

Social protection of servicemen in Ukraine: issues of digitalization of funding

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Abstract: Based on the analysis of scientific views of scholars, the essence and peculiarities of social protection of servicemen in Ukraine are revealed in the article. The author emphasises that the implementation of social protection measures is virtually impossible without a properly structured financial mechanism for their realisation. The key problems of using digital technologies in financing the mechanisms of social protection of the military personnel are highlighted and the ways to overcome them are elaborated.

Keywords: digital technologies, financial mechanisms, social protection, military personnel.

It has been argued that social protection should be interpreted as a complex of state and social measures aimed at ensuring minimum social standards, rights and needs of the population, in particular its most vulnerable groups. It has been noted that the main goal of financing social protection is to ensure equal opportunities and social justice, as well as to reduce the level of social injustice in society.

It has been emphasized that today the key problems of the use of digital technologies in the financing of social protection mechanisms for military personnel are: 1) insufficient level and quality of automation and digitalization of social security entities in Ukraine; 2) low effectiveness of cyber security; 3) unavailability of digital services, because not all the servicemen and women have access to digital technologies, including the Internet and/or mobile communications; 4) lack of integration and coherence of information systems, as well as a centralized database; 5) high corruption risks; 6) insufficient informational support of servicemen and women; 7) lack of standardization and uniform methodology

It has been established that in order to overcome the problems outlined above, we consider it necessary: first, to develop special software, which will be designed to automate the processes of financing the mechanisms of social protection of military personnel. These can be systems for accounting and control of financial flows, special electronic payment systems, web portals for convenient access to information on social protection, etc.; secondly, the introduction of digital identifiers and authentication systems, which will allow effective and safe identification of military personnel, as well as verification of compliance with their rights to receive social benefits and assistance; thirdly, improving the system of electronic document circulation, which will contribute to faster and more accurate calculation and payment of social benefits; fourth, special attention should be paid to cyber security, which will make it possible to ensure reliable protection of personal data of military personnel, as well as information systems from hacker attacks and unauthorized access; fifth, it is necessary to pay attention to the issue of information education of military personnel and their further support as users of relevant services.

Problem statement:

The full-scale war that is currently taking place in our country has revealed a number of social, economic, political, defence and other problems. However, the problem of financial and legal nature has become particularly acute, especially in the context of sufficient financial resources for the social protection of persons who have stood up for the defence of our state such as military personnel. These problems, in our opinion, are: firstly, insufficient financial support from the state after the military return to civilian life. The state has practically no financial resources and no programmes to finance rehabilitation, including psychological rehabilitation; secondly, many military personnel face problems with access to financial services; thirdly, the quality and spread of modern digital technologies in the financial services market is insufficient; fourthly, the

technical capabilities and knowledge of the population in using mobile devices, in particular, military personnel; and fifthly, the lack of comprehensive state programmes to ensure the use of digital technologies in financial services.

Along with the above-mentioned problems, there are many practical aspects that prevent servicemen and women from receiving social assistance quickly. After all, former military personnel often have to face numerous bureaucratic problems after being injured, wounded or maimed, which can be overcome by introducing digital technologies, in particular in the context of the functioning of mechanisms for financing social protection of military personnel remotely, using digital technologies.

Research status:

Some problematic issues related to social protection of servicemen and women were considered in academic works by: L.S. Holovko, L.I. Didkivska, V.S. Zhuravskiy, V.V. Lavrukhin, S.S. Lukash, R.P. Pidlypna, O.M. Potopakhina and many others. However, despite the substantial theoretical contribution, it is fair to state that the scientific literature lacks comprehensive theoretical studies on both theoretical and practical problems of using digital technologies in financing the mechanisms of social protection of servicemen and women.

The purpose and objectives of the article:

The purpose of the research is to identify the problems and outline the prospects of using digital technologies in financing the mechanisms of social protection of military personnel, based on the analysis of scientific views of scholars and the provisions of current legislation. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: to clarify the essence of social protection of servicemen and women and the mechanism of its financing; to reveal the content of digital technologies in financing the mechanisms of social protection of servicemen and women; to outline the existing problems in the field of research.

The scientific novelty of the article is that it is the first comprehensive theoretical study to outline the problems of using digital technologies in financing the mechanisms of social protection of military personnel, as well as to develop directions for their solution.

Presentation of the main material:

To begin the research, it is worth noting that, in general, social protection is not only an integral part of the social policy of any state, but also an indisputable requirement for civilised existence at a sufficiently high level of each society without exception. A person, as the main guarantor of the existence of society, should feel cared for and treated humanely as a certain guarantee of the existence of the state and law. Only by paying attention to social protection and social groups that directly depend on it, the state will ensure historical recognition of the past, stable modern functioning and happy existence of citizens in the future, which is the basis for the existence of a democratic legal social state [1, c.21]. Some scholars point out that social protection of the population is state support for certain categories of the population who may be negatively affected by market processes, ensuring an appropriate standard of living by providing legal, financial, material assistance to individual citizens (the most vulnerable segments of the population), as well as creating social guarantees for the economically active part of the population, ensuring acceptable living and working conditions for citizens, as well as by establishing social standards [2].

V.V. Lavrukhin points out that the social protection system is a complex, a policy mainly aimed at: observance of human rights (social and other); provision of social guarantees, decent life (quality of life) of a person or certain groups of the population, satisfaction of needs; support of the population's income in special situations, creation of conditions for self-realisation, etc. In this regard, the object of social protection is ultimately a person, in particular, his/her material or social status, regardless of his/her gender, age, nationality, etc., as well as various groups and communities (in particular, workers, employed persons, population, etc.), while social protection itself as a social phenomenon emerged at relatively late stages of human society development (capitalism, socialism, industrial society). Therefore, as the above-mentioned scholar notes, social protection should be seen as a category that reflects the totality of relations that develop in society regarding the production, distribution and redistribution of the social product in order to ensure adequate social adaptation and integration of individuals who are unable to cope with the negative impact of social risks on their own [3, c. 68–69].

Thus, in general, social protection should be interpreted as a set of state and social measures aimed at ensuring minimum social standards, rights and needs of the population, in particular its most vulnerable groups. The main goal of social protection is to ensure equal opportunities and social justice, as well as to reduce social injustice in society. Regarding servicemen and women, the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of

Servicemen and women and Members of Their Families" defines social protection of the military as an activity (function) of the state aimed at establishing a system of legal and social guarantees that ensure the exercise of constitutional rights and freedoms, satisfaction of material and spiritual needs of servicemen and women in accordance with the specific type of their service, status in society, and maintenance of social stability in the military environment. This is the right to provide for their support in case of full, partial or temporary disability, loss of the breadwinner, unemployment due to the circumstances beyond their control, old age, as well as in other cases provided for by law [4].

The social security of servicemen and women of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, according to L.V. Tsyukalo, is aimed at equalising the social status of this category of persons in relation to other members of society, as well as at establishing additional guarantees related to the high risk of injury or death as a result of participation in hostilities or military conflicts. Social security consists in the direct provision by the state, represented by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, of payments in monetary and in-kind form to servicemen and women who are entitled to them, provision of medical care and housing. Social security of servicemen and women of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has its own characteristics, sources of formation, conditions and forms of implementation, as well as subjects who receive such social security [5]. In the opinion of the above author, the following features of financing the social security of servicemen and women should be distinguished: 1) source of funding - funds for the social security of servicemen and women come exclusively from the State Budget of Ukraine, allocated to the Ministry of Defence for the current year; 2) subjects to be provided with social security - the specific circle of persons receiving social security is determined depending on the type of military service (contract servicemen and women, conscripts, mobilised servicemen and women and others) and their family members; 3) conditions of provision - the right to a certain type of provision is established for specific categories of persons in cases determined by the Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Servicemen and women and Members of Their Families", as well as other regulatory acts; 4) purpose of provision - granting support is aimed at achieving a certain goal (for example, monthly financial support of a serviceman, provision of necessary things, etc.) [5].

At the same time, it is worth noting that the effectiveness of social security for servicemen and women depends on the consistency and focus of state policy, which should be concentrated on improving the status of the military. The development of an effective mechanism for financing social security measures significantly accelerates the establishment of social protection standards for servicemen and women and contributes to the proper performance of tasks related to Ukraine's integration into the European political, economic, security and legal space, its membership in the EU and NATO, and the building of equal and mutually beneficial relations with other countries. [6]. In addition, it is quite reasonable to say that an important feature of social protection of servicemen and women is that it is provided exclusively at the expense of the state budget. Therefore, the allocation and use of financial resources are fully within the competence of the state, represented by its special institutions and their officials. Recently, a situation has arisen in Ukraine where, although military personnel have been granted a special social status with all the rights, benefits, compensation and guarantees associated with it, the state is actually unable to ensure their full implementation. This is due to the lack of the necessary economic base, insufficient financial resources and an unclear mechanism for implementing the stated guarantees and benefits. At the same time, servicemen and women are required to perform their official duties strictly and efficiently [5]. Ukraine is currently undergoing defence reform to address real defence challenges. The aim of this reform is to develop the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Ukraine in line with Euro-Atlantic norms and NATO membership criteria. To ensure the implementation of the reform, it is envisaged to amend legislation and other regulatory acts in various areas, including improving the social protection of servicemen and women and their families, maintaining the required level of social standards in military service and the military reserve, ensuring adequate material and other support for servicemen and women in accordance with their legally established rights and freedoms, taking into account the risks to their lives and health and the difficult social and living conditions of military service.

Moreover, an important area for improving the financial mechanisms of servicemen and women's social protection is the more active use of digital technologies in this area. In this regard, it should be noted that digital technologies refer to a set of tools, methods and processes that use electronic devices and computer systems to process, transmit, store, analyse and manage information. They are based on the use of digital data represented as zeros and ones and can include technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things, data accounting, cloud computing, blockchain and many others. Digital technologies are widely used in a variety of industries, including communications, business, science, medicine, education, finance and government, and they contribute to automation, efficiency, innovation and a better quality of life.

In our opinion, the key problems of using digital technologies in financing social protection mechanisms for military personnel today are as follows:

1. Insufficient level and quality of automation and digitalisation of social security entities in Ukraine. In this respect, it is worth noting that many processes related to the financing of social protection for military personnel can indeed be performed automatically and efficiently using digital technologies and systems. However, there are practically no centralised and integrated systems in our country, which leads to greater complexity, errors and delays in the relevant financial transactions;
2. Insufficient level of cybersecurity. The use of digital technologies requires a high level of cybersecurity, especially in the context of financial resources. However, there are threats of cyber attacks that can lead to unauthorised access to financial data of servicemen and women and violation of their confidentiality. Therefore, it is important to develop and implement effective cybersecurity measures to protect the personal data of servicemen and women and women;
3. Inaccessibility of digital services, as not all servicemen and women have access to digital technologies, including the Internet and/or mobile communications. This, in turn, can complicate the processes of financial support and social benefits. In addition, information literacy and skills in using digital services may be insufficient for some military personnel, which limits their ability to access relevant financial services;
4. Lack of integration and coherence of information systems. There are many different programmes and funding mechanisms for social protection of servicemen and women, which may not be sufficiently integrated and coordinated. This can lead to duplication of processes, excessive bureaucracy and delays in the provision of financial services;
5. Lack of a centralised database. Information on the military personnel and their financial needs is distributed among different systems and bodies, which makes it difficult to record, monitor and coordinate financial services for the military;
6. Corruption risks. In this regard, it is worth noting that the use of digital technologies can reduce corruption risks, but there are threats of insufficient data security and misuse of financial resources. It is important to establish effective control, audit and internal control mechanisms to prevent corruption and ensure transparency and integrity in the financial process.
7. Insufficient information support. Servicemen and women and their families may not have sufficient information about available financial services, programmes and benefits. Lack of education can lead to misuse of resources or loss of social protection opportunities.
8. Lack of standardisation and unified methodology. Different approaches and methodologies can be used in the area of social protection of servicemen and women in Ukraine, which leads to inconveniences in calculations, reporting and analysis. Standardisation and the introduction of a unified methodology would help to simplify funding processes and ensure greater consistency and clarity for all stakeholders.

Conclusion:

Consequently, in our opinion, these problems cause insufficient efficiency, delay and unsatisfactory quality of the implementation of measures aimed at state financing the social protection of the military personnel. For this reason, in order to overcome the above problems, we consider it vital to: *firstly*, develop special software designed to automate the processes of financing the social protection mechanisms for military personnel. These may include systems for accounting and controlling financial flows, special electronic payment systems, web portals for easy access to information on social protection, etc; *secondly*, the introduction of digital identifiers and authentication systems that will allow for effective and secure identification of servicemen and women, as well as verification of their rights to social benefits and assistance; *third*, improving the electronic document management system, which will facilitate faster and more accurate calculation and payment of social benefits; *fourth*, special attention should be paid to cybersecurity, which will ensure reliable protection of personal data of servicemen and women, as well as information systems from hacker attacks and unauthorised access; *fifth*, attention should be paid to the issue of information education of the military and their further support as users of relevant services.

Therefore, the use of digital technologies in financing the social protection mechanisms for the military will help to increase the efficiency of financing and resource allocation, which will allow to build a high-quality social protection system for the subjects studied above. They can help to automate processes, reduce administrative costs, eliminate the possibility of corruption and promote transparency in the use of funds.

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