

TRANSPARENCY OF THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES AS AN INDICATOR OF CITIZENS' SATISFACTION WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Denis S.Mikheev¹, Olga V. Yakhina^{2*}, Julia S. Yaichnikova³

¹ Doctor of Law, Professor, State University, RUSSIA, Mikheev_ds@mail.ru

²Tutor, Mari State University, RUSSIA, olgeens@mail.ru

³ Candidate of Legal Sciences, Mari State University, RUSSIA, tnmiheeva@marsu.ru

* Corresponding author

Abstract

The public and municipal services are becoming increasingly important at the present stage of the state development. Such services show the quality and level of reflection of the needs and interests of individuals and legal entities in activity of bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government.

The function of providing municipal services to the population is the primary function of municipal government. The quality of delivering public services affects citizens' feeling about the activity of local authorities.

However, in order to provide possibilities, which are granted by the state they must be known to the public, because of it there is a necessity for timely information. Nowadays the question of public information becomes contemporary issues for research.

The aim of the present study is the research of public information about municipal services as an indicator of citizens' satisfaction with the activities of public authorities is. In this regard, tasks of the study can be allocated. The aims of the research are the examination of the concept of transparency of information, the analysis of the legal institution of municipal services, as well as defining the role of publicity in satisfaction of citizens of activity of bodies of local self-government.

The main methods are analysis of the legal foundations of informing citizens and the practice of placing information on the Internet, generalization, and comparison of theoretical and practical material.

The result of the study was the determination of the place of transparency in the formation of the population satisfaction by the activity of bodies of local self-government, the determination of the current level of satisfaction with the activities of public authorities in the municipalities, as well as offer specific measures that can improve satisfaction of the population by public authorities on local level in Russia.

Keywords: Information, municipal services, the principle of transparency, satisfaction with the activities of local self-government

1 INTRODUCTION

Every democratic state presupposes the establishment of the effective mechanisms in order to protect the institutions of civil society, accountability of public authority subjects and the observance and protection of human rights and freedoms.

In this regard, the state and municipal services show the quality and the level of reflection in activity of state authorities and local self-government bodies of the needs and interests of individuals and legal entities (Mikheeva, 2013, p. 30)

The primary function of municipal government is providing municipal services to the population and entities. It allows everybody to obtain understanding of the activities of local governments, their effectiveness, identify deficiencies (Mikheeva, Belousov, 2015, p.178)

However, in order to provide state-of-the possibilities, to make such activity known to the society, it is necessary to carry out timely information. It causes significant research interest in connection with the question of public information.

Legal relationship for the provision of municipal services to the population represents a kind of public power relations. Local self-government body which is one of the constituent entities is always in positions of authority and has legal power. However, the purpose of the municipal services is to make the lives of the people of a particular municipality more comfortable.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this work is a complex of principles of study, as well as specific ways of understanding the subject of research. Such principles are: legality, elimination of subjective assessments, systematic. Legitimacy involves strict adherence to the study with the letter and spirit of the law. An objective assessment of the legal phenomena is achieved through the elimination of subjective assessments. Consistency ensures the completeness of the ongoing study, to examine all aspects of the subject.

Methods of this research are analysis, synthesis, comparison. The analysis allows us to consider the constituent parts of the phenomenon under study. Merging the obtained results into a coherent inferences possible due to the synthesis. The comparison allows for the comparison of different points of view on the considered problem.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Simagina pays attention to the public nature of both public and municipal services. The author proposes to distinguish state and municipal services on the basis of their focus. The state authorities ensure the integrity of the state through the state public service, and in municipal services it meets the needs of the community (the population of the municipality). (Simagina, 2011, p.111). Some other authors agree with such opinion and specify that the municipal authority is more close to the people and directly connected to society. It is its contrast to the state power (Mikheeva, Mikheev, 2011, p.9).

The concept the of public service is not disclosed in the legislation, however, it is analyzed in the literature actively. So, according to the position of Kostyukova, "the public service is a broader term (than the state or any other), which also includes services provided to an unlimited circle of persons in order to meet the public interest. The authorities can only provide and not to provide them independently" (Kostukov, 2007, p.20). Tikhomirov interprets the concept of "public services" widely, defining them as "legally and socially significant actions in the interests of society, state and citizens". (Tikhomirov, 2001, p. 200).

Other authors exclude services, which are addressed to an indefinite circle of persons from the category of public activity in order to delimit them from "state", "social" and "public". (Nesterov, 2005, p.22)

The principle of the openness of the municipal services was enshrined in the Federal law from 27.07.2010 N 210-FZ "On organization of rendering state and municipal services" and the concept of administrative reform in the Russian Federation for 2006-2010, where the openness of the information on the activities of the Executive authorities was seen as the way of improving the efficiency of interaction of the Executive bodies and society, modernization of the information system of bodies of the Executive power.

The principle of openness is closely linked to the principle of transparency, essential requirements of which are:

awareness of citizens about decisions of bodies of the state power and bodies of local self-government;

accessibility of discussion important state issues and local issues;
consideration of public opinion.

In the municipalities there are sufficient public resources in the form of local NGOs, active citizen groups, the media (Mikheeva, 2015, p.91)

As Savichev noted: "Providing the widest possible opportunities of obtaining information in this area is particularly important for the formation and development of civil society in Russia at the present stage. In fact, two important conditions for the formation of civil society: ensuring the rights and freedoms of man and citizen (as a politico-legal background) and the realization of the right to information (as a cultural factor) are joined together in the process of access for citizens to information about activities of local self-government ". (Savichev, 2014, p.41)

Electronic interaction of the society and the state, companies and municipalities, receiving information through the Internet at a superficial relation to placement of information, carelessness, irrationality greatly undermines the transparency of the activities of bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government. This is evidenced by the opinions of foreign researchers given in the work of Danilova "The Citizen in the "Electronic Government" in the Mirror of Foreign Analysts":

Jaeger and Berto believe that the attitude of the American society to public web sites by 2010, years from initially enthusiastic became critical because owners and providers of commercial sites offer users a technically more advanced than those of the state, and less costly communication, facilitating and accelerating access to the necessary information.

The studies "Transparency and E-government in Municipalities of Latin American Countries" (authors – Spanish analysts Manuel Rodriguez and Antonio Manuel Hernandez from the University of Granada and María del Carmen Pérez from the University of Almería) and "Relations between citizens and government in Chinese electronic government" (author – Chi Lee Lollar of the University of Wisconsin, USA) are also devoted to these questions. Researchers studied resistance of the political elite of many countries of the "young democracy" to introduction of "electronic government" on digital material.

The problem was investigated on the examples of the correlation of transparency and secrecy in the work of municipal authorities in Latin America and Asia. In particular, it was found that the data on the organization and functioning of the municipality of the capital of Mexico is transparent online in 70% of cases, in the capital of Chile the figure is 66%, in the capital of Colombia – 65%. 62% of information of the world wide web is available to users in the Argentine capital. In the Brazilian capital it is only 45% and in the capital of Paraguay it is only 19%.

100% of users are satisfied with the "hotline" services of municipalities, but at the same time, 23% of those polled are disappointed in declared by law the right to seek the answer of heads of the city administration on complaints and applications. There is the dissatisfaction with the fact that the municipal government was evading its assigned duties to post on the web sites of citizens ' comments about quality of work of municipalities, expressing at least one third of the interviewed Chinese citizens using the Internet (Danilov, 2015, p.230-235).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Browse the Internet sites of some Russian municipalities has shown that all municipalities adhere to its position regarding the placement of information in the network. So, this information can be found in the section "Municipal service" in the city of Yoshkar-Ola, in the section "Economy" in the town of Volzhsk, in the section "Administration" in the Volzhskii area. Thus, the practice of placement of information varies from area to area, and it is within one subject of the Russian Federation. The outdated information (dated 2012 and earlier) can be found on these resources often.

The monitoring of the quality of municipal services is conducted in some municipalities. The services were evaluated on the following criteria: satisfaction with quality of providing municipal services, satisfaction with the availability of information on the service, the compliance with waiting time for applying (no more than 15 minutes). Three indicators except the level of accessibility, satisfaction is usually 100 %. The satisfaction ranges from 97 to 100% in terms of "availability of information on the service"

Content analysis of the official Internet sites of municipal areas and city districts of the Republic of Mari El has shown that, the information about municipal services is placed in the Internet. We can see at least a formal observance of the principle of openness in practice there however, all official resources have different

internal structure, information about municipal services is presented in a different ways, it is placed in different sections. The positive experience of some municipalities is following: information about municipal services structured in sections whereby it is easier to find, there are channels of feedback from potential applicants and independent experts of administrative regulations (for example, the address for sending proposals, specific addresses and time of work of the organizations responsible for the provision of a service).

In addition, published reports on the independent evaluation of the quality of municipal services show a partial satisfaction of the consumers with transparency of information about municipal services.

After conducting a content analysis of the websites of some municipalities of the Republic of Mari El the impression that

The information is placed in the Internet because it is a legal obligation of the local authorities. Officials do not think about convenience of population.

In this respect we should agree with Mikheeva that municipalities prepare adapted to the present conditions municipal management, new managers who can think in modern categories, to implement the social needs of municipalities (Mikheeva, 2002, p.107).

At present, the presence or absence of information on the Internet are inspected only. Nobody cares about the user experience or comfort during its usage.

During the inspections, as a rule, its presentation, consistency of placement, feedback from potential consumers of such information is not estimated.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Municipal services is a socially useful institution, but it may be unclaimed, not because of their irrelevance, but because of lack of information support. In this regard, the municipal services should be based on the principles of openness and transparency.

The lack of satisfaction with information is a problem not only in Russia but also in foreign countries.

There is an acute issue of transparency in the interaction of authorities and population, because civil society and mechanisms of providing municipal services are on the stage of development in Russia

However we are face at best with openness of the regulation and implementation of municipal services in practice. Transparency is absent in this process legally and practically. At the same time, there are some developments to the emergence and implementation of this principle. This is, for example, leaving feedback channels to the public ("your offers you can send...", "offer to conduct an independent examination...").

But such offers become meaningless, because there are no ways of taking into account. They are not published for dissemination among the public. In this regard, it is necessary to reinforce the principle of transparency of activity of bodies of public authority in the sphere of interacting with complainants at the constitutional level. The effectiveness of their activities will grow significantly as the population gets more information and the instrument of social control.

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