

MAIN DIRECTIONS OF REFORMING THE REGIONAL POLICY IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. The urgency of reforming the Ukraine's regional policy is connected with political and economic challenges, which threaten security of the Ukraine's territorial integrity, as well as with the need to implement the key provisions of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Reforming the regional policy involves introduction of a new ideology in the state administration for regional development, local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine based on the principle of subsidiarity.

The reform provides transformation of the existing two-tier Ukraine's territorial structure to three level structure according to NUTS 1, NUTS 2, NUTS 3. Introduction of NUTS in Ukraine can be considered as one of the important steps towards enabling the Ukraine's accession to the single European Statistical System, which will provide a unified, transparent and effective model of statistical monitoring and based on it – implementation of an effective regional policy.

Key words: Ukraine, territorial and administrative structure, regional policy, community, district, area.

Introduction

The declaration of independence of Ukraine and the deep social, economic and political transformation of Ukrainian society are the historical factors that trigger the need for the new regional policy based on the improvement of territorial and administrative structure. Such reforms should be based on a strategic vision of the new Ukrainian ideology of regional development governance, local government and territorial organization of national economy.

Current importance of more immediate solution of the issues derives from the negative developments across all the areas of society in Ukraine and in the regions; the necessity to avoid threats to its integrity; addressing the problems of military operations in the eastern regions.

In this regard, we propose to reform the regional policy of Ukraine in direct connection with implementation of the comprehensive territorial and administrative reorganization.

Implementation of new territorial and administrative system in Ukraine may be considered as one of the important steps towards ensuring the reform of regional policy based on the current features of social and economic regional development, changes in their geospatial organizations due to the gravitational processes taking place at the interregional and intraregional levels.

At the moment the Ukrainian government believes that the territorial and administrative reform should be carried out only at the community level based on the principles of decentralization and improving of the effectiveness of local governments. The evidence of this approach is the amalgamation of villages, towns and cities in order to enhance their social and economic potential and to expand their financial capabilities.

Relevance of the problem of new regional policy in Ukraine

I suggest that transformation of the Ukrainian regional policy should be a comprehensive process on the basis of historical, cultural, behavioral and institutional methods. It should be aimed at the increasing of economic and financial potentials of regions, their effective use, support of regional competitiveness and social and economic convergence and countering the destructive processes in the society. At the same time the existing territorial division in Ukraine poses a serious obstacle to further development of national economy and its regions, and in particular to the reintegration of the eastern regions.

In Ukraine, there is a significant divergence among the regions which can be seen from the dynamics of GRP per capita. We have conducted an analysis of social and economic development of the Ukrainian regions for the period from 2005 to 2013 which showed that regions may be divided into five groups by this indicator. Two groups are characterized by GRP per capita above the country's average (101% – 125%) and three groups reached the value below the country's average – 75% and less than 50% (Pysarenko 2013).

Only six Ukrainian regions are now in the position to financial self-supporting (Dnipropetrovs'k, Lviv, Poltava, Sumy, Kharkiv and Cherkasy regions). The other region's economies are supported by subsidies from the state budget. In 2013, most subsidies had been received by city Kyiv and Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Volyn, Vinnytsya, Kirovohrad and Odessa regions (Zaharchenko 2014).

In order to address the range of problems of national and regional importance, there is an objective need to accomplish the primary reform goal, specifically the introduction of new ideology of government and local authorities to ensure the rights and freedoms of citizens on the basis of competence and separation of powers of national and local authorities at all levels.

The main principles shaping the regional policy are the following: subsidiarity, partnership, programming, complementarity and coherence. These considerations bring Ukraine to the implementation of basic principles of the EU Common Regional Policy.

While reforming the regional policy, special attention should be paid to compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. The subsidiarity principle provides that the national government renders only those decisions on social and economic development that cannot be considered at lower levels of authorities. The partnership creates the conditions when not only the authorities at all levels but also the economic agents of the region, as well as regional institutions are involved in the preparation and implementation of the regional development strategy.

The programming approach should be aimed at supporting the implementation of the defined courses of regional development strategies and also at the formation of integrated regional strategies.

The complementarity principle takes shape of the supplementation of national authorities' measures with the actions at regional and local levels with the use of international initiatives. It provides the "adjustment" of regional policy to the macroeconomic policy (Pysarenko 2009).

It is necessary to form such a concept of regional policy which will help to establish the effective mechanisms for balancing the current trends of centralization and decentralization in Ukraine.

The important condition for formation and implementation of a new regional policy is a legal groundwork which must provide for the wide use of macroeconomic regulators differentiated by the regions (preferential tax treatment, easy-term loans etc.), optimization of financial and economic base of the local and regional authorities as well as closer and effective cooperation between state and regions.

Effectiveness of formation of the regional policy in Ukraine is directly associated with development and implementation of the new territorial and administrative structure and legislative consolidation of its basic principles. The relevance of the problem is determined by the fact that governance of social and economic development of regions and local government in Ukraine is altogether self-contradictory, that hampers the social, economic and political reforms.

At present, there is no common understanding of the needs for the comprehensive territorial and administrative reform. There are no specific provisions and clear requirements for the creation of territorial and administrative structure and the operational policy based on combination of power of national and regional authorities.

Decentralization as a basis for reformation of the Ukrainian regional policy

Reformation of regional policy in Ukraine has started with decentralization of public administration and reformation of the local government based on experience of the EU members and in particular Poland.

In Ukraine, decentralization has been mentioned for the first time in the Constitution of Ukrainian People's Republic on April 29, 1918, which states: without breaking unitarily power UNR provides its lands and communities rights for wide self-government according to the principle of decentralization.

The excessive centralization of regional development, which has been a norm for the Ukrainian regional policy till 2013, resulted in many negative consequences. It has contributed to the increase of contradictions between "center" and regions and between "communities – districts – regions" that impeded the regional social and economic development and led to the emergence of destructive ideas of federalization.

The process of reformation of public administration in Ukraine should be comprehensive and consistent.

Main directions of its preparation and implementation are shown in Table 1.

K.Veskott and Y.Rehulsky believe that the preparedness of public perception and support of reform aspects are important for public administration reform as well as the development of principles, which have to meet the general strategy of reforming the Ukrainian regional policy (Regulski 1999; Wescott 2004).

The priority aspects of decentralization should include: departure from centralized model of regional development; economic viability of the regions and local self-government; building of the effective system of territorial organization of power.

Table 1. Main directions and principles of preparing and implementation of the regional administration reform in Ukraine

Area of activity	Results
Preparation and implementation of the reform in whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – internal system of national economy; – balance of system levels (regions)
Organization of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – existence of a single and capable control center of reform (metropolitan center) – staffing
Setting goals of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – strategic vision – creating a national model – clarity and reality – orientation in time
Preparation and implementation of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – political and public support – transparency
– stage of preparation of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unity and completeness of organization – scientific validity
– stage of implementation of the reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – stability – timeliness – feedback (principle of control) – continuous improvement – compliance of the objectives and roads

Source: The Constitution of Ukraine: Official text – Kyiv, Palyvoda A.V. – 2016 – 64 p.

Decentralization of the state government as a base for reformation of Ukrainian regional policy involves: i) transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from national level to local governments and regional authorities; ii) increase of the power of local communities in their relations with the center; iii) granting the regions with right to develop and implement their own development strategies; iv) concentration of resources required for internal development. Under decentralization, the great importance must be given to the issues of financial security of regions based on securing stable sources of tax revenue and differentiated provision of educational and medical subventions.

Implementation of such trends will contribute to social and economic development of the regions and communities, creating opportunities to provide high-quality services to all citizens, strengthening the principle of democracy in work and ensuring the formation and implementation of their own strategies for social and economic development without excessive administrative control of national government.

An integrated approach to the first phase of territorial and administrative reform involves the decentralization of local governments at the community level through a combination of three following components:

- Change of country's territorial and administrative division due to the sizing of communities through the amalgamation in order to draw public services near their direct consumers within the territorial communities;
- Optimal assignment of power at the “communities – districts – regions” levels which should provide self-development of communities;
- Fiscal decentralization, i.e. transfer of resources required for exercising powers to the local level (Vlasyuk 2015:7).

Ukraine anticipates fiscal decentralization, strengthening of the fiscal autonomy of local governments on the basis of revenue sharing between the center, local authorities and local governments, which requires changes in the existing system of budget levels interaction (that is the list of fixed incomes and standard withholdings from regulated revenues at all levels for a long term, not less than 5 years)

Decentralization of the budget process stipulates the increasing number of financial sources for the local budgets, in particular by attaching a certain part of corporate income tax of the companies operating within the respective territories, excise duty, environmental tax, subsoil use fees, fees for special use of national natural resources etc. to the local budgets.

The state budget should be formed in the amount needed to finance the government, defense and security, important national programs and convergence funds of social and economic development of the regions. The state should thus make the budgetary provision for residents in all administrative units at the guaranteed level established by law.

Internal incomes (local taxes and fees) and fixed incomes (funds of financial equalization for communities and regions, transfers, targeted subsidies and investment subventions) should become the basis for independence of the local budgets.

The main issue is the development of own revenue base of the regional management. Decentralization implies that most of money earned by the regions will stay in the region, and for that end they need to learn how to earn money by increasing their competitiveness and by efficient use of earnings.

One of the most important ways to increase the regional financial resources is the use of external financial sources – grants and loans – and creating of conditions to attract foreign direct investments. It requires coordination and effective interaction of both public and private sectors in the region.

Essence and importance of administrative and territorial reform

Ukraine has so far retained the two-level territorial divisions that emerged in the former USSR (*Constitution of Ukraine* 2016). The first level is region (oblast), whereas the second one includes districts and all settlements (cities of regional subordination, urban settlements and villages). As of 1 January 2014, the territorial and administrative system included: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 24 regions, cities of Kyiv and Sevastopol, 490 districts, 460 cities, 885 towns, 10 279 village councils and 28,397 village (*Derzhavna sluzhba ...* 2016).

Current territorial structure of Ukraine is characterized by: existence of disparities in regional development; different availability of services including administrative ones; uneven funding of territorial and administrative units calculated per capita; complex mechanism of interactions between local authorities and locals; imperfect system of local self-government.

Inefficiency, inconsistency, excessive centralization and distance from the interests of ordinary people are typical for the current territorial and administrative system. The existing territorial and administrative structure does not promote the effective regional development. It causes problems of social and economic recession and depopulation of much of the country.

Under current conditions a comprehensive territorial and administrative reform has become particularly important and should in particular consider aggravation of political and economic situation and European line of development in Ukraine. The territorial and administrative reform

should provide for the changes in the territorial and administrative structure and organizational system and the national and local authority performance. The government work should be aimed at creating more supportive environment for social development based on the balance of individual, collective (public) and national interests.

The goal of the reform is to strengthen territorial unity of the country and to ensure more effective regulation of society development, allocation of economic and financial resources, expansion of facilities and financial framework of the territorial and administrative units. Decentralization of power will reduce social and political tensions in the country and promote its comprehensive development.

The necessity for administrative and territorial reform is caused by obsolescence and mismatch of the current structure to the modern development of Ukrainian economy and to its operating mechanism that has negative impact on the political and economic system of the country.

Current territorial structure of Ukraine is characterized by the excessive dissemination of administrative units at the local level. Most of them have no sufficient economic potential for development.

The main tasks of territorial and administrative reform in Ukraine should be the following: decentralization of public authority, enhancing the role of local self-government and its reformation through consolidation of territorial units in accordance with the NUTS system.

In the process of territorial and administrative reform it is necessary to ensure: transition to the new system of territorial and administrative structure based on formation of integral territorial and administrative units; their administrative, financial, economic, social and demographic security with respect to the regional features. It is also necessary to define the nature and limits of national government control over the local governments; to develop the organizational and economic mechanism for strengthening the economic base and providing of financial and managerial autonomy of the administrative units.

The important issues addressing the principles and criteria of formation of territorial and administrative units at various levels were described in research publications of A.Lisovy and N.I. Ruban (2011), I.O.Kresin (2009), A.Tkachuk (2007).

The reform of territorial and administrative structure and spatial organization of power in Ukraine is one of the fundamental reforms, which affect almost all spheres of the society. Thus its successful accomplishment requires broad public support. This in turn requires frank and broad media exposure of reform process and problems.

The efforts taken by the regional authorities at all levels should aim at promoting the convergence. For this purpose it is necessary to develop the science-based innovation strategy for restructuring the regional economy; to provide broader support for development of business environment; to promote the consulting, education, research and technological development; to provide for concessional loans to the industrial enterprises and organizations conducting research and development; to involve the government orders mainly in the form of contracts for R&D and production of new innovative products; to promote development of international leasing, joint venture, venture capital; to ensure priority allocation of investment, financial and credit resources for creation of new jobs in the information-intensive industry sectors; to use more efficiently the existing scientific potential by means of reducing gaps of interdisciplinary connections in the "fundamental research – development – commercialization of knowledge in production" cycle; to create the national database to monitor the development of research and innovation processes in every region of Ukraine.

Currently, there are no adopted framework regulations concerning the new model of territorial and administrative structure of Ukraine. It is necessary to adopt the Law "on territorial and administrative structure", which will define the stages of reform, objectives and criteria of evaluation

at every stage; specific provisions and clear requirements for the formation of territorial and administrative units at each level. It has to suggest the optimal model, which will combine power of central government on one hand and will contribute to the development of democratic governance by strengthening the role of local self-government on the other hand.

Model of territorial and administrative reform

Territorial and administrative system of Ukraine has undergone significant changes at different stages of historical development. In the early 20th century, the country was divided between Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the Russian Empire, the Ukrainian ethnic territory consisted of 9 governorates divided into 90 counties. The Austro-Hungarian Empire included such Ukrainian lands as Galicia, Bukovina and Transcarpathian Ruthenia with corresponding division into counties. After the collapse of both empires at the beginning of 20th century, the Soviet Ukraine was divided into circuits and districts, and later division was changed to regions (oblasts) and districts. In 1962 there was an attempt to unite the oblasts into seven economic zones (councils of national economy) – Donetsk, Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Kharkiv and Black sea, but later it was switched to the division into regions (oblasts) and districts. This division has remained valid until now.

The new model of territorial and administrative division should be based on the spatial paradigm providing for the metropolitan spatial economic systems drawing on the existing settlement systems, which have been transforming under the influence of processes of economic zoning and metropolisation. The economic zoning should rest on consideration of the historical, natural, ecological, social and economic characteristics of the Ukrainian territory.

The European integration processes taking place in Ukraine afford the ground for conducting the territorial and administrative reform in accordance with the EU common system of classification of territorial and administrative units for statistics – NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics: NUTS I (3 million of people – 7 million of people), NUTS II (800 thousand of people – 3 million of people), NUTS III (159 thousand of people – 800 thousand of people).

Implementation of NUTS in Ukraine may be considered as one of the most important steps towards enabling Ukraine's joining the single European Statistical System, that will provide a unified, transparent and effective monitoring and as a result the implementation of the effective regional policy.

I argue that the reformation of existing Ukrainian territorial structure envisages the creation of first-degree units – NUTS III communities (a group of villages, settlements, towns); NUTS II – counties that will cover several modern administrative districts. The third level will be presented by the economic areas that will be created by combining the existing regions in accordance with NUTS 1 level.

Taking into account the experience of the CEE countries, where the territorial and administrative reform took place gradually in two stages under the European integration, the territorial and administrative reform in Ukraine should be also conducted in two stages.

At the first present stage, it is important to guarantee the reformation of basic NUTS III level, which should be formed by combining local communities (with a population of at least 5-6 thousand people in accordance with the recommendations of the World Bank).

Formation of territorial communities should be based on the existing regional settlement systems through the merger around a certain core (centers of economic development) of village, town and city councils in accordance with economic, social, demographic, historical, infrastructural, administrative

and managerial, natural, geographical and mental features of their territories, as well as the principle of territorial access to social, administrative and public services and proper economic fundamentals: property, appropriate property rights, natural and other resources, assets of local budgets, which should be sufficient for resolving local issues within their competence (Zakon Ukrayiny 2016).

The greatest distance of settlements from the center of the community is determined, as a rule, by basic requirements of social services at this level, especially by timing: emergency aid (15-20 min), delivery of secondary school students by school bus (15-20 min), emergency rescue (15 min). Regional public authorities have to develop the systems of local communities.

At the end of 2015, most regions of Ukraine approved the long-term plans of territorial communities reforming, however their implementation requires a proper institutional and methodical support. The regulatory acts addressing the system of organization and legal, financial and economic mechanisms aiming at the establishment and development of territorial communities have still not been adopted. The Ukrainian experts have offered some methods (*Proekt metodyky ...* 2016).

For example, in Lviv region the Perspective plan of creation of 140 capable territorial communities was developed. For stimulation of the social and economic development it is expected to provide the people with state financial support in the amount of three million hryvnias, and in addition, to transfer over 190 thousand hectares of land beyond their territories to the communities.

The existing district level in Ukraine (150-800 thousand of people) does not meet the NUTS II level (from 800 thousand to 3 million of people). It is necessary to combine the areas on the basis of the existing settlement systems and interrelationships, and to form the appropriate territorial units of the second level – that is districts (poviats) with corresponding population number. Moreover, the system may cover the administrative regions of adjacent regions that should be considered during the formation of NUTS I, because of the existing interdistrict connections in some regions.

Districts should deal with the issues that the community cannot solve themselves: protection of public order, disaster management, flood and fire control, maintenance of general hospitals, social assistance, unemployment and construction of roads.

Thus, as a result of the first stage of reform, the territorial and administrative division of Ukraine will consist of communities (NUTS III) and districts (NUTS II).

As an example and with support of the gravitational model I have singled out five districts in Lviv region – Lviv, Drobych, Zolochiv, Brody and Chervonohrad – and five districts in Ternopil region – Ternopil, Chortkiv, Kremenets, Berezhany and Shuya.

I agree with V. Kolosov that current population of the highest level of territorial and administrative division of Ukraine – region (oblast) – corresponds by quantitative parameters to NUTS II level (Kolosov 2005).

In this regard, at the second stage of territorial and administrative reform it is necessary to start formation of NUTS I by combining the economic areas with regard to agglomeration-metropolitan method. The centers of the selected economic areas should become large cities inhabited by million or greater population, on the basis of which the metropolitan spatial economic systems would be formed. Those systems constitute the foundation of national economy, sources of new ideas, technologies and innovations, generators and stimulants of economic growth.

The economic zoning involves division of national economy into relatively independent systems, each of which differs by appropriate level of public, economic and social integrity and independence. The economic areas may be considered as concentrations of historical, economic, political and social processes in a specific cultural environment or as part of the spatial structure of society. The economic areas might become businesses-structures which “are able to adapt to the global

economy and produce wealth”, in other words, should provide optimal space to get the best social and economic results.

Studying the national economic space zoning involves two interrelated approaches: qualitative (system) and quantitative (cybernetic). The goal of economic zoning should be realization of strategy of increasing competitiveness of the national economy based on sustainable long-term spatial social and economic development. Maintenance of the regional transport infrastructure, specialist health care and specialist secondary education, development of culture, sports, tourism, providing a higher level of service (higher education, health care, cultural institutions) is proposed to be transferred to NUTS I level.

The economic area level should also include development and implementation of the social and economic development policy and resolving the issues of inter-regional and national importance: creating the conditions for economic development; balancing the labor market; implementation of projects to support small and medium-sized enterprises; advertising; initiation of appropriate organizational forms to attract the investments and international financial assistance (agencies, foundations of regional development); organization of inter-regional cooperation, development and implementation of strategies and programs for regional development; maintenance and development of regional social and technical infrastructure to support scientific education and culture (theaters, philharmonic and museums); sustainable use of natural resources and preservation of the environment; maintenance of the emergency medical care facilities, specialist medical care and rehabilitation, diagnostics as well as specialist schools.

During the first years of independence (1990-1996), the Ukrainian scientists have proposed various options for integrated economic zoning. The authors proposed to single out from ten to six economic regions in Ukraine. The main principles of their allocation were: social and historical features; commensurable levels of industrial development and scientific and technological and cultural potentials. The researchers of such schemes includes O. I. Shablyi, O.M.Marynych, V.A.Popovkin, F.D. Zastavny, V.M.Turyeyev, S.I.Dorohuntsov, A.M.Fedoryshchev, P.O.Maslyak i P.H.Shyshchenko, V.K.Symonenko etc.



Figure 1. NUTS I structure in perspective of territorial and administrative structure of Ukraine

I agree with O.I. Shablyi that when taking current scientific approaches to economic zoning into account, allocation of six integrated social and economic regions: Central (Vinnytsya, Zhytomyr, Kyiv,

Khmelnysky, Cherkasy and Chernihiv regions), Eastern (Donetsk and Luhansk regions), Western (Volyn, Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil and Chernivtsi region), East-Central (Dnipropetrovs'k and Zaporizhia regions), Southern (Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson regions and Autonomous Republic of Crimea), Northeastern (Poltava, Sumy and Kharkiv region), with corresponding centers Kyiv, Donetsk, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa and Kharkiv the most optimal will be the will be the most optimal (Fig. 1).

By the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation about the support of local government reform in

Ukraine on December 17, 2014 in Warsaw, the Ukrainian-Polish advisory group was created for development of the proposals to improve the legal regulation of regional development and local self-government reformation in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian-Polish advisory group plans to assess implementation of the existing decisions on financial decentralization; prepare the proposals regarding the amendments to the Budget and Tax Code of Ukraine in terms of financial decentralization; strengthen the financial basis of local self-government considering the budgetary performance; work out the mechanisms to ensure public and state control of public finances.

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