

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: STATE AND PROSPECTS

*A.G. Zinchenko, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Public
Relations National University
of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy"*

The development of democracy in the sphere of public administration provides that the state should create favorable conditions for and support the social debate, to raise public governance, which in turn is not possible without communication, dialogue and jointly developed principles of cooperation that are possible only on the basis of trust.

At the present stage of development of democratic society, several factors are needed for the effective development of government communications. First of all it is a mature civil society, a high level of political culture, developed forms of partnership of civil society, the state and citizens. In addition, the important role is played by the availability of proven tools and technologies of cooperation that are not only determined by regulations, but also integrated into the daily activities of government.

In Ukraine, the institutional system of government communication departments presented by interaction with the media and the public in the executive branches, press services and the Department of Information and Communication of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Tools of interaction with the public (public hearings, public consultations, the possibility of public examination of executive bodies, etc.) are fixed in legal documents.

Partnership between government and NGOs is realized primarily through the participation of NGOs in the public councils and boards established under the central government, development of regulations and implementation of projects aimed at solving critical social problems. However, in Ukraine the partnership between government and business entities remains weak; high potential of businesses in solving critical social problems is not sufficiently used.

Unfortunately, public communication failed to intervene in the economic, political and legal activities, it served only as a "facade". Communication department became subsidiary, purely technical service.

The lack of effective public communication and cooperation with

civil society led to a decline in public confidence in the authorities, failure of reforms and mass protests (as an example, “tax Maidan”, 2010). Euromaidan and events in Crimea and Donbas demonstrated full inefficiency of local government communications.

In recent years the level of political culture and maturity of civil society significantly increased. Developing volunteerism, “volunteer landings” in the government, the establishment and effective operation of reanimation package of reforms are the evidences of these processes.

Under the pressure of civil society, authorities began to actively engage the various institutions of civil society to working groups in order to develop draft law; actively introduce technologies of e-government, which are aimed to ensure transparency and openness of government, reduce corruption, improve the quality of administrative services, save material resources and increase the overall effectiveness of government.

If the level of political culture and maturity of civil society in recent years in Ukraine is gradually increasing, the integration of communication tools and technologies of cooperation in activities of the state apparatus are on the initial phase of development. Analysis of the current practices of government communications in Ukraine showed that the main reasons for this are:

- Lack of understanding by government agencies of the need of strategic communication and cooperation with civil society and citizens;
- Consideration of the communication process mainly as public information, refusal to discuss the complex issues of socio-economic and political development of the country;
- Virtual absence of mechanisms of accountability of public officials for the lack of or insufficient communication and cooperation between the authorities and the public;
- Orientation of public bodies not on the result of activities in a specific field, but on the process.

The concept of government communication reform, which was developed by the Ministry of Information Policy, with the participation of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and a group of independent experts and supported by the British Government was presented on January 20, 2016 to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The main objective of the reform is to establish a dialogue between government and society, construct the system of public strategic communications and reform the structure of government communications management.

During the reform implementation, the major trends in world experience of government communication systems' development should be taken into account, which includes:

- Dynamic development. The development of civil society, implementation of social responsibility activities in businesses is “external” impetus for the development of government communications. This in turn requires the introduction of a strategic approach, continuous improvement of government communication management, continuous monitoring and evaluation of results etc.

- Decrease of the level of interest in “high politics” causes increased attention to government communication technologies;

- Application of news management technology causes increased attention to the ethics of government communications. At the Davos World Economic Forum in 2013, “digital fire” (viral dissemination of information that has false or provocative character) was called the global risk of the next decade. Today the issue of dissemination of objective information and the rejection of unethical methods of its dissemination becomes relevant like never before. Public communication should be a model of ethical communication.