

## **Assessment of Changes in Quality of Life and Social Expectations from the Activities of the Municipal Authorities of Russia**

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**Abstract:** This study deals with the assessment of the level of quality of life as a result of the activities of the municipal government. A comprehensive study of the level of municipal authority quality was carried out in the regions of the Russian Federation throughout 2014. The results led to the conclusion about current quality of the municipal authorities as partial correspondence of public demands for a decent quality of life. Analysis of the results shows that today there is a stable and mass public demand for the positive changes of the situation in the municipal structures. The list of the most urgent and pressing issues includes the problems of the material and social area, health safety, education, housing and utility services, road facilities and residential development by improving the quality of the local municipal authority institutions, enhancing the quality of both services in their respective areas and social efficiency of governance. At the present time, there is a need to do real work in all spheres of life and increase the responsibility for their implementation, overcome the isolation of the authorities from the public problems in the entire territory of the Russian Federation and in some regions in particular.

**Key words:** Municipal authorities, quality of life, social expectations, governance, Russian Federation

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The priorities of the socio-economic policy of Russia are the level and quality of life, provision of the completeness, quality and transparency of state and municipal services in all spheres of life. Currently, the organization of life activity and improvement of the quality of life of the population in the municipal structures such as cities and districts of the regions of Russia are closely associated with the problem of increasing the social efficiency of regional control and hence directly with the problem of improving the quality, efficiency and professionalism of local authorities activity.

The quality of government is the process of managing a complex systems, where the main place is occupied by a person in the public relations, a liaison in the management process is a professionally fit official with his/her willingness to direct all socio-economic, political, cultural and other processes in the direction right for the state (Anderson and Galinsky, 2006).

A measure of the quality and results of the government activity is the performance indicators of achieving the main goal such as the quality of life of the population.

We consider the quality of life as a result of purposeful, fair activity of bodies of state and municipal government, business, the civil society institutions and a person itself on creation of the optimum conditions to meet basic human needs (Lammers and Stapel, 2009).

The social efficiency of management shall be understood in terms of quality of life as the conformity of social results of the governmental activities on ensuring the completeness and quality of public services in the main spheres of life activity with the established federal and regional social standards, quality of life and social expectations of the population (Bobkov, 2005).

The quality of the municipal government shall be determined by analysis of the quality of professional work of an official on ensuring the quality of life of the population of the certain municipal structure. In other words, the better work an official representative will carry out in his/her region, the better quality of life of the population he/she will achieve. This area has the right to exist, however, unfortunately, many examples that have been traced continuously in the media in recent years show that the government employees can satisfy the needs of the region through their own benefit (Santosf and Martins, 2013).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Main part:** International Research Center of Modern Humanitarian Academy in cooperation with the Center for Social-Conservative Policy have conducted a comprehensive study of the quality of municipal government in Russia. The study was carried out in the regions of the Russian Federation throughout 2014 (in all 8 Federal districts, 23 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, 46 municipalities). In terms of location, the sample is based on data of the Ministry of Regional development on the assessment of the regional and municipal authorities for 2013.

Researchers of this study from the perspective of analytical experts, consider Belgorod (region) as a highly efficient region given the performance of 2014 results of the monitoring of the regional administration in the constituent entities of the Central Federal District: evaluation of the quality of life and social efficiency, which allows recommending the gained positive experience more locally and objectively for approbation by the other regions.

Objectives of the study are to assess and describe the quality of the municipal government and its professional training as well as give a critical evaluation of the results of activity and reputation of the municipal authorities.

We applied the following methods in the course of study: a monographic method, a method of structural and comparative analysis, a socio-economic planning and forecasting method, an analysis of statistical and qualitative data and expert interviews.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The main result of the study is the conclusion that the current quality of the municipal authorities in modern Russia corresponds partially with the level of public demands for a decent quality of life. Overall assessment of the quality of the municipal authorities in the Russian Federation is 2.2 points on a five-point scale.

The analysis shows that the municipal communities of Russia estimate higher the certain results of the municipal authority activities on ensuring the quality of life of the population in the areas of life activity (3.05 points) than the personal qualities of government (1.88 points) such as moral and spiritual, intellectual, systemic and social, value and ideological qualities and professional training (1.99). The result is that the government loses its credibility largely because of its low personal qualities rather than due to specific results of its activity.

We shall carry out the analysis of qualitative research data and identify both positive and negative qualities of modern municipal authority. What is the basis of the worldview for authorities and its value orientation today? Positive qualities: “a society of equal opportunities”, “life attitude reactivity”, etc. Negative qualities: “government for those in power”, “we do not care what will happen tomorrow, we care for thing happening today”, etc.

Whose interests does the governments stand for? Positive qualities: “social majority”, “the people’s interests”. Negative qualities: “business, and rich social class”, “mostly, their own”.

The main features of power elite. Positive qualities: “education”, “honesty”, “professionalism”. Negative qualities: “lack of experience and inconsistency”, “authoritativeness inertia”, “high self-conceit”, “closeness”, “focus on the power usurpation”, “inaction”, “desire for enrichment”, “impunity and irresponsibility”, etc.

Recourse support for government. Positive qualities: “the authority of the governor”, “administrative resource”, “large business”, “the military and security forces”, “media”. Negative qualities: “lack of authority and first of all, moral one”, “lack of public confidence”, “lack of spiritual and moral resources”, “lack of financial resources”.

A generalized description of the quality of municipal government is expressed as follows: goals of development do not know and do not indicate (indicated by 65% of experts); interests defend only their own and of large businesses (indicated by 74% of experts); ideas none (indicated by the absolute majority of experts 86%). Thus, a request of the municipal communities on the image of standard government is as follows:

- Number one is spirituality and conscientiousness
- Number two is honesty and justice
- Number three is responsibility and professionalism
- Further legality and personal example, reactivity, and sociality

The problem of the study is an assessment of the quality and impact of professional activities of the municipal authorities through the evaluation of the quality of life and services provided under the authority of municipalities in the major areas of life sustenance in the Federal districts and different municipalities in Russia.

Table 1 shows the assessments of the quality of life as a result of activities and the quality of government in the main spheres of life.

Table 1: Assessment of the results of activity of the municipal authorities in the main spheres of life in the Russian Federation<sup>1</sup>

Spheres of life activity	Russia's values
Nursery education	3.5
General and further education	3.2
Culture and spiritual development	3.0
Social services and social protection	3.0
Economic development, including new job creation	2.5
Personal safety	3.3
Housing and utilities	2.4
Road facilities and quality of roads	2.3
Transport services	3.4
Residential development and housing	2.4
Environment and ecology	3.4
Physical culture and sports	3.7
Yards and playgrounds landscaping	3.1
Electronic services	3.5
Overall sphere rating	3.05

<sup>1</sup>Analytical report "The quality of the municipal government", according to the results of the Eurasian study. M., 2015, 58

Assessment of the quality and results of activity of the municipal authorities on the criterion of the quality of life in the Russian Federation is very relevant and significant. Quality of the government is actualized through the quality of professional activities aimed at ensuring the quality of life of the population of a certain municipal structure (Shin and Johnson, 1978). In this respect, we consider the indicators for the assessment of the quality of life on the main spheres of life and generally, the quality of life primarily as the performance and efficiency of social control of the municipal authorities and local government in terms of socio-economic development of their territories (Hans, 2005).

We shall analyze the vector of changes in quality of life, and social expectations from the activities of the municipal authorities in 2013-2014. Data analysis showed that in Russia generally, according to the majority of experts (70%), the quality of life in municipal structures remained at the same level in 2014 as compared 2014 to the previous year of 2013. Only 18% have noted its positive vector improvement and 13% negative vector degradation.

Thus, the most graphically given estimates of the vector of changes in the quality of life in the municipal structures of Russia and Federal districts by the end of 2014 are supplemented by qualitative data analysis of positive achievements as well as bottlenecks and unresolved problems. Current problems in aggregate reflect the content and the direction vector of social expectations from the results of activity of the municipal authorities in terms of ensuring a decent quality of life.

The list of the most urgent and pressing issues includes the problems of the material and social area, health safety, education, housing and utility services, road facilities and residential development.

In our view, the citizens have formed in their mass and special consciousness the main vectors of social expectations from the activities of the local municipal authorities aimed at improvement of the quality of life of residents in the municipalities which are in the following basic requirements and directions.

Increase systemically, with the participation of civil society, the efficiency of municipal management and the effectiveness of professional activities, particularly in the rural areas of municipal districts.

Immediately eliminate the formality of the municipal structures development strategy by improving the competence, professionalism, and increasing the responsibility of municipal authorities for the implementation of their decisions and projects.

Promptly and differently ensure more favorable conditions for development of local small and medium-sized businesses and fair and permanent cooperation between the authorities and business at the local level. A topical subject an inclusion of consulting and expert institutions in the modern practice of management of the municipal authorities, who become not only intermediaries in the structure of the interaction of governmental, public and business structures but also one of the independent channels of public influence on the government among other channels and ways of expressing group interests.

It is important to improve the quality of municipal services to make the reforms relating to each individual become the first task of the local authorities. And the main thing is to increase the level and quality of life, the addressing of social problems of residents in situ, subject to the necessary development of channels representing the interests of the society.

## CONCLUSION

The municipal communities of Russia estimate higher the certain results of the municipal authority activities on ensuring the quality of life of the population in the areas of life activity than the personal qualities of government such as moral and spiritual, intellectual, systemic and social, value and ideological qualities and professional training. The quality of the municipal authorities in modern Russia does not corresponds with the level of public demands for a decent quality of life.

Current demand in the municipal communities on the image of standard government is based on the sincere attitude to an individual which is followed by indicators of professionalism, and focus on the initiative, etc.

The assessment of the quality of the municipal authorities cannot operate with clearly defined

characteristics, i.e., not each community or a person can evaluate the certain criteria in a certain situation (Znamenskiy and Terekhina, 2011). In our study, we have defined the criteria that can be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively; further, we assume to perform a more complete and detailed study.

The quality-of-life situation has been stabilized at the level of previous years and only 18% of the assessments in the Russian Federation indicates a positive vector of changes in the quality of life in the municipal structures. Today there has been formed a stable and mass public demand for the positive changes of the situation in the municipal structures.

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