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State support of stability of the information field of the electoral process in Ukraine

The article is devoted to the research of the information field of the election process in Ukraine, to determine the features of the state ensuring the stability of the information field and to establish ways to develop the system of information support of the election process. The characteristic of the information field and sources of its formation is given. The information field of the election process is divided into informing voters (official information from the authorities) and campaigning. The formation of the information field of the election process is influenced by two main sources: public authorities; political parties, candidates. It was determined that the former provide information on legal provisions and official information on the election process, the latter partially inform voters by duplicating official information, as well as organize agitation, which may be informal and ideological in nature. There is a special role of mass media, which act as a mediator between the subjects of the election process and the repeater of the whole set of information. A threat to the stability of the information field is that mass media may be politically biased or disseminate inaccurate information in their own interests. It has been established that in recent years the political

struggle has shifted to the Internet. This involves large social groups, especially young people - the vast majority of whom are users of modern technology. It is determined that such improvement of methods of information transfer and improvement of communication technologies leads to the fact that the possibility of manipulating the consciousness of a large number of citizens increases. It is concluded that the solution to a number of problems of state ensuring the stability of the electoral process in Ukraine should be, first, the regulation of the dissemination of information using the latest technologies; secondly, strengthening control over compliance with election legislation and real penalties for violating it; third, the development of a strategy for the formation of political and legal culture of citizens. Also, in order to ensure the stability of the information field of the election process, conditions should be created to ensure the timeliness, accuracy, objectivity, neutrality and completeness of information disseminated among citizens.

Keywords: *election process, elections, public authorities, political parties, information field of the election process, agitation, informing voters.*

FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM. The results of the elections largely depend on how well-informed voters are about the socio-political situation, what information they will have and what judgments they will have. This is influenced by the state of information support of the election process, the quantity and quality of information provided, the form of its submission, etc. The threat to fair political struggle and real voting results is that the information field is rapidly changing and vulnerable, especially in the absence of official information on any issues. The political component in the information support of the election process plays a particularly important role, because the process of forming representative bodies is accompanied by fierce struggle and the use of many means, including not always legal. This obliges public authorities, on the one hand, to create effective norms and monitor their implementation, and on the other hand, to take an active part in

filling the information field in order to maintain socio-political stability in the electoral process.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS. Analyzing the issues of information support of the election process and state support of the stability of the information field, it should be noted the works of such researchers as Zhuravel P., Lizunova O., Mikhailov M., Polska T., Salogub J., Yarmolenko O. In general, a large number of scientists consider various aspects of this issues (public administration specialists, political scientists, lawyers, philosophers, etc.), but for the most part their work is fragmentary and affects only certain aspects of the election process. At the same time, today the problem of stability of the information field of the election process is ripe, which requires scientific research in this direction.

FORMULATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE. The purpose of the article is to study the information field of the election process in Ukraine, to determine the features of the state ensuring the stability of the information field and to establish ways to develop the system of information support of the election process.

PRESENTING MAIN MATERIAL. Elections at any level are often accompanied by manipulation, the use of negative technologies, distortion of information, psychological pressure, and so on. Therefore, in order to avoid such practices and minimize the impact on public choice, the government faces the task of creating such norms that would ensure, firstly, the avoidance of strict regulation by the authorities, and secondly, the restriction of freedom of action of political actors by democratic and ethical norms.

The information field of the election process can be divided into informing voters (official information from the authorities) and campaigning

(Fig.1).

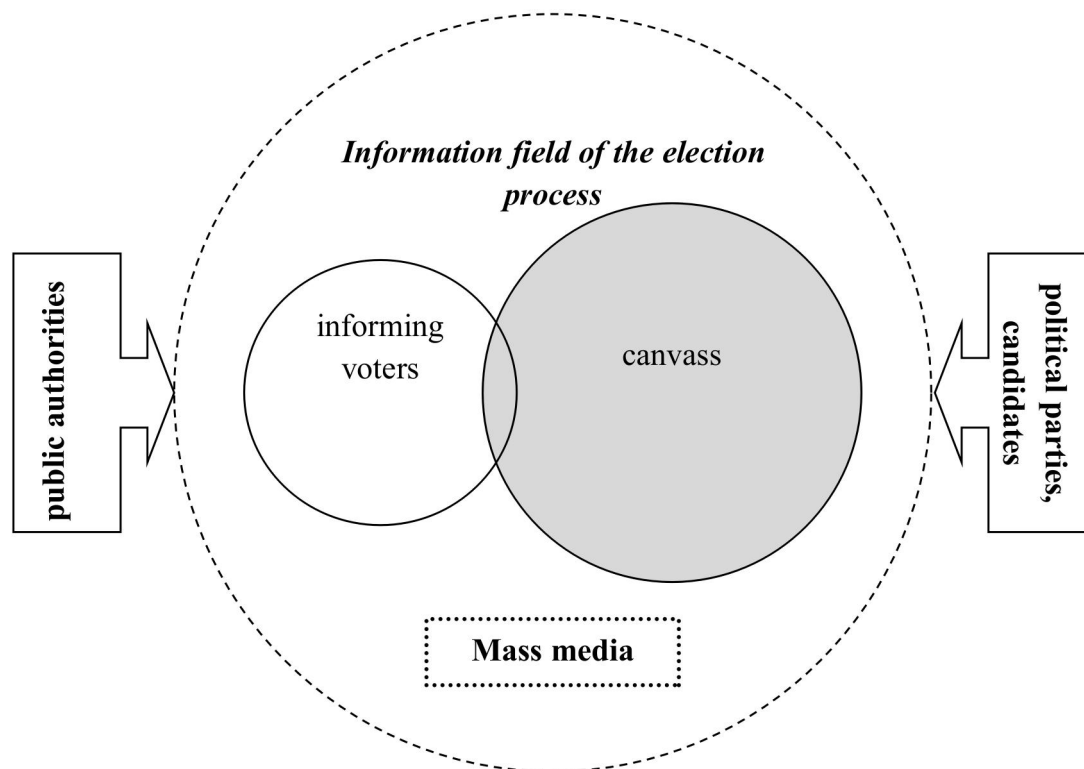


Fig. 1. Formation of the information field of the election process

The formation of the information field of the election process is influenced by two main sources: public authorities; political parties, candidates. The former, in addition to regulatory support, provide voters with the following:

- general information on the timing of the election, the order of necessary actions, the date of voting;
- official information on the implementation of pre-election actions of the subjects of the election process;
- current information on events and events of the election process;
- announcement of election results [14].

Such information is aimed at ensuring that voters have an objective picture of the election process, all participants and their actions. Due to this, a basis is created for the awareness of citizens and their preparation for the realization of their rights as voters. The positive thing is that the official information contains current rules, describes real events without comments and speculation. The downside is that official information is not always provided on time and may not contain everything that ordinary citizens are interested in.

On the other hand, the campaign is much larger due to the fact that there are more sources, and there are virtually no restrictions on it. It can intersect with informing voters about regulations, necessary actions, etc., and can be purely propagandistic. At the same time, the characteristic feature is ideological coloring and comments, which are usually tendentious for the purpose of PR. The threat to the stability of the information field is that agitation by political parties and candidates is accompanied by hyperbolization of its significance, the presentation of any information in terms of its uniqueness. In the worst case, the so-called "black PR" and other dirty election technologies are used for campaigning. With the aim of increasing the circle of their supporters, candidates can shake up the situation in society with their statements and actions and create conflict situations.

The role of the mass media in the formation of the information field of the election process should be noted separately. They are simultaneously:

- 1) are in the information field;
- 2) represent a mediator between public authorities, political parties and figures and citizens;
- 3) is a repeater of a set of information on the election process.

Such ambiguity of mass media is expressed in the fact that they can have a significant impact on public opinion, moods and preferences. After all, among the principles of their behavior, for the most part, are the following:

- attractiveness of the subject;
- unusual events and / or their novelty;
- political opportunism;
- priority of persons with high social status [2].

Accordingly, mass media provide information based on these principles, which most often leads to bias and distortion. Of course, there are regulatory restrictions on the functioning of the mass media, but they are not as strict and are offset by political bias. As a rule, mass media are dependent on political forces or business representatives who are interested in promoting their own candidates. This leads to the fact that citizens find themselves in a large information field,

which not only acquaints with the electoral process, but also actively influences freedom of expression.

The basis for the formation of the information field of the electoral process in Ukraine is Section II of the Constitution, which prescribes the rights and freedoms of citizens, and Section III, which is devoted to elections and referendums and contains the general principles of the organization. Relevant in terms of the election process are the provisions on:

- protection against the use and dissemination of inaccurate information about persons and their family members (Article 32) - candidates and members of their families should be protected from encroachment on their honor and dignity, as the election process may often be accompanied by the dissemination of inaccurate information;

- protection of the right to freedom of opinion and free expression (Article 34) - all subjects of the election process may have their own opinion and freely express it, but with restrictions on the legality of expression, respect for the individual and protection of reputation;

- the right of citizens to unite in political parties to satisfy their interests, participate in elections and promote the formation of political will (Article 36) - it also gives the right to exchange information and disseminate it in the socio-political interests;

- the right to vote and to be elected (Article 38) - a fundamental right to conduct the electoral process, which determines the participation of citizens in the political life of society;

- the right to appeal to public authorities and their officials (Article 40) - in fact, citizens in the absence or incompleteness of information about the election process can apply to the authorities for clarification;

- obligation to inform citizens about all regulations defining their rights and responsibilities (Article 57) - participation in the election process is an inalienable right of any citizen, respectively, each regulation relating to this right must be communicated to the general public [3].

Unfortunately, the wording on reputation protection is unclear and implies ambiguity of interpretation. On the one hand, this can protect participants in the election process from disseminating false information about them, and on the other hand, since disseminating truly truthful information will also affect a person's reputation, it can lead to legal harassment, especially if he is in power. In general, it should be said that the right of citizens to information about the election process is inalienable and is provided by the state [5].

According to researchers, the right to information about elections is a component of the right to information and provides for the complexity provided by election law [4]. Thus, another element of the formation of the information field of the election process is the Electoral Code of Ukraine [1], which regulates the procedures for the preparation and conduct of elections in Ukraine, as well as the principles of their conduct. The Code should be considered a continuation of the provisions of the Constitution, it contains information on the conduct of elections at all levels.

The Code contains a general section "Information support of elections", as well as separate sections on the peculiarities of information support of presidential elections, people's deputies and local elections.

The state provides information to voters about:

- election rights, their implementation and protection;
- opportunity to check their presence in the voter lists;
- place and voting procedure;
- claim of violations of their rights;
- responsibility in case of violation of election legislation [1].

In terms of the formation of the information field of the election process, Chapter VIII of the Election Campaign Code deserves attention. It contains rules on forms of campaigning, funding and deadlines. It is important that covert pre-election advertising / campaigning, printing of campaign materials without providing information about those responsible for the press and the company that carried it out is prohibited. From the point of view of ensuring the stability of the

information field, this is justified, as there should be responsibility in case of violation of the Electoral Code.

If the majority of public authorities provide information on the election process immediately before the election, the Central Election Commission conducts information systematically. This collegial state body is empowered to organize the preparation and conduct of all elections and referendums on the territory of Ukraine [11]. The principles of the CEC include legality, objectivity, publicity and openness. It is due to this that participation in the formation of the information field of the election process and its stabilization is organized. In fact, it can be said that the CEC and its official website are a constant source of information field, which provides a full-fledged basis for informing voters about the election process. The official website of the CEC [13] systematically publishes information for citizens, political parties, candidates, observers and the media. Here are:

- data on the legal framework for the organization of the election process in Ukraine;
- normative legal acts of the CEC;
- information on elections and referendums;
- reports on election observation conducted by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [15] and the National Democratic Institute [7];
- information about political parties;
- information and analytical publications with methodological materials to improve the legal (mostly electoral) culture;
- references to teaching materials for members of election commissions;
- information on the current activities of the CEC and financial reporting on the elections;
- page for citizens in electronic form [13].

In general, the CEC's official website is useful for informing voters and raising the general level of legal culture. It should be noted that citizens are

interested in the election process not only on the eve of the election, but also at other times. For example, for the last two years the statistics of appeals are as follows (Fig. 2).

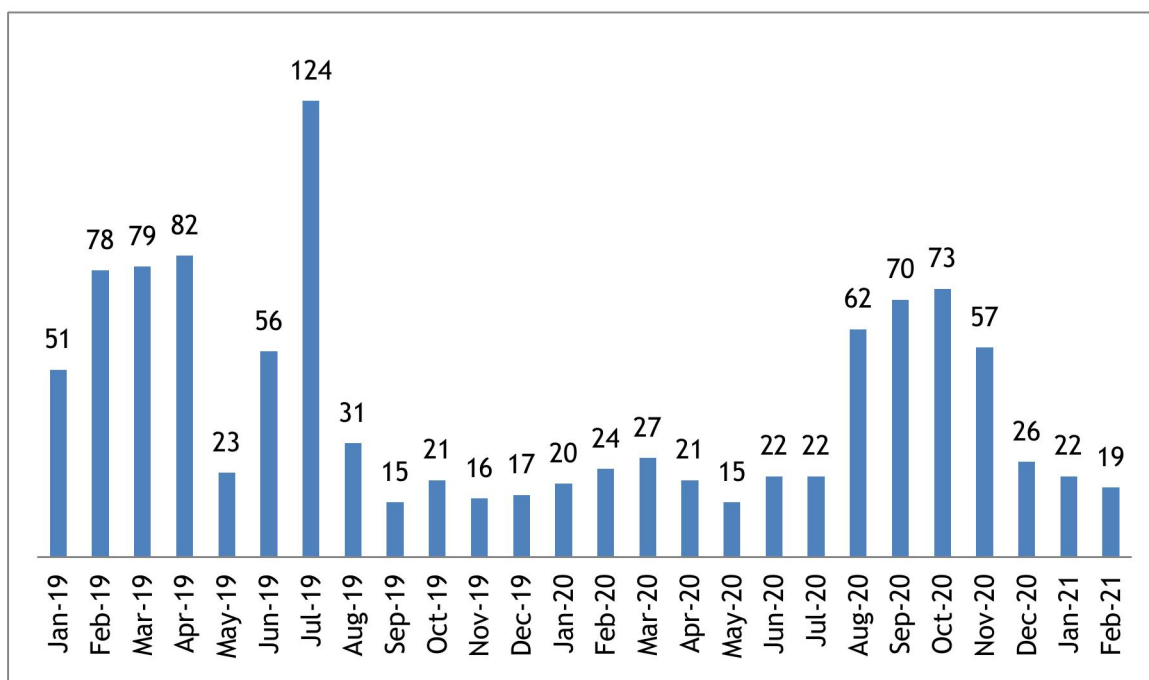


Fig. 2. Requests to the CEC for public information

According to statistics, there are systematic appeals from citizens, but their number is insignificant, which may characterize either the low level of interest in information about the election process, or the lack of need for official information. Therefore, it should be noted that the CEC as the main authority in this area has all the opportunities and prospects to expand the information field of the election process, however, to ensure stability, it is necessary to intensify. It is desirable to expand its activities and involve more channels of communication with the public.

Yes, in addition to the official site, there is a page on the social network Facebook, which is generally maintained in accordance with modern requirements and trends for maximum attention. In addition to current news, additional information on the election process and related content is provided here [8]. In general, the use of such a communication channel is quite intensive.

Another area of information activities of the CEC is the maintenance of the channel on video hosting Youtube [12]. The situation is somewhat different -

the number of subscribers is only 529, and the number of content views is insignificant, obviously limited only to users who apply for it to perform their professional duties. Analysis of video content suggests that it is largely limited to recordings of CEC meetings. To increase the number of people who use this channel, it is advisable to post short announcements, which can be quickly viewed and sent via various communication channels with a link to the main video. There are also almost no short videos with explanations and infographics for quick and easy presentation of information. It is worth increasing the number of such videos to expand the range of questions that citizens can get answered in a convenient form for them, as well as to organize them into a separate playlist to facilitate user search.

It is also worth proposing, following the example of many other authorities, to start using additional communication channels: the Telegram channel, pages on the social networks Twitter and Instagram. First of all, all these communication channels are modern, promising and easily accessible, as most citizens have a modern mobile phone. Telegram-channel allows you to instantly transmit information, photos, videos, ie all the news about the election process can all those interested can get at once. About the same with Twitter and Instagram, which are installed on the mobile phones of a significant number of citizens. The first allows you to present the news in the form of short text messages, which allows you to immediately pay attention to the essence of the information. The second - gives the opportunity to present images and short videos, accompanied by descriptions and comments. Thus, it is possible to disseminate and encourage the exchange of citizens with visual information, of course, provided that the materials are systematically presented in an accessible form.

A separate larger source of information field formation of the election process is information provided by political parties and individual candidates in any way. The vast majority of this information can be considered agitation to one degree or another, because even in a low level of interest at a time when elections are not taking place, politicians try to publish and disseminate positive information

about themselves and negative information about political opponents. Such a source, according to researchers, includes:

- printed materials in the form of newsletters, newspapers, campaign letters, etc .;

- visual materials - advertising posters, billboards, city lights, etc .;

- audio materials - audio clips on regular radio, Internet radio, street radio;

- audiovisual materials - advertising on television, participation in talk shows, broadcast on street screens, etc. [6].

In general, these are channels that are familiar to any advertising. To this should be added the official websites of political parties and candidates, social media accounts and instant messaging channels. Unlike public authorities, representatives of political forces are quite active in the use of information and communication technologies and form a much larger share of the information field of the election process. Both own forces and hired PR technologists, advertising agencies, mass media, representatives of public associations, etc. are used for this purpose. But at the same time there is a big flaw, which is expressed in the personal interest of political forces in the formation of positive public opinion and increase the number of their supporters. This is due to the fact that too much information is created, "information noise" of a political nature, which due to its massiveness prevents citizens from processing this information and take a critical approach to it. If the official information from the public authorities is clear, more or less clear and impartial, then the agitation information of the representatives of the political forces is often deprived of this and is combined with the judgments, opinions, conclusions that are imposed on the voters.

In recent years, the political struggle has shifted to the Internet. This involves large social groups, especially young people - the vast majority of whom are users of modern technology. According to researchers, compared to the usual channels (newspapers, radio, TV), the Internet and the latest information technologies greatly simplify the establishment of contact with the object of information and simplify the process of persuasion in one direction or another. At

the same time, the Internet and communications through it are less controlled [10]. Also, according to scientists, such an improvement in the methods of information transmission and improvement of communication technologies leads to an increase in the ability to manipulate the minds of a large number of citizens [9].

The electoral process of recent years has been characterized by increased use of the Internet to disseminate information about political parties and candidates. For this purpose both official channels (Internet media, news portals, official sites, pages in social networks, channels in messengers), and unofficial (fictitious pages in social networks, spam, unofficial news portals, conditionally independent video bloggers, so-called insider) are used. information for mass media, channels in messengers, etc.). The result is an exponential increase in information about the electoral process, the party and politicians, which is not always subjective and does not take into account the ethical side of the issue. Thus, there is a threat to the stability of the information field of the election process and in general to the free will of citizens.

CONCLUSIONS. Thus, today the state faces the problem of creating conditions for political struggle based on the principles of the rule of law, openness, transparency and observance of ethical norms. The solution should be, first, to regulate the process of dissemination of information using the latest technologies; secondly, strengthening control over compliance with election legislation and real penalties for violating it; third, the development of a strategy for the formation of political and legal culture of citizens.

Also, in order to ensure the stability of the information field of the election process, conditions should be created to ensure the timeliness, reliability, objectivity, neutrality and completeness of information disseminated among citizens. Of course, this is not about censorship, but credibility and objectivity should be demanded from both the mass media and all participants in the election process.

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