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**REFORMING THE ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL SYSTEM AS A BASIS FOR
SUCCESSFUL DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER: FRENCH AND UKRAINIAN
EXPERIENCE**

Abstract. This paper outlines the main approaches of the "decentralization" and "local self-government" concept understanding, it identifies the main features of the Ukrainian administrative-territorial system reform and its problematic aspects.

It was found that as a result of the attempt to complete the formation of the UTC, the aspects due to which these territories had previously refused to unite were ignored. Among the key ones: the resistance of local authorities, protection of own interests by local elites, conflict of interests of communities, territorial or resource disparities. These problems have not been resolved and they can significantly impair the further effective operation of the newly established UTCs. That is why this issue is especially relevant today for Ukrainian researchers of public administration.

To develop recommendations for a possible solution to these problems, it was proposed to study the experience of EU member states, which are the most relevant group in the process of Ukraine's integration into the EU. In the context of improving the administrative-territorial system, the most interesting for us is the experience of France, which has a similar territory and is a unitary state. We are also interested in the historical experience of decentralization in France due to its historical duration and the thorough approach of the French government to this issue.

As a result of the scientific literature analysis, it was found that today there are two main aspects that experience of decentralization in France points to:

- support and concentration on the development of small settlements to ensure their further independence - this is the approach of permission;
- introduction of supervision and control over local self-government bodies of newly created UTCs through the legislative implementation of the institute of Prefects;

The first point will allow developing the most vulnerable areas and solving several problems relevant to Ukraine: excessive urbanization, rural extinction, internal migration, lack of innovation and development in the agricultural industry. The second element will allow in the early stages to identify and solve the manifestations of the problems described above, which are due to the acceleration of the creation of UTC.

All the above-mentioned facts demonstrate the continuing need to improve the modern administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine, due to the existing problems in this area and their impact on the prospects for further implementation of the decentralization reform in our country.

Keywords: decentralization, united territorial community (UTC), democratization, administrative-territorial system, territory, government, France, Ukraine

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Introduction. Decentralization for Ukraine is a logical vector of development, which has developed against the background of the coincidence of a number of relevant factors. Among them: historical, national-ethnic, administrative-territorial, political-legal and legal-state-building. This is especially relevant in the context of globalization processes increasingly active influence on our state.

Today we are faced with a number of transformations that are taking place in Ukraine in all spheres and are due to the process of integration into the European Union and, accordingly, the prospect of our country entering the global arena as an EU member state. Decentralization is one of the key reforms in this process. That is why the experience of other EU countries should become a key marker for Ukraine in this matter.

Among the countries that can serve as an example for us, the experience of France in this matter deserves special attention. The experience of reorganization of its administrative-territorial structure may be especially relevant.

Literature review and the problem statement. The topic of decentralization is widely represented in the works of a leading scientists, the Ukrainian researchers interest in it has become especially active with the beginning of the relevant reform in Ukraine in 2014.

Among the specialists in this field it is necessary to name: O. Gradovsky, V. Nakonechny, N. Kaminska, R. Gneist, P. Chornopysky, Y. Shemshuchenko, O. Remenyak, I. Archipenko, V. Groysman, I. Hort.

In most sources, we find the close relationship described between decentralization and local self-government. O. Gradovsky for the first time speaks about the complexity of distinguishing between the concepts of "decentralization" and "self-government". Decentralization acted as a transfer of various management functions from the hands of central authorities to the hands of its local representatives [Yevtushenko O., 2012].

It is the existence of a functioning local government that ensures the rule of law, as well as gives access to all social elements and management of political processes in their territory. The latter is the immediate goal of decentralization.

Nakonechny V., according to the relationship between the competencies of central government and local government in the state, identifies four main models of public authority in the field: Anglo-Saxon, French (continental), mixed (Iberian) and Soviet [Nakonechny V., 2014].

Kaminska N. in her dissertation emphasizes that the dependence of local government on the central government is due to the fact that all powers of local government are provided by the state, namely it is a form of local government [Kaminska N., 2013]. This position was shared by: R. Gneist, A. Gradovsky, L. Stein and others.

As for the very concept of "local self-government", Article 14 of the Constitution of Ukraine defines local self-government as the right of a territorial community - villagers or voluntary association of villagers (several villages), settlements and cities - to decide local issues within the Constitution and laws of Ukraine". [Constitution of Ukraine, 2014] It enshrines the local self-governments principle of recognition and guarantee in

accordance with Article 2 of the European Local Self-Government Charter. This means that Ukraine recognizes the full independence of local governments in addressing all issues of local importance. [European Charter of Local Self-Government, 2015]

Returning to decentralization, P. Chornopysky defines it as a process of power transfer and budget revenues from central government to local governments [Chornopysky P., 2018]. Among the main reasons for the intensification of decentralization processes in Ukraine, the author cites the process of accession to the European Union and begun in Ukraine and the events in eastern Ukraine, the settlement of which requires compliance with the Minsk agreements.

In the Dictionary of Foreign Words, the term "Decentralization" is defined as derived from the term "centralization", which means the concentration of leadership, management in a single center. Based on this, "decentralization" is characterized as the destruction, abolition or weakening of centralization [Melnychuk O., 1937]. However, the opposition between decentralization and centralization in this case is rather conditional, as there will always be areas that must be subordinated to the center.

Shemshuchenko Y., 2015 believes that the decentralization of public power is the transfer of management functions and tasks from higher to lower levels of government, primarily in the transfer of power to local governments. This embodies the provision enshrined in Article 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine that the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in Ukraine is the people [Shemshuchenko Y., 2015].

Remenyak O. [Remenyak O., 2020] identifies two key aspects in the decentralization reform's implementation: formal-legal (substantive) and material (resource).

Also, O. Remenyak and I. Arkhipenko [Arkhipenko I., 2018] recommend studying the experience of France as a country with relevant conditions for Ukraine to implement decentralization reform. Highlighting the long period of implementation and improvement of the French reform.

Hroisman V. [Hroisman V., 2015], who was one of the initiators and the first actual executor of this reform in Ukraine, emphasizes the main components of the French decentralization model in his work.

The study of the Prefects Institute in France by I. Khort [Khort, I.V., 2015] deserves special attention, given the problems with its implementation in Ukraine.

Also, for a more thorough analysis, some aspects of the following regulations were worked out: the Constitution of Ukraine, the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Law of Ukraine "On Local State Administrations", adopted in first reading the Draft Law on Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine; Law of Ukraine "On Voluntary Association of Territorial Communities", Law of Ukraine "On Cooperation of Territorial Communities", Law of Ukraine "On Ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the Right to Participate in Local Self-Government", Law of Ukraine policy ". The outlined legal framework is interesting for us in terms of regulating the decentralization reform implementation, reforming the administrative-territorial system, the formation and functioning of newly created united territorial communities, the local governments activities in terms of expanding powers. The obtained data allowed us to draw conclusions about the peculiarities of the decentralization process in Ukraine and compare them with the experience of France and European trends in this area.

As a result of the literature analysis, we can conclude that most authors focus on studying the essence of the "decentralization" concept, its power aspect, budgetary and financial basis and study of regulations governing innovation policy. The issue of improving the administrative-territorial division of Ukraine, taking into account foreign experience and national characteristics, remains a little-studied topic today. The purpose of this article is to identify the main shortcomings of the existing administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine and develop recommendations for its improvement based on the experience of France. Which is especially relevant in the context of active transformation and European integration processes taking place in our country.

Results of the research. Without decentralization of powers successful democratization becomes impossible. It causes modernization of the public power system through the transfer of an expanded powers range directly to local communities that helps to ensure the necessary organizational and legal conditions for democratic transformation. This allows to create a basis for providing the necessary political, legal, financial, social conditions for the development of territories and their potential.

Given the growing impact of globalization, special attention should be paid to two main aspects of such reform:

- formal and legal - the strategy of the reform, their legislative definition and consolidation;
- material - resource base and national characteristics within which the reform is implemented. [Remenyak O., 2020]

These are necessary elements of successful decentralization. In domestic science, the success of the decentralization reform in Ukraine is understood as "building a developed, strong democratic state with self-sufficient local self-government, able to effectively solve local problems and provide the population with a wide range of public services." [Arkhyenko I., 2018]

The key advantages that promoted a decentralized approach to governance in European countries were: improving the efficiency of solving local problems by solving them directly on the ground, activation and development of local self-government and civil society, support and diversity and specifics of territories, development of local economic competition democratization processes. All of the above is absolutely necessary for modern Ukraine.

Today we can already talk about some successes in this direction, which include the expansion of the Centers network for the provision of democratic services and the development of electronic document management, which allowed access to them, even the most remote settlements. It is also worth noting the positive impact of the digitalization process and various projects aimed at the development of civil society, which are currently being implemented in Ukraine with the support of the government and partner countries. Indeed, the reform continues to evolve and is extremely successful.

However, a number of issues remain that threaten its successful completion. Among the key ones: imperfection of the legal framework that regulates this issue, insufficient resource, budgetary and financial support, incompleteness and imperfection of the reform of the administrative-territorial system. It is the last problem that is currently most acute. Lack of regulated administrative-territorial division, a significant gap in the level of development and security of the united territorial communities (UTC).

In order to find solutions to this problem situation, we need to determine what we mean by the term "decentralization" and at what stage this reform is in Ukraine today.

Based on the above aspects, there are several approaches to the decentralization phenomenon understanding:

- theoretical and cognitive understanding - constitutional (political) decentralization, the basis of which is the implementation of governance, including local self-government, at the local level of public authority;
- practical - decentralization as a functional process of transfer of administrative and financial powers from the central to local levels of public authority in order to rationalize and increase the efficiency of public administration, as well as involve citizens in addressing issues of territorial development;
- applied - managerial decentralization accompanied by mandatory reforms (in this case, administrative-territorial reform) [Chornopysky P., 2018].

Summarizing the above, P. Chornopysky defines decentralization as a process of power transfer and budget revenues from central government to local governments [Chornopysky P., 2018].

Of course, for the full-scale implementation of such a process requires a comprehensive constitutional, legislative, political and legal support, support and control of its implementation by civil society [Kalinkin A., 2016].

In Ukraine, the process of power decentralization includes the reform of three major elements:

- territorial organization of power;
- Local Government;
- local and regional policy.

The basis of the reform is a change in the administrative-territorial system. It is designed to form new territorial entities, hence new local governments and improved conditions for the implementation of regional policy.

The key issue here is the creation of new policy actors to whom much of the power is transferred. The new subjects to whom powers will be transferred are, within the framework of the reform, communities, districts and regions [Pro vnesennia zmin do Konstytutsii Ukrainy, 2019].

Accordingly, today the territory of Ukraine is divided into communities. Territorial community is a population united by permanent residence within a village, settlement, city, which are independent administrative-territorial units, or a voluntary association of several villages residents with a single administrative center [2. Bondarenko O., 2015]. Several communities form a district, and oblasts are regions of Ukraine.

Communities should be given powers that correspond to their competences on the principle of subsidiarity: primary and secondary education, primary medicine, housing and communal services, construction, local roads, infrastructure, etc. [Chornopysky P., 2018]

We have a process of consolidation of territorial communities regulated by the legislation (Law of Ukraine "On Voluntary Association of Communities"). It includes the following stages:

- initiating a voluntary association of territorial communities;
- preparation of draft decisions and decisions on voluntary association of territorial communities and their approval by local councils;

- submission of decisions of the regional state administration for issuing an opinion;
- decision-making on voluntary association of territorial communities;
- appointment of the first elections of deputies and the chairman of the UTC;
- holding elections;
- reorganization of local governments. [Law of Ukraine On Voluntary Association of Territorial Communities, 2015]

However, not all territorial units had the opportunity to go through this process voluntarily and in a timely manner. Territorial and resource disparity, resistance of local elites, lack of agreement on key issues of organization and management, the struggle for supremacy, the uncompetitiveness of some territories and a number of other factors. All this led to the fact that a number of settlements did not form their own (or did not join the existing UTC) in a timely manner - until the local elections on October 25, 2020.

The first elections in 159 united communities took place on October 25, 2015, the day of the next local elections. In the first eight months of 2016, elections were held in another 25 communities. After the December 2016 elections in the united communities, 367 united communities appeared in Ukraine. As of May 10, 2019, almost 900 united territorial communities have been created in Ukraine, and no UTC has been established in 94 districts [Official website of decentralization reform, 2020].

Nevertheless, the government continued to emphasize that the next local elections in 2020 should be held on the basis of the new administrative-territorial system. Thus, the Prime Minister of Ukraine Denis Shmygal stated: "Administrative and territorial reform is one of the most important and successful reforms and should be completed before the local elections scheduled for October this year" [Shmygal D., 2020].

This prompted the further development of the reform to the "Centralized Scenario" of further development. It provided for the centralized unification of UTCs into larger entities, the accession of weak UTCs to larger centers.

However, scientists have warned of a number of neoliks in the following scenario:

- crisis of confidence in the government and resistance from the UTC and the territories that will be forcibly united;
- the emergence of conflicts between representatives of local interests and government;
- discrepancy between local interests and UTC interests to which the territory will be annexed;
- resistance of local communities and interest groups;
- general departure from the concept of decentralization;
- condemnation by EU and US partners. [Chornopysky P., 2018]

Despite warnings and disappointing forecasts, on June 12, 2020, the government approved administrative centers and territories for 1,470 communities. Already on July 17, 2020, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution "On the formation and liquidation of districts", reducing the number of districts from 490 to 136 [16. Official website of decentralization reform, 2020].

Parliament has called regular local elections in all 1,470 communities for October 25, 2020. Regular elections are not held in the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and to oblast and Donetsk oblast councils due to the inability of these councils to represent the common interests of all oblast communities [Parliament has scheduled regular local elections for October 25, 2020].

Accordingly, from 1469 only in 1438 of them on October 25, 2020 the first elections of local mayors and deputies of local councils took place [Territorial communities, 2020].

Thus, we can talk about the urgent completion of the reform, which negatively affected its effectiveness. The process of UTC formation was delayed for objective reasons, which were never resolved. And the forced unification only preserved them, which indicates the threat of their negative impact on the activities of communities in the future. That is why the administrative-territorial reform cannot be considered complete and it is necessary to work out in detail all its problematic aspects within the framework of the new territorial formations.

That is why foreign experience, which will show what problems can be expected, what measures to introduce and how to prevent the escalation of existing conflicts today is virtually invaluable. The most relevant, given the similarity of territorial and duration of a reform, for us is the experience of France. It has passed all the tests on the way to the optimal administrative-territorial structure, which today ensures the successful development of all its territories and their operational response to any changes and influences.

It is worth starting with why the experience of France is relevant for Ukraine. Decentralization impact positively on levels of public transparency. Today establishing functional decentralized agencies, such as autonomous organizations, public companies, foundations and public business entities to provide public services is a necessary condition for the development of territories and ensuring the rights of the population (Cuadrado-Ballesteros B., 2014). Local governments also are more sensitive to democratic influences than central ones (Hong S., Lee S., 2018). For France, this resulted in the creation of a territorial civil service, which was founded in accordance with the principle of free management of communities (Qu'est-ce que la fonction publique territoriale?). In Ukraine, this process has already begun with the development of the system of administrative service centers, but now this system needs to be refined. That is why the experience of our European partners is necessary to understand the strategy of further development.

Also, since one of the problems on the way to Ukrainian decentralization is the weakness of the material and financial base of communities, the experience of full fiscal decentralization in France seems interesting. In France local governments choose their tax collection effort to maximize local utility (Aslim E. G., Neyapti B., 2017).

Another interesting feature for Ukraine is the system of energy decentralization in France. Energy decentralization is one of the most important topics for the French politics nowadays. Alternative decentralized model have emerged more recently as a way of mobilizing of many types of resources (political, economic, etc.) (Poupeau F.-M., 2020). One of the undoubted advantages of French energy decentralization is an extensive system of CREPs. This has been enabled by supportive policy schemes. The French CRE movement is largely dominated by small solar clusters because of the high acceptability of solar PV technology in France (Sebi C., Vernay A.-L., 2020). At present, renewable energy sources are just beginning to develop in eastern Ukraine. The "fields" of solar panels are set by large foreign corporations, while local authorities do not use their chance for energy decentralization and independence. That is why the experience of France is especially relevant.

Also common goal for Ukraine and France is to preserve farmland on the urban fringe. In France new modes of governance involve public local authorities, farmers' representative bodies and a positive but limited impact on the effectiveness of farmland protection instruments (Perrin C., Nougaredes B., Sini L., Branduini P., Salvati L., 2018).

All this makes France interesting in the context of learning from the implementation of decentralization reform at different levels and in different areas. However, first of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the administrative-territorial structure of the country and the peculiarities of its change. After all, this is the basis for the introduction of any other elements of decentralization.

World practice shows that the very issue of changing the administrative-territorial system was the most problematic for most European countries in the implementation of decentralization of power. And each state, taking into account its historical, geographical, demographic and political specifics, approached its solution in its own way.

Turning to the experience of France, we can see the lack of a radical change in the map of its administrative division. Today's system is the result of the natural evolution of the state territory in accordance with the influence of various objective factors [Remenyak O., 2020]. This makes France a unique EU country with the longest and most consistent experience of decentralization.

Given the territorial proximity of Ukraine and France, as well as the common for our countries unitary form of government, this example is very relevant today for in-depth study. After all, France was able to avoid the negative consequences that arose during the accelerated completion of the UTC, which was initiated by our government.

It is first necessary to reveal the main aspects of the implementation of decentralization reform in this country. In 1871 and 1884, the first pieces of legislation appeared that launched the process of decentralization. From 1982 to 1986, the process of legislative regulation and the creation of a regulatory framework for reform took place. 2002 - 2005 can be called the second stage of decentralization in France. It is established: direct democracy at the local level, decentralized governance, financial independence of territorial communities. Thus, in 2002 there was a law on agglomerations, which regulates the creation of associations of communes - self-governing territories, which can independently address pressing issues of local importance and have the conditions for self-development [Arkhypenko I., 2018].

In his work "Decentralization in Ukraine: Legislative Innovations and Public Expectations", former Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Groysman identifies three main components of the French decentralization model:

- scale of changes,
- gradual changes,
- methodical correction of changes [Hroisman V., 2015].

It should be mentioned that V. Groysman was the head of the government at the beginning of the decentralization reform in Ukraine. And at that time it was possible to trace the significant influence of this model on the organization and course of the reform of the administrative-territorial structure of our state. However, if France was able to adhere to the planned vector at the very end, then our version of the reform in 2019-2020 has undergone a number of not the best changes in this aspect.

A characteristic feature of the territorial division of France is the existence of a large number of small communes. This, in turn, somewhat complicates the implementation

of managerial powers due to the need for close cooperation between them. This has led to the establishment in this country of the creating municipal councils associations practice.

Nevertheless, the issue of liquidation of small communes in villages and settlements is still relevant. But France's policy in this vector remains well-balanced - the absence of administrative coercion to merge or radical liquidation, only the strengthening of weak communes by creating opportunities for cooperation at various levels and encouraging them to implement various projects. The Law on the Association and Consolidation of Communes (June 16, 1971), for example, provided for the possibility of several communes establishing joint local governments. Also, French law provides additional financial support for communes that are in similar alliances [Remenyak O., 2020].

The territorial fragmentation of France and the existence of sparsely populated communes, as well as the similar situation with villages and settlements in Ukraine, are explained by historical, political, geographical, economic, demographic and social factors. However, as part of the decentralization, these territories receive a whole list of important powers to ensure the effective functioning of their population. In France, among them:

- provision of various social services,
- registration of civil status,
- municipal police,
- road networks in the commune,
- primary schools,
- educational and cultural activities,
- powers in the field of urban and land planning, etc. [Lelechenko A., Vasilieva O., Kuybida V., Tkachuk A., 2017].

In Ukraine, this list is very similar. Accordingly, to ensure the implementation of these functions, local authorities receive a number of resources: local taxes, government subsidies, and so on.

However, today, 98% of communes in France have a population of less than 10,000 people, which, on an equal footing with others, complicates the implementation of their functions. This necessitates additional resource and financial support from the state. Accordingly, this is the main reason for active discussions about the need to forcibly merge small administrative-territorial units with their larger neighbors [Boryslavska O., Zaverukha I., Zakharchenko E., 2012].

In total, France has three levels of settlements in rural areas:

- small towns (with less than 20 thousand inhabitants),
- cities with bazaars (1000-15000 inhabitants),
- small villages (less than 1000 inhabitants) [Lelechenko A., Vasilieva O., Kuybida V., Tkachuk A., 2017].

The latter do not have sufficient infrastructure and resources to provide public services and a sufficient level, in accordance with their functional purpose. This problem is also characteristic of Ukraine today due to digitalization, development of electronic document management and centralized provision of administrative services online and through CNAPs.

In France, most of the inaccessible services to the small villages population are provided by communes of other types at the expense of their own resources and

infrastructure. Or small communes ensure their implementation on their own with the financial support of the government [Boryslavska O., Zaverukha I., Zakharchenko E., 2012].

Small communes, despite all their shortcomings, remain very valuable for France, because they maximize the idea of civil society and elements of direct democracy, help the development of the whole territory, not just developed settlements, and stop internal migration. For Ukraine, such an experience may be useful in the future. Despite the completion of the UTC formation, the small settlements that are part of them need further support in all aspects of its operation. The development of villages and settlements will allow:

- ensure timely and professional provision of services to people who are tied to their territories and cannot / do not want to change their place of residence;
- to reduce internal migration and urbanization, which today causes the presence of a large number of abandoned settlements from which all the working population left;
- to develop rural areas where most of the agricultural industry is concentrated, which in Ukraine remains the main one;
- to create self-sufficient territories with developed infrastructure;
- to avoid local conflicts against the background of forced unification of territories into one UTC;
- and solve the rest of the smaller local problems, not preserve them.

It is this kind of attention that the French government pays to the smallest administrative-territorial units and the conditions that are created for their continued development that should set an example for Ukraine.

Another element that is absent in the Ukrainian reality, but implemented in France is the system of control over the activities of local government by the government. The transfer of more powers gives UTC a wide range of opportunities. However, the implementation of these opportunities must take place within the current legislation and in accordance with all formal requirements. It is their observance in France that is monitored by representatives of the local government - prefects and suprefects. These are authorized persons who are empowered to suspend the implementation of municipal councils decisions in case of their non-compliance with the law.

The prefect (in France) is the representative of the state in the department, which is appointed by presidential decree, previously approved at a meeting of the French Council of Ministers [Quelle est la fonction d'un préfet?, 2020]. He is the direct representative of each minister and manages the civil services in the department. His responsibilities include informing the government about the situation in the local department, informing local elected bodies about the government's policy and assisting in its implementation [Khort, I.V., 2015].

There was also an attempt to introduce the institution of Prefects in Ukraine. This was provided for in the draft law "On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine (concerning decentralization)" № 2217a of 01.07.2015. This bill passed the first reading, but political conflicts within the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine blocked its further implementation. Then the prefects were called "people of the president" who can put pressure on local authorities. However, it should be noted that the scope of their powers under this law is much narrower than that of the French prefects.

Today, Ukraine is the only country in Europe that does not have a system of control over the actions of local self-government. Also, prefects are needed for advisory and informational support to newly formed communities, which can greatly facilitate their further development. Currently, there is hope for a possible settlement of this issue in the framework of the proposed draft law "On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine (regarding the decentralization of power)" № 2598 of 13.12.2019. [Pro vnesennia zmin do Konstytutsii Ukrainy (shchodo detsentralizatsii vlady): Proekt zakonu Ukrainy, 2019]

Such a focus on the experience of France will allow us to avoid a number of problematic issues that will inevitably arise if the reform of the administrative-territorial system in Ukraine stops at this stage and will not be improved in the further course of decentralization. Attention to small areas, community cooperation, support and oversight by the authorities are what French practice has gradually come to. Unfortunately, we do not have much time to implement the reform, and we are limited by the requirements of the EU and the Minsk agreements, which affect certain features of decentralization in Ukraine. That is why the study and borrowing of foreign experience remains for us almost the only alternative. Provided that we really want to ensure the stable and rapid development of really strong communities throughout our country.

Of course, these recommendations are not exhaustive. Thus, A. Lelechko calls the solution of the following problems factors of success of the decentralization reform:

- the impact of the merger on the definition of new regions and their strengthening;
- support for dynamically developing regions / metropolises that compete, especially in terms of economic development;
- the ability of metropolises to sustainable development and its spread to rural and remote suburban areas [Lelechenko A., Vasilieva O., Kuybida V., Tkachuk A., 2017].

Today it is necessary to work on the development of UTC and decentralization in other aspects: building civil society, democratization, information and training to improve the quality of self-organization, exchange of experience, coordination, association and cooperation of UTC, public and private sector involvement in community and territory development. There are still many aspects of the reform implementation, but their effective implementation is impossible without an established and effective administrative-territorial structure of the state.

As for the further implementation of the reform, it is worth giving recommendations, which on the basis of foreign experience identified I. Remenyak:

- delimitation of powers, rights and responsibilities of different governmental levels in accordance with the essence of the rule of law, social, democratic state and civil society, which will achieve a balance of interests in the system of public relations;
- development and implementation of an effective regional policy aimed at ensuring balanced local and regional development;
- ensuring the implementation of the subsidiarity principles as a way to overcome conflicts of interest between local executive bodies and local governments;
- introduction of administrative-territorial reform with ensuring the preservation of the state integrity and its unitary system;
- ensuring the expansion of the rights of territorial communities to address issues of local importance;
- increasing the responsibility of local authorities and local government officials for the results of their activities [Remenyak O., 2020].

It should be noted that decentralization of power has many advantages: economic development and healthy competition, development of civil society and direct democracy, increasing the rule of law, political responsibility and trust in government, training of local political leaders, formation of new elites, etc. That is why the work in this direction today does not lose its relevance.

Conclusions. After the local elections on October 25, 2020, the reform of the administrative-territorial system is considered to be virtually complete. On July 17, 2020, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution "On the formation and liquidation of districts", reducing the number of districts from 490 to 136. The exceptions were Donetsk and Luhansk regions. There, the completion of the formation of UTC is impossible due to the presence of uncontrolled territories.

However, the completion of the territorial division was actually completed artificially. Those territories that have not yet formed their UTCs or joined existing ones have been forced by the government to do so under pressure to run in the elections.

The result is low turnout in local elections, abandonment of the primary concept of natural UTC formation, and the presence of a number of local conflicts and problems that are currently in a state of conservation.

That is why this reform cannot be considered fully completed and successful. It needs further refinement, which should be based on our national characteristics and relevant foreign experience.

For us, the experience of France is interesting and relevant due to the territorial and administrative similarity of our regions. The history of the French administrative-territorial system formation is quite long. Having analyzed the historical aspect and today's realities, we can distinguish two main points:

- support of small territorial formations, intensification of cooperation between communities and territories of different levels and volumes;
- formation of a system for monitoring the local self-government activities by government representatives, providing informational and advisory support to newly established UTCs.

Of course, this is not the end of the recommendations, but these are the key aspects that must be implemented in the near future to ensure the effective development of all territories and settlements.

In general, it should be noted that the use of the experience of EU member states to improve their own domestic political processes is especially relevant for Ukraine in the active development of European integration processes.

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