

Effectiveness of Social Presence in Public Authorities Actions in Modern Russia

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ABSTRACT

The article studies the questions of social participation effectiveness in the state structures' actions and determines basic parameters of a civil society institutions' activity as well as the basic criteria of social presence effectiveness in modern Russia. The authors emphasize the importance of the realization of legal means and other public initiatives, taking into account the legal basis of civil society. The article uses methods of finding quantitative and qualitative characteristics of a social control paradigm such as special juridical, statistical, mathematical, sociological, political methods. The results of this research can be used in the system of political and administrative citizens' rights, legal methods of social control, improvement of democratic processes in modern Russia. Results can contribute to the development of an effective mechanism, which is aimed at protecting human rights and freedom in Russia and which promotes active social participation in political affairs of the country.

Keywords: *social presence, civil society, state mechanism, civil initiative, social control, democracy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social presence can be considered as a system of already established and legislative forms and means of social participation in public administration and other social interactions with administrative structures. Social presence involves the representation of the people, various forms of social participation in the state structures' actions, the implementation by citizens of their electoral rights [1]. It is preferable to divide forms of social participation into participative (complicity) and advisory. In the first case making a governmental decision is impossible without public opinion. It is an obligatory component of the procedure (e.g. carrying public hearing when making changes in municipal charter). In the second case, public opinion is taken into account optionally, at the discretion of government agency or public individual (public discussion of federal draft law).

In our case, the public should be considered as a system of non-governmental structures especially non-political actors who realize their interests in the administrative field, implement them in solving public issues, therefore they interact with government agencies. Those are primarily citizens and their communities.

The public includes action groups, voluntary people's guards, independent news agencies, social control groups, public chambers and councils, student communities,

applicant groups, labor unions, science advisory boards, independent experts, etc. [2].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper examines the effectiveness of social participation in the activity of public institutions. It highlights the main factors driving the activity of civil society institutions and discusses the main criteria for assessing the effectiveness of social participation in modern Russia. It also emphasizes the importance of the implementation of public initiatives with the active participation of civil society. The authors employed a variety of research methods in this study including special legal, statistical, mathematical, sociological, and political science methods.

3. RESULTS

Nowadays, major forms of social presence in the actions of public authorities have been formed and progress systematically. Here it is necessary to talk about more qualitative and actual participation of citizens and their communities in the state mechanism of modern Russia. However, the main problem is how to form an effective system ensuring the influence of citizens on state functions

through civil society institutions. This mechanism of functioning and development of Russian statehood is not created yet; it is at the stage of forming [3].

Main forms of social presence which are implemented nowadays are given below [1]:

1. The classic form of social presence is a democracy with its basic components: democratic elections, referendum, individual and collective citizens' appeals to government agencies, public assemblies (meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches, and pickets). Citizens have the right not only to form a personal structure of a governing body but also to influence the functions of the government. Attention should be paid to advisory forms of pure democracy: discussion of draft laws and other legal acts, preparation of bills by action groups, public hearings, and surveys.
2. Formation and activity of social councils under the public authorities. This form of legal activity is sufficiently effective. In modern times major social institution is the Public Chamber of the Russia Federation. Likewise, these are public chambers, assemblies of Federation subjects, and municipal formations.
3. The main source of social participation in state activities is social control, which can become a new form of democracy, a trust indicator of made and implemented governmental decisions. In this field civil society requires experience, knowledge, skills which allow forming a real model of social presence and legal influence on state mechanisms.
4. Russian public involvement in the anti-corruption mechanism [4]. The best way of fighting corruption is a systematic and productive interaction between social institutions and the government. This work is for assisting committees, commission for the settlement of conflicts of interests and against corruption, and other similar groups that are formed under the state and municipal authorities with participation of civil society institutions. Moreover, independent experts, specialists, and research advisory boards participate in this work.
5. Informational participation. For instance, information blocks, such as Civil Society and Civil Forum portals, are formed on official websites of regional and federal authorities. Here people can obtain information about different ways of interaction between state apparatus and public structures. Participation in different programs and events is offered by experts, non-governmental organizations, and social councils.
6. Development of an institution, such as social participation in the protection of public order, is future-oriented. Voluntary people's guard works in some country regions. They help Internal Affairs Agencies in the protection of public order and suppression of crime. But this field of social participation is underdeveloped and needs state support: from legal education of guard's members to relevant authority control. Activist groups from residential sectors, labor collectives, and youth communities can actively participate here.
7. Hence, local self-government with public meetings, conferences, and public self-government is a form of social commitment [5]. If we accept local self-government

as a part of civil society, we agree that this sector of public authority interacts with government agencies by for example an elected representative who will be in charge of holding inter-municipal meetings with the participants of state authorities.

It is possible to form other means of social presence, for instance, offering legal assistance or citizen initiative, or citizens participating in the protection of public order, or discussing projects of normative legal acts. Despite all these opportunities and useful initiatives by society reduces the effectiveness and consistency of interaction between society and government.

For a determined social presence attention may be drawn to the following points:

1. The legal opportunity of implemented institutions. The main criterion of legal and non-legal opportunities delimitation is if they are set out in law or not. Until the opportunity is established in law, it continues to be factual but not legal. For instance, these (impossible) social initiatives can be deputies' reports, imperative citizens' initiative in holding a referendum.
2. Democratic civic engagement in Russia. Many elements of electoral campaigns are reflected in numerical value. These are votes for particular candidates, the number of registered voters, and voters who take part. Also, an important element is the presence of many political parties, which nominate their candidates for democratic elections.
3. Possibility to use statistical methods in state administration. For instance, the All-Russia People's Front has worked since 2011. Using the website of this public association you can notice that the effectiveness of its work is shown through the prism of quantitative indicators.
4. It is important to talk about social activists' legal culture development as a condition of their regular and sustainable participation in public activity [6]. Legal culture can be defined as a legal activity model in a public sphere that is connected with the system of perception, understanding, experience, and evaluation of the actions of state agencies through the prism of experience and moral principles. It is obvious that the considered indicator can be filled with categories, such as the style of legal thinking and legal socialization, while defining role and place in the political system of society.
5. A new concept of an Index of Social Control Effectiveness should be introduced. This index can be developed on the basis of math data with the use of appropriate parameters and coefficients. For instance, parameters include the number of citizens – participants of community groups, number of found violations, information about administrative conclusions regarding the subject of the inspection. Coefficients include the presence or absence of subjects of social control in a particular region, the subject's working period, and incentive sanctions from state authority. This index can be used at the regional and federal levels as an indicator of social activists' work in different fields [7].
6. It is important to form a legal policy for the development of a social presence institution as a mechanism of effective interaction between society and government, direction of implementation for public

initiatives, civil opinion, civil position in a condition of statehood consolidation in modern Russia. In jurisprudence conditions for legal policy, implementation is determined in a timely manner; doctrinal basics of realization in a legal life are defined. It is necessary to take into account legal doctrine achievements, the scientific community's concentrated opinion [8].

In order to examine the effectiveness of social participation in Russia from a practical perspective, we should investigate the case of the Arctic region.

Nowadays, the development and use of the resources of the northern and arctic regions of Russia are significant and highly promising. The total area of Russia's Arctic region is about 3 million sq. km (18% of the entire country), 2.2 million sq. km of which can be attributed to the landmass. A considerable amount of natural resources is extracted in the Arctic zone. At the same time, the Russian sector comprises one-third of the total area of the Arctic.

The Arctic is a region of international cooperation, primarily, among Russia, Denmark, Canada, the USA, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and Finland. In this regard, the main subject of diplomatic relations concerns the protection, preservation, and restoration of the Arctic environment, the preservation of the Arctic flora and fauna, as well as remedying technological accidents and disasters in the region and ensuring mutual security. Russia's Arctic strategy is based on the principles of sovereign equality of states, inviolability of state territory, and mutually beneficial international cooperation.

At present, the government sets strategic tasks aimed at improving the quality of life of the population living and working in the Russian Arctic including the indigenous peoples of the region.

In turn, legal science raises various questions on the current state of the Arctic from a legal perspective. Thus, a common subject of research is the suitable model of state participation in the conservation of the Arctic environment and the amelioration of environmental degradation resulting from economic activity in the region. A major concern is the population decline in almost all northern regions of Russia, as well as a growing need for qualified workers with a university degree, since there is a lack of high-skilled workforce in the North. The question of preserving ethnic cultures and traditional education in the region is also important.

We should welcome and encourage a comprehensive scientific discussion on legal support for sustainable development in the Arctic from the perspective of human rights and the quality of life of the Arctic population. Active participation of the business community and non-profit organizations in public monitoring, preparation, and implementation of important decisions, alongside the regional authorities, is crucial.

The effectiveness of legal regulations on the development of the Russian Arctic directly depends on democratic transparency, open communication, dynamism, and a combination of social and legal means of influence in this area [9]. To achieve that goal, several advisory committees were established such as the Council for the Arctic and

Antarctic under the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, the Public Council under the Ministry for the development of the Russian Far East, and the Arctic, etc.

Furthermore, in Russia, there are three special laws that guarantee rights, freedoms, and interests of the population of the Russian Arctic: the law "On guarantees of the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation" of April 30, 1999 [10]; the law "On the general principles of organizing communities of the indigenous peoples of the Northern regions, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" of July 20, 2000 [11]; and the law "On the areas of the traditional use of natural resources of the indigenous peoples Northern regions, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" of May 7, 2001 [12]. However, in practice, over the past 15 - 17 years, those laws have demonstrated low effectiveness.

Nowadays, there is a need to create a suitable mechanism for social participation in the development of the Russian Arctic and guaranteeing the rights of the peoples of the North. We believe that the following social participation projects and initiatives may eventually be integrated into the existing legal framework:

1. In 2015, the State Commission for Arctic Development was established in Russia. The objectives of the commission are to protect the national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic and to solve strategic tasks for the period up to 2020 and beyond, as well as increasing the efficiency of public administration in the Russian Arctic. The problem is that the decisions of this institution do not have sufficient mandatory power to fulfill its mission, since the commission does not have administrative or political power. Therefore, it might be reasonable to establish a federal monitoring service, under the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, and delegate to that service the responsibility to oversee the development of the Russian Arctic with a consideration of national interests. It is extremely important to ensure the direct participation of key representatives of civil society, councils, public experts, and the scientific community in the activity of the aforementioned state institutions.

2. The Government of the Russian Federation approved the national strategy on the implementation of ethnic policy, which is to be effective until December 31, 2025 [13]. Officially, the program does not specify any additional organizers. Nevertheless, we believe that such a role could be assigned to the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, especially in the sub-programs such as "Public-private Partnership in the Realization of the National Policy of the Russian Federation" and "Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation". There are many opportunities for the participation of civil society in this process from protecting the rights and legitimate interests of the indigenous peoples of the Far North to participating in the Arctic clean-up program.

3. The system of local government in the Northern areas, inhabited primarily by the indigenous minorities, deserves particular attention. The existing literature emphasizes that the involvement and actual participation of the indigenous minorities of the Northern regions, Siberia and

the Far East in the implementation of public policies can be more effective within the framework of a strong partnership among indigenous peoples, public institutions, and the civil society. But in reality, the traditional lifestyle, cultural interests, and aspirations of the ethnic minorities of the North, as a rule, are not fully taken into account. We may rightly point out that there are no designated legal mechanisms or special constitutional standards aimed at effectively involving the Northern minorities in the process of making crucial decisions regarding their own destiny. It is vitally important to ensure the realization of the legitimate interests and rights of ethnic groups to create clans, communities, unions, and associations. It is also necessary to create a coherent system of councils of Northern ethnic groups for the preservation of language, writing, traditional kinds of sport, folklore, literature, traditions, cultural and ethnic identity. Such councils can be established under local governments, and their power must be guaranteed by the state by means of general and special legal regulations.

4. The Government of the Russian Federation makes every effort to ensure the participation of regional organizations in the activity of international institutions and forums devoted to the Arctic issues. For example, the national program of the Russian Federation, "Socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation", involves the participation of non-governmental, scientific, and other organizations in the implementation of the projects [14]. Another national program of Russia, "Environmental Protection 2012-2020", aims to increase the level of environmental safety and preserve natural ecosystems [15]. At the same time, civil society plays a crucial role in protecting the environment, preserving biodiversity, spreading eco-friendly ideas, and raising the environmental awareness of citizens. In this respect, the civil participation projects can be carried out in national parks, nature reserves, tourist areas, as well as zones of protection of historical and cultural objects, and other areas. Citizens and civil associations can participate in the protection of public order, environmental monitoring, tourist events, logistics projects, etc.

5. The indicators of socio-economic, industrial, geopolitical, and ecological development of the Arctic region suggest that civil participation projects are being implemented in different areas such as science, ecology, tourism, public-private partnership. For instance, volunteers of the Russian Geographical Society, together with specialists from the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, participate in expeditions to the North Pole not only to study the ecosystem of this region but also to find new tourist routes and locations, and to raise awareness of this region among investors, activists, and other stakeholders. It is essential to attract attention and encourage the participation of various institutions including public councils under governments, non-state media, political parties, religious communities, youth communities, professional associations, indigenous minorities of the Far North, as well as the business community. An important role is also played by the

mechanism of public control, which was formally announced in 2014, and today, it represents an integral part of the process of civil participation in public administration.

6. Another viable solution is the creation of a civil participation framework focused on socialization and raising legal awareness among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. On the part of the civil society, such work can be carried out through publishing educational materials, promoting a healthy lifestyle in the Northern communities, and organizing various competitions and contests among young people. Within the framework of the Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond, such civil initiatives are highly welcome [16]. The aforementioned Fundamentals of State Policy point out that universities and colleges need to allocate some resources toward training and retraining specialists that will be capable of working in the Arctic conditions. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of improving educational programs for the indigenous minorities of the Russian Arctic, especially in terms of preparing children for life in a modern society while fully equipping them with survival skills essential for living in extreme conditions. That will require supplying the Arctic educational institutions and remote settlements with distance learning tools and technology. The public should support the activities of professional educational organizations that set out to establish multifunctional educational centers of applied qualifications as well as centers for vocational education in key strategic regions. Such projects will allow young people to socialize and, possibly, increase their chances of admission to Russia's top universities in the future. Young people from the Northern region will also get an opportunity to acquire a sought-after profession, and raise their legal awareness and legal culture.

7. Indeed, we should mention that the culture, identity, language, and traditions of the ethnic groups of the Northern regions, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation are undoubtedly in the focus of the Russian public. Nevertheless, we still believe that there is a need to pay more attention to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the indigenous minorities living in these regions. In the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention held by International Labor Organization [17], and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [18], we can see that indigenous peoples have the rights to follow and revive their cultural traditions and customs, to use, develop and pass on to future generations their history, language, folklore, and literature. They also have the right to education, employment, vocational training, and retraining according to the documents mentioned above. Russia has yet to enact those documents on its territory. Nevertheless, the Russian authorities are already supporting and encouraging civil initiatives on participation in ethnographic and archaeological expeditions, as well as in the projects on identification, examination, and preservation of cultural heritage sites. The Constitution of Russia guarantees everyone access to cultural objects and values, historical and cultural heritage,

as well as the rights of ethnic groups living the Russian Federation to preserve and develop their cultural and national identity. In this regard, the scientific community may want to discuss and initiate the creation of a joint advisory council (commission) for the development of culture and education of indigenous peoples living in the Russian Arctic, under the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education of Russia. Such an organization (or a similar one) may benefit from the participation of social activists, scientists, specialists in the traditional culture of the indigenous peoples of the Northern regions, independent environmental experts, and other representatives of the civil community.

In fact, Russia pays a lot of attention to the issues of sustainable development and responsible use of the natural resources of the Arctic. For instance, on April 9-10, 2019, in St. Petersburg, Russia hosted the V International Arctic Forum "Arctic: Territory of Dialogue", whose main topics were the international cooperation in establishing economic and investment partnerships in the region, the implementation of modern environmental standards, and a large number of other projects with the participation of the business community. Hopefully, the new version of Russia's strategy for the Arctic development until 2035 will consider implementing the effective mechanisms for involving the civil community in solving urgent issues of the Arctic, and will also legally ensure and guarantee civil participation in public administration [19].

We believe that Russia's civil society is a strong force that can make a tremendous contribution to Russia's development and policy implementation in the Arctic. The arguments presented earlier may help to create a sustainable model of Russia's national policy in the Arctic, taking into account the rapidly developing legal frameworks and the role of non-governmental organizations and institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

In our opinion, it is advisable to talk about other indicators of social presence effectiveness in the public authorities' actions.

As a result, doctrine components about social participation in government and public agencies' functioning presented in this work can be assumed as a basis development of the government legal system.

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