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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Belarusian system of local self-governance has many specific features in comparison with the systems existing in other countries. It is represented by several institutions: local councils and territorial public self-government. And the main thing is the state model of local self-government, it is inseparable from the system of local governance as the state power at the local level [1; 2].

Such a state approach to building a system of local government has played and in some cases continues to play a significant and effective role in the management of socio-economic and social development of the country.

In Belarus, one of the few countries of the former Soviet Union, social stability is maintained in the society, since the government guarantees social security regardless of the place of residence of the citizen. In the conditions of preservation of the state property, changes in the economy, modernization of branches of the economy on a new technological basis, administrative methods of regional development management are considered as more acceptable.

Belarus is at the stage of transition to market economy, state property is persisted in the country, and in this situation the key task of the local authorities is to create institutional conditions for business development and support small and medium enterprises. This role is played by local authorities as local policy agents.

The components of this success are: implementation of administrative resources, personal responsibility of the head, strict control over the activities of government agencies, including the population. At the same time, the weakness and shortcomings of the existing system of local government have recently become more and more evident.

First of all, it should be noted that the country's executive authorities, or the presidential vertical, have a stronger influence on the development of the regions. Representative bodies in the form of *House of Representatives* are not organizationally separated from the executive bodies, their task is to control and coordinate the actions of the state authorities at the local level, based on regional interests.

In the conditions of centralism, the mechanism of self-development of local communities suffers, taking into account the great diversity of cities, villages and countryside, it is impossible to take into account all the local specifics from the center, to identify the reserves of growth. Lack of consideration of local specifics reduces the efficiency of public funds transferred to the regions "from above".

The system of local governance and self-governance in the country is three-tiered (region, district, and village council levels). Functions are almost completely duplicated, only the lower (primary) level has a more limited scope of authority. Relations between the levels are based on the principle of subordination. This leads to the parallelism in the work of local authorities, the workload of employees in the preparation of various references and reports "upwards", reduces the flexibility of the system.

The same principle of subordination applies to different actors located in the regions. The formation of the private sector and the strengthening of civil society institutions have led to the fact that entire sectors have begun to fall out of the field of local government administration and management.

With regard to relations with the local community and citizens, the country is constantly working with citizens' appeals in the aspect of solving the problem of de-bureaucratization of local government bodies. In order to establish feedback on the

following issues: the population - local authorities have introduced a book of complaints and suggestions, hot and direct telephone lines have been organized on a systematic basis, heads of public administration bodies and specialists carry out personal receptions of citizens, and additional guarantees for consideration of citizens' appeals have been established. Administrative procedures are carried out by citizens through the "single window" system.

However, these are all so-called "passive forms" of citizens' participation in resolving issues of local importance, mainly related to information. As for active forms of cooperation with the local community, despite the fact that the Constitution provides for forms of direct democracy, however, due to legal difficulties they are practically not implemented in the country [3].

Centralism is also characteristic of the financial and budgetary system in the country. The level of tax autonomy of local governments is insignificant - the volume of local taxes and fees, as well as additional revenues as a result of the implementation of the rights to increase the rates of real estate tax and land tax by local governments is not more than 6 percent of local budget resources.

Thus, it is impossible to speak about the compliance of financial support and the scope of authorities of local government bodies. A significant part of local budgets is of a subsidized nature. Such a vertical imbalance between the volume of own revenues and the volume of expenditure obligations is eliminated by the system of deductions from regulatory revenues from the republic budget.

There is also a so-called horizontal imbalance, i.e. inequality of fiscal capacity per capita at the level of different districts, which is equalized by means of inter-budgetary transfers. However, in the absence of a clear scheme for calculating the size of such transfers to administrative-territorial units, equal access to the budget resources of regions is not guaranteed.

In all the above mentioned problematic areas of local government in the country today there are trends of its improvement, the growth of new relations, a new type of interaction, the state, the population, economic and other entities located in the territory.

A number of initiatives aimed at improving the local government system have emerged in the course of the implementation of international projects, including those with financial support from the European Union.

Decentralization has been developed in the form of local community initiatives. In the country, the process of involvement of the population in the economic life of the regions, participation in the real solution of local community affairs through participation in project activities and the promotion of local initiatives within the framework of international technical assistance has been actively developed. As it is known, the initiative of the local community, citizens of cities and regions is one of the prerequisites for strengthening the institution of local self-government [4].

Further improvement of the system of local governance and self-governance in Belarus is proposed in the following areas.

1. Reform of local government and self-governance bodies is a comprehensive reform, it should be implemented simultaneously with changes in the administrative-territorial division, reforming regional financial and budgetary relations.
2. In Belarus, taking into account traditions, mentality, peculiarities of the existing period of transformation of the economic system, it is necessary to preserve the state power at the local level. Perhaps, it will be a modified version of the presidential vertical of power.
3. It is necessary to develop a full-fledged institution of local self-governance, which exercises power under its own responsibility, has its own terms of reference and appropriate financial resources. It is expedient to carry out it at the grass-roots territorial level. However, the existing level of village councils is small. Therefore, it is necessary to improve ATD (administration territorial division).
4. It is necessary to change the content of management functions, moving away from administrative methods to indirect and economic management tools, especially taking into account the development of market relations. Here, digital technologies should be the driver of fundamental changes, the use of which will reduce the state apparatus, ensure transparency of the management process, and facilitate contacts between the authorities and the population.

5. It is necessary to actively form various communication institutions between different players involved in the regional process, to introduce contractual partnerships, to gradually promote the fact that the relationship of social contract between different social and economic groups, the dialogue between the authorities, business, and the local community would ensure social stability and harmony in society, which is a true democracy.
6. Education, increasing professionalism of managerial personnel, changes in mentality, overcoming the psychology of dependency among citizens, new forms of work with the local community should be the important directions.

These approaches are consistent with the basic principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and take into account the Belarusian specifics. It will take a long period of time, especially taking into account that Belarus is a young independent state, where reforms are implemented gradually, in an evolutionary way.

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