

Ukraine's practices in implementing the administrative services doctrine

Viktor Tymoshchuk*

PhD in Law, Senior Researcher

V.M. Koretsky Institute of State and Law of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

01001, 4 Trokhsvyatytelska Str., Kyiv, Ukraine

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6109-0909>

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to analyse Ukraine's practices in implementing the doctrine of administrative services, which became the basis for a new model of interaction between the state and citizens. The study focused on the conceptual and practical aspects of the integration of administrative services at the level of territorial communities, with an emphasis on the role of decentralisation, which ensures great accessibility and quality of administrative services through the flexibility and efficiency of local self-government. The methodology of the study was based on the analysis of regulations, the study of successful practices of administrative service centres (ASCs), as well as a comparative approach, which helped to identify the advantages and challenges of the Ukrainian model in the context of international practices. The findings of the study demonstrated the success of integrated service delivery offices in communities. Integrated offices, specifically ASCs, provide quick access to basic services, while decentralisation has contributed to effective resource management at the state and local levels, enabling better adaptation of services to the needs of residents. The digitalisation of services improved service efficiency by minimising bureaucratic obstacles and reducing time spent. However, one of the key challenges is the uneven access to digital services, especially in rural communities and for the elderly. Furthermore, a lack of funding and overly centralised norms and standards create obstacles for local governments, limiting their autonomy and ability to respond quickly to community demands. At the same time, some aspects of outsourcing and competition are highly controversial due to the risks of commercialisation of public services. The findings of the study showed that Ukraine's practices in reforming the administrative services sector contribute to the Europeanisation and humanisation of public administration and administrative law, strengthening its citizen-orientation. Certain aspects of these practices may be of interest to other countries

Keywords: integrated offices; administrative service centres; decentralisation; digitalisation; outsourcing

Introduction

The relevance of the subject of this study, which is related to the implementation of the administrative services doctrine in Ukraine, is conditioned by the complex changes taking place in the public sector and society. Over the past decades, the country has been undergoing radical transformations in the political, economic, and social spheres, which puts forward new requirements for the public administration system. In these conditions, ensuring public access to quality administrative services is one of the key factors in the successful development of the state (Jeong *et al.*, 2024). The efficiency of public administration forms an integral part of national security and stability, as transparency and speed of service delivery contribute to the growth of public trust in public institutions and strengthen social unity, especially in challenging times of military aggression.

The study is particularly relevant in the context of Ukraine's integration into the European community, where an effective and transparent public administration system is significant. The European Commission (2024b) emphasised

that the network of Administrative Service Centres (ASCs) not only stays functional despite the military challenges, but also demonstrates resilience through mobile centres and remote workplaces, which is a sign of the successful application of modern approaches to administration. In the context of an active European integration course, it is Ukraine's practices in implementing innovative solutions in the field of public administration that can serve as an example for partner countries, which makes the subject even more relevant and significant (Zayats, 2024). The social aspect is equally important. Citizens' positive assessment of the quality of services provided by ASCs indicates real changes in the perception of public services, as noted O. Uliutina (2023). According to the latest data from the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the level of satisfaction with ASC services in Ukraine is 92-98%, which is an indicator of a strong level of performance by public administration and demonstrates effectiveness in the face of security challenges (Dashboard with the..., 2023).

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*Corresponding author



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Furthermore, this subject is relevant in terms of studying the risks and challenges associated with the processes of deregulation and digitalisation of public administration. O. Pluzhnyk *et al.* (2024) investigated how introduction of digital solutions in administrative processes allows optimising the work of public authorities and reducing bureaucratic burden, but at the same time creates new threats, such as the risk of discrimination against certain categories of citizens due to the lack of accessibility of digital services. Ukraine's practices in balancing digitalisation and maintaining accessibility of services for all segments of the population is crucial for shaping a modern approach to public administration.

In the context of these transformations, it was significant to analyse existing studies that assess the success of reforms in the field of public administration in Ukraine and determine the prospects for further development. E. Ferlie and E. Ongaro (2022) investigated the use of strategic management models in public organisations, emphasising the value of adapting these models to local political, administrative, and cultural contexts in conditions of new and post-new public administration reforms. B. Smith (2023) analysed how decentralisation affects governance and interaction between central and local governments. S. Breyer *et al.* (2022) provided a broad overview of topics related to administrative law and regulatory policy in the United States. The study of the basics of administrative law in this study was of particular significance in the context of comparing diverse models of public service administration, including deregulation and digitalisation, which are relevant to the Ukrainian reform.

However, despite the detailed studies of these aspects of the reform of the public administration system and administrative law, the issue of a comprehensive analysis of the specific Ukrainian practices of implementing administrative services in the context of war and threats to national security is still open. The risks associated with aggressive digitalisation, which can create artificial barriers to access to administrative services for multiple categories of the population, are also understudied. In addition, the issues of outsourcing in the provision of administrative services and competition of functions in this system, which may affect its further development, have not received sufficient coverage.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the practices of implementing administrative services in Ukraine, with a focus on the role of ASCs, as well as to identify positive and problematic aspects of deregulation and digitalisation in the context of war. The objectives of the study were to examine the historical development of administrative services in Ukraine and the key reforms that accompanied them, to assess the effectiveness of decentralisation initiatives in the field of administrative services, specifically the effects on the functioning of ASCs, to analyse the risks and challenges of digitalising administrative services and recommendations for overcoming them, to study the experience of outsourcing and competition of functions on the example of administrative services, and to assess the potential implications for the further development of public administration in Ukraine.

Materials and methods

The study involved a series of regulations that are key to analysing the administrative service system in Ukraine. The principal documents used included the Constitution of Ukraine (2020); the Law of Ukraine No. 5203-VI "On Administrative Services" (2012); the Draft Law No. 4380 "On

Administrative Fee" (2020); the Law of Ukraine No. 2073-IX "On Administrative Procedure" (2022). When developing the research methodology, a series of analytical reports and assessment documents were used, which provided structured information on the state of administrative service delivery in Ukraine and recommendations for improvement: Results of Monitoring of 25 Pilot ASCs of the U-LEAD with Europe Programme's Inception Phase (U-Lead, 2021); SIGMA (2023) Report; Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022-2025 (2021). The use of these sources ensured an objective and complete picture of the state and prospects of administrative services in Ukraine. These data provided scientific validity to the findings and helped to trace the dynamics of the development of the administrative services system in response to socio-economic and security challenges.

The study was conducted using the main legal methods that enabled a detailed analysis of the situation, assessment of legal provisions, and examine of the practice of their application. The comparative legal method was employed to analyse practices in the provision of administrative services, namely countries such as Sweden and Finland (Randall *et al.*, 2018), Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands, and Canada (European Commission, 2023; 2024a; Shepherd & Champagne, 2024; Leyland, 2025), and to assess the degree of compliance of Ukrainian practices with international standards. The historical and legal method of development of the institution of administrative services in Ukraine in the retrospective of 15-25 years (since the system of administrative services has been formed in Ukraine for more than two decades) revealed the stages of its development and evolution, as well as the specific features of legislative changes. The use of this method was relevant, as the development of the administrative service system requires an assessment of long-term changes, which allows tracing not only successful decisions but also mistakes. The study also focused on certain general theoretical aspects essential for administrative law as a science and a branch of law, including the types and levels of statutory regulation of relevant social relations in the field of administrative services.

The systemic approach helped to consider the provision of administrative services as a multi-component system that includes the interaction of regulations, institutional structures, and organisational processes at various levels of government. The analysis using the systemic approach helped to establish the place of administrative services in the overall public administration system, assess its efficiency and possible areas for improvement. The systemic approach also ensured the structured analysis by considering administrative services in relation to other components of public administration. The functional approach was focused on determining whether the performance of the administrative service system meets the needs of society. This method was employed to analyse how the current service delivery mechanisms meet the interests of consumers, specifically in terms of accessibility and cost. The functional approach also helped to identify problematic aspects of the system's adaptability to current challenges, including security and financial threats.

Results

Legal framework and practice of implementing the administrative services doctrine in Ukraine. Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has been on the path of building its governance system that meets the needs of civil

society and modern principles of public administration. One of the key tasks has been to create an institutional and regulatory framework for the provision of administrative services aimed at meeting the needs of society. A prominent event on this path was the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), which laid down the fundamental principles of legal regulation of relations between the state and citizens. The Concept of Administrative Reform in Ukraine was adopted (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 810/98, 1998), which defined the political and administrative framework for reforming the governance system, thus initiating the establishment of a new model of interaction between the state and its citizens. According to this Concept, the key goal of administrative reforms was to transform a citizen from an “object” of administrative influence into a full-fledged subject, a central element of social relations, for which the state and its body’s function (Tymoshchuk, 2024).

On the path to creating an effective administrative service delivery system, Ukraine has been actively studying the practices of various countries, including the UK, Northern Europe (Sweden, Finland), North America (specifically, Canada), and Germany. Each of these countries offered its unique approaches to the organisation of administrative services, which, when adapted, served as the basis for the modern system of service delivery in Ukraine. The model of public administration in the UK and Northern European countries was shaped by the ideas of “new public management”, which involves the adoption of private sector methods to improve the efficiency of public institutions. This approach, developed in the 1980s, promotes the concept of a “service state”, where citizens and businesses are considered as clients of the state, and while the provision of services by the state should meet the level of customer-oriented service as in private structures (Peña-Casas & Ghailani, 2023; Leyland, 2025).

Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Finland, are known for their focus on digitalisation of administrative services and the simplest, most transparent procedures possible (Randall *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, Finland has placed a major emphasis on integrating various services into a single digital platform, which allows citizens to receive all necessary services online, without the need to visit institutions in person. In Germany, a prominent role in the reform of administrative services was played by municipal “Bürgerbüro” or “offices for citizens”, which were created as multifunctional service centres. Between 2011 and 2024, Germany’s municipal “Bürgerbüros” have undergone significant development, evolving into central service units within city administrations. These offices have expanded their range of services, offering citizens streamlined access to various administrative functions in a single location. This transformation reflects a broader trend in German municipal policy towards integrated and citizen-oriented service delivery (European Commission, 2023; 2024a). Such offices enable citizens to receive basic services in one place, which greatly simplifies their interaction with the state. Specifically, German cities tend to focus on the most popular services, such as residence registration, passport issuance, vehicle registration, etc. This makes public services more accessible to the population, as the working hours of such offices and their structure are oriented towards the convenience of citizens.

Municipal offices in Poland, the Netherlands, and Canada also provide successful examples of integrated administrative service systems. For instance, in some communities

in Poland and in cities in the Netherlands, municipal centres provide not only conventional administrative services, but also social services, combining several departments and units in a single building. In Canada, such offices may include both municipal, provincial, and federal offices, which enables more effective coordination between distinct levels of government and provides convenience for service users. Notably, the creation of integrated offices in these countries is an autonomous decision of individual municipalities, which independently choose the organisational structure and functionality of such centres, reflecting the strong level of decentralisation in government. Between 2011 and 2024, Poland, the Netherlands, and Canada have expanded their integrated administrative service systems, enhancing accessibility and efficiency. In Poland and the Netherlands, municipal centers have increasingly combined administrative and social services, streamlining government interactions for citizens. In Canada, the integration of municipal, provincial, and federal services in single locations has improved intergovernmental coordination and service delivery (Shepherd & Champagne, 2024).

Ukraine has borrowed key ideas from the theory of “new public management”, which developed the basis of modern reforms in the field of administrative services. I.B. Koliushko *et al.* (2001) made a valuable contribution to the popularisation of the ‘service state’ concept, substantiating the need for the state to focus on the interests of citizens, emphasising that the state should serve society, and not vice versa. The idea of creating the doctrine of administrative services, despite its significance for reforming the public administration system, has not always been perceived unambiguously. In some academic circles, specifically among administrative law scholars, it caused some scepticism and criticism. Thus, V. Harashchuk (2001) expressed reservations about this concept, believing that the approach to administrative service delivery could lead to excessive commercialisation in relations between the state and citizens. His warning was based on the fact that the very idea of administrative services may lead to their paid nature, as the services of public authorities are increasingly viewed through the lens of market relations, where the aspect of payment prevails.

In 2006, the Government of Ukraine adopted the first comprehensive policy document in the field of administrative services – the Concept for the Development of the System of Administrative Services Provision by Executive Authorities (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 90, 2006). This document was a major step towards the development of a modern administrative service system, as it defined key concepts, service quality criteria, and priority areas for reform. The document laid the foundations for the structural organisation of the administrative service delivery process based on the principles of accessibility, transparency, and compliance with the needs of citizens. In 2009, the first legal act to regulate this area was approved – the Temporary Procedure for the Provision of Administrative Services, which defined regulatory aspects and became the basis for further changes (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 737, 2009).

However, a decisive impetus for the development of the administrative service delivery system was given by the events associated with the establishment of the first integrated administrative service offices by local self-government bodies (LSGBs). Thus, the establishment of such

offices in Vinnytsia (2008), Ivano-Frankivsk (2010), and Luhansk (2011) became a clear example of an innovative approach to the organisation of administrative services, which encouraged other communities to actively implement analogous initiatives. These offices operated on a 'one-stop shop' basis, where citizens could receive a range of administrative services in convenient and accessible conditions. The introduction of this approach became a driving factor in the development of a service model of public administration that is focused on meeting the needs of citizens. Notably, these initiatives of local authorities not only contributed to the expansion of the network of integrated offices in various regions of Ukraine but also prompted the central government to pay closer attention to the development of this area, as well as to support and improve the legal framework for their activities. The introduction of such innovations stimulated "competition" between local authorities, which later became a significant factor in the dynamic development of the administrative service system.

The central government of Ukraine noticed the popularity and positive perception of integrated offices among citizens, which stimulated the initiation of mandatory measures by the state to implement this concept on a wider scale. In response to this need, the Law of Ukraine No. 5203-VI "On Administrative Services" (2012) was adopted in 2012, which was a crucial step in the legalisation of the administrative services system. The uniqueness of this legislative act lies in the fact that it not only consolidated the category of "administrative services" legislatively but also created an institutional framework for the functioning of integrated offices – administrative service centres (ASC). Notably, this is a rare example among other developed countries where the concept of "administrative services" or its equivalents, such as "public services" or "administrative services", stay mainly in the realm of policy documents and programmes, rather than being prescribed in legal acts. Law of Ukraine No. 5203-VI (2012) thus not only legally formalised the concept of administrative services but also made it mandatory to provide them in a unified form through the ASC system, which subsequently laid the foundation for an efficient, transparent, and customer-oriented structure.

The law defined the principal functions of the ASC, among which the main ones include ensuring fast, accessible and high-quality administrative services to citizens; creating conditions for convenient access to these services, providing consulting support and transparency of processes. The ASC is primarily a front office with a wide range of administrative services. This allows improving the territorial accessibility of services, optimising the process of obtaining services, and ensuring standardised quality of performance. The primary tasks set for the ASCs include the integration of various administrative services into single offices, with a priority on basic (most popular) administrative services, as well as a suitable level of comfort in service: extended reception hours, related services (such as payment), etc. The ASCs are also intended to facilitate the decentralisation of administrative functions, expanding citizens' access to public services even in the most remote communities (Miliienko, 2023).

At the initial stages of development, Ukrainian ASCs faced limitations in the list of available services since most basic services were the responsibility of state bodies (e.g., the State Migration Service, the Ministry of Justice). This complicated the achievement of full integration, as

national (central) authorities often resisted the transfer of some of their powers to ASCs. Thus, considerable efforts were required to involve the really basic (most demanded) services to ensure real customer focus and compliance with modern requirements in the field of administrative services. The decentralisation process in Ukraine demonstrated a major positive influence on the dynamics and quality of administrative service delivery through ASCs. The government's initial attempts to implement the provision of executive services through ASCs began in 2014, when the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 523-p "Certain Issues of Provision of Administrative Services by Executive Authorities through Administrative Service Centres" (2014). However, this was not yet a question of decentralisation (i.e., delegation of powers to local authorities), but only of the possibility of providing certain services in ASCs as front offices. Therefore, this process was slow and inefficient in terms of service integration. Fundamental changes became possible only after the reforms of 2015-2016, which opened new prospects for the decentralised model. In 2015, the adoption of a series of laws laid the groundwork for the delegation of certain groups of administrative services to local authorities. This decision expanded the range of services available to citizens at the local level and accelerated the integration of these services into ASCs.

The digitalisation of administrative services became another key reform that radically changed the way citizens and state institutions interact in Ukraine. Digitalisation, which has been the key trend of government policy in this area since 2019, is aimed at simplifying access to services, reducing bureaucratic procedures, and considerably increasing the transparency of public administration. The primary digitalisation tool in Ukraine is the Diia application, which was launched for mobile devices and has been actively expanding its functionality to cover increasingly more administrative services. As of 2023, the number of users of the Diia application reached more than 19.2 million, indicating high demand and trust in digital services among the population (SIGMA, 2023).

One of the key achievements of digitalisation was the growth in the volume of electronic interagency transactions, which reached 541 million in the first quarter of 2023. This suggests that digital platforms are being actively used by government agencies, which substantially increases the efficiency of interagency functions and optimises data management processes within the country. Thanks to the electronic information exchange system, public institutions can quickly and securely exchange the necessary data, which greatly reduces the need for paper documentation and reduces the number of physical visits by citizens to public institutions. The digital infrastructure in Ukraine has also created new opportunities for entrepreneurship. For instance, the number of individual entrepreneurs registered online in 2023 exceeded 300,000 (SIGMA, 2023). This figure is crucial, as it demonstrates how digital services can support the development of the business environment in Ukraine, especially in an environment where personal presence at government offices can be challenging. The possibility of registering a business online reduces the time and effort required for this process and thus contributes to economic development and job creation.

Another prominent aspect of digitalisation is the introduction of electronic identification services, which allows citizens to prove their identity electronically. This tool has

become especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic and martial law, when the possibility of visiting public institutions in person was limited. Thanks to electronic identification, citizens can sign documents online, which reduces the need for physical contact and accelerates the provision of many services. Digitalisation has also resulted in the development of numerous services for filing applications, applying for social aid, registering certain civil status acts, obtaining certificates, and many other documents that previously required personal presence. This not only makes life easier for citizens but also contributes to the efficiency of public administration (Borelle *et al.*, 2023). Reduced queues and shorter waiting times are made possible by digitising procedures, which positively affects the overall level of public satisfaction with public services.

Results and prospects for the development of the administrative services system in Ukraine. The evolution of Ukrainian ASCs by 2024 is marked by great progress in the development of client-oriented public administration. The key aspects of this experience demonstrate positive changes in attitudes towards citizens, a focus on improving the quality of services that ensure a strong level of convenience and accessibility. According to research, Ukrainian ASCs have become an example of an integrated approach to citizen-oriented service delivery and are distinguished by unique features (SIGMA, 2023). Many centres provide 200 to 400 types of administrative services covering various areas of public administration and ensuring convenient access to basic services for citizens. This includes civil registration, residence registration, property and business registration, social services, etc. ASCs in Ukraine usually exceed the requirements of the Law on Minimum Reception Hours. For instance, prior to the full-scale invasion, ASCs in Kyiv districts were open from 09:00 to 20:00 daily, and on Saturdays until 18:00. Such extended opening hours facilitate citizens' access to services by reducing queues and waiting times. Most ASCs operate on the principle of an open-space office, with barrier-free premises, children's corners, or rooms for the convenience of visitors. In addition, electronic queue management systems are installed in ASCs, which increases comfort and transparency for citizens and contributes to service efficiency. The use of SMS notifications to inform citizens about the readiness of service results has become a significant part of the ASC's communication strategy. Additionally, the availability of on-site payment options facilitates the process of receiving services.

As of April 2023, the network of ASCs in Ukraine consisted of 1,110 centres, supplemented by 131 territorial units, 2,082 remote workplaces, and 29 mobile ASCs (SIGMA, 2023). This considerable expansion of territorial coverage increases the accessibility of services, especially in remote communities. Selective monitoring, such as the U-Lead results for 2021, demonstrates major success of ASCs in providing delegated services, for instance, residence registration is provided in 100% of ASCs; registration of real estate is provided in 92-96% of ASCs (U-Lead, 2021). At the same time, the services that stay under the jurisdiction of central executive authorities have much lower rates of provision: land registration – 44%; passport services – 32%; pension services – 16%. Thus, the decentralised model provides greater flexibility and motivation on the part of LSGBs, which are more focused on the needs of their citizens. LSGBs are actively expanding the territorial availability of services by creating new access points within their territorial

communities. This contributes to a more even distribution of administrative services and increases the availability of services even in remote settlements.

Although decentralisation and the development of ASCs have shown positive outcomes, there is a series of challenges that substantially limit the effectiveness of service integration in ASCs. The main barriers are both practical and theoretical in nature and are caused by certain legal and organisational factors. One of the greatest obstacles to the full integration of services in ASCs is still departmental resistance, which manifests itself in the reluctance of state executive bodies to transfer their powers to local authorities. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the centralised service delivery system, where ministries and central authorities conventionally retain control over certain types of services. Registration of civil status acts (births, marriages, deaths, etc.) stays mainly the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice (in Ukraine, there is a mixed model where both local authorities and state bodies have separate powers), and therefore these services are not sufficiently integrated into ASCs; passport services are rendered in only a quarter of ASCs, as these powers fall under the competence of the State Migration Service; car registration is also rarely provided through ASCs. Despite the need for these services, the difficulty lies not only in the excessive cost of special equipment for their rendering, but primarily in the resistance of the agencies.

Furthermore, Ukraine is a large country with 1,470 amalgamated territorial communities, which creates further challenges for the centralised administrative system. It is necessary to ensure the territorial accessibility of service provision throughout Ukraine, in various amalgamated communities that may include dozens of settlements. That is why the decentralised approach, which enables local authorities to take on more responsibilities and exercise them flexibly, is the most effective for Ukraine. However, the lack of support for this approach from the state continues to create difficulties for the optimised provision of certain groups of services.

At the theoretical level, there is a problem of distinguishing certain issues between the science of administrative and constitutional law in Ukraine. Conventionally, the issues of executive power are considered in administrative law, while the issues of local self-government are considered the domain of constitutional law. Such a distinction does not factor in that modern public administration forms an integral system that includes two key subsystems: State executive power and local self-government (as well as the regional level of governance, which is still under development in Ukraine). To ensure holistic and effective governance, it would be advisable to consider combining these aspects within the framework of administrative law, which would enable a coherent consideration of the issues of organisation and operation of public administration in Ukraine.

Legislative requirements for the establishment of an ASC in each territorial community oblige LSGBs, instead of enabling them to independently decide on the organisation and provision of services, as is the case in Western countries. For instance, in Germany, burger bureaus are established in municipalities with a population of exceeding 30,000 people (but even there it is at the free discretion of the municipality), while in Ukraine, the obligation to establish an ASC is imposed by law on each community. This approach carries the following risks: without adequate state funding, many local authorities cannot fully perform their obligations; many

communities lack sufficient staffing, which complicates the implementation of mandatory provisions in practice.

Since 2021, the Government of Ukraine has also established a mandatory minimum list of services that ASCs must provide. Since 2021, this list has been gradually expanded, and currently includes 345 services in district centres, 392 services in cities of regional significance, and 182 services in other communities (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 969, 2021). Such an extended list is often excessive, and not all local authorities possess the resources to meet these requirements. Furthermore, the list contains services that LGEs are admittedly obliged to provide, specifically due to the war, such as services for internally displaced persons, veterans, compensation for damaged property, etc. Many LSGBs are factually in the status of “violators” since they cannot fulfil all the requirements of the list of services. Meanwhile, those local authorities that try to meet all the standards face a considerable increase in staff workload. This leads to queues at ASCs, staff burnout, and turnover.

Maintaining and improving the territorial accessibility of administrative services stays a critical task for Ukraine. In the context of amalgamation of territorial communities, an integrated office in the centre of the community is often insufficient, as it is necessary to maintain access to services in remote settlements that previously functioned as separate communities (before amalgamation in 2020). Legislative norms and practical experience provide several solutions, such as the creation of remote ASC workplaces that are open several days a week or the involvement of “starostas” in service delivery. This allows maintaining the level of access to administrative services and avoiding excessive concentration of services in mega-offices.

Digitalisation also has a series of benefits, such as round-the-clock access to services, reduced corruption risks, and time savings (Ryzhuk *et al.*, 2021). However, this process is accompanied by certain challenges that must be factored in, especially in the context of customer needs. Firstly, not all citizens have sufficient skills or trust in digital services. This requires preserving the offline alternative as an accessible way to receive services. After all, the concept of a service state is based on people, not digitalisation as an end in itself. Refusing to provide an offline alternative or delaying its implementation may lead to discrimination against certain categories of citizens. This situation was observed, for example, during the introduction of the first types of state support for small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during the implementation of some war-related social programmes (specifically, the eCompensation for Damaged Property programme) (Aristovnik *et al.*, 2024).

Since 2019, digitalisation has become a priority of state policy in the field of administrative services, while the process of decentralisation, i.e., delegation of powers to local governments, has virtually stopped. This is an irrational approach, as without decentralisation, the full potential of local governments and their motivation to bring services closer to the population is not used. This is especially significant in the context of territorial accessibility and security in times of war, power outages, etc. An effective combination of digitalisation and decentralisation would help improve the quality of administrative services. Specifically, LSGBs could use the centralised registers and standardised procedures to provide services directly to citizens, helping them to interact with the state. Ukraine still has a considerable untapped

potential for decentralisation. For instance, LSGBs could fully take over the area of civil registration, which is currently under the Ministry of Justice and 90% of civil registration services are still rendered by the Ministry's units, car registration (currently under the Ministry of Interior), land registration (StateGeoCadastr), and other significant areas. Some basic services, such as passport, residence, real estate, and social protection registration, stay largely offline due to the need for personal communication and require special attention in terms of accessibility. In this context, it is vital to follow the Council of Europe's recommendations: the approach to the digitalisation of public services should be based on the principle of 100% accessibility, rather than full digitalisation, so that citizens' access to their rights is not limited (Ponti *et al.*, 2022; Doran *et al.*, 2023; Estrela, 2023).

It is worth noting as an achievement that the Ukrainian service delivery system survived the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022. On the one hand, there was a temporary shutdown of electronic registries and, respectively, of many services in the first days and weeks. On the other hand, the system was restored quite quickly, while the government itself introduced many flexible solutions: the principle of extraterritoriality for many services (such as pension services or housing subsidies); prolongation of the validity of many documents (passports, permits); simplification of certain procedures (for instance, exchange of a driver's licence without a medical certificate, etc.), telephone communication and video conferencing, etc. It is crucial that the ASCs proved to be particularly effective, as they became humanitarian hubs and helped internally displaced persons.

A separate problem that needs to be addressed is the “financial and economic” component, specifically, the issue of payment for administrative services. In 2024, about 90% of ASC services are provided free of charge, which is economically burdensome for the local budget. This creates an unfair system, as even services such as business registration, land registration, passport photo affixing, marriage registration, etc., are free or almost free, i.e., financed by all taxpayers. A positive example is provided by paid passport and real estate registration services, which contribute to the financial stability of ASCs, as fees for these services go mainly to local budgets.

Practices in reforming the administrative services sector, specifically those of Poland, the Czech Republic, and individual states of Germany, suggest that it is advisable to establish fixed amounts of administrative fees at the legislative level. Since 2020, the Ukrainian parliament has been considering Draft Law No. 4380 “On Administrative Fees” (2020), which received unanimous support from the relevant parliamentary committee in 2023. At the same time, alternative proposals to have the government, rather than the parliament, determine the fees are unacceptable due to constitutional restrictions (Article 92, paragraph 1, part 2) and the previous negative experience of government “lists of paid services” and other questionable payments in the field of administrative services. Therefore, the adoption of this draft law with transparent and moderate compensatory fees for administrative services would be crucial, especially in the current context of a significant budget deficit.

Deregulation and administrative simplification also continued to be a major area of public policy, involving numerous instruments and approaches. Specifically, the initiatives of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Digital

Transformation in Ukraine, which have been in place since 2021, demonstrate progress in this area (SIGMA, 2023). At the same time, there is considerable potential for further simplification of procedures in Ukraine, for instance, the transition of residence registration to a notification-based system would simplify the process for citizens and ensure better reliability of registers.

The issue of outsourcing and privatisation of administrative services also stays important, but Ukraine's experience in this area is mostly negative. Thus, in 2016-2019, allowing state registration of real estate and business by "accredited entities" (about 100 commercial enterprises) led to numerous cases of raiding, forcing the government to stop this practice in 2019. In the field of passport services, there is still a problem of additional payments for services provided by an enterprise in the field of the State Migration Service compared to the same services at the ASC or the State Migration Service itself, which is extremely questionable from a legal standpoint. Analogous problems exist in the system of state registration of civil status acts of the Ministry of Justice.

In countries with weak legal systems, outsourcing and commercialisation of public services require special care to avoid increasing the cost of services, blurring the lines between public administration and business, and increasing the risk of wrongdoing. Public service delivery by public servants is more economically balanced and ensures a greater level of legitimacy (Kyrychok *et al.*, 2024). Ukrainian administrative law continues to incorporate the concept of administrative services into legal practice and legislation, as evidenced by the adoption of Law of Ukraine No. 2073-IX "On Administrative Procedure" (2022) and the identification of this area as a priority in the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2022-2025 (2021). The institution of administrative services received due theoretical attention in administrative law textbooks, which indicates its value in the context of humanisation, democratisation, and Europeanisation of administrative law in Ukraine (Melnik & Bevenko, 2014). The advantages and disadvantages of ASCs in Ukraine, which reflects the key aspects of their activities, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Advantages and challenges of ASCs in Ukraine

Advantages of the ASC	Challenges for ASCs
ASCs provide a wide range of administrative services in one place, which reduces time and effort for citizens	The level of service provision varies from community to community
Versatile staff ensures flexibility and comprehensive service	Difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff
Implementation of digital technologies (e.g., online recording, SMS notification of results)	Incomplete digitalisation processes and the need for ASC staff to work in many registers
Extended reception hours and anti-corruption open space in front offices	Heavy workload of ASC employees, especially in large cities, burnout and the problem of recruitment and staff turnover
Many ASCs have been created with the best practices of European countries and even infrastructure solutions (barrier-free, etc.) in mind	Insufficient funding and inadequate regulation of administrative service fees affect the ability of ASCs to improve/maintain service conditions and infrastructure
Better territorial accessibility of services due to territorial units of ASCs, remote workplaces	Military operations and the unstable situation in the country (blackouts, air raids) limit the availability and stability of services in some regions

Source: compiled by the author

ASCs in Ukraine have become key elements of the administrative reform aimed at improving the accessibility and quality of public services for the population. The key advantages of ASCs include the consolidation (integration) of services in one place, an innovative approach to service delivery, convenience, and accessibility for citizens. They provide standardised and structured processes, which increases public trust in the state and local authorities. At the same time, ASCs today face numerous challenges, including a lack of funding, a heavy workload due to the constant expansion of the list of services, and staff shortages and turnover. These factors affect the efficiency of the centres, especially in the context of instability caused by the hostilities. Overall, the development of ASCs requires, first of all, balancing the workload, rationalising, and regulating administrative fees, and adapting to new conditions to meet the needs of citizens for quality public services.

Discussion

The conducted study was essential for a deeper understanding of the role of public administration and administrative law in Ukraine, especially in the context of the current socio-political challenges the country faces in wartime. In the context of war, mass migration, and escalating social conflicts, the public administration system is undergoing

considerable changes that require innovative approaches and solutions. The key findings of the study confirmed the trend towards active adaptation and transformation of management practices, which contributed to increasing the efficiency, transparency, and flexibility of public administration. These changes not only responded to the challenges faced by society but also opened new opportunities for innovation in public administration. To a large extent, the successful implementation of reforms in public administration can not only ensure stability in the country but also strengthen public trust in public institutions. The study also emphasised the significance of integrating the latest technologies and practices into administrative processes.

O. Zubko *et al.* (2023) focused on the development of the public administration paradigm in Ukraine in the context of constant reform and the effects of external aggression. Their study is notable for emphasising the need to humanise governance mechanisms by focusing on personal values and social responsibility. This reveals the significance of national contexts in the development of management theory and practice. The present study is comparable with the cited study in that it also explored the evolution of the concept of public administration. However, O. Zubko *et al.* (2023) placed greater focus on the overall optimisation of national legislation and adaptation to international governance principles. The present

study analysed administrative services in Ukraine more specifically and assessed national efforts to develop this area. The originality of the present study lies in the concrete focus on the doctrine of administrative services as part of the state apparatus that contributes to ensuring the rights of citizens.

K. Warren's (2018) study was limited to the context of US administrative law, focusing on the regulatory role of administrative agencies and their accountability. The study revealed a shared approach to the study of public administration, but the analysis focused on the Ukrainian practices with an emphasis on national reforms in the field of administrative services. Despite the difference in contexts, both studies emphasised the value of democratic accountability and transparency as fundamental principles of administrative law.

C. Harlow (2006) focused on the possibility of creating a global system of administrative law, analysing the prospects for the development of universal principles of good governance, the rule of law and human rights. The study also questioned the effectiveness of such an approach, emphasising the risks of negative impact of "Western" administrative law principles on developing countries. This study added a critical element to the topic, suggesting that the universalisation of administrative law should be avoided and that the cultural and economic context of diverse regions should be recognised. The conducted study developed the idea of the significance of these principles in the Ukrainian context, emphasising that the adaptation of effective international approaches is a vital part of the process. Both studies addressed the national aspects of administrative service delivery.

V. Lapuente and S. Van de Walle (2020) analysed the effects of the New Public Administration reforms on the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of public service delivery, emphasising that their success or failure depends on the administrative, political, and policy context where they are implemented. The studies emphasised the value of adherence to the principles of transparency, accessibility, and accountability in public administration.

Y. Uzun and S. Koch (2020) highlighted potential scenarios for the development of decentralisation, which is significant for the overall administrative structure of Ukraine. The present study complemented this analysis by covering concrete aspects of public service reform that are part of decentralisation. C. Dick-Sagoe (2020) argued that while decentralisation has led to some improvements in service delivery, the issue of service quality stays significant to ensure transparency and accountability of local governments. Consistent with their findings on structural challenges, the present study highlighted the need to develop more sustainable models of administrative services that meet both regional and national requirements. S. Khadzhyradieva *et al.* (2020) analysed public administration reforms and emphasised the value of decentralisation and anti-corruption measures, which are key components of the administrative services doctrine. The present study elaborated on these aspects, focusing on the significance of transparency and accountability of administrative services for achieving national goals. At the same time, S. Khadzhyradieva *et al.* (2020) concluded that the historical context of the reforms provides a broader perspective on achieving Ukraine's strategic goals on the global stage. That comparison of the present findings with other studies demonstrated the importance of shared principles, such as transparency and accountability, for the effective implementation of administrative service reform.

Thus, the study harmoniously complemented existing findings, expanding the analysis of administrative services as an integral part of the overall reforms aimed at strengthening Ukraine as a democratic and rule-of-law state.

Conclusions

Ukraine's practices in implementing the administrative services doctrine demonstrated great achievements in public administration. The introduction of integrated administrative service offices, such as ASCs, and the active expansion of the network have become essential steps towards making the state system more human-centric and transparent. The idea of administrative services has become part of Ukrainian administrative legislation and an integral part of public administration. The introduction of deregulation, decentralisation, digitalisation, and transparency in the provision of administrative services has greatly influenced the efficiency of public authorities. Deregulation and administrative simplification should strike a balance between protecting the public interest and making administrative services easier to access. Integrated physical offices continue to be one of the primary channels of access to administrative services, specifically to basic (most popular) services. After a period of dynamic growth in the number of ASCs and expansion of the list of services, the key task was to balance the system. One of the key aspects is to maintain proper working conditions for ASC staff, including optimisation of the list of services, balanced reception hours, and convenient working hours.

The decentralisation policy has been successful, as the delegation of administrative service delivery to LSGBs has contributed to the increased integration and comprehensiveness of these services. Local authorities ensured a stronger level of adaptation of services to the needs of citizens, as they work directly with local residents, enabling them to respond flexibly to the challenges and needs of communities. Digitalisation is certainly a promising area for the development of administrative services. At the same time, it is vital to adhere to the principle of inclusiveness to ensure access to services for citizens who do not have sufficient digital skills or access to digital technologies. The principle of accessibility requires not only online access, but also the possibility of receiving services through other channels, specifically through local authorities and their ASCs.

Deregulation is a prominent area that has helped to balance the freedom and efficiency of administrative procedures. However, in this process, it is essential to strike a balance between simplifying procedures and preserving the protection of the public interest. The issue of administrative fees also needs attention, as reasonable administrative fees are fair and ensure the sustainability of the system. It is also significant to develop reasonable approaches to service fees to ensure fairness and accessibility, specifically regarding the possibility of additional services or expedited service. Outsourcing and competition in administrative services are still quite controversial. These concepts are of concern because of the possible increased risk of blurring the boundaries between the public and private sectors, which could affect transparency and accountability in service delivery. Promising areas for further research include analysing the effects of digitalisation on citizen satisfaction, as well as exploring the possibilities of adapting the administrative service system to crisis conditions, specifically through flexible emergency management models.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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Практика України в реалізації доктрини адміністративних послуг

Віктор Тимошук

Кандидат юридичних наук, старший науковий співробітник
Інститут держави і права ім. В.М. Корецького НАН України
01001, вул. Трьохсвятительська, 4, м. Київ, Україна
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6109-0909>

Анотація. Метою цього дослідження був аналіз практики реалізації в Україні доктрини адміністративних послуг, яка стала основою нової моделі взаємодії держави і громадян. Предметом дослідження стали концептуальні та практичні аспекти інтеграції адміністративних послуг на рівні територіальних громад, з акцентом на ролі децентралізації, яка забезпечує більшу доступність та якість адміністративних послуг завдяки гнучкості та ефективності місцевого самоврядування. Методологія дослідження ґрунтувалася на аналізі нормативно-правових актів, вивченні успішних практик роботи центрів надання адміністративних послуг (ЦНАП), а також порівняльному підході, що дозволило виявити переваги та виклики української моделі в контексті міжнародних практик. Результати дослідження продемонстрували успішність інтегрованих офісів надання послуг у громадах. Інтегровані офіси, зокрема ЦНАП, забезпечують швидкий доступ до базових послуг, а децентралізація сприяла ефективному управлінню ресурсами на державному та місцевому рівнях, що дозволило краще адаптувати послуги до потреб мешканців. Цифровізація послуг підвищила їхню ефективність завдяки мінімізації бюрократичних перешкод та скороченню витрат часу. Однак однією з ключових проблем є нерівномірний доступ до цифрових послуг, особливо в сільській місцевості та для людей похилого віку. Крім того, брак фінансування та надмірно централізовані норми і стандарти створюють перешкоди для органів місцевого самоврядування, обмежуючи їхню автономію та здатність швидко реагувати на запити громади. Водночас, деякі аспекти аутсорсингу та конкуренції є дуже суперечливими через ризики комерціалізації публічних послуг. Результати дослідження показали, що практика реформування сфери адміністративних послуг в Україні сприяє європеїзації та гуманізації державного управління та адміністративного права, посиленню його орієнтації на громадянина. Окремі аспекти цих практик можуть бути цікавими для інших країн

Ключові слова: інтегровані офіси; центри надання адміністративних послуг; децентралізація; діджиталізація; аутсорсинг