

Press release

PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT DECENTRALIZATION REFORM

The nationwide public opinion poll was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Centre from June 9–13, 2017, across all regions of Ukraine with the exception of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the occupied territories in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. 2018 respondents aged 18 and older were polled. The theoretical margin of error does not exceed 2.3%.

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For comparison, data of nationwide polling conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology from October 9–19, 2015, and data from the polling conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Razumkov Centre from May 11–16, 2016, are provided.

- Over the year, the level of awareness of decentralization reform among Ukrainians has slightly increased. 20% of those polled are well aware of the reform (in August 2016 there were 12% of those), 62% of respondents have heard something about this reform (in 2016 – 54%). Accordingly, the share of those who do not know anything about decentralization has dropped from 30% to 18%. The decentralization reform is best known in the Center (a total of 87%), the least known – in the South (69%).
- The vast majority of Ukrainians – 42% – continues to support steps that Ukrainian authorities are taking in the context of decentralization reform. 27% express negative attitudes regarding the activities taken by the authorities in this area. A similar distribution of supporters and opponents of the decentralization reform was observed in the last year (43% supported reform, 32% didn't support it). Proponents of decentralization reform prevail in all macro-regions of Ukraine: the most of them are in the West (48%), the fewest – in the East (31%) of Ukraine. On the other hand, only 12% of Ukrainians are fully satisfied with the pace of reform, 37% of respondents believe that it is implemented too slowly, while 22% suppose that it is not implemented at all
- At the same time, the majority of Ukrainians have not yet felt any changes from the use of additional funds that local budgets have received in the recent years – 55% of those polled expressed such an opinion. However, the share of those who felt the change for better and those who saw changes for worse is the same – 16%. It is noteworthy that compared to the last year the percentage of those who felt the change for worse increased from 8% to 16%, while the proportion of those who saw changes for better remained the same. The predominance of those who saw changes for better was noticed in the West (24% vs. 12%) and in the East (17% vs. 15%), while in other regions there are more of those who felt negative changes (14% vs. 19% in the Center and 11% vs. 21% in the South).
- Among those who noticed positive changes, the most – 64% – said that these changes were related to improving the quality of roads. Quite often the respondents who felt changes for better mentioned improvement in public infrastructure (30%), conditions for leisure (25%), work of housing and communal services (23%), and work of transport (20%).
- As in 2016, the largest share of those who felt changes for worse indicated a decline in the quality of medical care – 53%. Other areas affected by the negative changes, in the opinion of this group of respondents, were care about socially vulnerable groups (44%) and providing citizens with workplaces (39%). It is noteworthy that according to those 38% who have noticed negative changes, the deterioration also affected the quality of the road surface.

- Over the year, public confidence in the ability of local governments to cope with the additional competences that they are receiving in the course of the decentralization reform, has somewhat weakened. 10% of respondents are absolutely confident about this (in 2016 – 15%), 32% are mostly confident (in 2016 – 37%), while 29% of those polled have significant doubts about this (in 2016 – 20%) and 17% are convinced that is not feasible for the local governments (in 2016 – 10%). The most confident in the capabilities of their local authorities are people in the Western region (50% of respondents there are “absolutely” or “mostly” confident), the least – in the East of Ukraine (32%)
- Citizens of Ukraine predict both positive and negative consequences of decentralization reform. According to 24% of those polled, the reform will provide citizens with new opportunities to influence public authorities, and 18% believe that this reform will improve the quality of public services. On the other hand, 28% of respondents are afraid that decentralization will lead to the emergence of “local princes”, and 16% believe that the reform might lead to the devastation of villages and towns. The biggest concerns about the “local princes” are in the East (38%) while the residents of the West see the greatest opportunities to influence authorities (32%).
- The awareness of citizens about the process of voluntary amalgamation of communities in Ukraine has also increased. 18% are well aware of it (compared to 12% in 2016), 56% – have heard something (46% in 2016). 26% of Ukrainians still do not know about this process. The level of awareness about amalgamation of communities is practically the same in the West, the East and the Center (74%, 75% and 78% respectively know well or have heard something about this) and is significantly lower in the South of Ukraine (59%).
- At the same time, among the residents of the amalgamated communities the share of those who felt the improvement on living conditions fell from 16% to 11%, and the percentage of those who felt the deterioration slightly increased from 9% to 12%. Most of the polled residents of the amalgamated communities – 63% – have not yet experienced changes in their living conditions.
- As in the previous year, Ukrainians are mostly dissatisfied with the extent to which they can influence the decisions of local self-government bodies – there are 63% of those who share this opinion (in 2016 there were 64% of those). The smallest number of citizens satisfied with their abilities to influence power is in the South – 9%, while in the West there are 20% of such citizens. At the same time, only 37% declared their desire to take part in the management of their village, town or city in case of extension of powers of local authorities (such opinion was expressed by 32% in 2016), while 50% admitted that they are not ready for this (47% in 2016). Among those who expressed their desire to participate in the management of their communities, the most popular instrument of doing so was voting during local elections (42%). However, over this issue there are significant regional differences: the strongest willingness to participate in elections of local self-government bodies is in the West (54%), while the weakest is in the South (29.5%).