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## Digitization of public authorities: Global experience

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### Abstract

The research focuses on the study of digitization processes at the Ukrainian and international level as an innovation in public management, as well as on the prospects for its implementation in the processes of state formation and communication with civil society. It was concluded that digitization of public authorities should be harmonized with generally recognized international standards, developed and adopted in the context of national characteristics and traditions. Based on the assessment of global trends in the development of digital technologies and the study of international experience, the key areas of activity of public authorities in Ukraine were determined, which can be taken as a basis by other developing countries, with special emphasis on: decentralization, simplification, deregulation, institutional capacity building and communication support.

**Keywords:** digitalization; e-democracy; state authorities; civil society; digital technologies.

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## Digitalización de los poderes públicos: Experiencia mundial

### Resumen

La investigación se centra en el estudio de los procesos de digitalización a nivel de Ucrania e internacional como innovación en la gestión pública, así como en las perspectivas de su implementación en los procesos de formación del Estado y de comunicación con la sociedad civil. Se concluyó que la digitalización de las autoridades públicas debe armonizarse con estándares internacionales generalmente reconocidos, desarrollados y adoptados en el contexto de las características y tradiciones nacionales. Sobre la base de la evaluación de las tendencias mundiales en el desarrollo de tecnologías digitales y el estudio de la experiencia internacional, se determinaron las áreas clave de actividad de las autoridades públicas en Ucrania, que pueden ser tomadas como base por otros países en desarrollo, con énfasis especial en: descentralización, simplificación, desregulación, desarrollo de la capacidad institucional y apoyo a la comunicación.

**Palabras clave:** digitalización; democracia electrónica; autoridades estatales; sociedad civil; tecnologías digitales.

### Introduction

Modern society is characterized by significant growth and active use of digital technologies, which leads to the need for global modifications of many social processes. Digitization also affects the most important state-legal institutions related to the formation of state authorities and the exercise of public power, and through it, conditions are created that can affect the type of modern representative democracy. The implementation of relevant innovations can have a qualitative impact not only on certain sources of state-management activity, but the use of relevant technologies simplifies and maximally reduces the cost of communication between the state and the population in the field of providing administrative services, expression of will, administration of justice, etc.

Using information technologies in public administration with the possibilities of finding alternative ways of entering data, performing the functions of collecting, storing, processing, transferring and using knowledge increases the efficiency of public administration, which makes it possible to find the necessary resources for this. The serious impact of digitalization is also felt on the functioning of the justice system, because modern digital technologies provide the possibility of creating a digital environment that can replace the system of individual bodies in the sphere of activity of state authorities.

Today, the vast majority of democratic countries in the world implement the tools of electronic democracy for the formation of policies, the basis of which are the relations between the state and civil society, based on transparency and full trust of the two parties to each other. World leaders in the development of e-democracy were able to reach its level when all tools represent a single effective communication system that strengthens and promotes the most effective two-way dialogue between the government and society.

Thus, the digitization of state institutions and management processes leads to the need to transform these institutions, and also poses new tasks for society and the state, which cannot be solved by proven and known methods (Togobytska, 2021), and the transfer of all public services to electronic format and the use of the latest technologies to maximize the efficiency of the processes of providing public services is a key vector of the development of many democracies of the world.

At the same time, scientists and practitioners highlight a number of problems of the implementation of digitization at the national and local levels: personnel shortage and the need to retrain old personnel in accordance with new competencies; improvement of the system of providing administrative services and digitization of most of them; the imperfection of the legislative provision of digitization processes in the context of decentralization, the need to expand the current legislative framework; insufficient technical and financial support for the purpose of integrating the latest technologies into one's activities; corruption (Korz, 2018; Nelipa, 2022).

The study of the world's leading practices of the implementation of electronic democracy will contribute to its development and application at the national level, the determination of priority tasks of state policy in order to optimize the mechanisms of public dialogue and institutions of direct democracy, will make it possible to formulate relevant conclusions aimed at restarting the nature of public relations between the state and society in order to improve quality of satisfaction of citizens' interests.

## **1. Methodology of the study**

To solve the tasks set in the scientific article, the basis of its methodology is a complex of methodological approaches and general scientific and special scientific methods of scientific knowledge of social phenomena and processes: theoretical generalization, semantic, comparison, analysis and synthesis for clarification and improvement of the conceptual and categorical apparatus, in particular, to clarify the essence of the concepts «digitalization», «electronic democracy», «electronic government»;

systemic analysis to reveal the regulatory and legal regulation of digital processes in public authorities at the national and local level, as well as to consider the changes that occurred as a result of the activation of digital transformation, decentralization, pandemics and military actions and the consequences of their impact on the functioning of the public authority system in Ukraine; comparative analysis and extrapolation to determine the advantages and problems of digitization of public authorities in Ukraine compared to relevant foreign practices; expert evaluations to determine the current state of development of e-democracy in the world and at the national level; logical generalization for the development of conclusions and recommendations regarding the development of mechanisms of digitalization of public administration bodies in accordance with modern global trends.

The normative basis and information base of the scientific article are the legislation of Ukraine on the development of the information society and e-government, the resolutions and orders of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the decrees of the President of Ukraine on the development of the information society, the implementation of e-government, the use of modern information and communication technologies by state authorities, the legislation of foreign countries in the field of e-government regulation, legal acts of local state authorities and local self-government bodies, web pages and portals that provide access to e-democracy technologies.

## **2. Analysis of recent research**

A significant number of scientific works are devoted to the fundamental foundations, theoretical, practical and methodological aspects of the development of electronic democracy in various aspects of social and administrative life, which repeatedly emphasized the presence of individual local and systemic barriers to the introduction and use of digitalization, suggested ways to solve them on the legislative, managerial, economic and other levels.

In general, without denying that the active introduction of information technologies into the system of socio-political relations significantly expands the opportunities of citizens regarding their participation in solving common issues and creates conditions for the formation of a qualitatively new level of citizen activity, however, the expediency of a comprehensive study of the issues of further development of state implementation mechanisms does not lose its relevance and ensuring, at the national level, world-leading digitization practices in the activities of public authorities. Among the complex of main problems, the problem of improving the normative and legal regulation of social relations during the use of information technologies is extremely important.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the national and international aspects of digitization in public authorities and assess the achievements of the leading countries of the world and Ukraine in its implementation and development.

### **3. Results and discussion**

One of the prerequisites for effective interaction between a democratic state and civil society is proper regulatory and legal support. In this part of the study, we will analyze the state of legal regulation of digital transformation in Ukraine, which reflects the state and development of reforming various spheres of public life and the participation of public administration subjects in the specified process.

The Sustainable Development Strategy «Ukraine-2020» states that one of the priority reforms is the reform of «state administration, the result of which should be the creation of an effective, transparent, open and flexible structure of state administration with the use of the latest information and communication technologies (e-government) to ensure the development and implementation of a comprehensive state policy aimed at social sustainable development and adequate response to internal and external challenges» (Decree Of The President Of Ukraine No. 5/2015, 2015).

On May 3, 2022, amendments were made to the Law of Ukraine «On Electronic Communications» regarding the improvement of the efficiency of the organization of the work of providers of electronic communication networks and/or services under martial law (Law Of Ukraine No. 2240-IX, 2022) in order to improve the efficiency of the organization of the work of providers of electronic communication networks and/or services in martial law conditions. This Law will ensure the stable functioning of the state's electronic communication network in conditions of martial law and will prevent interference by enemy forces in its functioning.

Also, on July 8, 2022, a Resolution was adopted on the approval of the tasks of the National Informatization Program for 2022-2024, the result of which was the approval of the program tasks and ensuring the implementation of informatization in state authorities, in particular, this is digital development, development of electronic government, information society, digital innovations and technologies in state institutions (Resolution Of The Verkhovna Rada Of Ukraine. No. 2360-IX, 2022).

Among all the variety of adopted legal acts, the following main areas of digitization of public authorities can be identified, reflected in the documents specified in these documents: functioning and content of web resources and web pages; electronic services; participation of citizens in

making management decisions; electronic document flow and electronic digital signature; protection of information and personal data.

In Ukraine, in general, an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework has been created in the direction of digitalization of the activities of public authorities, but it is not without such shortcomings as: declarativeness, non-systematic nature, incompleteness, vagueness, insufficient mutual agreement of documents and compliance with international norms.

The problem of the quality of the preparation of normative legal acts at the state level remains relevant: in some places, the acts are developed without conducting a thorough analysis of the problem that requires legal regulation and taking into account the risks of their introduction, public discussion, conducting high-quality socio-economic and legal expertise, taking into account the need for their interaction with other acts, etc. These factors lead to the fact that Ukraine lags behind the leading countries in the world in terms of digitalization rates. Also, today there is no integral mechanism of legal enforcement of tasks related to the digitization of relations between the state and society, legal nihilism of citizens and businesses, and imperfect practice of law enforcement.

The Government's long-term priorities are determined by the Program of Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which is a framework document, the content of which is disclosed in particular through strategies that represent long-term planning. In our opinion, the prospect of adopting a basic document that would outline the strategic orientations of the digitalization of public authorities is becoming extremely important, and the development of the action plan should take place in the context of sustainable development goals adapted by Ukraine and aim to achieve specific goals and indicators.

According to the Plan of the Working Group on Digitization in Ukraine, it is necessary to: ensure the stable functioning of the digital economy/IT industry; restoration of destroyed digital infrastructure; implementation of complex electronic public services, restoration of the network of centers for the provision of administrative services; protection of state information resources (Project of the Recovery Plan of Ukraine, 2022).

The main obstacles to the implementation of the mentioned ideas in life are: complex bureaucratic processes; conservative approaches to document management; production of electronic communication equipment; partial destruction as a result of the production of cable products, which complicates logistics processes; the need for advanced training and retraining of a significant number of specialists in the field has been mobilized, replacement of qualified specialists; lack of guarantees for conducting IT activities and the difficulty of attracting foreign citizens as

e-residents due to martial law; lack of state regulation of the virtual asset market; the outflow of startups and technological specialists abroad as a result of hostilities; lack of budgetary funding for cyber security projects; constant aggression against the country in cyberspace, which requires a response and limits resources for the implementation of cyber security projects; risks of physical destruction of infrastructure.

In general, it should be noted that the legislation of Ukraine, which is burdened by the conditions of war and is directly related to the introduction and use of digital technologies in the activities of public authorities, despite its fragmentation and certain chaotic nature, creates legal grounds for the wide use of IT technologies in the state administration, electronic document circulation and electronic interaction of state authorities. At the same time, the regulatory, administrative, organizational, technical, and economic components of the digitalization process of public authorities need to be further improved in order to effectively implement internationally recognized digital tools for the interaction of the state and civil society at the national, regional, and local levels.

As evidenced by world experience, only a strong political will aimed at achieving clear goals, enshrined in relevant strategies, programs, laws on the development and implementation of e-government, with appropriate amounts of financial resources, can positively influence the development of e-government in Ukraine. In our opinion, in the future, in accordance with the approved e-Governance Strategy until 2030, appropriate state programs for the development of e-Government with specific tasks, executors, task performance indicators and funding amounts for a specific period should be adopted.

Significant changes in the system of public administration, which were activated with the beginning of the process of joining Ukraine to the European Union and continue to this day under the influence of the processes of decentralization and digitalization, became a guarantee of the active development of the country in general. At the same time, today's challenges related to military operations on the territory of the country encourage the adaptation of national legislation and the practice of its application in various spheres of life in order to ensure dialogue between the state and citizens, so that the latter can exercise their rights and freedoms without hindrance.

The leading states of the world and the European Union are boldly testing various programs of digital social security, launching ambitious public service projects, stimulating public institutions to provide a wide range of administrative and other services. Let's pay attention to individual elements of the digitalization process, because the perspective of further exploration is the study of the experience of foreign countries, the determination of the most effective mechanisms, digital technologies that can be adapted to the



modern conditions of the functioning of the state mechanism of developing countries.

As foreign experience shows, transparency, a low level of corruption, free and equal access to public services, and public control over the budget and tenders contribute to improving the lives of citizens, a positive reputation of the state in the world, and even greater influence on foreign audiences. Singapore became the first country in the world to operate an electronic government. The Netherlands is one of the first European countries to introduce electronic interaction between the state and citizens.

A single portal for the provision of administrative services was created and introduced by service universes with the aim of providing services to the public in addition to the existing traditional means of communication between the citizen and the state, the use of identification cards for the provision of administrative services began (Mykhailiuk, 2016). In Croatia, the main areas of activity regarding the provision of electronic services are enshrined in the «Strategy for the Development of Electronic Government of the Republic of Croatia», according to which «the development of new public services should be based on the use of information and communication technologies (Strategija razvoja Elekroničke Uprave u Republici Hrvatskoj za razdoblje od 2009 do 2012 Godine, n/y).

In different countries, strategies for the formation of e-government are oriented towards an internal or external model of activity, are determined by the highest political leadership and are implemented at the levels of ministries or departments. The American approach to the creation of electronic government is based on economic criteria, the European approach is based on social criteria and the level of human capital development.

One of the important tools of e-governance is electronic document flow, which directly affects the optimization of the entire process, as it creates conditions for increasing the efficiency of the activities of state authorities and local self-government bodies, ensuring the improvement of the quality and availability of public services, restructuring relations with the population, overcoming information inequality and involving citizens to participate in state affairs, etc. The active introduction and use of digital technologies in state bodies allows for complete changes in all spheres of public life and gives rise to such a global phenomenon as «digitalization». However, we note that the restraining factor of this phenomenon in many countries remains traditional approaches to the organization of document circulation, which needs further improvement and development, primarily in the direction of digitalization.

Distinctive characteristics of the continental European model include: legislative regulation of information relations and information flows circulating in the European information space (Klimushyn and Sernok, 2010).

The main advantages of the Australian model include «the ability to provide an optimal structure for the management and financing of educational institutions based on a single e-government policy. Characteristic features of Australian e-government: creation of a single information space; simplification of the process of training and retraining, etc. (Klimushyn and Sernok, 2010).

Distinctive characteristics of the Anglo-American model are:

Reforms of the entire structure of public administration; creation of information portals that allow providing universal service to citizens and access to information; the use of a strategy focused on external activities, with a relatively low level of development (Canada); releasing civil servants from performing routine procedures during interactive interaction with the population (Zastrozhnikova, 2018: 148-152).

The Anglo-American e-governance model is particularly interesting, because the participating countries of this model occupy fairly high positions in the e-governance development rating. This level of e-government development is called the connectedness stage, which assumes that «the government transforms itself into a unified whole that meets the needs of citizens through the development of an integrated support service. And this is the most advanced level of electronic governance, which is characterized by the presence of: horizontal, vertical and infrastructural connections, connections between the government and communities.

A successful example of the international practice of applying electronic governance mechanisms is the experience of Great Britain, which is based on the provisions of the «White Book on Government Modernization» and is framed in the «Strategic Concept of Serving Society in the Information Age.»

The main purpose of the concept is to specify the process of transition to the government of the Information Age. An interesting level of interaction is the interaction of state institutions among themselves (G2G), which is aimed at increasing the reliability of data and the efficiency of their use, reducing the cost of services, improving the use of databases, and improving the public administration system in general (E-government). A strategic framework for public service in the Information Age, n/y). Relations between the central and local authorities and their bodies have been established in such a way that, if necessary, it is possible to obtain all the necessary information on issues that are assigned to the competence of another body.

A number of Scandinavian and Baltic countries have also digitized a number of government processes and digitized public services. For example, in Estonia, it has been possible to vote in elections online since 2005. The electronic voting system is actively used in the USA and is being

implemented in the countries of the European Union, at the level of the union itself (Krasnopolska and Myloserdna, 2020).

At the same time, it is worth warning that despite serious technical achievements, the introduction of appropriate technology, which is based on the formation of special trust in the authorities in general and in the digital space formed by them, has serious risks associated, on the one hand, with the problems of the legitimacy of the results online voting, and on the other hand, with the psychological features of citizens' participation in this process.

Also, analyzing the global research of the Riverbed Technology company in nine developed countries, such as the USA, Brazil, Germany, France, China, Singapore, India, Great Britain, Australia (the objects of the survey were enterprises in the field of sales, transport, industry, security health), 95% of respondents stated that they are currently unable to implement digitization in their own business processes. First of all, the main problems on the path of digital transformation are a limited budget and an outdated network infrastructure. The negative factors also include the non-transparency of the work of end users, low qualification of personnel and low interest of the management in conducting digital initiatives (Riverbed Technology: 95% of companies are not ready for digital transformation, 2018).

In addition, the growth rate of digitalization directly depends on the country's institutional environment, which concerns state policy, legislative and regulatory acts, and fiscal instruments. The long absence of an innovative base in the country's economy, the reluctance of representatives of large and medium-sized businesses to invest in innovative projects weaken digital transformation.

We come to the conclusion that in most countries of the world, the reasons for reforming the public sector, the initiators of which are mostly state authorities or local self-government bodies, are the objective need to improve and simplify communication between the state and the society of citizens in the provision of online electronic services. The government of Ukraine has set itself a similar goal.

The UN has provided certain recommendations for the transition of countries to digital governance and digital transformation. The recommendations are a change in thinking in the digital plane at the individual and systemic levels, a change in the institutional and regulatory framework in public policy, the availability of information through open government data and equal access to it (Mikhrovska, 2020).

As practice shows, the European Union will continue to consider virtualization as one of the main areas of development of science and innovation, at least until the end of 2027, while the new Framework

Program for research and innovation «Horizon Europe» (2021-2027) and the program of the European Parliament and Council of the European Union «Digital Europe». Accordingly, it can be concluded that for the European Union, digital technologies, artificial intelligence and robotics, the next generation Internet, high-performance computing and big data as the most important and popular digital technologies are areas of special interest not only now, but also in the strategic perspective (Strizhkova, 2019).

Given that the country's political course for joining the European Union was fixed at the constitutional level, we can say that the above-mentioned documents, namely the Framework Program for Research and Innovation «Horizon Europe» (2021-2027) and the program of the European Parliament and The Council of the European Union's «Digital Europe» will become mandatory. We share the point of view of S. Yesimov, who notes that the Association for the Development of Ukraine and the European Union closely links the development of Internet technologies with the reform of public administration, which will enable state authorities to provide high-quality, in-demand and affordable electronic services.

At the same time, it will allow the state authorities to carry out constant analysis and improvement of the system of providing administrative services, to identify negative effects on the quality and widespread distribution of administrative services based on the indicators of the assessment of the quality and availability of electronic administrative services (Yesimov, 2017).

In order to speed up the process of digitalization of public services, in particular at the level of territorial communities, an international project under the U-LEAD program has been implemented in Ukraine, which is financed by the European Union and its member states Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia.

The specified project is aimed at improving the provision of public services in local self-government bodies by developing and implementing a system of electronic interaction, information systems and administrative services with the aim of providing a significant number of public services entirely electronically (E-government. A strategic framework for public service in the Information Age, n/y). Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine affected the completion of this and other digitization programs of public authorities and society. However, digitalization processes continue even under such difficult conditions and are successfully implemented, including thanks to the support of the world community.

The general problems of the development of various models of e-government include the fact that in many countries, government institutions do not provide opportunities for joint operation of their information systems, and a significant part of procedures and services

are performed manually. Such a variety of features of the development of different models is due to different, distinct goals of building electronic governance in different models, to which the goals of individual countries are also added.

In the Anglo-American model, the goal is “openness, transparency, and responsibility to citizens, simplification and cheaper interaction of citizens and business representatives with state structures”; continental-European – providing government information online, ensuring the conditions for fulfilling one’s civic duty in, using the possibilities of electronic voting or internet testing, government services for paying taxes and fines; satisfaction of the information needs of the population and the introduction of communication and information technologies to various spheres of life are characteristic of the Australian and Latin American ones.

In general, it should be said that the need for digitization of public power, development of electronic government, online services objectively requires state authorities, local self-government bodies, budgetary and communal institutions not only to modernize the material and technical base for the performance of their own and delegated powers, but also actively implement infrastructure projects aimed at improving the communication infrastructure (laying of Internet networks, operation of servers, hosting companies, increasing the level of data security, etc.).

Such challenges today are a characteristic feature of modern industrial society, regardless of the political regime and the state system. For the modern system of state power, it is not only necessary, but also natural to use advanced information and communication technologies - to be an “electronic government” - not for the sake of “technological fashion”, but for the sake of a new quality of administration that corresponds to modern trends of socio-economic development, including modern threats to the institution of the state and law.

If we talk about the adoption of the best global experience in the field of digitization of public authorities, then the quick response to the needs and current requests of the population in the conditions of martial law in Ukraine has become an indicator of the effectiveness of cooperation between the authorities and citizens: the authorities promptly respond to today’s challenges, safely, quickly, effectively and transparently creating services and online services for citizens. Taking these measures requires the involvement of a significant number of highly professional specialists for a fast and high-quality process of digital transformation, the development of specially developed information programs in the field of providing and developing administrative services to the population in electronic form, etc.

At the same time, we share the point of view of scientists that today we need such legal norms that would contribute to the development of a global

and open single digital market by unifying legislation and simplifying the rules and procedures applied in different countries (Glibko and Yefremova, 2016). Acceleration of the transition to a model of digital administration of public authorities requires reengineering of management systems, processes and functions in accordance with the opportunities provided by new technologies, in particular with the use of a process approach to management and the formation of network connections, the creation of a single regional platform, interactive databases, introduction of electronic democracy elements into decision-making processes.

### **Conclusions**

Digitization of public authorities should be understood as a system of measures for transformation, improvement through the integration of information and telecommunication technologies of the activities of public administration subjects and their officials with the aim of developing an open information society, proper communication between the state and civil society, increasing productivity and economic growth. The implementation of digital technologies in the activities of state (public) authorities is an activity of public administration entities in the field of digitization (development of the digital economy, digital innovations and technologies, e-government, electronic document flow and electronic information resources, etc.) regulated by laws and other legal acts. by making management decisions and providing administrative services established by law.

The analysis of the normative and legal regulation of the activities of public authorities in Ukraine proved the existence of a multi-level model of legal support for the implementation of digitization tools, which combines legal prescriptions of various legal powers, which were reflected in acts of informational, administrative, civil, economic and criminal procedural legislation, and also illustrates the mutual influence and interaction of these branches of law in today's conditions.

The process of digitalization of the activities of public authorities is accompanied by such shortcomings as: declarativeness, non-systematic, incompleteness, vagueness, insufficient mutual agreement of documents and compliance with international standards. At the same time, in accordance with the approved e-Government Strategy until 2030, further improvement is required in the regulatory, managerial, organizational, technical and economic components of the process of digitization of public authorities in order to effectively implement internationally recognized digital tools for the interaction of the state and civil society at the national, regional and local levels.

The scientific analysis of the foreign experience of implementing digitization tools in the activities of public authorities leads to the conclusion of the need to reformat the activities of public authorities by introducing information and telecommunication technologies into their activities, improving the mechanisms of electronic governance in the field of telecommunications networks, e-commerce infrastructure and online interaction business subjects, digital skills and electronic document flow, improvement of communication infrastructure (laying of Internet networks, operation of servers, hosting companies, increasing the level of data security, etc.).

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