



INDEPENDENT ANALYTICAL CENTERS OF UKRAINE DEVELOPING POLICIES:

obstacles, perspectives and mutual
expectations in cooperation
with public authorities

INTRODUCTION. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One of the main complex challenges for Ukrainian society and Ukrainian state nowadays is conduction of deep and effective domestic reforms in the light of democratic transformation and European integration of the country. Under these circumstances, cooperation and fruitful partnership between independent non-governmental think tanks, on the one hand, and governmental agencies, on another, has acquired ever greater importance. Full-fledged involvement of think tanks into the process of policy and decision-making can be significant contribution to general transformation process.

However, so far the cooperation of analytical centers and public authorities is of a sporadic character despite mutual assurances of this cooperation necessity. To what extent the representatives of the central public authorities, legislative power, and local self-governance are ready to cooperate with analytical centers, what are the obstacles for such cooperation and what kind of «product» should be delivered by the analytical centers so that it could be used at best in the process of state decision-making – these are questions included into the survey conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. The research was initiated by International Renaissance Foundation and was carried out in frames of the «Initiative on development of analytical centers» implemented by International Renaissance Foundation in cooperation with Open Society Thank Tank Fund and due to the financial support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency SIDA.

The main component of research was the polling of authorities' representatives aimed at finding out the readiness to the cooperation with think tanks as well as to discover the factors that hinder the utilization of these activities results. The survey was conducted on November 16 - December 3, 2014; 65 respondents were polled, they were representatives of the central public authorities of executive and legislative powers, and local self-governance:

- 7 people from President's Administration (2 of them are Deputies of Administration Head);
- 5 people from Ministry Cabinet (1 of them is Minister);
- 17 people from different central public authorities;
- 17 people from local state administrations;
- 8 MPs from Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (from all parties represented in the Parliament);
- 11 deputies of local Councils.

In addition to Kyiv respondents, the representatives of local self-government from Dnipropetrovsk (8 respondents), Lviv (6 respondents), Odesa (7 respondents) and Kharkiv (7 respondents) were included into the polling. The selection of respondents was done purposefully – first of all from those management structures that in their activities should rely on analytical products. Expert survey was conducted by different methods: mainly via e-mail, partially by personal interviews

While compiling the questionnaire several questions from expert survey conducted by Kyiv International Sociology Institute on July 30 – October 3, 2012, were used. However, it is impossible to conduct direct qualitative comparison as KIIS survey had significantly wider general sampling – 244 respondents. Yet in the group of respondents – representatives of executive power – there is a possibility to compare the results at least at the level of tendencies and trends. It is especially important considering the fact that the authorities have changed during this time and, obviously, the circle of respondents have changed.

In addition to the survey among the authorities representatives of different branches and levels Democratic Initiatives Foundation conducted the polling of the representatives of non-governmental

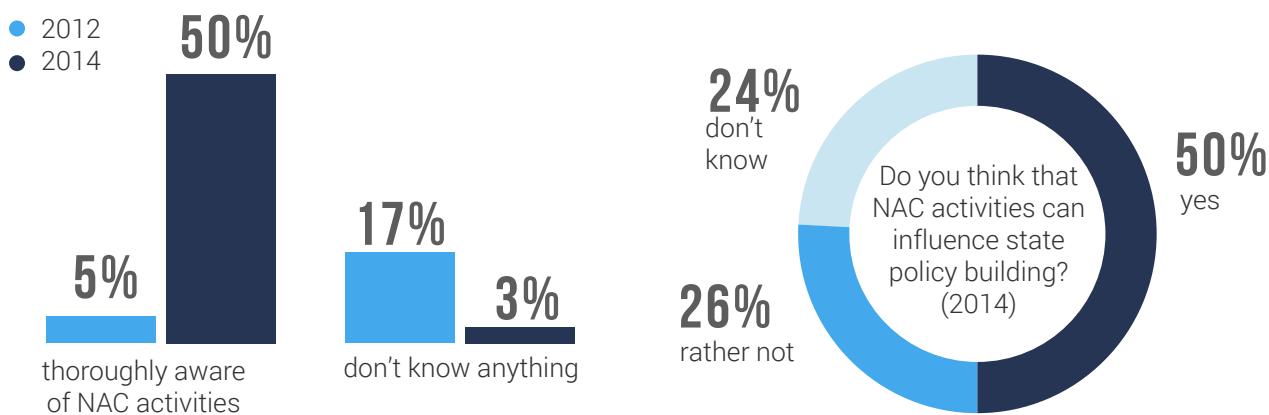
analytical centers. 38 experts were polled – 19 from Kyiv and 19 from other cities of Ukraine. The most famous and respected analytical centers were chosen, which provided the possibility to look at the process of mutual relations between analytical centers and authorities representatives from both points of view, to determine where their views on the same issues coincide and where they differ.

MAIN RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AMONG AUTHORITIES AND ANALYTICAL CENTERS REPRESENTATIVES

The attitude of authorities' representatives towards non-governmental analytical centers: Do they know? Do they use?

First of all there is a need to state that representatives of current authorities know more about activities of non-governmental analytical centers (NAC) than former authorities: during 2012 KIIS survey only 5% of representatives of executive power said that they are thoroughly aware of NAC activities, and 17% did not know anything. Today almost the half of respondents said that they are aware of these activities and only 2 respondents did not know anything (i.e. only 3%). The opinions of authrotites representatives regarding the influence of NAC activities on state policy building also differ: in 2012 35% of representatives of executive power did not recognize the availability of such influence as well as 33% of MPs, in 2014 almost 50%. However, today the significant part of respondents (26%) consider that NAC "rather do not influence" on public decision-making and 24% could not provide the certain answer.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ANALYTICAL CENTERS



It is necessary to mention that although the thoughts of authorities representatives on the influence of NAC on policy development and state decision-making diverged, in their understanding of the necessity if cooperation with NACs they were almost unanimous – 47 out of 65 authorities representatives consider that such cooperation should have constant character and 16 think that there should be ad hoc cooperation, when the need appears. Only 1 respondent thinks that there is no necessity in such cooperation with NACs at all. At that it is important that the necessity of constant cooperation was expressed by both representatives of central and local authorities (self-governance and local executive bodies).

Thus, we can state that almost all respondents from among authorities representatives acknowledge the necessity of cooperation with analytical centers and would prefer this happening on constant basis.

Moreover, almost all respondents from different branches of power (60 out of 65) said that they would personally need materials developed by think tanks. They quite actively use such materials: according to the poll data 36% of respondents are constantly using the NAC materials and 55% do this from time to time, 9% do not use developed materials at all. At that NAC materials are used not only in Kyiv, but also by regional public authorities, however mainly not constantly, from time to time.

Nota Bene: the majority of respondents consider that the cooperation with think tanks has to be constant; however the majority is using their materials sporadically. The situation is even worse with constant cooperation between NACs and authorities representatives or structures they represent: only 20% stated that such cooperation is taking place on a constant basis; the half of respondents said that the cooperation is of a sporadic, ad hoc character; and almost 30% did not cooperate with NACs at all. The majority of think tanks representatives (60%) also stated that their cooperation with public authorities and self-government bodies have ad hoc character, from time to time; 40% cooperate on a constant basis, and only one NAC representative responded that their center does not cooperate with authorities. However, one should not forget that representatives of leading Ukrainian non-governmental analytical centers participated in the survey. It is also necessary to say that in the cases when think tanks cooperated with the authorities, the NACs initiated the cooperation, and there was only one public body that initiated such cooperation.

Who are the main users of analytic centers products?

Relations between think tanks and governmental institutions haven't transformed into really effective and inclusive cooperation yet. It happens despite the fact that both sides – authorities and think tanks – understand the necessity of cooperation on a constant basis.

Today the main consumers of NAC products are mass-media, civil society organizations and international foundations and organizations – both analytical centers and authorities representatives agreed on this statement. Half as many answers by authorities' representatives about users of think tanks materials were: central public authorities, political parties, individual customers; local public authorities, business structures were named even less, and educational facilities were named only by 4 respondents.

Responses by representatives of analytical centers (who, obviously, know better their clients and customers) were even less optimistic: business structures, individual customers and educational facilities are almost absent as real customers.

In fact, the situation when mass-media, civil society organizations and international foundations and organizations serve as main consumers of think tank products was inevitable while the previous government was at power, which tried to be maximally

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closed from everyone and made decisions using criteria for optimal decisions not based on the scientific analysis. Thus mass-media, associations of civic organizations were the ideal tool for the influence and applying pressure on authorities. International organizations got to know the real situation in Ukraine through the analytic materials developed by non-governmental analytic centers. This situation – influencing the state decision-making by indirect tools – is still relevant today.

Low level of cooperation between governmental bodies and think tanks become visible when it comes to concrete mechanisms, which appears to be the most effective for think tanks to influence decision-making process. In the case of Ukraine two parties of these potential cooperation confirm that influence on the side of think tanks takes place, but mechanism of these influence are mainly indirect and presuppose existence of third actors, through which or due to which think tanks' effect for policy-development process is materialized.

Representatives of central and local authorities think that the main mechanisms by which think tanks make an impact on policy-making is their influence on public opinion through mass media, on the one hand, and public discussions of current developments at round tables and conferences in cooperation with authorities, on another hand.

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Thus, representatives of central and local authorities think that the main mechanisms by which think tanks make an impact on policy-making is their influence on public opinion through mass media, on the one hand, and public discussions of current developments at round tables and conferences in cooperation with authorities, on another hand. It is interesting that think tank representatives consider these mechanisms of influence on state decision-making (let's call it soft pressure on the authorities) not as main, and NACs are especially skeptical about Round-tables and Conferences despite the fact that authorities representatives might participate in them. At the same time, from non-governmental think tanks' point of view, the most important mechanisms are their cooperation with international organizations, which in their turn affect Ukrainian authorities, and involvement of separate experts to the strategy development and decision-making. Thus, analytical centers would like to participate in developing the state decisions.

It is necessary to mention that the effectiveness of such mechanism as participation in Public Councils and other advisory structures attached to the public authorities is of a low value both for the authorities representatives and civic organizations. Both sides do not rely on think tanks analysts employed by authorities, although to our mind it is very important. It is also interesting that while evaluating one of the mechanisms of influence by NACs, their opinion and the point of view of authorities' representatives was completely opposite: analytical centers think that different

forms of pressure on authorities – meetings, flashmobs, etc. – are the most effective tools, and authorities' representatives consider these tools to be least effective. Probably, think tanks are right, as there are several examples, when using these methods analytical centers together with other civil society organizations, managed to include certain issues into the agenda of Verkhovna Rada and to achieve adoption of the laws.

Mechanisms of cooperation between think tanks and central and local authorities

Thus, both representatives of central and local authorities are ready to cooperate with non-governmental think tanks. Moreover, if respondents from authorities' institutions had a need in some analytics, they would mainly address separate experts and non-governmental think tanks.

All other possibilities are less appreciated, even foreign consulting companies and foreign professionals as well as Ukrainian ones. State research institutions and higher educational facilities funded by Ukrainian state (as opposed to the think tanks) are not also very popular.

Regarding the state structures, we would like to give one example, which explains why customers prefer analytical centers to state research institutions. At think tank international conference that took place on December 4-5, 2014, the Deputy Minister of Education Inna Sovsun said that the Ministry of Education and Science asked the Academy of Pedagogic Sciences to compile a short analytical material regarding the workload of Ukrainian teachers. The Academy was preparing the report for more than 2 weeks and in the end it was not usable at all. The analytical center was asked to do the same (Mrs. Sovsun had some personal connections there) and compiled a high-quality report in a short time.

Thus, non-governmental analytical centers are the main research institutions to which authorities representatives would turn to get analytical materials on certain important issues. But how do authorities representatives get to know about which problems are researched by NACs and what materials they have? It appears that the main source of information is mass-media (almost two thirds of respondents marked this answer), the half of respondents pointed out the web-sites of analytical centers and events conducted by them – presentations, round tables, conferences. Approximately one third of respondents said that they get to know about NACs activities through their subscriptions in the Internet, printed materials and directly from heads and analysts of these centers. Finally, only the insignificant part of authorities representatives learn about think tank activities directly – from their colleagues and materials specially compiled by analytical centers for certain state institutions.

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This correlation of significance of different informational sources, when mass-media, web-sites and presentations, conferences and round tables are the main sources can mean that authorities mainly get to know about the results achieved by think tanks and some of them appear to be useful for certain public institutions. This can also explain the sporadic, "from time to time" character of NACs activities results usage. Obviously, the constant cooperation between authorities and analytical centers envisage the awareness of authorities about the planned activities of think tanks, and information center would be aware of what kind of requests for analytical materials were made by state structures. To achieve this, there is a need to purposefully build new relations between non-governmental analytical centers and authorities.

An important question for cooperation between analytical centers and authorities was included into the survey – How do the authorities choose the analytical organizations, what criteria do they use?

Taking in consideration the responses by polled authorities' representatives there are three main criteria:

- center's reputation, its general activities;
- quality of published by the center analytical materials;
- availability of professionals on certain issues.

Allegedly, the following criteria such as trustworthiness, availability of connections with state officials and politicians are of a minor importance. However, to our mind, these were rather stereotyped answers (as it should be) than reality (as it is). In reality personal connections play very important role in relations with analytical centers.

The real example of this is shown here as the survey of authorities' representatives would not take place without using personal connections and acquaintances with politicians and officials.

It is necessary to mention that different levels authorities representatives survey appeared to be very difficult to implement, that is why it took a lot of time and needed decent persistence. The attempt of simple rational approach towards the survey turned out to be a complete failure. Not a single letter sent by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and Renaissance Foundation to all public bodies inquiring the contacts of employees to get in touch with regarding the survey was answered by any of public bodies. There was no possibility to send questionnaires to those authorities representatives whose opinion would be important, as no e-mail addresses were mentioned either on the web-site of President's Administration (there are still no e-mails there today) or at the web-site of the Government (today the e-mails are available), and letters sent to MPs to the addresses stated at Verkhovna Rada web-site were returned to the sender. We hope that it was a temporary problem, before the beginning of work of the newly elected Parliament.

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Thus, almost all answers were received due to the mobilization of personal connections of Democratic Initiatives Foundation employees with authorities' representatives and MPs and in other cities due to the personal connections of local analytical centers and the assistance of the Renaissance Foundation in these cities.

This proves that so far personal connections are really very important factors in the work of the analytical center.

What are the main obstacles for the productive cooperation between non-governmental analytical centers and the authorities?

The main obstacles for effective cooperation between governmental institutions and non-governmental expert organizations looks almost identically from both perspectives. In particular, public servants and self-governance representatives consider lack of financial resources for involvement of "third sector" think tanks into authorities activity as the main obstacle for such cooperation. Besides of that public servants mention inability of state institutions to work with think tanks, lack of time for officials from these bodies to establish regular relations with analytical organizations, because in the most cases decisions are made very quickly and there is no enough time for investigations. Lack of appropriate information about non-governmental organizations' field of work also appears an obstacle from governmental agencies' point of view.

Interviewed think tanks' representatives mention the same obstacles, but put inability of governmental bodies to cooperate with analytical NGOs on the first place.

The main reason for which public officials might be not satisfied with the quality of analytics, produced by non-governmental think tanks, is its abstractness and lack of clear proposals, which are to be implemented.

It is necessary to mention that there were almost no references on the low quality of NACs materials – only 5 of them. Thus the issue of analytical materials presentation so that it was ready for the usage by state officials gains new meaning. During the discussion at the conference on December 4-5, 2014, the issue of analytical materials laconism was raised ("three pages demand").

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Who will pay for analytical materials: financial side of cooperation

Financial peculiarities of governmental and non-governmental cooperation in the field of analysis also appear as important. Majority of polled expert organizations states that the main source of their financing is international donors' funds.

Previous involvement of these think tanks into government agencies' work was financed not by state institutions, but by think tank's own resources in the frame of implemented projects or was not reimbursed at all and experts cooperated with official bodies on a voluntary basis.

On the other hand, there is no common readiness of questioned public officers to finance think tanks' activity. Part of respondents among public officials and representatives of local self-governance say that they are not ready to pay anything to think tanks for their analytics. Another part of the group says that joint financing (partly – by state institution, partly – by non-governmental funds) can be possible and acceptable.

What are the most actual problems: opinion of think tanks and authorities representatives

Under the circumstances when necessity of reforms is urgent and public demand for these reforms is unprecedentedly high, think tanks and governmental institutions can find the starting point for cooperation.

According to majority of public servant and local governors, the main fields, where authorities feel the need in expert assistance are sociological research, complex analysis of the state of society and tendencies of its development, decentralization, local governance issues and anti-corruption reform.

Representatives of non-governmental think tanks consider that at the present moment authorities need analytical support regarding mainly decentralization and local governance reform, anti-corruption policy and implementation of Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine.

Top-five areas, which are considered by authorities' representatives as the most important in terms of analytical support provided from outside, are as follows: 1) multidimensional analysis of society development; 2) guaranteeing energy security of Ukraine; 3) judicial reform; 4) situation in Ukrainian Donbas and expert prognosis on this issues; 5) decentralization and local governance reform.

THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS IN TERMS OF ANALYTICAL SUPPORT



multidimensional analysis of society development



guaranteeing energy security of Ukraine



judicial reform



situation in Ukrainian Donbas and expert prognosis on this issues

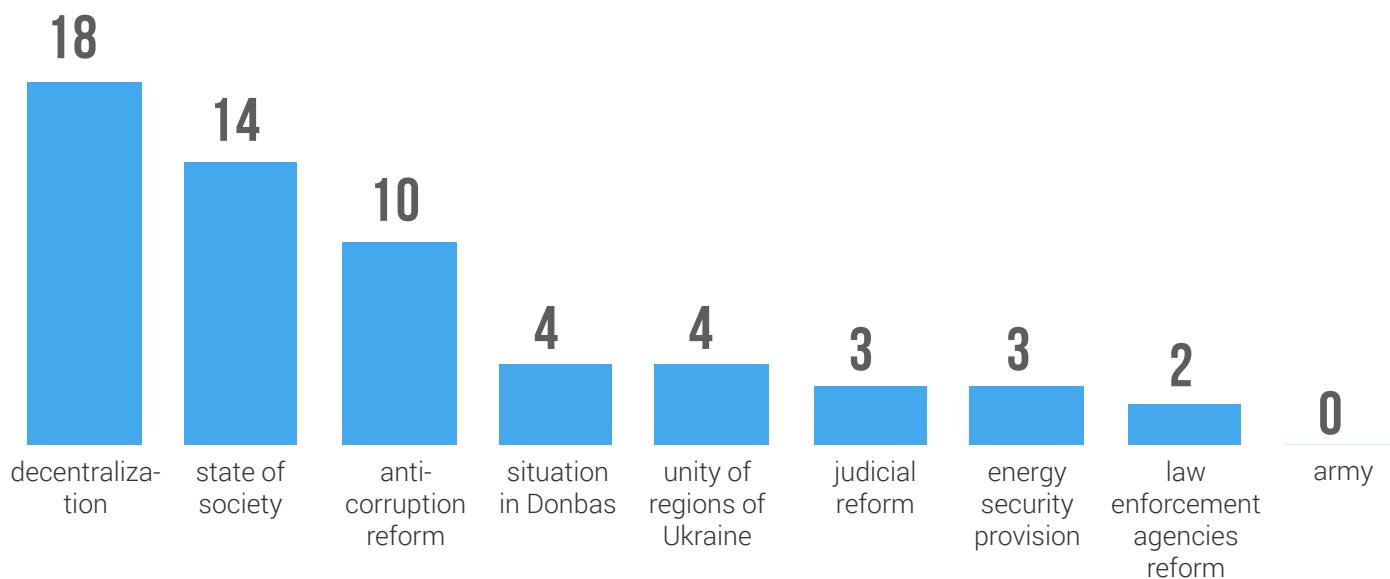


decentralization and local governance reform

The same question about the priority topics for the authorities where they need think tank support was also asked to the analysts. Some of priorities coincided (decentralization problems and local governance reform, anti-corruption, judicial and law enforcement agencies reform, the situation in Donbas), some of the topics were important for the analytical centers and unimportant for authorities' representatives. In general the clear trend was revealed: authorities' representatives considered humanitarian and social problems (education, health care and pension reforms, civil society and mass-media development, etc.) to be unimportant, and think tank representatives consider these issues to be quite important.

At the same time, although opinions of officials and analytical centers on the most important problems do not coincide completely, there is a possibility to find at least several think tanks dealing with these issues. Truth be told, some of the problems of top importance for authorities are covered by a lot of NACs (18 focus on decentralization and local governance development, 14 - on the state of society analysis and trends of its development, 10 of them work with anti-corruption reform), and some of the issues are covered by a few think tanks (situation in Donbas by only 4 centers, judicial reform – 3, law enforcement agencies reform – 2, energy security provision – 3, support of the unity of regions of Ukraine - 4). One, very important issue was not covered by any of the polled NACs – the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and security issues. Thus the fruitful cooperation between the public authorities and think tanks lies in the preparation of the analytical centers to the work in the most demanded spheres of the social problems.

THINK TANKS WORKING ON THE PROBLEMS OF TOP IMPORTANCE FOR AUTHORITIES



The most respectful analytical centers for the authority's representatives

The survey included the question on analytical centers, which activities considered by authorities representatives to be the most useful and demanded.

The unconditional winner in this nomination is Razumkov's Centre for Economic and Political Studies (mentioned by more than a half of respondents). It is followed with very close results by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms and the Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research. Top ten of the named think tanks (although

with way over modest results) are the International Center for Policy Studies, the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, the Laboratory of Legal Initiatives, Kiev International Institute of Sociology, and the National Institute for Strategic Studies. In general 70 (!) organizations were named, 44 of them had only one reference.

However, the fact that some of the named organizations are not analytic centers shows the real knowledge of authorities representatives about the think tanks. Thus, even the top ten of named organizations included Kiev International Institute of Sociology, which is a commercial structure, and the National Institute for Strategic Studies which is a state institution. The majority of the rest of mentioned organizations – GFK and Socis (commercial sociologic companies), International Renaissance Foundation, etc. are also not analytical centers. It testifies that authorities' representatives in many cases, naming the center do not know exactly what it is.

It is interesting to compare the list of the most respected analytical centers named in Democratic Initiatives Foundation 2014 survey and in KIIS survey of 2012. It seemed that if the analytical center possesses the top positions, there is no space for changes during just two years. Two years ago, exactly like today Razumkov's Center was the winner in all nominations (i.e. according to all criteria). The Top-7 of think tanks named two years ago included Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting and the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms. Mykhailo Pogrebinsky Kiev Center for Political Research and Conflictology, which two years ago possessed the general third place according to the complex of indices, was not named by any of 65 respondents. This totally corresponds to the reality as this Center as well as Mykhailo Pogrebinsky himself seemingly disappeared from the public space (although Pogrebinsky is a frequent guest of Russian TV talk-shows). Gorshenin's Institute, which two years ago possessed the second place, today has lost its leading positions.

Hence, why did it happen? Obviously, the matter is in the political connections of these centers to certain political forces that today are not in power any more. So, we can make a conclusion that cooperation with authorities should not turn into minion serving to those in power, the analytical center should keep its independence – objectiveness and unbiased character.

Among the regional analytical centers Kharkiv Foundation of Local Democracy was included into both lists (dated back to 2012 and 2014), and was the leader today and two years ago. Odesa Community Institute of Social Technologies, Lviv Informational-Legal Centre "Our Right" and Dnipropetrovsk Coordination-Expert Center of Regulatory Policy were also mentioned in both lists. Some of the centers named among the best in 2012 were not even mentioned in 2014, the list of the best was replenished by Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group and the Centre of Civic Advocacy. 37 more organizations were named, among which, however, more than a half are neither analytical centers nor regional ones (for example, the OSCE).

Generally, there is a possibility to make a conclusion that regional think tanks are known in the best case in their cities – this was also proved by our survey: regional NACs were named by the representatives of local authorities.

Main conclusions and recommendations

№1

The survey proved the high level of readiness of both authorities' representatives and think tanks for fruitful cooperation. Non-governmental analytical centers are rated as extremely needed institutions for implementing successful reforms in the country.

№2

At the same time the level of such cooperation, as recognized by both sides, obviously does not correspond to the acuteness of modern needs. State officials consider the absence of funds in state institutions to pay for non-governmental think tanks' services to be the main problem. On the other hand, there are state research institutions unable to solve practical tasks. That is why it would be quite logical that the part of funding of these institutions was allocated for the open tenders on development of certain socially important issues and that there was a possibility for both state and non-governmental research facilities to compete in these tender procedures.

№3

State institutions today really do not have financial possibilities to pay analytical centers for their work. However, the absolute majority of leading think tanks have funds from international foundations for their activities. Donors support the utilization of the developments by non-governmental centers for public decision-making; moreover, it is often an additional factor for grant allocation. The problem is that state officials as a rule do not know what projects are implemented by think tanks. Thus, it is extremely important to create a web-site for analytical centers of Ukraine with certain themed sections, where think tanks could post their information on current and already implemented projects. On the other hand, public authorities could post their requests for analytical materials they feel the need to use in their work.

№4

To establish the stable cooperation with authorities, the analytical centers have to publish not only the results of their activities, but also their projects that were just started to be implemented and even their strategic plans, so that the state institutions could join cooperation from the very beginning of the project. Authorities would also have to publish (probably, at their own web-sites) the issues that need analytical research to be solved. This will also add to the awareness of international donors as to which sphere of the analytical activities are the most demanded in current social situation.

№5

Today the most critical (those where public authorities feel the greater need in analytical understanding and where the obvious need in the work of analytical centers is) are the issues of: situation in Donbas and forecasts of its future developments; the issue of support of unity of the regions of Ukraine; reforming the law enforcement agencies and judicial reform; provision of the energy security of Ukraine, and especially reforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine and security issues. Perhaps, there is a sense to teach the professionals in these spheres in frames of the institutional development projects for non-governmental analytical centers.

№6

A serious obstacle in cooperation between non-governmental analytical centers and authorities is an inability of even professional analysts to prepare the materials in a format which would suit the needs of the state institutions. Thus, there is a need to organize trainings for analysts on how to write policy papers. We would like to stress that these should be trainings and not lectures, so that participants would train how to write these papers and would have the chance to correct their mistakes. Such trainings should be led by professionals who can do it themselves and not only tell how it should be done.

№7

An important direction of raising the general level of analytical work in the country is work with regional analytical centers. Mutual projects of leading think tanks from the capital and from the regions could become quite fruitful. It is also important to invite analytical centers from regions to Kyiv and organize press-conferences for them.

№8

For think tanks it is very important to establish contacts with businesses that are almost not involved into the support of analytical developments for reforms in the society as well as with educational facilities, as the complaints that university graduates are not ready for practical activities also include inability to develop the analytical materials.

№9

As the reality of analytical centers activities show, personal connections play a significant role in cooperation with authorities' representatives and politicians. While planning a new project there is a sense to find those state institutions, which would find the product to be extremely needed and work together with this institution in the implementation of the project. This will help products and materials developed by the think tanks to find their clients and customers.