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THE STATE OF HOUSING AND COMMUNAL SERVICES IN UKRAINE: CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS AND WAYS OF DEVELOPMENT

СТАН ЖИТЛОВО-КОМУНАЛЬНОГО ГОСПОДАРСТВА УКРАЇНИ: ВИКЛИК, ПРОБЛЕМИ ТА ШЛЯХИ РОЗВИТКУ

The article presents an analysis of the socio-economic development of housing and communal services (HCS) as a pivotal element of the urban economy, with a direct impact on the quality of life of the population. It is established that the effective functioning of housing and communal services is a prerequisite for meeting the growing needs of society and maintaining social infrastructure.

The article presents a rationale for the strategic placement of housing and communal services, considering social, economic, and environmental factors, as well as the necessity for enhanced public service quality. The article presents an analysis of the current challenges facing the housing and utilities sector in Ukraine, including the deterioration of infrastructure, the population's debt for utilities, and the impact of martial law.

The authors highlight the necessity of innovative solutions, infrastructure modernisation and improved governance mechanisms in this sector to achieve the goals of sustainable development. An integrated approach that includes cooperation between the state, local authorities and business is essential for effecting change in this critical area.

Keywords: housing and communal services, socio-economic development, infrastructure, management, innovation, Ukraine.

У статті розглядається сучасний стан житлово-комунального господарства (ЖКГ) України, яке є важливою складовою соціально-економічного розвитку країни. Автори підкреслюють, що ефективність ЖКГ безпосередньо впливає на якість життя населення і забезпечення його базових потреб. Проаналізовані основні виклики, з якими стикається галузь, зокрема застарілість інфраструктури, недостатнє фінансування, проблеми з тарифною політикою та високий рівень заборгованості населення за комунальні послуги.

Крім того, в даній статті аналізується складний характер економіки ЖКГ, яка об'єднує численні підгалузі, що мають тісний зв'язок між собою. Управління територіальними одиницями ЖКК не обмежується тільки координацією роботи підприємств комунального призначення, а включає весь комплекс управлінських функцій, пов'язаних з експлуатацією і ремонтом житлового фонду, інженерних мереж і об'єктів ЖКК, а також систем зовнішнього благоустрою і магістралей. Отже, для побудови ефективної системи управління ЖКК необхідно враховувати його особливості як об'єкта управління. Наведені дані про структурні проблеми, такі як нерівномірність розвитку різних територій, залежність від державного фінансування та монополізація ринку. У статті акцентовано увагу на

необхідності комплексного підходу до управління ЖКГ, що передбачає інтеграцію інтересів населення, місцевої влади та підприємств.

В умовах воєнного стану в Україні, ЖКГ стикається з новими викликамии, які виникають через руйнування інфраструктури та відсутність фінансових ресурсів для її відновлення. Зокрема, акцентується на зростанні заборгованості за комунальні послуги та зниженні якості їх надання. Розгядається важливість реформування ЖКГ, яке має на меті підвищення ефективності управління, поліпшення фінансової стабільності підприємств та забезпечення доступності послуг для населення.

У статті наведено рекомендації щодо стратегій розвитку ЖКГ, які включають модернізацію інфраструктури, вдосконалення тарифної політики, залучення інвестицій та активізацію місцевого самоврядування. Наголошено, що лише комплексний підхід до вирішення проблем ЖКГ може сприяти підвищенню якості життя населення та сталому розвитку регіонів України.

Ключові слова: житлово-комунальне господарство, соціально-економічний розвиток, інфраструктура, управління, інновації, Україна.

JEL Classification: H7, O21

Introduction. The socio-economic development of any country is contingent upon a multitude of factors, including the territorial development of its constituent regions. The housing and communal services sector plays an important role in this regard. Its development, like that of the social sphere as a whole, is subordinated to the main goal of meeting the constantly growing needs of society's members in the most comprehensive manner possible. As social development progresses, the dynamics of human needs and the structure of life goods designed to satisfy and provide for these needs evolve in a corresponding manner.

The housing and communal services complex (HCS) represents a significant component of urban infrastructure. The objective of this complex is to provide the urban population with the requisite living conditions, including housing and communal services.

The foundation of urban infrastructure is constituted by housing and communal management, which is defined as a socio-economic sphere of economic activity. This encompasses the study of production relations within the system of communal services for enterprises, institutions, and organisations, irrespective of ownership forms, as well as the economic relations between the population and local authorities regarding housing and communal services, maintenance of the urban infrastructure objects, and the formation and utilisation of local financial resource funds.

The economy of the housing and communal services sector is characterised by a high degree of inter-sectoral complexity and exerts a direct influence on a multitude of aspects pertaining to the quality of life, including living conditions, labour, and recreation. It encompasses over 20 disparate sub-sectors and comprises a considerable number of enterprises and organisations, which are either state-owned, municipal, or privately held. The main sub-sectors of the housing and communal services sector include residential housing management, water supply and sewage management, communal thermal energy, urban electric transport, gardening and landscaping, sanitation of cities, industrial production, road and bridge management, urban lighting, hydraulic engineering, elevator services and funeral services, among others.

The urban complex of housing and communal services is a holistic organism in its very nature, rather than a mere aggregation of disparate branches. It develops in accordance with its intrinsic objective laws, and the maintenance of territorial integrity necessitates a comprehensive approach to the shaping of its management system. The management of territorial units within the housing and communal services sector is not solely concerned with the coordination of communal enterprises. Rather, it encompasses a comprehensive range of management functions, including the operation and repair of housing stock, engineering networks, and HCS facilities, as well as systems for external landscaping and highways. It is therefore crucial to consider the characteristics of the HCS as an object of management in order to construct an effective management system. These characteristics are primarily determined by the fact that it is a complex conglomerate of various sectors that are closely

interconnected by common economic and social goals and tasks. The primary objectives of the functioning and development of HCS are to guarantee the preservation of residential and non-residential property, water supply and drainage, and heat, energy, and gas supply.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Z. Herasymchuk [1], I. Dragan, Melnychenko [2], L. Nemets, K. Pavlyuk [3], and other researchers have focused their work on the functioning and development of housing and communal services.

Formulation of the articles goals. The objective is to analyse the state of socio-economic development of housing and communal services (HCS) as a key element of the urban economy, with a view to determining its direct impact on the quality of life of the population. This section will outline the principal issues facing this sector, including the deterioration of infrastructure, public debt for utilities and the impact of martial law. The objective is to develop recommendations on strategies for the development of the housing and communal services sector, including modernisation of infrastructure, improvement of tariff policy, attraction of investments and activation of local self-government.

Presentation of the main material. The most distinctive feature of the majority of HCS enterprises is that they exhibit a considerable degree of diversity in terms of scientific and technical advancement, which considerably complicates the integration of their operations into a unified system of urban, regional, and district economies. Furthermore, numerous enterprises within the HCS perform disparate functions and are not incorporated into the urban management system. For example, one of the primary objectives of the HCS is to furnish the population with a comprehensive range of services that facilitate a comfortable and convenient lifestyle within the city.

The services provided by the housing and communal services sector to the population are divided into two categories: individual consumption services and public consumption services. The former are delivered directly to each consumer, while the latter encompass the maintenance of common areas in apartment buildings, elevator services, yard maintenance (including cleaning, waste collection and disposal), the maintenance of municipal territories (including street cleaning, construction, repair and cleaning of roads, bridges and sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting, solid waste disposal and burial, public transport, baths, laundries, funeral services, hotels).

These services are provided by enterprises that do not engage in the production of goods themselves, but rather act as intermediaries between manufacturing enterprises and the general population. This primarily refers to services such as heating, electricity, and gas supply, which pertain to the field of communal energy. All of these energy carriers are produced and extracted by enterprises operating within the respective sectors (ministries and departments) and are subsequently transported to cities and settlements. At these locations, enterprises responsible for supplying these energy carriers to residential buildings and enterprises purchase their products from suppliers and utilise their distribution and supply equipment to sell them to direct consumers. Consequently, managerial tasks are required with regard to the distribution, accounting, and calculation of costs associated with communal heating, electricity, and gas. A similar procedure is in place for the maintenance of water supply and drainage systems. The management of these enterprises within a centralised system is characterised by a number of distinctive features. Consequently, enterprises and services that are part of the housing and communal services sector are solely responsible for internal building and courtyard networks and bear no responsibility for the condition of external networks, let alone main pipelines. All suppliers establish their relationships on the basis of the maximisation of payments for the provision of heating, gas, and electricity for the complex. Significant losses of all energy carriers, associated with the poor condition of main, courtyard, and internal building networks, were offset by industrial enterprises in cities, as their consumption of water, heat, electricity, and gas significantly exceeded that of the population. Tariffs for enterprises are higher than for households, which negatively affects the condition of not only courtyard and building networks but also main pipelines. Suppliers are interested in increasing the absolute indicators of consumed energy carriers.

It is exceedingly difficult to exert any control over the losses in question. To illustrate, the greater the quantity of water that is lost from the building, courtyard, and main networks, the greater the interest expressed by the water supply enterprise, given that its revenues are determined on the basis of the volume of products sold. In practice, the product only reaches the consumer to a limited extent, with

the associated costs borne by municipal services and industrial enterprises. One consequence of this flawed practice is the deterioration of the overall condition of engineering equipment, as the manufacturing enterprises had no incentive to maintain and repair it.

A further characteristic of the HCS is the diversity of forms of subordination of its enterprises in a territorial context. In urban areas with a district-based distribution system, some sectors have enterprises and organisations that are divided according to the territorial level of city management. Such sectors include residential housing management, repair and construction production, and a portion of land and park management. In a different zoning configuration that does not align with the administrative districts of the city, network services such as water supply and sewage, gas, and thermal energy are provided. In certain sectors, there is no zoning of management, with responsibilities instead being city-wide. This is the case, for instance, in urban passenger transport and in part of road management and targeted landscaping.

The complexity of the economic mechanism for managing the urban complex is contingent upon the characteristics of territorial and sectoral functioning of the engineering systems of HCS. This creates additional difficulties for the multi-sector management system, its structure by functions and levels.

The formation of the housing and communal services sector from the perspective of rational territorial organisation of its objects requires consideration of the correspondence of the placement of housing and communal service objects to the needs of the population, the reduction of labour costs and the overcoming of the spatial gap between the elements of housing and communal services production. Furthermore, it necessitates the planning and controllability of the placement processes of objects, as well as their orientation towards achieving high economic efficiency in economic activity.

The scientifically justified placement of housing and communal services can be achieved by adhering to the following principles:

The rational placement of objects within this social sphere must be considered in light of primary demographic, social, and economic factors. Furthermore, the structure of the housing and communal complex should be optimal, ensuring the consumer needs of the population for relevant services. Additionally, an environmentally safe type must be formed in order to achieve an ecological balance. From an economic standpoint, it is crucial to prevent ecological tension in the territory, as housing and communal services are associated with significant waste that can pollute the environment.

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure a uniform level of housing and communal services for the population. This entails bringing regions and specific territories closer together in terms of integral indicators of housing and communal services for the population, as well as for individual elements.

The optimal development and rational placement of all links in the housing and communal services sector is essential for ensuring the material living conditions of the population, promoting an increase in the free time of residents and its rational use, improving the culture of everyday life, and reducing the scale and labour intensity of household management.

The enhancement of housing and communal services provides the essential foundation for the reproductive process, exerting a beneficial influence on marriage rates, birth rates, and the enhancement of the population's health, thereby influencing the demographic situation.

HCS, as a subject of managerial oversight, is distinguished by the stochastic nature of the processes occurring within it. Some sectors are subject to considerable seasonal fluctuations in service consumption, notably thermal energy, external lighting, landscaping and greening. In addition, there are periodic fluctuations on a monthly, weekly and daily basis, for example in the transport, water supply and gas management sectors.

As a result of the simultaneous implementation of services and production by HCS enterprises, the accumulation and reservation of product or service inventories are effectively excluded. This highlights the crucial importance of accurately gauging the rational capacities of HCS enterprises and organisations that operate in the context of seasonal, monthly, weekly, and daily fluctuations in service consumption.

It is imperative that the rational capacities of organisations and enterprises are in place to ensure their effective functioning at minimal costs. Deviations from this will result in either a

significant increase in costs or a reduction in reliability, an increase in service time and incomplete service execution.

A fundamental aspect of HCS as a subject of managerial concern is its emphasis on addressing the most pressing needs of the population. It is for this reason that expenditure on urban infrastructure represents the largest item in both urban and regional budgets. A comprehensive examination of budgetary allocations for the maintenance of urban infrastructure reveals that a significant proportion, approximately two-thirds, is allocated to the repair of housing stock, landscaping, and urban transportation. At the regional level, the majority of funds are allocated towards the capital repair and maintenance of housing stock, as well as landscaping. District-level management activities are even more oriented toward solving the problems of the housing and communal services complex.

The decisive influence of social factors also determines another feature of HCS, namely the specificity of the criteria for evaluating its effectiveness. The economic criteria for efficiency that are characteristic of the production sector are specified and supplemented by indicators of the quality of service provided to the population, the comfort of living, and the aesthetics of the environment.

In order to guarantee the uninterrupted provision of essential services such as water, heat, gas, public transport, and so forth to the city's population, enterprises, and cultural institutions, the majority of HCS enterprises have established reserve capacities.

While these reserves are entirely justified, they can result in a relatively low utilisation rate of fixed assets in the operation of communal enterprises. Furthermore, in newly created enterprises, during their initial operational period, they can lead to imbalances in the capacities of individual facilities, which in turn affects the cost of products (services).

A distinctive attribute of the production process of HCS enterprises is its minimal material intensity. Unlike other enterprises, communal enterprises do not consume raw or main materials; instead, they utilise only auxiliary materials.

The normal functioning of the housing and communal service is significantly connected with other sectors of urban infrastructure and systems at the national economic level. The latter category includes, for example, gas, water, and electricity supply systems, which, while being integral to the functioning of HCS, are not included in the urban subordination system.

The interconnection of HCS with all elements and subsystems of urban and national economic levels becomes particularly significant when addressing territorial management issues that require a comprehensive approach to the functioning and development of technologically and organisationally interacting sectors. At the national level, housing and communal services are regarded as collective economic sectors. At the lowest territorial level, specific facilities, systems, and elements of systems related to various sectors, departments, or enterprises are constructed for the purpose of servicing the population and the territory of a specific district. In such a case, it is necessary to introduce the concept of the housing and communal complex, which is characterised by a greater presence of physical objects and a lower level of organisational management systems.

The functioning of HCS and its constituent sectors is associated with two key issues: the consumption of a large volume of natural resources and the resulting environmental pollution.

One of the principal causes of environmental pollution is the contravention of established technological standards in the operation of enterprises that are responsible for the production and provision of communal services to the population. These violations are primarily the result of a lack of financial resources allocated for the construction and modernisation of treatment facilities. This was caused by a flawed system of financing and material and technical support for cities and regions that existed for decades and failed to provide adequate incentives for the effective maintenance of housing stock, engineering infrastructure, and HCS facilities. The consequence of this methodology has been a considerable degree of deterioration and wear and tear on these assets. The average rate of wear and tear on fixed assets in HCS is currently estimated to be between 35 and 40 %. As a result, the communal systems for water, heat supply and sewage are highly inefficient. The operational period of more than half of the boilers exceeds 20 years, and the efficiency of the outdated boilers is less than 82 %. Furthermore, over 14 % of thermal networks are currently in a state of emergency, while over 35 % have reached the end of their useful life. A considerable proportion of the water supply and sewage networks are in a state of emergency, with 30 % and 27 % respectively falling into this

category. A quarter of water treatment facilities and networks (in cost terms) and one in five pumping stations have effectively reached the end of their depreciation period, with 40 % of pumping units requiring replacement. The implementation of scheduled preventative maintenance has been superseded by the necessity for emergency repairs, which are estimated to cost between two and three times more. The condition of the housing stock continues to decline. In excess of four per cent of the housing stock is categorised as old and emergency.

The quantity and volume of fully depreciated fixed assets and equipment of HCS enterprises are 1.5-2 times greater than in any other sector. Currently, this sector of the economy is regarded as the most technically backward.

In the context of martial law in Ukraine, the challenges associated with ageing fixed assets in the HCS sector have been further compounded by the issue of destruction. There is a dearth of financial resources allocated for the restoration and maintenance of the HCS's normal functioning, given its status as a multifaceted component of urban infrastructure. The discrepancies between the production and consumption of communal services have intensified, giving rise to significant financial challenges for the involved parties. Consequently, the reliability of HCS enterprises' operations is compromised. A discernible pattern of increasing incidents and malfunctions is evident across the primary sectors of the HCS, resulting in augmented losses pertaining to the production and distribution of communal services to the population. Nevertheless, the HCS persists in fulfilling the fundamental requirements of the population and the operational necessities of the economy as a whole.

In the period preceding the war, there were approximately 5,000 enterprises and organisations operating within the housing and communal services sector. This constituted 25 % of the fixed assets involved in the state economy and employed 5 % of the working population. The housing stock of Ukraine, encompassing all forms of ownership, comprised approximately 10.4 million buildings with a collective area exceeding 1 billion mI. The provision of centralised water supply was available to the population of all cities in Ukraine, as well as 86 % of urban-type settlements (equivalent to over 70 % of the country's population). Similarly, 95 % of cities and over 50 % of urban-type settlements were served by centralised sewage systems. Approximately 80 % of the thermal energy produced by communal energy enterprises (equivalent to 72 million Gcal) was supplied to the population and budget sector facilities.

A total of 53 cities in Ukraine are utilising urban electric transport. The length of the street and road network reached approximately 80,000 km, with more than 3,700 bridges and overpasses under the responsibility of urban housing and communal services management.

However, the majority of enterprises in the sector continue to operate, and have done so for some time, at the expense of resource capabilities accumulated prior to the beginning of the 1990s.

A statistical analysis has demonstrated that this sector of the economy occupies a significant position within the context of Ukraine's national economy (table 1). However, the proportion of output attributable to the HCS, like that of other non-production sectors, has been observed to decline. In 2000, the sector accounted for 3.7 % of Ukraine's total output of goods and services. By 2021, this figure had declined to 1.8 %. Currently, the housing and communal sector employs 4.2 % of the country's working population and operates approximately 22 % of Ukraine's fixed assets. Of these, 17.5 % are housing stock and 3 % are communal services and domestic service.

At the same time, it should be noted that there is a causal chain of crisis phenomena in the housing and communal services (HCS) sector. This is evidenced by the following.

Year after year, the financial and economic indicators of HCS companies deteriorate. Most enterprises, as well as the sector as a whole, are operating at a loss. The share of loss-making enterprises in the total number of enterprises in the sector is quite significant. This situation is mainly due to the growing debt for services to enterprises, budgetary organisations and the population. Current payments for municipal services, the quality of which is declining, are made at constantly rising tariffs, which reach 100 % of the cost of the services. The situation is aggravated by the large number of benefits provided by law for certain categories of the population.

Since the beginning of 2022, the State Statistics Service has not published data on the population's debt for housing and communal services (HCS). At the end of 2021, this debt exceeded 81 billion UAH. Of this, about 34 billion UAH was for gas supply and distribution, almost 27 billion

UAH for heating and hot water, about 7.7 billion UAH for electricity supply and distribution, almost 6.4 billion UAH for centralised water supply and sewerage, about 5.6 billion UAH for management of apartment buildings, and almost 1.3 billion UAH for waste disposal.

Table 1. Key indicators of the development of the housing and utilities sector in Ukraine

Indicator	Value of the indicator by years					
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
 Revenue from sales of products (goods, works, services) % in the total volume of the Ukrainian economy. 	3,7	3,5	3,0	2,5	2,0	1,8
2. Share of the value of fixed assets (FA) in the total value of fixed assets of the Ukrainian economy, %.	20,7	21,6	21,0	22,1	22,5	-
3. Working capital (WC),- % in total working capital of the Ukrainian economy	7,4	8,6	9,7	7,2	5,6	4,9
4. Average number of employees, thousand people- housing sector- municipal services	260 458	253 472	254 462	242 448	171 405	170 393
5. The share of housing and communal services workers in the total number of workers in the national economy, %.	4,2	4,6	4,7	4,8	4,2	4,2
6.Balance sheet profit, - % in the financial results of the Ukrainian economy	2,2	2,2	-	-	-	-
7. Losses, - % of total losses of the Ukrainian economy.	6,0	3,2	4,9	5,4	5,6	5,6
8.Profitability, %.	5,5	3,0	- 0,6	- 3,7	- 1,8	- 7,7
9. Share of unprofitable enterprises in the total number of housing and communal services enterprises, %.	42,4	41,2	47,1	56,1	49,1	48,7

Source: compiled by the author based on [6]

In the context of the full-scale invasion, on 5 March 2022 the government introduced a moratorium on the disconnection of communal services, with the aim of making life easier for citizens in the early stages of the war. The problem of debt for housing and communal services has worsened. Today, the population's debt for consumed electricity has increased by 15 billion UAH (41 %) compared to the pre-war period, including 7.7 billion UAH in 2023 alone. The largest debtors are the city of Kyiv, Kyiv region, Dnipropetrovsk region and Kharkiv region. For example, according to Yasno, the overdue debt for electricity for consumers in the Dnipropetrovsk region amounts to more than UAH 764 million (1.5 million electricity consumers). The largest increase in debt was in the category of consumers whose bills average 2,700 UAH per month.

The HCS is characterised by its unattractiveness for investment, so investment in the sector is practically non-existent.

HCS is energy intensive. The sector's annual consumption of natural gas and electricity accounts for 10-12 % and 5-6 %, respectively, of total national consumption. The high cost of energy resources and the energy intensity of this sector of the economy, together with the losses of the HCS enterprises, lead to an increased debt of the HCS to the energy monopolies.

The debts of creditors and debtors of HCS enterprises are increasing. More than 20 % of the total debt is due to underfunding of budgets at all levels.

As of 1 June 2023, the wage arrears of HCS employees amount to 4 million UAH, the debt of the budget for housing and communal services amounts to 50 million UAH, and the debt of facilities transferred to municipal ownership amounts to 10 million UAH.

In market conditions, HCS enterprises face a number of problems, including:

- imperfections in the pricing policy of housing and communal services enterprises;
- constant non-payment by consumers for services received;
- unsatisfactory financial situation of enterprises, etc.

Conclusions. Research into the causal chain of crisis phenomena in the housing and communal services sector allows the current state of the sector to be characterised as an emergency. With a sharp reduction in budget financing, which partially compensated for the losses of HCS enterprises, these enterprises have demonstrated their economic incapacity and the inadequacy of their management system to the market conditions of economic activity.

The low quality of housing and communal services provided to the population, together with such reasons as the incapacity of the previous system of housing and communal services that existed for many decades, its backwardness and archaic nature, extreme monopolisation, weak manageability and low efficiency, necessitated the reform of the housing and communal services sector. After creating the conceptual and regulatory-methodological basis for the transformation of the housing and communal services sector of the economy, a development strategy for HCS was implemented, which is the responsibility of regional authorities and local self-government bodies, which conduct their own policies taking into account the socio-economic situation in the regions.

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