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## **ORIGINAL**

# Developing a system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations

# Desarrollo de un sistema de evaluación de las actividades de los organismos de la administración pública en materia de relaciones públicas

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article is devoted to the current problem of developing a high-quality, universal and effective system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations, taking into account the specific internal and external conditions of the existence of territorial entities of Ukraine. It is found out that the mission of the institute of public relations is the direct realization of the principles of democratic management in activity of public authority in the conditions of publicity, transparency, openness. It has been proved at the methodological level that relying on a high-quality public relations system, public authorities can make better use of communication and information opportunities to generate the necessary and/or acceptable public opinion on their activities, and, if necessary, organize appropriate monitoring of public opinion to adjust activities to existing or potential thoughts, by making public feedback mandatory. As a result of the synthesis of scientific, methodological and practical studies, the own clarified definitions of the concepts of "public" and "public relations" were provided. The main directions of public relations in local self-government bodies were formed and analyzed. A universal and effective system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations has been established. The main elements of the system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations were analysed. Public participation in decision-making requires an effective system with full transparency, engaged local leadership, strong feedback mechanisms, and community involvement in projects affecting diverse social groups.

Keywords: Public Administration; Relations System; Public Authority; Local Self-Government; Community.

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#### **RESUMEN**

El artículo está dedicado al problema actual del desarrollo de un sistema de alta calidad, universal y eficaz para la evaluación de las actividades de los órganos de la administración pública en las relaciones públicas, teniendo en cuenta las condiciones internas y externas específicas de la existencia de las entidades territoriales de Ucrania. Se ha descubierto que la misión del instituto de relaciones públicas es la realización directa de los principios de la gestión democrática en la actividad de la autoridad pública en las condiciones de publicidad, transparencia, apertura. Se ha demostrado a nivel metodológico que, apoyándose en un sistema de relaciones públicas de alta calidad, las autoridades públicas pueden aprovechar mejor las oportunidades de comunicación e información para generar la opinión pública necesaria y/o aceptable sobre sus actividades y, en caso necesario, organizar un seguimiento adecuado de la opinión pública para ajustar las actividades a las reflexiones existentes o potenciales, haciendo obligatoria la retroalimentación del público. Como resultado de la síntesis de los estudios científicos, metodológicos y prácticos, se proporcionaron las propias definiciones aclaradas de los conceptos de "público" y "relaciones públicas". Se formaron y analizaron las principales direcciones de las relaciones públicas en los órganos de autogobierno local. Se ha establecido un sistema universal y eficaz para evaluar las actividades de los órganos de la administración pública en materia de relaciones públicas. Se analizaron los principales elementos del sistema de evaluación de las actividades de los órganos de la administración pública en materia de relaciones públicas. La participación pública en la toma de decisiones requiere un sistema eficaz con total transparencia, un liderazgo local comprometido, sólidos mecanismos de retroalimentación y la implicación de la comunidad en proyectos que afecten a diversos grupos sociales.

Palabras clave: Administración Pública; Sistema de Relaciones; Autoridad Pública; Autogobierno Local; Comunidad.

#### INTRODUCTION

Current public administration processes, in their current sense, are primarily the consistent implementation of development and decision-making, the proper organization of implementation, the coordination of progress and the full monitoring of their successful and full implementation. A reference should be made that all these processes are impossible without qualitative and professional information support in the form of statistical, predictive and analytical information provided by state authorities, which is a prerequisite for the normal functioning of the state mechanism, while the lack or excess of information, its inaccuracy, partiality and untimeness can lead to suboptimal decisions and unpredictable negative and sometimes catastrophic consequences. In recent years, the main direction in management activities for the state authorities has been to work with socially significant information. Therefore, the role of public relations in this aspect is highlighted - to be an indicator of socially significant information about the activities of authorities. (1,2,3) Another important component of the institution of public relations in state authorities is the construction of a positive image of the authorities and the image of public administration in general. Thus, it is possible to formulate the main mission of institute of public relations, which consist in direct realization of the principles of democratic management in activity of public authority in the conditions of publicity, transparency, openness. Therefore, the problem arises of developing a universal and effective system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations, which will contribute to the harmonization of relations between society and authority and will become the basis for the stability of the state and an important component of its political and socioeconomic development.

The problem of forming an effective mechanism for the activities of the public relations service in public administration is the central place of many scientific, methodological and practical works of famous scientists from various fields of sciences, such as: V. Ladychenko, H.M. Shaulska, I. Bekeshkina, V. Yablonskyi, T. Andriuchenko, H. Ahafonova, O. Karchevska, H. Avanesova, O.S. Mordovtsev, V. Kozakov, O. Rashkovska and others, A.V. Sierikov, N. Bowles, O. Korniievskyi, H. V. Marchuk, I. Lozytska, O. Nepomnyashchyy, O. Marusheva et al., A.V. Romanenko, O.A. Diegtiar, A.P. Lelechko, N.S. Orlova and others, A.Yu. Gevorkyan, O.S. Druhova, S.V. Klepikova, V.V. Kruhlov and others. The above-mentioned scientists achieved significant results in the methodological basis and practical justification of assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations, but the issues of developing a unified and universal system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations remain unresolved.

The purpose of the article is to develop a universal and effective system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations, taking into account the changing political and socio-economic situation in Ukraine. In order to achieve this purpose, the objectives are as follows:

- - to synthesize scientific, methodological and practical studies and provide the own clarified definitions of the concepts of "public" and "public relations";
    - to form the main directions of public relations in local self-government bodies;
  - to develop a universal and effective system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations:
  - to review the main elements of the system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations.

Modern means of communication, receiving, processing, and disseminating information have created qualitatively new possibilities for the functioning of both the individual and society in the context of the irreversible globalization of world politics. (21,22,23,24,25) This situation of affairs leads to a tendency that all the accompanying processes of this globalization (economic, political, social, etc.) depend on information globalization, which provides an irreversible momentum (desired or undesirable) to unite existing, including national-state, information systems into a single global information infrastructure. (4,26,27,28) The optimization of information processes, the strengthening of the role of communicative factors, and focused management influences increase the importance of civil society in the general system of public administration.

#### **METHOD**

This study is observational descriptive research aimed at developing a universal and effective system for assessing the public relations activities of public administration bodies in the specific conditions of Ukraine. The study included a synthesis of scientific, methodological and practical research, as well as an analysis of existing public relations systems in state and local governments. (5)

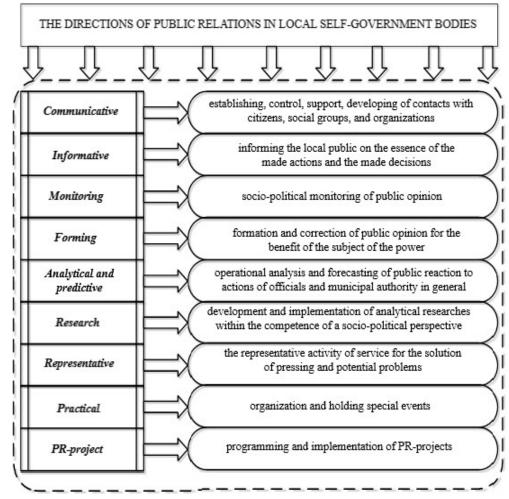
Data were collected from various sources, including government reports, academic literature and public opinion polls. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to summarize and understand patterns and trends in the activities of state government and their impact on public relations. (6,7,8,9) Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between various variables such as level of public involvement and performance of public administration. It should be noted that here, according to the Law of Ukraine "On Social Associations", civil society organizations can act as "public and trade unions and their associations, creative unions, employers' organizations, and their associations, charitable, volunteer and religious organizations, self-organization bodies of the population, the unification of owners of residential and non-residential premises of an apartment building, separate subdivisions of foreign non-governmental organizations and other legal persons of private law or organizations without the status of a legal person, registered in accordance with the procedure established by law, the purpose of which is to protect the rights and freedoms of a person and citizen or exclusively their members, representation of the interests of members of a separate territorial community or provision of social and other socially significant services without the purpose of profit".(29)

The study also utilized factor analysis to identify the underlying factors that contribute to the success or failure of public relations efforts in local and state governments. Regression analysis was applied to assess the predictive power of these factors on the effectiveness of public relations efforts in state government. The results of this analysis were used to develop the proposed evaluation framework. This study conformed to ethical principles of research using open data and information. Because the study relied primarily on publicly available data and secondary sources, there was no direct interaction with human participants and therefore informed consent was not required. However, all data used in the study was treated with confidentiality to ensure that sensitive information was not disclosed. The study was conducted with the approval of the relevant academic and governmental bodies to ensure ethical compliance.

The introduction of public relations in public administration should begin at the level of local authorities. It is effective work with members of territorial communities that is the key to the success and effectiveness of the entire public relations system of the state. It should be noted that the activities of public relations in municipal authorities are largely the same as in state authorities, and differences arise from their specific functional duties, as well as from territorial limitations. Current trends show that the need for this activity is constantly and steadily growing in local authorities. The reasons for this are a direct consequence of the democratic transformation of Ukrainian civil society, which caused significant changes in social activity, and also put the authorities before the need to take into account the opinion of the population on work, its level of professionalism, and competence.

# **RESULTS**

In order to develop the system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations effectively, it is necessary, first of all, to develop common directions for its work at the local level (figure 1). The practical experience of the public relations service at the local government level shows that the focus is on regular information activities, that is, rapid public information on current activities and decisions of local authorities, as well as on prospects and plans. Most often, this involves the capabilities of local media (district, city newspapers, radio stations, cable TV channels), as well as external media (stands, posters, bulletin boards), since the state media are almost impossible to use in this regard due to the limited importance of the information occasion for a wide, and not only a local audience. Recently, Internet communications have been used actively and effectively in the implementation of the information policy of local authorities, primarily the official website and blog.



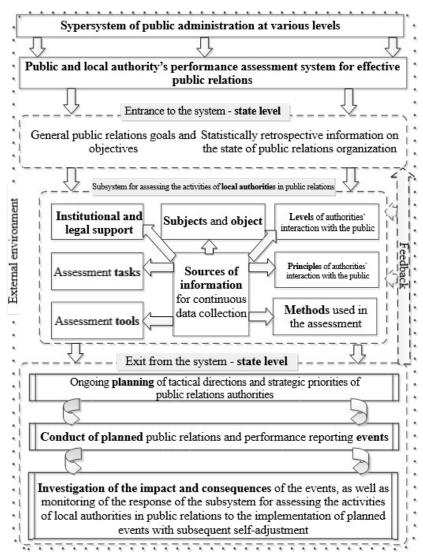
**Figure 1.** Formation of the main directions of public relations in local self-government bodies **Source:** author's development based on<sup>(10,11,12,30,31)</sup>

It should be noted that the individual components and elements of the system for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations, developed in figure 2, require additional explanations, clarifications and generalizations to increase the overall and practical value of the result.

The general goals and objectives of public relations can be formulated as follows:

- carrying out a continuous and focused assessment and analysis of the socio-political situation in the state and forecasting its development;
- on the basis of an assessment and analysis of the existing data bank, certain practical conclusions, specific recommendations that the administration needs to formulate policies, make informed management decisions, determine ways of influencing the socio-political situation of both individual territorial communities and the state as a whole;
- ensuring the interaction of the authority with political parties, social organizations, trade unions, other non-profit associations and individual members of the community with practical assistance in carrying out their legitimate activities.

Statistically retrospective information on the state of public relations organization is necessary for planning and forecasting of the following strategic and tactical events, which will be implemented by state and local services. As shown above, the basis for the successful and effective implementation of public relations events in public administration needs to be optimized at the local level. Therefore, figure 2 introduces a subsystem that is aimed at assessing the activities of local authorities in public relations, and which in turn consists of the following elements.



**Figure 2.** System for assessing the activities of public administration bodies in public relations **Source:** author's development based on<sup>(8-30)</sup>

- 1. Institutional and legal support is based on the practical application of laws and regulations to determine the legality of measures carried out by the local public relations service. Ukrainian legislation applies various means and mechanisms to regulate the activities of the public relations service in order to adopt and implement the social and economic policies necessary for the state, implement targeted programmes, integrate Ukraine into the world community and observe the overall policy course.
- 2. The subjects of the developed system can be considered state and local authorities, public organizations, trade unions, non-profit associations, individual members of the community. The object is the activities of the state and local authorities in the direction of interaction with the public.
- 3. The classification and characteristics of the levels of interaction with the public necessary for the success of the local service are provided in table 1.

	1. Levels of authorities` interaction with the public	
Interaction level	Interaction level name	Short description of the level of interaction with the public
I level		This level is essentially a one-sided relationship, through which the local authority service provides information on the development, adoption and implementation of decisions at the national and local levels to the public, as well as determines the mechanisms for the participation of members of the community and public organizations in the formation and implementation of policies in various areas of life.
II level		This type of communicative interaction is characterized by a possibility of providing comments, remarks, offers from the public on drafts of decisions of the state and local authority and also carrying out consultations with civil society concerning the course of realization already approved and introductions of already complete projects.

III level	with the authorities on	This level of interaction consists in the inclusion (involvement) in full membership (working groups, expert councils, etc.) in the process of developing decisions and projects of representatives of civil society
IV level	J 1	High level of interaction, which is characterized by mutual exchange of various kinds of resources between state and local authorities and the public (delegation of a certain type of services, joint organization of events, etc.)

- 4. Based on the elements identified above, the four objectives of the assessment of the local public service can be set out:
  - to find out the impact of the public service on the four levels defined in table 1;
  - to review the implementation of events on the level of interaction between the authorities and the public
    - to develop a list of recommendations to improve the activities of the public service;
  - to send the results of the assessment of the public relations service to the authorized state authority.
- 5. The principles of government interaction with the public, tools and methods used in assessing authorities` interaction with the public are described in table 2.

	<b>Table 2.</b> Principles, tools and methods used in assessing the interaction of the authorities with the public					
No.	Name	Short description				
1. Pri	nciples of author	rities` interaction with the public				
1.1	Transparency	Open access to public information, civil society information on project design and implementation, systematic reporting				
1.2	Competence	Continuous compliance with standards of public professionalism, ability to adopt sound projects, high professional and ethical qualifications of public officials				
1.3	Openness	Implementation of mechanisms for public access to policy development at all stages of the process				
1.4	Impartiality	Equal rights of all members of the community and civil society organizations in policy-making and to avoid any discrimination				
1.5	Consistency	Continuous operational public engagement planning with long-term strategic objectives				
1.6	Responsibility	Creation of an effective information branch for the public, where information on the events and activities of the authority will be submitted in a timely manner and have the properties of completeness and accuracy				
1.7	Virtue	Prevention of any corruption in public administration, compliance with general ethical standards				
2. Ass	2. Assessment tools					
2.1	Socio-political	<ul> <li>collection of statistical information on different categories of the population and its systematization;</li> <li>study of the views of different segments of the population;</li> <li>interaction with political parties, public associations, religious organizations, etc.;</li> <li>monitoring of social tensions at the municipal and state levels;</li> <li>preparation of annual analytical reports for administration, including statistical materials and indicators of urban development;</li> <li>comparative analysis of the results of sociological surveys, the formation of data banks, ensuring their storage</li> </ul>				
2.2	Media engagement tools	<ul> <li>transparent media coverage of the city administration;</li> <li>development of programs to improve the image of local authorities;</li> <li>posting of materials on the activities of the community administration;</li> <li>creation and support of attractiveness (including investment), the prestige of territorial entity;</li> <li>content analysis of the press;</li> <li>other contacts with the media</li> </ul>				
3. Me	thods for assessi	ment				
3.1	Analysis	<ul> <li>normative legal acts;</li> <li>official records, letters, minutes of meetings and proceedings, as well as statistics;</li> <li>public reports and data provided by relevant public organizations;</li> <li>official website of the authority;</li> </ul>				
3.2	Interview	- individual (including narrative interviews); - group				
3.3	Discussion	Often used so-called "focus-group" discussions (a qualitative method of collecting sociological information in homogeneous groups, which has a focus of discussion, with the participation of the host, based on the principles of group dynamics) <sup>(16)</sup>				

6. Sources of information for continuous data collection are the basis for providing the above system elements with information resources.

Thus, the assessment of local authorities' public relations activities is a key element in enabling the exit of the system to carry out a continuous process of planning tactical directions and strategic priorities of the authorities' public relations activities. On the basis of this planning, public relations events are carried out and reports are made on the results of the services of each territorial entity. After that, studies of the impact and consequences of the events should be carried out, as well as control of the subsystem's reaction to the implementation of planned events with subsequent self-adjustment. Attention should also be paid to the presence of constant feedback in the developed system, which provides the possibility of correction and improving both the entire system and its individual elements. (15,32,33,34,35) Thus, it can be concluded that public involvement in the process of discussion and decision-making is possible only with the effective operation of the developed system subject to the following conditions:

- to fully inform both the public at large and individual project task forces and the ongoing activities of the authorities at all levels;
- the interest of senior local administration in improving the mechanisms of the public relations service:
  - organization of an effective feedback mechanism;
- involving the public in the discussion and implementation of projects related to the interests of different social groups and individual members of the community.

#### DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of public relations in enhancing democratic governance and strengthening the relationship between society and public authorities. The development of a universal and effective system for assessing the public relations activities of public administration bodies is crucial, especially given Ukraine's unique political and socio-economic context. By refining key concepts such as "public" and "public relations," the study emphasizes the importance of active community participation in state activities. The identification of the main directions of public relations in local self-government underscores the need for public administration to adopt a strategic, rather than auxiliary, approach to public relations. The assessment system proposed in this study, which spans both state and local levels, underlines the significance of establishing robust feedback mechanisms and encouraging diverse public involvement in decision-making processes that affect various social groups. These insights underscore the imperative for a well-structured public relations framework to promote transparency, accountability, and trust between citizens and their governing institutions.

It should be clear that modern public relations are not an auxiliary area of public administration, and on the contrary, according to many experts, it acquires independent competence and an active constructive orientation in the local self-government, since public relations institutions of state and municipal governments are the main tool for monitoring social interests, based on which informed and effective management decisions are made, without which public integration and balance of interests are inconceivable. (13,14,36,37,38)

Ahafonova H and Karchevska O<sup>(6)</sup> examined the impact of mass communication on global politics, focusing on how socio-political media shape political realities for citizens. Researches highlighted the growing influence of social networks, which are trusted more than traditional political institutions. Their study also discusses technological advancements in media, such as robotic journalism, which can lead to manipulative influences and information overload. It underscores concerns about information security, noting that modern information warfare can exploit states with inadequate national security capabilities. The research suggests that advancements in information and communication technologies will enhance political transparency and build trust between political actors and citizens.

Sierikov AV<sup>(9)</sup> analyzed how a regional economy can be affected by a shortage of highly skilled workers. The authors used cyclic causative diagrams and nonlinear differential equations to model the "supply/demand" dynamics in the regional labor market, highlighting its imbalance. The study suggests that regional authorities can address this issue by leveraging internally displaced persons (migrants) to fill the labor gap, given their skills match regional needs. To manage this effectively, the paper recommends measures such as tax incentives for employers and socio-economic benefits for migrants, like free education and affordable housing. By applying synergetic control theory to manage the "demand/supply + management" system, the paper argues that it's possible to stabilize the labor market and boost regional economic recovery.

Nepomnyashchyy OM et al. (14) explored ways to enhance public administration of educational institutions to boost their competitiveness. Scientists reviewed recent regulatory changes, including the Ukrainian Law "On Higher Education," which introduced academic mobility, autonomy, and virtuous practices. Key issues in Ukraine's higher education system include inadequate management mechanisms, inefficient financing, and incomplete implementation of academic autonomy. (39,40,41,42,43) The paper analyzes approaches to reform, highlighting the need for a more flexible public administration system and a rating system for universities to better allocate state funds. This rating could improve educational quality, research, and partnerships. However, challenges like insufficient funding and low faculty salaries remain. The authors recommend increasing effectiveness through financial partnerships, collaboration with businesses, and improving grant systems and international cooperation.

Kruhlov V and Tereshchenko D<sup>(20)</sup> investigated how public-private partnerships (PPP) can enhance labor potential in the modern labor market. The authors focused on the interaction between public and private capital and their economic and social goals. Researchers found that successful PPP projects can stimulate labor capacity and address social issues by improving service quality and creating opportunities for highly qualified specialists. They concluded that state policies should focus on establishing a strong legislative framework, effective economic mechanisms, and modern standards to support PPP development and strengthen labor potential.

Thus, the development of a comprehensive assessment system for evaluating the public relations activities of public administration bodies is essential, especially given the unique political and socio-economic context of the country. By refining key conceptual definitions and identifying the main directions of public relations at the local level, the study highlights the need for public administration to adopt a strategic, rather than auxiliary, approach to public relations. The proposed assessment framework, encompassing both state and local levels, underscores the significance of establishing robust feedback mechanisms and encouraging diverse public involvement in decision-making processes that affect various social groups. These insights underscore the imperative for a well-structured public relations framework to promote transparency, accountability, and trust between citizens and their governing institutions. Ultimately, the success of public relations services relies on comprehensive information dissemination, strong feedback loops, and active public participation in projects that impact diverse communities, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of public administration and democratic governance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study addresses the challenge of developing a universal and effective system for assessing public administration bodies in public relations within Ukraine's unique context. By refining key concepts such as "public" and "public relations," the study emphasizes the importance of active community participation in state activities. It also identifies the main directions of public relations in local self-government, crucial for achieving operational and strategic goals in management and institutional interactions with civil society. The developed assessment system, which includes state and local levels, highlights the importance of effective public participation in decision-making. The study concludes that the success of public relations services relies on comprehensive information dissemination, strong feedback mechanisms, and active public involvement in projects affecting diverse social groups. These findings underscore the need for a well-structured public relations framework to enhance democratic governance and strengthen the relationship between society and public authorities.

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# **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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