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## **DIGITIZING OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR AN EXAMPLE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS**

**Abstract.** In order to increase the effectiveness of reforms in the information society, digital platforms need to be used. Digitization of strategic communications will provide wider opportunities for participants in communication processes.

The task is set to justify the role of digitalization of strategic communications in the implementation of reforms in Ukraine.

According to the results of the 2017 study on several reforms, from 16 % to 37 % of citizens know and support change, from 30 % to 48 % know and do not support certain reforms. The proportion of citizens who do not have information on reforms ranges from 22 % to 47 %. The use of strategic communications will improve information and influence the attitude of citizens towards reform. In this case, we are considering the use of digital formats of strategic communications. Under digital formats we will understand, in particular, the e-platforms, within which the public authorities operate information that affects the reaction of stakeholders.

The task for strategic communications will be to engage support groups of influence; more effective use of digital platforms for intensification of communication; coordination of reports of public authorities. Digitalization of strategic communications is manifested in the use of e-resources for the organization of interaction between government, citizens and business, and increasing the effectiveness of the state mechanism for social development.

Digitalization of strategic communications in public administration is seen as the expansion of the potential of strategic communications through the use of information and communication technologies and tools. The use of a digital approach in strategic communications (e-resources to discuss the progress of reforms, evaluation of results, surveys, etc.) significantly intensifies communication processes and encourages more active stakeholder participation.

**Keywords:** strategic communications, reform, digitalization, national target, influence, digital platforms, e-resources.

## ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЯ СТРАТЕГІЧНИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ НА ПРИКЛАДІ РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ РЕФОРМ

**Анотація.** Для підвищення ефективності реформ в умовах інформаційного суспільства необхідно використовувати цифрові платформи. Цифровізація стратегічних комунікацій забезпечить ширші можливості для учасників комунікаційних процесів.

Постає завдання обґрунтувати роль цифровізації стратегічних комунікацій у здійсненні реформ в Україні.

За результатами дослідження 2017 р. щодо кількох реформ від 16 % до 37 % громадян знають і підтримують зміни, від 30 % до 48 % знають і не підтримують певні реформи. Частка громадян, які не мають інформації про реформи, складає від 22 % до 47 %. Використання стратегічних комунікацій покращить інформування і вплине на ставлення громадян до реформ. У даному разі розглядаємо застосування цифрових форматів стратегічних комунікацій. Під цифровими форматами розумітимемо зокрема е-платформи, в межах яких органи публічної влади оперують інформацією, що впливає на реакцію стейкхолдерів.

Завдання для стратегічних комунікацій полягатиме в залученні підтримки груп впливу; ефективнішому використанні цифрових майданчиків для інтенсифікації комунікації; координації повідомлень органів публічної влади. Цифровізація стратегічних комунікацій виявляється у застосуванні е-ресурсів для організації взаємодії влади, громадян і бізнесу, підвищення ефективності роботи державного механізму для досягнення суспільного розвитку.

Цифровізація стратегічних комунікацій у публічному управлінні розглядається як розширення потенціалу стратегічних комунікацій за рахунок використання інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій та інструментів. Застосування цифрового підходу у стратегічних комунікаціях (е-ресурси для обговорення ходу реформ, оцінювання результатів, опитування тощо) значно інтенсифікує комунікаційні процеси і сприятиме активнішій участі зацікавлених сторін.

**Ключові слова:** стратегічні комунікації, реформування, цифровізація, національна мета, вплив, цифрові платформи, е-ресурси.

## ЦИФРОВІЗАЦИЯ СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКИХ КОММУНИКАЦИЙ НА ПРИМЕРЕ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ РЕФОРМ

**Аннотация.** Для повышения эффективности реформ в условиях информационного общества необходимо использовать цифровые платформы. Цифровизация стратегических коммуникаций обеспечит более широкие возможности для участников коммуникационных процессов.

Стоит задача обосновать роль цифровизации стратегических коммуникаций в осуществлении реформ в Украине.

По результатам исследования 2017 г. по нескольким реформам от 16 % до 37 % граждан знают и поддерживают изменения, от 30 % до 48 % знают и

не поддерживают определенные реформы. Доля граждан, не имеющих информации о реформах, составляет от 22 % до 47 %. Использование стратегических коммуникаций улучшит информирование и повлияет на отношение граждан к реформам. В данном случае мы рассматриваем применение цифровых форматов стратегических коммуникаций. Под цифровыми форматами предлагаем понимать в частности электронные платформы, в пределах которых органы публичной власти оперируют информацией, влияющей на реакцию стейкхолдеров.

Задача для стратегических коммуникаций заключается в привлечении поддержки групп влияния; эффективном использовании цифровых площадок для интенсификации коммуникации; координации сообщений органов публичной власти. Цифровизация стратегических коммуникаций проявляется в применении электронных ресурсов для организации взаимодействия власти, граждан и бизнеса, повышении эффективности работы государственного механизма для достижения общественного развития.

Цифровизация стратегических коммуникаций в публичном управлении рассматривается как расширение потенциала стратегических коммуникаций за счет использования информационно-коммуникационных технологий и инструментов. Применение цифрового подхода в стратегических коммуникациях (э-ресурсы для обсуждения хода реформ, оценка результатов, опросы и т. д.) значительно интенсифицирует коммуникационные процессы и будет способствовать активному участию заинтересованных сторон.

**Ключевые слова:** стратегические коммуникации, реформирования, цифровизация, национальная цель, влияние, цифровые платформы, э-ресурсы.

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**Problem statement.** The implementation of reforms in Ukraine takes place in parallel with the digital transformations. These two processes are mutually interconnected: the reforms involve the transfer of work with information in digital format, and digital platforms contribute to a wide range of reforms. Reformation is a process in whose results the whole society is interested, hence it is the goal at the national level that should be understood and expected by the majority. To achieve such goals, the strategic communications are used that in the information days require rethinking in the direction of digitization. The use of

digital technologies will provide wider opportunities for the participants in the communication processes, in this case, public authorities as reformers, and society as parties who are interested in positive change.

**The analysis of recent researches and publications.** As a result of the reforms in 2017, the macroeconomic stability was preserved, transitioned to the phase of economic growth, and the best indicators were achieved in reforms in health care, pension, and educational spheres. Among the main priorities for 2018 is the fight against corruption; privatization and effective management of the state-owned en-

terprises, improvement of the business climate, infrastructure modernization, energy sector reform, preparation for land reform, development of innovations, etc. [1].

The role of the strategic communications in implementing these goals is conditioned by their characteristics. Generally accepted formulation of the strategic communications is not proposed. We can rely on the definition of American researcher Christopher Paul. Under strategic communications he proposes to consider concerted actions, messages, images and other forms of participation to inform, influence, in order to convince the target audience in support of the national goals [2]. Based on the subject matter of our article, the named forms of communication should be considered through the prism of the digital embodiment.

Among the scientific studies on the topic of the strategic communications are the well-known works of Paul Cornish, J. Lindley-French, Claire Yorke [3], S. Tatham [4], where, in particular, their main components are analyzed. William M. Darley [5], in his publication, gives an overview of the possibilities for the strategic communications for international politics from the point of view of national security.

The Ukrainian studies have been certified by the books of G. Pocheptsov, [6], by the dictionary of T. Popova and V. Lipkan [7], by the articles of A. Barovska [8], M. Ozhevan [9], D. Dubov [10], T. Chernenko [11], O. Kushnir [12], a manual for civil servants by D. Konyk [13] and others.

The domestic researchers have not yet offered a focused study of the importance of digitalizing the strategic

communications in the implementation of reforms.

**The purpose of the article** is to propose the definition of the digitalization of the strategic communications, as well as to substantiate the role of the digitalization of the strategic communications in the implementation of reforms in Ukraine.

**Presentation of the main material.** The prerequisites for the strategic communications in the public administration have been formed with the signing of the Roadmap of the Partnership for Strategic Communications between Ukraine and NATO [14]. The new wording of the Military Doctrine of Ukraine fixed the definition of the strategic communications.

In this case, we are considering the use of digital formats of the strategic communications to advance reforms. Under digital formats we will understand, in particular, the e-platforms within which the public authorities operate information that affects the reaction of stakeholders.

According to the 2017 study “Five Government Reforms: How to Obtain Public Support”, the following results were obtained:

- pension reform – know and support 36 %, know and do not support – 42 %;
- land reform – 23 % and 48 % respectively;
- medical reform – 31 % and 39 % respectively;
- education reform – 37 % and 30 % respectively;
- privatization reform – 16 % and 37 % respectively.

At the same time, the proportion of the citizens who have not heard of the

above-mentioned reforms ranges from 22 % to 47 %, depending on the concrete reform [15].

An important part of this survey is also that the leaders of opinion have been identified, which the citizens listen to on a certain reform. For example, the most effective communicator in the field of reform for education stakeholders was experts and scientists – 41 %. In the perception of any reform the public authorities are not defined as a source of trust. To a certain extent, when discussing the land reform the citizens are interested only in the opinion of local deputies and village heads – 12 %.

Another poll shows a negative perception of the public authorities regarding reforms: 38 % of the citizens regard the government as barriers to reform, and 36 % – the President.

At the same time, positive trends are also emerging: the most persuasive leaders of reforms consider the President – 28 %, the government – 25 % of the citizens [16].

All of the given data allow us to formulate the thesis that the main influence on the formation of citizens' opinion about the advancement of reforms initiated by the authorities is carried out by other participants in communication processes, and the authorities in the perception of the citizens are in a double position.

The task for the strategic communications in public administration is to: 1) get support from groups of influence; 2) more efficient use of the digital platforms for intensifying the communication with the target audiences; 3) coordinate the reports of the public authorities of different origins: in information, virtual and physical spaces.

At the same time, the authorities should position their activities both as the initiation of socio-economic transformations, and as facilitating the activities of the players involved in the reform.

Significant influence of the strategic communications in a digital format may be reflected in the process of taking into account the interests of the individual target groups. The strategic narratives should be designed in such a way that the citizens noticed the benefits of a closer circle (updating the need for positive changes at lower levels rather than operating on concepts of the public benefit).

The strategic communications are expanding the e-governance toolkit (creating issues for e-polls, rating, assessing the progress of reforms, etc.).

The digitization of the strategic communications is manifested in the use of e-resources to organize the interaction of power, citizens and business, improving the effectiveness of the state mechanism for the achievement of social development.

In these processes the digital technologies provide for the first time the implementation of the technical and organizational stages, and the strategic communications are aimed at the development and delivery of meanings.

Barriers to the implementation of reforms can be set, among which the foreign researchers call the following: weak political support; the inability of the coalition supporters to overcome the resistance of the opponents; confrontation of middle-level public servants; rejection of changes in public opinion that sometimes leads to protests [17].

The solution to these and similar problems is possible, in particular, with the digital participation of the authorities in the processes in the form of strategic communications.

The functional capabilities of the digital strategic communications tools seem quite sufficient to overcome these challenges. For example, the “Digital Ukraine” initiative was launched in 2014 that aimed at implementing several projects to improve the efficiency of public administration. These are open data, e-procurement, e-circulation and e-petition, e-government, cryptography, e-services, cloud technologies [18].

Evidence of the potential of digital support for reforms can be considered e-resources with a rather versatile reformist functionality.

**Discussion of the need for reform.** Places for discussion can be e-forums created on the sites of the public authorities, public organizations, pages on social networks. This is an effective e-democracy tool that allows the citizens to: learn about the direction of the reforms, the planned results, terms, types of stakeholder participation, challenges associated with the proposed changes, etc. We will refer to the characteristics of e-forums: scope of discussion (number of involved); the speed of information exchange by the participants; efficiency in responding to actual events; the possibility of providing links to useful resources; comparing the opinions of all the participants in the discussion to develop their position; introduction to topics that were not the focus of attention, but may become important.

Among examples of the use of this tool, we present the site “Decentralization of Power” ([decentralization.gov.ua](http://decentralization.gov.ua)). This resource is devoted to highlighting the experience of decentralization reform, has a page “Forum for the United Territorial Communities” and the section “On the Reform” where an e-discussion is organized.

**Monitoring the implementation of reforms.** Tracking the course of reforms can take place in two main areas that we can conditionally define as public and state.

The first area involves the attention of the citizens and requires the availability of such electronic tools that would be convenient and understandable for use by a wide audience. These tools should, for example, visualize the data (infographics, charts, tables), contain tips for the user. This category includes resources examples of which are given below.

*Indices.* iMoRe (Reform Monitoring Index); Reformometer.

*Ratings.* Doing Business – A World Bank project that can track the movement of entrepreneurship reforms.

*E-poll.* Ratingpro.org – the information-analytical center among which the monitoring and research of the social relations, social, economic and political processes is declared. The project office of the National Council for Reforms ([reforms.in.ua](http://reforms.in.ua)) publishes an e-survey that is carried out by the research company TNS on its request.

*Open data sets.* Data.gov.ua – a resource that allows the citizen himself to draw conclusions about socio-economic phenomena due to the accessible format of information on the activities of the authorities.

The second area involves the vision of specialists, managers, politicians responsible for implementing reforms and may include reports, conference materials, political proposals, analytical notes, etc. In this case, it is important not the form of data display, but the use of the information technology for the preparation of documents: processing information, identifying trends, building models of development. An example is the website of the National Council for Reforms ([reforms.in.ua](http://reforms.in.ua)) where the section “Monitoring Progress of Reforms” functions.

Decisions in this area are taken at the level of the public authorities. At the same time, participation of other stakeholders should be taken into account through public discussions, direct lines, and the participation of the state representatives in e-forums. Public statements are also possible through e-consultations, e-petitions, e-referrals, and social networking pages.

**Expert assessment.** Based on the potential of e-tools (for example, collection, processing, presentation of data), the expert reasonably presents his vision of the transformation processes. Below are examples of such resources.

*Reanimation Package of Reforms* – ([rpr.org.ua](http://rpr.org.ua)). This structure is positioning itself as the focal point for 68 non-governmental organizations and 23 expert groups that develop, promote and control the implementation of reforms.

*National Team of Experts on Higher Education Reform – HERE (Higher Education Reform Experts)* ([erasmusplus.org.ua](http://erasmusplus.org.ua)) – the European Commission’s initiative is aimed at supporting

the modernization of the higher education systems in Erasmus+ partner countries.

*Strategic Advisory Group on Health System Reform in Ukraine* ([healthsag.org.ua](http://healthsag.org.ua)) – created by the order of the Minister of Health of Ukraine.

*The project “Supporting Reforms in the Field of Justice in Ukraine”* – ([justicereformukraine.eu/uk](http://justicereformukraine.eu/uk)). Implemented with the financial support from the European Union.

*Project Office of Reforms of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine* ([defense-reforms.in.ua](http://defense-reforms.in.ua)) – advisory and consultative body created by the order of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine.

**Conclusions.** We can offer the following definition of digitalization in the context of the topic of this article. Digitization of the strategic communications in the public administration is the expansion of the potential of strategic communications through the use of information and communication technologies and tools in order to increase the attraction of the target audiences to achieve the goals at the national level.

In the process of implementing reforms, the public authorities are forced to solve problems caused by their rejection. This requires additional efforts to implement the socio-economic changes in the society. The use of the digital approach in the strategic communications (e-resources to discuss the progress of the reforms, evaluation of results, surveys, etc.) significantly intensifies the communication processes and promotes more active stakeholder engagement.

Perspective is the study of the separate technologies of the use of the



digital platforms of strategic communications on the example of concrete reform.

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