

UDC 353:342.2

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DECENTRALIZATION OF POWERS AS A DETERMINING FACTOR IN REFORMING LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN UKRAINE

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ДЕЦЕНТРАЛІЗАЦІЯ ВЛАДНИХ ПОВНОВАЖЕНЬ ЯК ВИЗНАЧАЛЬНИЙ ЧИННИК РЕФОРМУВАННЯ МІСЦЕВОГО САМОВРЯДУВАННЯ В УКРАЇНІ

The article explores the problems of local self-government reform in Ukraine and suggests ways to overcome them. The analysis of the legal framework, which is the legal basis for the formation and functioning of public administration and defines the course for European integration, lays the foundations for the formation of public administration, shows that there was a sufficient legal framework for the first stage of the reform from 2014 to 2018. However, for the second phase from 2019 to 2021, it is necessary to amend the Constitution on decentralization to further advance the reform and complete it, and to adopt a number of important laws. Paper investigates the processes of decentralization of power, reform of local self-government in Ukraine and Chernihiv region. The results testify to the positive dynamics of formation of territorial communities. An analysis of the implementation of the perspective plan for community formation in the Chernihiv region, which reflects the vision of creating financially viable united territorial communities, showed that such planning facilitates the transition to direct intergovernmental budget relations, gives the opportunity to receive a subsidy for the formation of infrastructure of united territorial communities, and also, promotes the voluntary involvement of communities in united communities and cities of regional significance. The analysis of the results of sociological research in Ukraine and the territorial communities of Chernihiv region shows that the majority of the population of Ukraine is aware of the reform of local self-government and decentralization and considers this reform necessary. Surveys in Territorial Communities of Chernihiv Oblast have found that the overwhelming majority of respondents do not have an unambiguous answer to their attitudes towards United Territorial Communities, but do expect improvements from decentralization. The study identified the main problems of decentralization in Ukraine and in the Chernihiv region and suggested measures to be taken to address them. These include: introducing changes to the regulatory support of the reform, ensuring the coherence of reform implementation processes, redistributing powers to strengthen public control over local authorities, expanding instruments for promoting economic development, introducing inclusive governance mechanisms.

Key words: self-government reform, territorial organization of government, administrative-territorial units, community formation, integrated territorial community, decentralization reform

У статті досліджуються проблеми здійснення реформи місцевого самоврядування в Україні та пропонуються шляхи їх подолання. Аналіз нормативно-правового забезпечення, яке становить правову основу формування і функціонування публічного управління та визначає курс на європейську інтеграцію і закладає основи для формування публічного управління, свідчить про наявність достатньої нормативно-правової бази яка була необхідна для проведення першого етапу реформи з 2014 по 2018 роки. Однак для проведення другого етапу з 2019 по 2021 необхідно внесення зміни до Конституції щодо децентралізації для подальшого просування реформи та її завершення, а також необхідно прийняти ряд важливих законів. Досліджено процеси децентралізації влади та реформування місцевого самоврядування в Україні та Чернігівській області, які свідчать про позитивну динаміку формування територіальних громад. Аналіз виконання перспективного плану формування громад в Чернігівській області, який відображає бачення створення фінансово спроможних об'єднаних територіальних громад показав, що таке планування сприяє переходу на прямі міжбюджетні відносини з державним бюджетом, дає можливість отримати субвенцію на формування інфраструктури об'єднаних територіальних громад, а також, сприяє добровільному приєднанню громад до об'єднаних громад та міст обласного значення. Аналіз результатів соціологічних досліджень в Україні та територіальних громадах Чернігівської області свідчить, що більшість населення України знає про реформування місцевого самоврядування і децентралізацію та вважає її потрібною. Дослідження в територіальних громадах Чернігівської області виявило, що переважна більшість респондентів не мають однозначної відповіді щодо свого ставлення до об'єднаних територіальних громад, однак очікують покращення від децентралізації. Дослідження виявило головні проблеми децентралізації в Україні та в Чернігівській області та запропонувало заходи які треба здійснити для їх вирішення. Серед них: внесення змін в нормативно-правове забезпечення реформи, забезпечення узгодженості процесів реалізації реформи, проведення перерозподілу повноважень посилення громадського контролю за місцевою владою, розширення інструментів сприяння економічному розвитку, впровадження інклюзивних механізмів управління.

Ключові слова: реформа місцевого самоврядування, територіальна організація влади, адміністративно-територіальні одиниці, формування громад, об'єднана територіальна громада, реформа децентралізації

Problem statement. Local government reform in Ukraine involves the formation of an effective, local government that is able to provide a comfortable environment for people to live in Ukraine. The reform is decentralized in nature and involves the transfer of powers, resources and competences to a person-to-person level, through the creation of a territorial community as a basic subject of local self-government. Decentralization is generally considered to be the transfer of powers and budgetary revenues from state bodies to local governments. The purpose of local government reform is to ensure its ability to solve local issues on its own, at the expense of its own resources. It is about empowering territorial communities with more resources and mobilizing their internal reserves. The reform aims to bring together territorial communities. This is due to the fact that an excessive part of resources in such communities will continue to be spent on the maintenance of the management apparatus, and for the implementation of serious projects of local development of funds will not be sufficient. And even with the additional resources of the vast majority of existing small territorial communities, their capacity will not be provide. Therefore, the reform of local self-government, taking into account the positive both European and own historical experience, requires the obligatory integration of territorial communities.

Analysis of recent research and publications. the problems of decentralization of power in Ukraine and in different countries of the world was explored by many domestic and foreign scientists, in particular: O. Babich, V. Bordeniuk. O. Boryslavska, I. Gritsyak, V. Karpenko, L. Lozovskaya, V. Matvisnko, O. Moldovan, I. Pakhomov, V. Pylypyshyn. O. Skrypniuk, D. Khriplyvets, Y. Bruckner, C. Tiebut, X. Zou S. Yulmaz and others.

Allocation of the unsolved earlier parts of the overall problem. Despite extensive research on decentralization of powers, the authors have paid insufficient attention to the analysis of risks and dangers of local government reform and ways of overcoming these risks and dangers. Particularly urgent are the issues of improving the legal framework, ensuring the coherence of reform implementation processes, conducting the redistribution of powers of governing bodies.

The objectives of the article. The purpose of the article is to analyze the process of decentralization and deconcentration of power in Ukraine and the Chernihiv region and to provide recommendations for further actions in the implementation of the reform.

The main results of the study. Decentralization is seen as an extension of powers and strengthening of local self-government, which requires the development of an appropriate legal mechanism to ensure this process. The European Charter of Local Self-Government was adopted in 1985, The Concept of Local Self-Government, as presented in the Charter, stipulates that Local Self-Government means the right and ability of local self-government bodies to regulate and manage a substantial proportion of public affairs, under their own responsibility, in the interests of local people. This right shall be exercised by councils or assemblies, the members of which are freely elected by secret ballot on the basis of direct, equal, universal suffrage. This provision in no way interferes with the use of citizens' assemblies, referendums or any other form of direct citizen participation, if permitted by law. European Charter of Local Self-Government points to the main feature of the future system of government - proximity to the citizen, ie openness, publicity [16].

The recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe "On Citizens' Participation in Local Public Life" of 06.12.2001 outlined new trends in the formation of public administration on the basis of decentralization of power in Europe. The recommendations emphasize the status of the citizen as the center of democracy; citizens are the lifeblood of any democratic system; local democracy is one of the cornerstones of democracy in European countries and must function in the context of new realities that result from structural and functional changes in the organization of local governments;

in addition, local politics are changing in shape, which in turn requires more open, flexible and specific methods of participation [17].

The basic principles of the policy of democratic participation at the local level are: guarantee the right of citizens to have access to clear, comprehensive information; seek for new ways to enhance civic-mindedness and to promote a culture of democratic participation; develop the awareness of belonging to a community and encourage citizens to accept their responsibility to contribute to the life of their communities; accord major importance to communication between public affairs; avoid overly rigid solutions and allow for experimentation; start from an in-depth assessment of the situation as regards local participation, establish appropriate benchmarks and introduce a monitoring system; enable the exchange of information between and within countries on best practices in citizen participation; pay particular attention to those categories of citizens who have greater difficulty becoming actively involved; recognize the importance of a fair representation of women in local politics; recognize the potential that children and young people represent for the sustainable development of local communities; recognize and enhance the role played by associations and groups of citizens as key partners; enlist the joint effort of the authorities at every territorial level.

The basic legal act constituting the most important legal basis for the formation and functioning of public administration in Ukraine is the Basic Law - the Constitution of Ukraine. It affirms the general principles of the constitutional order, which means that the implementation of the public administration system and the decentralization of power must take place in accordance with its provisions. Article 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine establishes that the people are the bearer of sovereignty and the sole source of power in Ukraine. The Constitution also establishes democratic legal mechanisms for public administration and decentralization of power. In Ukraine, legal acts are in place that determine the course for European integration and lay the legal foundations for forming public administration.

The concept of adaptation of the Civil Service Institute in Ukraine to the standards of the European Union envisages the following priority areas: improvement of legal bases of functioning of the state services; reform of the system of remuneration of civil servants; establishing the procedure for providing public services and improving the regulatory regulation of the requirements of professional ethics of civil servants; improving the efficiency of public service management; professionalization of the civil service [15].

According to the Law of Ukraine "On the National Program for the Adaptation of the Legislation of Ukraine to the Legislation of the European Union", the program defines the mechanism for achieving Ukraine's compliance with the third Copenhagen and Madrid criteria for membership in the European Union. This mechanism includes the process of legislative adaptation, the sequence of implementation in priority areas; establishment of relevant institutions; financial, personnel, information support, other additional measures for effective law enforcement and enforcement [5].

The decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approving the Concept of reforming local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine" was one of the legal acts that created the prerequisites for forming the legal framework for the decentralization of power. The purpose of the Concept is to define the directions, mechanisms and terms of formation of effective local self-government and territorial organization of government for creation and maintenance of a complete living environment for citizens, provision of high quality and accessible public services, establishment of institutions of direct democracy, satisfaction of interests of citizens in all spheres of life activity, harmonization of interests of the state and territorial communities [11]. The Plan of Measures to Implement the Concept of Reforming Local Self-Government and Territorial Organization of Government in Ukraine was approved by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of September 22, 2016 No. 688-p

In August 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the State Strategy for Regional Development for the period up to 2020, which envisages reforming the administrative-territorial system in order to strengthen and harmonize the power relations and the system of governance in the regions on a progressive European basis [8].

The Decree of the President of Ukraine On Priority Measures for the Development of Local Self-Government in Ukraine for 2017 No. 545/2016 of 07.12.2016 stipulates that increasing the institutional capacity of local self-government in Ukraine should be one of the priorities of the state development. The decree also provided for improvement of the mechanism of state incentives for voluntary association of territorial communities in order to increase their capacity; to strengthen interaction of executive authorities with local self-government bodies; improve the organization of advisory and methodological assistance to local self-government bodies of the united territorial communities; to establish systematic work of executive authorities with local self-government bodies; to work out issues related to improvement of the legislation of Ukraine on holding the first elections in the united territorial communities; ensure compliance with the laws of Ukraine on decentralization of administrative services; improve the system of professional development of local self-government officials; to work out the issue of attracting international financial and technical assistance.

Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 77-r of January 23, 2019 On approving a plan of measures for the implementation of a new stage of reforming local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine for 2019-2021 provides for the formation of a new territorial basis for the activity of authorities at the level of communities and districts ; transfer (decentralization) of powers of executive bodies to local self-government bodies and their differentiation on the principle of subsidiarity; creation of a proper resource base for exercising the powers of local governments; formation of an effective system of service in local self-government bodies; streamlining the system of state control and supervision over the legality of the activities of local self-government bodies; development of forms of direct democracy: elections, referendums.

From 2014 to 2018, the first stage of power decentralization in Ukraine took place. The Law "On Voluntary Association of Territorial Communities" No. 157-VIII of the current version dated 01/01/2019 allowed to start forming a capable basic level of local self-government. From 2015 to 2019, 878 united territorial communities (UTC) were created in Ukraine. These united territorial communities have more than 4,000 former local councils. 9 million people live in UTC. Such rates of inter-municipal consolidation are called very high by international experts. The law also introduced the Institute of Village Chiefs in UTC, which represents the interests of rural residents in the community council. There are already 786 elderly people working in the villages in the united territorial communities, with almost 1.7 thousand people fulfilling the duties of Village Chiefs.

Law "On Cooperation of Territorial Communities No. 1508-VII of June 17, 2014" created a mechanism for solving common community problems: utilization and recycling, developing shared infrastructure, and more. By the end of 2018, 325 cooperation agreements have already been implemented. 975 communities have benefited from this mechanism.

According to the Law on the Principles of State Regional Policy No. 156-VIII of February 5, 2015, state support for regional and community infrastructure development has increased 39-fold during the reform period: from \$ 0.5 billion in 2014 to \$ 19.37 billion in 2018 . Due to this support, more than 10,000 projects were implemented in regions and communities in 2015-2018 [9].

On January 23, 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine initiated the transition to a new phase of decentralization reform, which envisages consolidation of already achieved successes and formation of able communities, change of territorial structure at the level of districts and communities, clear delineation of powers and functions of control of different levels of government, as well as development of forms of local governance and democracy. Among the new tasks: to approve the new territorial basis of the country - 100 wealthy districts and 1600-1800 wealthy communities, consolidate the financial self-sufficiency of local self-government, form an effective system of government, streamline the system of state control, and avoid duplication of functions.

The monitoring of the process of decentralization of power and the reform of local self-government as of September 10, 2019 shows the positive dynamics of the formation of territorial communities (Fig. 1).

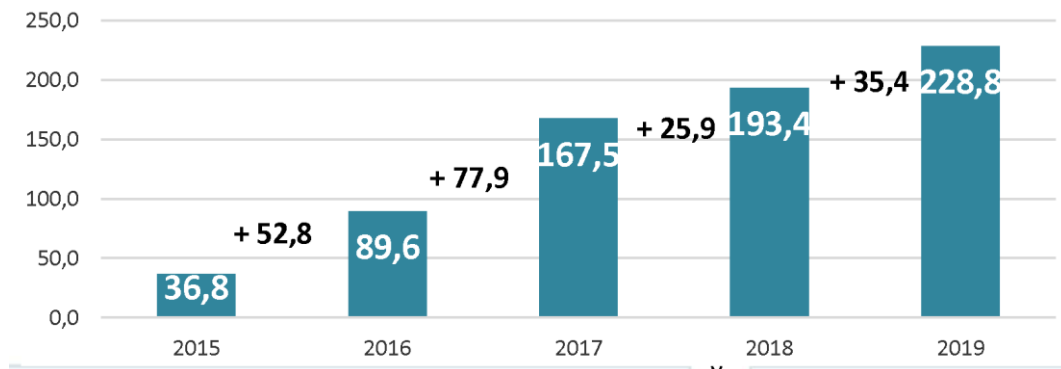


Figure 1. Number of territorial communities that have united and joined from 2015 to 2019

Another feature of the decentralization process is the development and implementation of a forward-looking plan for community formation. The Communities Plan is a document that reflects the vision of creating financially viable United Territorial Communities in accordance with the methodology of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The perspective plan approved by the Chernihiv Oblast Council envisaged the formation of 81 communities in the Chernihiv Oblast, including three cities of oblast importance: Chernihiv, Nizhyn, and Pryluky. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved this plan at its August 12, 2015 meeting [13].

However, on March 28, 2018, the plenary session of the twelfth session of the Chernihiv Regional Council was held, where one of the key issues on the agenda was the approval of the updated perspective plan for the formation of community territories within 100% of the territory of Chernihiv region. The document identifies configurations of 55 united territorial communities covering the entire territory of the Chernihiv region. The Government amended the prospective plan for the formation of territories of the communities of Chernihiv region [12].

These changes allows all united communities of the region created under the long-term plan to switch to direct inter-budgetary relations with the state budget and to receive a subsidy for the formation of the UTC infrastructure. Also, the changes will allow communities to voluntarily join united communities and cities of regional significance. The amendments clarify the composition of Baturyn, Komariv, Pliskiv, Gorodnyan, Ichnyan, Parafiev, Kozelets, Kiptiv, Desnian, Korop, Koryukiv, Mensk, Vertievsk, Losivin, Malodivysk, Sinyivka, Lynishkina, Lynovysk, , Khalyavin, Gonchariv and Novgorod-Seversky communities.

According to the analytical report "Decentralization and Local Government Reform: Results of the Fourth Wave of Sociological Survey" for 2019, 58% of Ukraine's population believes that local government reform and decentralization are necessary, but only 20% of them consider it absolutely necessary. At the same time, 17.5% consider the reform unnecessary. Of those who are well aware of the reform, 81% believe that Ukraine needs decentralization reform and only 13% do not. Among those who are only somewhat aware, the ratio is 62% to 19%. And among those who are completely unaware of the reform, 54% have no idea whether it is needed at all, support the reform - 27%, do not support - 20%. The level of awareness of local government reform and decentralization of power has remained virtually unchanged since 2015. The vast majority of the population is aware of local government reform and decentralization (80% are aware of some steps in this direction), but still only 17% of residents say they are very aware of this [3].

Chernihiv Regional State Administration Conducted Public Opinion Surveys on Attitude of Borznyiysky United Territorial Community Population to Decentralization Reform [1]. The sociological survey was commissioned by the Department of Information and Public Relations of the Regional State Administration. 200 respondents were interviewed in 5 settlements through a personal interview method. Interesting was the fact that the vast majority of respondents (33%) were unable to give a clear answer regarding their attitude towards the creation of an UTC. At the same time, it is worth noting that the percentage of those who are positive about unification is high - 28% (Fig. 2).

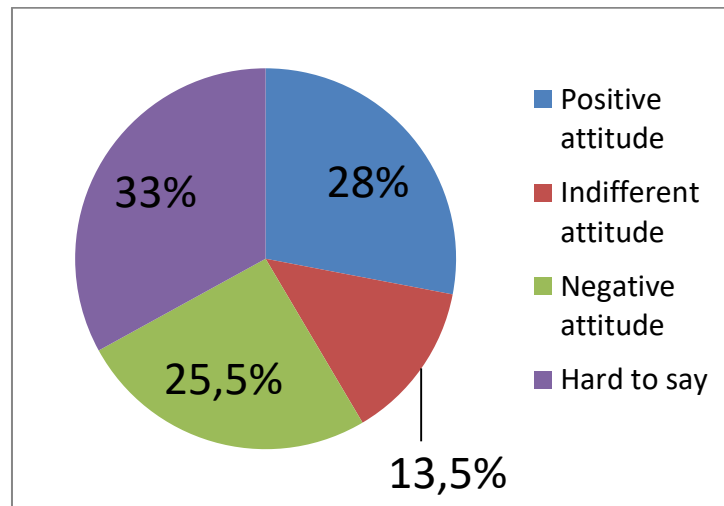


Figure 2. Respondents' attitudes towards creating integrated territorial communities

There is an expectation of improvement from decentralization. Thus, 42% of the respondents from the Novobilovo United Territorial Community expect improvement from the merger. In particular, the interviewed residents of the community believe that the reform will promote the development of the village. Among the problems that need to be addressed first and foremost after the implementation of decentralization, most often the villagers call road repair (Figure 3).

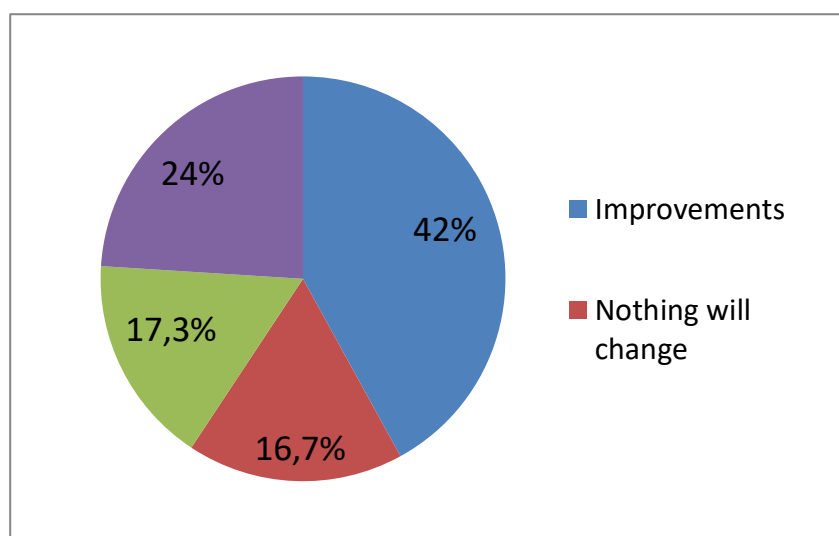


Figure 3. Respondents' expectations of creating united territorial communities

Studying the Attitudes of the Varva community to Decentralization Reform revealed that almost 30% of respondents see the reform as more positive. However, there is a high percentage of those who believe that the unification of Varva with the surrounding villages has more negative consequences - about 25%. It is worth noting that, when asked about the priority issues to be solved in the community, respondents most often called road repair, job creation, water supply and drainage problems. Questions were also raised regarding residents' satisfaction with social development. A personal interview interviewed 200 respondents in Varva and surrounding villages on a proportional stratified sample.

The implementation of decentralization reform poses several risks. These risk groups include:

Difficulties encountered when reviewing the boundaries of administrative and territorial units, which are likely to be reflected in the enlargement of territorial communities (to ensure their financial capacity);

Weakening of state control of local self-government bodies in the exercise of the powers that will be delegated to them, which is complicated by the weakness of civil society institutions;

Exacerbation of the problems of the budget system in the matter of financing the powers of local self-government bodies, the threat of its failure;

decrease in the quality of local government and legitimacy of the decisions made, due to the low level of competence of local self-government officials and the imperfection of the system of selection to the deputy corps;

assertions in the field of ideas, claims in the field of political interests that are contrary to national interests [7].

In addition, in the current political unstable situation in Ukraine, economic and social crisis, external aggression, decentralization can lead to deepening of existing and new negative tendencies in the development of the state and society. The following challenges should be anticipated for: deepening regional identities among the population, separatist sentiment in individual regions; strengthening of control over expenditures and their sources, volumes of arbitrariness of officials and local elites, growing dissatisfaction of the population of the regions with the power, in particular the central one, which will demonstrate the inability to protect the interests and rights of regional communities; the risk of centrifugal trends due to the extremely low level of responsibility of the state to administrative-territorial entities [14].

There are a number of steps that need to be taken to resolve existing problems. As the legislative framework is further developed, it is necessary to amend the Constitution on decentralization, which are necessary to further advance the reform and complete it. A number of important laws must also be enacted. Among them is the Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of the Administrative and Territorial System of Ukraine", which should determine the bases on which the administrative and territorial structure of Ukraine should be based, types of settlements, system of administrative and territorial units, powers of state and local self-government bodies on administrative issues; territorial structure, the procedure of formation, liquidation, establishment and change of boundaries of administrative territorial units and settlements; maintenance of the State Register of administrators vno units and settlements of Ukraine [10].

There is a need for a new wording of the Law on Local Government Service, which should ensure equal access to local government service, enhance the prestige of local government service, motivate local employees to develop their communities and their own development. Laws need to be drafted "On State Oversight of the Legality of Local Government Decisions" and "On the Local Referendum". There is a need to update laws on local elections, on local self-government, on local state administrations, etc. The regular local elections on the new territorial basis of districts and communities should play an important role. Powers between levels of government should be differentiated on the principle of subsidiarity. Community dwellers should be provided with mechanisms and tools to influence local authorities and participate in decision-making [4].

It is also important to ensure that the practical processes of implementing decentralization reform are consistent with its strategic goals and priorities; accelerate the redistribution and normalization of powers of

administrative bodies of administrative-territorial units in the process of administrative-territorial reform, with the prevention of conflicts of authority; to consistently expand the list of tools for strengthening one's own capacity and promoting economic development within the competence of territorial communities; strengthen the managerial capacity of the UTCs and implement inclusive governance mechanisms; to establish proper qualification and personnel support for effective community management; streamline rural health care delivery in the context of sectorial reforms and decentralization reform [2].

Particular attention should be paid to stimulating and strengthening public control over local authorities, as European practice demonstrates the significant effect of such control and increasing interest in cooperation between local authorities and public organizations. One of the recent problems facing united territorial communities today is the resistance of the state authorities themselves, in particular the Central Election Commission and regional state administrations, which blocked the elections in August 2018 to 123 communities [6].

Conclusions and suggestions. Decentralization reform opens up considerable prospects for ensuring the ability of local self-government to independently address the issues of life of the local population, in particular enhancing the role of citizens, their influence on the decision-making process and implementation of decisions on ensuring the conditions of social and economic development of society.

The study revealed the main problems of decentralization in Ukraine and in the Chernihiv region: streamlining the boundaries of administrative and territorial units, weakening control over the exercise of powers, exacerbating problems of the budget system, reducing the quality of local government, affirmation of political interests that are contrary to national interests, etc. it is necessary to implement to solve the existing problems the most important are the introduction of changes in the legal support of the reform, ensuring the coherence of processes of implementation of the reform with its strategic goals and priorities, carrying out the redistribution of powers of the administrative units of administrative and territorial units, expansion of instruments for promoting economic development, introduction of inclusive governance mechanisms. It is also important to ensure that the practical processes of implementing decentralization reform are consistent with its strategic goals and priorities, stimulating and strengthening public control over local authorities, and counteracting resistance by state authorities themselves.

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Researcher ID: I-4025-2016