

# Socio-Economic Impact of International Technical Assistance Programs on the State of Public and Administrative Services in the Amalgamated Hromadas of Ukraine

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**Abstract:** The article considers the main issues related to the implementation of projects and programmes of international technical assistance to Ukraine in the field of public and administrative services. It is substantiated that the impact of international technical assistance can improve the state of administrative services throughout the country and directly in local communities. Within the framework of this topic, the authors of the article analysed the programmes of international technical assistance to Ukraine, which improve and enhance the provision of public and administrative services. Under such conditions, the implementation of programmes and projects of international technical assistance should consider: feasibility, efficiency, realism, logic, relevance, sustainability and risk management. Although administrative service centers (ASC) are already in place in local communities, their quality and affiliation remain in question. During the period of implementation of the decentralization reform on the territory of Ukraine, the programmes of international technical assistance, which contribute to the receipt of institutional and physical support by local authorities, play a significant role. In these processes, the provision of public and administrative services also receives appropriate support, not only at the state and regional levels, but also at the level of amalgamated hromadas of Ukraine. Each amalgamated hromada is trying to create an appropriate system of providing administrative services close to the people, establishing on its own administrative services centers of or Centers "Dija".

**Keywords:** Administrative Services, Administrative Services Center, Centers "Dija", COVID-19, Decentralization, International Technical Assistance, Local Authorities, Project Management, Public Services.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the current conditions of decentralization and implementation of reforms related to the provision of public and administrative services, the significant role and great influence on the economic and social sphere in the territorial communities of Ukraine is influenced by international technical assistance (ITA) programs. It is this phenomenon that contributes to the development of a global society that shares common values and is consolidated. It can be determined that the development and improvement of the socio-economic sphere and directly the sphere of administrative services in the territorial communities of Ukraine depends, inter alia, on programmes and projects of international technical assistance, which forms modern approaches to administrative services at both regional and national levels. ITA programs are an important source of support for the territorial communities of Ukraine. A large number of communities are

trying to attract appropriate investment in the socio-economic development of their territories, by using project management tools to obtain and implement on a competitive basis additional opportunity within the ITA. Such local projects from international partners have a significant impact on attracting extra-budgetary funding and improving the socio-economic situation in territorial communities (Bielska and Khomaiko, 2018; Pavlichenko and Huzenko, 2019; Smokovych, 2020).

The sphere of providing public and administrative services in the amalgamated hromadas of Ukraine needs comprehensive assistance not only in the form of material values but also in the development of institutional documents, training of administrative services centers (ASC) employees, informing and involving the population. Let's clarify why each of the above points of territorial communities assistance is important. Providing institutional support allows local governments to provide administrative services to the public in the legal field, avoiding violations of illegal actions or inaction of officials, maintaining confidentiality and information about personal data, adhere to procedures and deadlines, prevent corruption. Also, amalgamated hromadas residents can receive various services quickly and efficiently, and par-

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ticipate in various community initiatives at the local level. In addition, there are aspects of the development of the relationship between the administrative services centers for the population with local governments, which affect the progress and development of ITA on the ground in proportion to the contributions provided by the state and public support. Determining the point of providing administrative services largely depends on the degree of its connection with the local population and local governments (Tkach, 2015; Sarioglu and Ogay, 2019).

Thus, an integrated approach to the implementation of ITA programs allows to improve the situation in the field of administrative services not only in specific amalgamated hromadas but also in Ukraine as a whole. When implementing ITA programs, there are always certain risks that may affect the outcome. There are the following risks in the implementation of ITA programs aimed at improving the provision of public and administrative services at the local level.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES PROGRAMS

The implementation of ITA programs in Ukraine is accelerating decentralization processes, and the direction of modernisation of public services has significantly intensified since 2016. Among the ITA programs that have the greatest impact on the development of the system of public and administrative services in Ukraine are the following: U-LEAD with Europe (2021): Programme for Ukraine on Empowerment at Local Level, Accountability and Development – Component 2: Establishment of ASC and raising public awareness of local self-government, E-Governance for Accountability and Participation Program (2021), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (2021), United Nations Development Programme (2021) and others. SALAR is the Swedish Association of Municipalities and Regions, which specializes in creating and developing appropriate local government systems around the world. NIRAS as one of the leading Scandinavian consulting organisations specialises in providing consulting and engineering services in the fields of construction, industry, agriculture, energy, environment, processing, transport (U-LEAD with Europe, 2021). The EGOV4UKRAINE (2021) project (Support to the Decentralization Process of e-Government in Ukraine) is part of the U-LEAD with Europe (2021) Program implemented by the Estonian Academy of e-Government. Estonian Academy of e-Government is a non-profit think tank and consulting organization. Estonian Academy of e-Government improves the skills and assists officials of central and local governments, and local governments in implementing digital transformation programs to create smart, sustainable and effective solutions in the field of e-government, e-democracy and cybersecurity (Bielska and Khomaiko, 2018; Codogno and van den Noord, 2021). Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (2021) – operates in Ukraine on behalf of four German ministries, the European Union and other international partners. Currently, the priority areas of German-Ukrainian cooperation are:

sustainable infrastructure;

security, reconstruction and peace;

social development;

state and democracy;

environment and climate;

economy and employment.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (2021) supports the process of public administration reforms. Services for the population and the economy need to be improved. The transparent electronic public procurement system (Prozorro) developed for this purpose promotes fair competition and thus saves public funds. In addition, communities across the country benefit from comprehensive decentralization reform. United Nations Development Program (2021), United Nations Global Development Network. Collaborates around the world with governments, civil society and the private sector in 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty, develop and preserve national capacity, achieve tangible and lasting results, protect the environment and enhance democratic governance, focusing on the principle of “leave no one without attention” (Cohen and Karatzimas 2022; Tkach, 2015; Sydorenko, 2021; Özdemir and Kayhan, 2021). Many amalgamated hromadas of Ukraine had the opportunity and received ITA for the creation or modernization of ASC. Each of these ITA programs has helped to develop the provision of public and administrative services on the ground, namely in the following areas: institutional support (assistance in the development of local self-government documents for the proper functioning of the ASC); training of the personnel, representatives of the deputy corps, subjects of service of public needs and the public concerning work of local self-government and direct work of ASC; physical support, construction, repair of premises, supply of furniture and equipment for ASC, arrangement of territorial subdivisions, remote workplaces of administrators, and the purchase of mobile ASC; assistance in informing and involving the population in the activities of the ASC; design and development of design and estimate documentation for construction or repair work in the premises of the ASC; development of methodological manuals, legislative initiative, development of template documents related to the activities of the ASC.

To clearly demonstrate the number of ASC created with the support of the ITA, it can be used the electronic resource – ASC Maps (Fig. 1) (Sydorenko, 2018).

Citizens in all settlements and communities should receive fast and high-quality administrative services. As of February 18, 2020, there were almost 800 ASCs in Ukraine (The number of..., 2020). In comparison with 2018 and the beginning of 2020, the number of amalgamated hromadas with the current ASCs has increased significantly. Currently, 1439 amalgamated hromadas have been formed on the territory of Ukraine (Decentralization, 2021), while about 639 communities remain without ASCs or Centers “Dija”, which complicates the process of forming a modern sphere of public and administrative services in the newly formed communities. These communities need support in creating or modernizing the ASC.

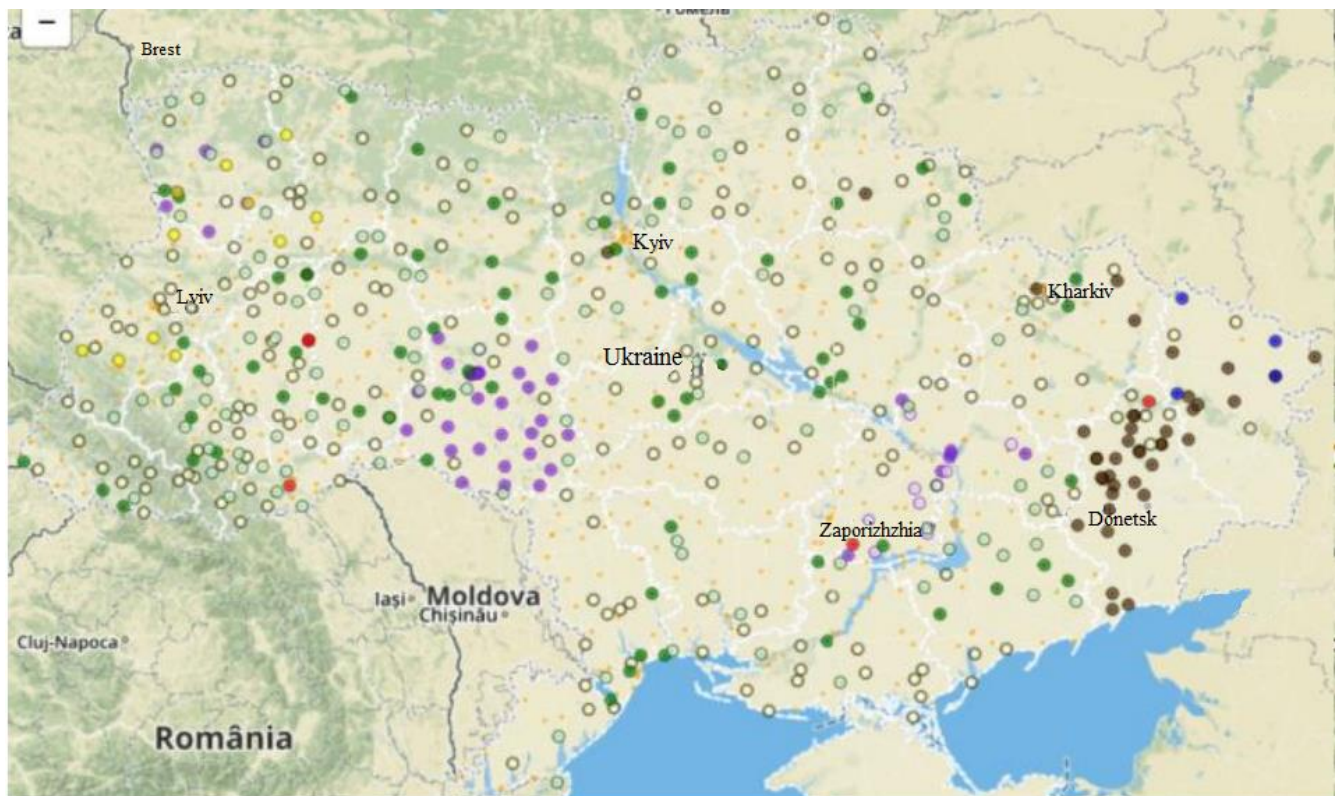
### 3. STRUCTURAL STUDY OF ADMINISTRATIVE MECHANISMS ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE WORK OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WITH ITA RESOURCES

To implement ITA programmes, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has introduced an ITA system (Resolution of the..., 2002). The positive fact is that in Ukraine there is a tendency to support the development of public and administrative services by the ITA. Here are the ITA programs that are the most comprehensive approach to the implementation of projects to support public service centers. United Nations Development Programme (2021), 8 of the 12 points of the integrated approach. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (2021), 7 of the 10 points of the integrated approach (Table 1).

**Training of officials.** This part of the support from the ITA programs is extremely important, especially in the development of the new ASCs. It is desirable to conduct training for local self-government staff at the initial stages of the ASCs project to form an understanding of local self-government officials and local council deputies on the provision of administrative services, the importance of ASCs, the need to develop quality institutional documents ASCs. Also, after the recruitment of ASCs staff, it is desirable to conduct training on the development of communication skills, principles of communication with ASCs clients, customer orientation and gender equality (Saliya, 2021).

**Physical support.** First of all, physical support in the implementation of projects to improve the provision of administra-

tive services is a motivating factor for the institutional establishment of the ASC, the development of appropriate conditions for the provision of administrative services. Visitors to the ASC pay attention to the condition of the premises and the convenience of conditions when receiving administrative services. Carrying out construction of ASC, providing conditions of accessibility for persons with disabilities, providing convenient and comfortable furniture for the waiting and service area. Physical support, in addition to construction work, may also include the provision of machinery, equipment and furniture for the work of ASC employees. It is especially important to provide amalgamated hromadas with a sufficient amount of computer equipment, which will be enough for all ASC employees. The electronic queue management system helps the receptionist and visitors to understand the queue and the procedure for receiving administrative services. Physical support includes mobile suitcases of the ASC administrator. The mobile case allows providing administrative services to the ASC client directly at home if there are certain conditions for such receipt. Mobile ASC will be useful for amalgamated hromadas, which have many settlements, have a significant dispersion of such settlements and a small number of inhabitants. ASC designation is an integral part of the work. First of all, amalgamated hromadas residents should know exactly where such a center is located. It is also important that customers can follow the signs. The main condition for the development of the sign should be accessibility for the visually impaired. To do this, the information in Braille should be duplicated on the label.



**Fig. (1).** ASC with the support of international target programmes. Source: N. Sydorenko (2018).

**Table 1. Comparison of ITA Support forms for the Development of Public Service Enterprises in the Amalgamated Hromadas of Ukraine (in the period 2005-2020).**

Name of MTD Programs	U-LEAD with Europe: – component 2	E-Governance for Accountability and Participation Program	United Nations Development Programme	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	United States Agency for International Development	Expert Deployment for Governance and Economic Growth
Institutional support (yes/no)	+	+	+	+	+	-
Training (yes/no)	+	+	-	+	+	+
Physical support (yes/no):						
furniture	+	+	+	+	+	-
machinery	+	+	+	+	+	-
marking	+	-	+	+	+	-
electronic queue	+	+	+	+	+	-
mobile ASC	+	-	+	-	+	-
mobile suitcase	-	-	+	+	-	-
construction and repair work	+	-	+	+	+	-
Informing and involving the population (yes/no)	+	+	-	-	-	+
Design of premises (yes/no)	+	-	-	-	+	-
Legislative initiatives (yes/no)	+	+	+	-	-	+
Software	+	+	-	-	-	+

Source: compiled by the authors.

Software. Part of the integrated approach to the creation of ASC is the software used by the staff of such centers. One of the ITA programmes in the field of software in the field of administrative services is the programme EGOV4UKRAINE (2021), which developed software for the automated workplace administrator of the software package “HIVE” (Bielska and Khomaiko, 2018). Informing and involving the population. Even if the ASC is established, all norms of accessibility and accessibility, the number of services is observed, the staff will have high competencies, it is necessary to inform the residents of the amalgamated hromadas about the activities of such a center. It is necessary to involve the public in the decision-making of local self-government bodies, to hold public consultations. An example of involving amalgamated hromadas residents is a survey of community residents to determine one day a week when the ASC must work until 20:00 according to the Law of Ukraine No. 5203-VI “On Administrative Services” (2013). Design of ASC premises. It is important to adhere to the norms of accessibility and accessibility, open space, energy efficiency and comfort during the construction or repair works in the premises of the ASC. That is why ITA programs should pay attention to design, development of sketch plans and design projects. Legislative initiatives. The implementation of projects supported by ITA programs provides extensive institutional experience and feedback from local government representatives on legislative conflicts and imperfections in the provision of public and administrative services. This experience can serve as a basis for developing recommendations for improving legisla-

tion in this area (Table 2) (Pavlichenko and Huzenko, 2019; Sarioglo and Ogay, 2019).

**Table 2. Risks in the Implementation of ITA Programs in the field of Public and Administrative Services.**

Risks	Overcoming Risks
Non-compliance with amalgamated hromadas rules for partnership participation in projects	When concluding partnership agreements between the ITA programme and the local self-government, clearly prescribe the requirements to be met by the territorial communities (funding, staff participation in training). Coordinate the signing of an agreement with the local council (relevant decision on community participation in the ITA program) to avoid local political contradictions.
Misuse of physical assistance provided	Official appointment by the community of a responsible person (at a level not lower than the Deputy Chairman) for the targeted use of material values provided by the ITA programme (administrative document).
Reluctance of amalgamated hromadas to take the initiative and continue to develop the public service sector after the completion of the project	Development and approval of a local target program for the development of public services in the amalgamated hromadas for the next three years, after the completion of the project with mandatory funding for the ASC.

Failure to comply with legal requirements or personal interpretation of public service legislation.	Carrying out advanced training of local government officials on the recommendation of ITA programs. Participation in exchange programmes for appropriate ASCs in other communities. Using templates of institutional documents (recommended by experts) for the development and approval of local organizational and administrative documents in the community (regulations, regulations, lists of services, information and technology cards, job descriptions).
The negative impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic	Debugging remotely. Compliance with anti-epidemic norms, vaccination of the population.

Source: M. Smokovych (2020).

Each ITA program should pay attention to all possible risks and try to avoid or overcome them (Causevic *et al.*, 2022).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn. Amalgamated hromadas of Ukraine need an integrated approach in the implementation of ITA programmes, in particular in the field of public and administrative services. When implementing ITA programs in the field of modernisation of public and administrative services at the local level, donors and implementers should consider the risks associated with the specific features of local self-government (procedural issues), and the specific features of Ukrainian legislation in this area. Also, the negative consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic significantly hinder the development of public and administrative services at the local level. In order to make better use of ITA programs, local self-government staff need to develop professional skills, especially in the field of project management. Because the ITA programs affect the situation in the field of administrative services not only in individual consolidated communities, but also in Ukraine as a whole. However, when implementing ITA programs, there are always certain risks that can affect the outcome.

The rules of partnership participation in projects of united communities make local political contradictions impossible. And physical aid, initiatives of united communities to continue developing the sphere of public services after the completion of the project, following the requirements of legislation provide an opportunity for the coordinated implementation of socio-economic relations, which significantly affects the international technical assistance programs on the state of state and administrative services in consolidated communities of Ukraine.

It has been proven that the development and improvement of the socio-economic sphere and the sphere of providing administrative services in the territorial communities of Ukraine directly depends on international technical assistance programs at the regional and national levels. This is important support for territorial communities of Ukraine. Therefore, in the life of communities, there is a tendency to attract appropriate investments in the socio-economic devel-

opment of their territories, which is no less harmful for their modernization and favorable functioning.

It is with the help of the project methodology that project applications for obtaining the ITA are prepared, projects are implemented. This significantly supports the community in finding extra-budgetary sources of funding for socio-economic development. The analysis shows that about 600 newly created Ukrainian communities formed after the local elections in October 2020 need significant institutional and physical support not only in the field of public and administrative services, but also support for democratic and decentralization transformations in general. Therefore, support for ITA programmes will be relevant for local communities for at least the next 10 years.

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