

Transforming public administration in turbulent times: the case study of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus

Viktor Sapryka, Zvyeryeva Olga, Denys Tkachov,

Abstract

The processes of independent state building after the disintegration of the USSR have predetermined the tracks of development of public administration systems in the new states. We are going to present the results of the success analysis of public administration reforms in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – the states that have been the core of the Soviet Union.

For a long time, these states lived in the common socio-cultural, legal and economic system, which, on the one hand, has resulted in similar problems in the process of public administration reformation, and on the other hand, crystallized the peculiarities of public administration evolution that could be extrapolated to the whole post-Soviet space.

Points for Practitioners

Keywords: public administration, turbulent times, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, socio-cultural

Introduction

The processes of independent state building after the disintegration of the USSR have predetermined the tracks of development of public administration systems in the new states. We are going to present the results of the success analysis of public administration reforms in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – the states that have been the core of the Soviet Union. Belarus, Russia and Ukraine – were seen for a long time as special cases of the central European transition to democracy and liberal market economy (Beichelt ,2004). For a long time, these states lived in the common socio-cultural, legal and economic system, which, on the one hand, has resulted in similar problems in the process of public administration reformation, and on the other hand, crystallized the peculiarities of public administration evolution that could be extrapolated to the whole post-Soviet space.

In the geopolitical reality for these states, the interstate border was close to non-existent for centuries (in the Russian Empire and the USSR); it was an extremely light administrative and consequently economic barrier. It had no cultural significance due to the ethnic diffusion of Russian and Ukrainian populations across the border and the shared axiological system. The political aspect of the border was also insignificant because border regions belonged to the same, though proclaimed as federative, state.

Such problems and peculiarities shape not only the state reforms, but also the development of the whole civil society.

Another factor that determines the transformation of the public administration systems, is cooperation of its agencies between themselves and with foreign partners. Before 2013, the public administration reforms in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus had had similar vectors determined by bilateral Treaties of Amity and Cooperation. However, after 2013 Ukraine has been struggling to move to a public administration system inspired by the one adopted in the EU.

The objectives of our research include a comparative analysis of public administration systems in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, analysis of effectiveness of the administrative reforms, and drawing scenarios of social space development in these states (McAllister & White, 2015).

Methodology

In the process of the formation of new states, a special place is given to the theoretical foundations of public administration, management of the socio-economic development of territories, the definition of priority reforms, mechanisms for accelerating economic growth, determining the place and role of trust in the public

administration system. The problem of an inefficient public administration system is one of the global problems of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This problem assumes a distinct sociocultural character in all post-Soviet countries and is expressed in the fact that the public administration system is based not only on formal rules or a specific professional group, but also on subcultural phenomena associated with trust in the public administration system.

Several approaches can be applied to the study of public administration in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine:

- regulatory approach, which will allow assessing the level of development of the regulatory environment in the field of public administration;
- a retrospective approach that will assess the quantity and quality of administrative decisions and reforms;
- a sociological approach that will allow assessing the level of public confidence in the main institutions of public administration.

The use of a sociological approach in research is associated with the idea of the need for methodological synthesis in the process of studying the dynamics of various socio-political entities and processes in new states, to which Russia, Belarus and Ukraine can be attributed (Babintsev, 2013.). In particular, P. Sorokin in collaboration with the American researcher R. Merton noted that the study of social processes should be carried out taking into account social time, which, unlike astronomical, reflects changes, the movement of social phenomena in terms of other social phenomena (Sorokin, Merton, 1937.).

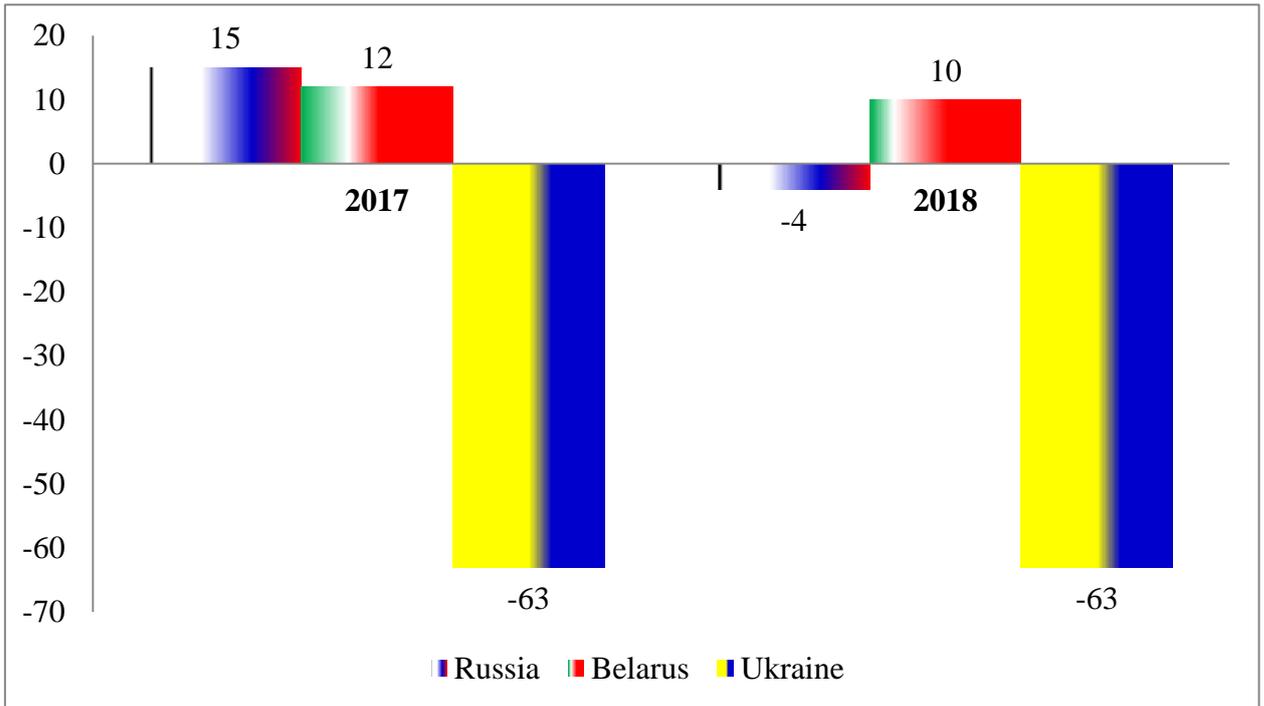
The turbulence of the same time for the majority of the population of the noted countries is reflected in the fact that social time is divided into parts, speaking in the form of periods devoid of common logic, contrasting with each other. Under the influence of modern media and politically biased science, the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods appear as relatively independent fragments, which creates the ground for manipulating historical facts in political and economic interests. The social space is somewhat less discrete, but it also does not look holistic, if only because even the Russian regions are far from always organically interconnected, internally differentiated.

A natural consequence of the establishment of the state border between the former Soviet republics has become the asynchronous nature of social processes on a single territory in the past, which manifests itself at the interstate and regional levels. Therefore, the differences that existed between the neighboring territories during the Soviet period underwent a significant transformation and deepened. The growth of territorial contrasts impedes the organic development of public administration and may, under certain circumstances, destabilize the entire social situation. Belonging to different state socio-economic systems predetermines the discrepancy in the rates of changes in the social situation and public administration systems. Asynchrony is also manifested in confidence in the public administration authorities in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Let us consider several sociological studies on confidence in social institutions, which include public administration authorities conducted during 2017-2018. sociological services in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (Gudkov L.D. 2018; Derbin A.P. 2018; Razumkov Center. 2019; Grushetsky A. 2018).

First of all, it is worth considering the public confidence in the elected governments of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, which implement state policy, carry out reforms, and also form the entire public administration system in the countries noted. The rating was determined by comparing the responses of the population, whether they trust the public administration authorities or not. Responses from respondents who were undecided were not taken into account. As can be seen from the diagrams, the government of Ukraine enjoys the least confidence, with anti-rating

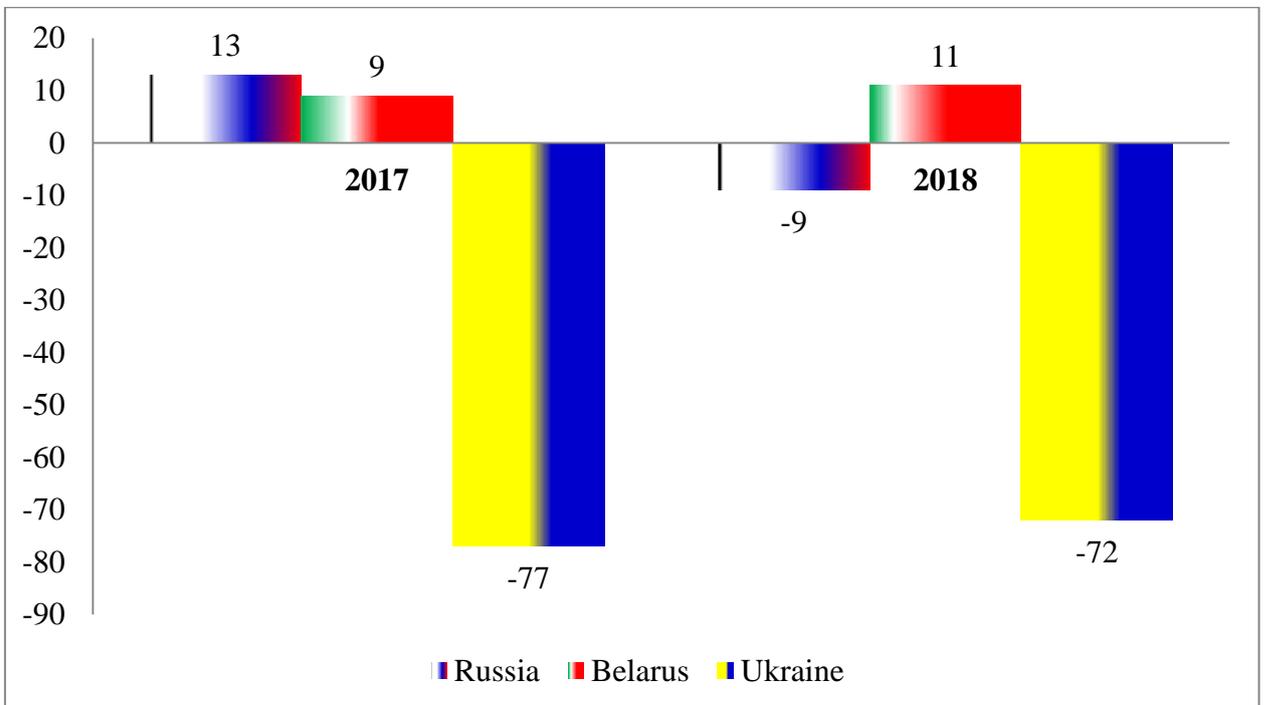
of -63.



Trust for the governments of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

A decrease in the rating of confidence in the government of the Russian Federation is also noted, while the rating of the government of the Republic of Belarus remains stable.

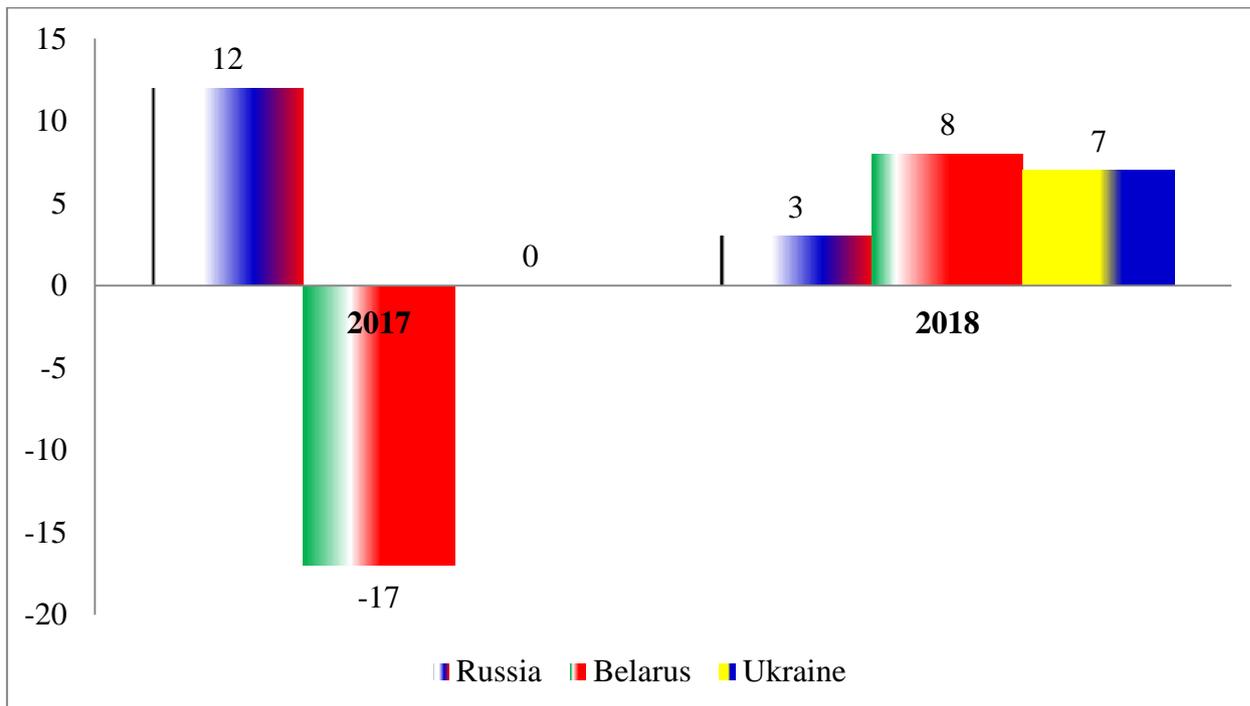
The following diagram shows the attitude of the population towards the current parliament in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.



Trust for the parliaments of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

Anti-rating heads the parliament of Ukraine, and we also note a decline in public confidence in the Russian parliament. At the same time, there is an increase in the level of trust in the government of Belarus.

Considering the rating of confidence in local authorities, it is worth noting that in 2017 and in Russia, Belarus was lower than in other authorities. However, in 2018 it is positive for all 3 countries, which determines its importance in the system of public administration and the development of democracy.



Trust for the local governments of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

Conclusion

Considering the transformation of public administration in turbulent time, it is worth noting that the sociological approach makes it possible to evaluate not only systemic changes in the structure of public administration, but also the dynamics of the attitude of the population to reform, the socio-political structure of states and the development of civil society.

In modern conditions, the functional content of public administration is changing and only the application of the concept of social time allows overcoming the asynchronous nature of social processes in the territories of the past for objective sociological evaluation.

Of course, we can note a certain servility of national sociological services, however, their reliability is confirmed by the laws of development of new states.

Public confidence in institutions of public administration is an indicator of the “correctness” of the state’s development vector. The development of institutions of public administration in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine depends on the support of the population and civil initiatives that will complete the process of the formation of national states.

References

- Ian McAllister & Stephen White. 2015. Electoral Integrity and Support for Democracy in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 25:1, 78-96, DOI: [10.1080/17457289.2014.911744](https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2014.911744)
- Babintsev V.P., Sapryka V.A. 2013. Opportunities of sociology in the time of troubles. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 12 (26): 1535-1537.
- Timm Beichelt Associate Professor. 2004. Autocracy and democracy in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, *Democratization*, 11 (5): 113-132, DOI: [10.1080/13510340412331304615](https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340412331304615).
- Pitirim A. Sorokin, Robert K. Merton. 1937. Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 42 (5): 615-629. URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-9602%28193703%2942%3A5%3C615%3ASTAMAF%3E2.O.CO%3B2-I>
- Gudkov L.D. 2018 Institutional Trust in Russia. http://www.levada.ru/2018/10/04/institutsionalnoe-doverie-4/?fbclid=IwAR2G1_Hq4TsomnkKdJpKbRPw0tr53kxiWeH_xBRrm_HIQuNQNG50G1I7xT8
- Derbin A.P. 2018 Republic of Belarus in the mirror of sociology (issue 10) Collection of materials of sociological research http://iac.gov.by/ru/nashi-izdaniya-ru/?fbclid=IwAR2QUZLJkR2WZcN5NoUt-gdCLaW42Dw7DjYVGLRrIK-igBUT_a7QLqJa_2g
- Razumkov Center. 2019 Trust in social institutions in Ukraine <http://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/riven-doviry-do-suspilnykh-institutiv-ta-elektoralni-orientatsii-gromadian-ukrainy>
- Grushetsky A. 2018 Press releases and reports public and political sentiment of the population in Ukraine <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=rus&cat=reports&id=806&page=1>