

2015 - 2016: two years and two steps to 'Good Governance' - the case study of Sumy Oblast

Maksym Gavryliuk

Thorough implementation of EU best practices of Good Governance is a key prerequisite for a country's successful development following European standards. By introducing the principles of "Good Governance" in our country we can ensure a sustainable development path for the country and maintain the trust

of the citizens, the consumers of public services, towards government agencies. In the past two years Sumy Oblast like other regions of Ukraine, made real progress towards reforming the system of public management. It was during this time that I also attended the Academy of Good Governance and Empowerment in Europe.

In the upcoming years the priorities in the work of government agencies in Sumy Oblast should include such European principles as transparency, meeting citizen expectations of public services, effectiveness and efficiency, the rule of law, sustainable growth and accountability of the authorities to citizens.



As it happens, in the last two years our country has witnessed the initial phase and the implementation of two important reforms that form the basis of Good Governance in every European country. We are talking about reforms aimed at preventing corruption and improving public service.

Having attended the seminars AGREE-3 in 2014-2015, I found it very interesting and useful to learn about the best practices of Good Governance in Germany. At the same time, upon my return to Ukraine, I was not only a witness, but an active participant in changes and reforms of the domestic public administration.

Any reforms, and especially effective implementation of Good Governance in Ukraine, require well-established and developed political and legal environment, as well as well-coordinated system of institutions of state power. Transparency and effectiveness of government agencies, and promoting development of participatory and innovatory management style are also very important.

What was the main message that the organizers and the teachers of AGREE tried to convey to their students?

The answer is both simple and difficult: Good Governance means (social) accountability of public authorities, combination of continuity and innovation in the work of government agencies, and most importantly the best possible performance and work efficiency. Governance of the best caliber is always based on the rule of law, openness and transparency to the consumers of public services.

These are simple truths, which can be found in best examples of European governance, and while not difficult to grasp, are difficult to implement. I think, there are enough objective and subjective reasons for this: general economical state of the country, weak institutional capability of government agencies, insufficient competency level of public officers, low level of corruption prevention etc.

However, any objective factors that slow down reforms often have a more subjective reason behind them, given that the efficiency and the quality of the reform implementation directly depend on the work of the public servants.

What are the basic principles of Good Governance that we have adopted in the past few years based on German experience?

I would highlight the following:

1. citizens' participation; fair elections on all levels;
2. feedback loop between the state and the citizens; a better match between public services and citizens' expectations;
3. accountability of state authorities to the citizens;
4. effective and efficient use of available resources;
5. full transparency and openness in the work of public institutions;
6. the rule of law;
7. professional expertise and continuing development of the public servants of all levels;
8. openness to changes;
9. sustainability as well as institutional memory in the work of government agencies;
10. efficient management of financial resources.

Currently all of the above-mentioned principles are being introduced and used to a greater or lesser degree in the work of government agencies in Sumy Oblast, and each of them can be illustrated by a specific example from practice: public procurements, system «Prozorro», newly-created system of anti-corruption agencies, electronic declarations by public officials and new European Law of Ukraine “On Public Service.”

Given the specific nature of my own work, which has to do with the implementation of government policy in the sphere of public service in Sumy Oblast, I would like to provide some practical examples of introducing Good Governance in Sumy Oblast.

1. Citizens' participation in decision-making: fair elections on all levels

Since 1 May 2016 a new selection process has been put in place for filling job vacancies in public service, which includes among other things independent and impartial computer-based tests for every candidate for public service in Sumy Oblast. I am the head of the office that carries out preliminary analysis and checks if all the submitted for publication job announcements and documents conform to the requirements of the law of Ukraine “On Public Service” for purpose of publishing them on the website of the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service.

2. Professional expertise and continuing development of the public servants of all levels

In May 2016 I took part in the review and validation of the lists of job titles with support functions in all government agencies in Sumy Oblast. These lists determine the category of employees in government agenci-

es who perform duties that do not involve the exercise of powers related to tasks and functions of a specific government agency.

This particular area of my work follows the model of public service in Germany, which according to the law from 1985 includes special regulation of public legal relations that are divided into two main groups: relations with public officials and relations with employees, i.e. public servants and workers of government agencies.

3. Rule of law

In order to introduce this principle of Good Governance in Sumy Oblast in 2015-2016 I offered a series of communication training opportunities. The aim of these training sessions, seminars and round tables was to pass on the best practice of European public management and corruption prevention, which I learned about during AGREE seminars.

These training opportunities are still offered today, and the participants can be subdivided into the following categories:

- public servants of the government agencies in Sumy Oblast (around 5 000 persons);
- local government officials (around 2000 persons);
- employees of National Police in Sumy Oblast (patrol officers, investigation officers, district police officers);
- graduates who are interested in working in public service.

4. Effective and efficient use of available resources

In order to secure high quality performance by public servants in Sumy Oblast in fulfilling their tasks and functions, my office actively supported the introduction of the new payment scheme. In particular, based on the results of the validation of the lists of job titles with support functions carried out in May 2016 we initiated real optimization campaign of the number of public servants. The latter will make it possible to significantly cut the salary bill, while increasing the salary for remaining public servants.

In addition to already mentioned principles, since 14 October 2014 the fundamental and key principle of Good Governance has been introduced in the work of all government agencies including the Interregional Division of the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts: substantially updated law of Ukraine "On Prevention of Corruption." This law already includes European anti-corruption rules that are actively implemented in the daily activities of public officials:

- principle of "accountability of the authorities to citizens," put into effect on 1 September 2016 by way of mandatory requirement for public officials to submit their declarations in electronic form;
- communication aimed at fighting corruption within Ukrainian society based on the principle of "feedback loop between the state and the citizens." Since 1 May 2015, following the German model, we've been actively monitoring the lifestyle of those submitting official declarations and made it possible to submit notifications of corruption activities that require obligatory review and checks.

Summing up, it may be concluded that in all spheres of public management in the past two years there have been initiatives to introduce best practices of Good Governance from Germany. I constantly try to apply newly acquired practical knowledge in my work both as the leader and the teacher while implementing government policy in the sphere of public service in Sumy Oblast. Methodological materials as well as knowledge of functions of German government authorities have shown how to change approaches in inner government activities and introduce individual management tools in the work of government agencies in Sumy Oblast.

Maksym Gavryliuk

Maksym Gavryliuk is the Deputy Director of the Interregional Division of the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service. He participated in the AGREE 3-2014 seminar and in the continuation AGREE 3-2015.

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This paper reflects the opinion of the author.

Contact

European Academy Berlin
46/48 Bismarckallee
14193 Berlin, Germany
+49 30 895951 0
eab@eab-berlin.eu
<http://www.eab-berlin.eu>