MAIN ASPECTS OF FUNCTIONING OF PHONE “HOT LINES” OF STATE AUTHORITIES

Abstract. The article analyzes the main aspects of the functioning of telephone hotlines of public authorities in Ukraine. Emphasis is placed on the identified shortcomings in the investigated field. The basic information on the functioning of “hot lines” of executive authorities is considered. The necessity of covering information on the functioning of hotlines and their contacts on the official websites of some state bodies is raised.

In the course of the study, particular attention was paid to the existence of discrepancies between the names of hotlines and their telephone numbers.

They came to the conclusion that information about the presence of the hotline or link to it on the home pages of official bodies of the executive bodies was required.

Attention was drawn to the significant limitation of the possibility of direct access to the hotlines of most central executive bodies due to the lack of possibility of making free calls.

It was found that in some cases there is a timely update of information on official sites, no clear mode of operation of the line, and a list of several “hotlines”.

A study of telephone conversations with hotline workers found that there was no way to call some executive agencies because the line was constantly busy.
They also drew attention to the presence of an answering machine with a message about the ability to record a conversation in order to improve the quality of calls. Only 10 executive bodies can sway here.

They analyzed the beginning of the conversation and came to the conclusion that most of the specialists of hotlines do not provide either their own name or even their number. But, at the same time, it is worth noting the polite manner of communication and friendly treatment of the citizens by the employees of most lines of the authorities, as well as the correct and tolerant conclusion of the conversation.

They clarified the need to improve the functioning of telephone “hotlines” of public authorities in the following areas: setting up and working out uniform standards of work; introduction of special training courses for employees of these lines; constant control of the quality of service to citizens; updating of software and so on.

In general, let us conclude that the main problem is the lack of clear coordination of the work of such lines by the state.

**Keywords:** “hotline”, appeals, public authorities, functioning, specialists of “hotlines”, improvement.

**ОСНОВНІ АСПЕКТИ ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ ТЕЛЕФОННИХ “ГАРЯЧИХ ЛІНІЙ” ОРГАНІВ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ ВЛАДИ**

**Анотація.** Проаналізовано основні аспекти функціонування телефонних “гарячих ліній” органів державної влади в Україні. Акцентовано увагу на виявлених недоліках у досліджуваній сфері. Розглянуто основну інформацію щодо функціонування “гарячих ліній” органів виконавчої влади. Розкрито питання необхідності висвітлення інформації щодо функціонування “гарячих ліній” та їх контактів на офіційних сайтах деяких державних органів.

У ході дослідження особливо увагу звернено на існування розбіжностей між назвами “гарячих ліній”, а також номерами їх телефонів.

Зроблено висновок щодо необхідності висвітлення на стартових сторінках офіційних сайтів виконавчих органів інформації про наявність “гарячої лінії” або посилання на неї.

Головний акцент зроблено на суттєве обмеження можливості прямого звернення на “гарячі лінії” більшості центральних органів виконавчої влади у зв’язку з відсутністю можливості здійснення безкоштовних дзвінків.

З’ясовано, що в деяких випадках відбувається невчасне оновлення інформації на офіційних сайтах, не зазначається чіткий режим роботи лінії, а також наведено перелік кількох “гарячих ліній”.

У процесі дослідження телефонних розмов з працівниками “гарячих ліній” виявлено, що змога дотелефонуватись до деяких виконавчих органів взагалі відсутня, оскільки лінія постійно зайнята.

Також привернула увагу наявність автовідповідача з повідомленням про можливість запису розмови з метою покращення якості розмов. Позитивним результатом при цьому можуть похвалитися лише 10 органів виконавчої влади.
Проаналізовано початок розмови, який дозволив дійти висновку, що більшість фахівців “гарячих ліній” не повідомляють ні власного імені, ні навіть табельного номера. Водночас слід відзначити ввічливу манеру спілкування та доброзичливе ставлення до громадян з боку працівників більшості ліній органів влади, а також коректне та толерантне завершення розмови.

Висвітлено необхідність удосконалення функціонування телефонних “гарячих ліній” органів державної влади в таких напрямках: налагодження та відпрацювання єдиних стандартів роботи; запровадження спеціальних курсів підвищення кваліфікації для працівників зазначених ліній; постійний контроль якості обслуговування громадян; осучаснення програмно-технічного забезпечення тощо.

Загалом зроблено висновок, що основна проблема полягає у відсутності чіткої координації роботи таких ліній з боку держави.

**Ключові слова:** “гаряча лінія”, звернення, органи державної влади, функціонування, фахівці “гарячих ліній”, удосконалення.

**ОСНОВНІ АСПЕКТИ ФУНКЦИОНИРОВАНІЯ ТЕЛЕФОННИХ “ГОРЯЧИХ ЛІНИЙ” ОРГАНІВ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЇ ВЛАСТИ**

**Аннотация.** Проанализированы основные аспекты функционирования телефонных “горячих линий” органов государственной власти в Украине. Акцентировано внимание на выявленных недостатках в исследуемой сфере. Рассмотрены основные сведения о функционировании “горячих линий” органов исполнительной власти. Раскрыто вопрос о необходимости внесения информации о функционировании “горячих линий” и их контактов на официальных сайтах некоторых государственных органов.

В ходе исследования особое внимание обращено на существование разногласий между названиями “горячих линий”, а также номерами их телефонов.

Сделан вывод о необходимости размещения на стартовых страницах официальных сайтов исполнительных органов информации о наличии “горячей линии” или ссылки на нее.

Основное внимание сакцентировано на существенное ограничение возможности прямого обращения на “горячие линии” большинства центральных органов исполнительной власти в связи с отсутствием возможности осуществления бесплатных звонков.

Было выяснено, что в некоторых случаях происходит несвоевременное обновление информации на официальных сайтах, не указывается четкий режим работы линии, а также приведен перечень нескольких “горячих линий”.

В исследовании телефонных разговоров с работниками “горячих линий” выявлено, что возможность дозвониться до некоторых исполнительных органов вообще отсутствует, поскольку линия постоянно занята.

Также обращено внимание на наличие автоответчика с информацией о возможности записи разговора с целью улучшения его качества. Положи-
тельным результатом при этом могут похвальиться только 10 органов исполнительной власти.

Анализ начала разговора позволил сделать вывод, что большинство специалистов “горячих линий” не сообщает ни своего имени, ни даже табельного номера. Одновременно следует отметить вежливую манеру общения и доброжелательное отношение к гражданам со стороны работников большинства линий органов власти, а также корректное и толерантное завершение разговора.

Отмечена необходимость усовершенствования функционирования телефонных “горячих линий” органов государственной власти в следующих направлениях: налаживание и отработка единых стандартов работы; введение специальных курсов повышения квалификации для работников указанных линий; контроль качества обслуживания граждан; модернизация программно-технического обеспечения и т. п.

В целом сделан вывод, что основная проблема заключается в отсутствии четкой координации работы таких линий со стороны государства.

Ключевые слова: “горячая линия”, обращение, органы государственной власти, функционирования, специалисты “горячих линий”, совершенствование.

Problem statement. In modern Ukraine, the role of citizens’ appeals as an effective tool of civil society influence on public authorities has not yet been fully understood. The substantial revaluation of approaches to determining the role and place of the institution of citizens’ appeals is necessary to improve public administration in the system of ensuring human rights, improve the interaction between state and society, and establish social and legal state in Ukraine.

The citizens’ appeals are an important factor in making socially important decisions in any democratic country, regardless of its political structure and form of government. This is an important tool for identifying and systematically analyzing negative trends that threaten the stable development of individual and society as a whole. Ensuring rights and freedoms involves creating appropriate conditions and forming effective mechanisms for responding to citizens’ appeals by public authorities and local self-governments, as well as implementing constitutional principles of state governance [1].

The existence of various hotlines allowing citizens to submit an appeal has long been no news for our time. Now, most organizations have their own telephone lines, which can be used to obtain this or that information. In this case, public authorities are no exception [2]. This led to the need to analyze the activities of such lines and special directory inquiry services that currently operate in most executive authorities.

Highlighting the unresolved parts of general problem. Today, the issues of ensuring proper functioning of hotlines of public authorities remain unre-
solved. There are a lot of problems from organizational point of view of their functioning, human resourcing, proper distribution of functional responsibilities and load on employees, as well as in terms of responsibility for improper consideration, evasion or unjustified refusal to consider appeals. Given that the institution of citizens’ appeals is an integral part of the rule-of-law state functioning, the outlined problems deserve special attention and need to be addressed. This, in turn, will allow establishing cooperation between public authorities and citizens who apply to these authorities in order to be heard.

**Analysis of recent studies and publications.** The wide range of scientific works of domestic and foreign scientists is devoted to the study of hotlines and citizens’ appeals submitted directly with their help. The importance of this issue is due to the fact that appeals to public authorities and local self-governments, which are submitted using special hotlines, are an important feedback mechanism between state and citizens and one of the objective integral indicators of assessing the level of civil society formation, indicator of maturity and irreversibility of democratic transformations in the state. These are the works by O. Chub, O. Babinova, V. Sobol, V. Soroka, V. Bakumenko, M. Bilynyska, V. Vorotin, V. Holub, V. Hoshovska, N. Hrytsia, Yu. Kovbasiuk, V. Kniaziev, A. Kolodiy, V. Luhovyi, V. Mammonova, A. Popok, O. Pukhalo, Ya. Radyshe, I. Rozputenko, Ye. Romat, V. Trushchynskyi, H. Sytnyky, A. Semenchenko, Yu. Surmin, S. Teleshun and others.

However, despite the wide range of studies on various aspects of this topic, a significant number of problems still require further development and in-depth study. The processes of social transformation, establishment of new social ties updates the need for scientific studies of the problem of interaction between government and public, which would adequately reflect the complexity of transformations taking place in society [3]. The urgent need to improve the efficiency of working with citizens’ appeals due to hotlines and to optimize dialogue relations requires a comprehensive study of these problems, increases their relevance and practical significance.

**Purpose of the article** is to analyze the current status of telephone hotlines of executive authorities in Ukraine and ways to improve them based on the analysis of activities of hotlines of public authorities and scientific studies.

**Statement of main material.** The study analyzed the effectiveness of hotlines of central executive authorities, identified their “bottle necks” that negatively affect both the image of the institution and the effectiveness of response by public authorities, and determined the ways to improve the activities of the studied lines and services.

This analysis was based on the list of reference information provided on the websites of the state institution Government Contact Center [4] and Government Portal [5].

The analysis of contact information provided on these Internet resources clearly showed that the websites of Government Contact Center and some central executive authorities do not contain any information on existence of their own hotlines. Apparently, such executive authorities are not interested in receiving appeals directly, but are
“content” only with appeals that are registered at the government hotline.

In some cases, information on telephone lines and services of certain public authorities could only be found on the website of Government Contact Center, while no similar contact information was found on the websites of these institutions. There were cases when telephone numbers could be found on the websites of executive authorities, but they were not displayed on the website of the mentioned state institution. In most cases, information on telephone hotlines and directory inquiry services were available both on the websites of executive authorities and on the website of Government Contact Center.

It is impossible not to notice the fact that in many cases of analysis of information available on the official websites of executive authorities and website of Government Contact Center, the differences were traced, that is, completely different telephone numbers were indicated. In other cases, discrepancies were found, which can be considered “typical”. They consisted of:

• differences between the names;
• differences between hotlines telephone numbers listed on the websites of relevant authorities;
• lack of information on hotlines working hours.

In addition to the identified problems of system nature, the attention should also be paid to other problems of substantive and organizational nature identified during the study [6].

First, the vast majority of telephone hotlines of central authorities differ both in sound and in spelling, for example: telephone number, hot telephone line, directory assistance service, telephone hotline, call center, hotline telephone number, crisis hotline, directory inquiry telephone line, telephone number of hotline, single telephone number, helpline, directory assistance telephone system, hotline, contact center, Pulse service, direct telephone hotline, Corruption Report, support line, contact center, Dovira service telephone number and so on. Due to this discrepancy between the names, ordinary citizens have difficulty finding a particular telephone number.

Secondly, information on existence of hotline or link to it cannot be found on the start page of the official websites of some institutions, therefore, the citizens concerned spend more time searching. Instead, information on or link to government hotline is available on almost every website of public authorities.

Thirdly, to call the vast majority of hotlines, there is a need to make long-distance calls (unless you are a resident of Kyiv). This is due to the fact that most lines have the dialing code 044, which is the code of Kyiv. Instead, numbers starting with 0800 are much more convenient, because they are usually free.

During the study it was revealed that the majority of websites of executive authorities, the telephone line numbers of which start with 0800, do not provide information which of these calls are free: either only from landlines, or also from Ukrainian mobile operators.

Fourth, a fairly large number of central executive authorities have several telephone hotlines. In some cases, there is a whole list of numbers to leave an
appeal. This can confuse citizens, as they do not clearly understand the area of responsibility for each of them. It is much more convenient for the population to have one telephone hotline for each executive authority, which would allow specialists to switch calls to government officials responsible in one plane or another.

Fifthly, during the study, there were cases when no comprehensive information on lines working hours was found. Often, the official websites of relevant authorities do not provide information on possible work breaks, and in some cases the schedule sounds like “during the working day”, which leads to additional actions by parties concerned to clarify necessary issues. It is also worth noting the lack of consistency in the work schedule of such lines. This means that some lines work 24/7, while others work on certain days or hours per week. In this case, citizens have to wait, for example, for a certain day, which makes it impossible to use the right to appeal at any time. In my opinion, if hotline works only at certain times, then the meaning of its existence is lost, because there is no possibility to resolve the issue that may require immediate response.

Sixthly, the study found that in some cases the information on official websites is not updated in time. There was outdated information concerning, for example, the already liquidated or renamed authority, line work schedule, schedule of participation of officials during the hotline, and so on.

I believe that it is advisable to conduct the study in terms of telephone conversations with employees of hotlines of central executive authorities.

**The study consisted of three stages.**

1. At the first stage, contact information on the activities of directory inquiry services and telephone hotlines of authorities was clarified.

2. The second stage was to investigate their work by making calls on the principle of “secret applicant” who had a problem requiring advice or certain actions by relevant authority to resolve it.

3. During the third stage, the results of advice or appeal registration were systematized, summarized and analyzed.

When evaluating the work of telephone lines and directory inquiry services, the following factors were taken into account:

- thematic structure of appeals;
- total number of attempts to call;
- message from the answering machine on possible recording the telephone conversation;
- response of hotline employee to the raised issue (whether it was proposed to register the appeal or provide oral advice, or it was connected with a specialist);
- ethical aspect of conversation of specialist with applicant.

The study covered the work of quite a large number of hotlines of executive authorities. All calls were made during working hours indicated on the official website of the state institution Government Contact Center, and on the principle of “secret applicant”. In other words, the problem with which the applicant called a particular hotline was invented, and the course and result of the conversation were analyzed.

Thus, the following results were obtained.
Availability. In most cases, the conversation started after the first attempt to call. In some executive authorities, the connection occurred after several minutes of waiting on the line. This indicates the proper organization of work of the studied lines.

Despite the positive results in this direction, there were also negative sides, namely the lack of opportunities to call. The reason, first of all, was that the line is always busy. It should be noted that conclusion on impossibility to call these hotlines was made as a result of repeated attempts.

Answering machine. During the experiment, it was found that only ten hotlines of public authorities have an answering machine with a message on possible recording the conversation to improve the quality of conversations. The absence of such notification may indicate that audio recording is being made without informing the applicant, or is not being made at all. It is sad, as this practice would be useful for other hotlines to improve the quality of service and control the work of specialists who receive calls.

It is also impossible to ignore the fact that during the call no hotline reported the number of applicant in the queue for connection with a specialist, as well as approximate time of possible waiting. Due to the lack of such information, very often applicants just hang up without waiting for connection.

On some lines, citizens who try to call are offered to choose the appropriate appeal subject by clicking a certain number, choosing which they receive only general advice. If the issue requires more detailed consideration, they suggest waiting for connection with a specialist. The hotline of one of the ministries immediately reports that appeals only on certain issues are accepted. If issue is of different nature, you need to click other numbers. In general, calling this hotline made a rather unpleasant impression. First, the answering machine voice is hoarse, which does not leave a pleasant impression. Secondly, they immediately inform that you call a hotline of the ministry, not mentioning its full name, but only the abbreviation without transcription that may confuse an ordinary citizen.

On hotline of one of the ministries there is only the automatic directory inquiry telephone line, where you can get information on schedule and visiting hours of officials, or contacts of structural divisions.

Starting the conversation. When starting the conversation, it turned out that most of hotline specialists do not say their names and(or) employee ID, which also makes very negative impression, as citizens do not understand who they are talking to in this case.

Style of communication. In general we can say that in the vast majority of cases the communication style of specialists of hotlines of executive authorities can be assessed as polite, friendly and making positive impression.

But we should not forget about the lines that struck with complete ignorance, impolite communication style and rudeness of specialists.

Speed of orientation and awareness. In this case, we intentionally called the hotlines of authorities not according to their competence and checked the speed of specialist orientation in the issue and advice on how to
contact the competent authority to address the issue.

**Ending the conversation.** The conversation with the applicant in all cases was ended with observance of the rules of ethical communication and wishes for “all the best” or “thank you for the call”.

Taking into account the data of the study, it is concluded that it is necessary to improve the work of hotlines of central executive authorities, which is as follows:

1. Establishing and developing common standards for telephone hotlines and directory inquiry services of central executive authorities [7].
2. Introducing special training courses for employees of these lines to ensure better, more professional and effective level of response to appeals.
3. Placing information on available hotlines on the start pages of official websites of public authorities or implementing the system of simplified search for contact information on these websites [8].
4. Constant control of quality of citizen service by considering the possibility of audio recording of each and all calls on the line.
5. Providing recommendations for creating hotlines to those authorities who do not have them.
6. Updating software and hardware for the perfect work of hotlines.

**Conclusions and suggestions.** Summarizing the above, we can conclude that all the results of analysis of the activities of hotlines indicate the need for mandatory improvement of the work of hotlines of public authorities. Their functioning should help to increase the efficiency of response to citizens’ appeals and confirm the need for their development as an integral part of the National system of processing appeals to executive authorities [9]. However, it is too early to talk about the results. The work of each telephone hotline should be analyzed separately and in more detail. The main attention should be paid to work with hotline specialists who receive calls and often do not fully perform their duties or do not perform them at all.

**REFERENCES**


