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DIGITALIZATION AS A TOOL TO PREVENT CORRUPTION: INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE

Background. ***The intensification of democratization processes in public administration and the practice of improving the provision of administrative services necessitate the implementation and application of modern innovations in the development of digital technologies. Amid martial law, Ukraine is persistently working on enhancing the digital anti-corruption infrastructure built over recent years, with the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP) serving as a successful case of building the institutional capacity of a public administration entity in the direction of digital transformation.***

Methods. ***A combination of general scientific and special research methods was used: systemic-analytical, exploratory, predictive, and generalization.***

Results. ***The innovative experience of Ukraine in the processes of digital transformations in the field of combating corruption has been analysed. It has been established that the reduction of corruption levels in the country depends on the extent of the implementation of innovative digital IT technologies. It is noted that the digital transformation of the work of state and local government bodies is one of the principles of state anti-corruption policy up to 2025, and digitization is one of the most effective tools for preventing corruption, particularly in identifying signs of it in the work of public administration bodies and their officials. It is argued that the state anti-corruption program provides for the implementation of 63 IT products that will contribute to reducing corruption risks and enhancing public control over the use of budget funds, strengthen the interaction of citizens and businesses in the state, and ensure transparent mechanisms and public oversight. It is emphasized that the digitization of NACP is carried out in the areas of automating internal management processes and implementing modern information and communication technologies to improve algorithms for monitoring transparency and integrity in the activities of public administration entities and improving mechanisms of their democratic accountability and responsibility. It is highlighted that the implementation of innovative anti-corruption digital solutions is a sign of the professionalism, maturity, and honesty of the government. It is noted and substantiated that the application of the latest IT technologies has a productive impact on the quality of data collection and processing for identifying corruption risks and/or practices.***

Conclusions. ***The presence of innovative digital tools determines the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. The application of digital tools is the most cost-effective way to prevent and combat manifestations of corruption. The implementation of digital tools envisaged in the Anti-Corruption Strategy and the State Anti-Corruption Program will strengthen preventive anti-corruption mechanisms and contribute to reducing opportunities for corrupt practices.***

Keywords: ***corruption, public management and administration, digitalization, digitization, digital transformation, digital anti-corruption solutions, anti-corruption policy, anti-corruption strategy***

Background

The application of modern innovative information and communication technologies (hereinafter – IT technologies) determines the quality of managerial decisions and serves as a powerful factor influencing the effectiveness of the functioning of the domestic public administration system. IT technologies are a crucial tool for engaging representatives of civil society in governance processes. The development of effective and accountable state institutions that shape and successfully implement public policy for the sustainable development of the state contributes to the strategic goal of building a capable service-oriented and digital state in Ukraine as a whole Strategy for Public Administration Reform in Ukraine for 2022–2025, approved by Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 21 July 2021 No. 831-p (Strategy for Public Administration Reform in Ukraine for 2022–2025, 2021).

Digital transformation is a defining vector of the development of modern Ukraine. This is confirmed by the adopted regulatory and legal acts, particularly those of a strategic nature (Polovyi, 2022). In the context of modernizing the domestic system of public administration and aligning it with European standards, significant progress has been made in conducting professional consultations on joining the "Digital Europe Programme". On September 5, 2022, Ukraine, as an associated State, signed the relevant Agreement with the European Commission and joined this program until 2027. This action confirmed Ukraine's commitment to supporting European programs in five key areas: supercomputers, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensuring the widespread use of digital technologies in the economy and society (Ukraine joined the "Digital Europe Programme", 2022).

The issues of digital transformation in public administration in Ukraine and the implementation of innovative digital solutions are currently actively researched at the intersectoral and interdisciplinary levels by representatives of legal science, public administration science, and economic science. Specifically, the regulatory and legal aspects of digital transformations, issues of public administration in the field of digital transformations, and digitalization of public administration have been covered in the works of O. Vynnyk, T. Byrkovych, V. Byrkovych, H. Podzigun, V. Kuzmenko, Y. Kostiuchenko, O. Kabanets, O. Mazur, M. Mikhrovska, P. Polovyi, H. Razumey, M. Razumey, A. Semenchenko, M. Khaustova, and I. Khomyshyn.

Despite the numerous scientific contributions regarding the domestic experience of implementing various IT transfor-

mations, the issue of digitalization as a tool for preventing corruption has not been comprehensively addressed.

Methods

The research employs a comprehensive methodological framework, utilizing a systematic approach and a suite of general and specialized methods. These include Systematic-Analytical Method: employed to analyse the situation regarding corruption in the state and the implementation of innovative IT products; Exploratory Method: used to establish the synergetic potential of anti-corruption IT products in combating corruption. Predictive Method: Applied to generalize the processes of digital transformations and digitalization in the activities of public administration entities and to formulate the thesis on the leadership of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (hereinafter, NACP) in developing anti-corruption digital solutions; Generalization Method: used to substantiate the anti-corruption effect of the digital transformation in the execution of governmental powers.

Results

The corruption landscape in Ukraine continues to be a prevailing concern. According to a sociological survey conducted by Info Sapiens on behalf of the NACP in 2023, 71,6 % of citizens and 73 % of business representatives consider corruption the second most critical issue after the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation. The judiciary (51 %), customs (38 %), and state and municipal healthcare (30 %) are seen as priority areas requiring anti-corruption efforts by the public, while entrepreneurs highlight customs (58 %), public procurement in construction, repair, and maintenance of roads (33 %), and the judiciary (including enforcement of court decisions) (32 %) (Corruption in Ukraine 2023, 2023).

The topic of corruption carries a significant destructive potential. Recent sociological studies indicate a trend toward prioritizing corruption issues among Ukrainians. Concurrently, this issue serves as a potential basis for informational and hybrid operations by the Russian Federation (Identification and analysis of Russian information…, 2024).

Unfortunately, here is a prevailing notion in society that effective anti-corruption efforts are measured by the number of criminal cases filed and the resulting imprisonments. However, the articulation of zero tolerance towards corruption has only recently gained relevance.

According to the abovementioned sociological survey, in 2023, 60 % of the population and entrepreneurs expressed negative attitudes toward any form of corruption. Furthermore, a clear position supporting the exposure of corrupt practices has formed within society. Corresponding indicator continues to rise, with 67 % of the population and 90 % of businesses supporting corruption whistleblowers in 2023. Notably, the proportion of the population with personal corruption experiences decreased to 19,5 % in 2023 from 26 % in 2021, but slightly increased compared to 2022 (17,7 %). For businesses, this figure remained relatively unchanged last year (22,2 %) compared to 2021 (21,6 %), though it worsened significantly compared to 2022, where the share of entrepreneurs encountering corrupt practices was 15,4 %.

Given the significance of educational efforts in shaping citizens' psychological rejection of corruption, the NACP team developed a Strategy for Forming Zero Tolerance for Corruption in 2021 (The strategy for forming zero tolerance for corruption, 2021). This document emphasizes that coordinated and aligned cooperation among all state bodies is critical for increasing trust in the state, particularly in anti-corruption digital transformation (Anti-corruption strategy for 2021–2025, 2021). Currently, the online learning platform of the Integrity Building Office, developed and launched by NACP in 2022, holds significant practical importance.

An analysis of the eleven-year experience of digitalization by one of the most prestigious and oldest analytical centres, The Brookings Institution, shows that technology and policy go hand in hand. Political leadership, particularly under the guidance of President Volodymyr Zelensky and the Ministry of Digital Transformation, has been crucial in transitioning from partial digitalization to full transformation–reengineering state processes and practices for the technological era (Ingram, & Vora, 2024). The authors noted, "Ukraine is the first non-EU country on the Third Countries Trusted List of the European Union," and its 2022 accession to the "Digital Europe" and 2023 "Connecting" programs will provide access to funds for digital development. As a result, "Ukraine is adopting its digitalization to EU and international standards by conforming to the EU Digital Single Market".

Today, international experts highly commend the "ProZorro" and "e-Health" systems, the "Smart City" project, the launch of e-services in both the public and private sectors, the creation of the "Diia" state services portal, and the "Diia. Digital Education" online learning platform.

Ukraine's experience demonstrates that the process of digital transformations in public authorities encompasses electronic services and e-governance, becomes decisive in forming the conditions (political, organizational, technological, and ideological) for the development of electronic democracy, and acts as a motivating factor for the development of digital skills and competencies. It has also accelerated the implementation of artificial intelligence technologies. In line with the Ukrainian Government's decisions on developing digital competencies (The concept of the development of digital competences…, 2021) and the introduction of the Deputy Head's position for digital development, digital transformations, and digitalization (CDTO) (Some issues of activities of units on issues of digital development…, 2020). In late 2020, the NACP became one of the first State bodies in the internal structure of which the Digital Transformation and Innovation Development Department was establishedthat is a vivid example of "improvement of communication and introduction of innovative informational ties in "citizen-state" relations (Korchak, 2022).

Given that digitalization is a crucial tool for preventing and minimizing corruption, it has a significant preventive effect in combating corruption overall. Therefore, building the NACP as a digital benchmark public organization is a strategic goal of its continuous institutional development (On the approval of the Institutional Strategy…, 2024). Detailed information on the stages of implementing the results of the agency's digital transformation is available on its website from April 2020 to the present (Digital Transformation of NACP, 2020). This includes developing and approving requirements for protecting anonymous communication channels, implementing automated distribution of responsibilities for verifying electronic declarations, electronic reporting of anti-corruption officials, updating the unified state register of declarations, and the registry of persons who committed corruption-related offenses, developing open data in the NACP, launching the Unified Whistleblower Reporting Portal, the Corruption Risks Catalog Portal, the "Hidden Interests" Portal, and the NACP case management system.

The digital transformation of the authorities' powers, transparency of activities, and opening data to minimize corruption risks in their activities and create more convenient and legal ways of obtaining services are three main principles of anti-corruption policy for the next three years (State Anti-Corruption Program for 2023–2025, 2023). Their implementation will serve to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of governmental bodies and minimize corruption practices and risks.

Accordingly, the State Anti-Corruption Program (hereinafter, SACP) envisions the implementation of 63 IT products in various areas of the country's life and the synchronization of state registers to facilitate automatic declaration completion.This outlines the primary direction of cooperation between the NACP and the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine .

Considering the importance of post-war reconstruction, the SACP provides for the introduction of digital management of the reconstruction process and an interactive map of works, which will include information on tenders held, contracts concluded, contractors, and the current progress of construction. An open map for the construction, repair, and maintenance of roads is also planned. Notably, to ensure transparency and integrity in implementing reconstruction projects and guarantee their transparent and effective implementation at national, regional, and local levels, the Digital Restoration Ecosystem for Accountable Management (DREAM) was introduced in 2024 as a unified digital pathway for implementing relevant financial programs.

In addition, the SACP includes measures to improve IT tools in higher education and science, healthcare, and other sectors. It also outlines goals for enhancing the Unified Register of State Property Objects, creating a unified electronic urban planning cadastre, automating procedures, and improving the functioning of electronic services and automation of interaction between the state and business.

To create a convenient digital tool for citizens, businesses, and experts to track progress in achieving the expected strategic outcomes of the SACP, the NACP launched the Information System for Monitoring the Implementation of State Anti-Corruption Policy in June 2023. Its two modules ("Results of monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the State anti-corruption program for 2023–2025" and "Statistical information on the results of the work of specially authorized entities in the field of combating corruption and other state bodies"). As of now, 10 out of 63 anti-corruption IT products have been implemented, including the introduction of a unified system for collecting, summarizing, and visualizing statistical information on the results of the activities of the National Agency, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, the State Bureau of Investigations, ARMA, the National Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the courts, and other state bodies. Additionally, an automated mode for verifying political parties' reports through integration with other information and telecommunications and reference systems, registers, and databases has been introduced; a system of electronic criminal proceedings has been established, and 41 products are in various stages of development.

However, unfortunately, work on 12 digital products has not yet started, including:

- the implementation of an information-analytical system for managing natural resources, providing open access to up-to-date information on natural resources, electronic services, electronic reporting, traceability, environmental monitoring and inspection, and an open API for creating analytical and visual (geoinformation) software based on such a system; a two-tier information and communication system enabling the creation, placement, publication, and exchange of information and documents electronically, conducting concession competitions and competitive dialogues, and publishing documents in direct negotiations with state property lessees transferred into concession; a new unified integrated permit system for market access, replacing existing diverse procedures, establishing simplified rules, and digitizing all registration activities;
- development and industrial deployment of an official tool for preparing and conducting public procurements in the informatizationand communications sectors that provides visualization of purchases, availability of electronic communication networks, automation of calculations of expected value;
- formation of a single interoperable system of state databases based on a single state data processing centre and national spatial data infrastructure, elimination of duplication of data collection processes; a single electronic Urban Cadastre, which is a platform for providing all administrative services in the field of urban planning activities, a public source of urban planning information. Urban planning documentation enters into force from the moment of its entry into the Urban Planning Cadastre and the assignment of a spatial index.

Overall, by the end of 2025, in accordance with the expected strategic outcomes of the State Anti-Corruption Program for 2023–2025, the NACP should implement 9 IT products, the Ministry of Digital Transformation – 6, and other state bodies (including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Infrastructure) – 48 products.

Despite the martial law regime and security aspects, Ukraine remains an open state. A vivid example of this is the opening of the Unified State Register of Declarations of Persons Authorized to Perform State or Local Government Functions (Register of Declarations) at the end of 2023. Given that Ukraine has a strong civil society and is a participant in the UN Convention against Corruption, the NACP, in partnership with the analytical center "Institute of Legislative Ideas," developed an interactive web platform for public control to track the country's progress in combating corruption – Monitoring Ukraine's implementation of international anti-corruption commitments. (Monitoring Ukraine's implementation of international anti-corruption commitments, n.d.)

Considering the sensitivity of Ukrainian society to the issue of combating corruption and to introduce effective and convenient online tools for collecting and researching necessary information regarding compliance with anti-corruption requirements, active citizens can use IT products such as Zoloto Partii (an online tool by CHESNO for easy analysis of party funds), Opendatabot (a resource for monitoring the registration data of Ukrainian companies and the court register, useful, for instance, for protection against raider seizures and counterparty control), YouControl (a tool for easy monitoring of official information about counterparties from open data, decisions in the field of corporate economic and information security), WikiInvestigation (a platform for joint investigations of corruption by professional investigators and public

activists), Ring (a search engine that combines about 20 state registers and open databases), Bihus.Info (a resource jointly developed by journalists, lawyers, IT specialists, and activists that drives change), POLITDATA (an electronic register of political party reports), and the Register of Declarations (a portal that collects declarations of persons authorized to perform state or local government functions).

In addition to the aforementioned best practices for implementing anti-corruption digital solutions, transparency and accountability of state management processes, adherence to ethical standards, and the formation of trust relationships are achieved through the functioning of the Unified State Web Portal of Open Data (https://data.gov.ua), the Prozorro (https://prozorro.gov.ua/uk) and Dozorro (https://dozorro.org/) systems websites, which allow tracking tenders and public procurements, the Repair Map (https://map.shtab.net/), the Road Geocalculator (https://kmplus.ukravtodor.gov.ua/), the Hidden Interests portal (https://interes.shtab.net/). In 2024, the public organizations "Anti-Corruption Headquarters" and "Together Against Corruption" presented a digital tool – the "Local Interests" portal (https://localinteres.shtab.net/), which will significantly assist journalists, activists, and law enforcement officers in identifying potential conflicts of interest among deputies and officials at the local level.

We believe that the use of digital IT technologies is an effective means of maintaining a balance between the processes of preventing corruption and ensuring the inevitability of responsibility for committing corruption and related offenses. Modern technologies allow decision-making based on the processing and analysis of large amounts of data, reducing the risks of corruption by minimizing or completely eliminating the human factor. According to the Open Government Partnership (OGP), digital governance is the second fastest-growing area of policy in the current action plans of OGP member countries.

Thus, the implementation and use of information and communication technologies in relations between public administration bodies, citizens, and business structures, as well as between the authorities themselves, result in increased efficiency of anti-corruption activities and the involvement of various representatives of civil society in the fight against corruption.

Discussion and conclusions

Ukraine's experience shows that the process of digital transformations in public authorities:

- covered the system of electronic services and e-government;
- became crucial in forming the conditions (political, organizational, technological, ideological) for the development of e-democracy;
- acted as a motivational factor in developing digital skills and competencies;
- objectively led to the rapid implementation of artificial intelligence technologies.

Evidence of the above is the results of a study on the future of e-government presented in 2022, according to which Ukraine entered the group of countries with a very high level of e-government development for the first time, ranking 46th among 193 countries.

Despite Russian aggression, the modern development of Ukraine can be characterized by the processes of modernization of public services and state management, optimization of the provision of administrative services, and increased readiness of state authorities and local self-governments to utilize the opportunities of e-democracy. The development of digital infrastructures and digital competencies is the result of the interaction of modern technologies and policies, outlining the priority directions of digital transformations of the state in the public sphere. The digital transformation of the implementation of governmental and administrative powers is one of the principles of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and the State Program until 2025.

The creation of an innovative anti-corruption digital infrastructure only strengthens the systematic nature of combating corruption in general. In turn, the Register of Declarations, the Register of Political Party Reporting, the Whistleblower Portal, the Global Beneficial Ownership Register, the ProZorro electronic procurement system, and dozens of other digital products ensure transparency and accountability of state processes in Ukraine and can guarantee integrity during the reconstruction of our state. The implementation and use of innovative IT products are powerful tools primarily for preventing and identifying signs of corruption both in public administration bodies and in the actions of persons authorized to perform state or local government functions or equivalent persons.

Authors' contributions: Nataliia Korchak – conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological foundations of research; Iryna Mordas – analysis of digital tools in the field of corruption prevention, formulation of conclusions.

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ДІДЖИТАЛІЗАЦІЯ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ЗАПОБІГАННЯ КОРУПЦІЇ: ІННОВАЦІЙНИЙ ДОСВІД УКРАЇНИ

Вступ. ***Наголошено, що посилення процесів демократизації публічної адміністрації та практики вдосконалення надання адміністративних послуг вимагає впровадження і застосування сучасних інновацій у розвитку цифрових технологій, тому в умовах воєнного стану Україна невпинно працює над удосконаленням створеної за останні роки цифрової антикорупційної інфраструктури, а НАЗК – над успішним кейсом розбудови інституційної спроможності суб'єкта публічної адміністрації у напряму цифрової трансформації.***

Методи. ***Використано поєднання загальнонаукових та спеціальних наукових методів дослідження: системно-аналітичного, пошукового, прогностичного, узагальнення.***

Результати. ***Проаналізовано інноваційний досвід України щодо процесів цифрових перетворень у сфері протидії корупції. Встановлено, що зменшення рівня корупції в країні залежить від рівня впровадження інноваційних цифрових IT-технологій. Відзначено, що цифрова трансформація роботи органів державної влади та місцевого самоврядування є одним з принципів державної антикорупційної політики в період до 2025 року, а цифровізація – один із найефективніших інструментів для запобігання корупції, зокрема в частині виявлення її ознак у роботі органів публічного адміністрування та їх посадових осіб. Аргументовано, що державна антикорупційна програма передбачає впровадження 63 IT-продуктів, які сприятимуть зменшенню корупційних ризиків та посиленню громадського контролю використання бюджетних коштів, посилять взаємодію громадян і бізнесу в державі та забезпечать прозорі механізми і контроль громадськості. Акцентовано, що діджиталізація НАЗК здійснюється за напрямами автоматизації внутрішніх управлінських процесів та впровадження сучасних інформаційно-комунікативних технологій задля покращення алгоритмів контролю прозорості та доброчесності в діяльності суб'єктів публічного адміністрування та вдосконалення механізмів їх демократичної підзвітності та відповідальності. Наголошено, що впровадження інноваційних антикорупційних цифрових рішень є ознакою професіоналізму, зрілості та чесності влади. Розкрито та обґрунтовано, що застосування новітніх IT-технологій має результативний вплив на якість збирання та опрацювання великого масиву даних із метою виявлення корупційних ризиків та/або практик.***

Висновки. ***Обґрунтувано, що наявність інноваційного цифрового інструментарію зумовлює ефективність протидії корупції, а застосування цифрових інструментів є найдешевшим способом профілактики проявів корупції та боротьби з нею. Доведено, що впровадження передбачених в Антикорупційній стратегії та Державній антикорупційній програмі цифрових інструментів посилять превентивні антикорупційні механізми та сприятимуть зменшенню можливостей для корупційних зловживань.***

Ключові слова: ***корупція, публічне управління та адміністрування, діджиталізація, цифровізація, цифрова трансформація, цифрові антикорупційні рішення, антикорупційна політика, антикорупційна стратегія***

Автори заявляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів. Спонсори не брали участі в розробленні дослідження; у зборі, аналізі чи інтерпретації даних; у написанні рукопису; в рішенні про публікацію результатів.

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