

ICPS newsletter

Technical assistance extended to Ukraine should be allocated more efficiently

Technical assistance programs help international donor organisations to play the first fiddle in Ukraine’s reforms. Nevertheless, as the recent survey indicated there are different systems of technical assistance for EU candidate states and FSU countries. Donors’ assistance to Ukraine is not strategically focussed yet, while its provision principles are not assessed from the standpoint of efficiency criteria accepted throughout the world. The difference of the two systems lies in the approaches, principles, and methods of technical assistance provision. Therefore, the inefficiency of technical assistance programs has perfectly clear explanations behind it, and they do not boil down to solely “mentality” and “lack of political willpower”

Eventually, state authorities have paid attention to the problems of efficient allocation of technical assistance extended by Western donors to Ukraine. Recently, a presentation of the survey results on the “Technical Assistance: Two Views” was held, which was done by the International Centre for Policy Studies (Ukraine) and the Institute of Public Affairs (Poland) with sponsorship from the Open Society Institute (OSI) under the framework of the “Information collection and assessment of international donor activities in Ukraine and Poland” project. The discussion of the survey results and technical assistance problems involved representatives of the two most influential institutions in this sector—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and European Integration.

The survey revealed the discomfiting for Ukraine results of the comparison of technical assistance provision on the example of Ukraine and Poland and laid emphasis on the necessity of immediate and uprooting changes, which will significantly boost the efficiency of technical assistance (TA) provision, and, thus, are efficient for both donors and the national government. Despite the fact that technical assistance coming from the West was a new experience for Ukraine being listed among major reasons behind donors’ distorted perception

and the government’s mistreatment of TA provision (Ukraine did not have appropriate governmental and public institutions, which would ensure efficient allocation of technical assistance and, consequently, assistance got into unprepared environment), the biggest flaw of the technical assistance in Ukraine is its strategic inconsistency.

Technical assistance in Ukraine lacks strategic frameworks

The foremost flaw of the Ukrainian approach is that TA provision in Ukraine is not coordinated with any official document, like, the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) entered by and between Ukraine and the EU. Meanwhile, in Poland quite a great part of TA relies on the overall strategy outlined in the “Europe Agreement”—a document shaping Poland-EU relations. The preface to this document says, “The European Council ruled that associated membership envisages intense preparations for accession, which mobilises all forms of assistance to candidate countries under the framework of a single strategy. In such a way, EU channels its assistance for the identified needs of each candidate in order to help out with certain problems, arising in view of the future entry of these countries to the Union”. This document is crucial in identifying

problems and searching for their solutions.

Thus, technical assistance to Poland is granted under the framework of the determined strategy and it aims at facilitating the country’s accession to the EU. Having taken the Copenhagen Criteria¹ as a basis, the country is undergoing a gradual institutionalisation of democracy and market economy principles with the help of projects yielding perceptible results, which can be assessed by the well-defined criteria. Poland is on its way to the EU membership following a structured, scheduled strategy, with financial assistance from donors only supporting and facilitating this process in every possible way.

Having analysed the data on a roughly similar number of projects in both countries (62 in Ukraine and 78 in Poland), Ukrainian and Polish researchers spotted other weighty differences in the following aspects:

- The TA was extended to Ukraine mostly in the form of general advice, discussions and short-term trainings. The assistance to Poland was directed at generating specific outputs: documents, legal acts, standards, etc.;
- The general donors’ strategy in Ukraine aimed at general goals of a democratic society and market economy building, meanwhile, Poland was purposefully prepared for the EU accession having pursued concrete goals—the Copenhagen Criteria fulfillment, legislation harmonisation, etc.;

¹ Officially adopted EU enlargement principles and requirements to candidate countries, which include (1) sustainable democratic institutions in the country, (2) respect for minorities, (3) market economy, able to withstand the EU competitive pressure, and (4) the capacity to abide by the goals of the political, economic, and monetary union.

- The overwhelming majority of TA projects, implemented in Ukraine, did not envisage to create and disseminate reports and publications summarising their activity. On the contrary, all Polish projects envisaged to distribute information about projects' activities already at the planning stage;
- Geographically, TA projects cover only 30% of Ukraine's oblasts unlike Poland, where this indicator makes 62%;
- In Ukraine, TA projects were mostly short-term; only 21% of projects was long-term, meanwhile, in Poland 59% of TA projects were long-term;
- Most Ukrainian projects, unlike Polish ones, did not have clearly defined goals and project deliverables.

Recommendations for boosting TA efficiency

Our survey aimed at finding out whether there are any factors affecting TA efficiency and achievement of goals, which, unlike the "mentality" and "political willpower"—much talked of, when assessing failures of Ukrainian reforms—would have a concrete shape. The reply was affirmative, since TA project and program activity in Ukraine over the past decade, due to a lack of a well-defined, purposeful strategy can be characterised as an inconsistent and unsystematic.

Poland's achievements in the sphere of local self-government were related to the TA system itself, which affect all aspects of donor activity, in particular, project development. Additional grounds for success are that the policy of TA provision to Poland is brought into line with the requirements of the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework² (CDF), while the general strategy is being fulfilled under the framework of the "Europe Agreement", which envisages concrete steps to be undertaken by candidate countries to

² The key TA efficiency criteria set by the World Bank include (1) a long-term vision, (2) a dominating role of a country-recipient in its strategy development, (3) achievement of specific development results, and (4) the national strategy coordinated with the general goals and cooperation of all interested parties.

accede to the EU. Unfortunately, Ukraine's system of technical assistance provision lacks a national strategy, as well as due attention paid to the CDF criteria observance.

In view of the above, we offer the following recommendations to the government:

- to consider the PCA as a strategic framework for reforms in Ukraine;
- to create a special calendar plan to fulfil the PCA listing well-defined criteria for progress;
- to orient goals, tasks, and activities of TA projects towards the obligations fulfillment under the PCA, which is to shape the TA strategy;
- to facilitate public consultations, discussions, and analysis of the submitted for consideration Law of Ukraine "On international technical assistance" in order to bring it into line with the PCA;
- to arrange public consultations, discussions, and analysis of the draft Cabinet of Ministers resolution on coordination of technical assistance in Ukraine in order to make sure it is coordinated with the PCA;
- to organise regular Cabinet of Ministers sessions in order to identify the priorities and spheres where technical assistance is to be delivered;
- to hold regular meetings with leading donors to coordinate joint activity in Ukraine under the framework of implementing the PCA and other strategically important documents;
- to create a monitoring organisation, which would supervise technical assistance provision in Ukraine;
- to implement an easy-to-access and user-friendly system for accumulation and dissemination of information about donors and results of their activity.

Our recommendations regarding further activity of donors in Ukraine run as follows:

- projects should be developed in line with the CDF principles;

- such types of activity should be introduced, which really meet the PCA priority requirements and introduce them into well-established and recursive practice;

- the design of manuals and other documents should be envisaged as one of the deliverables of TA programs activity, as well as training courses, which can be introduced throughout the country to make the project maximally efficient;
- to involve Ukraine's government in the decision making process during project tenders under the framework of the PCA implementation;
- when cooperating with each other and the government, donors should make sure that projects cover as many regions and spheres of activity as possible in order to guarantee the execution of the priority tasks in full scope and throughout Ukraine;
- to implement an easy-to-access and user-friendly system for accumulation and dissemination of information about donors and results of their activity.

Problems related to technical assistance provision and its efficient allocation in Ukraine will be further surveyed. In the near future, it is planned to hold a series of discussions on the survey results involving representatives from the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors of foreign countries pursuing a dynamic policy of democracy building in Ukraine and representatives of leading donors organisations. ■

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