

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AS A FACTOR OF STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY

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The political crisis of recent months in Ukraine is not "artificially created" or a random phenomenon. Both thoughts and polls of the citizens on the effectiveness of "reforms implementation" in the country quite clearly demonstrate their level of trust to major government institutions. Indeed, the dominant factors of influence on public opinion is the quality of the basic processes in the country, changes in economic, legal, social and other fields. At the same time we are well aware that information and communication opacity of the state authorities have extremely painful impact on citizens. This creates discouragement, rejection and forms protest. Unfortunately we have already passed this way. We again appeal to the fundamental principle and purpose of public relations - to achieve consensus in the society by creating two-way symmetrical communication between state authorities and citizens.

The aim of this analysis was to determine whether the Communication Administration of Ukraine (and, in fact, the President) is two-way and ethical, whether the communication channels used by the institution to provide the public with information about its activities in this extremely difficult and dangerous period of development are effective.

Where can we get the information on the "veracity" of communications?

- 1) social networks – as they are provided as a resource where no one is restricted to express their point of view, so theoretically feedback in social networks is the most honest and open official web-site of the institution – on that web-sites it can be seen which mechanisms are provided for obtaining feedback from citizens and how these

comments are processed;

- 2) personal statements of the President on specific situations;
- 3) organized events;
- 4) statements and articles, comments, etc. of the Head of the Presidential Administration, politicians and journalists (specific examples);
- 5) analysis of the results of sociological research on the effectiveness of communication of Ukrainian authorities, including the Presidential Administration.

The President of Ukraine has its own official website, which covers the main activities and the activities of the Presidential Administration. Categories that we are interested in are “Speeches”, “Latest News”, “Press Center” and actually “Presidential Administration”, but to complete the study all site categories were analyzed, as well as the Presidential Administration page on Facebook network.

We have analyzed the information of the pages of the President of Ukraine and other political leaders on Facebook and Twitter. Also articles and researches on the Ukrainian Internet portals and publications on this topic were analyzed.

1. Analysis of the Presidential Administration page on Facebook

Analyzing the page, we took into consideration not only the number of followers (in fact, quite large number - almost 31 thousand of people “liked” the page), or how many likes gets each post, but also the reaction of those, who maintain this page (their comments).

Unfortunately, during the last three months we have not noticed any response (from authorized account managers) or comments under the post.

It is clear that social media account is not the main channel of communication of the institution, but if it exists, then probably it was created specifically for two-way communications. Unfortunately, we can't see it.

Thus, we see that such “negligence” of communication maintaining at the Presidential Administration page does not contribute to the formation of trust.

2. Analysis of web-site of Presidential Administration of Ukraine

As it was already indicated, the President of Ukraine and his Administration have joint official website.

We are interested only in aspects related to communication. Where

the information on the activities, actions and plans of the President and his administration on the web-site can be found?

Category “Latest News” covers the events, which were attended by the President – foreign visits, diplomatic visits, signing decrees, etc. In category “Speeches” all speeches of the President in chronological order can be found. “Congratulations” - the official greetings of the President. A separate section “President’s Wife” covers the activities of the First Lady. Sections “Photos”, “Videos”, “Documents” (decrees, orders and the Constitution of Ukraine).

Next come categories “Presidential Administration” and “Press Center”, which theoretically should contain the information on a two-way communication tool of Presidential Administration. But information concerning this sector can only be found in the section “On citizens’ appeals”, which describes options of application:

- In writing (via mail, internet or direct submission to the office)
- Through official reception office;
- Through electronic petition.

Next is information about the structure of the Presidential Administration and information for the media.

The web-site is updated several times a day, but there is no information on the effectiveness of such communication. There are some links to social networks, but, as we have seen above, the authorized managers of those pages do not respond to the comments of citizens. Also there is no statistics on the effectiveness of electronic petitions, no information on the results of press conferences, meetings and activities in which the President has participated etc.. Thus, we can conclude that communication through the web-site is one-sided and incomplete.

3. Analysis of the speeches of the President of Ukraine

4 speeches of the President of Ukraine were analyzed. Speeches of the President are a specific means of communication. Clearly that in one speech it is impossible to mark all important points, but it is possible to check the speeches on populism, whether declared statements are abstract, whether they focus on clear actions, facts, results etc..

So, first analyzed speech is the Address of President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, to the deputies of Verhovna Rada of Ukraine, February 18, 2016. In fact, the main task and analysis of these speeches was to determine whether President explains his current actions, does he says about the reasons for his steps / decisions, or the speech is more abstract.

Abstract statements from the speech:

- «... Just one last day remained ...»;
- «... This formalization Commission will start literally tomorrow ...»;
- «... Perfect is the enemy of good. Readiness to vote is not enough».

The most clear statements from the speech:

- «Therefore I ask you today to adopt two more laws. One of them should open the way to trial in absentia of the organizers of terrible inhuman crimes against the participants of Revolution of dignity. Other is aimed at returning the loot to the budget and use this resource to strengthen the country's defense».

However, there was no information on what the President actually meant by "returning the loot to the budget."

The second speech is the Address of the President of Ukraine on the occasion of the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes, February 20, 2016.

Abstract statements from the speech:

- «... In addition, we gradually compensate damages caused by the economic aggression of Russia ...» (*unfortunately there is no explanation on how actually it is done*);
- «... very important and complicated laws are adopted ...» (*not underlined which exactly*);
- «... We have given the public more opportunities to influence the election of a special anti-corruption prosecutor and strengthened its independence from political influence and the Attorney General ...» (*it is not clearly understood from the speech how exactly the public got more opportunities*);
- «... finalize the amendments to the Constitution in terms of judicial reform, which provides deep clearing of the courts ...» (*it is not explained what was meant by the term "clearing"*).

The most clear statements from the speech:

- «For example, in January 2016 compared with January 2015 Ukrainian export of food to the EU increased by 16%. By 22% increased the import of new technology from Europe. 18 convictions against 26 persons were issued. 84 cases are considered by the courts. Another eleven are submitted to the court, and the hearing will begin shortly. On sixty-three trials pre-trial investigation continues».

The third speech is the Address of the President on the occasion of the second anniversary of resistance to Russian occupation of Crimea, February 26, 2016.

Abstract statements from the speech:

- «... obviously there is a leading role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide political and diplomatic conditions for the return of the Crimea ...» (*Unfortunately, the conditions were not announced*);
- «... In Crimea occupation authorities massively violate fundamental human rights and freedoms, force to taking out citizenship of RF, implement a deliberate policy to change the composition of the population, push aside ethnic Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and other ethnic minorities and eliminate the Ukrainian language. Ukrainian church also faces oppression and repression...» (*no clear evidences of this statement were provided. We do not deny its veracity, but without any specific examples the speech sounds very abstract*);
- «... Kyiv will take all measures to maintain the issue of illegal occupation of the territory of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol ...» (*almost every paragraph demands more specifics, besides this phrase was said in future tense and is not a statement of fact*);
- «... But the main prerequisite for the reintegration of temporarily occupied territory is the rapid development of economy of Ukraine and its democratic institutions and human rights mechanisms, improvement of the level and quality of life...» (*after these statements the statistics on all the above is necessary to be indicated: did the standards of living improve? did the quality of life improve? is the economy of Ukraine "progressive"? Without concrete evidence such statements, unfortunately, look like populism*).
- «... Kyiv, albeit belatedly, realized the need to create in the Crimea national autonomy of Crimean Tatars with absolute guarantee of equal rights and civil liberties of ethnic Russians, Ukrainian and other ethnic groups of the half-island...» (*any information on similar statement of "Kyiv" on the web-site was not found, or perhaps it was wrong wording*).

As for sharper statements, the speech is rather short, and most part of it the President speaks about the orders he gave to government agencies.

Fourth Speech - President's speech at the ceremony of awarding Taras Shevchenko National Prize of Ukraine, March 3, 2016.

Abstract statements from the speech:

- «... Our answer to all threats today should be unity - the unity of the Ukrainian nation, consolidation of the Ukrainian society around the highest value - the establishment of a sovereign, independent, democratic, social and legal Ukraine.” *(Similar statement was made a few times already, so it would be better to indicate what is actually made to achieve this goal);*
- «At the same time, there are institutions which officially can not effectively work in the Ukrainian market because of the budget, government and legal restrictions.” *(Why such restrictions are available and what the institution was not stated);*
- «At the moment I'm waiting for a call on the rescue of another hostage, who was held and tortured in the basement for almost a year...” *(it can be concluded that this plan contributes a lot of efforts)*
- «We all are looking forward to it. Believe me, I am doing everything possible for that and I believe that justice will prevail» *(here it is also not indicated what is actually done, just abstract words “everything possible”).*

It is also important to note that in the president's speech there are always relatively much pathos:

- «... No devilish power will be able to turn the country back ...”;
- «... whose bells summoned the people of Kiev for rescue ...”;
- «... Breaking objective and subjective difficulties, breaking the resistance of the old system, the country nevertheless changing and moving forward ...”;
- «... birthday of Taras is a celebration for all Ukrainians, united with Shevchenko's love for his native land, striving of Ukrainians for freedom, for independence.”...” Kobzar in its values is inferior only to the Gospel...”;
- «... From one manuscript began the modern history of Ukraine...”.

4. Organized activities

29-30 April 2015 at the Ukrainian crisis media center was held a

conference «GOV.COMMS.UA. Raising communications standards of Ukrainian public authorities». The event was supported by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Administration of the President of Ukraine and the US Embassy in Ukraine (information from the official website).

In the framework of the press-announcement it was stated: “At the 15th meeting of the National Reform Council, which was devoted to the reform of the regulators at the markets of natural monopolies and financial markets, also were adopted strategic decisions in the areas of agriculture and public communications. The meeting raised the issue of reforming state strategic communications. At the same time public opinion poll regarding the perception of citizens of Ukraine of the reforms indicated a lack of information about the reform.

Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, Borys Lozhkyn, drew attention to the need to develop a strategic approach to communications. He said that people do not feel involved in the process of decision making. Unfortunately, often communication in the whole system of government in Ukraine is not in high priority and not a policy tool. Currently, there is little understanding that communication is an integral part of democracy and good governance. It is necessary to form a strategy of government communication reform. Boris Lozhkyn proposed to create a working group at the National Reform Council on public communications reform, which will develop and present appropriate strategy of public communication reformation and mechanisms of its implementation at the next meetings» (reforms.in.ua).

Taking into consideration this statement, which was made almost a year ago, the question arises - how new mechanisms of “strategic approach to communications with the public” are being implemented? The official website of the Presidential Administration does not cover concrete actions; the analysis of citizens’ comments on social networks doesn’t work as well.

Next event (osvita.ua):

“The main problems of the external and internal communication of the authorities were discussed at the round table “How the state should prepare to communication exam?”. The participants of the round table were the representatives of the Presidential Administration, Parliament, National Bank, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Coordinator of the Information Centre of the Presidential

Administration, Svitlana Tkachenko believes that the most important thing in communication processes and reforms in the Presidential Administration is the balance between strategy and operational points, which need skilled professionals; “a lot of good ideas may be produced, but nobody will know how to implement them, so I think basic element is people. The balance of the right people - strategists and operationists – for such institution like ours is the main thing. The focus should be on people”.

Also it is not shown what is actually being done by this institution to establish communication with citizens.

5. Analysis of the Communications of Presidential Administration of Ukraine, the President of Ukraine and of some politicians in particular example

In this study, as the example it was decided to take the fact of resigning of the Minister of Economy Aivaras Abromavicius. This event caused a wide resonance. This is a crisis situation that required rapid concrete communication efforts on the explanation of the situation to internal and external public. The fact that this event went public not only in Ukraine, was proved by the fact that, for example, US Ambassador Geoffrey Payette wrote on his Twitter page the following:

“One of the Ukrainian government’s great champions of reform... and a believer in the future Ukraine’s people deserve” (information was taken from Ambassador’s Facebook page and web-site “Ukrayinska Pravda”).

“UP” notes “Ambassadors of the key European Union countries, the USA and Canada made the strong statement in which expressed deep disappointment with probable resignation of the Minister of Economics Ayvaras Abromavichus”.

Corresponding statement shared also press-service of Embassy of Germany.

“We are deeply disappointed with the resignation of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade mister Ayvaras Abromavichus who reached the real results in carrying out reforms in Ukraine”, - ambassadors declared...”. In addition, IMF managing director Christine Lagarde said that if the suspicions, which he express, are accurate, this is a clear sign that the commitments to fight corruption are not fulfilled by the government (information of tsn.ua).

The Head of BPP fraction, Yuri Lutsenko told the deputies, that Minister of Economy can get another job.

Over the time comments of Yuri Lutsenko became lengthier, but more revealing are his further comments: “Lutsenko said that the statement of Mustafa Nayem on that those of his colleagues, who disagree with his opinion are corruptionists, caused outrage of deputies”. “The decision on who is corruptionist and who is not, should be taken not by a journalist or a deputy, but by the court. But before that the law enforcement agencies should held an examination” - he said (Ukrinform).

Obviously, this statement is essentially populist, because all law-making system is determined by the court. The problem is that the court will decide on whether the person is corruptionist or not only if this person got a subpoena. If the person was subpoenaed, there is always should be a prior notification. Thus, the system does not exposing criminals, as it allows them to “hide the traces.” Anti-Corruption Bureau cannot yet work effectively because of the courts and these bureaucratic procedures. Therefore, stressing that “only the court has to decide who is corruptionist” Yuriy Lutsenko does not provide any specific mechanisms for implementation of this process.

6. Analysis of sociological research

Quote from the web-site osvita.ua: «Ukrainian Crisis Media Center (UCMC) in the framework of the project Gov.Comms.Ua presented a study on the effectiveness of public communications in Ukraine in 2015, implemented jointly with GfK Ukraine, NoksFishes, TNS and the National Reform Council. The research was aimed at identifying of the values and topics the government communicates in media-field and how they are reflected in public opinion; learn how the journalists evaluate the cooperation of state authorities of Ukraine with the press services”.

Used information was posted on the website osvita.ua:

Among individual personalities most negative response in the media according to the above-mentioned values (accountability, transparency, competitiveness, integrity and distancing from the oligarchs) during last year had the President Petro Poroshenko. “...” In the context of indicator “distancing from oligarchs”, the leaders of negative assessment is Petro Poroshenko...” - we can see that, unfortunately, the president is often mentioned in a negative tone.

It is also important that a large percentage of citizens are not informed on the reform processes. In general, according to the survey conducted in late 2015, the image of the Presidential Administration as an institution-communicator is quite negative.

Conclusions

So, is it possible to determine the communication of the President of Ukraine and his Administration as effective and the one that meets the expectations and requirements of the community and creates a bilateral and responsible discourse in society?

1. Facebook Page, though is updated frequently, is not a platform for analyzing public reviews/comments. Over the past three months there were no official reply to messages/comments of the citizens, so we can say that there is a one-way, limited communication.
2. On the official web-site of the Presidential Administration there is no information on the effectiveness of communication channels through which citizens can submit their claims and suggestions (petitions, applications, etc.). Also, there is no information about the actions implemented by the institution to address the issues of ineffective communication efforts.
3. The president's speeches were analyzed for the presence of abstract and populist statements and, unfortunately, they were found in every speech. Where specifics and explanations are necessary, they are usually absent.
4. Representatives of the Presidential Administration are involved in activities aimed at reorganization and/or establishing of communication of the institutions with the public, but there is no confirmation of the results (currently, no information was not found).
5. Communication of the Presidential Administration in a crisis situation cannot be called as organized and efficient. It undermines the public confidence in the ability of government to solve strategic issues of the reform and development.
6. One of the latest public opinion polls showed that the Presidential Administration is not making enough effort to establish communication with the public. The evidences for this fact are quantitative indicators. This situation also does not contribute to its positive image.

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