очільників ОТГ.

Ключові слова: публічні послуги, якість публічних послуг, оцінка та контроль якості публічних послуг, підвищення якості, напрями підвищення якості публічних послуг в об'єднаних територіальних громадах.

ОСНОВНЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВА ПУБЛИЧНЫХ УСЛУГ В ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ ТЕРРИТОРИАЛЬНЫХ ОБЩИНАХ

Аннотация. Исследование проведено в рамках комплексного научного проекта “Государственное управление и местное самоуправление” Национальной академии государственного управления при Президенте Украины по теме научно-исследовательской работы “Формирование национальной резильентности в Украине в условиях социально-экономической турбулентности”, что подчеркивает ее актуальность и связь с научными программами, планами и темами.

Определены основные направления повышения качества публичных услуг в объединенных территориальных общинах (ОТГ). Установлено, что определение направлений повышения качества публичных услуг в ОТГ влияет на формирование новой управленческой парадигмы, что особенно актуально в контексте глобальных целей устойчивого развития. Аргументировано, что показатель “качество публичных услуг” следует рассматривать как отдельный индикатор оценки способности ОТГ. В этом контексте представлено авторское видение дефиниции понятия “сильные институты на уровне органов местной власти” (англ. *strong institutions*), что следует понимать с позиции способности учреждений и организаций должным образом выполнять задачи в области обеспечения качества публичных услуг.

Отмечена значимость мониторинга потребностей и ожиданий жителей ОТГ, а также внедрение в работу системы управления качеством публичных услуг инновационных подходов и методов, обеспечение эффективной коммуникации с общественностью. Акцентируется внимание на том, что проведение на постоянной основе оценки и контроля качества публичных услуг в объединенных территориальных общинах, с одной стороны, может способствовать позитивным сдвигам в системе управления качеством публичных услуг на местном уровне, с другой, учитывая отсутствие системных шагов и наработок в сфере публичных услуг, наоборот, выступать раздражающим фактором для руководителей ОТГ.

Ключевые слова: публичные услуги, качество публичных услуг, оценка и контроль качества публичных услуг, повышение качества, направления повышения качества публичных услуг в объединенных территориальных общинах.

Formulation of the problem. The problem of improving the quality of the public services in the amalgamated communities (hereinafter referred to as AC) for the public administration is relatively new and actualized in Ukraine, in fact, with the beginning of the active phase of decentralization processes. The identified scientific problem is multifaceted, requiring the public authorities to take prudent steps, considerable financial resources, staffing with professional staff, proper legal and practical measures that would ensure the quality of the public services in AC. In the context of the local development vectors in Ukraine, these issues are of paramount importance for the territories, establishing dialogue with the residents, increasing trust between the consumers and the public service providers.

At the same time, improving the quality of the public services requires prompt reaction of the authorities to the problems of the specified sphere. It can be argued that the quality of the public services determines the capacity of an AC and characterizes how effective (strong) the communities are at this stage of development, which is particularly relevant in the context of the global sustainable development goals (hereinafter referred to as the SDG).

Analysis of the recent research and publications. The theoretical and scientific achievements on the quality of the public services in Ukraine are works of V. D. Bakumenko, H. A. Borshch, V. P. Tymoshchuk, S. O. Hanotska, V. S. Koltun, V. H. Korolyuk, V. V. Nakonechny, S. M. Seryohin. Most of the scientific intelligence focuses on the general theoretical aspects

of the quality of the public services at the local level. However, the analysis of the scientific sources shows that the problem of the scientific search for improving the quality of the public services in AC, in particular regarding the identification of the main directions and ways of quality improvement, has not been sufficiently studied, which led to the choice of the research topic.

The purpose of the article. To find out the main directions of improving the quality of the public services in the amalgamated communities in Ukraine in the conditions of the modern transformations.

Presentation of the main material. Among the successful reforms carried out in Ukraine by 2020 the domestic and international experts name the reform of decentralization of the public power. On the one hand, this is evidenced by the dynamics of the newly formed (amalgamated) communities, numbering 951 [1, p. 9]. On the other hand, the success of the reform is confirmed by the existence of concrete results of its implementation (e.g. financial) and correlation with the “service-oriented” approaches implemented in the activity of the public authorities in Ukraine following the example of the developed countries of the world.

The domestic researcher V. P. Tymoshchuk notes that the client-oriented models of the citizen service, introduced in the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, envisaged the organization of the work of the public authorities on the principles of the private sector [2, p. 8]. We note the positive developments in the recent years related to the implementation of the theoretical

and methodological provisions of the service marketing, municipal administration and business approaches in the public administration in Ukraine, that are traditionally associated with improving the level of satisfaction with the services provided. At the same time, we are convinced that without the development of economically sound set of measures, medium-term planning, financial forecasting, evaluation and control, taking into account the local features of a particular AC, this will not produce the desired results.

It can be argued that the quality of the public services (administrative, medical, educational, social, housing and communal) also determines the capacity of the AC. At the same time, the indicator “quality of the public services” is not allocated in a separate parameter of the capacity assessment of the AC, mainly focuses on the financial indicators, and among the components of the rating regions for the formation of capable communities identified only quantitative parameters (population, districts in the region, amalgamated communities, area of the capable communities, number of the cities of regional importance, perspective plans of the capable communities) [1, p. 11].

We are convinced that the evaluation and quality control of the public services in AC should be considered as one of the main directions for improving its quality. First and foremost, the results of the evaluation and control make it possible to make sound changes in the quality administration system of the public services at the local level. Of course, this process seems complicated, given that the definition of the category “quality” is quite capacious

and, in the context of the topic under study, integrates not only the quantitative indicators of quality assurance of the public services at the level of an individual AC. In our view, identifying ways to improve the quality of the public services in an AC influences the formation of a new administration paradigm, characterizing how effective (strong) the amalgamated communities are at this stage of development, which is especially relevant in the context of the global sustainable development goals (hereinafter referred to as the SDG). One of the SDG’s tasks related to peace, justice and strong institutions has been attributed to improving the efficiency of the government and the local government [3, p. 52].

We consider it necessary to consider improving the quality of the public services in an AC as one of the tools to achieve effective local government that demonstrates the ability to implement the SDG, taking into account the local characteristics and identified priorities for the development of an AC. In the context of the establishment of effective, accountable and inclusive health care institutions, the SDG-2030 has used the words “strong institutions” [4], including with respect to the local government institutions. In a number of foreign studies, the question of the importance of the functioning of the strong institutions (in the sense of strong, powerful, effective, efficient) providing services to the population, both nationally and locally, is raised.

We agree with the thesis that “good local government is essential for an efficient and financially sound public sector as well as high quality of the public services” [5, p. 3]. In addition, the

foreign sources can be formulated as to the need for a strong regional structure providing services [6]. In our view, the words of the UN System Coordinator in Ukraine Osnat Lubrani at the Third International Conference “Ukraine Reform Conference” (July 02-04, 2019, Canada) deserve special attention in the context that “reforms are necessary to satisfy every Ukrainian’s desire for peace, justice, prosperity, decent jobs, a clean environment, fundamental human rights, equality, strong institutions that provide quality services, social protection, the rule of law and justice for everyone” [7]. Thus, in the context of this study, under strong institutions at the level of the local authorities providing quality services, we understand the ability of the institutions and organizations to properly perform the tasks of quality assurance of the public services provided to legal entities and/or individuals at the local level which, among other things, requires sufficient financial base, professional training and high motivation of the decision-makers, as well as improvement of the quality of the public services on the basis of the modern theories-methodological approaches.

Undoubtedly, any discontent at the local level is in a way stimulating the authorities to change and improve the public services. Against this background, there is a real need at the AC level to adjust the administration activities and decision-making process regarding the quality of the public services in accordance with the contemporary public requests, regardless of the personal preferences and administration style of the head (AC head). However, the local authorities are in-

terested not only in loyalty to them from the residents of the AC, but also the potential investors, domestic and foreign businesses, whose involvement will create additional jobs in the AC and will allow to increase the economic potential of the territory. The stated motives urge the authorities to develop a set of measures related to, inter alia, the provision and/or improvement of the quality of the public services in AC, and require key provisions in the legal acts.

It should be noted that the renaming of the Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Housing and Communal Services to the Ministry of Communities and Territories of Ukraine justifies a certain shift in the emphasis on human development, comfort, access of the citizens to all the social/communal services. In addition to the name change, it is also announced the development of a “social standard” in collaboration with other ministries, according to which in each community the residents will be provided with social, medical and transport infrastructure (according to [8]). In this approach, the professional qualities of those responsible for enhancing the quality of the public services in AC are highlighted; the importance of monitoring the needs and expectations of the AC residents; introduction of innovative approaches and methods into the quality management system of the public services; ensuring effective communication with the public.

Conclusions of the research. The analysis of the domestic and foreign sources makes two key conclusions. Firstly, in the context of resource management, the capacity of the institu-

tions to provide quality, accessible public services at the local level is a measure of their effectiveness. Secondly, considering the continuing reform of the national public administration system on the principle of decentralization, when developing measures to improve the quality of the public services in AC, attention should be paid to improving the professional qualities of the administrators and developing medium and long-term plans for ensuring the quality of the public services.

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