

CHAPTER «STATE ADMINISTRATION»

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION STATE POLICY OF COMBATANTS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ATO PARTICIPANTS) IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. The choice of a democratic European path of development by Ukraine requires active and targeted measures in the political, security, social and other spheres. The state policy of Ukraine on social protection of veterans has undergone radical changes since the beginning of the hybrid war (2014). There is an intensive process of improving the system of social protection of military men and veterans, updating the legal framework, institutional support and introducing NATO standards in order to achieve a high level of national defense.

The objective of the article is to assess the implementation of the state policy of social protection of veterans. For the evaluation study, an expert survey was conducted among veterans on the following key social indicators: the level of social protection; level of social tension; psychological and social adaptation; quality of providing social services; effectiveness of targeted support programs for veterans; efficiency of the Government. Social measures of efficiency enable us in the course of public policy evaluation to focus attention on individual administration decisions and actions regarding veterans, to reveal their urgency, rationality and effectiveness.

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After analyzing the current state of implementation of the state policy of social protection of veterans, the shortcomings of the social protection system were revealed, namely: imperfection of the existing mechanisms of policy implementation; lack of clear functional interaction of public authorities; low level of efficiency of the system of providing state benefits to combatants, insufficient awareness of veterans; weak feedback from veterans' NGOs. The existing shortcomings in the social protection system confirm the need for conducting appropriate reforms and improvement of mechanisms for implementing public policy, in particular: institutional and legal, information and communication and financial.

The success in solving problems to overcome social tension, carrying out adaptation and psychological rehabilitation of veterans will be ensured by such components as activity, empathy and solidarity of residents to solve the existing problem; professionalism of public organizations; involvement of international experts; systematic work and constructive proposals; openness of the government, its readiness for cooperation and dialogue. It is also important to form new staff resources to ensure the psychological and social adaptation of combatants and their families. Attention should be paid to the training and education of volunteers, community experts and leaders of NGOs in the field of social protection of veterans to enhance the effectiveness of their activities.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of state policy of veterans' social protection, it is expedient to: create a single information platform on existing rights, guarantees and support programs; to introduce information support for veterans; to establish feedback, public dialogue and partnerships between authorities and civil society institutions. Also on the platform of the newly created Ministry of Veterans' Affairs and existing public organizations of veterans it is possible to create an effective mechanism that will enable us to provide targeted assistance to each participant in the ATO at the expense of budget expenditures in the framework of the implementation of existing and perspective government programs.

1. Introduction

The welfare of each person and certain categories of the population depends on the effectiveness of the implementation of the state social protection policy. The choice of Ukraine of a democratic European path of development requires active and targeted measures in the political, security, social and other

spheres. Continued military aggression in Eastern Ukraine, the occupation of part of Ukrainian territory and the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea require the improvement of the functioning of the military sphere and the system of social protection of combatants. In conditions of indefinite duration of the conflict, it is possible that the number of military men who will acquire the status of a combatant will increase. According to the legislation of Ukraine, a combatant is one of the categories of war veterans [7]. Ukraine's state policy on social protection of veterans has undergone radical changes since the beginning of the hybrid war (2014). There is an intensive process of improving the system of social protection of military men and veterans, updating the legal framework, institutional support and introducing NATO standards in order to achieve a high level of national defense.

The implementation of public policy is carried out through the formation of public administration mechanisms that have comprehensive nature. It is through the implementation of public administration activities that the social goals and needs of society are met. The key to the effectiveness of public policy are the following factors: setting adequate, achievable, specific goals; relevant principles, methods and tools for policy implementation.

One of the approaches to assess the implementation of public policy is based on data collection and analysis of information on the final, intermediate and related results to further improve policy or improve the quality of managerial decisions [3, p. 35]. Nowadays, Ukraine has adopted many social programs to support veterans, for the implementation of which the state allocates significant financial resources. However, the effectiveness of their implementation and the degree of their contribution to the solution of specific social problems of veterans is rarely monitored. Note that the evaluation of social development policy is based mainly on generalized integrated indicators, expert evaluation with an emphasis on measuring social effects. The fact is that state programs of social support for veterans do not always provide for the availability of quantitative evaluation criteria. Therefore, for the objectivity of the assessment, it is necessary to supplement the cost-benefit approach with other qualitative criteria to assess the implementation of public policy.

Social measures of efficiency enable us in the course of public policy evaluation to focus attention on individual management decisions and actions regarding veterans, to reveal their urgency, rationality and effectiveness.

In order to assess the implementation of the state policy of social protection of veterans during September-December 2019, an expert survey was conducted. The poll was conducted with the assistance and participation of the Union of ATO veterans. A total of 197 respondents took part in the survey – combatants, namely the participants of anti-terrorist operation and international operations to maintain peace and security. To analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of the state policy of combatants' social protection the following general indicators were selected as key social indicators:

- level of social protection;
- level of social tension;
- psychological and social adaptation;
- quality of providing social services;
- effectiveness of targeted support programs for veterans;
- efficiency of the Government's work.

These generalizing indicators provide an opportunity to see the level of meeting the pressing needs and solving the problems of veterans (combatants), to determine the effectiveness of public policy in this area. The conducted expert research is to some extent a diagnostic tool based on the expert assessments of the veterans themselves on the degree of their satisfaction with the results of the activities of public authorities. In conditions of political and economic instability, it is important that the needs of veterans and the solution of existing problems by the state take place on a regular basis, reliably and in a timely manner with the rational use of resources. An additional source base in the analysis and evaluation of public policy was also the effectiveness of the functioning of public institutions, reports of public authorities, mass discussions, the media and public opinion.

2. The current state of the social protection system of combatants

Assessing the current state of the combatants' social protection system in Ukraine, most respondents found it positive and stable, but not all the elements of the system and without significant positive dynamics (39% and 27% of all respondents, respectively). This shows that the state as a whole pays considerable attention to the issues of social protection of veterans, but there are a number of current socio-economic issues that require in-depth study.

The experts have identified catalysts that have significantly intensified changes in the system of combatant' protection, namely:

- political situation and military conflict in the East of the country (59% of all respondents);
- the need to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine in high combat readiness (37% of all respondents);
- fight against combatants' poverty (15% of all respondents).

The general level of social protection of veterans was rated by 49% of respondents as medium, 34% indicated a low level. That is why an important step in the formation and improvement of social protection policy for veterans is to determine the range of pressing issues and the introduction of effective mechanisms for their solution.

According to the experts, first of all it is necessary to improve the financial mechanism (39%), as well as to bring in line the legal (34%), information (32%) and organizational (27%) mechanisms. 39% of the experts noted the need to improve all basic mechanisms.

Particular attention should be paid to establishing effective cooperation between public authorities and local governments, because they are the main actors in the implementation of public policy. According to respondents (46%), it is necessary to pay attention to the reluctance of local governments to increase their responsibility for social support of combatants. The experts consider measures to adopt a state strategy for the development of social protection of military men (37%) and improve the legal framework for the general procedures for organizing social protection of combatants (29%) to be influential in establishing cooperation.

Since 2015, united territorial communities have been actively created, and decentralization of financial resources for the provision of social services on the sites is underway. The system of social protection of veterans has also become important. Ensuring and uniformity of social protection of veterans will now depend on the effective work of communities. This is confirmed by the answers of respondents who believe that communities play no less important role in the implementation of state social protection policy than the public authorities themselves (29% of all respondents).

Today the process of state support for the development of public organizations, unions, charitable foundations, associations, whose activities are aimed at implementing and protecting the rights of veterans, informing the authorities about their moods and desires, lobbying their interests, monitoring the effectiveness of state programs and more has

been intensified. According to the respondents, it is expedient to create public associations of veterans (83%). But it should be noted that in the absence of effective models of communication, such interaction remains quite low.

The survey showed an active public position of respondents. Thus, more than half of them are ready to personally participate in the activities of public organizations of veterans (54% of all respondents).

To clarify, detail and deepen the knowledge about the attitude of veterans to the existing system of social protection, respondents were asked to determine the completeness of performing their functions by public authorities (Figure 1).

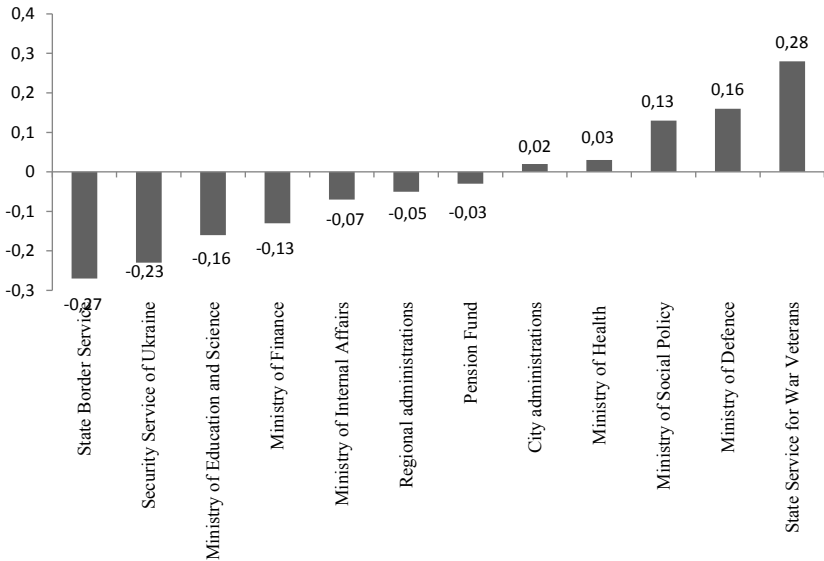


Figure 1. Index of performance of social protection functions of combatants by public authorities

The index of performance of functions was calculated by the formula (*index on a scale from +1 to -1, where +1 – fully executes; +0.5 – rather, performs; 0 – medium level of implementation; -0.5 – rather, does not perform; -1 – does not perform at all*):

$$I_{\text{аук}} = -\left(\frac{X - 3}{2}\right), \quad (1)$$

where X is the average value in the distribution of answers by this indicator.

According to the respondents, their functions related to social protection were rather performed by: the State Service for War Veterans and ATO Participants (I perf = 0.28), the Ministry of Defense (I perf = 0.16) and the Ministry of Social Policy (I perf = 0.13). The State Border Service (I perf = -0.27) and the Security Service of Ukraine (I perf = -0.23) do not perform the functions of social protection of combatants.

In particular, the provision of services for veterans was divided between 19 higher level institutions (ministries and civil services), but none of them had full responsibility for the implementation of state policy in this area. The experts, at the time of the survey, considered it appropriate to create a single body responsible for the social protection of veterans (58%). As an important condition for its effective functioning, respondents (63% of all respondents) noted the introduction of 30-40% of veterans in the staff resources. In 2018, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs was established, the main tasks of which are:

- formation and implementation of state policy of social protection of veterans and members of their families, in particular: providing psychological rehabilitation, social and professional adaptation, employment, increasing competitiveness in the labor market, sanatorium-and-spa treatment-, housing, educational services, lifelong state scholarships, etc .; granting, deprivation of status; maintaining the mental health of veterans and their families; honoring the memory of veterans;

- ensuring the rights and freedoms of veterans and their families;

- ensuring the formation and maintenance of the Unified State Register of War Veterans [5].

The establishment of the Ministry of Veteran Affairs is the centralization of providing services to veterans and simplification of the processes of formation and implementation of state policy in the field of social protection of veterans. And preparation of veterans for work in the public sphere is one of the steps to identify and solve existing problems. In the context of modernization of institutional support, the leading issue is the establishment of cooperation between the subjects of public policy in order

to avoid duplication of functions and the scattering of public funds. There is a need for research to strengthen the interaction of public authorities, local governments and civil society institutions. It is also important to attract and create professional staff, on which the quality of problem solving and services provided to veterans depend. Further development of institutional support, compliance of the legal framework with modern challenges and the quality of staffing play a powerful role in the effective implementation of the state policy of social protection of veterans.

3. Social security of veterans

We have identified the assessment of the current state of social security for veterans as the first of the generalizing indicators of the effectiveness of the implementation of state policy. The main sources of information on their own rights and guarantees for social security, as most respondents said, were: comrades-in-arms (59%); mass media (44%), information from the Union of ATO Veterans (32%) and other public organizations (24%) (Figure 2).

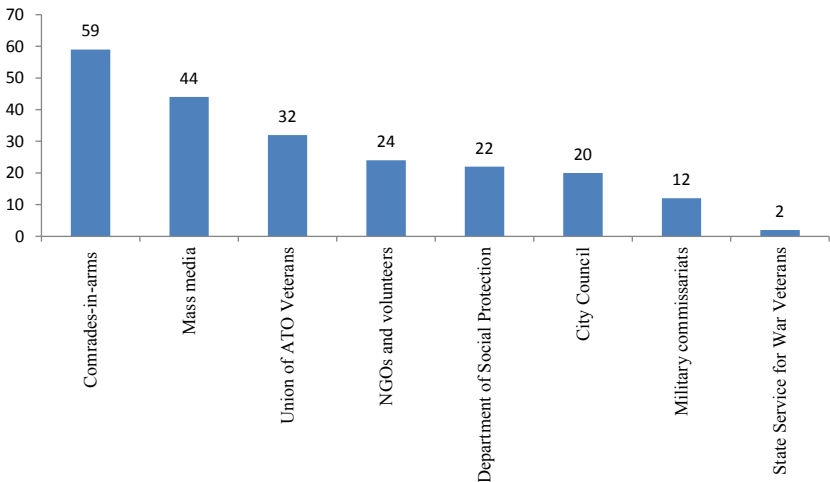


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: «Which sources did you receive information from about your own rights and guarantees for social security?»
(percentage % to all respondents)

According to the respondents, in order to increase the level of information it is necessary to involve the mass media and television (37%); it is expedient to create a single information platform on existing rights, guarantees and support programs (34%) and to introduce information support for military men (34%).

It should be noted that the effectiveness assessment of implementation of the social protection state policy of veterans, namely the analytical review of events and the real state of affairs is performed by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, other public authorities and public organizations. Among the institutions of civil society, it is necessary to highlight the research of the NGO Legal Hundred. It is worth comparing the latest results of the sociological survey «Veterans' Attitudes to Benefits» conducted by Kantar Company and the NGO Legal Hundred in 2019, which also show that surveyed respondents consider their comrades-in-arms as the main sources of information. War veterans and people with disabilities caused by the war speak of a complete lack of information [4]. Thus, it can be noted that there is a need for an effective information system and improvement of the information and communication mechanism.

Among the benefits enshrined in the Law of Ukraine «On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection», the majority of combatant respondents enjoy free and discounted travel (85%); utilities (over 70%); annual medical examination (60%). More than 30% of veterans enjoy benefits such as temporary disability allowances, a 75% discount on fuel costs for people living in houses without central heating, free prosthetic dentistry and medication. As for benefits for priority use of communication services (14%), placement in social protection institutions (14%), obtaining loans for construction (11%) and others, veterans almost do not enjoy them. When it comes to benefits related to jobs, study and business, we are convinced that this is a very specific category of benefits that is of interest only to certain groups of veterans. Thus, the majority of respondents enjoy only a third of all statutory benefits.

Only 2% of respondents consider the system of benefits effective, 37% of respondents believe that not all benefits are effective, 32% of respondents consider the system of benefits satisfactory. However, almost 25% of respondents said that the system of providing state benefits is inefficient. This assessment of preferential provision confirms the need to reform the system of benefits (Figure 3).

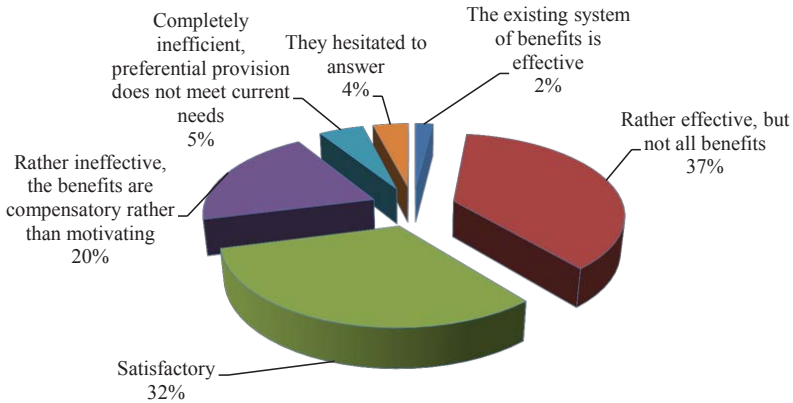


Figure 3 Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: «How do you assess the effectiveness of the system of providing state benefits to combatants?» (percentage % to all respondents)

Undoubtedly, there is a problem with the insufficient level of financial support for veterans (52% of respondents indicated a fairly low level) (Figure 4). The cash security of veterans in developed countries is considered to be the most important component of social protection while in Ukraine, despite the relatively high actual size of benefits, cash security does not meet modern requirements.

Since the main sources of information about their own rights and guarantees for social security in respondents' answers are comrades-in-arms and the mass media, we can assume that due to lack of information support and other channels of information dissemination, veterans are not aware of all available benefits. We also note the low level of feedback between public authorities and veterans. The system of preferential provision is mostly compensatory rather than motivating, it does not take into account current peculiarities, does not correlate with all the needs of veterans. It is extremely necessary to reform the system of preferential provision, gradually abandoning ineffective benefits in general.

Today, the system of cash security for military men, including veterans, is being reformed. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has approved a new scheme of cash security for military men, which will regulate the basic

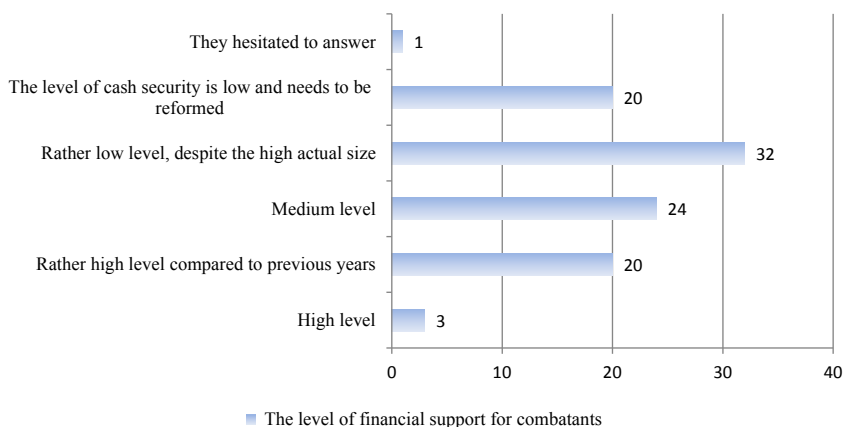


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: «How do you assess the level of cash security of combatants today?»
(percentage % to all respondents)

ratios of norms of cash security for military men to standardized values of wages in the country as a whole. The disadvantage of the system of cash security for military men is the partial loss of its motivational and stimulating functions, so the relevant issue is to create an effective system of material incentives [6].

4. Overcoming social tension among combatants

To assess the level of social tension among combatants, the experts offered six possible answers. Extremely aggravated situation was stated by 2%, a high level of social tension was determined by 20%, the medium level of social tension was estimated at 61%, low level – 12%, the lack of social tension was indicated by 5% (Figure 5).

This assessment of experts is negative from many aspects. Social tension is a state of social consciousness that affects the perception and assessment of reality. In conditions of social tension, a person grows distrust of power, conflict in society, anxiety, depression, and so on. Social tension is mainly realized as social stress and arises as a result of social maladaptation. Therefore, among the attitudes that are characteristic of veterans today there

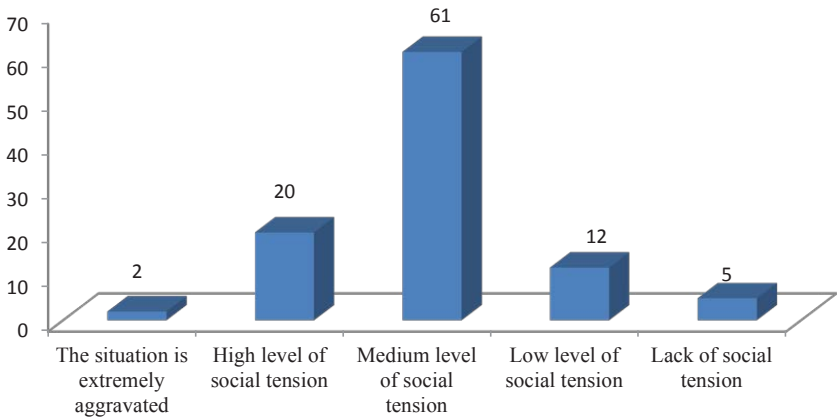


Figure 5. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: «Please estimate the level of social tension among combatants»
(percentage % to all respondents)

are more negative: despair, sadness, resentment and anger (27%), but in contrast to them (34% of respondents) feel hope.

The experience of 2014-2019 has shown that in the country a system of providing rehabilitation services to people who have been hurt by the war is just forming. In most cases, veterans do not seek the services of a psychologist after returning from places of military conflict (73% of respondents). Instead, after demobilization, they are most concerned about financial support (44%) and employment (37%), but psychological support and adaptation to civilian life remains an important issue (34%) (Figure 6).

Negative consequences of ignoring psychological rehabilitation can be an increase in social tension and loss of human potential due to deteriorating health, prolonged instability, destruction of personality, increased crime, and so on.

Since 2003 up to now, the national system of providing social services has been modernized. Given the strategic course of European integration, social services must meet the norms and standards of the European Union. Note that the quality of social services is an indicator of the state's ability to perform a social function. In current conditions, namely the protracted financial, economic and political crisis, the issue of quality of social services provided to veterans is becoming increasingly important.

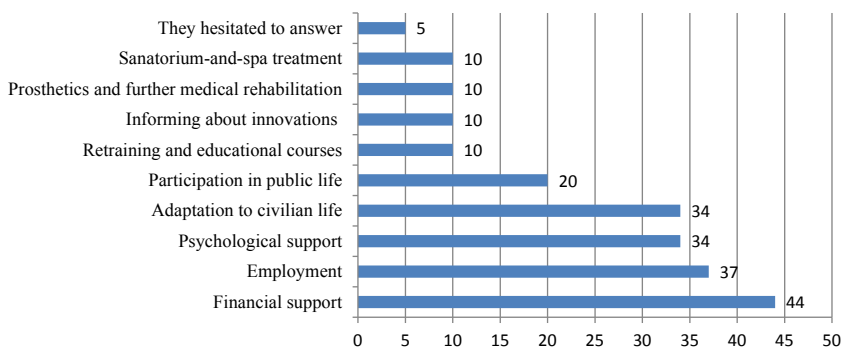


Figure 6. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: «What worries combatants the most today after demobilization?» (percentage% to all respondents; the total amount of answers exceeds 100%, because it was possible to choose several answer options)

During the expert survey, the majority of experts (68%) satisfactorily assessed the quality of social services provided under the system of social protection of veterans. The most important criteria for assessing the quality of social services which respondents chose were:

- minimum bureaucratic procedures to obtain the services (51%);
- timeliness of service provision (51%);
- availability of services (42%).

It should be noted that one of the tools to solve social problems is the implementation of state targeted programs for social protection and support of veterans. Note that only a third of respondents (32%) are informed about existing government programs and projects in this area. 34% of veterans are not informed at all and do not follow the appearance of new social protection programs. Among the respondents, 85% did not participate in international social protection programs for veterans, which are quite effective and aimed at medical and vocational rehabilitation. Respondents did not show much interest in veterans' vocational adaptation programs that encourage them to start their own business. Only 24% of respondents are interested in this type of adaptation, 34% of respondents indicated that they may be interested in starting their own business in the future, 17% of respondents stressed the need for financial support

and benefits from the state. This attitude may be due to the unstable and unpredictable regulatory environment, the economic and political situation in the country, quite unfavorable investment climate and the lack of own financial resources and more [1].

International experience shows that self-employment, involvement of veterans in entrepreneurial activity can be not only an effective tool for their adaptation to civilian life, but also become a powerful catalyst for socio-economic changes. The policy of public authorities in the field of small business development for veterans should be further aimed at building a comprehensive support system, creating programs and preferential conditions, investment and innovation activities, intensification of information and education campaigns [8].

The experts, in summary assessment, pointed to the medium and low level of effectiveness of state programs (44 + 34 + 7), 85% of respondents call for the need of an in-depth definition of the causes of low effectiveness of state programs and improvement of the program-target mechanism for implementing social protection policy for combatants.

The range of influence of war factors on society is extremely wide and has devastating consequences, which hinders the achievement of macroeconomic stability in the future. The scale of the changes taking place causes difficulties in the individual's cognition and assessment of the social significance of these changes, as well as the development of a program for adequate correction of the interaction between the individual and the environment. It is because of a certain specificity of military activity that the state needs to care about this category of citizens, but due to certain problems and difficulties of an economic nature, the state is not able to provide an adequate level of social support to veterans. Hence the need to find effective ways to solve problems and reduce social tension with the support of society, non-governmental organizations, local communities, self-organization of citizens, public organizations and foundations. It should be noted that personnel support to Ukraine is provided by the Western allies of our state, who send highly qualified psychologists and other specialists to help. Therefore, the authorities, non-governmental organizations, local communities, civil society and the international community can create favorable conditions for the social adaptation of veterans through coordinated efforts [2].

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the study we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The sphere of social protection of veterans is currently dynamically developing and improving. The modern system of social protection has certain shortcomings, namely: imperfection of existing mechanisms for policy implementation; lack of clear functional interaction of public authorities; low level of efficiency of the system of providing state benefits to combatants, insufficient awareness of veterans; weak feedback from veterans' NGOs.

The existing shortcomings in the social protection system confirm the need for appropriate reforms and improvement of mechanisms for implementing public policy. The result should be an improvement in the institutional, legal, informational, communication and financial support of the veterans' social protection system. It is worth paying attention to the establishment of effective cooperation between public authorities and local governments. In our opinion, an effective, transparent, open and flexible structure of public administration with the use of the latest information and communication technologies (e-government) should be created. Also on the platform of the newly created Ministry of Veteran Affairs and existing public organizations of veterans it is possible to create an effective mechanism that will provide targeted assistance to each participant in the ATO at the expense of budget expenditures in the implementation of existing and future government programs.

2. With regard to social security, it should be emphasized on the need to reform the system of preferential provision. Many benefits are ineffective in current conditions, but burden the state budget. It is also expedient to create a single information platform on existing rights, guarantees and support programs and to introduce information support for veterans.

3. The success in solving problems of overcoming social tension, adaptation and psychological rehabilitation of veterans is guaranteed by such components as activity, empathy and cohesion of residents to solve the existing problem; professionalism of public organizations; involvement of international experts; systematic work and constructive proposals; openness of the government, its readiness for cooperation and dialogue. It is important to form a new staff resource to ensure the psychological and social adaptation of combatants and their families. Attention should be

paid to the training and education of volunteers, community experts and leaders of NGOs in the field of social protection of veterans to enhance the effectiveness of their activities.

Modern realities pose new challenges for society; construction of an effective system of social protection of veterans requires constant analysis of the current situation in order to improve the effectiveness of public policy. The existing problems of veterans can be solved within the framework of a model where there will be a well-established system of communication, feedback, public dialogue and partnership between the authorities and civil society institutions. To increase the effectiveness of public policy, it is necessary to involve veterans in its development and implementation.

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