REFORMS IN UKRAINE: DO PEOPLE KNOW OF, SUPPORT OR BELIEVE IN SUCCESS?
The informational-analytical publication “Public Opinion” is a reflection of the latest trends in public opinion among the Ukrainian population, informing the broad public about the dynamics of the moods of the Ukrainian people regarding topical problems in the establishment of democracy and statehood, commentary of experts on relevant issues and recommendations on improving the situation in different spheres of social life. This is one of the projects of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) – one of the leading think-tanks of Ukraine which focuses its activity on fostering the development of democracy, market economy and the integration of Ukraine into the European and Euro-Atlantic community.

What is public opinion?

Public opinion is the aggregate of moods, assessments, judgments, views and opinions of society. The research of public opinion implies studying the views of the population on specific problems and issues of political, economic and social life. This is an assessment given by the people on the course of events and to the politicians, and also a source of information about the problems and priorities of the people. Public opinion is an indicator of the level of satisfaction of the people with the government and the situation in society in general. Constant monitoring of public opinion and the widespread dissemination of results fosters understanding of rational and emotional elements and factors which define the nature of social interaction between members of society.
REFORMS IN UKRAINE: do people know of, support or believe in success?

At the end of the Revolution of Dignity and the ensuing change of power in Ukraine, reform took a prominent place both in public opinion and the declared goals of government. But even after four years of the Maidan, the progress and impact of reforms raise reasonable doubts, especially in the public’s assessments and views.

Naturally, the impact of reforms cannot be measured solely based on changing public moods. Still, public opinion of reforms is crucial for feedback between government and society with regard to adjusting the content of reform as well as related communication campaigns.

The purpose of our study is to identify the specific features of the public's perception, awareness and expectations of reforms, including their implications. Simultaneously, independent experts were surveyed to compare differences in the assessment of reforms and identify the main difficulties in communicating the goals and measures of reforms.

In this edition of the periodical Public Opinion, data based on a nationwide survey of Ukrainians was analyzed that was conducted jointly by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on October 23-November, 2017.

For comparison, data is used from a survey of experts from the organizations that comprise the Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR) coalition, which was conducted jointly by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the RPR Secretariat on November 24-28, 2017.

This study was presented within the ENGAGE program to enhance civil society activity, a project financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact in Ukraine. The study’s content and substance is the sole responsibility of Pact and its partners and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government.
EVALUATION OF PROGRESS AND SUCCESS OF REFORMS

More than three years of planning and implementing reforms is enough time to arrive at interim results. According to a majority of experts, not more than a third of necessary reforms were accomplished. A significant portion of the expert community believes that not more than 10% of what was required was done. Clearly, these indicators are low enough and do not provide cause to speak of a positive assessment, let alone, a successful completion of the reformation process. Giving an average rating on the reforms carried out, experts gave 2.66 points on a 5-point scale, which is still below a satisfactory showing.

Diagram 1. Evaluation of reform progress. A comparison of a nationwide public opinion survey and poll of RPR experts

Public opinion on reform shows an even higher level of dissatisfaction: 41% of respondents believe that nothing at all was done, another 35% say that 10% required was done, 10% that not more than a third and 0.5% not more than half, and only 0.4% said that most necessary reforms were done.

A slow pace of carrying out reforms heightens negative public expectations regarding their impact. Thus, the level of public trust in their success is alarmingly negative.
Diagram 2. Belief in the success of reform. A comparison of a nationwide public opinion survey and poll of RPR experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief in the success of reform</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believe in the success of reform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally believe, but have doubts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t believe, but have certain faith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t believe in success at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of experts, on the contrary, show a high level of belief in the success of reform. Clearly, such a striking difference between public and expert opinion is partially explained at once by a difference in expectations that were identified three years ago, as well as different levels of informed awareness on the course of reforms.

Concurrently, the gap’s wide margin is a cause for concern in that citizens are not only the principal “consumers” of reform, but also voters who elect people to office. And in the absence of communication between reformers and citizens, anti-reform political forces may come into power in the next elections by riding on the wave of populism.

Significantly, citizens and experts alike see an insufficient amount and inconsistent quality of information on reforms that the government provides.

Diagram 3. Public awareness of reforms. A comparison of a nationwide public opinion poll and survey of RPR experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public awareness of reforms</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is enough information and people understand it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on reform is plenty, but people don’t understand it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on reform is lacking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on reform is not trustworthy because it doesn’t reflect reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the government’s performance and reforms should interest professionals, not ordinary people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only a small portion of Ukrainians believe that there is enough information and that people understand it. However, a majority of respondents believe that there is insufficient information on reforms, or when there is enough, the public does not understand it. The biggest problem in communications is to pay attention to the low level of trust on the quality of information. A big portion of experts and citizens believe that trust of this kind of information is not high because it often does not correspondent to reality.

SUCCESES AND FAILURES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS

A majority of the public could not name one successful reform, in their opinion. Nearly 60% of those surveyed noted having difficulty responding to this question, and 20% said there are no successful reforms.

At the same time, experts managed to name several successful reforms. In truth, some of them have only started (medical, education, and judicial reform). That which the public does not consider successful and are the same as what experts noted were, once more makes the disparity clearer between public and expert opinion. This, in turn, creates preconditions for discrediting even the portion of reforms that are successful by populist political forces.

Diagram 4. The five most successful reforms. Survey of RPR experts

Experts were also asked questions on failed reforms. What emerged was an interesting duality of assessments. The formation of new anticorruption bodies is considered successful, but actual anticorruption reform is currently a failure. The start of judicial reform is considered a positive improvement, but actual judicial reform is a failure. Indeed, experts stress that the majority of reforms in Ukraine are incomplete and therefore they cannot objectively meet public demands.
OBSTACLES AND ENGINES OF REFORMS

According to both public and expert opinion, the institutions that drive reforms are fewer than those who hinder reforms. Ukrainians believe that the most resistance towards reforms is by government officials (35%) and oligarchs (34%). A significant portion of Ukrainians also say obstacles towards reforms are the government (29%) and the president (25,7%).

Diagram 6. Five main obstacles of reform (more than one choice could be made, %). Nationwide survey
Experts also name the biggest hindrances of reform foremost to be oligarchs, the bureaucracy, adding to this also law enforcement bodies. A majority of experts also consider the president and parliamentary coalition to be more obstacles than drivers of reform.

*Diagram 7. Five main obstacles of reform. Survey of RPR experts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>2017 %</th>
<th>2016 %</th>
<th>2015 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oligarchs</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy, officials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political forces who form the parliamentary coalition</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement bodies (prosecutor’s office, courts, police; )</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding drivers of reform, Ukrainians most rely on the government (30%), president (28.5%), public (27%), civil society organizations and volunteers (26%), as well Western countries (17%). In 2017, in comparison with the previous year, the public places more hope on itself and civil society groups and volunteers and somewhat less hope on Western countries. The best balance in assessing the role of citizens in conducting reforms (i.e. prevalence in assessing the role of the engine) was found in the public (+25%), civil society organizations and volunteers (+24%) and Western countries (+14%).

*Diagram 8. Five main drivers of reform* (more than one choice could be made, %). Nationwide survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society groups and volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experts almost unanimously say that civil society and Western countries are the only locomotives of reforms. Experts rather positively assess the government’s role. The list in fact ends here since the president and parliamentary coalition more frequently are considered obstacles, rather than drivers, according to the opinion of polled experts.

Diagram 9. Five main drivers of reforms. Survey of RPR experts

| Civil society groups, volunteers | 92% |
| Western countries               | 80% |
| Government                      | 57% |
| President                       | 22% |
| Political forces that form the parliamentary coalition | 22% |

Thus, a majority of citizens and experts say that the country’s political leadership does not have the political will to implement reforms. Accordingly, the main drivers of reforms are either outside institutions or society as a whole.
The hierarchy of the most important reforms for Ukrainians has remained consistent for the last three years: the most important is anticorruption reform, according to 60% of the population.

*Diagram 10. Which five reforms, based on public opinion, are a priority. Nationwide survey*

- Anticorruption reform: 60%
- Healthcare reform: 44%
- Pension and social security reform: 36%
- Reform of law enforcement bodies: 34%
- Lustration of officials: 22%

For experts, reform priorities somewhat differ: election reform, decentralization and public administration reform are included on the list of most important.

*Diagram 11. Which five reforms, based on public opinion, are a priority. Survey of RPR experts*

- Reform of law enforcement bodies: 72%
- Election law reform: 57%
- Anticorruption reform: 53%
- Reform of decentralization and regional development: 35%
- Reform of public administration: 35%
PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATING REFORM: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, an analysis of public and expert opinion polling data confirms that the communication of reforms remains a crucial social and political problem. Respectively, the following recommendations can be made:

For government

• Take actual steps towards anticorruption reforms since their implementation is associated with the entire reform process in Ukraine.

• Form public communication tools. In particular, strengthen communication efforts regarding the explanation of goals and measures of certain reforms to the public, especially those which experts consider successful, or partially successful: decentralization, medical and education reforms.

• Identify clear and objective success indicators of implemented reforms, including those based on available analyses – particularly by the Reanimation Package of Reforms.

For donor agencies and institutions

• Pay more attention to projects that highlight reforms, which explain them and teaches people how to use new mechanisms that have appeared as a result of reform.

• Anticipate a process to have information campaigns accompany all projects aimed at supporting the implementation of reforms.

For civil society organizations that work on monitoring and implementing reforms

• Pay attention not only to the problems of carrying out reform, but also on the positive cases and inform the public about this through the mass media and directly.

• Strengthen the promotion of one’s own agenda: in particular, intensify the promotion of what independent experts on reform say are a priority: electoral, judicial, anticorruption and decentralization.
Public Opinion
Informational-analytical publication №32 2018

Informational-analytical publication “Public Opinion”

Topic: REFORMS IN UKRAINE: DO PEOPLE KNOW OF, SUPPORT OR BELIEVE IN SUCCESS?

Author: ANDRII SUKHARYNA, political analyst of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation

This research was conducted as part of its project implemented under the USAID/ENGAGE program, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact. The contents of this research are the sole responsibility of Pact and its implementing partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation
For correspondence: P.O. Box B-271, Kyiv, 01001, Ukraine
Telephone: (+380 44) 331 67 61
E-mail: dif@dif.org.ua
http://www.dif.org.ua

For re-printing or partial use of the materials a reference to the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation is obligatory

© Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2018

Printing services:
Physical Person Entrepreneur (PPE) I.P. Artyushenko
Printing house address: 84 Vyborska St., Kyiv, Ukraine
Tel: +380 44 227 78 17; +380 50 358 80 88
Format: 60x84/8
Print run 100 copies