Research Article

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC AS A FACTOR IN LOWERING THE RISK OF CORRUPTION

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Summary: 1. Introduction. – 2. Methods: How to Exit the Circle of Particularism with the Help of Communications. – 3. Communications in Preventing Government Vulnerabilities to Corrupt Practices (based on Robert Klitgaard's anti-corruption methodology). – 4. The 'Island of Integrity™' Methodology: The Ukrainian Experience. – 5. Results and Conclusions.

ABSTRACT

What seems necessary to reduce corruption is not the imposition of anti-corruption policies, which has an influence, but the building of an anti-corruption culture to envisage rejection of corrupt practices both on the personal and at any level of state or local government. The public control of authorities, the request for which is formed by the anti-corruption culture,

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can be realised via well-running communications between the authorities and the public and their professional management. The authorities lacking transparency increases both the risks of corrupt practices and the faith in institutions being lost. The article describes the role communications have in implementing steps to get out of the loop of particularism and presents a plan for the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy in the field of public administration by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi. The role of communications in the implementation of Robert Klitgaard's anti-corruption methodology based on the corruption formula is also presented: $C = M + D\text{-}A\ /T$, where M stands for monopoly, D is for discretion, and A/T is for accountability/transparency. The author presents the results of the 'Islands of Integrity ™' anti-corruption project, implemented by the United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Program and funded by the EU. In 2020, the 'Islands of Integrity ™' anti-corruption methodology was implemented in six communities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (East part of Ukraine). The author of the article was involved in sociological research conducted in six communities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (April-July 2020), which revealed a lack of public interest and confidence in the official channels to inform the population about the activities of local authorities. Local residents prefer to receive information about the activities of local authorities from informal channels of communication (including from local government officials) than from official sources. This leads to the spreading of rumours and defamation, which enhances the decline in the level of public trust. The reason for this is the low professional level of communications management, the lack of research on the media preferences of local residents, and, as a consequence, the inefficient communication activities of local authorities. This state of things requires an immediate reform of the communication strategies local authorities are currently using. Moreover, mandatory practices of informing the population about all actions of the authorities should be introduced, especially regarding the activities that are vulnerable to corruption. This will reduce the corruption vulnerability of local authorities to ensure communication support for anti-corruption methodologies and foster public control. In this article, the author will turn to the matter of building effective communications between the government and the public in Ukraine and determining the necessary conditions to reduce the risk of state corruption practices by means of communications.

1   INTRODUCTION

Despite the *coup d'état* in Ukraine in 2014, corruption still permeates all spheres of public life in Ukraine – from everyday corruption to machinations at local and higher levels of government. According to a 2018 snapshot of public opinion published in Dzerkalo Tyzhnja weekly on 24 August 2018, Ukrainians see corruption as the root of all their problems: 92% believe that 'because of corruption, money ends up in the pockets of people in power'; 88% say 'corruption leads to the impoverishment of the population' and 'undermines the country's economy'.[1] Another change of government in Ukraine in 2019 – the new president and government did not make things better. A year and a half later, at the end of 2020, corruption was still among the top three bugbears for Ukrainians.[2] Considering corruption to be one of the main problems in the country, people shift responsibility for what is

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1   Tetjana Nikitina, 'Hope and Faith Without Responsibility, or Sociological Diagnostics of Ukrainian Society' (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnja*, 24 August 2018) <https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIUM/nadiya-ta-vira-bez-vidpovidalnosti-abo-sociologichna-diagnostika-ukrayinskogo-suspilstva-286321_.html> accessed 20 September 2022.

2   Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 'Press Releases and Reports Assessment of the Situation in Ukraine and Perception of Parties and Politicians: October 2020' (*Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*, 19 October 2020) < https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=973&page=1 > accessed 20 September 2022.

happening to the authorities,[3] disclaiming responsibility both for controlling the authorities and for traditional everyday corruption practices that they perceive as permissible from the standpoint of law and morality. Liberation of society from corrupt practices will not be effective in the establishment of anti-corruption culture, which implies the formation of

> anti-corruption ideas and moral and legal culture, which is expressed in a negative attitude towards corrupt activities; anti-corruption standard of behavior and active citizenship; values and abilities associated with legal and moral and ethical norms; the ability to find constructive approaches to solve problems of illegal activities.[4]

> It is not the imposition of anti-corruption policies, which also has an influence, but the building of an anti-corruption culture to envisage rejection of corrupt practices both on the personal and at any level of state or local government that seems to be a necessary measure in reducing corruption. How can the public hold authorities accountable, a demand which will be formed by anti-corruption culture? The top tool of public control is well-running communications between the authorities and the public.

According to the results of polls conducted by sociological groups in Ukraine, Ukrainians consider corrupt government officials to be the country's top issue. Studying the successful experience of fighting corruption in different countries, one can see that all cases are imperfect. Success stories range from classic cases such as Singapore and Hong Kong, China,[5] to more recent examples of progress such as Colombia, Georgia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Qatar, and Rwanda.[6] The progress achieved by anti-corruption programs in those countries does not mean the eradication of corruption, but an improvement to a different extent – a change in attitudes towards corruption practices, a decrease in scale in all or individual social spheres, the building of a new anti-corruption culture, and the enhanced communication between the authorities and the public. *The research goal* is to look into forming effective communications between the government and the public in Ukraine and determining the necessary conditions to reduce the risk of state corruption practices through communications. *The research tasks* are to review the anti-corruption methodologies of Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Robert Klitgaard and identify forms of communication that are important for the implementation of these methodologies (the theoretical part of the work). The author of the article was involved in online sociological research conducted in six communities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (April-July 2020) and analysed 2,683 respondents' responses. The results are presented in the empirical part of the paper.

2   METHODS: HOW TO EXIT THE CIRCLE OF PARTICULARISM WITH THE HELP OF COMMUNICATIONS

Corruption has been part of scientific discourse since the late 60s, although the subject started enjoying significantly increased popularity among researchers in the 2000s. There is a steadily growing number of interdisciplinary studies of corruption, research, training centres and programs, and individual projects in international organisations, including in Ukraine.

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3   Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and USAID, 'Corruption in Ukraine: Perceptions, Practices, Attitudes' (*Ukraine Crisis Media Center*, 28 February 2019) <http://ucmc.org.ua/uk/2658-2> accessed 20 September 2022.

4   IV Klymenko, 'The formation of the future police officer's anticorruption culture in the system of higher educational institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine' (2017) 37 Problems of Modern Psychology: Collection of research papers of Kamianets Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University, GS Kostiuk Institute of Psychology at the National Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine, Kamianets Podilskyi: Aksioma 131-141.

5   Robert Klitgaard, *Controlling Corruption* (University of California Press 1988).

6   Robert Klitgaard, *Addressing Corruption Together* (OECD 2015).

Having a common object of research, scientists focus on the study of its various aspects – influence on legitimacy, connection with democracy, involvement of politicians (political scientists), behavioural elements of corruption, factors of corrupt situational behaviour (psychologists), informal networks for the exchange of corrupt practices (sociologists), etc. It should be noted that the topic of communications and their role in the building/ suppression of state corruption as a subject of analysis is not presented in modern studies. The works by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Robert Klitgaard, Oksana Gus, Monica Bauhr, and Marcia Grimes are closest to the topic of the given research.

Mungiu-Pippidi's research focuses on different contexts stipulated by governance regimes in the implementation of anti-corruption methodologies. Each of these contexts requires a different approach to anti-corruption. Thus, Mungiu-Pippidi sets out three types of governance regimes – particularism (a method of social organisation, which is characterised by a systematic distribution of common goods NOT in common and uniform grounds for all, which reflects the detrimental division of power in such societies) with a low level of tolerance for corruption (patrimonialism regimes), competitive particularism with a low level of tolerance for corruption in society (competition for power privileges among several groups), and ethical universalism (liberal democracy), which is the opposite of corruption. To correctly diagnose corruption in each individual country, Mungiu-Pippidi proposes to apply an individual qualitative strategy, first determining whether corruption is the norm or an exception for this society and what is the nature of corruption. Also, according to the same author, many anti-corruption initiatives fail because they are inherently non-political, while the majority of corruption in post-communist developing countries is of a political nature.[7]

After diagnosing particularism, it is necessary to determine the degree of openness/closeness of the system. Closed particularism generates more dissatisfaction with the system, so it is more vulnerable to open confrontation that destroys the entire system. Open and flexible particularism has more chances to withstand where the system allows representatives of any group of society to adapt to its rules. This is a more complicated form for changing the attitude of the public towards corruption by communicative strategies since there are, albeit formal, mechanisms to ensure the responsibility of civil servants.

Mungiu-Pippidi lists steps to exit the circle of particularism, which we see as an implementation plan for an anti-corruption strategy in public administration.[8] Let us set out the role communications have in the implementation of those steps:

A) *Organising/self-organising those who lose to the system as a result of corruption.* The change agents here are active citizens, journalists, trade unions, and independent media to implement aggressive communication strategies with the following key messages: 'system-society', 'them-us', 'rich-poor', etc., with a complex of communication tools and technologies. The role of communications at this stage is to create a revolutionary critical mass through communicative practices to promote a change in the form of governance and foster a new form of governance.

B) *The institutionalisation of the norms of honesty and criteria of justice achieved as a result of particularism destruction, making them a part of public policy.* Regardless of whether the criteria turn into regulations or are adopted at the level of civil servants' professional ethics, they must become the criteria to control high-ranking officials and politicians, with the results published and made available to the public. At this stage, communications have an informational and educational role in forming the broadest possible public anti-corruption culture with zero/low tolerance for corruption and demand for politicians with a high level

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7   Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, 'Corruption: Diagnosis and Treatment' (2006) 17 (3) Journal of Democracy 86.
8   Ibid 97.

of anti-corruption culture. At this stage, it is important to form an anti-corruption culture on a personal level to support the preciousness of turning down corruption in public life.

The matter of anti-corruption programs for local governments is still relevant. Ukraine has many opportunities both to create its anti-corruption programs supported by international organisations and implement already successful methods for the prevention and eradication of corrupt practices. Anti-corruption grassroots initiatives will not be successful with government agencies unless they gain support from higher management levels in government. Conversely, there is a chance to implement anti-corruption programs in government agencies only if officials of different levels are interested. To support this thesis, there is a practical case regarding the implementation of 'Islands of Integrity' (discussed below) – an anti-corruption methodology rolled out in 2019-2020 in Ukraine. The local administrations of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (eastern Ukraine) were participants in the project to implement the anti-corruption methodology.[9] Local administrations that expressed interest and truly wanted to identify corruption vulnerabilities of their administrations to reduce them were active learners when the methodology was taught and implementers on the local level. They received obvious positive changes in the performance of local administrations and attracted investments for local projects. The formal participants in the project (the management/employees not truly interested but were obliged to participate in the project to comply with the terms of cooperation with a donor organisation or the requirements of the Law on Decentralization of Government Agencies) did not change the situation for the better. Moreover, one of the project participants, a deputy mayor in a district administration, was held legally accountable for corruption.[10]

C) *The obligation to submit income and assets declarations for public sector employees.* The role of communications to accompany this step is both in the technical provision of tools for social monitoring and access to information about the income and property of public officials, which should also be supported by the law on compulsory disclosure of income and implemented in social communications for the purpose of social control. Modern monitoring systems are ensured via information technologies, and the function of social control is possible and available not only to law enforcement agencies but also to media, public organisations, and any interested citizens.

D) *Public monitoring of the distribution of public benefits and budget.* The role of communications in the implementation of the step is to ensure the technical capability for exercising social control and monitoring of public procurement, allocation of resources via the Prozzoro electronic procurement system, holding biddings, regular public reports, and public voting in the distribution of the public budget by local governments. We see technical and public communications as having equal value in ensuring the progress of the anti-corruption strategy.

As far as we can see, communications support the entire cycle of changing a patrimonial society to competitive particularism and further – the achievement of universalism through the acceptance of the value of transparency and accountability. A special role in the implementation of communicative support of this process is assigned to professional communicators – public information officers, public relations professionals, and sociologists.

9   United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'Final Reports on the Implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy Project' (*UNDP Ukraine*, 28 April 2021) <https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/uk/home/library/recovery-and-peacebuilding/final-reports-on-the-implementation-of-the-project-to-develop-the-anti-corruption-strategy.html> accessed 20 September 2022.

10   T Kotenko, 'Na Habari popavsia mer prifrontovogo mista Kreminna na Luhanshini' (Glavcom, 10 November 2020)< https://glavcom.ua/news/na-habari-popavsya-mer-prifrontovogo-mista-kreminna-na-luganshchini--717275.html > accessed 24 January 2023.

3 COMMUNICATIONS IN PREVENTING GOVERNMENT VULNERABILITIES TO CORRUPT PRACTICES (BASED ON ROBERT KLITGAARD'S ANTI-CORRUPTION METHODOLOGY)

In another anti-corruption methodology developed by Klitgaard, communications also play an important role in diagnosing and preventing government vulnerabilities to corrupt practices. One of the main assumptions in developing the methodology is that most people are honest by nature if the system allows them to thrive within the law. Except for the corrupt ones who use the system for personal gain, there are potentially honest public officials who are willing to fight corruption and improve the performance of their organisations (and themselves), provided they can receive due recognition and reasonable monetary incentives. Another assumption is that people will behave with integrity, provided that the system rewards such behaviour and limits the opportunities and temptations to abuse their position for personal gain.[11]

This is also the main message of Klitgaard, MacLean-Abaroa, and Parris in their book *Corrupt Cities – A Practical Guide to Treatment and Prevention*:[12] we must focus our anti-corruption strategies on changing the context in which individuals live and work and not only focus, as most strategies do and fail, on changing people through legal and moral pressure.

People are prone to corrupt behaviour when they think they will gain more than they lose because the reward is high and the risk of being caught is low, and even if caught, the fines are soft. People tend to engage in corrupt activities when they work in organisations that give them monopoly power over a product or service, the right to decide whether someone gets that product or service, or how much, and they have no rules of accountability and transparency, wherein others can see how they make their decisions. This is the context that breeds corruption. Klitgaard describes this through his famous formula $C = M + D\text{-}A / T$, where M stands for performance monopoly, D stands for discretion, and A/T is for accountability/transparency.

It is true that different people may react differently to the temptations suggested by the context and that many people do not engage in corrupt activities, even if the temptations are there. The important idea, though, is that the more temptations the context provides, the more likely we are to face corrupt practices. The given anti-corruption methodology uses those concepts to diagnose the vulnerability of local governments and identify priority areas for attention. The solutions follow the same conceptual framework that was used in the diagnostics:

- Breaking monopoly by increasing competition in the sector

- Reduced discretion in decision-making by establishing and enforcing clear rules/procedures

- Strengthening accountability and transparency mechanisms for operations/service delivery through effective information and data management

- Increasing the likelihood of being caught and punished by establishing effective control mechanisms

- Reducing the relative value of gain versus loss by creating incentives/motivation for effective and honest behaviour

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11   Klitgaard (n 6).

12   Robert Klitgaard, Ronald MacLean-Abaroa and H Lindsey Parris, *Corrupt Cities: A Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention* (ICS Press; World Bank Institute 2000).

When determining the role of communications in each step of diagnosing the vulnerability to corruption in public officials, we claim it as the one that ensures the transparency of the government's activities, manifested in the accessibility of public control to all individuals, especially the ones exercising social control – journalists and public organisations. We also note the importance of motivating public officials, which consultants and communicators can undertake, regarding the feasibility and relevance of an anti-corruption strategy to be developed by local governments in order to build public trust in the government:

- in a crisis, it is of particular importance how effectively the government spends public budgets and how effectively and transparently it makes decisions

- anti-corruption programs play an important role in matters related to the reputation of local governments, especially since the territorial communities are small, most of their residents know each other

- anti-corruption reputation is important in relationships with donors and foundations that want to be sure that money is spent efficiently, transparently, and for the purpose intended

- the anti-corruption strategy and efforts of local government to implement anti-corruption programs are of great importance for voters since we often see how local government officials lose trust after corruption scandals

- anti-corruption strategies complement socio-economic development strategies to a great extent, reinforcing the implementation of those priority tasks that the community has identified – it is very difficult to create an attractive socio-economic environment for investors, for the tourism business, for the implementation of logistics projects, if donor or community funds are spent ineffectively or wasted.

4 THE 'ISLAND OF INTEGRITY™' METHODOLOGY: THE UKRAINIAN EXPERIENCE

As part of the United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Program, a project funded by the EU was launched in October 2018 with the main goal of restoring good governance and promoting reconciliation in crisis-hit communities in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine. The project supports the effective restoration of governance by eliminating and preventing corruption in municipal public services, increasing honesty, transparency, accountability, and efficiency with the 'AC Islands of Integrity™' (hereinafter – Islands of Integrity) anti-corruption methodology.

The Islands of Integrity anti-corruption methodology was developed by Ronald MacLean Abaroa, the mayor of La Paz (Bolivia), who served as mayor for four terms, and Ana Vasilache (Romania) – FPDL founder – as part of Klitgaard's scientific concept, with the goal of spreading the successful anti-corruption experience worldwide. The methodology envisages the active participation of government leaders, managers, and employees, as well as other stakeholders, in the process of diagnosing activity lines and making anti-corruption decisions.

The Island of Integrity methodology has been successfully applied in 30 local governments in 11 CEE / SEE countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Serbia, as well as in Latin America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) and Africa (Nigeria). It received international recognition in 2011 thanks to the UN Public Service Prize and is included in the anti-corruption programs of many other international organisations, such

as Partners Global, World Bank, Open Society Foundations, International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), and the Hague Academy of Local Government. In May 2016, coordinated by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Center and after completing a one-year course, 'AC Islands of Integrity ™ – Anti-Corruption Training', facilitators from Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine received their 'anti-corruption practitioner' qualification. Among them are two Ukrainian specialists – Halyna Kravchenkova and Oleksiy Soldatenko, the author of the paper.

The Islands of Integrity Anti-Corruption Methodology project had already been implemented in 2019 In Ukraine in Novopskov of the Luhansk oblast and in 2020 in six communities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (Eastern Ukraine), which became possible due to the UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Program (UN RPP). In those communities, the managers formed working groups involving representatives of local governments, who, under the guidance of a facilitator, performed a number of steps to diagnose corruption vulnerabilities in the main activity lines of the local government and develop solutions to minimise the consequences in communities. Those steps were as follows: to conduct a general diagnosis using the Klitgaard corruption formula: $C = M + DA/T$; to carry out in-depth diagnostics of three activity lines that were most sensitive to corruption and identified at the first stage of work; to develop a plan to minimise corruption vulnerabilities of the identified activity lines and offer them for discussion to the local community – journalists and representatives of public organisations. The final stage in the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Methodology is the development of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and its implementation as authorised by the local governments. It should be noted that only three communities out of seven that took part in the project in 2019-2020 in Ukraine adopted the developed anti-corruption strategy and claimed success in solving anti-corruption tasks (Novopskov Municipality, Shulhinka Village Council, Troitsky Village Council of the Luhansk oblast). The other four communities stopped at the stage of developing an anti-corruption strategy. We should note the motivation of the employees of the three named municipalities and the management responsible for making decisions, which contributed not only to conducting corruption diagnostics of the activities of local authorities but also to taking steps to reduce the identified corruption vulnerabilities.

It is also necessary to mention the issues identified in the course of conducting the sociological survey in the participant communities regarding the transparency and information openness of local governments, which is one of the essential conditions for holding the authorities accountable. From 15 April to 5 May 2020, there was an online survey organised and conducted among 582 residents of the Troitsk amalgamated territorial community, 430 residents of the Belovodsk amalgamated territorial community, 436 residents of the city of Kreminna, 400 residents of the Krasnorichensk amalgamated territorial community of the Luhansk oblast; 448 residents of the Kurakhiv amalgamated territorial community of the Donetsk oblast (15-26 June 2020), and 387 residents of the Shulhynka amalgamated territorial community of the Luhansk oblast (13-29 July 2020). All the respondents were over 18 years old. The survey was devoted to determining the level of information openness and transparency of the activities of local governments as perceived by residents of local communities during the implementation of the project. The reports on the survey are included in the reports of the practitioners on the implementation of the Islands of Integrity anti-corruption methodology in Ukraine. The reports were prepared and published as part of the UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Program and funded by the EU.[13]

The lack of information was noted by the residents of all the amalgamated territorial communities along precisely those activity lines that were identified in the course of general diagnostics by local governments as vulnerable to corruption. Conversely, the activity lines

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13   UNDP Ukraine (n 10).

for which local residents have enough information are not included in the list of activity lines vulnerable to corruption during the general diagnostics by representatives of local governments (Figure 1).
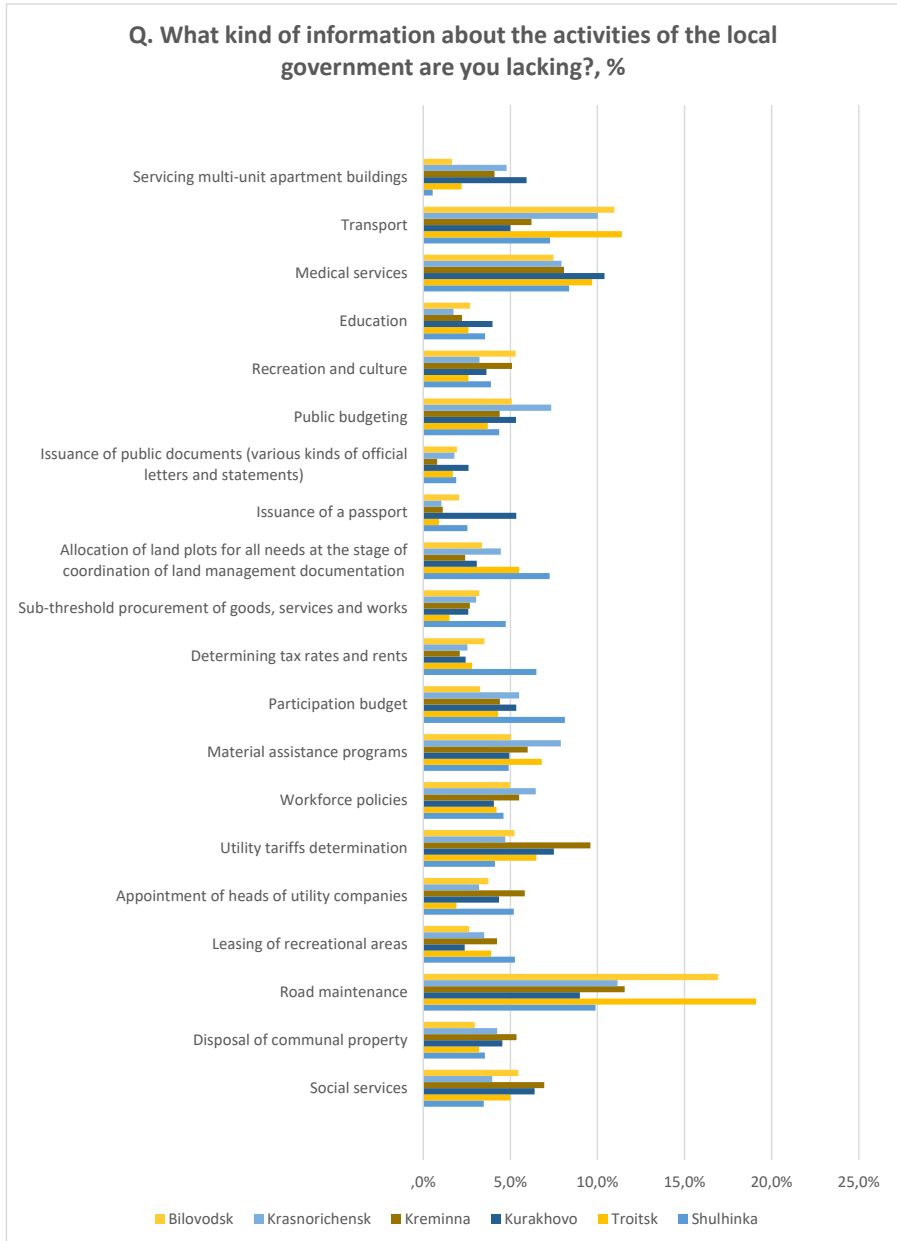

Figure 1. Distribution of responses by communities and activity lines of local governments

The community residents assessed their level of satisfaction with the information openness of local governments, their accessibility, and the availability of feedback as follows (Figure 2).
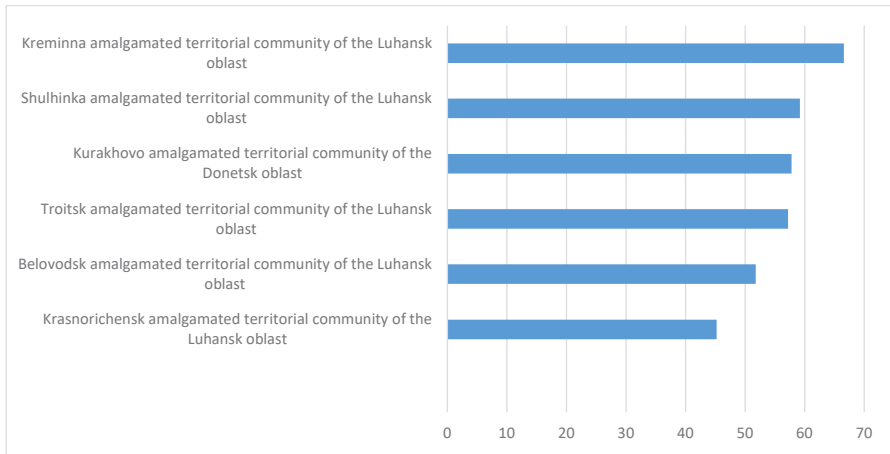

Figure 2. The level of satisfaction with the information openness of local government

Speaking of ensuring the openness and accessibility of information from local authorities, one cannot but mention the channels of communication between the authorities and the public. To ensure effective communication, it is necessary to study the possibilities and preferences of citizens in obtaining information and using the pertinent information channels. In the course of the sociological survey, the data revealed that only in one of the six participant communities, the official website of the local government is a channel for obtaining information about its activities for community members (the city of Kurakhovo, 57.5% of respondents mentioned the municipality website as the main source of information on the activities of the local government). In the remaining five, estimates of the popularity of that information source among the population are no greater than 21%. At the same time, social networks are preferred as the main source of information about the activities of the local government (more than 50% in all communities) in communities with predominantly young populations. In Figure 3, the preference for receiving information about the activities of the local government from local administration officials is highly ranked, as well as from friends and acquaintances, rather than from official sources – government websites, local newspapers, or social media. The reason for this may be either a lack of trust in official information or being oblivious of official information resources being in place (Belovodsk, Troitsk, and Kurakhovo local administrations have official websites with up-to-date information) or the low credibility of those information sources. In both cases, information programs are needed to promote the official channels of communication with the government and build trust in those communication sources.
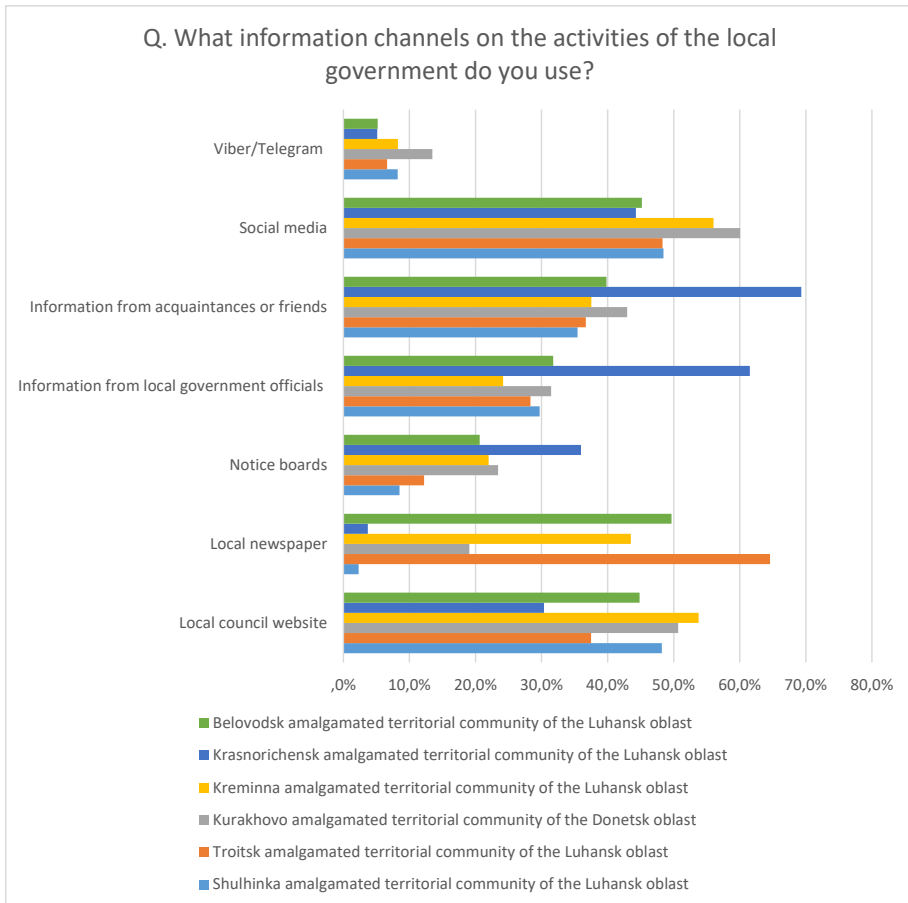
Figure 3. Information channels on the activities of the local government

5   RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Without information transparency for authorities, the risks of implementing corrupt practices and the building of distrust in the institution of power as a whole increase. A sociological study conducted with the participation of the author of the article in six communities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (April-July 2020) revealed a lack of interest and confidence in the official channels of informing the population about the activities of local governments. Local residents prefer to receive information about the activities of local governments from local officials rather than from official sources. The reason for this is the low communication activity of local governments, especially in areas with preferences for personal communication among local residents. This leads to rumours and defamation being spread, which further exacerbates the distrust of the government. Such a state of affairs calls for an immediate reform of the communication strategies local governments are using and the introduction of mandatory practices of informing the population about all actions of the public authorities, especially in activities that are vulnerable to corruption. This will reduce the corruption vulnerability of local governments and ensure communication support for anti-corruption methodologies and social control.

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