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Geoecological problems of decentralization (on Ternopol region materials)

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Abstract. The objective of the article is to study the essential geoecological problems of Ukrainian associated territorial communities. The necessity of implementation of effective environmental management, through introduction of an official responsible for improvement, ecology and sustainable development of the associated territorial communities in the

administrative apparatus of communities is substantiated. The decentralization reform created a considerable potential for development of the local communities. The transmission of significant financial resources and powers provided the preconditions for the formation of competent associated communities. It was discovered during the study that despite of significant advantages of new administrative units, managerial approaches to the use and preservation of natural resources had not changed. Administration of forest, water, mineral and land resources is further carried out from the center. Practically no one cares about the main ecological problems, communities are drowning in wastes, using water polluted municipal waste with agrochemicals, and the last hectares of forests are being cut down and used as energy resources. In context of sustainable development, the priority issues to be solved for 38% of the communities in Ternopil region are the issues of an ecological nature the issues of an economic nature are priority for 34% of communities and the issue of the social nature – of 28% of communities. In Ternopil region, as in one of the leaders in decentralization reform, 78% of community leaders consider high-quality water supply to be much more important than availability of cooperative or lighting of the streets. The most actual in regional communities are issues concerning sorting and utilization of wastes, lack of treatment facilities and an outdated drainage system. The article proposes amendments to the Article 19 of the Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Protection», regarding the extension of powers of village, settlement, city councils as well as associated territorial communities in the field of Environmental protection. The necessity of introduction the position of ecologist responsible for improvement, ecology and sustainable development of the community is substantiated. His duties are the following: monitoring of components of the environment; struggle with the illegal landfills, regulation of processes of economical nature management; optimization of land use; control of rational water use, preparation of a submission for the creation of new protected objects of local importance; creation of recreational and green zones.

Key words: environmental management, sustainable development, decentralization, associated territorial communities, environmental problems, position of ecologist.

Геоєкологічні проблеми децентралізації (на матеріалах Тернопільської області)

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Анотація. У статті висвітлено основні геоєкологічні проблеми об'єднаних територіальних громад України, обґрунтовано необхідність впровадження ефективного природоохоронного менеджменту, через запровадження в адміністративному апараті громад посадової особи відповідальної за благоустрій, екологію та сталий розвиток об'єднаної територіальної громади. Реформа децентралізації, створила значний потенціал для розвитку місцевих громад. Передача значних фінансових ресурсів та повноважень забезпечила передумови формування спроможних об'єднаних громад. У ході дослідження було виявлено, що попри значні переваги нових адміністративних одиниць, менеджерські підходи до використання та збереження природних ресурсів не змінилися. Управління лісовими, водними, мінеральними та земельними ресурсами і надалі здійснюється з центру. Основними екологічними проблемами практично ніхто не переймається, громади тонуть у відходах, вживають забруднену агрохімікатами та комунальними стоками воду, останні гектари лісів вирубуються та використовуються як енергетичний ресурс. В контексті сталого розвитку, першочерговими для вирішення у 38% громад Тернопільщини є питання екологічного характеру, у 34% – економічного характеру і у 28% – соціального характеру. В Тернопільській області, як одній із лідерів у реформі децентралізації, 78% керівників громад вважають якісне водопостачання набагато важливішим від наявності кооперативу чи освітлення вулиць. Найбільш актуальними в громадах краю, є проблеми пов'язані із сортуванням

та утилізацією відходів, відсутністю очисних споруд та застарілою системою водовідведення. У роботі запропоновано внесення змін до статті 19 Закону України «Про охорону навколишнього середовища», щодо розширення повноважень сільських, селищних, міських рад, а також об'єднаних територіальних громад, у галузі охорони навколишнього природного середовища. Обґрунтовано необхідність запровадження посади еколога – відповідального за благоустрій, екологію та сталий розвиток громади, із наступними посадовими обов'язками: моніторинг компонентів навколишнього середовища, боротьба із незаконними сміттєзвалищами, регулювання процесів ощадливого природокористування, оптимізація землекористування, контроль раціонального водокористування, підготовка подання на створення нових заповідних об'єктів місцевого значення, створення рекреаційних та зелених зон.

Ключові слова: природоохоронний менеджмент, сталий розвиток, децентралізація, об'єднані територіальні громади, екологічні проблеми, посада еколога.

Introduction. Ukrainian state reforming processes nowadays provide systemic changes in the principles of management of certain areas of public life causing conceptual managerial approaches to replace outdated methods of planned management. Thus, the basic principles of sustainable development concept should become priorities in shaping the new model of management of economic, social and natural resources.

Decentralization reform appears to be one of the effective reforms implemented in Ukraine. Decentralization is understood as transfer of powers and finances from the state power to local self-government bodies. Provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the world standards of public relations in this area form the basis of this policy. The focus on the balanced use of natural resource potential, the development of local infrastructure, the improvement of natural living conditions of the people, as well as the provision of services in the health, education and social relations can only be possible when the economic, natural and social subsystems are coordinated to ensure their conflict-free development.

The legal basis for a radical change in the governmental system and its territorial basis at all levels began to emerge in 2014. At the beginning of 2019 876 associated territorial communities (ATC) have already been established based on the Law of Ukraine «On Voluntary Association of Territorial Communities» (Legislation of Ukraine, 2015). These ATCs comprise 4010 former local councils with more than 9 million people. International experts consider such rates of inter-municipal consolidation to be very high (Decentralization, 2019).

The package of laws on extension of powers of local self-government bodies and optimization of the provision of administrative services allowed to delegate the necessary level of authority to the local self-government bodies so they could provide basic administrative services. However, in our opinion, among legislative acts and bills, there is a lack of those regulating legal relations in the environmental and ecological spheres. Today, despite the need to solve a number of economic and social problems, the environmental problems of citizens are the most

important in most ATCs. They include a problem of collecting and utilizing solid household wastes, the problem of qualitative drinking water supply, sewage drainage and its removal, the problem of creating field-protective forest belts and green areas within settlements, and finally, the problem of optimizing land use for more efficient and diverse use of productive and unproductive land plots, as well as the problem of effective environmental education of people. Little attention is paid to solving these and other geocological problems nowadays, since the ATC management structure lacks a position of manager for ecological development and improvement.

In this regard, the **purpose of the article** is to study the main environmental problems of the associated territorial communities of Ukraine and its individual regions; to substantiate the necessity to implement effective environmental management through the introduction of an official responsible person in the communities' administrative apparatus for improvement, resolution of environmental problems and sustainable development of ATCs.

Review of the literature. Materials and methods of the study. A narrow circle of scientists is engaged in the study of problems of environmental and ecological management in the context of decentralization. Issues of this nature are often raised by public activists, newly elected community leaders and various international organizations that promote local self-government reform in Ukraine. Among the most recent scientific researches in the field of decentralization it should be noted the works of Ye. Khlobistov (2016), V. Matyukha, I. Bistryakova, D. Klinovy (2015). Land resources management in conditions of decentralization and geocological problems of using land by combined territorial communities is covered in the publications of Tretyak A.M. (2015), Kostyshyn O. (2015), Kuzyk I. (2018) and a number of other specialists conducted. Problems of administrative-territorial reform of Ukraine and the formation of capable communities are engaged by L. Zastavetska (2015), Ya. Oliynyk (2016) and others. N. Kotenko and T. Ilyashenko (2015), conducted researches in the field of fiscal decentralization and provision of public eco-

logical services. Economic mechanisms of nature management are analyzed in the works of V. Boronos, I. Sklyar, M. Kostel (2012). Decentralization in terms of managing sustainable development processes is considered in the studies of Bardhan P. (2002), Holden E., Linnerud K. and Banister D. (2014). The problem of decentralization and administrative ecology at the end of the XX century was considered by Brown P. (1987). Research in Tereshina M., Tambovceva T. and Khalafyan A. (2018) concerning the socio-economic potential of rural communities are relevant in the context of decentralization.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the fundamental provisions of ecological management and auditing, geoecology, ecological and constructive geography, geographical native land and a number of legal acts of state importance. In preparation of the article the theoretical and applied developments of such domestic and foreign scientists, articles in periodical professional editions, stock materials of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, resource and analytical center «Society and Environment», Department of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Ternopil Regional State Administration.

Materials for writing the article were the results of the ATC representatives' survey, on the relevance of environmental problems and the prospects for their solution in the context of decentralization reform. Polls of community representatives were conducted using questionnaires. The questionnaires were prepared in advance. The questions raised were of a closed and open type. Answers to the questionnaire were provided by community leaders or authorized

persons (deputy, secretary). As part of the survey, 42 communities were interviewed. According to the results of the survey, charts were created (figures 2,3,4), that cover the results of the sociological research. The survey was conducted directly by the authors of the article, by the method of V. Verbets (Verbets, 2008).

The wide range of phenomena, processes and factors analyzed in the article led to the necessity of using general scientific methods: statistical (analysis of the current state of decentralization reform, the number of existing ATCs and their financial and resource support), assessment (assessment of the main geoecological problems of territorial communities), descriptive (characteristic problems of waste management, watersupply and drainage, landuse by ATC), comparative (comparison of actual ecological and socio-economic problems in the context of the sustainable development of communities). Also, in the course of the study, special scientific methods were used: cartographic (mapping of the territory of Ukraine covered by the acting ATC), geoinformation, ecological-geographical analysis and others.

Results and their analysis. In Ukraine, the biggest amount of associated territorial communities is created in Dnipropetrovsk (63), Zhytomyr (56), Cherkasy (55) and Zaporizhzhya (49) oblasts. About 40 ATCs already operate in Volyn, Poltava, Ternopil, Khmelnytsky and Chernihiv oblasts. Outsiders in the decentralization reform are Kharkiv (17 ATCs), Kyiv (17 ATCs) and Zakarpattia (6 ATCs) oblasts (Decentralization, 2019).

The largest percentage, 45% of territories covered by the existing associated territorial communities

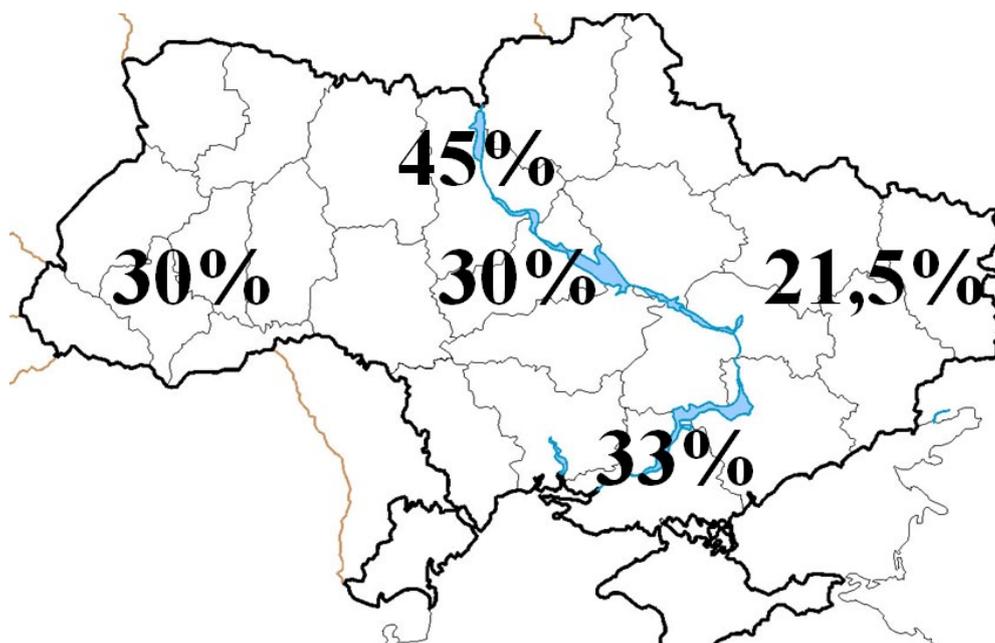


Fig. 1. Percentage of the territory of regions of Ukraine covered by operating ATCs

is observed in the northern region of our state since most of these administrative units were created in Zhytomyr, Volyn and Chernihiv oblasts (Fig. 1).

Southern (Odesa, Mykolayiv and Kherson) regions are ranked second with decentralized territories covering 33% of their total area; some 30% of the territory is now part of ATCs in the western and central regions. Yet only 21.5% of the territories are occupied by associated communities in the east of Ukraine, which is explained by the difficult economic situation in most settlements of the region and ongoing military actions.

ATCs operating with unresolved strategic issues in the field of ecological, social and economic development occupy about a third of the territory of Ukraine. While financial decentralization has been legally regulated in a certain way, with appropriate regulations and laws adopted, powers delegated to local communities and changes made to the budget code, no steps have been taken in the context of the environmental component of sustainable development, except for changes in environmental tax deductions. At the same time, for most ATCs, the issue of a safe environment remains the most urgent and calls for immediate solution.

As the part of the United States Agency for International Development project (USAID), the Global Communities «Decentralization brings better results and effectiveness», a survey was conducted among 75 ATCs in 7 oblasts of Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kirovograd, Ternopil and Mykolaiv). According to the results of the survey, the majority of respondents (representatives of ATCs) ranked environmental factors first among those influencing the quality of life in the communities. According to the interviewed persons, the following components are crucial to the quality of life in the territorial communities:

1. Cleanliness and availability of green recreation zones;
2. Road infrastructure (high quality roads with asphalt covering);
3. Illumination of streets.

The survey showed that problems with solid waste management, river cleanliness, ponds and lakes, and the problem of drainage (lack or unsuitability of sewage networks) are among the most acute ecological problems in 75 participating ATCs. Such issues as cemetery keeping and air quality were most successfully addressed in surveyed communities.

Being a participant in the «DOBRE» program, Ternopil region is one of the leaders in the number of ATCs created (42), 12 of which (Baikivtsi, Velyki

Hayi, Vyshnivets, Husyatyn, Zavod, Zoloty Potik, Ivanivka, Mykulyntsi, Skala Podilska, Skalat, Terbovlya and Shumsk communities) participate in the US Agency project.

Within the Community Sustainable Development Strategy framework, Ivanivka ATC with the support of the United States Local Democracy Development Foundation (USAID) the strategic objective of a clean and safe environment for the human being in the environmental sphere is identified. This strategic objective involves performing more than ten tasks, which are grouped into three key operational objectives:

1. Purification and reclamation of territories under the ecological threat, together with raising the level of ecological consciousness of the inhabitants (this includes: cleaning and improvement of ponds, renovation of green spaces, parks, environmental and educational activities, etc.).
2. Commercialization of natural and landscape resources (this includes: creating recreation areas, restoring fish population in ponds, forming a community of fishermen).
3. Organize waste management (including: eliminating natural garbage dumps and developing a waste sorting concept).

Such a spectrum of diverse nature protection problems encountered by residents and the administration of ATCs not only in Ternopil region, but also in Ukraine as a whole, makes us think about the prospect of their solution. In different regions of Ukraine environmental problems have their different vectors of direction. ATCs in the eastern regions of Ukraine face environmental problems primarily related to the mining industry, air and water pollution. Issues such as unregulated recreational activities, illegal felling of forest resources, and solid waste mistreatment are typical for the western regions. The central areas are characterized by high plowed area, pollution of rivers and ponds. North of Ukraine suffers from radiation pollution, landscape destruction due to illegal amber mining and deforestation. Southern areas are characterized by problems of soil degradation, unregulated recreational activities, pollution of coastal strips, etc. Yet three key ecological problems are typical for the whole of Ukraine: solid waste mismanagement, low water quality (including drinking water and sewage) and biodiversity conservation (expanding the network of protected sites and conservation areas, reducing the intensity of deforestation and plowing).

We conducted research on the most important ecological problems of the ATCs of Ternopil region by interviewing respondents. The results of the survey of representatives of 42 ATCs in the region were

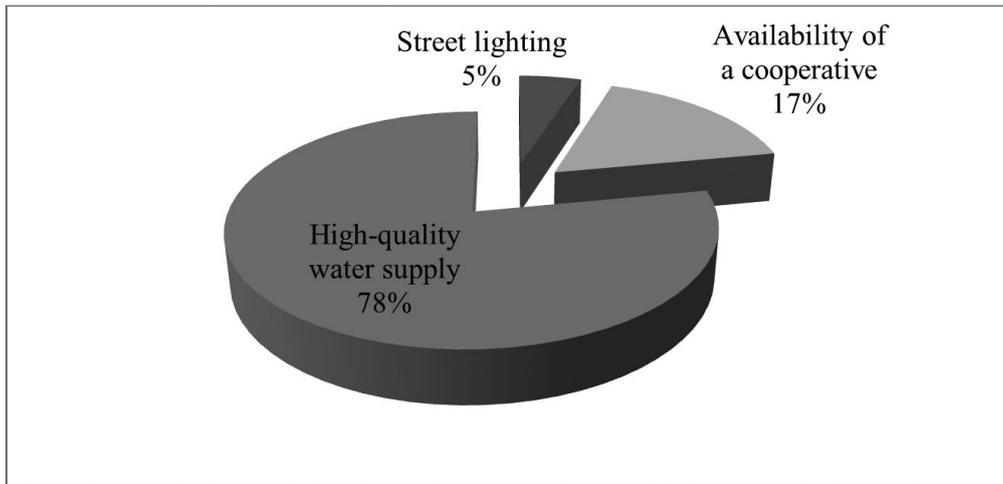


Fig. 2. Response of survey participants (representatives of Ternopil region ATCs) to the question: What issue is the most pressing for your ATC?

predictable. When asked to choose the most pressing issue for their ATC from the three options provided, 78% of respondents ticked high-quality water supply. Availability of a cooperative and street lighting options were chosen by 17% and 5% respectively (Fig. 2).

When asked about areas of nature management which they consider to be the most problematic, representatives of Ternopil oblast responded that problems with use of water, subsoil and land use remain among the pressing ones, yet the most important issue is solid waste management (Fig. 3).

Utilization, recycling, solid waste collection and disposal issues are today urgent practically all over Ukraine. Some ATCs partially solved these problems by signing contracts with waste collection and disposal services, installing waste sorting tanks, etc. The European Union is providing significant assistance in dealing with household wastes. Many grant projects on this topic have already been implemented in

Ukraine, but many of them are still not open yet.

We have analyzed the geoecological situation in the context of solid waste treatment in the communities of Ternopil region. According to the register of waste disposal sites (Department of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ternopil Region, 2018), only 15 of the 42 ATCs in Ternopil region have authorized and certified landfills. More than 90 solid waste landfills in the oblast are out of work, 25 of which are within the existing ATCs. At the same time, there are no authorized dumps in such large communities as Lantivtsi, Melnytsia-Podilska, Khorostkiv and Shumsk, where the population is 12-20 thousand people. Where should members of these communities dispose of household waste, who should take care of it and who is responsible for the treatment of solid waste? These as well as some other issues remain open.

ATCs with functioning dumps face equally difficult problem. After all, as their own observations show, the basic sanitary-ecological standards are of-

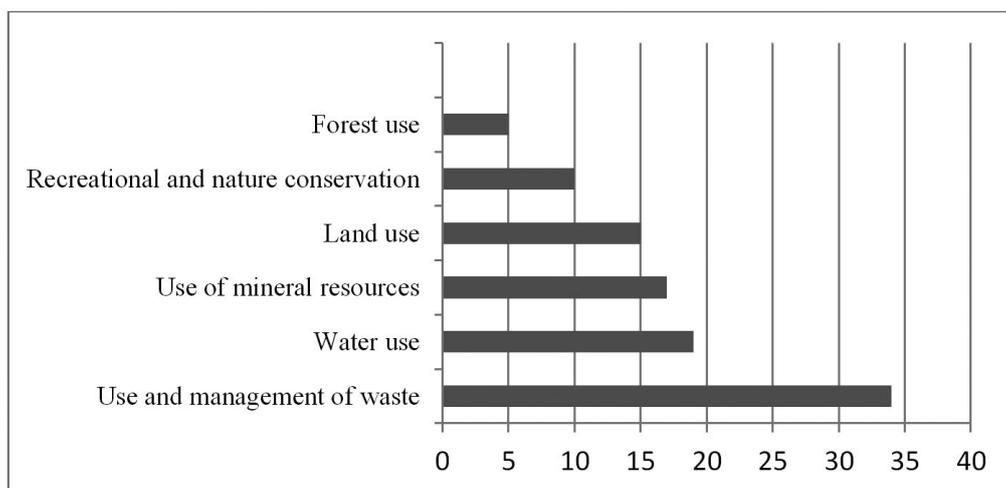


Fig. 3. Response of survey participants (representatives of Ternopil region ATCs) to the question: What area of nature management is the most problematic for your ATC? (%)

ten not observed at such objects: the distance from the nearest settlements is less than 500 m, there is no road with hard covering, open water reservoirs (rivers, reclamation ditches) are located nearby, and the necessary protective forest belt is missing, and so on. In Ternopil oblast, the design volume of all authorized landfills located within the ATCs amounts to 945 thousand m³ of wastes. Over 328 thousand people live in these communities. On average, over a year a resident of a private house with a homestead land produces 1.2 m³ (or 550 kg) of household waste (Stol'berg, 2000). Thus, all citizens who live in the ATCs of Ternopil region produce about 395 thousand m³ of waste per year. That means that all existing landfills in the associated communities of Ternopil oblast will be filled in 2.5 years. Waste sorting and processing appears to be the only way out of this situation. Residents of territorial communities are obliged, first of all, to implement the changes to the Law of Ukraine «On Wastes» and strictly comply with the Article 32 of this Law: «In order to restrict and prevent the negative impact of waste on the environment and human health, unprocessed (untreated) household waste dumping is prohibited starting on January 1, 2018». Business entities that provide waste removal services should create conditions for its separate collection (Article 17 of the Law of Ukraine «On Wastes»). According to the current legislation, the sorting of domestic waste, the conclusion of contracts for its removal, the organization of authorized landfills in communities should be monitored by an official in charge who is not currently present at most of the ATCs. Therefore, the issue of waste management remains urgent and unresolved for most of the newly created administrative units of Ukraine.

Analyzing the problems of water use, which among others include water supply, drainage, pond management, state of natural watercourses, etc., we should note that one of the most urgent problems is the problem of private household waste water utilization. In the vast majority of rural and urban communities, so-called «septic tanks» (cesspools) have been built to collect sewage. Only a small part of them meets the requirements, whereas the majority leaks waste water in the soil. Drinking water wells are often found within 10–20 meters of «septic tanks», which eventually will lead to their pollution with the infiltrate. The quality of drinking water deteriorates significantly. In addition, the removal and utilization of waste water remains unregulated. Locals in most cases just get rid of drains in forest plantations, gullies, beams, on fields. None of the services monitor this process. Thus, large-scale uncontrolled pollution of soils and groundwater horizons occurs within the boundaries of

settlements and their environs, which will undoubtedly adversely affect the health of people.

In urban territorial communities, the problems with the utilization of municipal wastewater are also very pressing, since most settlements in Ukraine, and in Ternopil region, in particular, lack water treatment facilities, and their drainage systems are outdated and in an emergency. Often, wastewater from buildings gets into open water without cleaning, which in turn can lead to pollution of natural watercourses and even some horizons of groundwater.

The organization of the private households' waste water removal, monitoring of discharges of communal enterprises, fish breeding and restoration of pond management, centralized water supply, drinking water quality and a number of other issues in the field of water use, which are relevant to newly established ATCs, should be decided by an appropriate official or a special ecological unit, as for most associated communities, especially rural ones, water resources are the most valuable and essential for household management.

Problems of land use faced by the associated territorial communities are, first of all, due to the imbalance of the land structure, excessive chemicalization of agriculture, the use of land outside settlements, etc. Being a typical example, Ternopil region ATCs are characterized by high agricultural development of their territory amounting to 78% (65% of which is arable land) and low forestry, 11% (standard wood coverage being within 23–40%), about 5% of the land is developed (Tabl.), which in turn forms an unsatisfactory structure of land use with just 26% share of natural lands (Kuzyk, 2018). It is considered that the optimal share of natural lands should cover 50–60% of any territory, since at least 50% of the natural lands are necessary for the geosystem to maintain a dynamic equilibrium and perform its main stabilization and regenerative functions (Tsaryk, 2009).

The most urgent problem for 21 ATCs of Ternopil region is that of solid waste sorting and recycling; 7 ATCs suffer from the lack of treatment facilities; 6 communities have to cope with inadequate state of centralized water supply and drainage; illegal felling remains the biggest problem for 5 ATCs, while only 3 communities are not happy with the operation of local quarries.

The majority of people interviewed (representatives of Ternopil region ATCs) identified their priorities in solving the environmental problems. In the context of sustainable development, environmental protection issues call for immediate solution, whereas economic problems rank second, the administrative-

Table. The general structure of Ternopil region ATCs lands

Arable land	Hayfields, pastures and perennial plantations	Woods	Developed land	Land covered by water and marshes	Share of natural land	Share of anthropogenic land
65%	13%	11%	5%	2%	26%	74%

planning issues rank third, and the social ones are fourth in this list, which again confirms the urgency and necessity of developing a systematic approach to solving environmental problems in the newly created administrative units.

And who is there to solve environmental and ecological issues in ATC? Unfortunately, the appropriate officials practically do not exist in all administrative apparatuses of territorial communities. Until recently, the district environmental safety departments have been eliminated and the modern process of reforming the system of state supervision (control) in the field of the environment is just beginning. It is planned that the newly established the State Environmental Protection Agency will have 10 interregional territorial bodies, and local communities will be given specific functions for overseeing greenery, contaminated territories, hunting, observance of the regime of the natural reserve fund objects of local importance and the fight against poaching (Resource and Analysis Center, 2018). Although, it should be noted that at the moment, the environmental inspection reform does not give a clear answer to the question of what authorities will be given to local self-governments in the field of nature management. Local environmental issues are better solved and should be solved locally.

Similar studies were carried out by the participants of the «Society and Environment» Resource and Analytical Center project (Resource and Analysis Center «Society and Environment», 2018) – «Promoting Reforms in the Regions», monitored by the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting in cooperation with the «European Truth». In September 2017, representatives of the center conducted a survey among the management of the majority of Ukrainian communities. According to the survey results, 77.6% of respondents indicated that there was no structural unit or employee responsible for environmental problems in the management unit of their community (Fig. 5), and 71.4% agreed that they needed an institution or additional authorities in the field of environmental protection (Fig. 6). According to the research of «Society and Environment» Resource and Analytical Center only in some cases the ATC apparatus has an official responsible for environmental protection. As an exception, in some communities, a structural unit is created that combines its functions of improvement, land management and ecology. At the same time, the majority of respondents interviewed (representatives of ATC) believe that for the effective operation of the management apparatus it is necessary to extend the powers to control the felling of forests,

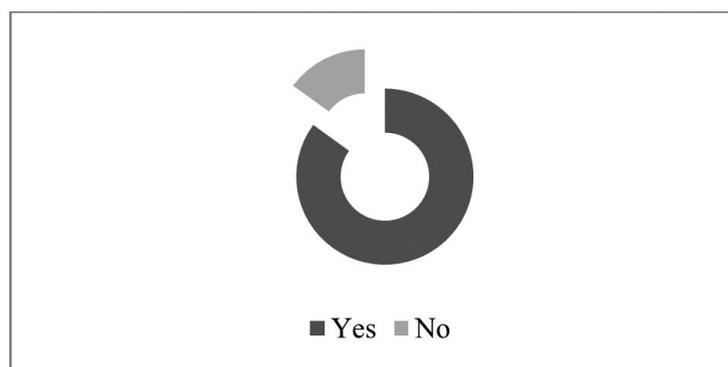


Fig. 4. Response of the survey participants (representatives of Ternopil region ATCs) to the question: Is there a need for an official responsible for the improvement and environmental situation in your community? (%)

We conducted a survey of representatives of Ternopil Oblast associated communities on whether an officer in charge for the improvement and environmental situation is needed in their community. The undisputed majority (85%) answered «yes», and only 15% (6 communities) said «no» (Fig. 4).

sewage and natural garbage dumps (Resource and Analysis Center «Society and Environment», 2018).

A position of ecologist is practically absent in most of the newly created administrative units, although the issue of environmental conservation and management of natural resources is quite pressing in

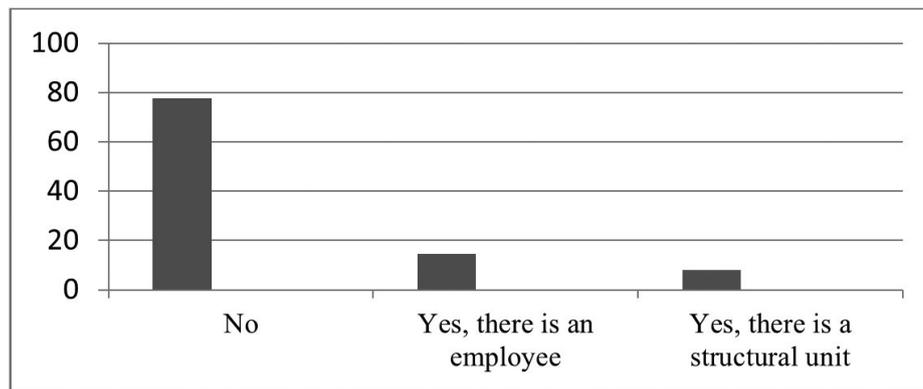


Fig. 5. Survey participants' responses to the question: «Is there a structural unit (official) responsible for ecology in the administration of your community?» (Resource and Analysis Center «Society and Environment», 2018)

the communities. A large number of surveyed ATC managers demand the extension of environmental authority and the introduction of an appropriate post. Such changes are possible only through appropriate legislative adjustments. Within the framework of this research, we propose to amend the Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Protection», in particular the Section IV «Powers of the Environmental Protection Authorities». The Article 19 The competence of the executive bodies of village, township and city councils in the field of environmental protection, after the

the decentralization reform, other laws and regulations, in particular the Laws of Ukraine «On Flora», «On Fauna», «On Land Conservation», «On Wastes», «On Pesticides and Agrochemicals», «On Air Protection», «On Drinking Water and Drinking Water Supply», «On Hunting Economy and Shooting», as well as Water, Land and Forestry Codes.

In order to address local and regional environmental problems, the rational use of national and local natural resources, we propose to introduce in the associated territorial communities a position of an

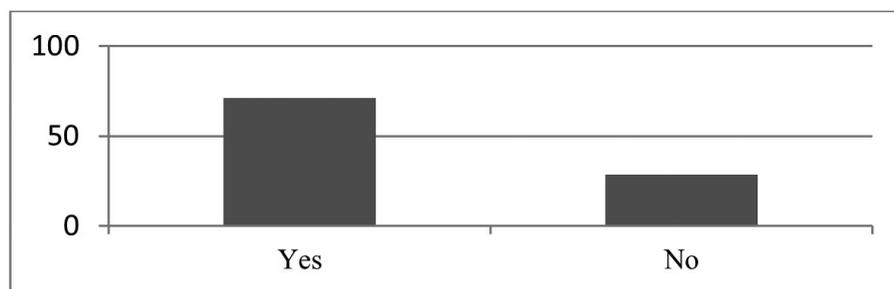


Fig. 6. Survey participants' responses to the question: «Do you need the authority of your community to exercise additional powers in the field of the environment?» (Resource and Analysis Center «Society and Environment», 2018)

words «city councils ...» to be supplemented with the words «associated territorial communities». The article also needs content filling with additional powers in the field of water supply and wastewater, sorting waste, control of contamination of territories and preservation of green spaces, forests, etc. In our opinion, Article 19 of the Law of Ukraine «On Environmental Protection» has the declarative nature of the theoretical component of environmental protection: environmental education, public awareness, environmental taxes, etc., while the practical component of the use and protection of natural resources, especially local ones, is omitted. Decentralization should become the mechanism of transfer the powers in the field of forest use, water use, and subsoil use. In accordance with

Ecologist who is responsible for improvement, ecology and sustainable development of the community. The duties of the environmental officer, responsible for the improvement and sustainable development of the territorial community will include:

- issues related to the monitoring of the environment quality (problems with natural garbage dumps, the creation of sanitary landfill sites; creation and control of the local waste water treatment plants operation; issues of illegal emissions and discharges);
- regulation of the processes of economical use of natural resources (problems of water supply and drainage, issues of optimization of land use – planting of forests and control of their operation, organization of water protection coastal strips, reduction of plow-

ing, regulation of development processes and transfer of land plots);

- assistance in increasing conservation areas within the communities, preparation of the justification for the organization of the Natural Reserve Fund-objects, preservation of unique and valuable natural complexes within the boundaries of the associated communities.

Local use of environmental taxes, the urgency of local environmental problems, and the priority in addressing environmental issues is a guarantee of the effectiveness of nature and environmental management at the local level. Through appropriate instructions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and decrees of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, territorial communities will be able to make a step towards providing an environmentally safe living environment for their residents. After all, without solving key issues related to the preservation of the environment, coordinated ecological, social and economic development is impossible. At the same time it is important to prevent the complication of environmental problems through their solution, rather than to deal with the consequences of environmental ignorance. Effective management of natural resources on the basis of modern managerial approaches will help to ensure sustainable development of communities and successfully complete the process of reforming the administrative and territorial structure of Ukraine.

Conclusions. The study found is that, despite the significant benefits of new administrative units, managerial approaches to the use and conservation of natural resources (often the ones that form the local budget) remained unchanged. Management of timber, water, mineral and land resources is still carried out from the center. Practically no one cares about the main environmental problems. For example, in Ternopil oblast, only 15 from 42 ATCs have authorized landfills. In this case, it is estimated that the existing 25 landfills that operate within communities will be filled in the next 2-3 years. There is virtually no waste sorting, although there are legal grounds for this. In the communities there are no sewage treatment facilities; sewage from private households is removed to the outskirts of settlements in gullies and beams, which pollute soils and groundwater. The structure of land use is unbalanced in the majority of the territorial communities of Ukraine including Ternopil region, where the share of natural lands ranges from 25 to 45%.

The results of the survey of ATC representatives in Ukraine have shown that the cleanliness and availability of green areas is far more important than road infrastructure or street lighting. In 71% of the territo-

rial communities, people spoke for the necessary additional powers in the field of environmental protection, since only 14% of the ATCs have an official or structural unit responsible for ecology and improvement. In most cases, these powers are exercised by the land surveyor, one of the deputy chairperson of the community or a separate utility company. Ensuring clean and safe environment for people is a top priority for the associated communities of Ukraine in their activity. In Ternopil region, which is one of the leaders in decentralization reform, 78% of community leaders consider quality water supply far more important than existence of a cooperative or street lighting.

In this regard, the work proposes the introduction of the position of ecologist responsible for the improvement, ecology and sustainable development of the community. It is substantiated that the restructuring of ecological management in territorial communities should be legally enshrined through the relevant changes to the legislation, as well as the decrees and decisions of the appropriate departments. Consequently, the conceptual transformations of environmental and natural resources management in new administrative units will contribute to solving the local, regional and, subsequently, global environmental crisis.

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