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THE RIGHT OF CITIZENS TO APPEAL TO STATE AUTHORITIES IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY: EXPERIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AND FOREIGN STATES¹

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We consider that new digital solutions used to improve the mechanism for ensuring the right of citizens to appeal to state organs. Based on the analysis of legal acts and law application practice of a number of foreign states, the authors propose to consolidate in national legislation such form of appeal as an electronic petition. The article shows the problematic points that arise in connection with the introduction of modern technologies in working with citizens' appeals, affecting the protection of personal data, abuse of law, etc. A set of organizational and legal measures to overcome such problems, including creation and successful operation of a unified information system for recording and processing applications from citizens and legal entities are proposed by authors.

Keywords: the right to appeal; human rights; e-petition; e-government; public administration.

ПРАВО ГРАЖДАН НА ОБРАЩЕНИЕ В ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЕ ОРГАНЫ В УСЛОВИЯХ ИНФОРМАЦИОННОГО ОБЩЕСТВА: ОПЫТ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ И ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ ГОСУДАРСТВ

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Рассматриваются новые цифровые решения, применяемые для совершенствования механизма обеспечения права граждан на обращение в государственные органы. Опираясь на анализ правовых актов и правоприменительной практики ряда зарубежных государств, авторы предлагают закрепить в национальном законодательстве такую форму обращения, как электронная петиция. Показаны проблемные моменты, возникающие в связи с внедрением современных технологий в работу с обращениями граждан, которые затрагивают вопросы защиты персональных данных, злоупотребления правом и др. Предлагается комплекс организационно-правовых мер, направленных на преодоление подобных проблем, в том числе посредством создания и успешного функционирования единой информационной системы учета и обработки обращений граждан и юридических лиц.

Ключевые слова: право на обращение; права человека; электронная петиция; электронное правительство; государственное управление.

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Human rights which are developed throughout human history and currently enshrined at the international, regional and national levels are rightly considered one of the greatest achievements of world civilization. Despite the difficulties with their compliance in many countries of the world, the ongoing discussions regarding the recognition of individual rights as universally, other problematic issues, the list of fundamental human rights, which is contained in the relevant international legal documents, remains fundamental issue.

However, the fact of recognition by one or another state of international legal documents in the field of human rights is an important but insufficient condition for their implementation in practice. In this regard, the consolidation of the relevant mechanisms for the protection of human rights in the legislation is an equally important goal.

Currently, the most important and effective means of protection of human rights is traditionally the right of citizens to appeal to public authorities. At the same time, the rapid development of modern technologies, primarily in the information sphere, has a significant impact on the practice of implementation of this particular right. There is a point of view that the rapid introduction of information technology in various spheres of society, including public administration, is able to give rise to new threats of violation of human rights, for example, in the field of personal data protection. This statement is partly true. However, on the other side, there are opportunities for improving the mechanisms for human rights protection that new technologies provide.

So, with the development of the concept of an electronic government, the problem of communication between the state and citizens, in particular, such new form of appeal to government as an electronic appeal, is becoming increasingly important.

In general the problem of ensuring of the right of citizens to appeal to state authorities is among those that sufficiently developed in modern legal science.

The problematic issues of the implementation of the right to appeal to state organs, questions of modern digital solutions were considered in the works of such foreign scientists as L. Mosca [1], L. Dahlberg [2], A. Michels [3], L. Hoffman [4], etc.

Among the Belarusian researchers on this subject the works of G. A. Vasilevich [5], I. V. Vejera [6, p. 151–153], O. I. Chupris [7] are highly considered.

This topic is of interest to Russian researchers such as E. D. Solomatina, N. V. Shabutskaya [8], A. V. Savoskin [9] and others.

First, let's start with the examination of relevant foreign experience on the discussed problems.

In Art. 17 of Chapter I of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of the Federal Republic of Germany, the right to submit a petition is provided. It guarantees that "each person has the right individually or jointly with other persons to apply in writing with requests or complaints to the competent authorities or to the legislative authorities"².

In 2005, the version of the electronic filing system, which was developed in Scotland, was first introduced to the German National Parliament, as part of a joint project between the Scottish Parliament and the Bundestag – "The online services division". This new system also was introduced to the Bundestag and the parliaments of all 16 separate German lands, including cities with special status [10, p. 505]. Among the various complaints organs, the German Bundestag Appeals Committee is the most famous. Today in Germany both on national and at the subnational level appeals to government organs can be submitted electronically via electronic circulation.

This innovative method is largely the result of using the practices of Scotland, an experience to be discussed below. The development of the institution of appeals in Germany has created new ways that are intended to improve the system, taking into account the opinions of the population, such as the possibility of holding hearings and public discussions in the Committee on Appeals, which should receive 50 000 signatures in their support [11, p. 30]. While most of these electronic ways are publicly available, "traditional" applications are still possible.

The percentage of appeals which are filed electronically in the German Bundestag, in comparison with the total mass of all appeals, including traditional appeals, has increased, for example, from 34 % in 2010 to 39 % in 2016 [11, p. 19]. From September 2005 to the end of 2010, there were more than 3 million signatures for support approximately 2100 electronic communications and more than 100 000 comments were formulated in the discussion on the corresponding forum [12, p. 12]. Electronic communications is subject to verification before they will be published in Internet. The process of admissibility of electronic communications is governed by special rules, including eligibility criteria.

Within six weeks after the publication of the text of the appeal in Internet, signatures can be made in support of it, and the possibility of online discussion is also available. It should be noted that various electronic communications received various support in the community. Therefore, only 9 requests (0.4 %) received more than 50 000 Internet signatures within six weeks [11, p. 20]. According to the examination carried out by state organs, there is no evidence of significant abuses

²Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland : vom 23 Mai 1949 (BGBl. S. 1), zuletzt geändert durch Artikel 1 des Gesetzes vom 13 Juli 2017 (BGBl. I S. 2347) [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/aufgaben/rechtsgrundlagen/grundgesetz/gg_01-245122 (date of access: 18.02.2020).

of the function of signing appeals, which made it possible to formulate a recommendation that there is no need to establish higher requirements for verifying the identity of applicants and signatures for electronic appeals in comparison with traditional ones [13, p. 639].

An innovative component of the platform for electronic submission of applications is the possibility of online discussion of public initiatives. Such forums are moderated by the appeals authorities, which has the right to warnings and delete messages in cases of violation of the rules, which in practice is quite rare. For participation in the discussion on the forum, users must go through the registration procedure. According to the surveys of participants taking part in the online discussion, the vast majority of users find the forums useful and informative [13, p. 644]. Also according to a user survey conducted in 2015, approximately two-thirds of them would like to establish contacts with members of Parliament through forums. They also expressed the opinion that the forums should support the Appeals Committee in its work on the assessment of substantive appeals [14, p. 135].

The United Kingdom's experience introducing an innovative method in working with citizens is no less interesting.

The UK system of appeal's submission has been the focus of attention in recent years. At all levels of the political system, the reform of the appeals system was implemented. Despite the significant differences between individual legal and organizational transformations, the use of the Internet is a general characteristic of the ongoing transformations.

An electronic system for applying to government agencies, including the Prime Minister's office, was created in 2006, but was stopped shortly before the election of the new British Parliament in May 2010 [15, p. 377]. Subsequently, D. Cameron's office returned the institute of electronic petitions [16]. Its function made it possible to achieve interesting results. Therefore, in 2007, an electronic appeal against the introduction of toll roads and car tracking attracted more than 1.8 million electronic signatures, which was unexpected to ministries and the government who considered it to be the most successful and numerous electronic petitions [17].

In order to submit electronic petition, a citizen needs to go through the registration procedure on the site with verification via email address, and also indicate the name and zip code. Any new petition undergoes pre-moderation. As in other similar systems, users have the opportunity to submit and publish their requirements and collect signatures on the platform for submitting electronic applications. For example, to receive a response from the government, the appeal should have reached a quorum of in the amount of at least 500 online signatures. For example, from 2006 to 2010, more than 67 000 electronic communications were submitted. Among these appeals, applications

accepted for consideration received a total of 11.8 million electronic signatures [18]. Currently, in order to receive a response from the government, the appeal must reach at least 10 000 signatures online, and with a quorum of more than 100 000 electronic signatures, the appeal will be considered in Parliament.

The experience of Scotland is also of interest, where in 1999 the Parliament became the first elected assembly in the world, which introduced an electronic petition system called the "e-petitioner". This allows citizens to initiate and sign appeals, receive reference information related to the issue, and also add their comments on the Internet forum provided for each appeal.

These groups of parties are involved in the electronic filing system: 1) persons submitting appeals; 2) persons supporting individual appeals; 3) the organs to which the appeals are directed, specifically they are government, Parliament and local authorities. Appeals, which are submitted by e-mail or regular mail, are posted in Internet and on the Scottish Parliament website, which allows users to track and control the process of their consideration and decision-making. The applicant has the right to submit his thoughts and comments in support of the appeal, which is published on the website. In addition to instructions for submitting appeals in Internet, information on the process for submission and consideration of appeals is also available on the corresponding website, including the minutes of the meeting at which the appeal was considered. In addition, Online Forum allows the applicants to draw public attention to participate in discussions [19].

Scotland's government websites also contain the variety of information materials, texts, brochures, and animations, available in several languages (including Arabic, Bengali, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese or Mandarin, or Urdu) that explain how the appeal system works, from the moment of its submission to the final decision. Debates and hearings about complaints submitted can be monitored in Internet.

The Scottish system is also characterized by an emphasis on the participation of candidates in the application process of submission and consideration of applications, as well as a high degree of transparency and publicity. As opposed to Great Britain the Scottish system has no restrictions regarding the necessary quorum of signatures. In addition to written and electronic appeals (by e-mail), they also can be submitted in person, by telephone, in the form of a video, and, as reported, in the future even with the help of short text messages (SMS) [20, p.155].

As in other countries, in the United States, the development of information technology has significantly expanded the ability to send appeals to government agencies. Therefore, in 2011, on the website of the US Presidential Administration, the section "We people" began to function. The abovementioned section pro-

vided the opportunity to send appeals to the political experts of the administration. Appeals can be created, posted and signed by persons supporting them. Only applications that have reached a certain threshold or quorum of signatures (for example, 100 000 signatures within 30 days) should be considered by the officials of the Administration, followed by an official response, although this rule is not always respected [21, p. 328]. This mechanism is not intended to file complaints regarding criminal proceedings. However, an analysis of the functioning of this mechanism and the fact that a number of petitions with the required number of signatures were never given official answers allow us to conclude that the "We people" system is nothing more than a method that allows citizens to express their opinion.

As it can be seen from the analysis, different countries of the world whose governments use modern digital solutions to more effectively exercise the right to appeal, demonstrate different approaches to the implementation of these instruments. However, general tendencies in this area can be distinguished, for example, the increasing role of electronic petitions and appeals, the development of the institution of public discussion, the determination of a specific threshold number of applicants necessary for an official response, the use of the share of such ways as SMS, video communication, etc. Much of these innovations are of interest to the Belarusian legislator and law enforcer.

After the examination of the experience of foreign countries, it is necessary to analyze the system of working with citizens' appeals that has developed in Belarus and identify areas for improving, taking into account the development of modern technologies, in order to guarantee the exercise of the relevant rights.

It should be noted that now in the Republic of Belarus there are a number of legislative acts that enshrine the right of citizens to appeal to state organs, as well as guarantees for its realization. Among them the most significant are the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus³, the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 18 July 2011 No. 300-3 "On appeals of citizens and legal en-

tities"⁴ (Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 300-3), the Directive of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 27 December 2006 No. 2 "On debureaucratization of the state apparatus and improving the quality of life support of the population"⁵, Edict of the President of the Republic of Belarus of 15 October 2007 No. 498 "On additional measures for work with appeals of citizens and legal entities"⁶, Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 16 March 2005 No. 285 "On some issues of organizing work with the book of comments and proposals and amendments and additions to some decisions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus"⁷ and others.

Some of these legislative acts contain rules governing issues related to electronic appeals from citizens and legal entities. For instance, the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 300-3 contains a number of such norms, including separate art. 25 "Consideration of electronic appeals", which defines the features of working with such appeals.

An analysis of law application practice indicates that the electronic form of appeals is becoming increasingly popular among citizens. This is due to its characteristics, which are simplicity, accessibility and gratuitousness for the population. At the same time, if we talk about the technical aspect, in comparison with various state organs, the possibility of submission of electronic appeals was implemented quite differently. An attempt to unify the technical side of this issue resulted in the appearance of paragraph 71 of the Regulation on the functioning of Internet sites of state organs and organizations, approved by the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on 29 April 2010 No. 645 "On certain issues of the websites of state organs and organizations and the recognition of the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 11 February 2006 No. 192 as invalid"⁸. This paragraph has fixed certain technical and substantive requirements for the special section "Electronic appeals", which should be posted on the official website of the state organs.

³Constitution the Republic of Belarus of 1994 : with amendments adopt. by repub. referendum on 24 Nov. 1996 and 17 Oct. 2004 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 1999. No. 1. 1/0; Constitution the Republic of Belarus of 1994 : with amendments adopt. by repub. referendum on 24 Nov. 1996 and 17 Oct. 2004 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2004. No. 188. 1/6032.

⁴On appeals of citizens and legal entities : Law of the Republic of Belarus of 18 July 2011 No. 300-3 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2011. No. 83. 2/1852.

⁵On debureaucratization state apparatus and improving the quality of life support of the population : Directive of the President of the Rep. of Belarus of 27 Dec. 2006 No. 2 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2007. No. 2. 1/8173.

⁶On additional measures for work with appeals of citizens and legal entities : Edict of the President of the Repub. of Belarus of 15 Oct. 2007 No. 498 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2007. No. 250. 1/8997.

⁷On some issues of organizing work with the book of comments and proposals and amendments and additions to some decisions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus : Resolution of the Council of Ministries of the Repub. of Belarus of 16 March 2015 No. 285 // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2005. No. 52. 5/15728.

⁸On certain issues of the websites of government bodies and organizations and the recognition of the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 11 Feb. 2006 No. 192 as invalid : Resolution of the Council of Ministries of 29 Apr. 2010 No. 645 (with amendments) // Natl. register of legal acts of the Repub. of Belarus. 2010. No. 108. 5/31751 ; On certain issues of the websites of government bodies and organizations and the recognition of the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 11 Feb. 2006 No. 192 as invalid : Resolution of the Council of Ministries of 29 Apr. 2010 No. 645 (with amendments) // Natl. legal Internet Portal of the Repub. of Belarus. 16 Nov. 2019. 5/47329.

Despite the adoption of these legislative measures, a number of practical problems arising in connection with the use of electronic communications by citizens remain unresolved.

The growing popularity of the format of electronic appeals has led to the emergence of sites that offered the opportunity to prepare and submit collective petitions. In 2017, the death of a serviceman A. Korzhich caused a great public outcry. A number of collective electronic communications were prepared on one of the sites, containing various requirements for the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Belarus. Separate appeals were supported by several thousand citizens [22]. However, the state organs, faced with such number of requests, instead of preparing a response, sent out requests to the applicants with a message to confirm the fact of sending your own appeals, and also initiated the blocking of this site, because analysis of individual complaints showed that they contained inaccurate registration data [23].

It should be noted that the practice of sending of requests containing a requirement to confirm the fact of appeal to state authorities is not provided by law.

At the same time, this situation has revealed a problem that seems to remain relevant to the present. The current legislation on citizens' appeals contains the minimum requirements for electronic communications, the reliability of which is practically impossible to establish without additional verification measures, some of which can only be carried out by specially authorized military organs. While the current legislation remains in this form, it is possible that one citizen or a group of people with relevant technical skills will be able to create the imitation of widespread support in the society for arbitrarily controversial or even destructive ideas, by sending collective appeals from non-existent applicants.

This problem seems to have another side. At the moment, there are no barriers to the preparation and submission of the appeal on behalf of an entity or persons without their permission. After all, nothing prevents the person, who knows, for example, the registration data of a citizen create an electronic mail box and send an appeal on behalf of someone else.

In theory, since Art. 151 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus⁹ recognizes the right to a name to intangible benefits; in a similar situation a citizen may apply to the court for the protection of his rights. At the same time, taking into account that relations in the sphere of citizens' appeals are regulated by administrative law, the issue of the advisability of introducing administrative responsibility for this kind of torts should be considered.

However, the development of the mechanism of legal liability for such violations does not seem to be able to completely resolve the identified problem. It should

agree with the opinion of the Russian lawyer A. V. Savoskin, who notes that the period of "acquaintance" of citizens and state organs with the Internet has passed and it's time to streamline existing relations, which contributes to the advisability of introducing an electronic signature as a prerequisite for electronic communication, especially since such rules are already contained in the legislation of several CIS countries [9, p. 8].

Another vulnerable form of citizens' appeals, which is gaining popularity in the post-Soviet space, is a petition. As mentioned earlier, the concept of "petition" itself was formed in the framework of the foreign legal doctrine [24, p. 434–435] and in fact has a lot in common with the appeal of citizens. At the same time, in the legislation of the CIS countries, this term is used mainly to refer to a certain collective form of citizens' appeals, and is realized mainly in electronic format.

It should be noted that the format of electronic petitions is mainly used for raising a wide range of political, social and economic problems before government agencies that affect the interests of large groups of the population. Subsequently, the process of creating appropriate organizational, legal and technical conditions for the functioning of such instrument as electronic petitions is closely related to the realization of the right of citizens to participate in state affairs. The guarantee that the requirements contained in electronic petitions reflect the interests of a wide range of citizens is the need to collect a significant number of signatories (from 25 000 to 100 000 or more) [8, p. 140–141].

In the post-Soviet area, the possibility of preparation and submission of electronic petitions is already enshrined in the legislation of the Russian Federation and Ukraine [9, p. 8].

It seems that the including in the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 300-3 such form of appeal as an electronic petition fully complies with both global and regional trends in lawmaking process. At the same time, taking into account the total population of the Republic of Belarus, there is a need to introduce a significant, but not an excessive number of signatories necessary for preparing a petition. Also, keeping in mind the fact that in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus the right of legislative initiative can be exercised to citizens with the right to vote in the amount of at least 50 000 people, we tentatively consider that it will be permissible to apply from 1 000 to 10 000 signatories in relation to electronic petitions. At the same time, the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 300-3 should provide for a specific mechanism for the consideration of such petitions by the competent state authorities, for example, the creation of inter-agency commissions to review the content of petitions.

Another problematic point related to the use of the electronic format of communication between citizens

⁹Civil Code of the Republic of Belarus of 7 Dec. 1999 No. 218-3 // Vedomosti Natsional'noi palaty predstavitelei. 1999. No. 7–9. Art. 101.

and state organs is the lack of obligation on the part of the state organs to notify the applicant that his electronic appeal has been received and accepted for work. Currently, various state organs use different technical solutions to this issue. Some of the organs implement the practice of sending notifications of receipt of electronic communications, including in automatic mode. Other organs are sending a request form to the applicant's email address, after which notifications are not sent to the applicant. Consequently, the applicant is not fully sure whether his appeal was sent to the state organ, and also, in the event of a dispute on this issue, he cannot confirm the fact of sending of appeal. The solution to this problem can be seen in the obligation to send a notification to the applicant about the receipt of his electronic appeal which should be mentioned in the legislation. From an organizational and practical point of view, an automated technical solution to this issue seems preferable.

For further improvement of this format of communication, the experience of Kazakhstan is interesting, where the innovative project "Aikin" is implemented, which involves the operation of a unified system for recording citizens' appeals. This project allows citizens to look into the course of its consideration, obtain registration information and results of the review, and also read the answer before receiving it by mail [25]. This activity is provided by the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Accounts of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan since it is closely related to ensuring the rule of law in the field of public administration and the fight against corruption. Earlier, in the Republic of Belarus, in a Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 9 April 2018 No. 269 "On the introduction of a unified classifier of appeals of citizens and legal entities"¹⁰ the creation of a unified republican automated system for recording and processing appeals of citizens and legal entities was announced. However, at this moment, there is no information on the successful implementation of this system. We consider it appropriate to take the relevant experience of Kazakhstan in creating and ensuring the function of this system with the mandatory involvement of prosecution authorities in this process, which will simultaneously improve the quality of work with citizens' appeals and ensure the appropriate level of protection of their rights.

Another direction of improving the legislation on citizens' appeals in the digital society is the desire to provide a real opportunity for the realization of the right to appeal for all categories of citizens. So, Art. 40

of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus contains an indication of the right of everyone to send personal or collective appeals to state organs. However, for certain categories of citizens the enforcement of this right is difficult due to physiological reasons. It is, in particular, about the visually impaired. Moreover, the Presidential Edict of 24 September 2015 No. 401¹¹, formalized the signing by the Republic of Belarus of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York on 13 December 2006.

To implement the norms of this convention, a number of legislative acts have been adopted, including the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 13 June 2017 No. 451 "On approval of the National plan of action for the implementation in the Republic of Belarus of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2017–2025"¹². Among the activities of this plan is duplication of visual information in Braille (for the visually impaired) in organizations and institutions providing services to the population during the period of 2017–2025. The responsibility on the implementation rests with state authorities, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee and the public association "Belarusian Association of the visually impaired". This initiative deserves support, but it seems that it can be further developed. So, the issue of securing in the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 300-3 the citizen's right to receive an answer prepared using Braille should be considered. It should be noted that earlier in Russian legal literature such innovations were supported [26, p. 33].

Thus, according to the results of the examination of foreign and national experience in realization of modern information technologies in working process with citizens' applications in order to increase the effectiveness of protection of their rights, the following trends can be identified:

- with the development of the information society electronic forms of communication between people and the state are becoming more and more popular;
- in addition to the electronic form, the legislation of certain foreign states enshrines the form of appeal through video communication;
- in the legislation and law-making practice of foreign countries, an important place is given to working with the right to petition, which is a collective appeal to state organs on the most important political, economic and social issues;
- the use of modern digital solutions to ensure the implementation of the right to a petition allows take

¹⁰On the introduction of a unified classifier of appeals of citizens and legal entities : Resolution of the Council of Ministries of the Repub. of Belarus of 9 Apr. 2018 No. 269 // Natl. legal Internet portal of the Repub. of Belarus. 13 April 2018. 5/45036.

¹¹On the signing by the Republic of Belarus of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities : Edict of the President of the Repub. of Belarus of 24 Sept. 2015 No. 401 // Natl. legal Internet Portal of the Repub. of Belarus. 26 September 2015. 1/16030.

¹²On approval of the National plan of action for the implementation in the Republic of Belarus of the provisions of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities for 2017–2025 : Decree of the Council of Ministries of the Repub. of Belarus of 13 June 2017 No. 451 // Natl. legal Internet portal of the Repub. of Belarus. 17 June 2017. 5/43835.

into account the opinions of the general public on relevant issues, as well as the organization of public discussions on relevant Internet forums, for which state organs create specialized sites or other information resources;

- the use of information technology to improve work with citizens' appeals mediates the importance of protecting personal data, ensuring identification of users in a digital environment, eliminating the possibility of abuse of the right to appeal, manipulating public opinion, etc.;

- the introduction of modern technologies allows us to offer new opportunities for the realization of their rights to vulnerable categories of citizens, for example, people with disabilities.

Based on the identified trends, we offer the following organizational and legal measures which are intended to introduce digital solutions to work with citizens' appeals in the Republic of Belarus:

- to continue work on creating a unified information system for recording and processing applications from citizens and legal entities, while addressing the issues of ensuring reliable identification of applicants, pro-

tecting personal data, automating the process of sending notifications of acceptance of applications for work;

- take into account the positive experience of foreign countries in the creation of this system, as well as ensure the involvement of prosecutors to solve this problem, taking into account the relevant practice of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

- consolidate in the national legislation on citizens' appeals such form of petitions as an electronic petition, determine the number of signatures upon receipt of which the petition receives a similar status, and also provide for the special nature of the consideration of such collective petitions;

- provide for the possibility of filing appeals using video communication instruments, as well as consolidate the right of citizens to receive an answer prepared using Braille.

The realization of these proposals will contribute to more effective protection of the right of citizens to appeal in the digital era, increase the efficiency of work with citizens and legal appeals in state and non-state structures, and ensure law in various spheres of public life, including in public administration.

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