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The Role of a Lawyer's Request as a Means of Legal Communication in the Field of Human Rights Advocacy

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Abstract

Judicial practice shows that the request of all lawyers is not answered, so the study of the role of the application is relevant. The objective of the research was to carry out a theoretical and legal analysis of the role of the lawyer's request in the field of the defense of human rights due to the peculiarities of its normative support as a means of legal communication. The following methods were used: direct observation; comparison method; analysis of the content of the documents governing the procedure for giving and receiving a response to a lawyer's request. Documents and normative-legal programs that regulate the order and peculiarities of the legal work of lawyers and their requests were identified. The article also examines the legal practice of using applications and analyzes the activity of lawyers to ensure the role of the application as an effective means of legal communication. It was found that, in Ukraine, the application practice itself remains an ineffective means of legal communication. However, the attorney does not always collect the information and documents necessary for the defense in due time.

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Keywords: legal practice; collection of documents and evidence; adequate response; legal communication; defense of human rights.

El papel de la solicitud de un abogado como medio de comunicación jurídica en el ámbito de la defensa de los derechos humanos

Resumen

La práctica judicial muestra que no se da respuesta a la solicitud de todos los abogados, por lo que el estudio del papel de la solicitud es pertinente. El objetivo de la investigación fue realizar un análisis teórico y jurídico del papel de la solicitud del abogado en el campo de la defensa de los derechos humanos debido a las peculiaridades de su soporte normativo como medio de comunicación jurídica. Se utilizaron los siguientes métodos: observación directa; método de comparación; análisis del contenido de los documentos que rigen el procedimiento para dar y recibir una respuesta a la solicitud de un abogado. Se identificaron documentos y programas normativo-legales que regulan el orden y las peculiaridades del trabajo legal de los abogados y sus solicitudes. El artículo también examina la práctica jurídica de utilizar las solicitudes y analiza la actividad de los abogados para garantizar el papel de la solicitud como un medio eficaz de comunicación jurídica. Se descubrió que, en Ucrania, la práctica de solicitud en sí misma sigue siendo un medio ineficaz de comunicación jurídica. Sin embargo, el abogado no siempre recopila la información y los documentos necesarios para la defensa a su debido tiempo.

Palabras Clave: práctica jurídica; recopilación de documentos y pruebas; respuesta adecuada; comunicación jurídica; defensa de los derechos humanos.

Introduction

Legal communication of human rights organisations is a type of activity, aimed at forming constructive cooperation to defend human and civil rights and freedoms (Pohosian, 2020). The lawyer's request ensures the flow and dissemination of regulatory and legal information and documents, aimed at human rights activities, between the lawyer and the authorities, local governments, enterprises, institutions, organizations, and physical parties. Lawyers' professional privileges include the right to a lawyer's request as the right to a special means of legal communication.

In human rights advocacy, lawyers have the right to use various means of communication with government agencies and municipal authorities, such as lawyers' requests, statements, complaints, petitions, and answers to them; information on the facts that can be used as evidence; other means of legal communication under the Law (Wolters Kluwer, 2020). Recently, however, Ukrainian lawyers have been confronted with difficulties in requesting for the documents and data that their clients need during the defence. A lawyer's request can usually be made electronically or in writing. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lawyers often must work remotely, making it difficult to obtain a proper written response to a lawyer's request.

A study of court practice and comparison of legislation regarding advocacy activity in eight countries (Ukraine, the USA, the UK, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Italy, France) in general shows the effectiveness of the lawyer's request as a proper means of a lawyer's legal communication. In Ukraine, the number of violations of lawyers' professional privileges, including the right to information and the appeal rights, is increasing every year due to the failure to provide the necessary response to a lawyer's request. The court practice shows that the answer is given only to every fourth lawyer's request (Unified State Register of Court Decisions of Ukraine, n. d.).

The problem of lawyer's requests is the subjective assessment of the satisfactory form, reception and provision of responses to them and becomes the judicial matter (National Association of Lawyers of Ukraine and Council of Lawyers of Ukraine, 2020). However, in his professional activity, a lawyer must rely on the effectiveness of procedural rules and regulations, according to which his rights are exercised. Respect for the lawyers' professional privileges is an element of legal culture of society and the state (Boryak, 2021).

Thus, examining the role of the lawyer's request as a means of legal communication in the field of human rights advocacy is relevant.

1. Literature Review

COVID-19 crisis has stimulated the use of digital technologies that allow lawyers to work remotely, improve the efficiency, reduce the risk of COVID-19 disease, and achieve better results. However, it turned out that not all law firms are ready to work with electronic lawyer's requests. Thus, due to lack of technological knowledge or skills, 31% of the surveyed law firms are not ready to switch over to electronic document exchange, 43% of respondents have organizational, and 26% of respondents have financial difficulties in using new technologies (Wolters Kluwer, 2020).

In a judicial dispute, the parties rely on different types of evidence when providing the court with their claims or objections – they are allowed to provide any documents, videos, and other materials relevant to the case. Although the evidence is weighed by the court, it is important to gather it before the trial (Rothman, 2019). In this case, the lawyer acts as an assistant to the defence team in obtaining and further legal analysis of the evidence.

At the same time, the lawyer's request is the main and unique tool for practicing advocacy activity, which is implemented in the form of a written document, used to request the information, recorded during the activities of authorities, local governments, and physical parties (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2013a). By means of lawyer's requests, it is possible to obtain evidence and documents that were known or not to the trial participants after filing a lawsuit. However, the amount of information that a lawyer is allowed to collect is quite large, but there are certain limitations to prevent abuse of the judicial process (Brown & Fortunato, 2020). Even though a lawyer in his professional activity can apply to any country in the world, the general rules of evidence gathering, their use and evaluation are laid down exclusively by national procedural legislation (Garamvölgyi *et al.*, 2020).

Gathering of information and documents is a significant part of a lawyer's work, they are presented as evidence in court and are used during negotiations and in advisory work. Effective preparation of the trial is impossible without such documents and information, and it is the responsibility of the parties in civil and commercial proceedings to gather evidence (Layevskiy *et al.*, 2019). In this case, the basic principles of advocacy activity should be honesty, independence, confidentiality, and decency.

1.1. Aims

The purpose of the study is to conduct a theoretical and legal analysis of the role of the lawyer's request in the field of human rights advocacy due to the peculiarities of its legal and practical support as a means of legal communication.

In the furtherance of this goal it is necessary to solve a number of tasks: to explore the relevant national and international legal standards in the field of advocacy in the use of legal means of communication; to identify endemic problems in the implementation of lawyers' guarantees in the right to a lawyer's request in domestic legislation and in practical terms, as well as the causes of such problems; to identify and analyse the examples of problems in the process of seeking a proper response to a lawyer's request.

2. Methods

The input data for this study were the data, obtained from 60 official sources - academic papers and articles, generalizations of international sociological organizations. The main data of the study were obtained using three methods: direct observation, comparison method and analysis of the content of documents governing the procedure for providing and receiving a response to a lawyer's request in Ukraine and in other countries (the USA, the UK, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Italy, France).

Using the method of *direct observation*, it is necessary to identify normative legal documents and programs that regulate the procedure and peculiarities of the legal work of lawyers with lawyer's requests, to identify standard forms for submitting lawyer's requests, their review duration, and the practice of providing appropriate responses. Having analysed modern scientific research papers, we will also be able to find out or refute the need for further implementation and development of legislation and digital technologies to enable the submission of a lawyer's request in electronic form.

With the help of the *comparison method*, it is possible to establish how some countries in the world in their own way provide regulatory and practical implementation of the right to a lawyer's request and its guarantees.

When *analysing the content of various documents*, we are to examine the information posted on social networks, scientific journals and on news websites, which is related to the possibility of implementing a lawyer's request as a means of legal communication in human rights advocacy.

3. Results

At the national level, a lawyer's request is made exclusively in writing (not electronically), with the obligatory addition of documents confirming the lawyer's credentials. To receive a response to the request, the lawyer may be asked to reimburse the costs of copying or printing physical documents, but electronic documents must be provided to the lawyer free of charge.

When submitting a lawyer's request, a lawyer should not only state that the information is necessary for him within his legal activity, but also confirm his credentials by means of a copy of the warrant or procuratory of the body (institution), authorized by law to provide free legal aid, stating that he/she needs this information for the protection of a specific client in a specific court case. At the same time, the amount of personal data that can be provided to a lawyer upon such a request is much larger than can be provided in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Access to Public

Information” (Oleksiyuk, 2020). In addition, the information request is submitted only to legal entities (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2011), while the scope of persons to whom a lawyer's request can be submitted is much wider, they include public authorities; local governments, their officers, and public individuals; enterprises; institutions; organizations; public associations; physical parties (with their consent).

In their turn, the authorities and individuals who have received a lawyer's request must respond to it within five to twenty working days, depending on the complexity of the database search. Exceptions for the refusal to provide information to a lawyer's request is only the information that has limitations (Unified State Register of Court Decisions of Ukraine, n. d.). There are legal grounds not to provide information to a lawyer's request, for example, requests for confidential, private, and restricted information (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1992).

However, in case of unlawful refusal or providing misinformation response to the lawyer's request, the perpetrators may be fined in accordance with Article 212-3 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses. The administrative protocol under this article may be drawn up by the Chairman or the authorized person of the relevant regional bar council, to which the lawyer should apply (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1984). However, this article does not provide for repetition.

A lawyer's request cannot relate to counselling and interpretation of the provisions of legal documents (National Association of Lawyers of Ukraine and Council of Lawyers of Ukraine, 2020), and the refusal to answer should be distinguished from the inability to draw conclusions on the questions, asked by the lawyer.

Domestic legislation does not include the commitment to provide the lawyers with restricted, confidential, secret, and official information (for example, information containing medical secrecy, banking information, materials of operational or investigative activities, intelligence operations etc.). This deprives the lawyer of the opportunity to obtain and use such information in the preparation of the case, which reduces the effectiveness of legal assistance and violates the principle of adversarial proceedings and equality of arms between the defence and the prosecution, restricts the right of individuals to effective judicial assistance and right to a fair trial. The causes of such problems are the lack of a legislative possibility for lawyers to obtain limited information; ineffective mechanism of responsibility; unwillingness of individuals and organizations to provide information at the request of lawyers due to misunderstanding of the nature and importance of advocacy for the protection of rights and freedoms or their neglect (Human Rights House Network, 2015) . While a lawyer's request is often answered within the time limit set by criminal procedural law, prosecutors and the judiciary may seek a response immediately or much earlier than

the lawyers, which puts the latter at a disadvantage to the prosecution (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2013b).

In accordance with the legal ethics, a lawyer is obliged to use his knowledge and professional skills in his professional activity to properly protect and represent the rights and legally protected interests of individuals and legal entities, complying with current legislation of Ukraine, promote the establishment and practical implementation of principles of legality and rule of law (Congress of Lawyers of Ukraine, 2017).

Guarantees of advocacy activity are set out in the United Nations (UN) Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which stipulate that member governments should ensure lawyers the possibility to exercise their professional responsibilities conveniently, which requires the authorities to provide lawyers with early access to the necessary information, files and documents at their disposal or under their control, so that lawyers would have the opportunity to provide effective legal assistance (International Commission of Jurists, 2020). In addition, it is the responsibility of the authorities to provide a lawyer with access to information, documents, and case materials in a timely manner (United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990). The role of lawyers should be respected and considered by judges, prosecutors, all types of authorities, society as a whole and governments within the limits of domestic legislation and practice.

However, intentional abuse of the right to a lawyer's request may be interpreted as a violation of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, for which the lawyer may be subject to a disciplinary sanction (Mamchenko, 2021). It is also inadmissible to "sell" a lawyer's request (its transfer to a principal for money so that the latter could use it at sole discretion) and to use the lawyer's request for personal purposes (Makarov, 2020).

In the United States, lawyers may also collect data on persons or information that may serve as evidence, but there are special private services that seek the necessary information instead of lawyers. So, databases are of business interest to large companies that exist solely to simplify and provide information to lawyers, as searching and collecting data is painstaking and hard work (Taylor, 2020). In addition, evidence gathering only in favour of the client may jeopardize the lawyer's ethical responsibilities, as a lawyer can be the only person who knows where the evidence came from. As a result, the lawyer will cease to be a defence attorney and move to the "category of witnesses", so the best option is to conduct an objective collection of evidence in the case or to entrust such work to third parties (Technology Safety, 2018). At the same time, lawyers on the side of the disputing party may submit requests for pre-trial discovery of evidence (Civil Law Self-Help Center, n. d.), and the time and method of documents' delivery should not be calculated in such a way as to disadvantage or embarrass the party

receiving the documents (United States District Court of Northern District of California, n. d.). The parties are limited to the number of requests of each type on the set form: 30 requests for access, 30 requests in the form of a survey and 30 requests for the production and discovery of documents. Similar requests may also be made to third parties, who must respond within 14 days (Law Office of Aaron D. Bundy, n. d.). In some states, a lawyer's request is elevated to the status of a judge's request, and ignoring it involves various types of liability, including criminal liability (Dergunova, 2017).

As information management systems simply do not keep up with progress, computers, e-mail, mobile technology, collaboration on the Internet have changed the way lawyers work. Thus, during 2015, lawyers on average created and received more than 70 documents daily or approximately 26,000 documents per year. These include e-mails and document files, e-mail offers, appointments with clients and opponents, etc. In the period from 2013 to 2015, on average, a lawyer processed only 18,000 documents per year. Some of us still remember the 80's - the world of paper, when the lawyers processed about 80 documents a week or about 16 documents every day. That's about 4,000 letters and contracts, letterheads and notes about customers' phone calls every year (Meta Jure, 2016). However, this does not mean that the lawyers should retreat and reduce the pace of digitalization in the organization of advocacy activity. On the contrary, lawyers need to demonstrate a high level of professionalism and willingness to handle e- lawyer's requests (Makarov, 2019). A survey of 700 lawyers from the United States and nine European countries (the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Spain, Poland, Belgium, and Hungary) provided an assessment of reliability and sustainability of the legal sector in the future. Thus, 60% of the surveyed law firms plan to increase investment in digital technologies (Rothman, 2019).

In the Netherlands, information technology is already widely used in the formation of relevant databases and in obtaining information from them. Thus, advocacy is provided through the participation in the case not only of a lawyer, but also of a representative, whose letter of attorney is contained in the relevant register and can be provided in electronic format (Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands, 2019).

Generalized information on the international practice of normative exercise of right to the lawyer's request and its guarantees in eight countries (Great Britain, Italy, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the USA, Ukraine, France) is given in Table 1.

Table 1. International practice of normative and practical exercise of right to the lawyer's request (author's development)

Country	The set form of the lawyer's request	Request type	Limit on the number of requests submitted	Key response time (days)	Additional response time (days)	Consequences of failure to provide a proper response to a request	Chances for answers, %
United Kingdom	Yes	Written Electronic	Yes	30**	0	The loss of the case.	90
Italy	No	Written Electronic	No	15	***	Lawsuit	90
Republic of Belarus	No	Written Electronic	No	15	30	No consequences	
Republic of Kazakhstan		Written Electronic	No	10	0	Money penalty	
Russian Federation	Yes	Written Electronic	No	30	30	Money penalty	60
USA	Yes	Written Electronic	Yes	30**	0	The loss of the case. Criminal liability.	90
Ukraine	Yes	Written	No	5	20	Money penalty	20
France	Yes	Written Electronic	No	15	30	Lawsuit	75
Note: * - Except for discovery of notarial documents. ** - deadlines are set only during the judicial inquiry. *** - corresponds to the complexity of the request.							

Source: Adygezalova and Kovaleva (2020), Avvocato Facile (2020; n.d); Demidov (2018); Domaine Legale (n. d.), Les Echos Solutions (2016), Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2018); Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation (2016); Ministry of Justice of the UK (2020); Nazarbaev (2018); Nikonov and Hodzhaeva (2016), Ukrainian National Bar Association (UNBA) (2021).

From the table in Ukraine, in contrast to the United States, Britain and Italy, a lot of lawyer's requests are made in practice, but only some of them are answered, because officials know how not to answer or answer without providing the information, necessary for advocacy in court (Pysarenko, 2016). Given the difficulties that lawyers face in obtaining evidence, it becomes problematic to prove these circumstances in court. It turns out that in relation to the prosecution, which has much broader powers to obtain evidence, the defence is not acting on an equal footing (Hromko, 2020).

In the period from 2016 to 2020, for unlawful refusal to provide information, late, or incomplete provision of information, provision of misrepresenting information in response to a lawyer's request, the Unified State Register of Judicial Decisions (n. d.) contains approximately 1,500 decisions of the first-instance courts. On average, only in every third case the court established the body of the offence, among which in 33% of cases 160 people were fined, in 27% a verbal warning was given and in 40% of cases the lawsuit was closed due to expiration of the term of bringing to responsibility. Figure 1 schematically shows the quantitative results of the hearing of administrative violation cases under Part 5 of Article 212-3 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses.

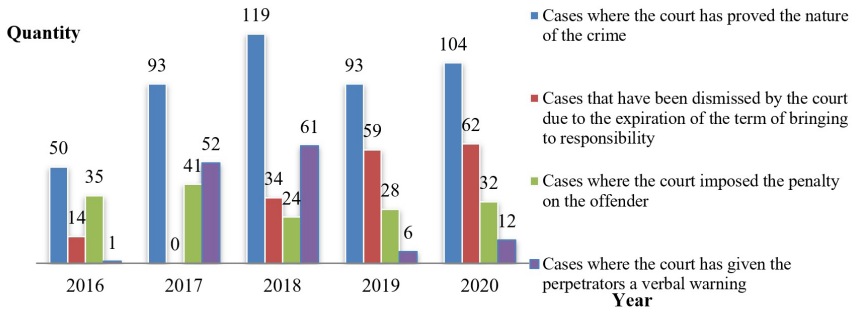


Figure 1: Quantitative results of the hearing of administrative violation cases under Part 5 of Article 212-3 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses (author's development).

However, it turned out that a more accessible way of restoration of violated right of lawyers, who did not receive a response to a lawyer's request was a civil or administrative lawsuit to oblige them to take action, namely, to undertake a substantive review of the lawyer's request and provide a fuller answer. Thus, during 2019-2020, there was the increase in the activities of lawyers in ensuring the role of the lawyer's request as an effective means of legal communication by discovery of information on the ignored lawyer's requests. Figure 2 schematically shows quantitative results of civil and administrative cases where the court has obliged to provide a lawyer with a complete response.

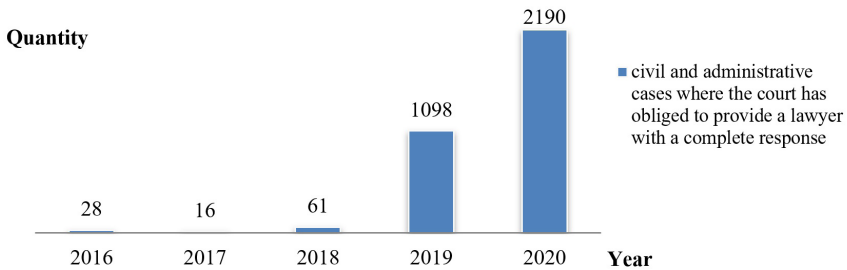


Figure 2: Quantitative results of hearing of cases on adjudication of illegal actions or inactivity of governing institutions or local self-government bodies on failure to provide complete or necessary response to a lawyer’s request for the period of 2016-2020 (author’s development).

However, the diplomatic missions of most CIS countries always respond to lawyer’s requests, although the diplomatic missions of European countries ignore requests, addressed to them. Thus, even despite the contentious political relationship, the Embassy of Ukraine in Russia always responds citizen appeals, while the Embassies of Switzerland and Italy did not respond to a request for the reasons for banning entry to Switzerland of a Russian citizen who has a money deposit in a Swiss bank (Sodikov, 2018).

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, failure to respond to a lawyer’s request is treated as resistance to a lawyer’s lawful activity, and according to the results of court proceedings, most administrative cases of this category end in bringing offenders to administrative responsibility. During 2020, according to the results of the trial, 97% of the perpetrators were fined (Sizintsev, 2021).

Regarding the deadlines for the submission of a respond to a lawyer’s request, it should be noted that not all questions in lawyer’s requests can be easily answered, as the law is extremely complex. If the answers were quick or easy, then there would be no need for lawyers and courts. In other words, there is no such notion as a “quick question” in the legal sector. This approach to communicating with a lawyer can be unpleasant for both the client and the lawyer (Robichaud, 2020).

In addition, issues related to the ownership of documents are as common as the proper collection of fees from the client for photocopying. Lawyers are usually copyrighted for the results of their activities, and the client’s documents are only his/her property. Exceptions are cases where the agreement with the lawyer provides that the copyright to the product

of the activity reverts to the client. At the same time, the ownership of documents, obtained through lawyer's requests, is not regulated by law or the lawyer's code of professional ethics. Lawyers may use documents they have prepared for other clients as precedents or templates without disclosing the client's confidential information. Therefore, every law firm must develop its own policy on the organization, storage, and disposal of clients' documents, otherwise during the relationship between the lawyer and the client it is necessary to execute the agreement on the storage and disposal of documents and property relevant to the case (Law Society of British Columbia, 2017). In addition, a lawyer may keep the client's documents as collateral for unpaid legal assistance (Law Society UK, 2020).

4. Discussion

A lawyer's request, provided it is properly executed, can be a very effective tool for obtaining the necessary information. To avoid administrative liability, it is better to provide an adequate response to a request than to give a formal fudge or ignore it (Krenets, 2018). However, a comparison of international experience shows that shortening the deadlines governing the response to a lawyer's request has the opposite effect on the quality and completeness of the answers to lawyer's requests, as not all questions in a lawyer's request can be easily answered. Besides, without adequate administrative and criminal liability, it is difficult to receive a proper response to a lawyer's request.

The problem of the effectiveness of a lawyer's request in obtaining information and evidence concerns not only lawyers but also courts, as they are interested in ensuring that, for example, in civil lawsuits, the claim papers are prepared as fully as possible and submitted to the court almost ready for the trial, so that the judge would not waste time on discovery of evidence at the request of the parties. Thus, the article provides the practical effectiveness of lawyer's requests, provided in electronic and written form. It is unacceptable to use a lawyer's request for personal purposes or to abuse this right. The client's documents obtained during the delivery of legal services, including in response to a lawyer's request, are the customer owned property. In addition, it has been established that at the national level, a lawyer's request can be an effective tool if a lawyer is willing to defend his or her interests in court in the future.

The advantages of a lawyer's request are: a limited and short period of consideration of the request and provision of information and documents; it belongs to the category of requests with special status - some countries provide for liability for failure to provide response, for giving late or incomplete response to the request (Ukraine, the USA, the UK, the Republic

of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Italy, France) or it is possible to lose the case in court (the UK, the USA). Criminal liability, provided by law in the United States, forces the addressees to respond to a lawyer's request in any case. It is paradoxical that in Ukraine the legislation sets the shortest basic term for providing an answer in five days, but the chances of getting a proper answer are the smallest and are 20%.

In fact, initiation of a procedure for accountability for the crimes at the national level through the mechanism of appealing to the Bar Council is ineffective. It would be expedient to provide an opportunity for the lawyers with more than four years of experience, to draw up protocols under Part 5 of Article 212-3 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses and to recommit them to the court, thereby relieving the regional bar councils (Kachura, 2020).

Thus, a lawyer's request can be an effective tool if a lawyer is willing to defend his or her interests in court in the future. The law sets out specific requirements for a lawyer's request, but the reasons for refusing to provide information to it may be unexpected: seemingly confidential information, impossibility to provide original certificates, the wrong address (Yasinskaya, 2020) or the wrong recipient. At the same time, lawyers do not make active use of the right to a lawyer's request (United States District Court of Northern District of California, n. d.). Thus, during 2019, refusals to respond to a lawyer's request were appealed to a court only in 24.3% of cases in the Russian Federation, and in 23.5% of cases in Ukraine (UNBA, 2019).

Conclusions

In human rights advocacy, lawyers have the right to use various means of communication with government agencies and municipal authorities, the main of which is the lawyer's request. At the national level, the lawyer's request itself continues to be an ineffective means of legal communication. A lawyer does not always collect the information and documents required for defence in a timely manner. Thus, despite the legal regulations that give much power to a lawyer's request, lawyers' requests are often ignored by employees of government agencies and municipal bodies, who in fact provide an adequate response to every fifth request only. However, it is possible to request by judicial means the necessary and complete information that was previously required in the lawyer's request. In addition, shortening the deadlines governing the response to a lawyer's request has the opposite effect on the quality and completeness of the answers, as not all questions in lawyer's requests can be easily answered.

Recommendations to the lawyers aimed at ensuring the role of the lawyer's request as a means of legal communication: it is necessary to mention in the request the responsibility for unlawful refusal to provide information, late or incomplete provision of information, providing untrue information in response to a lawyer's request; comply with the requirements for writing a lawyer's request and attach the necessary documents; to seek proper delivery and registration in the office of the addressee to whom the lawyer's request is directed with the reclamation of the appropriate receipt acknowledgements or documents; to make a request only for information that has no restriction on access; to give a proper answer to a lawyer's request; not to use a lawyer's request for personal purposes and not to abuse this right; in case of illegal refusal to provide information at the request of a lawyer, untimely or incomplete provision of information, provision of irrelevant information, to immediately to prosecute the perpetrators, with a simultaneous obligation to provide an appropriate response; the information and documents obtained by lawyers as a result of a lawyer's request may be used by lawyers as precedents or templates without disclosing the client's confidential information.

The state and society must respect the lawyers' professional rights and privileges. In addition, ignoring lawyers' requests by international diplomatic missions can also exact a toll on legal communication.

Moreover, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the governments' strategic direction should be legislative optimization and digitalization of advocacy activity. Digitization of personal details databases may provide better technological opportunities for government agencies and organs of local self-government, in the process of analysis and selection of data at the lawyer's request. However, at the national level, the law does not yet provide for the possibility of submitting a lawyer's request electronically.

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