

Interaction of Authorities and Civil Society in the Context of Information and Communication Technologies` Development (on the Example of the Yaroslavl Region)

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Abstract

The article presents the results of an expert survey, which is devoted to the attitude of representatives of regional and local authorities to various forms of online and offline civic activity and non-profit organizations in the Yaroslavl region. The experts of the survey, conducted in early 2021, were representatives of regional and local authorities, social institutions. Based on the concepts of public administration, the article focuses on participation, the interaction of the government and NGOs, public associations, the perception and assessment of civic activity, the role of the Internet in governance, as well as the attitude to online forms of activity.

Representatives of the government of the Yaroslavl region continue to maintain relations of cooperation with the non-profit sector, forming a clearer understanding of purposeful interaction with it. The authorities see the benefits of interacting with NGOs and express a fairly high level of trust in NGOs. The most common forms of civic activity are volunteering and volunteering, letters and appeals to the authorities, and civic activity on the Internet. At the same time, "grassroots" civic activity significantly decreased its indicators relative to the level of development and popularity in comparison with institutional forms. According to experts, online activity also declined in 2020, after a three-year trend of its growth. At the same time, the authorities do not perceive civic activity on the Internet as a manifestation of "full-fledged" activity. However, it affects the work of government and administration, contributing to the development of "e-government" procedures.

Keywords

Internet, communication, authorities, civic activity, NGO

1. Introduction

Public administration in modern Russian society is carried out with the involvement of the forces and resources of the non-profit sector, and is also focused on building constructive relations with various forms of civic activity. However, the specifics of the interaction between the state and society aimed at creating public goods depend on many factors, including the level of established relations and building partnerships with representatives of civil society.

Public administration is entirely based on the institution of power, which extends its influence to the entire society and determines the state-power competence on the legal basis of interaction between state bodies and public institutions of society. Under these conditions, public administration exerts not only an administrative coercive influence, but above all a powerful creative, professional, resource, informational and stimulating influence on the consciousness, behavior and activities of people in various spheres of society [1, p. 41].

Of fundamental importance in this aspect is the nature of the relationship between the government and NGOs, as well as citizens. The legislation establishes a number of formats of civic activity as a

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mechanisms of interaction between the government and citizens (and not only as ability of citizens to independently solve existing socially significant problems). One of these formats is an NGO, as a form of citizens' association which can interact quite effectively with the authorities.

At the same time, there is a transformation in the nature of the interaction between the government and citizens under the influence of two factors. One of them is the development of information and communication technologies. It has been observed for a long time, has a significant impact. This factor has already significantly changed the relationship between the government and society. It will continue to affect them.

The second factor is relatively new. This is the COVID-19 pandemic. Its influence is only being comprehended. However, in its significance, it can only be not much less than the influence of the first factor. It is important to note that the development of ICT has made it possible to experience the COVID-19 pandemic less painfully. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the introduction of ICTs into the formats of interaction between government and society.

In this regard, the purpose of this study was to identify the conditions for interaction between government authorities and civil society institutions (on the example of NGOs and civic activity) in the context of the development of information and communication technologies. Therefore, the paper was based on the following logic: at the beginning, the general theoretical framework of the study is given, then the methods of collecting empirical data, the characteristics of the relationship between the government and NGOs, the forms of civil activity, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on civil activity, and then the characteristics of the impact of the Internet on the dialogue between the population and the authorities are given. At the end of the paper, the conclusions of the study are formulated.

2. Theoretical framework

The effectiveness of government decisions and their implementation are the criteria for evaluating public administration. The system of public administration carries out a regulatory action, while here there is both an external managerial influence of the state apparatus (actor) and self-government of the social system (object), whether it is a separate group, or society as a whole [2, p. 5].

There are many modern approaches to understanding public administration. G. V. Atamanchuk interprets public administration through the practical, organizing and regulating influence of the state (through the system of its structures) on public and private life activities of people for its ordering, preservation or transformation [3, p. 32-33]. At the same time, the mainstay is the "power force" of the state. E. V. Okhotsky complements it with the characteristic of the purposefulness of this organizing and regulating influence on social processes, consciousness, behavior and activity of people [4, p. 120]. The key role is the "organizing and regulating influence" of the State. State regulation is defined as a system of cooperation between different structures (public, private, public) to meet public interests and problems, where the state acts as a partner.

The interaction of government and society, which is carried out through state and public institutions, is a reflection of the models and practices of governance implemented in the state. Effective state and municipal governance today is impossible without broad public support [5, p. 70]. Combining, state, municipal, non-profit and private organizations are a system for ensuring and satisfying public interests, the production of public goods.

Manifestations of self-organization of citizens allow us to talk about the practices of civic activity and its forms: institutional (non-profit organizations) and non-institutional ("grassroots" activism). Often, researchers consider the activities of NGOs and their development as a factor in improving public administration, where state support for NGOs encourages the participation of citizens in the management of society, increases the level of trust in the authorities and legitimizes their management activities. However, according to the researcher R. Hasmatha and his colleagues, the regulation of NGOs is a strategy of the state to have a (corporatist) mechanism that feeds directly into the "grassroots civic space" [6, p. 271].

Within the framework of public administration, there are institutionalized and non-institutionalized dialogues between the state and society. Their development is connected with the modern understanding of governance, which, in contrast to the traditional top-down government leadership, tends to the interaction of power institutions with public ones, to cooperation with self-regulating networks.

However, interaction with networks on the one hand can have a negative impact on the ability of the state to manage, and on the other-to increase efficiency by cooperating in the implementation of policies [7, 133]. L.I. Nikovskaya points to the results of a study of municipal public policy, taken in the context of the network approach, which showed that the growing importance of horizontal networks significantly strengthens the functions of administrative structures in the field of organizing and coordinating the interaction of various networks: they become key actors of network policy and management, while replacing traditional administration with coordination methods and practices of smart, flexible co-management [8, p. 187].

It can be noted that if the authorities use Internet tools mainly to inform citizens, then as the researchers note, civil society activists, in addition to informing, actively seek to organize the mobilization of activists and communication between them [9]. In this regard, such forms of online activity as signing online petitions, discussing socially significant issues on various digital platforms, communicating and supporting each other (opinions, judgments) in social networks are developing.

At the same time, it is important to agree with the classic of Internet research – Yevgeny Morozov, who noted that not every online action is a real civic activity with corresponding actions [10]. His conclusion was confirmed relatively recently by K. Haenschen, who conducted an experiment [11]. He created a Facebook community to protect the historic fountain in Koppingen. More than 27 000 people have joined this community. At the same time, it is important to note that the fountain in reality was not threatened, but in practice, none of the community members took any action offline, and did not even check the accuracy of the information about the demolition of the fountain.

A similar position is demonstrated by Delia Dumitrica and Mylynn Felt. They note that civil society activists are more focused on online actions, expecting them to have a significantly greater effect than they can actually give [12]. At the same time, the Internet can be actively used as a medium for manipulation and misinformation [13].

At the same time, this orientation of civil society activists forces the authorities to become more public, to take steps to create online mechanisms for involving citizens in the process of discussion and decision-making [14].

As a result, the roles of the state and society in public administration and political decision-making are updated, and new repertoires of actions are assigned to them in different societies. Public administration is the interaction of state and non-state structures to meet the interests of society, to find solutions to protect society from various threats. In public administration, "the relationship between the operational, administrative and political subsystems of public administration is traced" [15, p. 105]. They demonstrate different guidelines and decision-making mechanisms, different ideas about management technologies, norms, and alternatives. As G. L. Kupryashin notes, we see power formations (related to the current political regime), technologies and management tools, as well as the results of interactions, negotiations and conflicts of interest groups, coalitions, and power institutions.

The modern management idea of "service value management" is aimed at increasing the participation of citizens and other stakeholders and improving this interaction. According to G.V. Pushkareva, the risks of "failure of public values" in our country are unusually high due to the obvious dominance of the state in the public sphere and the fragmentation of civic activists who have clearly insufficient experience in conducting discussions with an experienced player in the space of political communication [16, p. 320]. Nevertheless, the management of social processes is moving to the rank of the concepts of "co-management" and "complicity" [17, p. 78], where NGOs, public initiatives, stakeholders and the government jointly create a management system.

According to the theory of social exchange, civic participation is an exchange between state institutions and individuals [18]. The citizen here acts not only as a provider of resources, offering physical actions, personal pinions, and / or trust to the government to create public value, but also as a recipient of resources [19]. The built system of mutually beneficial conditions for cooperation, co-management. Their compliance becomes important for maintaining the balance and maintaining these relationships within the framework of state-managed processes. Defining the rules and boundaries of intersectoral interaction, and a common understanding of joint action requires the willingness of both parties.

Modern society dictates the conditions for the total value of information and numbers, which transform both civil participation and public administration. The widespread use of information technology has significantly changed and continues to change the functioning of democratic

institutions. The use of the Internet for the implementation of forms of civic activity is connected with the concept of "electronic participation". A.Chugunov defines it "as a set of methods and tools that provide electronic interaction between citizens and authorities in order to take into account the opinions of citizens in state and municipal administration when making political and managerial decisions" [20].

E-participation helps to increase the effectiveness of public organizations, to create social value, contributing to the establishment of democratic governance, as well as to increase the satisfaction of citizens, the expansion of their opportunities and personal benefits [21]. A.D. Trachtenberg points to the symbolic significance and effectiveness of information technologies, and therefore their implementation is necessary for those structures that strive to have the status of effective and modern. This applies to public authorities that constantly need to legitimize their right to manage and control [22, p. 163].

The involvement of NGOs and civil society activists in the practices of "e-government" is the desire of the authorities to increase the opportunities for citizens to participate in government and take into account their opinions, as well as to improve the administrative procedures of public administration. However, e-participation of citizens depends largely on the political system and the norms and culture of participation that have developed in it. The increasing measures of regulation of civic activity on the Internet, the specifics of the development of civil society, as well as the new conditions of the coronavirus pandemic and their consequences set additional rules for the interaction of the state with the non-profit sector online and offline. Thus, information and communication technologies and digital technologies of e-participation are the infrastructure that promotes civic activity and interaction with the authorities. At the same time, the institutional, organizational, and legal conditions that affect the nature of management are important.

3. Methods

In January-February 2021, an expert survey was conducted on the topic "Civil society and the activities of non-profit organizations (public associations) in the Yaroslavl region through the eyes of representatives of regional and local authorities". A total of 101 experts-representatives of regional and local authorities (42 participants were representatives of regional executive authorities, 59-representatives of municipal authorities).

Data collection was organized according to the following procedure. A letter was sent to the state authorities of the Yaroslavl region and local self-government bodies of the Yaroslavl region with a request to participate in the study with an attached questionnaire. The sample of the study included questionnaires received from these bodies and fulfilled the criteria of filling in and representation of the bodies.

The purpose of the study: to determine the attitude of officials of the Yaroslavl region to various manifestations of civic activity and non-profit organizations in the context of the development of information and communication technologies.

The tasks of the expert survey were:

- to identify the characteristics of the current state of civil society;
- to determine the attitude of the government to the non-profit sector and the expert assessment of various forms of interaction between the government and non-profit organizations;
- to identify the value judgments of civil and municipal employees about various forms of civic activity;
- to determine the attitude of local and regional officials to the Internet as a mechanism for the development of civil society and intersectoral interaction.

The survey of experts was conducted using a semi-formal questionnaire and correspondence written data collection. The experts filled out the questionnaires received by e-mail on their own. Statistical data analysis in the SPSS software product was used to process the survey results.

The method of independent characteristics used made it possible to process the collected data in such a way that each described phenomenon received a generalized assessment based on the collected different opinions of independent experts. Within the framework of the study, three stages were implemented. The first stage was to identify and correlate the opinions of experts, the second-to process

the collected data using statistical procedures to determine the positions of experts, the third-to formulate conclusions.

The data obtained in the course of the study characterize the relations and phenomena that took place in 2020. The results obtained in this study were compared with the results of similar studies in previous years.

4. The attitude of the authorities to NGOs, the nature of their relations: trust and practice of cooperation

The results of the study show that in 2020, the focus on cooperation between government authorities and NGOs and public associations in the Yaroslavl region has not weakened at all. The task of the management to interact with representatives of the third sector is assigned to 89% of experts-representatives of government bodies (almost equally regional and municipal).

Despite the apparent immutability of the government's approach to this issue, in 2020 there was a qualitative transformation of the semantic content of the concepts of "cooperation": from a vague - "in all areas of work" to a clear designation of "individual areas of work". In 2019, only 41.9% of experts had clear boundaries, algorithms and areas of work with the non-profit sector, in 2021 they were 56.4%.

This may indicate a growing understanding of the authorities, especially at the regional level, of the role and practical benefits of non-profit organizations as a tool for improving management efficiency and quality of life.

In 2020, 87.1% of officials at various levels actually interacted with non-profit organizations and public associations (no more than 3% of changes during the year). According to the already established tradition, it was more often done by representatives of the regional authorities, somewhat less often – by the municipal authorities.

Despite the fact that the number of officials involved in the process of interaction with the non-profit sector remained virtually unchanged during the year, there was a decrease in its intensity. If in 2019, 51.4% of government representatives "constantly" and "often" communicated with public activists, then in 2020, 41.6% already did. It can be assumed that the reason is related to the consequences of the spread of coronavirus infection in the region and the country as a whole. Within a few months of the transition to self-isolation, many organizations, including government agencies and non-profit organizations, either stopped or restricted their activities. Taking into account the scale of the consequences of the pandemic, the frequency of contacts between the authorities and civic activists in the Yaroslavl region observed in 2020 can be considered an achievement.

As a year ago, today the absolute majority of experts-representatives of the authorities believe and see real and concrete benefits and benefits for their body/institution from interaction with non-profit and public organizations (97.0% and 84.0%, respectively). This point of view is equally common among representatives of the regional authorities and among the local authorities.

Moreover, 89.2% consider the activities of non-profit organizations useful and effective for society as a whole. Among them, 24.8% of experts are firmly convinced of this and 64.4% are not so unambiguous on this issue, but they do not deny the fact of the positive impact of the non-profit sector on the development of society.

In general, 87.9% of experts said about trust in non-profit organizations and public associations in January 2021 (21.2% "trust" and 66.7% "rather trust"), which is 5.4% less than the value of 2020. The recorded decrease in the level of trust of officials to non-profit organizations was the "flow" of some experts from the group "rather trusting" to the group "rather not trusting". It is noteworthy that the representatives of local authorities spoke more often about the trust in non-profit organizations, as well as about their undoubtedly high importance for society.

The results of the latest expert survey confirmed the earlier conclusion that the indicator of trust in civic activists depends on the intensity of their communication and on personal beliefs about the level of professionalism of the heads of non-profit organizations.

At the beginning of 2021, 81.2% of government experts considered the heads of non-profit organizations to be experts in the field of their direct activities. This is higher than the value of a year ago by 3.9%. This fact is probably the reason that during the 2021 survey, there was not a single expert who felt absolute distrust of civic activists.

Representatives of regional and local authorities have different approaches to the issue of subjective assessment of professionalism of non-profit and public organizations. The latter are a little more critical in their judgments on this issue, but they also perceive the work of non-profit organizations and their practical significance for society more positively.

In general, the responses of experts over the past few years state that there is a pattern between general value judgments about the role and significance of non-profit organizations and the level of the official: representatives of the municipal government are somewhat more positive when answering the question about the meaning, role, general usefulness, trust in non-profit organizations.

5. Forms of civic activity

The events of 2020, according to representatives of regional and local authorities, contributed to the development of key forms of civic activity in the Yaroslavl region. Thus, the average expert assessment of volunteerism at the end of 2020 was 6.49 points (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is practically absent, 10 is maximum development). It is important to note that almost every year there is a positive trend in this indicator. As a result, it has increased by 2.29 points since 2013.

The same pattern is observed in the dynamics of the assessment of the development of charity in the region: an increase in the average assessment of experts. The index increased from 4.3 points in 2013 to 5.66 in 2020. At the same time, it should be noted that there is no unidirectional trend for this indicator: in some years, there was a significant decrease in expert assessments.

The positive dynamics of the development of the institute of public control is noted. The index increased from 3.7 points in 2013 to 5.67 in 2020. Every year, there is a slight positive trend.

In 2021, for the first time, experts were asked to assess the level of development in the Yaroslavl region of one of the mechanisms for involving the population in the implementation of local self – government - territorial public self-government (TPSG). As a result, the institute of TPSG is the least developed today among the key forms of civic activity in the Yaroslavl region. At the end of 2020, the average expert assessment of its development was 5.10 points.

Based on the personal observations of experts, in 2020, a whole range of forms of civic activity was used in the region. As in 2019, in 2020, the most common were volunteering and volunteering (71.3%), letters and appeals to the authorities (58.4%), and civic activity on the Internet (46.5%). At the same time, 2020, according to experts, has its own exceptional specifics in the choice of forms of civic activity. First, in connection with the pandemic, residents of the region have become less likely to participate in the activities of public organizations, in the life of their home and entrance. Secondly, the popularity of volunteerism, volunteerism and charity has increased among the population in the region. Third, residents of the region have become noticeably more likely to participate in public actions of political parties (movements) and to show civic activity on the Internet.

Over the past year, non-institutionalized ("grassroots") civic activity has significantly lost its development and popularity. This is evidenced by the dynamics of experts' responses to the relevant question. With a slight increase in the number of experts claiming the superiority of the development of "grassroots activity" (from 6.7% in January 2020 to 11.9% in January 2021, plus 5.2 %) by 5.9 % - from 32.7% to 38.6% - there are more experts who are confident that the "grassroots" activity is lagging behind the institutionalized one. The share of experts confident in the absence of differences in their development decreased by another 12.9 % from 38.5% to 25.7%.

At the moment, local authorities working directly on the ground with citizens, significantly higher estimate the development of "grassroots" civic activity than officials at the regional level.

According to the expert survey, the 2020 pandemic has made its own adjustments not only to the development of the main mechanisms of civic activity in the region, but also to their relevance.

In the Yaroslavl region, after a three-year increase in the popularity of civic online activity (2017-2019), in 2020, there was a "cooling" to this kind of expression of their civic position. Over the past year, the interest of residents of the region to participate in the activities of unregistered associations of citizens has also decreased. While the activities of registered non-profit organizations in 2020, on the contrary, intensified.

Experts are unanimous in the opinion that the authorities at various levels are making attempts to regulate civic activity in the Yaroslavl region (96.9%). According to their assurances, these attempts in

most cases are reduced to measures to monitor civic activity in the online environment (62.2%) and to build a clear interaction with non-profit organizations and civic activists (17.3%). Less often, experts understood the regulation of public activity as various restrictive measures and censorship (media and social network sites). The practice of regulating civic activity through intervention and influence is mostly used by regional authorities and, as already noted, is quite rare.

6. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on civic activity in the Yaroslavl region

The coronavirus pandemic has affected literally all aspects of the usual life of citizens around the world — from everyday life to the socio-economic and socio-political spheres. Civic activism was no exception, and the consequences of the pandemic have led to some positive changes in it.

In particular, most experts agree that the coronavirus infection contributed to the activation of volunteer activities in the region (79.2%) and the growth of the popularity of online services among civic activists (51.5%). Every third participant of the survey shares the opinion about the positive impact of the pandemic on the volume of charitable assistance in the region (31.7%) and the content of the work of non-profit organizations and civic activists (35.6%).

Every tenth expert - 9.9% and 10.9%, respectively-spoke about the transition of civic activity to the protest channel and the growing demands of the non-profit sector on the state. At the same time, the increased pretension of civic activists during the pandemic was actually exclusively spoken by representatives of regional authorities.

With positive changes, the pandemic brought new challenges to the "life" of non-profit organizations and public associations, which not all of them were able to cope with on their own. Almost every fourth expert-representative of the government reported that in his practice over the past year, there were cases of appeals from civic activists in connection with problems/difficulties caused by the spread of COVID-19 (22.2%). At the same time, most civil society activists and representatives of non-profit organizations preferred to apply to regional authorities for help in the pandemic, rather than to municipal ones.

In general, speaking about the role of non-profit organizations and civil society activists in solving the problems and difficulties caused by COVID-19, 52.2% of experts noted their unconditional usefulness, 4.4% spoke about the positive and negative result of their work, 1.1% - only about the negative.

41.1% of experts did not notice the contribution of regional non-profit organizations to solving social problems during the pandemic. This view is particularly widespread among representatives of local authorities.

7. The role of the Internet in the development of civil society and dialogue between the population and the authorities

Among regional and local officials, there is growing skepticism about the actions of citizens on the Internet. This trend is observed against the background of a general decline in the popularity of the Internet's opportunities for expressing a civic position.

According to the results of the 2021 survey, 72.7% of experts perceive the actions of citizens on the Internet as "partial" civic activity (in 2020, there were 63.2% of them). 22.2% of survey participants – government representatives don't see any difference between civic activity in the offline and online environment for (in 2020 - 31.1%).

The number of those who do not accept the online activists and their practice in the Internet as a self-sufficient form of manifestation of civic activity during the year remained stable at 5.1%. This view is shared only by municipal officials.

Despite the refusal of many government officials to perceive the expression of civic position on the Internet as a manifestation of "full-fledged" civic activity, it affects the work of most of them (80.2%).

Based on the responses of experts, today this influence is expressed in the concentration of efforts on creating services for working online (51.8%), working with citizens' appeals – accelerating the "reaction" of the authorities to them (51.8%) and interviewing documents (36.5%). Interestingly, online

activity affects the work of regional and local authorities in different ways: the first gives an advantage to the creation of services for working online, the second-the speed of processing citizens' requests.

Only 1.0% of experts are fully confident that this type of civic activity has not affected the work of the authorities in any way.

Most of representatives of regional and local authorities are active Internet users (99.0%). They use it as part of their professional activities to search for reference information and work with e-mail, as well as for studying and just having fun.

This fact allows us to conclude that the authorities are well aware of the possibilities and potential threats of the Internet.

In 2020, the attitude of government representatives to Internet services has not changed, despite their growing popularity during the period of self-isolation. As a year ago, today 20.8% of experts tend to treat them with special respect, 73.3% note their convenience, on the one hand, and the limited use, on the other hand.

Among regional and local officials, there is still an urgent trend to strengthen the positive image of the Internet as a means of simple and accessible means of communication "power-citizen", "power - power", "power – other sectors of society".

They highly appreciate its role in the process of increasing the availability of state and municipal services for citizens and legal entities, simplifying interdepartmental interaction in solving problematic issues of citizens and other civil society actors, improving the effectiveness of the information policy of state and municipal authorities, interaction with citizens and non-profit organizations.

Table 1

Distribution of expert responses to the question: "Evaluate your degree of agreement with the following statements regarding the impact of the development of the Internet on the work of state and municipal authorities on a 10-point scale (1-the minimum degree of agreement, 10 – the maximum)?»

Head 1	Average score in 2018	Average score in 2019	Average score in 2020	Average score in 2021
The development of the Internet makes state and municipal services more accessible to citizens and legal entities, including NGOs	8,66	8,02	8,10	8,54
The development of the Internet simplifies interdepartmental interaction in solving problematic issues of citizens and other civil society actors	8,53	7,39	7,94	8,17
The development of the Internet increases the effectiveness of the information policy of state and municipal authorities	8,73	8,09	8,39	8,26
The development of the Internet makes it more difficult for the authorities to transmit the values necessary for the state to civil society	3,85	3,97	3,94	4,09
The development of the Internet makes such traditional "intermediaries" in the interaction of the government and civil society as NGOs in little demand	4,19	4,30	3,80	3,91
The development of the Internet makes it easier for authorities to interact with citizens and NGOs	-	-	-	7,51
The development of the Internet does not change the activities of the authorities in interacting with citizens and NGOs	-	-	-	3,57

Against this background, the general level of concern among government officials about potential Internet threats to society and the country, as well as personal security, is decreasing.

Table 2

Distribution of expert responses to the question: "How do you assess your degree of agreement with the following statements about the role of the Internet in the life of modern Russian society on a 10-point scale (1-the minimum degree of agreement, 10 – the maximum)?»

Head 1	Average score in 2018	Average score in 2019	Average score in 2020	Average score in 2021
The Internet is a threat to family values	4,91	5,26	4,98	4,71
The Internet gives great opportunities for self-realization	7,51	7,17	6,84	7,77
The Internet is a threat to political stability in the country	4,00	4,74	4,84	4,69
The Internet-expands the opportunities of citizens to participate in the affairs of the state	6,90	6,33	6,57	7,19
The Internet is used by foreign countries against Russia	4,61	5,66	5,23	4,84
The Internet significantly increases the number of suicides	3,78	5,09	4,93	4,12

The officials' view on the introduction of Internet censorship is also gradually softening, and the number of supporters of a selective approach to the regulation of Internet information is growing. As of January 2021, their share was 68.3%.

8. Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that the representatives of the Yaroslavl region authorities still maintain relations of cooperation with the non-profit sector. The transformation of their interactions is associated with changes in the government's vision of algorithms for working with NGOs - through the definition of more specific tasks and areas of work with organizations. The identification and establishment of clearer ideas about cooperation and, consequently, the transition to the implementation of targeted interaction are presented as a positive trend for improving and effective management.

The impact of the pandemic could hardly have been reflected in the practice of cooperation between the government and the non-profit sector. Despite the fact that the frequency of interactions between officials and representatives of public organizations has actually decreased, it is worth noting that the involvement and communication with activists has remained at a fairly high level.

The authorities see the benefits of interacting with NGOs both for their body/institution and for society as a whole. This fact demonstrates that the government recognizes the existence of a result from the activities of the non-profit sector, a sufficient level of professionalism to create a public good, as well as to improve public administration in general. Thus, the government's trust in non-profit organizations in the region in 2021 is estimated at a fairly high level. It was revealed that the trust of the authorities is formed in the sum of the frequency of personal interaction with representatives of non-profit organizations, as well as on the ideas about their professional competencies. The practices of officials working with civil society activists consolidated the positive experience and its results in such a way that among the respondents there were no those who completely distrust NGOs (for the first time in 10 years of the survey). It can be stated that in general, the region has a favorable attitude towards NGOs and their role. It is noted that the municipal authorities at the same time more positively assess the benefits of the activities of non-profit organizations, as well as express higher values of trust in them.

The events of 2020, according to representatives of regional and local authorities, contributed to the development of key forms of civic activity in the Yaroslavl region – volunteerism and charity. A little better than in 2019, the tool of public control proved itself. The institute of TPSG is noted as the least developed among the key forms of civic activity.

The most common forms of civic activity were volunteering and volunteering, letters and appeals to the authorities, and civic activity on the Internet. At the same time, in 2020, it was noted that citizens distanced themselves from participating in the activities of public organizations and in solving the problems of their place of residence – at home and at the entrance. However, citizens more often empathized with those in need of help and performed acts of charity through participation in volunteerism, volunteerism and charity. The exclusivity of 2020 was manifested in the increased participation of citizens in public actions of political parties (movements) and the desire to show civic activity on the Internet. This may be due to the general level of increased social tension and protest.

However, representatives of regional and local authorities noted that "grassroots" civic activity significantly decreased its indicators regarding the level of development and popularity in comparison with institutional forms. At the same time, local authorities that directly work with citizens on the ground, significantly higher estimate the development of "grassroots" civic activity than officials at the regional level.

Experts' assessments of the popularity of civic online activity also became a feature of 2020. After a three-year continuing trend of its growth in 2020, the authorities assessed the declining level of expression of civic position in this way by the residents of the region. At the same time, the interest of citizens to participate in the activities of unregistered associations of citizens has decreased. While the activities of registered non-profit organizations in 2020, on the contrary, intensified.

Among regional and local officials, there is growing skepticism about the actions of citizens on the Internet. This trend is observed against the background of a general decline in the popularity of the Internet's opportunities for expressing a civic position. The results of the 2021 survey suggest that experts assess Internet activity as only a partial manifestation of civic activity. In fact, representatives of only municipal authorities do not accept online activity as full-fledged.

At the same time, the development of civic activity on the Internet, as experts point out, affects the work of authorities and management. However, according to the responses, this influence is associated with the development and improvement of the administrative procedures of "e-government".

The regulation of civic activity in the Yaroslavl region, the presence of which was agreed by almost 97% of experts, is implemented by monitoring civic activity in the online environment and building a clear interaction with non-profit organizations and public figures. Less often, experts understood the regulation of public activity as various restrictive measures and censorship (media and social network sites). Thus, it is noted that the online environment is becoming the main source of information about civic activity and a monitoring tool for the authorities. Experts assess the regulatory function as the absence of direct intervention, its implementation through observation and clear interaction.

In general, regional and local officials express a positive attitude to the possibilities of the Internet as a tool for increasing the availability of state and municipal services for citizens and legal entities, simplifying interdepartmental interaction in solving problematic issues of citizens and other civic society actors, improving the effectiveness of information policy of state and municipal authorities, interaction with citizens and non-profit organizations. Against the background of opportunities, as well as personal active use of the Internet, experts do not see it as a threat to society and the country, as well as personal security. In this case, the censorship of information on the Internet should be selective, depending on the type of information.

The responses of the officials demonstrate a tendency to reduce the optimistic assessment of the possibilities of digital tools to improve the effectiveness of interaction with NGOs and civil society activists. If at the initial stage digital tools were perceived as an intrinsic value that can change the essence of interaction, now it has become clear that the «partner» remain the same, their perception of each other is the same. Therefore, changes in relationships are possible not so much due to changes in the tools of interaction, but due to changes in the attitude to each other, the basic values of each of the parties to the interaction. Moreover, the Internet and digital tools create new threats and fears that can reduce the intensity and effectiveness of interaction.

At the same time, each of the parties strives to master digital tools with the greatest benefit for themselves. Each of the parties is trying to understand how digital tools can improve not only the

effectiveness of interaction, but also the effectiveness of monitoring, control and influence on the other side.

Certain limitations of conclusions may be related to the specifics of the data collection method. It can be assumed that in the course of the study, respondents expressed somewhat more socially approved responses than their actual opinions and assessments. Practice shows that the authorities are somewhat skeptical about NGOs and civil society activists. They are not fully open to interacting with them. Therefore, it can be argued that this study presents a slightly more optimistic view of the situation than it actually is.

In this case, we can develop the research in future by interviewing the well-being of NGO leaders and civil society activists, studying their vision of the situation of interaction with the authorities, as well as the effectiveness of digital interaction tools. A separate direction can be the study of bright cases of organizing interaction between the government and NGOs (civic activists) through digital tools.

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10. References

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