Administrative Reform and Local Elections in Ukraine 2020

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ABSTRACT

2020 has been an important year for Ukrainian local politics. Firstly, administrative reform has introduced a new strengthened and decentralised administrative division of the country, with the goal of strengthening local self-government. Also as a result of new administrative division, the country now also has new electoral districts for local elections that will for the first time be mostly conducted according to a proportional party list system. Secondly, it is a year of the local elections on 25 October 2020, elections that follow triumph of the Servant of the People party in presidential and parliamentary elections, which delivered a strong mandate for the president and a majority in parlament. Therefore elections are not only important for local decisionmaking, but will also be an indicator of the real support for President Zelenskyy and his Servant of the People party. Recent public opinion polls show that in general Ukrainians support mainly established national political parties that have representation also in country's Parliament. The ruling Servant of the People Party has clear lead overall, followed by main pro-Russian opposition party Opposition Platform – For Life and two pro-European opposition parties European Solidarity and Batkivshchyna. At the same time, it is probable, that in many big cities parties led by popular local politicians prevail. It is therefore expected that that the national parties, especially ruling Servant of the People party, are dependent on cooperation and the formation of coalitions with other national and also with local parties.

Local government structure of Ukraine and administrative reform

According to the Constitution of Ukraine[1], the system of the administrative and territorial structure of Ukraine includes the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, oblasts, rayons, cities, city districts, settlements and villages. Village, settlement, city, rayon or oblast radas comprise deputies elected for a five-year term by residents of village, settlement, city, rayon or oblast on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

According to the territorial reform of 12 June 2020, the government approved a new administrative division at the local level that includes 1,470 hromadas instead of the approximately 12,000 operating at the start of the reform. The Verkhovna Rada changed the administrative division of the country at the subregional level and approved Resolution No. 3650 of July 17, 2020, on the Creation and Elimination of Districts and approved a new division of 136 rayons instead of the previous 490. After the administrative-territorial reform the united territorial communities (hromadas) will be large, 30-40 thousand people each. Under the new division, each district should contain no fewer than 150,000 people, and the most remote settlements in each district should be no further than 60 kilometers from the town where the district authorities are to be located. Towns with a population of more than 50,000 can qualify to be new district seats.[2]

The reformed local government units at both levels will be constituted in autumn 2020 with the beginning of the term of the new local government bodies. The changes will not affect the occupied Crimea not the the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where the Ukrainian authorities are currently unable to hold elections. The reform is to be finalised with constitutional changes planned for 2021 that will introduce a new division of competences between the central and local governments. Rayon and oblast state administrations will be abolished, with most of their powers taken over by new, self-governing executive bodies at both levels. Representatives of the Government (executive) in rayons and oblasts will become prefects, appointed and dismissed by the President, and performing mainly supervisory functions in relation to local governments and coordinating the local activities of central executive bodies.[3]

According to the government of Ukraine, the administrative reform continues the ongoing decentralization policy aimed at decreasing budget spending, lowering the number

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1 – Constitution of Ukraine https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8233/file/Ukraine_Constitution_am2019_EN.pdf

2 – Peter Roudik. Global Legal Monitor. Ukraine: New Territorial Division of the Country Initiated. 21.07.2020. https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/ukraine-new-territorial-division-of-the-country-initiated/

3 – Daniel Szeligowski. The Next Step Towards Decentralisation in Ukraine. – PISM Bulletin NO. 174 (1604).20.08.2020. https://pism.pl/file/748a6485-d13d-40fe-9dcc-52b054cf27a1

of government employees, and eliminating the duplication of services. The goal of the reform is to create more powerful local self-governing bodies and transfer to them many functions currently performed by government institutions. So far, the key achievement of administrative reforms in Ukraine has been the empowerment of territorial communities (hromady) through their voluntary amalgamation and through broadening the scope of their competencies. This empowerment has included granting the communities new sources of income, mainly provided through the redistribution of tax income between the State Budget and local budgets and by launching new subventions for the improvement of infrastructure and public services.[4]

Organisation of 2020 local elections

Ukraine's next local elections are scheduled for 25 October 2020. These will be the first elections to take place under the country's new electoral law, adopted in 2019, that was amended in 2020.

The Ukrainian legislation on local elections has been undergoing continuous changes over the last 30 years. Different electoral systems have been used: majoritarian (absolute and relative majority, single- and multi-member constituencies), proportional representation (all of them of a closed type), and parallel systems, combining elements of majoritarian and proportional representation systems.[5]

The Electoral Code comprises provisions related to all kinds of elections in Ukraine: presidential, parliamentary, and local ones. Hence one could welcome the emergence of a single piece of legislation replacing three distinct laws on elections. That being said, the Code does not regulate the functioning of the Central Electoral Commission, the State Registry of Voters; nor does it contain any provisions dealing with nationwide and local referendums. One can say then that instead of an electoral code we are dealing rather with a compilation of laws on elections.[6]

Although electoral districts are established on the basis of the current administrative division of the country, the Verkhovna Rada's resolution announcing the elections ordered

4 – Maryna Rabinovych. Ukraine's Decentralization from the Perspective of Territorial Self-Governance and Conflict Management. – Forum for Ukrainian Studies. 17.07.2020. https://ukrainian-studies.ca/2020/07/17/ukraines-decentralization-from-the-perspective-of-territorial-self-governance-and-conflict-management/

5 – Ukraine's 2020 Local Elections: Challenges and Problems in the Light of the New Electoral Legislation. – Democracy Reporting International. 07.05.2020.
https://democracy-reporting.org/dri_publications/ukraine-2020-local-elections-challenges-and-problems/

6 – Ukraine's 2020 Local Elections: Challenges and Problems in the Light of the New Electoral Legislation. – Democracy Reporting International. 07.05.2020.
https://democracy-reporting.org/dri_publications/ukraine-2020-local-elections-challenges-and-problems/

the National Central Election Commission to adjust the electoral process in consideration of the forthcoming divisional changes.[7]

As mentioned before, The Verkhovna Rada has scheduled elections for local authorities on Sunday, October 25. 326 MPs voted for the relevant resolution № 3809. Resolution No. 3809 stipulates that polls to elect members of regional, Kyiv City Council, district councils in cities and towns and the mayor of Kyiv be held on October 25. Ukraine's Central Election Commission (CEC) set September 5, 2020, as the date for the beginning of the campaign for local elections scheduled for October 25[8].

At the same time, the document stipulates that the election of members of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, members of local councils and village heads, town and city mayors in the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, in certain areas, cities, towns and villages in Donetsk and Luhansk regions will not be scheduled and held.[9]

In addition, the resolution has provisions that due to the impossibility of ensuring the representation of the common interests of the territorial communities of villages, towns and cities of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, elections of members of Donetsk and Luhansk regional councils are not to be appointed and are not to be held. Elections of members of local councils, village heads, town and city mayors that were not appointed in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of this resolution will be scheduled in accordance with the procedure and terms established by separate laws.[10]

The Verkhovna Rada adopted the resolution 3485 on the further amendments to the Election Code on 15 July 2020. The law significantly decreases the bids for elections. The proportional representation electoral system imposed in the cities with at least 10,000 populations and majoritarian system below that treshold. A person may run for elections as head of a village, settlement, and city as independent candidate. Candidate can only be self-nominated in places with a population of less than 10,000 voters, in all other cases candidates must be nominated by political parties.[11]

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7 – Peter Roudik. Global Legal Monitor. Ukraine: New Territorial Division of the Country Initiated. 21.07.2020.
https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/ukraine-new-territorial-division-of-the-country-initiated/

8 – Ukraine's parliament approves date for local elections. – UNIAN. 15.07.2020.
https://www.unian.info/politics/local-elections-ukraine-s-parliament-approves-date-for-polls-11075672.html

9 – Ukraine's parliament approves date for local elections. – UNIAN. 15.07.2020.
https://www.unian.info/politics/local-elections-ukraine-s-parliament-approves-date-for-polls-11075672.html

10 – Ukraine's parliament approves date for local elections. – UNIAN. 15.07.2020.
https://www.unian.info/politics/local-elections-ukraine-s-parliament-approves-date-for-polls-11075672.html

11 – Ukraine to hold local elections on October 25. – 112 Ukraine. 15.07.2020

In proportional election districts, the elections have a 5% election threshold for party lists. Voters will have to fill in two types of candidate lists – one for the whole city (district or region) and a separate one for their electoral district (in which they have to write down the number of their favourite candidate themselves). The number 1 on the party list of the whole city is guaranteed a place in the local council if the party passes the election threshold. The election in cities with at least 10,000 will be held with a specific open list system. In order to benefit from this open list system, a candidate in an electoral district needs to gain 25% of the total number of votes received by all parties that overcome the electoral threshold divided by the number of seats in the local council minus the seats won by the number 1s on the party list of the whole city. On all candidate lists, two out of every five candidates have to be female.[12]

Elections of mayors can be held in two rounds for cities with a population of over 75 thousand. A repeat vote for candidates will be appointed if none of them gains an absolute majority (from 50% + 1) of votes in the first round. In other localities, the heads of the councils will be elected by a simple majority.[13]

With an equal percentage, a candidate who takes the higher place on the territorial elections list of the candidates from the party's organization also takes the higher place. Then, other candidates put on the list in accordance with the order determined by the organization of the party during the nominating of the candidates. The candidate included on the list with the first number by the organization of the party is put on the first place in the territorial election list.[14]

The sanctions are increased for the crimes and administrative offenses in the sphere of the election legislation; the responsibility for falsification of documents and other violations is determined. The document bans holding of election campaigning or provision of money, gift certificates, food products, alcohol and goods to the electorate, establishments, institutions, organizations.[15]

For the first time in Ukrainian local elections, all candidates have to pay cash deposit to be able to take part in the elections. The size of this deposit depends on the size of the

https://112.international/politics/ukraine-to-hold-local-elections-on-october-25-53068.html

12 – 2020 Ukrainian local elections. Wikipedia article. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Ukrainian_local_elections

13 – Анна Березина. Местные выборы 2020: что нужно знать об избирательной кампании в Украине. – РБК-Украина. 09.09.2020. https://vybory.rbc.ua/rus/2020/mestnye-vybory-2020-nuzhno-znat-izbiratelnoy-1599646378.html

14 – Ukraine's parliament amends Election Code. – 112 Ukraine. 1607.2020 https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/ukraines-parliament-amended-election-code-53110.html

15 – Ukraine's parliament amends Election Code. – 112 Ukraine. 16.07.2020. https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/ukraines-parliament-amended-election-code-53110.html

population of the place where the election is held. The lowest deposit will be for candidates for mayors of Uzhhorod (19,000 hryvnias), Nikopol (20,000 hryvnias) and Melitopol (24,000 hryvnias); while the highest will be for the mayoral candidates of Kiev (445,000 hryvnias), Kharkiv (219,000 hryvnias), and Dnipro (157,000 hryvnias).[16]

Political situation before local elections

Ukrainian local elections are characterized by serious **fragmentation of political scene.** 194 parties announced the participation of their local organizations in the local elections on October 25, 2020 (as of September 7, 2020). **Volodymyr Fesenko**, Director at Centre for political studies "Penta" has pointed out that from political parties that have announced their participation in the 2020 local elections, a quarter of them are either named parties (with the name of the party leader) or with local self-identification. 31 parties are registered, 21 are purely local (and this is only in name, in fact there are many more of them). Of the nominal parties, only a minority are associated with politicians of a nationwide scale (Vladimir Groisman, Vitali Klichko, Valentin Nalyvaichenko, etc.).[17]

According to Fesenko, the parties participating in the 2020 local elections, taking into account their status and interests can be divided into four categories.[18]

1) The ruling party – Servant of the People. If a year ago the party of President Zelensky had the intention to take power in local governments into its own hands, but due to other political riorities there were no significant steps taken during the year that passed. Now the real (and not declarative) goals are more modest – to hold their factions in local councils and participate in the formation of majority coalitions with the parties of local elites and a number of other political forces. If they manage to win the elections of mayors in one or two regional centers, this will already be a successful result for the Servant of the People party. Moreover, other parliamentary parties will have their mayors in regional centers as well. But a completely acceptable result for the Servant of the People will be the presence of its own people in the leadership of city and regional councils (secretaries of city councils, chairmen or deputy chairmen of regional councils).

2) Opposition parliamentary parties. It is important for pro-Russian opposition party

16 – 2020 Ukrainian local elections. Wikipedia article https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Ukrainian_local_elections

17 – Володимир Фесенко. Местные выборы-2020: обзор избирательной кампании. – Українська правда. 15.09.2020. https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/fesenko/5f607bfaab93c/

18 – Володимир Фесенко. Местные выборы-2020: обзор избирательной кампании. – Українська правда. 15.09.2020. https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/fesenko/5f607bfaab93c/

Opposition Platform – For Life and pro-European opposition parties European Solidarity and Batkivshchyna to win or become one of the winners in their basic regions, to become there, if not the core of the ruling majority, then its active part. If these parties manage to take control of at least some of the regional and city councils in their base regions, then they can use them to put pressure on the central government on the national political agenda – the topic of resolving the conflict in Donbass, issues of socio-economic policy, quarantine restrictions. In the case of Opposition Platform – For Life in the East and European Solidarity and Batkivshchyna in the West, this is also fraught with increased regional political polarization, which Russia can take advantage of. Opposition parliamentary parties can use their possible, although far from guaranteed success in local elections to promote the idea of early parliamentary elections.

3) Parties of local elites. This category includes not only parties with a "local name" and with the names of local politicians. These are the parties of influential mayors of big cities (like, for example, the party Trust the Affairs of the Odessa mayor G. Trukhanov) who want to preserve their posts and together form serious opposition to ruling Servant of the People party aspirations. There are also the parties of influential businessmen (for example, the party For Concrete Affairs, associated with Alexander and Galina Gereg, which has influence in the Khmelnytsky region). The task of these parties is to win (or achieve a successful result) in their city (region), to form a majority in the interests of the mayor, or to represent the interests of a particular politician, an influential local clan in the relevant local government bodies. The choice of many representatives of local elites in favor of their parties is predetermined by the unwillingness to depend on Kiev politicians (including the unwillingness to pay for the party franchise).

4) Non-parliamentary parties. This is the most diverse category of participants in local elections. There is a small group of such parties (about a dozen) that see local elections as a way to demonstrate their ambitions and potential, but associate their interests with parliamentary elections, although some of them have modest representation in some self governments (Svoboda, Oleg Lyashko's Radical Party, Strength and Honor, Sharia Party, Groisman's Ukrainian Strategy and a number of others). This group also includes new parties created on the eve of local elections, but clearly with an eye to the future parliamentary elections (For the Future, Victory of Palchevsky, Proposition). Although some of these parties (for example, Proposition) simultaneously have a pronounced local character. There are parties whose founders have great political ambitions (often overstated), but failed to realize them. These parties do not have the resources to fully participate in local elections throughout the country, but they hope to get into local councils at least in certain cities and districts. For them, this is a way to stay in big politics. The vast majority of non-parliamentary parties participating in local elections are legal shells sold (or leased) during the elections.

They participate in elections only in certain regions, cities and hromadasIn the best case, they pretend to get several deputies to the corresponding local councils. However, more often they perform auxiliary political technology functions for the favorites of the elections.

The specifics of the parties participating in local elections also determine **the political agenda** that they promote in the pre-election campaign. Parties of local elites traditionally focus on local issues (parties of incumbent mayors and ruling local elites – on their achievements and future plans; and their competitors from local elites – on the most acute local problems and ways to solve them). Parliamentary parties and political forces with ambitions at the national level, on the contrary, rely on general Ukrainian problems, taking into account their ideological specifics.[19]

Servant of the People is currently is still most popular party, but is losing popularity and does not enjoy strong representation in all the regions, while the parliamentary and regional opposition see the local elections as an opportunity to take revenge against Zelensky for his landslide victories last year.[20] However it could be expected that the ruling Servant of the People party has a good chace entering almost all local councils and will get the most votes and seats on local councils overall in the elections.The ruling party has traditionally done so throughout Ukraine's independent history. What remains to be seen is the level of support the party will receive. The new election system strengthens political parties and Servant of the People will benefit from this during the coming elections. Therefore, despite its polling losses, the Servant of the People party has a good chance of entering almost all local councils in Ukraine.

In general, it is expected that no party would win an absolute majority in local elections all over the country. All parties are dependent on cooperation and the formation of coalitions. It is probable that the main goal of the Servant of the People party sees coalitions as the way to influence local politics. This could also reduce tensions between the central and local governments, and Zelenskyy's still owerhelmingly positive image should also help.[21] It could also lead to consolidation of Ukrainian political forces, for example The Holos party is already negotiating a merger with representatives of seven other Ukrainian center-right political parties. For example the lists of the Holos party to the Kyiv City Council are people

19 – Володимир Фесенко. Местные выборы-2020: обзор избирательной кампании. – Українська правда 15.09.2020 . https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/fesenko/5f607bfaab93c/

20 – Konstantin Skorkin. Revenge Voting: Ukraine Prepares to Go to the Polls. – Carnegie Moscow Center. 29.09.2020. https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82811

21 – Veronika Melkozerova. Selenskyj und seine Partei können bei den Kommunalwahlen im Oktober kaum auf Sieg hoffen. – Zentrum Liberale Moderne. 15.09.2020. https://ukraineverstehen.libmod.de/melkozerova-kommunalwahlen-selenskyj-partei

who previously represented the center-right political forces DemAlliance, People's Power, Self-Help and Determined Citizens.[22]

Nevertheless, Ukraine's main opposition parties (Poroshenko's European Solidarity and the pro-Kremlin Opposition Platform – For Life) have also been revitalized. Public disappointment with the current authorities could play a role in increasing support for those opposition forces in October.[23]

Some influential mayors criticize Zelenskyy and question his government's decisions in order to score points in the run-up to the elections. The mayors of Ternopil, Cherkassy and Ivano-Frankivsk openly disregarded the government's corona rules and challenged them in court. In June, Borys Filatov, Mayor of Dnipro City, introduced the new Propositsia party, also known as the Mayors' Party. The heads of the cities of Chernivtsi, Mykolaiv, Novo Chowka, Zhytomyr and Kropivnitsky also joined the movement.[24]

Local elections are also a chance for Ukraine's old political elite to exact payback against Zelenskyy for their humiliating defeat at his hands in last year's presidential and parliamentary elections. Local problems with roads, hospitals, and other day-to-day issues have been put aside, while the focus is once again on the nationwide agenda. In the country's southeast, Yuriy Boyko and Viktor Medvedchuk's pro-russian Opposition Platform – For Life party slams Zelenskyy and his party for failing to bring peace to the Donbas and forcing the Russian language out of schools. In central and western Ukraine, former president Petro Poroshenko's European Solidarity party and Batkivshchyna accuse the president of giving up national interests to the Kremlin and persecuting patriots. Both ends of the political opposition will try to turn the regional elections into a referendum on people's trust in Zelenskyy. Despite those efforts, centrist voters are in no rush to transfer their allegiance en masse to Zelenskyy's opponents.[25]

According to a survey conducted by the **Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS)** (September 12–16, 2020), among those who have decided on which party to support (survey was about general parliamentary elections), 21.5% would vote for the **Servant of the People** party, 17.8% for the **Opposition Platform – For Life** party, 16.3% for the

22 – Притула: "Голос" веде переговори про об'єднання з сімома партіями. – LB.UA. 13.10.2020.
https://lb.ua/news/2020/10/13/468009_pritula_golos_vede_peregovori_pro.html

23 – Brian Mefford. Five predictions for Ukraine's local elections. – Atlantic Council Ukraine Alert. 15.09.2020.
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/five-predictions-for-ukraines-local-elections/

24 –   Veronika Melkozerova. Selenskyj und seine Partei können bei den Kommunalwahlen im Oktober kaum auf Sieg hoffen.
– Zentrum Liberale Moderne. 15.09.2020 https://ukraineverstehen.libmod.de/melkozerova-kommunalwahlen-selenskyj-partei

25 – Konstantin Skorkin. Revenge Voting: Ukraine Prepares to Go to the Polls. – Carnegie Moscow Center. 29.09.2020.
https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82811

European Solidarity party, 8.7% for the **Batkivshchyna All-Ukrainian Association**, and 6.3% for Oleh Liashko's **Radical Party**.[26]

According to the **SOCIS (Centre For Social And Market Research)** poll (survey was about general parliamentary elections): (September 18–28, 2020), the support to the Ukrainian parties was: **Servant of the People** party 23%, **European Solidarity** party 18%, **Opposition Platform – For Life** party 14%. **Batkivshchyna** 8%, Syla i Chest 4,5%, while other parties had lower support.[27]

The results of the last survey (as of October 7 2020) of **the Sociological Group Rating** showed results of the aggregated rating of parties in local elections, of those who have decided and intend to come to the polls the conditional 5% barrier is overcome by five partiesAccording to the results of the aggregate rating of parties participating in the local elections, five parties overcome the conditional 5% hurdle: **Servant of the People** party – 17.2% of those who have decided and intend to vote; **European Solidarity** – 11.7%, **Opposition Platform – For Life** – 12.6%, **Batkyvshchyna** – 7.5%, and **Za Maybutnye** –7.2%. The party **Nash Krai** is supported by 4.0%. **Radical Party** of Oleh Lyashko is supported by 3.9%3.o% are ready to give their votes for **UDAR** of Vitaliy Klytschko; **Svoboda** –2.4%, **Shariy Party** – 2.6%, **Syla i Chest, Peremoha** of Palchevskyi and **Holos** parties – 1.6% each,– **Propozytsiya** 1.0%. The total rating of other parties participating in the local elections and included in the survey list is 22.3%.[28]

As those surveys show that **in general Ukrainians support mainly established political parties,** which have representation also in country's Parliament. The ruling Servant of the People Party has clear lead overall, followed by main pro-Russian opposition party Opposition Platform – For Life and two pro-European opposition parties European Solidarity and Batkivshchyna. Za Maybutnye is a recently created party supported by the former Zelenskyy ally and now critic businessman Ihor Kolomoisky. Main parties had not published separate electoral platforms for local elections.[29]

The ruling Servant of the People party has presented its **candidates for the posts of mayors of cities of regional significance**. The candidates were presented at the 7th extraordinary

26 – Опрос показал, кто лидирует среди кандидатов на должность Киевского городского головы. – UNIAN. 15.09.2020. https://www.unian.net/elections/vybory-2020-opros-pokazal-kto-lidiruet-sredi-kandidatov-na-dolzhnost-kievskogo-gorodskogo-golovy-novosti-kieva-11147807.html; https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=969&page=1

27 – Соціально-політична ситуація в Україні – вересень 2020. – SOCIS http://socis.kiev.ua/ua/2020-09-30/

28 – Мониторинг местных выборов 2020: УКРАИНА (4-7 октября 2020). The Sociological Group Rating. 07.10.2020 http://ratinggroup.ua/ru/research/ukraine/monitoring_miscevyh_vyboriv_2020_ukraina_4-7_10_2020.html

29 – See https://sluga-narodu.com ; https://zagittya.com.ua ; https://eurosolidarity.org ; https://ba.org.ua .

congress Servant of the People in the end of August.[30] It has been pointed out that in the 2020 Ukrainian local elections Servant of the People candidates include many former members of Party of Regions, Batkivshchyna, Petro Poroshenko Bloc and other political parties. The candidate for the mayor of **Vinnytsia** is the head of the Vinnytsia Regional State Administration Sergey Borzov. **Dnipro** – Chief Physician of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Clinical Hospital named after I.I.I. Mechnikov **Sergey Ryzhenko**. **Zhytomyr** – Rector of the State University "Zhytomyr Polytechnic" **Viktor Evdokimov. Zaporizhzhya – Vitaliy Tishechko,** First Deputy Chairman of the Zaporizhzhya Regional State Administration. Ivano-Frankivsk – legal consultant, director of private companies **Alexander Bogachev**. **Kyiv** – People's Deputy from Servant of the People, Chairman of the Subcommittee on State Security and Defense of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on National Security, Defense and Intelligence **Irina Vereshchuk. Kryvyi Rih – Dmitry Shevchik**, General Director of the Central Mining and Processing Plant, PJSC. **Kropyvnytsky** – financier, banker **Olga Kovaleva-Alokili. Lviv** – doctor, deputy of the Lviv city council **Taras Klefa. Mykolaiv** – entrepreneur, public figure **Tatyana Dombrovskaya. Odessa** – Doctor of Philology, entrepreneur, teacher **Oleg Filimonov. Poltava** – entrepreneur **Sergei Ivaschenko. Rivne – Vitaly Koval,** chairman of the Rivne regional state administration. **Sumy** – People's Deputy from the Servant of the People **Tatyana Ryabukha. Slovyansk** – Deputy of the Slovyansk City Council **Olga Altunina. Ternopil** – actor, screenwriter **Viktor Gevko. Uzhgorod** – advisor to the chairman of the Transcarpathian regional state administration, deputy of the Uzhgorod city council **Viktor Shchadei. Kharkiv** – Chairman of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration **Alexey Kucher. Kherson** – Rector of the Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University **Yuri Kirillov. Khmelnytsky** – Professor, Dean of the Khmelnytsky Humanitarian and Pedagogical Academy **Inna Yashchuk. Cherkasy –** businessman **Vitaly Ilchenko. Chernivtsi – Vitaly Druganovsky,** chairman of the Chernivtsi regional branch of the Servant of the People party. **Chernihiv** – Deputy of the Chernigov City Council, Chairman of the Standing Commission on Architecture, Construction and Regulation of Land Relations **Yuri Tarasovets.**

According to the regional surveys conducted by **the Sociological Group Rating** in many regions and main cities in general leading position is held either by the Servant of the People party or locally popular electoral list.[31] **Kyrylo Molchanov**, an expert at the **Ukrainian Institute of Politics,** has proposed in June 2020 that the main electoral struggle will take place between the Opposition Platform – For Life and the Servant of the People in southeastern Ukraine, between the Servant of the People and Batkivschyna in central regions, and between the Servant of the People and the pro-European parties in western

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30 – Слуга народа" представила своих кандидатов в мэры на местных выборах (список). – UNIAN. 31.08.2020. https://www.unian.net/politics/mestnye-vybory-2020-spisok-kandidatov-v-mery-ot-slugi-naroda-novosti-ukraina-11130272.html

31 – The Sociological Group Rating. Monitoring Regions http://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/regions/

Ukraine. It should be mentioned that the 2019 elections showed the lowest support for Zelenskyy. Lviv region gave only 11.96% of the vote, Ternopil region – 14.67%, Ivano-Frankivsk – 16.07%. However, the Zakarpattia region reacted favorably to Zelenskyy and gave him 38.35%.[32] According to Molchanov, it is probable that the Servant of the People in general will fail to repeat the success of its previous campaigns as its popularity continues declining. Therefore, the Servant of the People will have to form coalitions with other parties in regions, which may result into unexpected political consequences both in Ukraine's regions and, hence, also in the central government. He also proposed that influential mayors **Hennadiy Kernes** in Kharkiv, **Vitali Klitschko** in Kyiv and **Hennadiy Trukhanov** in Odesa have the highest chances to stay on their posts. He also noted that one should expect the most interesting election campaigns in Dnipro and in Lviv, where **Andriy Sadovy** has to defend his positions.[33]

The situation in regions could differ radically. For example **in capital Kyiv,** according to the earlier survey by **Rating** (September 4–9, 2020) in the rating of political forces in the elections to the city council, the leader is the **Vitali Klitschko's UDAR party**. 23.6% of those who have made up their minds and intend to come to the elections are ready to vote for UDAR candidates. Servant of the People is supported by 13.6% of respondents, European Solidarity – 13.1%, Holos – 8.2%, Opposition Platform – For Life – 7.4%, Batkivshchyna – 7.3 %, the Victory of Palchevsky party – 3.9%, the Shariy party – 3.7%, the Power and Honor party – 3.4%.

Vitali Klitschko is the leader among candidates for the position of Mayor of Kyiv, 43.6% of those who have decided and intend to take part in the elections are ready to support him. 9.8% of respondents could support Holos party **Sergei Pritula**, 6.9% – the Servant of the People Irina Vereshchuk, 6.4% – entrepreneur and TV presenter **Andrey Palchevsky**, 5.8% – representative of the Opposition Platform – For Life **Alexander Popov**, 5.7% – MP from Batkivschyna **Alexey Kucherenko**. In addition, the survey showed that 57% of Kyiv residents are satisfied with the activities of the current Mayor Klitschko, 37% are dissatisfied. But only 37% are satisfied with the activities of the Kyiv City Council, 51% is dissatisfied, 21% found it difficult to assess.[34] Also, the European Solidarity party has promised to support the current

32 – Natalia Lebed. Local elections 2020: Who to take mayoral offices in Western Ukraine? – 112 Ukraine. 17.08.2020. https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/local-elections-2020-who-to-take-mayoral-offices-in-western-ukraine-53947.html

33 – Expert Prospects of The Servant of the People Party at Local Elections In October 2020. – Ukraine Open for Business. 05.05.2020. https://open4business.com.ua/expert-prospects-of-the-servant-of-the-people-party-at-local-elections-in-october-2020/

34 – Опрос показал, кто лидирует среди кандидатов на должность Киевского городского головы. – UNIAN. 15.09.2020. https://www.unian.net/elections/vybory-2020-opros-pokazal-kto-lidiruet-sredi-kandidatov-na-dolzhnost-kievskogo-gorodskogo-golovy-novosti-kieva-11147807.html

mayor of Kyiv Vitali Klitschko in elections.[35] The Servant of the People party plans at the same time hopes take first place in the local elections in Kyiv on party lists.[36]

The main contenders of the post for Mayor in other important Ukrainian cities are:

Andriy Sadovy will again compete for the chair of **Lviv mayor**. He has been working as mayor since 2006. Sadovoy's main opponents will be: **Taras Klofa** from Servant of the People (doctor of the deputy head of the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Western Region), Ruslan Koshulinsky (VO Svoboda), **Volodymyr Girnyak** (Civil Position), ex-head of the Lviv Regional State Administration **Oleg Sinyutka** (European Solidarity), deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of the IX convocation **Yaroslav Rushchishin** (Holos), public activist and deputy of the City Council **Igor Zinkevich** (Varta).[37]

In the elections of the **Kharkiv mayor,** the incumbent mayor **Gennady Kernes** is running for the third time. Among the candidates for the post of head of the Kharkiv City Council: representative of the political force Opposition Platform – For Life, businessman **Alexander Feldman**, head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration **Alexei Kucher** (Servant of the People), deputy of the Kharkiv City Council **Igor Chernyak** (Block Svetlichnaya Razom), architect, vice-rector Kharkiv School of Architecture **Oleksandra Naryzhnaya** (Holos), volunteer **Oleg Abramichev** (European Solidarity), lawyer **Nikita Solovyov** (Democratic Sokira).[38]

The incumbent **mayor of Dnipro, Boris Filatov**, decided to run for the position of mayor for the second time from the Proposition party. The party of **Oleksandr Vilkul** Block Ukrainian Perspective will take part in the local elections of 2020 in Dnipro. **Sergey Ryzhenko** is running on behalf of Servant of the People (deputy of the regional council, head physician of the Dnipropetrovsk regional clinical hospital). On behalf of Opposition Platform – For Life is the candidate Deputy of the City Council **Sergei Nikitin**. Former Governor **Igor Kulichenko** became a candidate in the local elections from Our Land.[39]

The **mayor of Odessa Gennady Trukhanov** announced his participation in the elections

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35 – European Solidarity to support incumbent Kyiv mayor Klitschko in mayoral elections - Chairman of city party's organization Prokopiv. – Interfax Ukraine. 16.09.2020 https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/688269.html

36 – Servant of the People plans to take first place in elections in Kyiv on party lists – Korniyenko. – Interfax Ukraine. 16.09.2020. https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/689329.html

37 – Анна Березина. Местные выборы 2020: что нужно знать об избирательной кампании в Украине. – РБК-Украина. 09.09.2020. https://vybory.rbc.ua/rus/2020/mestnye-vybory-2020-nuzhno-znat-izbiratelnoy-1599646378.html

38 – Анна Березина. Местные выборы 2020: что нужно знать об избирательной кампании в Украине. – РБК-Украина. 09.09.2020. https://vybory.rbc.ua/rus/2020/mestnye-vybory-2020-nuzhno-znat-izbiratelnoy-1599646378.html

39 – Анна Березина. Местные выборы 2020: что нужно знать об избирательной кампании в Украине. – РБК-Украина. 09.09.2020. https://vybory.rbc.ua/rus/2020/mestnye-vybory-2020-nuzhno-znat-izbiratelnoy-1599646378.html

of the mayor on October 25 from the party Trust the Deeds. Trukhanov has been in office since 2015. In Servant of the People, the comedian **Oleg Filimonov** was nominated for the post of mayor of Odessa. **Natalya Delieva** (head of the Odessa regional organization of the political force) is running on behalf of the Holos party in the 2020 elections. An entrepreneur and social activist **Petr Obukhov** will become a candidate from European Solidarity.[40]

Regarding the choice of the candidates from ruling Servant of the People party, there have been questions in Ukrainian media why Servant of the People candidate for important city of Odessa is comedian **Oleg Filimonov.** President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy has explained that Odessa needs a symbol of honesty, cultural leadership, decency, a mayor who is known not only in Odessa, but also abroad.[41]

Conclusion

As result of an administrative reform, the Ukraine is approaching local elections in newly created electoral districts, where the balance of political forces can differ from earlier period. Recent public opinion polls show that in general Ukrainians support mainly established national political parties that have representation also in country's Parliament. The ruling Servant of the People Party has clear lead overall, followed by main pro-Russian opposition party Opposition Platform – For Life and two pro-European opposition parties European Solidarity and Batkivshchyna. Servant of the People party remains most popular political force, but is unlikely to repeat landslide victories of last presidential and parliamentary elections. The main electoral struggle will take place between Opposition Platform – For Life and Servant of the People in southeastern Ukraine, between Servant of the People and Batkivschyna in central regions, and between Servant of the People and the pro-European parties in western Ukraine.

However, national political parties are not the only contenders in those elections. Local parties/electoral lists are likely to prevail in many cities and districts. Parties of local elites traditionally focus more on local issues that are important to electorate (parties of incumbent mayors and ruling local elites – on their achievements and future plans; and their competitors from local elites – on the most acute local problems and ways to solve them). Parliamentary parties and political forces with ambitions at the national level, on the contrary, generally rely on general Ukrainian problems, taking into account their ideological

40 – Анна Березина. Местные выборы 2020: что нужно знать об избирательной кампании в Украине. – РБК-Украина. 09.09.2020. https://vybory.rbc.ua/rus/2020/mestnye-vybory-2020-nuzhno-znat-izbiratelnoy-1599646378.html

41 – Зеленский объяснил, почему "Слуга народа" выдвинула Филимонова кандидатом в мэры Одессы. – UNIAN. 13.09.2020 https://www.unian.net/elections/vybory-v-ukraine-zelenskiy-obyasnil-pochemu-filimonova-vydvinuli-v-mery-novosti-odessy-11144702.html

specifics. Most signifanctly popular mayors of many important cities are leading their own parties and do not belong to main national parties. For example, Vitali Klitschko is the leader among candidates for the position of Mayor of Kyiv, but his UDAR party has very litte support nationally.

It is therefore expected that that the national parties, especially ruling Servant of the People party, are dependent on cooperation and the formation of coalitions between themselves and also with local parties. Even if winning overall most support in many districts in local elections, it is probable that for the ruling Servant of the People party realistic campaign goal could be to achieve position to be in coalitions in as many new administrative units as possible, to influence local politics. At the same time, it is probable, that in many big cities parties led by popular Mayors prevail. Potentially this approach could then also reduce tensions between the central and local governments. However, if in elections opposition parties achieve strong foothold and form coalitions in respectively Eastern (the Opposition Platform – For Life) and Western (European Solidarity, Batkivschyna) parts of country, the tensions beteen local and central governement and also between different regions of country can also grow more serious.