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Regional Positioning of Development of the Social Sphere of Ukraine as a Guideline for Post-War Reconstruction

Introduction

After the outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression, many sectors of Ukrainian economy were severely affected. The prolonged resistance of the Ukrainian people became possible due to the powerful and continuous support from the EU countries, as well as the concentration of the population both on the front lines and in terms of overall economic recovery, as well as the social and service segments in particular. In order for the development of Ukraine's regions to meet the needs of the local population, it is necessary to select benchmarks that could serve as indicators of their functioning level. At the present stage,

such benchmarks can be indicators of recent decades that track trends in socio-economic development.

The second decade of the 21st century has generally demonstrated positive reflections on most indicators that allow us to analyse the components of Ukraine's social sphere in the regional dimension. They should serve as a guide for its recovery after the war.

Spatial levelling of living conditions is one of the "classical" areas of social geography, but civilizational development puts forward new requirements for living standards and comfort of living, so socio-geographical research is facing new challenges in this area. Today, among the requirements that modern Ukrainian society must meet is the conformity of development characteristics with the goals of sustainable human development.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that the authors have identified the peculiarities of spatial differentiation of the social sphere, revealed the essence, objects, subjects, and results of the process of differentiation of the social sphere of Ukraine in the spatial context, as well as the specifics of relations and the nature of the deployment of the relevant process in space and time. For this purpose, the authors analyse incomes as one of the key criteria for the level of formation and functionality of the social sphere.

Material and research methods

The problems of the functioning of the social sphere are presented in a number of modern scientific studies.

Shtunder's study reveals the peculiarities of the sustainability of the social sphere in the context of economic stress and formulates promising directions for the formation of the sustainability of the social sphere in the face of uncertainty from an economic point of view.¹ Pihul, in her research, notes that a necessary condition for improving the level and quality of life of the population is the presence of a developed social infrastructure, the key function of which is the full and comprehensive development of an individual by creating a complex of life goods necessary for the expanded reproduction of labour. She identifies two blocks of the social sphere functioning. The first block is system-forming and it determines the specifics of the further organisation of the social infrastructure, while the second serves the first and ensures its effective functioning depending on the sectoral specifics. The study emphasises that social infrastructure should

¹ І.О. Штундер, *Природа стійкості соціальної сфери в умовах шокових впливів*, "Економіка і суспільство", 2017, nr 11, pp.11–16.

be considered as a single integrated system, the activity of which is aimed at ensuring the comprehensive development of an individual.²

Kavetskyi has studied the current state of structural changes in the service sector in the main territorial units of France, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine, with a special emphasis on the group of manufacturers and business services, which are considered one of the leading factors in differentiation of regional development. Attention is focused on the significant differences in the level of development and structure of regional service systems in the studied countries, which reflect their socio-economic experience and the presence of certain universal patterns of development characteristic of all the countries under consideration, which primarily concern the concentration of producers and business services in the most prosperous regions.³

Makkonen and Inkinen identified the dependence of the development of the social sphere on demographics, in particular depopulation processes (focusing on the specifics of rural settlement).⁴ This problem is also considered from the perspective of assessing the quality of life, where the factors that have the greatest impact on the environment of comfortable living are analysed. In this study, the variables are projected onto the factor plane, which makes it possible to get an idea of their meaning as well as the corresponding correlations. In particular, it is emphasised that the quality of life is improved by intangible values, such as a healthier and more active lifestyle as a result of physical activity or the need for proper education.⁵

The studies by Oliynyk and Stepanenko assess the social sphere from the perspective of the common localization of territorial communities.⁶ According to Nemets, the time and space organisation of society is key in assessing the social sphere in the light of globalisation influences. She argues that the innovative and investment image of territories, model development, and socio-geographical

² Н.Г. Пігуль, *Соціальна інфраструктура: функціональне призначення та особливості розвитку*, "Економічний аналіз", 2014, nr 1, pp. 117–122.

³ I. Kavetskyi, *Regional Differentiation of the Service Sector Development in Selected European Countries*, "European Journal of Service Management", 2018, vol. 4(28/2), pp. 193–200.

⁴ T. Makkonen, T. Inkinen, *Benchmarking the Vitality of Shrinking Rural Regions in Finland*, "Journal of Rural Studies", 2023, vol. 97, pp. 334–344.

⁵ M. Ivanová, R. Klamár, E. Fecková Škrabuláková, *Identification of Factors Influencing the Quality of Life in European Union Countries Evaluated by Principal Component Analysis*, "Geographica Pannonica", 2022, vol. 26(1), pp. 13–29.

⁶ Ya.B. Oliynyk, A.V. Stepanenko, *Social Localization of the Lives of Individuals and Territorial Communities*, "Economic and Social Geography", 2012, vol. 2, p. 3–23.

zoning to optimise the territorial organisation of society and ensure optimal living conditions for the population are the keys to regional development.⁷

In a broader format, this problem was discussed in the research of Kuczabski, who suggested a new and unique approach to assessing the economic efficiency of national governments. The assessment is based on the gross product per capita, and one of the contextual issues of the assessment is the social sphere. The author evaluates the government as an instrument for implementing social policy.⁸ A regional assessment of the social sphere components of the Carpathian-Podilskyi region was carried out by Kuzyshyn and colleagues.⁹

Rosłon-Żmuda emphasizes that the feature of the modern world economy is its global nature, which means that any action on the part of one participant in international life results in multiple reactions and consequences for others. Moreover, the consequences of the war will be severe not only for the parties directly involved in the conflict but also for many other countries.¹⁰

A current source of information on the state of the social sphere in Ukraine is *Social Cohesion in Ukraine: Key Trends Based on reSCORE 2024*.¹¹ This report offers a detailed analysis of the current state of social cohesion in Ukraine, shedding light on how Ukrainians are navigating the complex social, political, and economic challenges posed by the Russian invasion. More specifically, the report addresses the following questions: what are the current levels of social cohesion in Ukraine, and how have these levels evolved in comparison to the pre-full-scale invasion situation, as well as in comparison with the immediate aftermath of the invasion. The report draws on the Social Cohesion and Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction Index (reSCORE2), an innovative analytical tool designed to measure and track different dimensions and elements of social cohesion in a comprehensive and sophisticated way. In the context of our research, the spatial assessment of governmental support for the social sphere is of particular

⁷ Л.Н. Немець, *Сталий розвиток: суспільно-географічні аспекти (на прикладі України)*, Факт, Харків 2003, p. 383.

⁸ A. Kuczabski, *Economic Efficiency of National Governments: Case Study of Poland and Ukraine*, "Journal of Geography, Politics and Society", 2021, vol. 11(3), pp. 30–40.

⁹ A. Kuzyshyn, A. Kuczabski, I. Poplavska, S. Zadvoyni, *Risk Assessment of the Social Sphere Development on the Example of Areas of the Carpathian-Podillia Region (Ukraine)*, "Czasopismo Geograficzne", 2022, vol. 93(3), pp. 473–493.

¹⁰ J. Rosłon-Żmuda, *Military Conflict in Ukraine and Its Economic Impact*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska", sectio M, 2023, vol. 8(1), pp. 237–249.

¹¹ UNDP, *Social Cohesion in Ukraine: Key Trends Based on reSCORE 2024*, <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/social-cohesion-ukraine-key-trends-based-rescore-2024>, access 17 VIII 2025.

interest, both from the perspective of those employed in it and in terms of the functioning of its components.

Results and analysis

Social space is differentiated because the population is multidimensional, and the population is the basis of social space. The more complex the differentiated society, the more numerous the parameters of social space. The status of any person in the social world is determined by a system of social coordinates, which are determined by a set of social groups and positions within each of them. Social status is directly related to the place of residence, because moving up the social ladder can take real action. For example, when people increase their status, they move to better and more prestigious districts or regions of the country.

The following research methods were used during the study: descriptive, comparative, and descriptive-vector methods. The decision on the choice of research methods was influenced by the research issues, while taking into account the quality and quantity of available research material. Thus, the descriptive method was used to characterise the concepts associated with the presence of the social sphere components and their accessibility to the local population; the comparative method was used when comparing the functional level of individual components of the social sphere and their comprehensive review; while the descriptive-vector method is important from the point of identifying the most important factors influencing the subjects functioning of the social sphere, along with indicating the most important activities.¹²

Traditionally, elements of the social sphere are characterised by local influence and limited operational capabilities. Despite their different functional purposes, their common goal is to identify and meet the local needs of society. Unfortunately, despite the high motivation, many needs go unnoticed or may not be met because the subjects have limited resources or very specialised (or too fragmented) applications. The main task of these actors is to prevent social stratification and maintain social harmony (concern for the availability of socially important goods and services leads to “social balance”).

We view the objects of the social sphere as entities that focus on solving social problems, meeting social needs in an innovative way, while serving the common interest, which means that they are focused primarily on social impact, not profit. In general, social actors operate on the basis of and in combination with local roots and traditions, taking advantage of joint management. Their functioning

¹² A. Kuzyshyn, A. Kuczabski, I. Poplavska, S. Zadvornyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 473–493.

is marked by a direct correlation dependence – a decrease in interest in their supply due to lower incomes and lower financial costs for local governments to support social sphere organizations. At the same time, we would like to note that social actors are perceived as reliable partners that will have even greater responsibility in the context of meeting social needs.

The subjects of the social sphere are special units, the distinguishing feature of which is the socially defined purpose and method of using profits. However, it should be kept in mind that these entities are also subject to market legislation that face similar barriers to enter the market or barriers to develop at later stages. However, these are very important institutions from the point of view of the excluded ones or threatened with exclusion, as they are often the only opportunity for them to take a paid job or have a product or service designed for such people.¹³

The location, development, and manifestations of differentiation of the social sphere in Ukraine are influenced by a large set of factors, which should be grouped according to their origin and socio-economic content.¹⁴

Economic factors allow us to justify the level of socio-economic development of the state and each specific region, the level and structure of employment in social production, the level of monetary income of residents and their differentiation among certain social groups, related to the volume and structure of commodity supply, the level of consumption of goods and services achieved, the structure of the individual consumer budget, as well as the nature and type of ownership of enterprises.

Political factors characterise the essence and influence of political and administrative components on increasing the potential of the social sphere, the transparency of the implementation of legal guarantees in the field of social reproduction of the population, social support and assistance to low-income groups of the population, as well as the socio-political situation on its development.

Legal factors determine the legislative norms and legal relations in the field of regulation of the services segment and regulate their availability in quantitative and spatial format.

Cultural factors substantiate the impact of the system of moral, cultural, and spiritual values, norms and traditions prevailing in society, their regional characteristics on the service sector.

¹³ A. Kuzyshyn, *Spatial Diversification of the Social Sphere Development in the Carpathian-Podillia Region (Ukraine)*, "Folia Geographica", 2019, vol. 61(2), pp. 144–162.

¹⁴ Н.Г. Пігуль, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–122.

Natural and climatic factors correlate the impact of the natural environment, recreational conditions of the population, and the environmental situation in the region with the availability and nature of social services.

Demographic factors take into account the number of people by social groups, their gender and age characteristics, birth and death rates, migration, the total number of families, their size and composition, the ratio of urban and rural population, and the proportion of able-bodied persons.

Social factors reflect the professional and qualification structure, employment, educational level, peculiarities of everyday life, the amount of leisure time of the population, and the structure of its use.

Urban planning and spatially-oriented factors characterise the peculiarities of settlement systems (density of residents, size and relative location of settlements, location of industrial, administrative, scientific and other facilities, transport links, directions, and intensity of the main flows of movement of residents).

National and ethnic factors are generally close to demographic factors, but the influence of mentality, interests, consumer habits, traditions, and customs on the development of the social sphere should be added.

Socio-psychological factors position the manifestations of moods, feelings, expectations of the population, their aspirations, personal and group attitudes in the demands of the social sphere.

It is likely that the article will not allow us to fully reveal the depth of influence of each of these categories, but their impact on the manifestations of differentiation in the social sphere is significant. Due to the interconnection and interdependence of all groups of factors, the determining role in the further development of the social sphere of Ukraine at the current stage of its functioning is played by those that highlight the degree of formation of settlement systems and the level of development of material production. And they, in turn, influence the manifestations of the aforementioned differentiation of the social sphere at the regional level.

One of the criteria for the functioning and development of the social sphere is the financial accessibility, which, in turn, is determined by the ability of the population to spend a certain amount of money on social services. At the regional level in Ukraine, there are significant fluctuations in the income of the population, which is generally an objective phenomenon (Table 1).

Analysing income data on a regional scale, several generalizations are worth noting. Our research allows us to compare income levels in the national currency of Ukraine (*hryvnia*) and the Euro. Over the study period (2008–2020), dual trends are observed. On the one hand, throughout 2008–2015, a majority of regions experienced an increase in population income. It is noteworthy to

Table 1. Income of the population of Ukraine per capita, thousand UAH/EUR

		2008		2010		2015		2020	
		UAH	EUR	UAH	EUR	UAH	EUR	UAH	EUR
1.	Ukraine	13.7	1.9	18.5	1.8	31.8	1.2	74.7	2.2
2.	Autonomous Republic of Crimea	11.5	1.6	15.5	1.5	-	-	-	-
3.	Vinnitsia	11.7	1.7	16.0	1.6	29.6	1.1	70.9	2.1
4.	Volyn	10.6	1.5	14.3	1.4	25.0	0.9	58.0	1.7
5.	Dnipropetrovsk	15.5	2.2	20.7	2.0	39.1	1.5	94.8	2.8
6.	Donetsk	16.2	2.3	21.3	2.1	21.3	0.8	42.2	1.2
7.	Zhytomyr	12.0	1.7	15.8	1.6	27.8	1.1	66.6	2.0
8.	Zakarpattia	9.7	1.4	12.7	1.3	22.5	0.9	52.4	1.5
9.	Zaporizhzhia	15.3	2.1	20.0	2.0	36.3	1.4	83.3	2.5
10.	Ivano-Frankivsk	11.3	1.6	15.0	1.5	26.5	1.0	61.1	1.8
11.	Kyiv	14.3	2.0	19.5	1.9	34.0	1.3	80.3	2.4
12.	Kirovohrad	11.5	1.6	15.4	1.5	27.4	1.0	64.5	1.9
13.	Luhansk	13.4	1.9	17.8	1.8	15.6	0.6	27.3	0.8
14.	Lviv	12.7	1.8	16.5	1.6	29.5	1.1	73.1	2.1
15.	Mykolayiv	12.6	1.8	17.0	1.7	29.3	1.1	69.9	2.0
16.	Odesa	11.7	1.6	16.3	1.6	32.4	1.2	82.0	2.4
17.	Poltava	13.9	2.0	18.0	1.8	31.2	1.2	78.8	2.3
18.	Rivne	11.1	1.6	14.6	1.4	26.7	1.0	59.3	1.7
19.	Sumy	13.2	1.9	16.9	1.8	30.6	1.2	72.0	2.1
20.	Ternopil	10.6	1.5	13.8	1.4	24.0	0.9	55.8	1.6
21.	Kharkiv	14.1	2.0	18.4	1.8	32.2	1.2	79.2	2.3
22.	Kherson	11.2	1.6	14.9	1.5	27.9	1.1	63.8	1.9
23.	Khmelnyskyi	11.9	1.7	15.8	1.6	29.3	1.1	65.4	1.9
24.	Cherkasy	12.0	1.7	15.8	1.6	27.0	1.0	64.9	1.9
25.	Chernivtsi	9.8	1.4	13.5	1.4	23.9	0.9	54.2	1.6
26.	Chernihiv	12.3	1.7	16.7	1.6	28.4	1.1	65.8	1.9
27.	The city of Kyiv	25.0	3.5	37.0	3.7	76.5	2.9	182.5	5.4

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, *Statistical Yearbook of Ukraine for 2021*, https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/11/Yearbook_21_e.pdf, access 18 VIII 2025.

Official exchange rate: 2008: EUR 1 – UAH 7.1; 2010: EUR 1 – UAH 10.1; 2015: EUR 1 – UAH 26.2; 2020: EUR 1 – UAH 34.0

highlight oblasts where official incomes per capita more than doubled during this period: Vinnytsia, Volyn, Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Zakarpattia, Zaporizhzhia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Ternopil, Kharkiv, Kherson, Cherkasy, Chernivtsi, and Chernihiv. Particularly, the city of Kyiv saw a tripling of incomes. Notably absent from this list are regions that, since 2014, have been under military occupation and constant conflict, naturally undergoing disintegration across all economic sectors. Conversely, in Euro equivalents, incomes decreased across all regions, indicating insufficient financial protection for the Ukrainian population, despite the country's openness and its Euro-integration direction. From 2015 to 2020, a positive trend emerged – incomes per capita increased, and the EUR value rose insignificantly to offset these indicators. Within a relatively short period, a significant leap in population income is observed, notably in the capital city of Ukraine (where income increased nearly twofold in Euro equivalent or 2.5 times in the national currency). Significant increases in income indicators were also observed in Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, and Cherkasy oblasts.

The same Table 1 allows us to group the regions by income level. Traditionally, Kyiv has the highest income. The group of regions with incomes that fluctuate within the average Ukrainian level (EUR 2.1–2 thousand per person) includes Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Poltava, Sumy, and Kharkiv oblasts. As you can see, these regions are located in all parts of Ukraine, which indicates a general possibility of income growth throughout the country. At the same time, there are several regions where the growth of personal income was too slow compared to the national trend. Naturally, this list includes the regions where hostilities have been taking place since 2014 (Donetsk and Luhansk), as well as the regions of Western Ukraine (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Rivne, Ternopil, and Chernivtsi). To a certain extent, these indicators determine the level of development of the social sphere in these areas.

Figure 1

At the same time, such statistical indicators are important for assessing and forecasting the structure of possible incomes of the population. It is possible to analyse the income of an average Ukrainian household, which is traditionally based on the number of family members (primarily related to the number of children) (see Figure 1).

It is noteworthy that traditionally, families with a small number of children are young, and salaries are not the main source of their income. At the same time, these families have high expectations for social support in various forms



Figure 1. Income structure of Ukrainian families

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, *Statistical Yearbook of Ukraine for 2021*, https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/11/Yearbook_21_e.pdf, access 17 VIII 2025

(scholarships, grants, and targeted payments). Families with more children mainly form their budget from salaries and, in equal proportions, from entrepreneurial activities and other social benefits. The aforementioned indicators are the basis for the financial assessment of expenditures on social services. It is possible to statistically summarise information on this criterion at the pre-war (2021) level.

According to Table 2, the maximum number of services is provided in the II to IV quarters of the year. From the regional perspective, the maximum number of services is sold in industrial regions, where, as mentioned above, the income of the population is higher (Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, and Kharkiv oblasts). Minimal indicators of services provided are typical for Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, Rivne, Ternopil, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, and Chernivtsi oblasts. In the vast majority of cases, these indicators correlate with the level of income of the population in these regions.

When assessing the structure of services sold at the national level, transport, warehousing, postal and courier services, temporary accommodation and catering services, information and telecommunications services, real estate transactions, professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support services, education, healthcare and social assistance, arts, sports, entertainment and recreation services account for the bulk of expenditures, as shown in Table 2. This is clearly seen in the regional format of the assessment of the differential demand for social services (Table 3).

Within the Western Ukrainian region (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, Chernivtsi), the majority of population expenditures in the segment of social services are allocated to healthcare services and social assistance (almost 28% of expenditures). Naturally, in the most powerful regions in terms of human potential and development, these expenditures are maximal, while Rivne region shows the lowest expenditures for such services (it should be noted that this is practically the lowest indicator within all of Ukraine). Significant expenditures within these regions are also allocated to education, transportation services, storage services, postal and courier activities, as well as accommodation and food organisation services. Minimal funds from the population are allocated to services in the sphere of administrative and ancillary services, as well as in the sphere of arts, sports, entertainment, and leisure. In subregional terms, the maximum expenditures on the population service sector are spent in Lviv region and the minimum in the Rivne region. It should be noted that the leadership of Lviv region is somewhat associated not only with a significant population, but also with the specific status of the region, which attracts Ukrainian and foreign tourists, possesses one of the largest historical and architectural potentials within Ukraine (preserved authentic structures of

Table 2. The volume of services provided by enterprises in the service sector of Ukraine, million UAH

		I quarter 2021	II quarter 2021	III quarter 2021	IV quarter 2021	Total
1.	Ukraine	49914.4	53944.8	65055.1	63393.9	232308.2
2.	Autonomous Republic of Crimea	–	–	–	–	–
3.	Vinnytsya	928.5	799.3	1124.2	923.1	3775.1
4.	Volyn	357.0	356.1	930.2	1160.8	2804.1
5.	Dnipropetrovsk	2727.5	2934.8	3277.7	3691.1	12631.1
6.	Donetsk	640.2	664.4	770.9	753.2	2828.7
7.	Zhytomyr	432.9	474.0	558.7	524.6	1990.2
8.	Zakarpattia	428.4	441.4	646.6	500.0	2016.4
9.	Zaporizhzhia	1026.9	875.1	1036.6	1048.5	3987.1
10.	Ivano-Frankivsk	965.4	432.9	735.5	648.1	2781.9
11.	Kyiv	1181.1	1213.8	1517.2	2309.6	6221.7
12.	Kirovohrad	300.3	247.2	276.9	303.3	1127.7
13.	Luhansk	509.6	497.6	506.1	659.4	2172.7
14.	Lviv	2054.9	2162.3	2336.2	2551.3	9104.7
15.	Mykolayiv	844.3	821.8	851.3	1033.8	3551.2
16.	Odesa	2424.3	2218.3	2760.9	2612.8	10016.3
17.	Poltava	507.8	529.2	651.8	615.1	2303.9
18.	Rivne	264.8	233.0	288.5	269.9	1056.2
19.	Sumy	606.7	613.1	709.5	749.0	2678.3
20.	Ternopil	473.8	368.3	613.1	464.6	1919.8
21.	Kharkiv	2339.8	2331.1	3844.1	4484.3	12999.3
22.	Kherson	347.7	397.1	556.5	423.9	1725.2
23.	Khmelnyskyi	348.8	333.0	409.9	394.9	1486.6
24.	Cherkasy	384.8	386.9	469.3	430.5	1671.5
25.	Chernivtsi	388.1	409.0	369.8	461.8	1628.7
26.	Chernihiv	1025.7	1058.2	1035.1	1334.0	4453.0
27.	The city of Kyiv	16743.6	20426.9	26376.6	22349.1	85896.2

Source: <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua>, access 12 VIII 2025.

various purposes), and therefore has a more developed and utilised social sphere. Overall, the Western Ukrainian region was distinguished at the pre-war level (until 2021) by significant population expenditures on social services, but it is difficult to assert their balance; expenditures on healthcare are 20 times higher than expenditures on services in the spheres of arts, sports, entertainment, and leisure.

The areas of the Eastern Ukrainian region (Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, and Kharkiv) have the highest income of the population within Ukraine, given the significant development of the industrial segment of the economy and the localisation of the most powerful Ukrainian enterprises. Unfortunately, these are the areas that suffered the most destruction during the Russian-Ukrainian war, and this will definitely have a long-term impact on regional and national development. In 2021, three groups of services provided by the service sector had the highest cost to the local population: transport, warehousing, postal and courier services. In total, the region's population spent more than 71% of their expenditures on these services.

What this sub-region has in common with the Western Ukrainian sub-region is that it has minimal expenditures on services in the arts, sports, entertainment, and recreation sectors (the difference in expenditures here is over 32 times). The significant differentiation between the levels of consumption of social services should be explained by the fact that hostilities have been taking place in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts since 2014, and the occupied territories have naturally fallen out of the official records of Ukrainian statistics. At the same time, the frontline Kharkiv and Dnipro oblasts managed to adapt to the conditions of the military neighbourhood and make the most of the available services (it should be noted that their expenditures in this sector were the highest in Ukraine). The weak position of Zaporizhzhia region, which is generally considered to be industrially powerful, looks rather strange, as by 2021 it had all the conditions for the development and operation of all areas of the service sector, but the level of spending on them was below the average in Ukraine.

In the Southern Ukrainian region (Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson), it should be noted that there has been a significant disruption in obtaining reliable information due to the full occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea since 2014. Therefore, data from only three oblasts were actually taken into account. This sub-region is similar to the previous ones in terms of the highest expenditures of the population on healthcare and social assistance services (they account for more than 44% of the sub-regional indicator). It should also be noted here that the region has a general specificity associated with its Black Sea location and a powerful system

of healthcare facilities that provide services to both the local population and residents of other regions in need of treatment, rehabilitation, and recreation. Education, administrative, and support services, as well as information and telecommunications services, are quite costly in the sub-region and therefore in demand. Odesa region stands out against the general background, as it ranks third in Ukraine in terms of spending on social services.

Within the Northern Ukrainian region (Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv), we note quite significant fluctuations in expenditures at the level of the oblasts that make up this sub-region. Due to suburbanisation processes and the formation of the metropolitan area of the capital, Kyiv oblast is the undisputed leader in terms of expenditures. Chernihiv oblast, despite its generally average economic and non-economic potential, is characterised by relatively high expenditures on services. And Zhytomyr oblast is not characterised by the typical features of the functionality of the social sphere. While healthcare services are traditionally in demand and highly costly, the relatively low level of use of educational services can be explained by the location of Kyiv, which is the main Ukrainian educational hub and draws on the educational and scientific potential of both the region and the whole of Ukraine (we did not include the capital as a centre for the provision of social services in the regional assessment due to its status and the methodology used in Ukrainian statistics). In the structure of expenditures on services, the lowest rates are typical for services in the areas of art, sports, entertainment, and recreation, but their amplitude with the most popular services is not as striking as in other sub-regions of Ukraine.

It is clear that the oblasts of the Central Ukrainian region (Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy) have their own peculiarities. This is the only sub-region of Ukraine where most of the expenditures in the service sector are related to the education sector. It is already common to see significant expenditures by the population of these areas on transport, warehousing, postal and courier services, as well as healthcare services. It should also be noted that there is a relatively small amplitude of expenditure on services within the oblasts of this sub-region, which suggests that this segment of the economy is functioning in a relatively balanced manner.

The city of Kyiv has traditionally been a leader in terms of population expenditures on social services. There are all the prerequisites for this. This metropolitan area of Ukraine has the highest income of the population and, accordingly, opportunities for creating better welfare conditions. This city accounts for one third of the official expenditures on social services in Ukraine. This is a sign of a significant imbalance that requires the intervention of specialists from various fields and levels of management at the regional and

Table 3. Volume of services sold by social sector enterprises by type of economic activity, millionUAH

	Transportation, warehousing, postal and courier activities	Temporary accommodation and catering facilities	Information and telecommunications	Real estate transactions	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Activities in the field of administrative and support services	Education	Healthcare and social assistance	Arts, sports, entertainment and recreation	Provision of other types of services	Total
1. Ukraine	34159.7	19291.1	63564.3	4383.0	4577.7	24311.8	24010.6	53869.2	3064.6	1076.2	232308.2
2. Western Ukraine	3350.4	2253.1	1550.1	734.7	360.4	1911.9	4190.7	5960.0	363.3	70.7	21311.9
3. Volyn	413.6	106.7	183.4	47.8	45.5	91.9	256.3	1624.7	21.6	12.4	2804.0
4. Zakarpattia	332.3	159.1	122.8	51.6	0	41.0	437.6	695.5	165.1	0	2016.5
5. Ivano-Frankivsk	295.6	398.4	228.5	150.0	49.2	385.9	718.9	427.7	5.6	0	2781.9
6. Lviv	1405.7	1479.8	539.9	225.1	182.3	1129.5	1485.3	2468.5	160.3	57.4	9104.8
7. Rivne	279.8	22.6	135.8	95.9	41.1	79.4	213.8	145.1	0.7	0.9	1056.3
8. Ternopil	351.8	55.1	213.3	58.6	31.4	124.4	833.6	224.5	0	0	1919.8
9. Chernivtsi	271.6	31.4	126.4	105.7	10.9	59.8	245.2	374.0	10.0	0	1628.6
10. Eastern Ukraine	4986.2	1841.5	1326.1	1467.9	496.7	2132.3	5462.7	14263.1	444.4	200.5	3461.9
11. Dnipropetrovsk	1187.3	885.5	458.8	239.7	118.7	151.6	1080.0	6908.6	181.8	54.8	12631.1
12. Donetsk	769.2	132.5	122.1	230.4	0	409.2	272.9	628.4	0	24.3	2828.7
13. Zaporizhzhia	743.8	169.6	245.0	509.4	100.6	179.5	928.9	1037.3	23.4	30.3	3987.2
14. Luhansk	111.7	15.9	54.0	81.4	12.5	124.7	124.7	1620.4	0	0	2172.8
15. Khar'kiv	2174.2	638.0	446.2	407.0	264.9	1267.3	3056.2	4068.4	239.2	91.1	12999.2
16. South Ukraine	1371.4	809.2	1448.9	220.3	185.2	1537.7	2533.4	6732.2	119.1	96.2	15292.7

Table 3. cd.

	Transportation, warehousing, postal and courier activities	Temporary accommodation and catering facilities	Information and telecommunications	Real estate transactions	Professional, scientific and technical activities	Activities in the field of administrative and support services	Education	Healthcare and social assistance	Arts, sports, entertainment and recreation	Provision of other types of services	Total
17. Autonomous Republic of Crimea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18. Mykolayiv	256.7	50.6	252.8	90.2	52.5	198.8	291.4	2228.1	0	0	3551.2
19. Odesa	867.4	602.1	869.1	111.1	100.3	1259.3	1931.8	4059.9	119.1	96.2	10016.4
20. Kherson	247.3	156.5	327.0	19.0	32.4	79.6	310.2	444.2	0	0	1725.1
21. Northern Ukraine	2970.7	817.1	1131.5	530.0	225.3	1883.5	1177.0	5722.6	195.3	372.2	15343.0
22. Zhytomyr	436.2	110.6	291.2	48.1	53.9	159.2	255.8	597.5	123.7	254.0	1990.2
23. Kyiv	1712.5	508.7	308.4	348.3	70.9	1127.9	365.6	1699.3	39.8	40.2	6221.5
24. Sumy	280.2	36.1	246.6	32.5	56.9	337.4	395.8	1256.3	5.2	31.1	2678.3
25. Chernihiv	541.8	161.7	285.3	101.1	43.6	259.0	159.8	2169.5	26.6	46.9	4453.0
26. Central Ukraine	1513.5	306.5	990.1	472.7	877.7	1169.3	1999.1	1675.1	104.9	342.6	10364.7
27. Vinnytsya	390.6	66.1	155.3	109.7	635.0	247.8	950.1	111.3	9.5	10.8	3775.1
28. Kirovohrad	179.4	13.3	50.3	31.5	48.2	218.8	104.4	413.6	0	0	1127.7
29. Poltava	375.1	128.3	395.1	231.1	61.8	267.0	241.5	556.1	11.0	36.6	2303.8
30. Khmelnytskyi	161.5	49.3	204.1	61.1	64.2	314.7	268.8	325.3	15.7	5.8	1486.7
31. Cherkasy	406.9	49.5	185.3	39.3	68.5	121.0	434.3	268.8	68.7	289.4	1671.4
32. The city of Kyiv	19908.4	13257.4	7381.3	870.6	2333.4	14312.8	8222.8	17525.1	1804.0	280.5	85896.1

Source: <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua>, access 12 VIII 2025.

national levels to achieve at least a partial levelling of the situation with the neighbouring regions (as mentioned above) and with the average indicators for the country. If such steps are not taken, this will deepen the gap between the level of functioning of all sectors of the economy (including the service sector) and will have a negative impact on the regional development of Ukraine. The structure of expenditures on services in Kyiv is dominated by transport, courier, and postal services, although other services are also quite high, which indicates the overall balance of the service sector and the areas of its consumption.

In order to address the outlined peculiarities of regional development of the social sphere, a number of measures should be taken to improve its accessibility. In particular, ensuring the sustainability of the social sector is impossible without the development of social and labour relations. This includes the efficient use of labour potential, ensuring effective employment, reducing hidden unemployment, creating new jobs and making effective use of existing ones, expanding active employment policy measures, developing entrepreneurship, implementing a policy of supporting self-employment, and increasing territorial mobility to redistribute labour between regions. All of this will help optimise household incomes and create a middle class.

The way to ensure the sustainability of the social sector is to transform the income policy, which will improve living standards, stimulate economic activity, reduce paternalistic attitudes in society, and help generate the necessary revenues for social insurance funds and budgets at all levels. A thorough reform of the labour remuneration system based on the establishment of reasonable inter-job and inter-qualification ratios will help to strengthen the sustainability of the social sphere. Reforms in the labour remuneration system should be aimed at bringing the level of sectoral and qualification-based remuneration structures closer to the real cost and condition of the labour force, creating an efficient and flexible labour market, and increasing labour mobility. The development of self-employment, employment in small businesses, and changes in the remuneration system will help to overcome poverty, form a middle class, and create conditions for reducing the volume of irreversible external labour migration.¹⁵

The development of social partnership relations is a way to ensure the sustainability of the social sphere and create conditions for the realisation of human social potential. Its goal is to balance the interests of different segments of the population, establish social harmony, civil peace and tranquilly, resolve industrial conflicts, and improve interaction between the state, employees and employers.

¹⁵ І.О. Штундер, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–16.

The special priorities of state policy to ensure the sustainability of the social sphere are to improve the social protection system. It is important to improve the state mechanisms of the social protection system, increase the welfare of citizens, fight poverty through effective and targeted social protection, guarantee decent wages and fair pensions, and support the disabled and vulnerable population.¹⁶ Ensuring the sustainability of the social sector is also impossible without the formation and stable functioning of the pension system.

Given the pessimistic demographic forecasts, low average pension levels, and the spread of the informal economy and shadow employment, it is important to reform the pension system. Priority measures should include: ensuring a uniform and fair procedure for granting pensions to the entire population; eliminating unjustified differentiation in pensions by size; accelerating the introduction of a funded mandatory pension system that will encourage longer working lives; promoting the de-shadowing of employment and wages; and the payment of pension insurance contributions.

Conclusion

The social sphere pillars are characterised by local influence and limited operational capacity. Despite their different functional purposes, their common goal is to identify and meet local social needs. The realities of modern Ukrainian society require the formation of guidelines for restoring the state of functioning and accessibility of the social sphere that was characteristic of the regions of Ukraine before the start of the Ukrainian-Russian war.

The criterion for the functioning and development of the social sphere should be financial accessibility, which in turn is determined by the ability of the population to spend a certain amount of money on social services. At the regional level in Ukraine, there are significant fluctuations in the income of the population, which is generally an objective phenomenon. Statistical data from recent decades suggest that the vast majority of oblast regions have seen an increase in the welfare of the population. Social expenditures in the regions of Ukraine correlate with the number of family members, especially the number of children. Traditionally, families with a small number of children are young, and salaries are not the main source of their income. At the same time, these families have high expectations of social support in various forms (scholarships, grants, and targeted payments). Families with a larger number of children mainly form their budget from salaries and, in equal proportions, from entrepreneurial

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

activities and other social benefits. The structure of services sold at the national level includes transport, warehousing, postal and courier services, temporary accommodation and catering services, information and telecommunications services, real estate transactions, professional, scientific and technical services, administrative and support services, education, healthcare and social assistance, art, sports, entertainment and recreation services.

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Abstract: The study examines the spatial differentiation of the social sphere across the territory of Ukraine. It outlines the essence, objects, subjects, and outcomes of differentiation processes within the social sphere in a spatial context, as well as the specific features of their development over time and space. Special attention is given to analysing household income as a key indicator of the level of development and functionality of the social sphere. The decisive role of population needs as a fundamental driver in shaping the social space is emphasised. The research explores the relationship between the demand for and the actual use of elements of the social sphere and the level of household income, revealing both regional and temporal (quarterly) differences in the structure of service consumption. At the regional level, the study identifies the main categories of socially oriented services that account for the largest share of consumer expenditures.

Keywords: social sphere; regions of Ukraine; spatial differentiation; population income; availability of socially oriented services; delivery of social service

Regionalne uwarunkowania rozwoju sfery społecznej Ukrainy jako wyznacznik powojennej odbudowy

Streszczenie: Badanie poświęcone jest analizie przestrzennej dyferencjacji sfery społecznej na obszarze Ukrainy. Przedstawiono istotę, obiekty, podmioty oraz rezultaty procesów dyferencjacji sfery społecznej w ujęciu przestrzennym, a także specyfikę kształtowania się tych zależności w czasie i przestrzeni. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na analizę dochodów ludności jako kluczowego wskaźnika stopnia rozwoju i funkcjonalności sfery społecznej. Podkreślono decydującą rolę potrzeb mieszkańców jako podstawowego czynnika kształtowania przestrzeni społecznej. W badaniu przeanalizowano zależności między poziomem popytu i wykorzystaniem elementów sfery społecznej a dochodami ludności, identyfikując jednocześnie regionalne i czasowe (kwartalne) różnice w strukturze konsumpcji usług społecznych. Na poziomie regionalnym określono główne kategorie usług o charakterze społecznym, na które przeznaczana jest największa część wydatków konsumentów.

Słowa kluczowe: sfera społeczna; regiony Ukrainy; różnicowanie przestrzenne; dochody gospodarstw domowych; dostępność usług o charakterze społecznym; świadczenie usług społecznych