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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF UKRAINE IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALTHCARE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT: ANALYSIS OF MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

**Abstract.** *The article notes that the international community has provided Ukraine with significant funding for reforming many areas of public life and improving the public administration system. In particular, significant results have been achieved in the field of healthcare thanks to the implementation of the medical reform. International organizations have been active partners in the reform. It has been established that for the first time the issue of international technical cooperation, in which the Ukrainian state acted as a full participant in international interaction, was implemented at the state level in the legal field in 1999 at the initiative of the President of Ukraine. Subsequently, a number of other regulatory legal acts were adopted that regulate issues in the field of international technical assistance. The Ukrainian state mainly receives international technical assistance and implements it on the basis of a project approach. The main subject here, which has the relevant powers, is the Government of Ukraine and a number of central government bodies. It was found that in the area of coordination of the implementation of such projects, the weak point is the direction of effective management of international aid projects. It was determined that one of the subjects of public administration that irregularly reports to the government is the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. This was a consequence of the inconsistency of the current regulatory framework, which currently lacks, in the context of public administration, a methodology for analyzing the impact of project results and their implementation on the functioning of the health care system and its future results. It was determined that the assessment is carried out by comparing the goals of international aid projects with the goals of state programs, and a prospective assessment of expected changes is not carried out due to the lack of methodological tools in the field of public and sectoral management.*

**Key words:** *public administration, international aid, cooperation, project monitoring, project implementation analysis, performance reporting, healthcare.*

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## МІЖНАРОДНЕ СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВО УКРАЇНИ В КОНТЕКСТІ РОЗВИТКУ ГАЛУЗИ ОХОРОНИ ЗДОРОВ'Я: АНАЛІЗ ПРОБЛЕМ УПРАВЛІННЯ

**Анотація.** *У статті зазначається, що міжнародне співтовариство надало Україні значне фінансування для реформування багатьох сфер суспільного життя та вдосконалення системи державного управління. Зокрема, значних результатів було досягнуто у сфері охорони здоров'я завдяки впровадженню медичної реформи. Активними партнерами реформування виступали міжнародні організації. Встановлено, що уперше питання міжнародного технічного співробітництва, в якому українська держава виступила як повноправний учасник міжнародної взаємодії, було імплементовано на державному рівні у правовому полі у 1999 році за ініціативи Президента України. Надалі було прийнято низку інших нормативно-правових актів, які регулюють питання у сфері міжнародної технічної допомоги. Українська держава, переважно отримує міжнародну технічну допомогу й реалізує її на засадах проектного підходу. Головним суб'єктом тут, який має відповідні повноваження, виступає уряд України та низка центральних органів влади. Встановлено,*

що у сфері координації щодо реалізації таких проєктів слабким місцем є напрям ефективного управління проєктами міжнародної допомоги. Визначено, що одним із суб'єктів державного управління, який нерегулярно звітує перед урядом, є Міністерство охорони здоров'я України. Це стало наслідком неузгодженості чинної нормативно-правової бази, в якій на даний час бракує в контексті державного управління методології аналізу впливу результатів проєкту та їх впровадження на функціонування системи охорони здоров'я та її майбутні результати. Визначено, що оцінка здійснюється шляхом порівняння цілей проєктів міжнародної допомоги з цілями державних програм, а перспективна оцінка очікуваних змін не проводиться через відсутність методологічного інструментарію у сфері державного та галузевого управління.

**Ключові слова:** державне управління, міжнародна допомога, співробітництво, моніторинг проєктів, аналіз виконання проєктів, звітність за результатами діяльності, охорона здоров'я.

**Statement of the research problem.** The formation and development of healthcare systems in any country primarily depend on constitutionally established state priorities and the political will of its leadership. However, over time, strategic approaches to health promotion and the provision of medical services may evolve under the influence of various factors. Moreover, the impact of global initiatives on the healthcare sector, both globally and in Ukraine, has become increasingly significant in light of geopolitical events and societal transformations (Decree of the President of Ukraine, 2022). Notably, the models of public administration for healthcare services differ markedly between the pre-COVID period and the era of full-scale war. Furthermore, the national model of healthcare governance during Ukraine's post-war reconstruction will likely involve additional managerial innovations.

In this context, it is difficult to disagree with T. Semyhina's assertion that the concept of "health" in contemporary conditions should be understood as a complex medico-biological, social, philosophical, and economic category, which simultaneously serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of public administration (Semyhina T., 2019). We fully support this distinguished researcher's perspective that, in the current crisis conditions – including the recent pandemic and ongoing war – the quality of healthcare governance reflects the overall state and effectiveness of public administration. This viewpoint underscores the relevance of the proposed research topic.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** An analysis of numerous scientific studies, monographs, and dissertations devoted to the organization of international technical assistance in the development of Ukraine's healthcare sector reveals that this issue has received insufficient attention from domestic scholars. This gap highlights significant opportunities for further research in this field.

In his work, K. Plosky emphasizes the lack of systematic research in this domain, pointing out the fragmented study of international technical assistance and the need for further interdisciplin-

ary investigations. This need is particularly acute given the relevance of the topic amidst ongoing social transformations in Ukraine (Ploskyi, K., 2013).

The limited body of research available on this topic suggests that scholarly attention has predominantly focused on specific aspects of public administration and the management of international technical assistance, including the conditions, procedures, and principles of its provision, as well as the financial and expert support for implementing international technical assistance projects (Voitovych, R., 2007; Lozovytskyi, O., 2011; Kovbasiuk, Yu., 2005).

In particular, Professor Yu.V. Kovbasiuk, in his examination of Ukraine's economic cooperation with international organizations, emphasized the necessity of improving the principles of public governance in Ukraine's collaboration with international financial institutions (Kovbasiuk, Yu., 2005). According to his analysis, such principles serve as the foundation for introducing new procedures for preparing and implementing projects aimed at the economic and social development of Ukraine. He further underscored the importance of developing a state strategy for engaging with international financial institutions in the context of Ukraine's structural economic transformation. Central to this process, as Kovbasiuk argued, are state mechanisms designed to create an effective system of international cooperation, which facilitates the country's economic transformation (Kovbasiuk, Yu., 2005).

Building on these ideas to improve public administration mechanisms in the field of international technical assistance for economic transformation, it is equally important to address the development of the social sphere—particularly the healthcare sector—in the context of international cooperation. For example, domestic researcher K.I. Antonyuk, focusing primarily on aspects of international technical assistance in implementing Ukraine's priority reforms, highlighted the need to enhance the system for monitoring projects conducted by government agencies and local authorities. She explained that monitoring priority sec-

tors, such as transport, energy, agriculture, and healthcare, is an extraordinarily complex process due to the multifaceted, intricate, and often ambiguous nature of the impacts of international technical assistance (ITA). Antonyuk also pointed out the lack of correlation between these impacts and broader indicators of economic development in the country (Antonyuk, K., 2018).

**Research objective.** This study aims to analyze the current state of the public mechanism for coordinating international technical assistance directed toward the development and support of Ukraine's healthcare system. Through the lens of activities undertaken by government agencies, local authorities, and sectoral management institutions, the study seeks to propose improvements to public administration practices in this field.

**The main part of the study.** Investigating the current global health crisis, some scholars emphasize that it is the result of the lack of proper coordination in the management system. As Lozovytskyi notes, there is no proper coordination "primarily with the management of systems, not diseases" (Lozovytskyi, O., 2011). The unbalanced actions of various structures involved in the health management process have led to inequality in the right to health care, inequality in access to high-quality and safe services at the global level of management. The period of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a litmus test, identified the inability of national-level management structures to adequately confront modern challenges in the public health system. That is why the aspect of international cooperation and the regulation of public relations in this sector require a better understanding.

Engaging international investment in Ukraine's economy is a critical issue in public administration. Consequently, at the current stage, a priority direction for improving governance mechanisms in this area is the implementation of e-governance tools (Nepomnyashchyi, O., 2017).

As we can see, the focus on the organizational aspects of attracting and monitoring international technical assistance for Ukraine remains underdeveloped in the theoretical and applied dimensions of public administration and management. This fully applies to the management of international technical assistance provided to meet the needs of Ukraine's national healthcare system. Therefore, the aforementioned considerations justify the need for further research aimed at enhancing governance mechanisms for organizing and distributing international technical assistance. This issue is particularly significant during martial law and the post-war reconstruction process, as substantial international technical assistance is directed to

Ukraine during this period to support and develop the healthcare sector.

As noted earlier, inequality in access to healthcare services directly affects the quality of life, which is determined by the conditions in which people are born, live, and age. A key indicator in this context is the equality of conditions under which the healthcare system operates for various social groups, as well as the provision of protection against the adverse consequences of health deterioration. This issue is especially relevant for individuals requiring medical care, as well as for internally displaced persons and war refugees temporarily residing abroad and receiving medical support from international organizations.

It is important to emphasize that international technical assistance projects and their donors pay significant attention to "developing institutional capacity" and "enhancing the professional competencies of administrative personnel" to achieve the goals of cooperation. The importance of this direction has increased following the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, and it has gained even greater relevance during the full-scale Russian aggression. Ukraine's geopolitical position, social transformations, and proclaimed course toward European integration have spurred numerous initiatives aimed at technical, professional, and scientific-technological support, including the reform of the healthcare system in Ukraine.

In the historical context, it can be noted that the need for regulatory and legal support for the regulation of international technical assistance arose quite a long time ago, and for the first time the conceptual construct "international technical assistance" (ITA) was reflected in the administrative documents of the National Agency, where it was defined as "resources provided donor countries, international organizations, foundations and non-governmental institutions on a free basis for the purpose of implementing reforms and programs of socio-economic development of Ukraine". Later, at the level of state authorities, the President of Ukraine issued a special decree "On international technical assistance" in 1999, in the content of which ITA was defined as resources. In this document, for the first time in the history of the independent development of our country, the definition of international technical assistance (ITA) was given as "resources that, in accordance with international treaties of Ukraine, are provided by donors to Ukraine free of charge for the implementation of programs, projects of international technical assistance with the aim of carrying out reforms and implementing programs of social and

economic development of Ukraine” (Decree of the President of Ukraine № 596/1999). Further development of this concept was enshrined in the legal field by a resolution of the Government of Ukraine in 2002, in which international technical assistance is defined as “funds, other resources and services provided by donors on a free and non-refundable basis in accordance with international treaties of Ukraine with the aim of supporting Ukraine” (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Resolution of February 15, 2002 № 153). That is, the content of the concept began to include not only resources, but also the sphere of services. Later, the concept of ITA received its legal implementation in various spheres of social and socio-economic activity. This became possible on the basis of the development of the legal mechanism of state administration, and the subjects of the formation of the legal mechanism of state administration of ITA, most often, were the following institutions:

- National Agency of Ukraine for Reconstruction and Development, State Customs Service of Ukraine;
- National Agency of Ukraine for Development and European Integration, State Tax Administration of Ukraine;
- President of Ukraine;
- State Treasury of Ukraine;
- Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine;
- Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine;
- Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

The Government of Ukraine, as the highest executive authority, has established procedures for the state registration of international projects within their economic focus. It is important to emphasize that the state management of international technical assistance is based on a programmatic approach. Accordingly, the resolution provides definitions for key terms such as “program,” “annual program,” and “strategic program.” A program is defined as “a series of projects aimed at achieving a common goal,” while a project is described as “the collaborative efforts of participants (donors, implementers, beneficiaries, and recipients) along with the necessary resources to achieve the objective of delivering international technical assistance, including co-financing from other sources, within a specified timeframe. This framework indicates that the state’s management of international technical assistance is implemented through a targeted, program-based methodology.

The Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine plays a pivotal role in developing both strategic and annual programs of international

technical assistance. Acting as the coordinating body for the executive branch’s efforts to attract international technical assistance, it ensures that submitted requests align with key strategic documents such as the Government Action Plan, the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, the European Atomic Energy Community and its Member States, the Regional Development Strategy, and other foundational strategic documents for Ukraine’s development. From a practical perspective, prioritizing the analysis of these requests’ consistency with the tasks and activities outlined in the Register of International Technical Assistance Projects is essential. Comprehensive information on these projects can be accessed through online information search systems.

The organizational foundation for public administration in the field of international technical assistance projects is provided by the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. This body has the authority to initiate the creation of sectoral working groups composed of representatives from relevant state agencies, beneficiaries, and donors. These groups evaluate, review, and approve submitted requests while addressing other issues related to the attraction and utilization of international technical assistance.

According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine, in 2018, 137 international technical assistance projects, provided by international organizations and valued at approximately \$3.3 billion, were planned for implementation in Ukraine. Of these, 29 projects in the healthcare sector amounted to \$137 million. This trend of prioritizing international donor funding for the development of the national healthcare system has persisted to the present day. The largest financial contributions to Ukraine’s healthcare sector development are provided by the partners listed in Table 1.

As of April 2023, the EU Delegation website (EU Delegation EU del projects, 2023) reported the implementation of 250 projects. However, no reports or detailed information about these projects have been published, with the last available report dating back to 2014.

Between 2018 and 2023, the EU implemented 236 projects in Ukraine, with a total budget of €429 million, of which only 10 were in the healthcare sector. One notable healthcare project was the €3 million initiative “*Support for Ukraine in Developing a Modern Healthcare System*”.

International support for Ukraine’s healthcare sector primarily focuses on strengthening the public health system’s capacity. At the central

Table 1

**Characteristics of the largest volumes of international technical assistance to Ukraine  
in the field of health care**

| Subject of international assistance in the field of health care | Legal framework for providing international assistance | Number of projects in the field of healthcare | Total amount of international assistance provided for the project/s (USD) |
|---|--|---|---|
| United States   | Cooperation Strategy                                   | 13  | 95 280 136  |
| European Union  | Strategic Assistance Program                           | 8   | 10 456 344  |
| Swiss Confederation   | Cooperation Strategy                                   | 1   | 5 062 909   |
| European Bank for Reconstruction and Development                | Operation Strategy                                     | 1   | 360 167   |
| UNDP  | Sustainable Development Strategy                       | 1   | 300 000   |
| <b>Total</b>  | -  | <b>24</b>                                     | <b>111 459 556</b>  |

Source: Compiled by the author for the ITA Monitoring Report 1st Half of 2019 ([https://issuu.com/mineconomdev/docs/\\_1\\_2019](https://issuu.com/mineconomdev/docs/_1_2019))

governance level, the executive authority within this system is led by the Public Health Center of Ukraine. Additionally, the project encompasses the development of a modern blood safety system in Ukraine as part of its healthcare initiatives.

A significant contribution to strengthening Ukraine's healthcare system is made by the United Nations and its numerous specialized agencies, such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, UNODC, WHO and IOM (WHO Ukraine Office, 2016–2019). According to the ProAid website (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2023), 12 projects across various sectors are listed, but only one project pertains to the healthcare sector: "Strengthening National Capacity for Effective HIV/AIDS Epidemic Response in Ukraine."

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine enhances local capacity in various areas, including healthcare system reform. This direction is being implemented through the funded project "EU Support for Eastern Ukraine: Recovery, Peacebuilding, and Governance." Support for healthcare reform accounts for approximately €6.7 million through 2021.

According to numerous information sources, the World Bank has also invested \$1.02 billion in Ukraine for the implementation of three healthcare-related projects. Unfortunately, more detailed information could not be found in any national database or registry (World Bank, 2023). This lack of detailed records highlights the fragmented coordination mechanisms within Ukraine's public administration. Consequently, state executive authorities lack comprehensive information on the impact of international assistance on the healthcare system and the resources expended at national, regional, or even local levels.

Given these circumstances, it can be inferred that international technical and professional support for developing healthcare systems and providing quality medical services is financed at a level comparable to the budgetary allocations for enterprises in this sector, including public and municipal nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, data on projects that are either unregistered or implemented exclusively in specific regions through international cooperation initiatives led by local territorial communities or municipal authorities remain unavailable.

It should be noted that all international technical assistance projects have ultimately had a positive impact on both national and local health policies. This includes the adoption of national and regional regulatory acts (such as local health programs) addressing specific healthcare issues; advocacy for health-related principles and standards; improvements in diagnostic and treatment methodologies; and the development of knowledge and skills among healthcare professionals and the general population. These outcomes deserve recognition and commendation.

This conclusion is supported by various descriptive monitoring reports on project implementation facilitated by nongovernmental organizations. The beneficiaries of these projects include Ukrainian state authorities, notably the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and its structural units, such as the Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health, the National Health Service of Ukraine, the eHealth Agency, the State Procurement Agency, and others.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** Thus, it can be asserted that Ukraine possesses a potentially capable organizational structure for public administration to coordinate

international technical assistance. Additionally, the national regulatory framework for aligning government objectives with those of international technical assistance can be considered sufficiently developed. However, the registration of international technical assistance projects within the Ukrainian context remains practically voluntary and excessively complex. This creates adverse conditions whereby a certain number of international technical assistance projects provided by international partners are excluded from governmental coordination.

It has been determined that the leading institutions in Ukraine for international technical assistance are: National Agency of Ukraine for Reconstruction and Development, State Customs Service of Ukraine; National Agency of Ukraine for Development and European Integration, State Tax Administration of Ukraine; President of Ukraine; State Treasury of Ukraine; Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine; Ministry of Economic Development and

Trade of Ukraine; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

This issue is particularly evident in the transparency of international health sector projects involving the Ministry of Health of Ukraine as the primary beneficiary. Furthermore, the current regulatory framework does not specify a clear mechanism for analyzing the expected outcomes of projects or assessing how project implementation affects the functioning and future performance of the healthcare system. At present, evaluations are predominantly conducted by comparing the goals and objectives of international assistance projects as perceived by the national partner in international cooperation.

Therefore, in our view, this area within public administration requires substantial development and improvement. The aim should be to align more closely with European standards for international cooperation and reporting on the outcomes of implemented international technical assistance projects.

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