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PUBLIC TRUST IN AUTHORITIES:
RESULTS OF A SURVEY CONDUCTED IN CITIES
AND AMALGAMATED TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES

Problem setting. An important factor of the proper functioning of a public administration system in democratic states is the public's trust in bodies and officials of state and local self-government.

Trust in authorities is closely connected with legitimacy and effectiveness of governmental institutions, their authority and social significance. A low level of trust in the government can indicate uncertainty, doubt and suspicious attitude of the population to the authorities, which in its extreme manifestations can lead to very negative consequences: the growth of social tension, political instability, protest actions, open confrontation. That is, the level of trust serves as a kind of indicator in the system of relations "authorities-population", an indicator of citizens' assessment of the compliance of public authorities with public inquiries and expectations. That is why the issues of studying the phenomenon of public trust in authorities and determining its level are relevant and require investigation.

Recent research and publications analysis. The issue of trust in institutions of power has been reflected in works of both foreign and domestic researchers. The body of scientific literature devoted to theoretical and methodological questions of trust is constantly developing, clarifying its role and importance in public relations in general and in the sphere of public administration in particular. So, trust in authorities as a state-creating factor in Ukraine is explored by P. I. Lopushinskyi, as a factor of efficiency of the system of public administration – O. G. Kuchabskyi and S. S. Pogorelyi, L. M. Moskvych considers public trust in court as an indicator of the efficiency of the judiciary.
At the same time, issues of determining the level of citizens' trust in authorities, finding out the real attitude of the population to the authorities are still relevant.

**Paper objective** is to identify the level of trust of population in cities and amalgamated territorial communities to bodies and representatives of authorities, as well as to determine the factors influencing it.

**Paper main body.** This study was conducted within the framework of the project "Participatory Democracy and Evidence-Based Decision Making at the Local Level in Ukraine", implemented by the Association of Ukrainian Cities in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, with the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A survey of population (aged 18+ years) was conducted to reveal the level of public trust in the authorities. The survey was conducted in 20 cities and 12 amalgamated territorial communities (ATC). At least 100 respondents were interviewed in each of the cities and ATCs. The total sample size is 3374 respondents.

The survey was conducted in October-November 2017 by "Operatyvna Sociologia" Sociology Company.

During the survey, respondents were asked to assess the level of their trust (5-point scale) in: City/Village/Settlement Mayor; Local Council; Deputy of the Local Council from the respective constituency; Rayon Council (if applicable); Rayon State Administration (if applicable); Oblast Council (deputy of the Oblast Council from the corresponding constituency); Oblast State Administration; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine; President of Ukraine; courts; police.

The population both in cities and in ATC trusts in local, rayon and oblast authorities more than the national ones. At the same time, the level of trust of the population of ATC in the local, rayon and oblast authorities is higher than the level of trust of urban residents in respective institutions. So, trust (on a 5-point scale, where 1 - "I do not trust", and 5 - "I trust completely") in City/Village/Settlement Mayor of
respondents in cities is 2.9, in ATC - 3.5; Local Council - 2.7 and 3.3; Deputy of the Local Council from the respective constituency - 2.6 and 3.3; Rayon Council - 2.4 and 3.0; Rayon State Administration - 2.4 and 2.9; Oblast Council (deputy of the Oblast Council from the corresponding constituency) - 2.4 and 2.8; Oblast State Administration - 2.4 and 2.8; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine - 1.7 and 1.7; Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine - 1.8 and 1.7; President of Ukraine - 1.8 and 1.8; courts - 1.8 and 1.8; police - 2.2 and 2.1 respectively.

In general, the level of trust of city residents in all listed in the questionnaire authorities and their representatives was below the average scale (3 points), that is, the population of cities actually does not trust (in whole or in part) to any authorities. There is a slightly different situation in ATC, where the level of public trust in local authorities is still higher than the average scale.

An analysis of the correlation between the levels of public trust in the authorities and the membership of respondents in the following institutions was carried out: public organizations, political parties, co-owners of condominiums, street committees, quarterly committees, and public councils. Membership in these institutions was assessed on a 3-point scale: 0 - "No, not a member," 1 - "Yes, is a member, but only formally" and 2 - "Yes, I take an active part in the activities of the organization". The results of the correlation analysis indicated a lack of statistically significant relationships between the trust of respondents in the authorities and their membership in the above-mentioned institutions.

The level of public trust in the authorities is also accompanied by material conditions of the respondent: the trust of the respondents in the authorities of all levels increases with the improvement of the material situation of the respondents.

**Conclusions of the research.** The results of the study revealed that the majority of the population both in the cities and ATC in general does not trust in the authorities on the rayon, regional and national levels. With the approach of the authorities to the population from the national to the local, the level of trust increases. Residents of ATC trust in authorities and their representatives slightly more than city dwellers. In addition, the population of ATC compared to residents of cities is more
inclined to believe that local media depict objectively the activities of government agencies on the local, rayon and regional levels.

Trust in authorities (in particular local ones) is closely correlated with the transparency of government activities and authorities’ readiness to take into account citizens’ views when making managerial decisions: increasing public trust in government institutions is accompanied by growth of residents' confidence in the fact that local authorities take into account the people's opinion when making decisions, as well as that the authorities inform citizens well about the actual issues that are discussed in the city council and about what budget funds are spent on.

Also, statistically significant correlation between the trust in the authorities and the respondents' assessments of their possibilities to influence decision of the authorities (the question "You have the opportunity to influence the decisions of the local authorities" and "To what extent can you influence the decision making at the local level?", 4-point scale) are revealed. However, these relations are rather weak - the correlation coefficient does not exceed 0.20.