

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY IN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

У статті розглядаються деякі ознаки соціальної держави та відстежуються їхня присутність в українському суспільстві. Аналізуються співвідношення очікувань і реальності для українських громадян у сфері соціальної політики та реформ. Робляться висновки з приводу наявності соціальної держави в Україні.

Ключові слова: соціальна держава, реформи, громадянське суспільство, відповідальність, пасивність.

В статье рассматриваются некоторые признаки социального государства и отслеживаются их присутствие в украинском обществе. Изучается соотношение ожиданий и реальности для украинских граждан в сфере социальной политики и реформ. Делаются выводы по поводу наличия социального государства в Украине.

Ключевые слова: социальное государство, реформы, гражданское общество, ответственность, пассивность.

The article gives a description of some key characteristics of a social (welfare) state and discusses if they are present in Ukrainian society. Drawing on the data of the "Ukrainian Society" nationwide survey, the author analyses how well respondents' expectations of the government's social policy and reforms are being met. The analysis serves as a basis for reflection on whether Ukraine can be suitably considered a full-fledged welfare state.

Keywords: social (welfare) state, reforms, civil society, responsibility, passivity.

Article 1 of the Constitution of Ukraine says: "Ukraine is a sovereign and independent, democratic, social, legal state".

How much does it coincide with reality and how do the citizens of our state feel comfortable and protected in their country, what does it depend on, in their opinion, and what efforts do they make for this purpose?

All these issues have increasingly dominated minds of many citizens lately while the level of satisfaction and living comfort, which is provided by social benefits for a number of our citizens, is rapidly declining.

Ukraine is proclaimed as a social (welfare) state in which people, their life and health, honour and dignity, integrity and security are recognised as the highest social value. The state is for man, and not vice versa – this is the content of many constitutional norms that determine the state policy in the social sphere and ensure the social orientation of the economy. The Constitution provides equal conditions for the development of each individual, the possibility of using his abilities for his own and public benefit. An important sign of a social state is not only recognising but also promoting the satisfaction of the interests of all social groups and segments of the population, as well as strengthening on this basis the social accord and unity of the people.

The concept of a social state arose in the 19th century during the period of “Prussian socialism”. No wonder this term sounds in German – Sozialstaat. The French economist Michel Albert classified the following types of capitalism: neo-American / Anglo-Saxon and Rhine, aka “social”.

The latter model was put into practice by Ludwig Erhard, an outstanding German economist, author of the “well-being for all” theory [1, p. 17]. Today, the economic model of Germany can be termed “social liberalism”, which provides, on the one hand, maximum economic freedom and the liberation of the entrepreneurial spirit, and on the other, the existence of a powerful block of social security guaranteed by the state. The concept of a social market economy was first formulated, paradoxically, in the difficult post-war years by the German economist Alfred Müller-Armack, who was always in the shadow of the more famous Erhard. According to the Müller-Armack concept, neither the state nor private business should have a monopoly on global decision-making, and as far as their ultimate goal is concerned, they should all serve ordinary people and their interests. The basic principles of this model are the striving for full employment, social justice, protection of free competition by limiting monopolies, comprehensive maintenance of continuous economic growth, trade promotion and a stable national currency. But in reality, the main principle is the existence of a consensus between the state, business and employees regarding the redistribution of national product. It is because of the lack of such consensus, such things as shadow economy and poverty occur. This is the situation in Ukraine.

In this article, we will touch upon just the second block of the Ludwig Erhard model, that is, social security of the population.

In the first half of the 1990s, ideas and processes of the formation of a social state began to spread to the European post-socialist countries: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and others, then to the CIS countries. Several years of efforts to democratise the social system in all countries of Central and Southeastern Europe resulted in new constitutions, in which a change in the role of the state and its functions was enshrined. Ukraine was no exception, but unfortunately, to implement constitutional provisions it is still necessary to go through some stages. Most of the countries of the “socialist community” of Central and Southeastern Europe faced significant social problems and tried to solve them as early as the 1950–80s. At that time, they went through periodic crises that forced them to overcome the negative consequences of mistakes of the party and state leadership by carrying out the most urgent reforms.

Some indicators from our monitoring will probably help us understand what society thinks about respecting constitutional rights.

The reforms

Over the past five years, in our country, the authorities have been so keen on introducing the reforms of various structures, including such absolutely fundamental ones as education, health care, and social welfare payments (pension reform).

Answering the question “Try to evaluate which of these changes have had the most negative impact on life in this country?”, most people highlighted three main negative changes: reforming school education, changes in health care system and changes in pension system. We can see that people are not satisfied with these reforms and believe them to be failure.

Reforming social policies could lead to positive results, as well as reforms in the education system, in health care system and other areas of citizens’ life, but how successful did they turned out to be and how are people happy with them? Our survey has such an indirect question regarding these reforms.

Society passivity

There is direct relationship between the ability of people to stand up for their rights or against neglecting their rights and the rate of satisfying their requirements.

Table 1
Try to evaluate which of these changes have had the most negative impact on life in this country?

Reforming school education (beginning of the implementation of the first “Ukrainian New School” programme)	26.3%
Changes in the health care system (free choice of your own doctor, “Available Medicines” programme)	35.2%
Changes in pension provision (system of calculating pensions)	28.1%

We can often see that if there is violation of citizens’ rights in European countries, people immediately come out with demands to stop certain actions or to consider their demands. As far as Ukraine is concerned, not many people are ready to assert their rights.

In 2019, being asked the question: “In your opinion, how likely are mass protests in your city / town / village against a decline in the standard of living or for the protection of rights?”, 62.2% said that protests in their city were unlikely to happen. In 2018, the same answer was given by 47.9% of respondents.

But the most indicative thing is that even if such meetings were held, only 17.4% of people answering the question “Would you take part in them?” said “Most likely would”, while in the previous year 29.1% were ready to rally for their rights.

Unfortunately, Ukrainians are generally rather passive in social and public life. The proof of this fact can be seen in the table below.

As we can see, the largest number of affirmative answers is given precisely to those questions where sometimes it is not even necessary to leave home: “Convinced friends, relatives, acquaintances in the correctness of my political views” – 22.8%, “Discussed social and political issues on social networks” – 12.5%. However, “helping veterans or ATO fighters, e. g. by transferring money”

Table 2
In your opinion, how likely are mass protests in your city / town / village against a decline in the standard of living or for the protection of rights?

	2018	2019
Unlikely	47.9%	62.2%
Difficult to say	23.0%	23.0%
Very likely	29.1%	14.8%

Table 3

If such protests or rallies took place, would you participate?		
	2018	2019
Unlikely	45.0%	58.7%
Difficult to say	25.9%	23.9%
Likely	29.1%	17.4%

Table 4

In which sociopolitical activities have you personally participated over the past 12 months?

Convinced friends, relatives, acquaintances in the correctness of my political views	22.8%
Discussed social and political issues on social networks	12.5%
Have not bought certain goods for political reasons	11.2%
Donated money to volunteers, the army, charities	7.9%
Participated in the work of public organisations, social movements, parties	3.9%
Engaged in volunteer work, treatment and support of ATO (JFO) warriors, supported internally displaced persons	2.6%

was marked by only 7.9%, “volunteer activity” – 2.6%, and work in public organisations – 3.0%.

Personal responsibility

Unfortunately, in our society, there is an opinion that the authorities will solve our problems, but in reality no one except us will and should find solutions to our problems.

As can be seen from the answers, people do not hold themselves responsible at all, but at the same time they consider other citizens to be responsible.

Apparently, this happens because people globally understand that they are responsible for their own choice, but, at the same time they think that no one can change anything on their own. This is most likely just because there is no unity in society, people do not feel any kind of common actions. By and large, this is the result of the absence of civil society, which should form and uphold the rights and freedoms prescribed by the form of a social state.

But here we can also say that the recent elections have actually shown that people can make their choice to elect and not to

Table 5
In your view, how far are the citizens of Ukraine responsible for a state of affairs in the country?

Fully responsible	37.3%
Somewhat responsible	36.0%
Difficult to say	15.8%
Somewhat not responsible	8.5%
Not responsible at all	2.4%

Table 6
How far are you personally responsible for a state of affairs in Ukraine overall?

Completely	8.1%
Partially	36.9%
Not at all	46.0%
Difficult to say	9.0%

elect certain people, that unity and determination to support their rights and freedoms is their own responsibility.

The political system of the Ukrainian state is such that Ukraine is a democratic state with a republican form of government, that is, citizens have the right to elect the legislative body, elect the President, and participate in the work of local governments. But as we can see from the above survey, Ukraine does not have a full-fledged social state. Moreover, in social sphere, its position is not in line with European standards.

I think that there are sound and sensible forces in the country, and they are able to confront the process of social destruction of the state.

The sooner they could self-organise, the better. Today, in my opinion, methods of self-organisation of the deceived and destitute population deserve a thorough study.

Contribution of scientists to this process seems to be their highest and highly professional work in this direction.

References

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