

Assessment of the impact of budget decentralization on sustainable development of territorial communities in Ukraine

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Abstract: Peculiarities of territorial community (hromada) development management are revealed and theoretical approaches to budget decentralization in Ukraine are substantiated. Based on the analysis of the composition and structure of local budget revenues, as well as the calculation of indicators of financial independence of territorial communities (hromadas), it is proved that the modern budget system of Ukraine is characterized by a high degree of centralization of budget resources, which does not provide real independence. To build an effective and efficient model of budget decentralization is to determine the tax potential of a separate administrative-territorial unit (territorial community). For further success of decentralization, it is necessary to determine the optimal scope of state functions, which are expedient and cost-effective to delegate to the appropriate local level on a permanent basis, thus translating them into their own functions of local governments.

Key words: budget decentralization, community (hromada), amalgamated hromadas, sustainable development, hromada financial support, financial security.

JEL: G28, H30, H41, H50, H72, H77, R12.

Introduction

In modern conditions, the global trend in public finance and public construction is to strengthen the institution of local self-government and strengthen its influence on social, economic and political processes in society. Ongoing reforms in Ukraine to decentralize power and strengthen the financial independence of local governments require an assessment of their effectiveness and efficiency in achieving these goals and long-term priorities.

Socio-economic development of the regions of Ukraine in terms of integration with the European Union is modernized by introducing budget decentralization and giving greater independence to local governments in addressing issues of their competence in accordance with European requirements. The reasons for the reforms are: low level of financial

independence and economic and financial security of territorial communities (hromadas), disproportionate distribution and redistribution of funds between the state and regions, imperfect management of the formation and use of financial resources by territory. This leads to a slowdown in the balanced development of the regions of Ukraine, which is particularly reflected in the dynamics of indicators of hromadas' development, which are the main actors of socio-economic development of regions and the country as a whole.

Budget redistribution, which is accompanied by horizontal unification of hromadas throughout Ukraine, requires the development of an effective strategy to improve the financial situation in the country through the use of promising modernized instruments of state regulation of the economy. It should be noted that the process of hromadas' amalgamation should be in the interests of citizens, not just the state, thus ensuring positive changes in financial security indicators.

Methodology

The research is theoretical and cognitive in nature and contains an analytical part. The authors use critical analysis of the subject literature, meta-analysis, deductive and inductive reasoning, as well as a comparative analysis using elements of time series analysis (analysis of dynamics and structure changes). Due to objective obstacles in carrying out a quantitative analysis, the assessment is qualitative in nature, with elements of inductive reasoning.

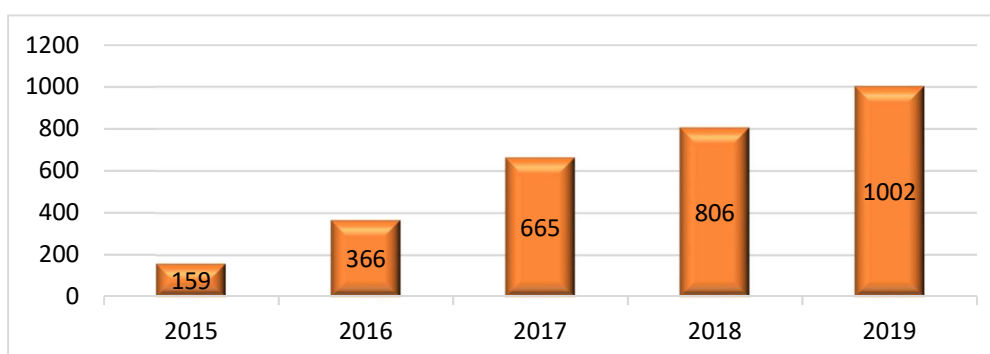
The analysis of recent publications on regional development, budget support of territorial communities and the formation of regional research methodology was carried out by scientists, in particular: D. Palma, G. Richardson, F. Perrault, M. Storper, R. Walker, B. Burkinsky, Z. Gerasymchuk, V. Chuzhikov and others. Methodological problems of socio-economic development of regions in the context of decentralization are reflected in the works of such foreign scientists as: A. Alcian, R. Barro, T. Veblen, E. Zolta, R. Coase, R. Musgrave, W. Oates, D. Romer, R. Solow, C. Tibou. The works of Z. Varnaliy, T. Bondaruk, B. Danylyshyn, V. Kravtsiv, M. Melnyk, V. Miklovdy, and I. Storonyanska are devoted to the issue of solving the problems of improving the regional policy of socio-economic development of regions in the context of decentralization and administrative-territorial reform, O. Tishchenko, M. Khvesika, S. Schultz, etc.

Decentralization as a one of the key reforms to create capable territorial communities (hromadas) in Ukraine

The process of hromadas' amalgamation in Ukraine began in 2014 due to the relevant amendments to the Tax and Budget Codes of Ukraine, which in 2015 allowed to demonstrate the first positive changes in the development of territorial communities as a result of their financial resources increasing. The way to implement decentralization is a very complex and long process to achieve a high level of economic development. There are many problems and acute moments on this path of implementation that seem strange to the population, but they are effective in the European value system. It is impossible to copy everything, as in the EU, but we must always remember that when choosing one's own model of socio-economic development, one needs to be more delicate and prudent.

The chronology of hromadas' amalgamation for 2015-2019 is as follows (Fig. 1). In 2015, their number was 159 amalgamated hromadas (AHs), in 2016 – 366 AHs, in 2017 – 665 AHs, in 2018 – 806 AHs, with each passing year the indicators increased. As of the end of 2019, there are already 1002, which includes 490 districts, indicating a significant breakthrough in the development of territorial communities (hromadas). Because budget funds are spent not only on the welfare of the state as a whole, but also directly on the welfare and development of a large number of them.

Figure 1. Number of Amalgamated hromadas

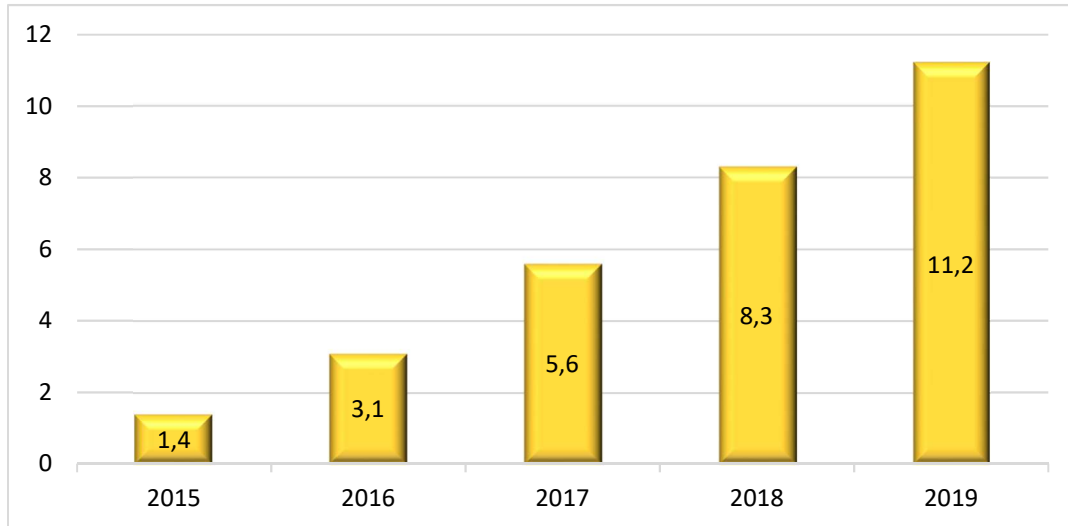


Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Considering the dynamics of the number of inhabitants (Fig. 2), we can see that in 2015, there were 159 AHs accounted for 1.4 million people, the number of AHs grew and the population increased in this area, in 2019, 11, 2 million people lived in 112 AHs. This indicates

that not all the population of Ukraine moves to cities or abroad for a better life, and with the development of their locality, they can work on their native land.

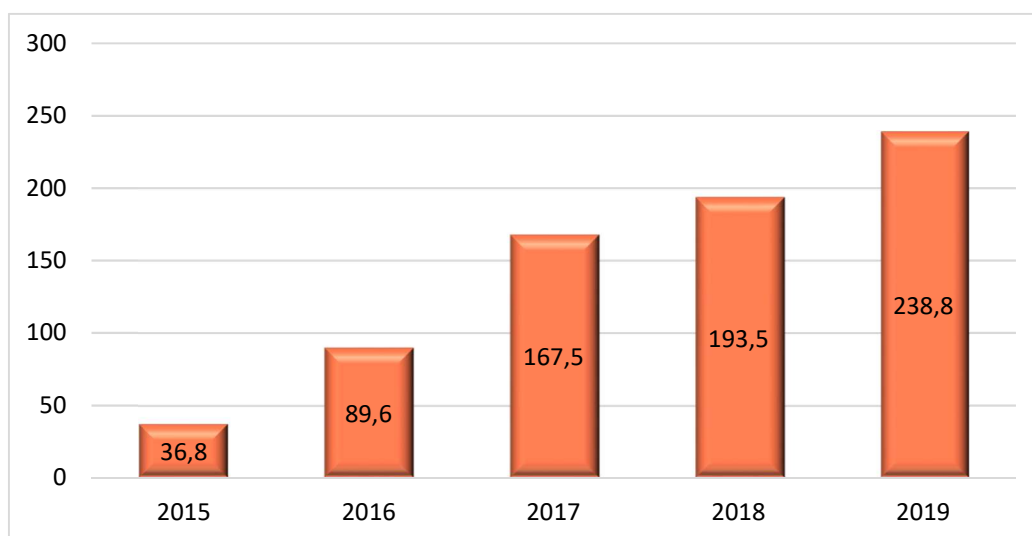
Figure 2. Number of inhabitants in amalgamated hromadas



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

The dynamics of area indicators also increased (Fig. 3), in 2015 it amounted to 36.8 thousand square km. of the total area of the country, in 2016 - 89.6 thousand square km., 2017 - 167.5 thousand square km., 2018 - 193.5 thousand square km., and today it is as much as 238.8 thousand square km.

Figure 3. Area of amalgamated hromadas (thousand square km)



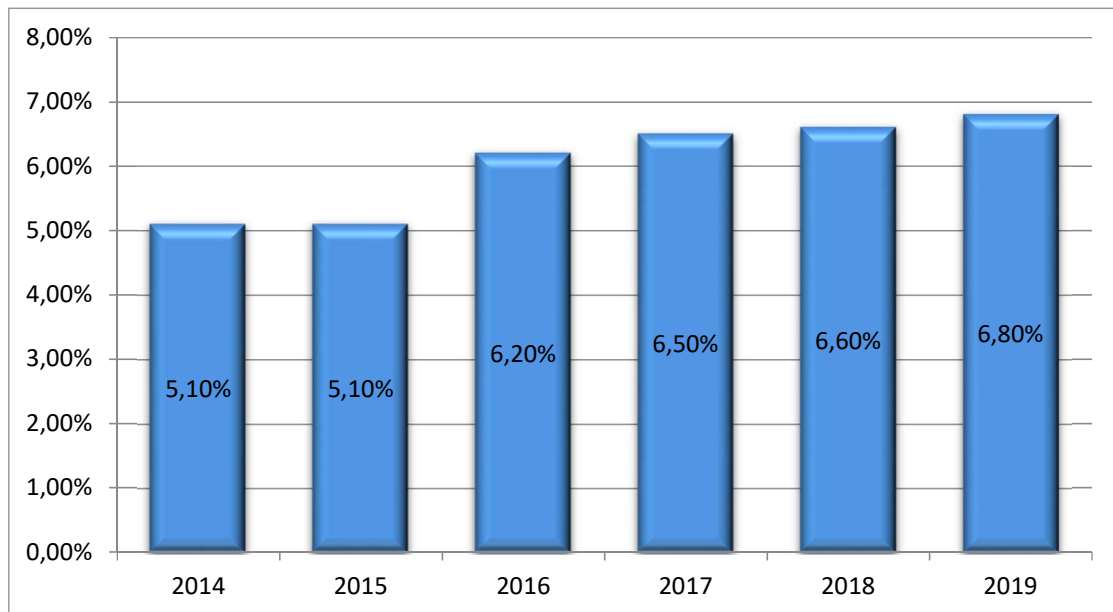
Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Local budget development trends for the period from 2014 to 2019 in Ukraine

Based on the results of the monitoring process of decentralization of power and reform of local self-government, we will analyze the dynamics of local budget indicators and determine the trend of change for the period from 2014 to 2019.

Due to the expansion of the revenue base of local budgets, emerging and increasing shares in gross domestic product (GDP), the share of own revenues of local budgets (general fund) to GDP in % (Fig. 4) increased rapidly, during the period from 2015 to 2016 by 1.1%, and in other years increased slightly and decreased every year by 0.1% from 0, 3%, but stable growth is already progress.

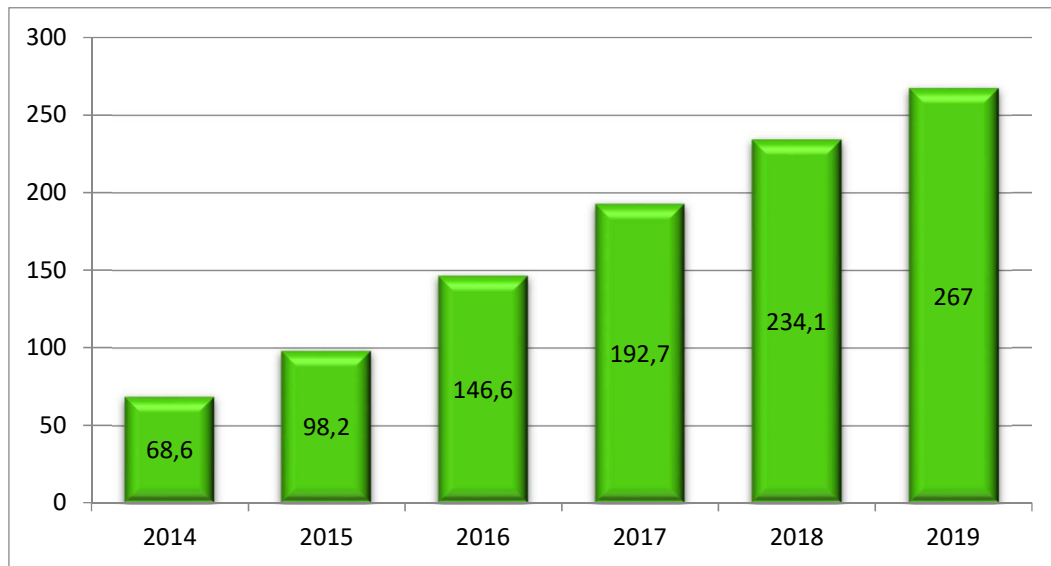
Figure 4. Share of local budgets' own revenues (general fund) in GDP, in %



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Own revenues of the local budgets' general fund (Fig. 5) also tend to increase. From 2015 to 2016, the growth was by UAH 48.4 billion, and from 2018 to 2019, the growth decreased to UAH 32.9 billion, which is not an unsatisfactory indicator, the main thing is that this growth trend works. That is, local authorities have sufficient financial resources to use effectively for community development.

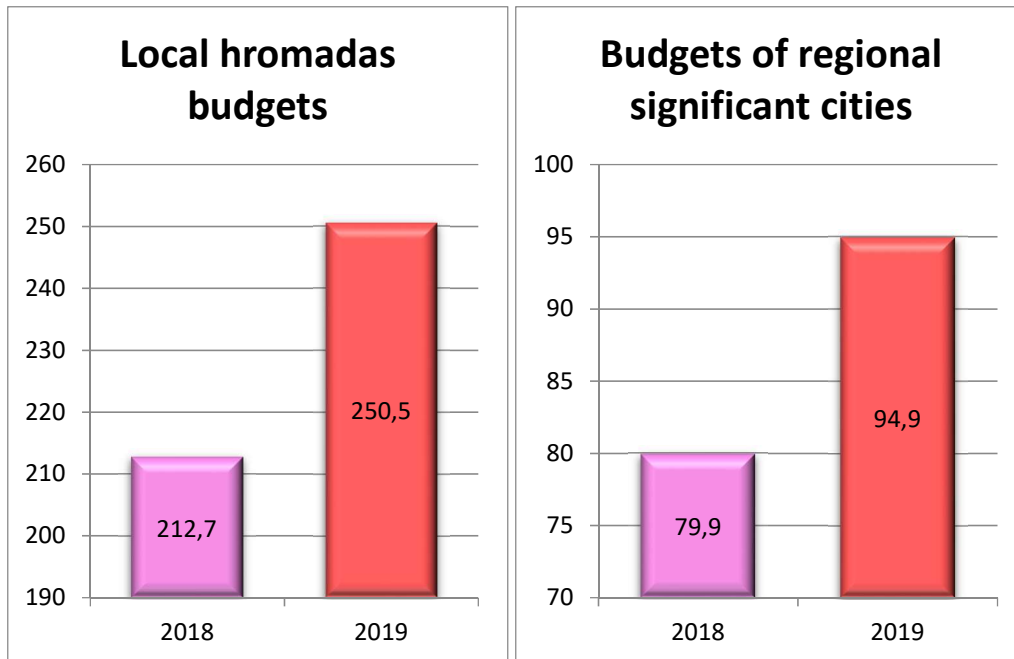
Figure 5. Own revenues of the local budgets' general fund, UAH billion



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Analyzing the implementation of the local budgets own revenues for January-November, 2019, compared to January-November, 2018 (Fig. 6), we see that there was an increase of 18-19%, namely by UAH 37.8 billion in the local budget, and in the budgets of the regionally significant cities by UAH 15 billion. We believe that this is a significant progress in development, although in 2019, prices continued to rise with low official inflation in the country, but the competent distribution of funds provided for in the reform of decentralization of territorial communities (hromadas) shows a positive trend in territorial development. Thus, by increasing the revenues of local budgets and increasing budget funding, it is possible to stimulate the development of infrastructure and more fully meet the needs of local communities (hromadas).

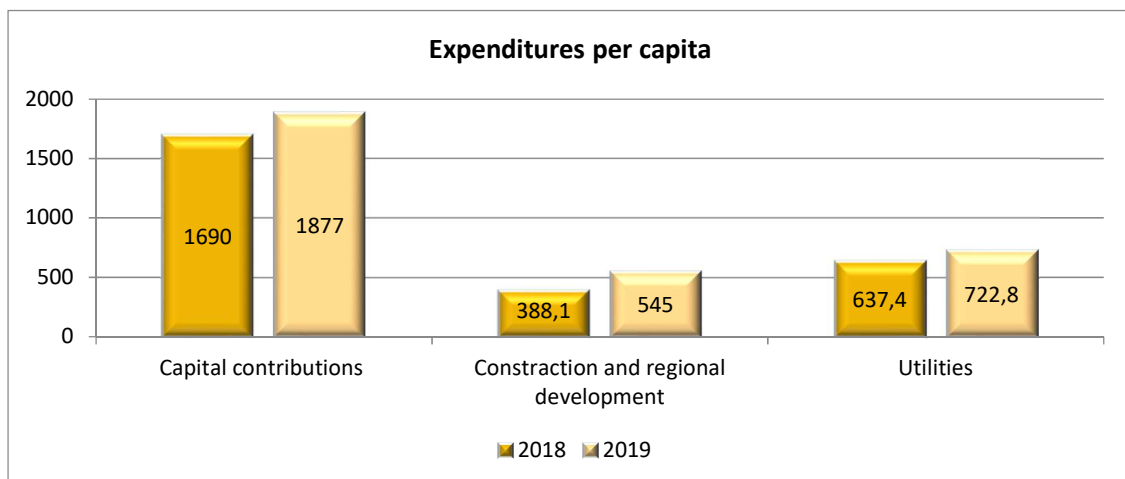
Figure 6. Execution of local budgets' own revenues, UAH billion (%)



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Considering the distribution of local budget expenditures per capita (Fig. 7), when comparing the years 2018 and 2019, it was found that the main components of the distribution are: capital expenditures (by 11.1% increase), construction and regional development (by 40, 4% increase), housing and communal services (by 13.3% increase).

Figure 7. Dynamics of local budget expenditures for 2018-2019

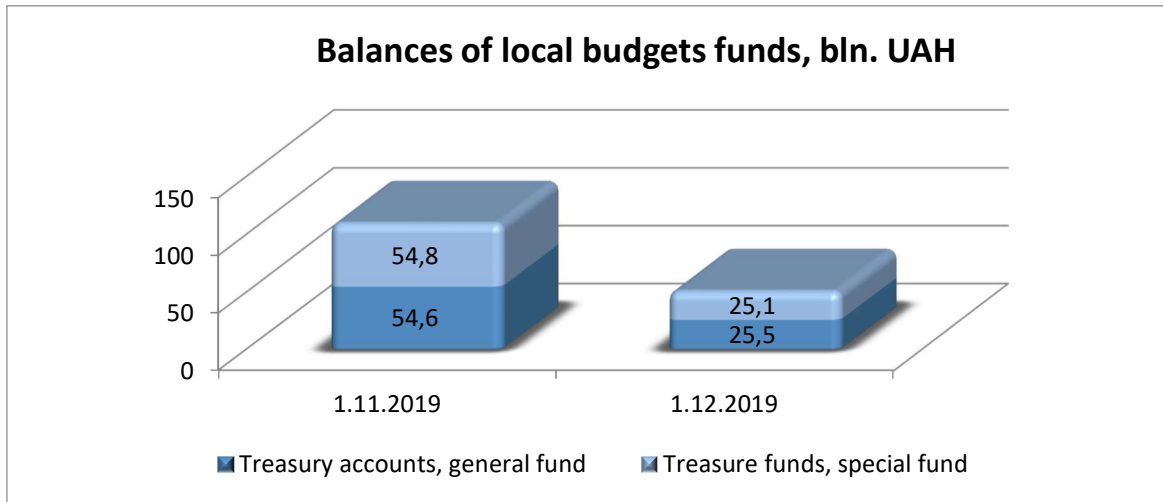


Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

As evidenced by the data in Fig. 8, even with the existing revenues and expenditures of local budgets, there is a balance. This indicates that the data on the financial capacity

of amalgamated hromadas are trying to make it as transparent as possible and show that there is a balance on the accounts. Balances of local budgets of Ukraine (Fig. 8) decreased in the period from 11/1/2019 to 12/1/2019 twofold.

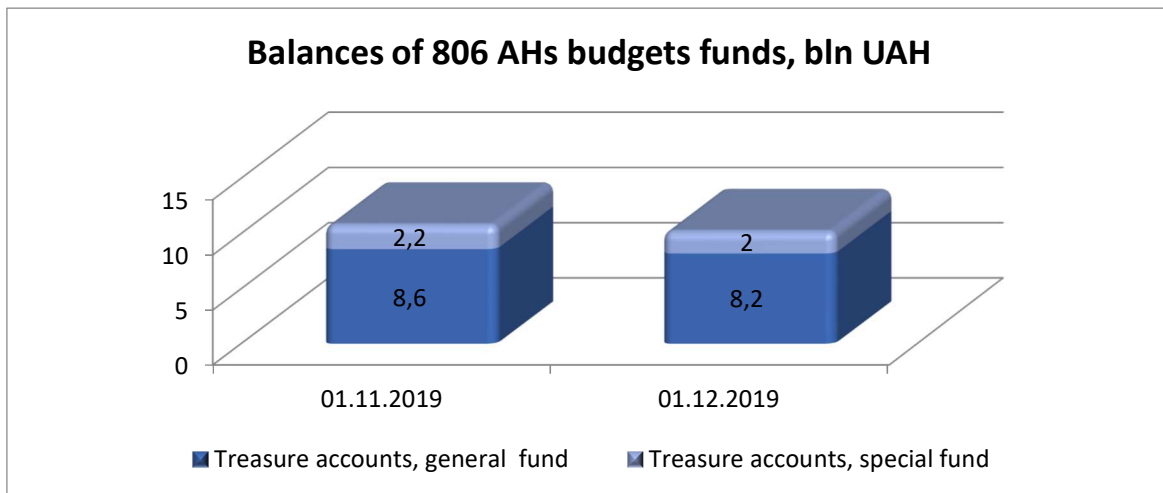
Figure 8. Balances of local budgets funds, bln UAH



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

At the same time, the balances of 806 amalgamated hromadas (Fig. 9) decreased slightly, by UAH 0.4 billion.

Figure 9. Balances of 806 amalgamated hromadas budgets funds, bln UAH

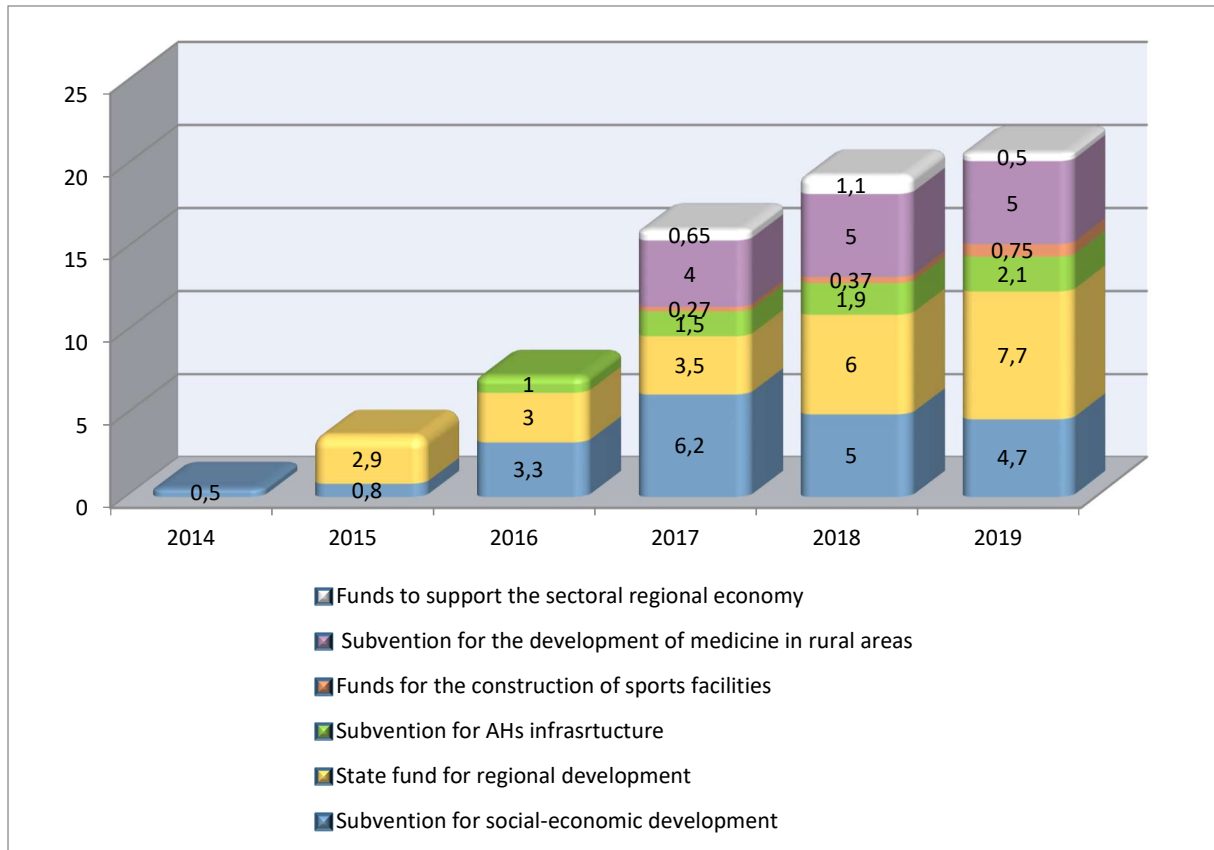


Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

Thus, it can be assumed that the funds for the needs of the population and the support of the hromada are too much, but this is a false assumption. In fact, there is a mismatch between the expenditures of each period for the same needs, so balance is formed.

As for the volume of state support to territorial communities (hromadas), as evidenced by the indicators, the state has increased the amount of financial support to AHs (Fig. 10). Thus, if in 2014 support for socio-economic development amounted to UAH 0.5 billion, then in 2018, the amount of support funds amounted to UAH 19.37 billion, and in 2019 - UAH 20.75 billion, or 41 times more than in 2014.

Figure 10. State financial support of local and regional development, UAH billion



Source: own work based on <https://decentralization.gov.ua>

With regard to the amount of state aid to regions in support of socio-economic development, a rating of state financial support for local and regional development, in every 24 regions (excluding the Autonomous Republic of Crimea). The first 5 oblasts are: Donetsk - UAH 1,064 million, Lviv - UAH 907 million, Dnipropetrovsk - UAH 881.1 million, Odesa - UAH 809.4 million, Ivano-Frankivsk - UAH 738.7 million. These funds supplement the local budget and are designed to improve and renew the infrastructure of the local community. Particular attention is paid to the Donetsk region, as there are military operations and the local community needs more help.

To meet a certain level of territorial security needs, a clear list of priorities and tasks is calculated, in order to avoid threats of loss of financial resources that may arise in the process of implementation of tasks. The search for ways to increase financial resources is for local governments to find alternative sources and sides of local communities that attractive to investors, where it is possible to invest in order to increase profits from these areas.

In the conditions of turbulent economic development due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in most countries of the world and the introduction of restrictions on border crossing for both population and goods, the balanced development of Ukraine's regions is slowing down.

The level of financial independence of hromadas

There is a need to assess the impact of budget decentralization on the level of financial independence of hromadas by calculating the relevant indicators.

Analytical calculations will allow to determine the dynamics and trend of hromadas' development in relation to the financial independence of local budgets from the volume and types of transfers from the State Budget of Ukraine. In particular, there was calculated the coefficient of financial dependence, which is determined as the share of subventions from the State Budget of Ukraine in local budget revenues; budget decentralization ratio; expenditure decentralization ratio as a share of local budgets in the Consolidated Budget expenditures; modified expenditure decentralization ratio as a share of local budgets in the Consolidated Budget expenditures (excluding defense expenditures). The results of the calculations are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Dynamics of indicators of territorial communities' financial independence in the process of budget decentralization introduction in Ukraine for 2016-2019

| Indicator | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Coefficient of financial dependence, % | 51.5 | 49.9 | 48.7 | 41.8 |
| Coefficient of budget decentralization, % | 14.5 | 16.4 | 15.8 | 8.1 |
| Modified coefficient of decentralization of expenditures, % | 44.6 | 49.9 | 48.8 | 44.7 |
| Coefficient of expenditures decentralization, % | 41.4 | 46.4 | 45.1 | 41.2 |

Source: calculated by the author according to the State Treasury Service of Ukraine www.treasury.gov.ua

These calculations show that, in 2016, local budgets were the most financially dependent on the state budget. In the conditions of the ongoing process of budget decentralization in Ukraine, there is a trend to increase the financial independence of local budgets. As can be seen, in 2018, local budgets were more financially independent of the state budget, but in 2019 the trend changed to the opposite (Koliada, 2018, p. 270).

As for the coefficient of budget decentralization, it is one of the most important indicators showing the ratio of local budget expenditures (excluding intergovernmental transfers) to GDP. The values of this indicator reflect the part of financial resources that is distributed among local governments. According to the normative indicators, if the indicator is below 10%, the level of decentralization is low; 15-10% - average; 15% - high. That is, in 2016 - the level of budget decentralization was average; in 2017-2018 - high; but in 2019 - low.

In addition, during the period 2017-2018, there was an increase in the modified coefficient of budget decentralization by expenditure. However, in 2019, the ratio returned to the level from 2016. The lowest coefficient of decentralization by expenditures was in 2019 (41.2%).

The subjects of the financial system, determining the needs of hromadas according to their interests, make it possible to come up with a development strategy that ensures their self-development and independence, taking into account not only the interests of the state, but also the population. At the same time, in Ukraine, there is a significant differentiation in the volume and quality of public goods at the level of settlements, districts, cities, etc. In some district centers, there is much more useful and necessary infrastructure than in cities with small numbers. We can examine the public goods of a particular territorial community (hromada) according to the rating of state financial support for local and regional development.

Thus, in districts and villages, the living conditions of the population by age category from the youngest to the oldest inhabitants are improving. This is only because the ranking of priority needs is used and financial security indicators are monitored. Although there has been a misuse of budgetary resources for many years, because corruption schemes still work, we already have conscious shifts in the understanding of the country's population and what is necessary for their benefit. Corruption schemes are a threat to financial security, which affects not only the local community (hromada) itself, but also local businesses and the state

as a whole. That is why it is necessary to introduce and talk about financial literacy for different age groups in order to improve their well-being and living conditions in the country.

To better understand the financial interests of local communities (hromadas), we offer such characteristics as:

- observance of the collective agreement of definition of public needs, priorities and modernization of old needs for improvement of an economic condition of the territorial community (hromada);
- the factor of provision is financial security in the manifestation of the reproduction of goods in the form of social and economic indicators;
- due to the distribution of financial resources between the territories, there is a threat of high competition, which should be minimized by indicators of improving the lives of the population and increasing own income of the territorial community (hromada);
- minimization of the negative impact of threats in ensuring the financial interests of the community.

The mechanism of protection against threats in the process of realization of certain goals requires not only control over the implementation of certain tasks, but also the targeted use of financial resources with the involvement of a professional specialist in financial control and security. To this end, the Concept of reforming local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine has been created, which aims to provide high-quality and public services, fruitful work of government and local governance in general. To achieve all the objectives of this concept, it is allowed to expand the boundaries of financial independence of local self-government in order to improve their own economic situation. Such innovations will protect and act not only in the interests of a particular territorial community (hromada), but also public finances in general.

We believe that it is necessary to set strategic goals for 5 years, and at the end of each year, to summarize and modernize the goals in accordance with changes in the economy. This will have a positive impact on the development of the territory and the state, as well as it will highlight significant improvements. Why such a term for setting goals? Because in 5 years, it is possible to gradually implement new ideas, methods and techniques, track their development and the trend of change for certain indicators. Reporting should be a prerequisite, as only with the help of control, the work is constantly moving. Any financial

and economic development of an entity has risks and threats to sustainable growth associated with it. To avoid or minimize this, it is necessary to calculate the degree of impact and the probability of losses that may occur, so that there are no uncontrolled fluctuations in sustainable development.

If the responsibility for the financial activity result of a local self-government body is transferred to the state power, then the principle of division of powers and competencies between levels of government will not be observed and certain goals of territorial communities' development will not be achieved. When local government representatives are aware of the seriousness of their actions, then there is a real potential to create something better than in other local communities (hromadas), and the method of competition continues to work. The main thing at this stage is not to forget about financial security, the result and quality of public services.

As for budget decentralization, it has clear goals for improving the work of local governments and transparent accounts of local and regional funding. We have indicators for which there are people who are trying to fulfill their direct responsibilities and improve the lives of the population and the state as a whole.

It needs to be noted that there is no separate body (unit) that would control only financial security, as a result, responsibility for financial resources and interests are assumed by local governments, which are forced to make changes in the legal framework or take responsibility. These changes create imbalances and destroy financial security, as there is a lack of transparency in the provision of information to consumers of public services and a low level of financial literacy of the population. And when, due to significant differentiation of financial potential of territorial communities, central executive bodies are obliged to objectively legislate to prevent the emergence of horizontal fiscal imbalances, when strengthening the financial security of some communities by reducing others or weakening the financial security of the country as a whole. The key in this process is that the mechanism of inter-territorial redistribution of financial resources works, which was not envisaged in the first stages of the creation of territorial communities.

The interdependence of local hromadas and state financial security

The interdependence of financial security of the public and the territory affects the financial security of countries. The last years of the future vertical construction of financial security are provided due to this and the horizontal construction of this system, because it requires a diet and a self-defined vertical construction. Currently, economic entities use only those scales and tools that are specified in the legislation. If necessary, allowing to "manage the situation, influence the situation" (which is etymologically contained in the change of the term "security") is absent in local communities when it comes to the principles of customs policy, the functioning of financial, monetary, credit risks. This conclusion follows from Article 92 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which provided for a single influence on certain areas of state law. Therefore, it is impossible to agree with those scientists who consider monetary, currency and banking, stock, customs and tariff and inflation security in the structure of financial security of the region (Medvid, 2007, p. 7; Karpinsky, 2008, p. 131).

There are objective limitations to the influence of individual financial security entities, namely territorial communities, on determining the priorities of national economic policy. At the same time, we believe that the formation of priorities of certain components of financial security, namely: budget, investment and debt security, depends on the actions and decisions of local communities (hromadas) and local governments.

Article 143 of the Constitution of Ukraine states that territorial communities, through local self-government, have the authority to manage communal property; approval of programs of socio-economic and cultural development and control over their implementation; formation, reorganization and liquidation of utility companies and organizations; etc., these are all the principles of functioning of the investment market, which is determined by law. In other words, territorial communities can participate in and influence the types of operations in investment processes, despite the fact that there are no principles for the functioning of the investment market, as provided by the legislation of Ukraine (Constitution of Ukraine).

Threats and risks to financial stability need to be anticipated for the future forecast of sustainable development. This minimizes their negative manifestation in the future or identifies ways to minimize the loss of their impact. Therefore, the main thing in the mechanism of financial security is to identify and structure events, phenomena and

processes that may be a threat to sustainable socio-economic development of the state and, accordingly, to meet the social needs of territorial communities. Threats need to be identified quickly so as not to trigger an intensification of the process.

The threat of loss of financial balance for the territorial community indicates, among other things, the insufficient level of legal support for the functioning of local self-government in the country. There are criteria by which you can identify the risks that arise in the legal field, namely:

1. Uncertainty of mechanisms for organizing the territorial communities' activities and clear economic rights. Therefore, it is difficult to fully realize their economic rights.
2. Inconsistency of the provisions of various legal acts. For example, local governments have such risks as: poor performance of powers, underfunding of territorial needs, incorrect redistribution of budget resources, hidden deficit of funds, credit indebtedness of local budgets.
3. Contradictory legal norms, namely the financial support of territorial communities (hromadas). A striking example is the administration of a single tax paid by local communities (hromadas), accrued to:
 - in 2014 - the special fund of local budgets;
 - in 2017 - the special fund of the State Budget of Ukraine;
 - other periods - the general fund of local budgets.

Territorial communities function as subjects of a single economic system, so they have a different type of threat to financial security. In particular, we can identify the following threats:

1. Dependence of current development financing volumes of territorial community on volumes of transfers in local budgets incomes;
2. Social instability among the population due to political events;
3. Depopulation of the territorial community population;
4. Weakening of the investment climate;
5. Significant probability of natural and man-made threats.

The source of threats to the territorial communities' financial security are external factors that regulate the economic policy of central authorities. The specialty of community functioning is to minimize the threats of internal factors. Such threats include:

1. Ineffective structure of the territorial economy.
2. Independent state of communal infrastructure, which exists in all regions of the country.
3. Insufficient resources for the development of territories and regions in general. In Ukraine, there are no public registers of communal property belonging to individual communities, for most settlements their territorial boundaries are not defined, the implementation of the mechanism of succession to communal property is not ensured. This situation, together with the lack of effective mechanisms for monitoring the activities of local authorities by local communities, leads to irrational use of communal property, inefficient economic activities of local councils, raids and mass illegal alienation of communal property (Teritorial community, 2016, p. 42).
4. Low level of financial literacy, social activity, public consciousness.
5. Lack of a strategic plan for the activities of local self-regulatory bodies.

The need to confront threats to the financial security of local communities is beyond doubt. The success of the implemented measures depends on the completeness and timeliness of their implementation, as well as on the clear awareness of financial security entities of such threats. Note that the list of threats to the economic and financial security of the state is contained in the National Security Strategy of Ukraine (Strategy 2015). With regard to financial security, regulations have not been considered, although this would reduce the number of threats. To improve the work and efficient use of funds, the evaluation of the development strategy was calculated, namely through a SWOT analysis. This indicator makes it possible to calculate the strengths and weaknesses of economic entities and identify threats to financial security. If the above actions are followed, the territorial communities (hromadas) will function effectively and fully perform their functions and tasks, and financial resources will be used for their intended purpose without corruption schemes and other threats.

Conclusion

In summary, decentralization is a key reform and mechanism for creating affluent territorial communities (hromadas) and ensuring sustainable regional development in Ukraine.

Priority issues that need to be addressed in the decentralization process are - determining the list of tasks (scope of functions) to be solved by the central government and those entrusted to local governments, as well as legislative consolidation of revenue sources needed to form their own budget resources for their implementation.

Therefore, there needs to be emphasized the need for all responsible persons to fulfil their functional responsibilities in order to improve the lives not only of their own territorial community (hromada), but also of the population of the state as a whole. It is not for nothing that local communities (hromadas) have created local self-government bodies to make it easier to assess the needs of a certain territory and monitor their implementation. Due to the introduction of budget policy on decentralization, the division of responsibilities for control and monitoring of financial security not only at the local level, but also at the national level, is relevant.

Since financial security is characterized by threats of various phenomena, events and processes that interfere with the effective functioning of local governments, the development of territorial communities (hromadas), strategic plans and calculations of possible threats, using the method of assessment of SWOT-analysis, which shows the strengths and weaknesses of the strategic development of financial security and possible threats, need to be applied.

Thus, there is a need to study and research this topic to improve the functioning of the system of monitoring the financial security and economic condition of the state and the united territorial communities, even in difficult political conditions. Such measures will make it possible to make a rational choice of the real needs of the territorial community (hromada), set realistic priorities, as well as promote a certain level of financial security and sustainable economic development in general.

Further research in this area is necessary to determine the tax potential of a particular administrative-territorial unit and the optimal scope of state functions, which are appropriate and cost-effective to delegate to the appropriate local level on a permanent basis, thus

translating them into their own functions of local government and ensuring real independence and financial security of territorial communities.

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