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PROBLEMS AND SPHERES OF ACTIVITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES IN THE REGIONS OF UKRAINE LIBERATED FROM RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

ABSTRACT: *The article examines the legal, organisational, security, socio-economic, humanitarian, cultural, international and other aspects of the formation and operation of local self-government bodies (LSGs) in the territories of certain regions of Ukraine liberated from Russian occupation, in the period from spring 2022 to summer 2024, that is, from the time of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine until now. Initiatives and areas of activity of territorial communities and city, village and village councils are studied. The conditions for resuming the activities of local government, guaranteeing the safety of the population, countering repeated attacks by Russian interventionists and demining territories, establishing energy and gas supply, providing citizens with housing and all the necessary services of the communal sphere have been studied. Issues of financial and humanitarian assistance, participation of local self-government bodies in seeking support from foreign partners, involvement in various forms and programs of foreign cooperation are considered. Therefore, the main objective of the article is to analyse the functioning, challenges, and roles of local self-government bodies in Ukraine under the conditions of military occupation and liberation. It emphasises the importance of maintaining local governance to ensure effective administration, provision of public services, and recovery in the war-affected regions. In addition, the article addresses legal and institutional frameworks affecting the balance of power between local authorities and state administrations during martial law. The article uses a methodological approach that integrates legal analysis, the study of administrative practices, and case studies focused on Ukrainian regions operating under martial law.*

KEYWORDS: local self-government bodies; de-occupied territories; financial assistance; humanitarian aid; international cooperation.

1. Introduction

The development of local self-government, which was a sign of the existence of a world civilization, is the most important task for the social development of Ukraine and its future. Therefore, the strategic goal of

Ukraine is to create a system of local self-government bodies that would respond, on the one hand, to the current needs and tasks of Ukrainian state formation, and on the other hand, would be consistent with the spirit and principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (European Charter of Local Self-Government, 1985).

The course towards European integration through the implementation of reforms in various directions of the development of Ukraine is urgent and extremely important. In addition, the state is in a permanent political and economic crisis, the situation is extremely complicated by the full-scale invasion of Russia on the territory of Ukraine and its hybrid manifestations, which cover all aspects of the socio-political life of the Ukrainian state. Therefore, the Ukrainian authorities should focus their attention not only on the establishment of peace, but also on the development of a strategy for the realisation of the main tasks - membership in the European Union, and compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, which in the result will speed up the process of Ukraine's advancement on the path of integration with the EU. The reform of the local self-government system is considered one of the most successful reforms in Ukraine, but it was stopped by the bloody war. The case of the activity of self-governing bodies of local self-government in the territories de-occupied from Russia is unique, which has no analogues on the European continent since the Second World War, is unresearched and not understood either in Ukraine or abroad, and that is why it is worth a detailed study.

As a result of the armed intervention unleashed by Russia against Ukraine in its acute phase after February 24, 2022, the tasks of local self-government bodies of Ukraine changed, especially in military conflict zones, as well as in regions that were liberated from Russian occupation. The administrative-territorial reform in Ukraine, partially completed in 2020, consisted in granting greater powers to local self-government bodies (decentralisation) and changing the administrative-territorial division. Instead of more than 11,000 local councils, 1,469 capable territorial communities were formed (Zakon Ukrayiny, 2020).

The full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine from February 24, 2022 led to the temporary occupation of part of the territory of Ukraine, significant destruction of infrastructure, millions of forced migrants and a record decline in the Ukrainian economy. With the beginning of the full-scale aggression, almost 4 thousand settlements in 231 territorial communities were temporarily occupied. This applies to 11 regions of Ukraine - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernihiv, Sumy and Odesa. During the occupation, the Ukrainian management system was deconstructed - both local self-government and state power, the provision of public services - education, health care, social security, etc. (Barynova, 2024). Instead there were attempts to introduce an occupation management system with the participation of local collaborators, the completion of which was the formal inclusion of the territory of four oblasts - Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Kherson regions into Russia as new subjects, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was included in Russia earlier (Bohdanyok, 2022).

The purpose of this article is to study the legal, organisational, security, socio-economic, humanitarian, cultural and international aspects of the functioning of local self-government bodies (LSGs) in the territories of Ukraine liberated from Russian occupation in the period from spring 2022 to summer 2024. The article is aimed at identifying key problems and initiatives that ensure the recovery and development of territorial communities, in particular in the context of security, infrastructure reconstruction, demining, energy supply, housing construction, as well as the search for international support and financial assistance.

To achieve the set goal, the following tasks must be solved: analyse the legal basis of the functioning of local self-government bodies in the liberated territories and their adaptation to the conditions of post-conflict reconstruction, evaluate organisational measures aimed at restoring the work of local councils and ensuring the normal life of the population, study socio-economic and humanitarian initiatives, in particular the provision of housing and communal services, to analyse the cultural and humanitarian aspects of the restoration of the territories, including the restoration of educational and cultural institutions, to assess the role of local government in the establishment of energy and gas supply in the liberated territories, to study the issue of international support, including financial aid, humanitarian aid and participation in foreign co-operation programs.

The main research question of the article is as follows : how can local self-government bodies in the liberated regions of Ukraine effectively address administrative, social and economic challenges during the recovery and reconstruction process, while dealing with the constraints imposed by martial law?

2. Literature review

The research draws upon a vast and diverse array of sources, encompassing regulatory and legal instruments, official government documents, analytical articles, news items, and reports on a multitude of subjects pertaining to the restoration and development of Ukraine's de-occupied territories, administrative reforms, social payments, infrastructure projects, and humanitarian aid during martial law.

The analysis of literature and sources shows that local self-government as a social reality has become an object of study in a number of scientific disciplines, a subject of detailed elaboration of theoretical and methodological problems of its current state and a direction of development of modern political science. There are a large number of author's approaches and interpretations of the essence of local self-government, its structure, functions, levels and types. The problems of local self-government are in the focus of attention of a significant number of scholars and practitioners. Particularly noteworthy are scientific studies of the

general theoretical, political science, historical, legal, administrative and other aspects of local self-government. Such widespread interest in local self-government is primarily due to its political, legal and managerial significance for the development of a modern democratic state operating under the rule of law.

The problems of local self-government are studied by researchers N. Antonyuk, B. Katz, J. Nowak, G. Stoker, S. Wójcik and many others. Among the current issues of searching for mechanisms to rebuild Ukraine and ensure regional development through the development of territorial communities, it is advisable to highlight the studies of such authors as: D. Barynova, O. Nyzhnyk, I. Pyroha, M. Pyroha, I. Yablonovs′ka, T. Yurkova and others. However, the role of communities and local governments in planning the reconstruction and finding effective mechanisms for the immediate restoration of territories under martial law remains unresolved.

Therefore the main sources used in the research are:

1. The regulatory and legal framework of Ukraine, in particular the laws of Ukraine, orders and resolutions regulating the administrative and territorial system, the functioning of local self-government bodies during martial law, and determining the territories on which hostilities are conducted or which are temporarily occupied: Law of Ukraine No. 562- IX of 2020 regulates administrative division and establishes territorial communities; Law No. 2259-IX of 2022 amends the laws on civil service and local self-government under martial law; The order of the Ministry of Reintegration defines the territories of hostilities and occupation.

2. Analytical materials and expert opinions, including articles at government websites, official media and analytical platforms. Analytics relate to the restoration of de-occupied communities, the operation of local programs and planning for the reconstruction of infrastructure. For example, D. Barynova's article "Restoration and development of de-occupied territorial communities: reality and prospects" examines the real possibilities and prospects for the recovery of communities after de-occupation. The materials of the International Round Table on the topic "Local Self-Government in the Conditions of Reconstruction of Ukraine: Challenges and Prospects" held in Kyiv, on December 9, 2022 dedicated to Day of Local Self-Government in Ukraine includes many interesting and important information on the topic (Local self-government…, 2022).

3. Publications in national and regional journal and reports about the current situation in the de-occupied regions, including information on infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid, restoration of services, as well as the consequences of shelling, reports on the restoration of roads, medical services, electricity supply and other vital resources in the territories that were under occupation.

4. News and analytics highlighting international projects, grants and assistance, including from the European Investment Bank and other international partners, to restore infrastructure.

Thus, the article uses both legislative acts and operative news and analytical articles, which provides a comprehensive overview of the legal, socio-economic and infrastructural processes related to the restoration of the de-occupied territories of Ukraine.

3. Methodology

The research methodology covers a complex of approaches that will allow detailed research and analysis of the specifics and challenges of the activities of local self-government bodies (LSGs) in post-conflict reconstruction. The methodological approach is based on a combination of qualitative methods, as the research involves the analysis of both structural and social aspects of recovery based on the case studies. The main approaches are: socio-political analysis to assess the role of local government in stabilising the region, restoring infrastructure and providing social services; legal analysis, which allows to evaluate the effect of the legal framework regarding the functioning of local government in liberated areas and its adaptation to new conditions, as well as institutional analysis of local government activity, in particular, assessment of their interaction with central authorities and international partners. The article uses data from existing scientific studies, legislative acts and reports of international organisations regarding the functioning of local government organisations in post-conflict regions, in particular in Ukraine after 2014, and a review of normative documents regulating the activities of local government organisations in liberated areas is carried out.

The theory of self-government, which provides an interpretation of its essence, relations between self-government bodies and state administration bodies, became the theoretical and methodological basis of the study. A number of studies are devoted to the study of the specifics and competencies of self-governing bodies. The next research problem is the question of outlining the genesis of self-government. Related discussions led to the formation of three theoretical schools: natural rights of citizens, state and political theory of local self-government. These are not the only concepts, as there were many disputes among their representatives, some of whom can be attributed to different currents. In the literature, one can find opinions indicating the existence of the so-called natural-state theory. Although some interpret it in the same way as statist theory, some researchers see it as a synthesis of the theory of natural rights of citizens and statist theory. Initially, the dispute about the essence of self-government was conducted mainly by lawyers. Later, sociologists, economists, and political scientists began to participate in the discussion, which made it possible to include in the discussion about local self-government such concepts as: localism, the theory of rational and social choice, or social constructivism (Bosiacki, 2006; Stoker, 1997; Wójcik, 2007).

The sociological theory of cognition, developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Lukman in their book "Social construction of reality" - social constructivism, which had a number of followers in the second half of the 20th century, was of interest to the authors (Berger, & Luckmann, 2011). According to this theory, the social construction of reality is a dynamic process that is supported by the social relations of different groups in society. The next theory - one of the oldest - was the theory of free communities, which explains the essence of local self-government. Its creators introduced the concept of self-government, included a number of elements as the concept of management in the interests of the community, and the fact that officials of self-governing bodies are not state but community functionaries.

The political philosophy of localism approach believes that the local should prevail in all spheres of life. It is local food, local services, local suppliers, local history, culture, identity. The philosophy of localism contrasts itself with regionalism and centralization. Bruce Katz and Jeremy Novak, authors of the book "The New Localism: How Cities Can Grow in the Age of Populism" (Katz, & Nowak, 2018). The next, close to the above, in the research discourse of the study is the idea of forming a polycentric society, as well as the concept of joint management, which proposes to change the system from the electoral to the civil democracy system, thus deepening the horizontal plurality and policy directions.

In the course of preparing the article, a variety of empirical research methods were employed, including description, statistical analysis, and comparison. The combination of these diverse approaches and methods of scientific expertise facilitated a comprehensive and detailed investigation of the issues and activities of local self-government bodies in the regions of Ukraine that had been liberated from Russian occupation. A structural-functional and systemic approach was adopted, whereby the subject under investigation was regarded as a system with a complex structure and dynamic interrelationships. The data was subjected to analysis, including a content analysis of normative legal acts, reports, and interviews. This approach was adopted with the objective of identifying the principal issues and areas of activity of the local government, thereby facilitating a systematic and multifaceted analysis of the problems associated with the activities of local self-government bodies in the regions of Ukraine that have been liberated from Russian occupation.

4. Empirical results and discussion

During the war, local self-government in Ukraine became an important territorial association, which in

these difficult conditions solved all issues of community life, providing the most necessary services to people. However, the greatest difficulty in solving the urgent needs of the people fell to the fate of those territorial communities and districts that were partially or completely, and many of them are still under Russian occupation. In particular, under martial law, all local administrations were renamed military administrations. Thanks to decentralisation, the ability of communities to take responsibility and make difficult decisions, to quickly respond to internal and external challenges, was demonstrated. The war sharply emphasised the role of local self-government in the stability of the country, in the organisation of resistance. In the conditions of martial law, the government of Ukraine did not reduce the powers of local self-government, and in some areas even strengthened the functions of heads of communities and provided them with additional resources.

Usually, the population in the liberated territories has decreased significantly. Thus, in the regional center of Kherson, from over 340,000 people before the start of the war, only 60,000 people remained after its liberation. 100,000 people left during the occupation, and after the shelling began, the rest left and continue to leave. There remain mainly socially vulnerable sections of the population who cannot afford to evacuate, or very patriotic people. At the same time, the city has water and heat supply, shops, pharmacies and humanitarian aid distribution points are working (V Khersoni zalyshylos′ 20% naselennya, 2023). In the same way, the population of Kharkiv, the second most populous city in Ukraine, has significantly decreased since the beginning of the war, but after the successful counteroffensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the fall of 2022 and the partial restoration of a full-fledged life, people began to return here, and already at the beginning of 2024, according to the statements of Regional military administration (RMA), in the city 1.3 million people lived there. As it turned out, from the pre-war population of the city, 68% of Kharkiv residents live in Kharkiv, and 32% live outside the city. Instead, according to the statements of the city council, 500,000 internally displaced persons live in Kharkiv. These are residents of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk and other regions (Skilky zaraz zhyve kharkiv'ian u misti?, 2024).

During the evacuation of the population deep into Ukrainian territory or abroad, as well as due to the mobilisation of men in the Armed Forces, the possibilities of staffing many spheres of public life were sharply reduced. Therefore, local self-government bodies have to solve the difficult task of guaranteeing the safety of the population and providing basic social and communal services in a difficult situation.

During the war, the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyy signed the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Functioning of the Civil Service and Local Self-Government During the Period of Martial Law" No. 2259-IX. The corresponding draft law No. 7269 was approved by the Parliament on May 12, 2022. The law expanded the competence of village, settlement, and city heads during martial law and gave them individual powers to make a number of decisions. He changed the conditions of

creation, the procedure and the terms of exercising the powers of local self-government by the military administration of the settlement (hereinafter - MAS) (Zakon Ukrayiny, 2022).

MAS can be created within the territories of territorial communities (previously - only settlements). The appropriate village, township, or city mayor may be appointed as the head of the MAS. MAS acquired the powers of local self-government bodies, village, settlement, and city heads only after the adoption of a corresponding decision by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. At the same time, the acts of local self-government bodies and their officials are not subject to the requirements regarding the publication of draft acts under the Law of Ukraine "On Access to Public Information", as well as the Laws of Ukraine "On the Basics of State Regulatory Policy in the Field of Economic Activities", "On State Assistance to Sub "business entities" (Zakon Ukrayiny, 2022).

The Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories (Ministry of Reintegration) and the Ministry of Development of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure (Minregion) of Ukraine are responsible for the main coordination functions regarding the organisation of public life in the territories liberated from Russian occupation. Territorial changes related to the liberation of Ukrainian territories from occupation and the processes of establishing all forms of social life in them are regulated at the legislative level. According to the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, during 2022-2023, about 2,800 settlements in more than 160 territorial communities of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zhytomyr, Zaporizhzhya, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernihiv, Sumy and Odesa regions were de-occupied by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Barynova, 2024). In particular, in 2024, the law "On approval of changes to the list of territories where hostilities are (were) conducted or temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation" dated 05.23.2024 No. 143 was updated (Pro zatverdzhennya Zmin, 2024).

At the same time, it is necessary to immediately distinguish the specifics of the activities of local self-government bodies - cities, towns, villages, as well as territorial communities, districts within the liberated parts of the territory of these regions and the entire region in general. A special scope of tasks of the LSGs is within the borders of the front-line and border territories, which are under the threat of a repeated invasion of Russian troops or are subject to constant shelling and destruction from Russian territory or from the temporarily occupied parts of Ukraine. An example of this can be the Vovchansk city community bordering the Russian Federation in the Chuguyiv district of the Kharkiv region, which was subjected to repeated attempts of Russian aggression in May 2024 (Okupanty obstrilialy Vovchans’ku hromadu, 2024).

In particular, in the liberated areas of the Kherson region, the issue of creating or renewing the military administrations of the local government immediately became the main issue. To ensure operational management in part of the front-line and de-occupied territories, military administrations of settlements were created

- in 184 territorial communities of 12 regions of Ukraine. Part of the appointed heads of military administrations were the current heads of local councils, who were elected in 2020 during the first local elections on a new administrative-territorial basis (Barynova, 2024).

Among the basic services that are restored by the LSGs are the bodies of the State Migration Service (SMS), which provide the following basic services to the population: issuing a passport of a citizen of Ukraine, exchanging passports, issuing an ID card, issuing a foreign passport, etc. Destroyed or lost documents can be restored in the territorial bodies of the State Migration Service. In case of loss of paper documents, you can use the service in the "Diia" - "eDocument" application. During martial law, it is a digital analogue of the ID card.

The Administrative Service Centres (ASC), which are usually created in parallel with the restoration of authorities, are also resuming their work, starting to receive reports on damaged and destroyed immovable property as a result of hostilities, acts of terrorism, sabotage caused by the military aggression of the Russian Federation, producing lost documentation, etc. Local authorities provide readily available operational information on where to go for help if housing is damaged by shelling or other emergency assistance is needed in case of injury or evacuation (Na deokupovanykh terytoriyakh Kharkivshchyny.., 2023).

In order to introduce a more effective procedure for obtaining Ukrainian documents for residents of temporarily occupied territories, the government submitted draft law No. 9069 to the Verkhovna Rada. According to this draft law, it will be possible to obtain civil status acts directly from the State Register of Civil Status Acts (SRCSA).

Accelerated digitization is quite a breakthrough effect in the recovery of the activities of many units of the local government, and especially the activities of the National Center for Social Security. In a very short period of time, with the help of the "Diia" application, it was possible to reduce the paper circulation of documents and increase the convenience of providing services several times. Digitization has made it possible to reduce the number of papers that a person has to bring with him to complete documents (Tsyfrova transformatsiia, 2022).

Prevention of shelling of border areas, prompt elimination of their consequences and provision of assistance to the local population is in the centre of attention of the Territorial Self-Defense Forces and LSGs (Berezhans′kyy, 2023). The threat to the life and safety of residents of the border areas determines the further conduct of operations to evacuate residents to the interior regions of Ukraine. In particular, in the first half of 2024 alone, more than 800 citizens were evacuated from the border regions of Chernihiv region due to the threat of a repeated invasion from the territory of Russia (Tsohorich z prykordonnya Chernihivshchyny evakuyuvalysya ponad 800 lyudey, 2024).

Usually, in the first stage, settlements and roads are demined, and in the second - fields, meadows and

forests. Thus, sappers worked in the Kyiv region from April 6 to November 2022 and mainly demined these territories, which made it possible to say that demining of the Kyiv region was completed by 70-80%. However, more than 5,000 hectares of forests and fields still remain to be demined (Na Kyivshchyni treba rozminuvaty shche 5 tysyach hektar zemli, 2023). At the same time, it should be noted that the Kyiv region was only partially occupied and liberated for a relatively short period of time at the beginning of April 2022, and therefore the scale of landmines here was not as large as, for example, in Kherson or Kharkiv regions.

Another of the tasks of the local authorities together with the bodies of the Security Service of Ukraine is to find out the war crimes of the occupiers, as well as to honour the dead and those tortured during the Russian occupation, to exhume bodies from mass graves and to find out their origin. In 2015, the International Association of Lawyers founded such an initiative as the eyeWitness to Atrocities application. The purpose of this application is to enable all members of the public sector to independently collect evidence of war crimes. That is, it is an ordinary application that is installed on a mobile phone, with the help of which photo and video recording takes place.

Currently, a number of platforms and applications have been created in Ukraine that significantly simplify the collection of evidence of Russian war crimes: eyeWitness to Atrocities application; WarCrimes platform; WarCrime chatbot; Dozak portal; The portal "Cultural crimes" to collect evidence of the destruction of historical and cultural monuments by the Russian army. In addition, war crimes reports can be sent to the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague at otp.informationdesk@icc-cpi.int (Foto, 2023). Assistance in the exhumation of victims and reburial of bodies from mass burial sites is also one of the tasks of local self-government bodies. Local self-government bodies provide courier assistance in investigations and provision of reburial services (V Izyumi rozpochalosya perezakhoronennya til z masovoho pokhovannya, 2023).

One of the primary tasks of the local government after guaranteeing the safety of the population is to determine the extent of the destruction, the extent of the damage and the sequence in creating conditions for the livelihood of citizens and the restoration of the economy, as well as substantiating the necessary finances and assistance from the central higher authorities. Local self-government bodies, after releasing and finding out the crimes of the Russian occupiers and calculating the damage caused, usually start planning the restoration of territories and designing the development of their communities.

To document the damage or destruction of the building, you need to collect photo and video materials, take a certificate from the State Emergency Service (SES), as well as obtain a certificate from the local self-government bodies that the building was indeed damaged as a result of hostilities. In addition, it is important to submit an application for damaged property to Diia. With the statement about the commission of a war crime, it is necessary to apply to the National Police authorities, to obtain an extract from the Unified Register

of Pretrial Investigations, which will be proof that the person applied to the National Police.

The damage caused by the enemy to the monuments of the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people is quite significant. According to the information provided by the regional and Kyiv city military administrations on the basis of the relevant submissions of the local government, for June 2024, the total number of affected monuments of the cultural heritage of the regions increased by 5 units and amounts to 1,085 objects. Among them, 121 are of national significance, 884 are local, and 80 have just been discovered. The most damaged monuments are in Kharkiv Region – 307, Kherson Region – 150, Donetsk Region – 125, Odesa Region – 116 (Na Sumshchyni poshkodzheno 26 pam'yatok kulʹturnoyi spadshchyny vnaslidok rosiys'koyi ahresiyi, 2024).

A separate type of damage inflicted by the enemy is environmental damage. Ukrainian specialists believe that 27% of environmental crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine are in the Kharkiv region. In particular, according to the information of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Ruslan Strilets, after a visit to Kharkiv Region, "As of July 10, 2024, 1,436 cases were registered there among all 5,298 cases of Russian ecocide in Ukraine. 469 billion hryvnias is such an amount of damage to the environment of the region (Chvert' vsikh ekolohichnykh zlochyniv okupanty zdiysnyly na Kharkivshchyni, 2024).

The restoration of the communal economy and all aspects of life support for the population requires adequate financial receipts and accounts with amendments to the conditions of martial law. Changes in budget legislation and features of financing budget programs during martial law often raise questions for local self-government experts. The program to support Ukraine on its path to strengthening local self-government, empowerment, accountability and development is called "U-LEAD with Europe" and is jointly funded by the EU and its individual member states. U-LEAD promotes transparent, accountable and multi-level governance in Ukraine that meets the needs of citizens and empowers communities. U-LEAD experts systematically monitor new legislation and provide clarifications during thematic information sessions and consultations. In accordance with the rules for drawing up passports of budget programs of local budgets and reports on their implementation, approved by order of the MFU No. 836, the passport of the budget program defines the purpose, tasks, performance indicators and other characteristics of the budget program in accordance with the designations established by the local budget decree. In case of non-acceptance of the local budget, a temporary schedule of the local budget for the relevant period is approved (Eksperty U-LEAD dopomahayutʹ fakhivtsyam hromad Khersonshchyny skladaty pasporty mistsevykh prohram, 2023).

Among the important issues of a financial nature are the issues of pension payments to citizens from the newly liberated territories, as well as the payment of housing subsidies and benefits for the payment of housing and communal services, the purchase of solid and liquid household stove fuel and liquefied gas,

insurance payments and payment of sick leave (U Khersonskiy oblasti profinansovano pensiyni vyplaty na 233,2 mln hrn., 2023).

Local self-government bodies also contribute to the provision of financial assistance by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Red Cross to citizens who were in the occupation zone. As part of the international humanitarian mission money is allocated to Kharkiv Kherson, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Sumy and Chernihiv regions.

A very important area of work of the local community after guaranteeing safety and clarifying the scale of the occupiers' crimes and after providing primary assistance is the establishment of communal services: electricity, water and gas supply, establishment of the work of educational, health and cultural institutions, post offices, institutions trade and catering, public transport and household services. Almost all the usual services to the population in the cities and villages of Ukraine freed from the occupation were either reduced and significantly complicated, or they disappeared completely and need to be restored from almost zero level. This especially applies to the issue of transport connections related to the destruction or significant damage of bridges, the establishment of electricity supply and gas supply.

In general, 25.1 thousand km of roads and 341 artificial structures in their composition were destroyed in Ukraine as a result of hostilities. Of these, 8,800 km and 150 bridges and overpasses are on the state network. 2 large automobile bridges over the river Desna near the regional centre were destroyed and the direct connection with the capital was severed. Prompt and high-quality repair of roads is now one of the areas of priority activity of local authorities (Na remont dorih v prykordonnykh hromadakh Sumshchyny z derzhbyudzhetu vydileno ponad 200 mln hrn., 2024).

Restoration of electricity supply in the cities and villages occupied in the past is an additional problem compared to the constant problems of electricity restoration in almost the entire territory of Ukraine, which is caused by Russian rocket attacks on electricity generation and transmission facilities. As reported by Ukrinform, almost 500,000 subscribers were left without electricity in Odesa region due to a large-scale accident at a substation following rocket attacks in early February 2023. However, the situation in the liberated areas is complicated because transformers and power lines were destroyed or damaged as a result of the fighting, and part of the expensive equipment of the power industry was stolen (U seli na Khersonshchyni vidnovili elektropostachannya, 2023).

Another important area of activity of the local government is the restoration of gas supply: systems of gas-carrying stations and gas transportation networks. The north of Kyiv region became the first region to be liberated from the Russian invaders. The issue of restoring gas supply to the population of the part of the Kherson region liberated from occupation, located on the right bank of the Dnipro, has become acute. In the

conditions of problematic supply of gas and electricity and their significant price increase in the local government of a number of regions, the issue of converting boiler rooms to work on firewood is being considered (U Shosttsi zbil'shuyehtsya kil'kist' kotel'nykh, 2024).

Internet services are among the most accessible services that can be provided to the population almost immediately and are an important means of communication and information. This is mainly due to the realities of martial law and the international aid provided. In Ukraine in 2022, 22,000 Starlink terminals were involved, 80% of liberated cities and villages have partially restored Internet. This was discussed in the presentation of the Ministry of Digitalization on the main telecom achievements for 2022 (80% zvil'nenykh mist chastkovo z vidnovlenym internetom, 2022).

It is much more difficult to restore institutions of education and health care, as well as culture and recreation, since they require much more capital investment in the repair of damaged premises or even the construction of completely new facilities, but the most important thing is that a significant part of the funds and material support of kindergartens, schools, libraries, hospitals, polyclinics, clubs and houses of culture were destroyed or stolen by the occupiers. In addition, the population in the liberated areas has significantly decreased, and before the intervention and during the occupation, many teachers, doctors and other specialists left for safe areas of Ukraine and abroad, and under the current conditions of devastation and uncertainty, they are in no hurry to return home.

A new mandatory condition for the full functioning of children's preschools, schools, colleges, and universities of Ukraine has become the availability of sufficiently safe and properly equipped shelters in case of shelling by Russian aggressors. In addition, according to the decisions of the united territorial communities, the provision of educational services can be carried out online, offline or in a mixed format. Also, in local communities liberated from the enemy, the question of urgent reconstruction of destroyed educational institutions often arises, if there are no suitable ones nearby or if transport connections are significantly complicated (Zruynovanyy litsey u seli Kluhyno-Bashkyrivka budut′ vidnovlyuvaty, 2023). In one of the bomb shelters of the city of Dergachi, Kharkiv region, an innovative children's room was opened with the funds of the charitable organisation "CodeIT for life", "where children have a safe and comfortable space for moral recovery, development and leisure activities (Na Kharkivshchyni vidkryly innovatsiynu dityachu kimnatu u bomboshovishchi, 2023).

Receiving and distributing humanitarian aid both from Ukrainian partners from other regions and from abroad is another area of activity of the local government in the territories liberated from the enemy. Among the directions of humanitarian aid from abroad and from philanthropists from Ukraine, food, clothing, medicines, basic necessities, etc., which are directed primarily to various groups of the population in need, pre-

vail. However, LGUs need such assistance in order to establish the communal economy, which was destroyed or stolen by the enemy during the occupation (Kherson otrymav partiyu kommunal′noï techniky vid Kyieva. (2023).

Quite often, humanitarian aid includes modern and expensive equipment, especially for the needs of hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Thus, on March 15, "hospitals of four communities of the Sumy region received OM-2M Uzumeu mechanical operating tables manufactured in Turkey. Their total cost is about 1.2 million hryvnias. The equipment with a full set of relevant attachments is suitable for general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, traumatology, urology, ophthalmology, etc. It was provided to the hospitals of Shostkyna, Bilopolska, Krasnopilska and Trostyanetska communities (Skakun, 2023).

Foreign Ukrainian organisations provide similar assistance to the frontline regions. For example, as part of the global campaign "Ukraine is calling", with the assistance of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the rescue service of the Sumy Region received a modern Renault fire truck ladder from the Association of Ukrainians in Luxembourg LUkraine (Ryatuval′nyky Sums′chyny otrymaly tekhnichne pidsylenniia, 2023).

A fairly common form of assistance to the communities of the de-occupied territories is the provision of generators to ensure uninterrupted power supply, which is also required during emergency and scheduled power outages due to massive rocket attacks on critical infrastructure facilities. The city of Irpin, Kyiv region, which was so badly destroyed by the Russians, received four generators from the Spanish sister city of Guernica (Irpin′ otrymav chotyry heneratory vid ispans′koho mista-pobratyma, 2023).

Also in Irpin, thanks to international aid, it was possible to restore the city's reliable water supply. The international association OXFAM allocated funds for the modernization of the sewage pumping stations of the Irpin Water Canal. The HYDRO-VACUUM SA company also provided pumping equipment for the reconstruction of the sewage pumping stations in Irpin, which were heavily damaged as a result of hostilities (Mizhnarodni partnery modernizuyut Irpins′kyy vodokanal, 2023).

The most voluminous and valuable is the assistance of local government from foreign partners in the construction of modular towns for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from occupied or front-line territories, as well as local residents who lost their homes as a result of hostilities. There are several such settlements in the de-occupied territories. Thus, as part of the project financed by the Ukrainian Humanitarian Fund UNOPS, a powerful generator was delivered to the modular centre for internally displaced persons in Gostomel, - reports the "Kyiv region" Telegram channel. The entire infrastructure of the town: heating, hot water, light, kitchen stoves - depends on electricity supply (U Hostomeli obzhyvaiut′ modul′ne mistechko dlia VPO, 2023).

Support for local entrepreneurship was an important area of activity of the local government: assistance in obtaining humanitarian aid for industrial purposes, establishment of information support and logistics

services. Many manufacturing plants were destroyed and equipment looted or destroyed. Farmers faced difficult problems on the eve of the sowing campaign. Exploitation of agricultural land, destroyed property and buildings, significantly more expensive seed material and mineral fertilisers, and most importantly - a significant lack of labour resources - all these and other problems require a comprehensive solution and proper assistance to farmers from both local self-government bodies and relevant ministries and departments ("Zaminovani polya, 2023).

It is interesting that many cities, towns and villages liberated from the enemy and destroyed actively establish cooperation with territorial communities of foreign countries, sign agreements on twinning and partnership with them. Thus, one of the most brutally mutilated cities of Bucha signed a twinning agreement with Albany, the capital of the American state of New York, in a short period of time (Misto Olbani stalo pershym amerykans′kym mistom-partnerom Buchi, 2023).

The European Investment Bank (EIB) continues to act as one of the main partners of Ukraine, in particular, in the process of rebuilding and restoring the infrastructure that was damaged as a result of the military aggression of the Russian Federation in the liberated territories or territories with a large number of internally displaced persons. Since 2014, EUR 540 million of loan funds have been raised to support Ukraine's reconstruction potential within the framework of two financial agreements between Ukraine and the EIB (Emergency Credit Program for the Recovery of Ukraine and Program for the Recovery of Ukraine). Starting from July 2024, Ukraine will be able to attract 100 million euros to support communities, primarily those affected by Russia's military aggression (Vidnovlennya hromad, 2024).

5. Conclusions

Consequently, the local self-government bodies in the territories that have been liberated from Russian occupation, as well as in the areas neighbouring to the occupation zones, are gradually implementing changes in various spheres of public life. In the aftermath of the renewal or re-election of local community and governing body leaders, security concerns and the resolution of the occupation's residual effects typically assume prominence. This encompasses the demining of the territory, the restoration of communication routes (especially bridges), and the repair of housing. Subsequently, the establishment of communal enterprises – encompassing healthcare institutions, educational facilities, public transportation, post offices and communication networks – must be addressed. A further complex issue that requires the involvement of local self-government organisations is the provision of assistance to restore local businesses as a guarantee of employment for the population, the return of residents and the assurance of their financial capacity. Another task,

which may be of a temporary nature, is the organisation of the receipt and distribution of humanitarian and financial aid to institutions and organisations, as well as to the population. In numerous regions, the function of assorted social initiatives aimed at engaging disparate social groups in diverse forms of public activity is on the rise. It is of the utmost importance to guarantee the accelerated restoration of normal life in territories that were formerly occupied and along the front lines. This can be achieved through the establishment of aid and the expansion of cooperation with foreign partners.

Following an in-depth examination of the aforementioned issues, it becomes evident that there should be identified solutions and recommendations for enhancing the efficiency of local self-governments in liberated territories. These include the establishment of transparent legal and institutional frameworks to prevent the overlap of powers with state administrations and the reinforcement of the principle of subsidiarity, which empowers local authorities to address matters that are most relevant to citizens. It is of the greatest importance that LSG have access to sufficient financial resources in order to address the recovery needs that have arisen. The establishment of centres for legal aid, psychological support and vocational training can facilitate the rebuilding of livelihoods in affected communities. The transparent communication of recovery plans, resource allocation and priorities can enhance public confidence. Investments in infrastructure, digital transformation of public services and capacity-building programmes for local officials can facilitate the creation of a more robust governance system capable of effectively managing future crises. The implementation of these measures can facilitate the ability of local self-government bodies to address the challenges of recovery in liberated regions in a manner that maintains democratic values and fosters sustainable development.

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