

Metropolitan Governance in Kyiv:

Council of Europe Survey

Residents of the so-called “Kyiv Agglomeration” – the Kyiv sub-region and Kyiv City – were surveyed on attitudes towards metropolitan governance. Findings of this opinion poll commissioned by the Council of Europe Programme “Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine” were presented in Kyiv on 29 September 2020 and will serve as a starting point for further assistance.

Background information

At the end of 2018, the leadership of the Ukrainian capital requested the Council of Europe’s support in determining the organisational and legal framework for creating the Kyiv agglomeration, functioning of local government in the sub-region and the provision of public services in the area.

According to the State Strategy for Regional Development through 2027, almost 560,000 people make daily trips to the capital city for work, study, or to obtain health care, social, administrative services, etc. In the evening, they all leave Kyiv City and return home, with the vast majority of them going to communities located in the 30 to 60-kilometer belt around the Ukraine’s capital.

Urbanists call this trend commuting, a common attribute of many European capitals and other metropolitan areas. Of course, it has its pros and cons, so in order to bring these processes under control, European countries resort to introducing various forms of cooperation and democratic governance in such areas.

The Council of Europe [Centre of Expertise for Good Governance](#), which implements the project, prepared and in July 2019 published an analytical study – a [Peer Review Report “Democratic governance in metropolitan areas, focusing on Kyiv Region”](#), in which it described, why this issue is of national scope and its full resolution is beyond the powers of local government. The Peer Review was organised in co-operation with the [European Committee on Democracy and Governance \(CDDG\)](#). The international peer review team was composed of senior officials from metropolitan areas of Hamburg, London, Turin and Warsaw and the Council of Europe experts.

The Report contains analysis of the current situation of “greater” Kyiv and practical recommendations to establish cooperation between Kyiv and neighbouring communities on partnership terms. On this occasion, let us recall the statement of Ms. Charlotte ADAN from the UK, who was a member of the international peer review team: *“It is necessary to start the creation of an agglomeration not with what we lack for its creation, but with what problems this agglomeration could solve for each community. In London, we reached mutual understanding when we turned upside down the pyramid of long discussions between the capital and the suburbs about the creation of the metropolitan area, and began next meeting with the words: “What do London’s neighbours give to it?”*

Dialogue mechanism

Kyiv City committed to close cooperation with neighbouring communities and initiated the creation of the local government association “Kyiv Agglomeration” in late 2017. However, progress was negligible in the first year. And then the capital authorities requested additional help from Strasbourg.

Olga Shevchuk, Senior Programme Officer of “Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine”, says:

“The initiative belonged to the Capital City authorities. Over two years, this idea has become a common cause for many communities in Kyiv sub-region and the Kyiv City, and has been supported by our programme.

The “Kyiv Agglomeration” Association, which has already brought together 19 communities, is created as a platform for dialogue and finding joint solutions for the socio-economic development of the entire area and improving the quality of life of each resident. Until now, the Council of Europe has carried out a number of activities, such as an international Peer Review, training sessions for the sub-region’s community mayors based on the [Council of Europe Leadership academy programme](#), thematic consultations on specific joint infrastructure projects, [legal expertise of the draft law on agglomeration](#), and more.

Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched

And now about the opinion poll itself, the findings of which have been recently presented. It was not for nothing that the participants of the event called it a joint product of the communities involved, their leaders, and professionals working for the executive committees of local councils and the Council of Europe Programme “Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine”. A wide range of stakeholders [developed the concept of the survey and formulated questions](#) for the questionnaire.

According to Council of Europe local expert Markian DACYSHYN, this is the first representative survey of residents of Kyiv sub-region. Pollsters interviewed 400 respondents in Kyiv and 800 in six cities, three urban-type settlements and six villages located within a radius of 30 km from the capital. Another 600 respondents were residents of four cities and four villages located within a radius of more than 30 km from Kyiv.

The expert said that the sample of respondents was taken for the first time not from a single community, but from several suburban communities around the capital city, which are closely linked to it. In particular, the survey tried to establish the specific features of the local identities of population in communities, with most of the suburbanites turning out to be migrants rather than locally born.

In recent decades, new villa communities and chaotic neighbourhoods of high-rises have sprung up around Kyiv. Meanwhile, social infrastructure, including schools, kindergartens, cultural and sports facilities, has been lagging. Neither private developers nor local governments can solve these issues.

Residents of such entities mostly work in the capital city, spend their leisure time and educate their children there, use the capital’s infrastructure, and fill the streets of Kyiv with tens of thousands of cars. Only their homes remain beyond the city limits.

Therefore, it is not surprising that 24.1% of respondents living in communities located less than 30 km from the capital, and 14% in communities located over 30 km from it, consider themselves Kyivans (even if they live outside the current limits of the capital).

The survey painted a generalised sociological “portrait” of a resident of Kyiv sub-region. Every working day, 24.8% of the residents of the 30-kilometer belt make a trip to the capital (that is, they do so under normal conditions, not taking into account the lockdown period). 17% of those living in communities located over 30 km from the city do the same.

They get there mostly by public minibus: 63.1% in the less than 30 km belt and 57.8% in the over 30 km belt do so. Meanwhile, only 14.5% (in the less than 30 km belt) and 3.4% (in the over 30 km belt) of them get to Kyiv by suburban train, which is typical for other European capitals. Respondents from suburbs most frequently spend 0.5 to 1 hour on one-way commute (49% in the less than 30 km belt), while for those from remote communities (the over 30 km belt) the figure is 1 to 1.5 hours (43% of such respondents).

The decisive reason for such long daily trips is work for 47.9% of respondents from communities located at distance of over 30 km from Kyiv and for 38.9% of those living less than 30 km from it. Therefore, it is quite understandable that 61% of interviewed Kyivans appreciate what daily labour migration is, while 57.6% of them consider this phenomenon to be positive.

78.6% of respondents agree that Kyiv and neighbouring cities and villages should agree on equal terms to co-finance the development of social infrastructure and only 18.8% believe that the capital should limit the employment of non-residents.

Out of all public services, residents of the sub-region most frequently receive secondary health care services in the capital (as opposed to their communities) (26% of those living in communities located less than 30 km from the capital, and 13% of those living over 30 km from it).

And now to the most interesting finding. The opinion poll provided an eloquent answer to the question of how the residents of Kyiv sub-region feel about the cooperation of communities making up the agglomeration.

Overall, 45.1% support this idea. Among today's Kyivans, 44.4% are its supporters (14.5% are opposed, and 40.5% are unsure about it). It is supported by 59.7% of those living in communities located less than 30 km from the capital, and 33.2% of those living over 30 km from it.

The respondents named job creation, secondary health care services, public transport, environmental protection, waste recycling and even the fight against corruption as key priorities for such cooperation.

Finally, here is another figure that was announced during the presentation. 50%, that is, half of the respondents, consider decentralisation reform, which has reached the final stage, necessary. It seems that it has not only expanded the rights and financial capacity of Ukrainian local governments, but also significantly contributes to the formation of culture of trust and cooperation in this country, and trust and cooperation are key features on the path to community well-being and sustainable development.

It is planned that the findings of the survey will be used by the Council of Europe and its local partners in Ukraine in their future activities for the benefit of the metropolitan governance and provision of high-quality public services to citizens.

Article prepared in cooperation with Iryna Nagrebetska, independent journalist, with support of the Council of Europe Programme "Decentralisation and local government reform in Ukraine"