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Electoral corruption: illegal voter bribery technologies

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Abstract

Based on the methodology of documentary review of scientific sources, materials of public organizations, law enforcement and judicial practice of investigating cases of voter bribery, the most widespread technologies of electoral corruption in Ukraine and other countries were revealed and investigated in the article. Peculiarities of direct and indirect voter bribery have been discovered. The most widespread forms (technologies) of election-related bribery have been identified: “carousel”, “bargaining”, “conditioning”, “bus”, “dumping”, “election network technology”. It has been established that the most insecure technology that poses a serious threat to the smooth conduct of elections is the creation of “election networks”, which can significantly influence and undermine the credibility of the will of citizens. It is concluded that the characteristics of such a criminal network are: massive character involving a wide range of participants with different roles; significant territorial distribution; realization of criminal intent through clearly planned step-by-step activities within a temporary criminal group. Based on the results of the research, it has been established that in Ukraine the “carousel” technology has been widely used.

Keywords: electoral corruption; electoral technologies; voter bribery; criminal offense; criminal investigation.

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Corrupción electoral: tecnologías ilegales de soborno a los votantes

Resumen

Con base en la metodología de revisión documental de fuentes científicas, materiales de organizaciones públicas, aplicación de la ley y práctica judicial de investigar casos de soborno de votantes, se revelaron e investigaron --en el artículo-- las tecnologías más extendidas de corrupción electoral en Ucrania y otros países. Se han descubierto peculiaridades del soborno directo e indirecto de votantes. Se han identificado las formas (tecnologías) más extendidas de soborno relacionadas con las elecciones: “carrusel”, “negociación”, “condicionamiento”, “bus”, “dumping”, “tecnología de redes electorales”. Se ha establecido que la tecnología más insegura y que representa una seria amenaza para el buen desarrollo de las elecciones es la de creación de “redes electorales”, que pueden influir significativamente y socavar la credibilidad de la voluntad de los ciudadanos. Se concluye que las características de dicha red criminal son: carácter masivo que involucra una amplia gama de participantes con diferentes roles; importante distribución territorial; realización de la intención delictiva mediante actividades paso a paso claramente planificadas dentro de un grupo delictivo temporal. Sobre la base de los resultados de la investigación, se ha establecido que en Ucrania la tecnología de “carrusel” se ha utilizado ampliamente.

Palabras clave: corrupción electoral; tecnologías electorales; soborno de votantes; ofensa criminal; investigación crimina.

Introduction

Democracy is the main value of the international community, supporting democracy, humanity promotes human rights, development, peace and security. Democracy promotes good governance, monitors elections, supports civil society to strengthen democratic institutions and accountability, ensures self-determination in decolonized countries, and security (Kalynovskyi *et al.*, 2022).

Constant transformation processes in a state-organized society stipulate the need to adapt activities in the field of organizing and holding elections to government bodies to changing conditions. One of the key directions of such adaptation is the transformation of the system-structural approach and the improvement of the functional-purposeful organization of such activities (Keshikova and Demeshko, 2021).

The use of corrupt election technologies (the so-called “electoral corruption”) completely nullifies principles of direct popular government

and provides an opportunity for the corrupt elite, as well as criminal and semi-criminal structures, to directly influence formation of representative bodies of state power, and for the dishonest politicians – to dispose of significant public resources. Corruption in election process is a rather dangerous phenomenon, since as a result of corrupt relations realistic political competition is revealed, corruption of future representatives of the legislative and executive authorities is laid, the level of trust decreases the process of power formation through elections, thus ultimately creating a real threat to the national security of any given state. Electoral corruption, the institutional mechanism of which lies in the abuse of various kinds of administrative resource of public authorities of different levels, serves as a starting point for political corruption in general.

Elections are often “overshadowed” by various types of violations, including distortion of the results of popular will. According to the information of the database of political institutions (DPI), which contains statistical data on some 181 countries, facts of fraud, falsification and even intimidation of voters have been recorded in about 20 percent of the last elections to the executive power bodies (Asunka *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, study and improvement of mechanisms for countering criminal attempts to disrupt the election process are extremely urgent and important task not only in Ukraine, but also around the world.

Manifestations of electoral corruption can be divided into three groups: a) limiting the voter’s ability to express his preferences by implementing his voting rights; b) manipulation of election results during or after elections without any direct intervention with voters; c) cooperation with voters in the organization and implementation of illegal actions during the election process.

According to Yuriy Orlov, the forms of manifestations of electoral corruption are: a) bribing voters; b) bribery of election commission members for the purpose of falsifying election documents; c) corruption agreement regarding obtaining a suitable (so-called transit) place in electoral list of the party (political bloc) (Orlov, 2016). This list is further extended by V. Sokurenko by referring to violation of the procedure for financing political parties (Article 159-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine) (Sokurenko, 2017).

Corruption in our state can be compared to the ongoing war in Ukraine (Vozniuk, *et al.*, 2021). The negative consequences of corruption have been repeatedly discussed in the context of negative consequences of corruption (Carson and Prado, 2016; Mykhailov, 2020). Corrupt technologies and practices not only impede economic and social development, they also prevent democracies from normal functioning. Citizens in corrupt democracies can find it unnecessary or unable to establish credible relations with their representatives.

As a result, citizens can distance themselves from the political system, believing that it is better to stay at home on Election Day (Stockemer *et al.*, 2013). The influence of political corruption makes respondents refrain from voting more often. On the other hand, democracy itself reduces corruption (Kolstad and Wiig, 2016) and democratic elections play a decisive role in stamping out corruption (Vries and Solaz, 2017). Democratic elections are called to prevent corrupt politicians from getting into office. In practice, however, corrupt politicians are often elected to state seats in elections. Moreover, one of the reasons for this is bribery of election officials.

According to M. Ivanov and Y. Davidenko, the reasons for bribery of election officials are deeply rooted in the history of elections in Ukraine. The modern socio-economic and political instability in Ukraine, according to scientists, contributes to the fact that citizens do not object to donations, free concerts, receiving certain amount of money during election campaigns, thus selling their votes to one or another candidate, assuming that in such way they receive at least some benefit from him (Ivanov and Davidenko, 2019).

Until recently, countering such criminal offenses has been a significant problem in Ukraine, and were also found to be deficiencies in the legislative regulation of the consolidation of criminal liability for such offences. Thus, prior to the amendments to Article 160 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (“Bribery of a voter, referendum participant, member of the electoral commission or the referendum committee”), sanctions of part. 1 of the Article did not entail deprivation of liberty, so investigators could not prosecute a person under Article 208 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, which significantly complicated documentation of such proceedings.

Moreover, according to the previous wording of Art. 160 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the act of bribing a voter by means of a proposal, or by giving an unlawful warning (part 2) was considered a crime of medium gravity, which substantially limited investigator’s procedural possibilities in the part of conducting secret investigative actions. For comparison: in Australia, for instance, electoral bribery is the most serious political offense: according to Articles 326 and 362 (1) of the Electoral Act (Commonwealth Electoral Act) of 1918, even one candidate’s request (proposal) to bribe a voter nullifies his or her election (Orr, 2005).

With the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Amending Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine to improve the election legislation” № 805-IX of 16.07.2020 (Law of Ukraine, 2020), the situation in this aspect has changed. At the same time, the lack of sufficient experience of investigators in the investigation of such criminal offenses in the conditions of frequent updating of the legislative framework and the lack of proper methodical support for such investigations, taking into account the latest changes, is evident. The low effectiveness of the investigation of voter bribery is also

evidenced by the data of official statistics. Thus, it is worth pointing out at the extremely low rate of criminal prosecutions: 2016 – 0%, 2017 – 2%, 2018 – 40%, 2019 – 3,1%, 2020 – 11,6% (Report, 2020).

Difficulties of investigating criminal offenses are in some ways caused by complicated technologies of voter bribery, which include several stages, take into account modern possibilities of opposing investigations, particularly in the form of the prosecution of such crimes, as well as the psychology of interactions between the giver of bribe and the person who is actually bribed.

1. Theoretical Framework

The article employs a set of research methods, namely: terminological, system-structural, formal-legal and statistical (grouping, deduction, analysis of quantitative indicators). The empirical basis of the article is constituted by the generalized materials of investigative and judicial practice; systematized statistical information about the dynamics of criminal offenses related to electoral bribery, as well as the results of work of law enforcement agencies; analytical materials and informational reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Police, Office of the Prosecutor General, Committee of Voters of Ukraine, the “Opora” civic network. Theoretical foundation of the article is based on scientific works, provisions of the Criminal (2001), the Criminal Procedure (2012) and the Electoral (2019) Codes of Ukraine and the provisions of the Laws of Ukraine “On the Elections of People’s Deputies of Ukraine” (2011), “On Local Elections” (2015), “On Elections of the President of Ukraine” (1999) and others.

The system-structural method has been used to describe stages of implementation of the electors by creating an «electoral network» and the peculiarities of creating an “electoral batch” of the “electoral pyramid”.

Statistical methods have been used to summarize results of sociological research, study of criminal proceedings materials, law enforcement and judicial practice.

The formal-legal method has allowed authors to analyze the legal essence of the provisions of regulatory legal acts, which regulate organization of the electoral process in Ukraine and establish liability grounds for election violations.

Of course, comparative legal method has been actively employed in this article as well. It helped to get a better image of illegal electoral behavior both in Ukraine and some other jurisdictions. We have previously pointed out the importance of using comparative method in legal research (Movchan *et al.*, 2022).

2. Analysis of recent research

Works of such scientists as Hryhorova (2021), Kubareva (2020), and others are devoted to the study of certain aspects of the investigated issues. Besides, researchers of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (O. Taran, O. Kubareva, A. Vozniuk, M. Hryha, Ya. Diakin and others) over the course of four years have been researching problematic aspects of the investigation of bribery of a voter, voter-participant of the referendum, as a result of which the relevant methodological recommendations have been prepared (Taran *et al.*, 2020).

Without diminishing the role of scientific contribution of the abovementioned scientists, it is necessary to acknowledge that a lot of problematic issues related to the investigation and prevention of crimes provided for by Art. 160 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, continue to occur. Now, after the introduction of amendments to this norm, as well as taking into account the emergence of new methods of implementation of election bribery, studying specifics of the implementation of illegal election technologies is of essential importance for the implementation of a quick, complete and effective investigation of these crimes and preventing them.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the most common modern technologies of voter bribery in order to improve methods of investigating criminal offenses associated with manifestations of electoral corruption.

3. Results and Discussion

Various classifications of bribery in the electoral process have been formed in academic science, but the most widely spread one is based on the familiarity with the subject of corrupt relations. According to such classification the following types can be named: bribery of electors; bribery of candidates and authorized representatives or trusted individuals; bribery of members of election commissions; bribery of witnesses; bribery of mass media representatives.

Bribery of the electorate consists of giving the elector a wrongful win for any actions related to the indirect exercise by the voter of his/her election right (Kushnaryov, 2018). Bribery of an elector is defined by the Black's Law Dictionary as a crime committed by the one who gives or promises to give, or offers money or anything of value to bribe an elector for the purpose of corruption, to encourage others to vote in a certain way or to refrain from voting or to pay the voter for voting in any way by refraining from voting.

Bribery of voters was criminalized through changes to the Criminal Code of Ukraine, introduced in 2014. Despite this, the Committee of Voters

of Ukraine has recorded multiple facts, when a vote was purchased for as low as UAH 50 (in the “poorest” districts) up to more than UAH 1,000, or cash certificates, grocery sets, the opportunity to use certain services (for example, free public transport, medicines, etc.), concluding with voters of extralegal “social agreements”. Bribery of voters can be not only personal, but also corporate in nature (for example, provision of goods, services, equipment for social institutions, organizations).

Voter bribery is a serious problem in ensuring a fair ground during election process. This issue has caused concern among relevant stakeholder parties in many countries, including Bulgaria, Lithuania, Montenegro, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, and Slovakia (2011). Credible reports on bribery of voters on election day have been registered in Armenia, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia (2010), Lithuania, Moldova (2011), Romania (2012), Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine (2012) (Binder *et al.*, 2013), USA (Levitt, 2007).

As for Ukraine, the report by international observer’s states that during local elections in 2015, reports were recorded with accusations of bribery of voters, and there were also cases when candidates handed out grocery kits to low-income voters directly or through charities organizations (International Election Observation Mission, 2005).

Analysis of the situation regarding the realization by the electors of their right during the electoral processes of national and local elections in Ukraine has revealed that the freedom of making a decision by voters is constantly subjected to an unlawful influence. The main problem is the bribery of the voters, which is often the main factor, which influences election results.

At the legislative level, two ways of bribing voters have been defined: direct and indirect. Thus, Decree of the Central Election Commission No. 376 of February 22, 2019 “On the Role of implementation of the provisions of part six of Article 64 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Election of the President of Ukraine” (currently, this Decree became null and void on June 25, 2020) by direct bribery of electors is defined as a proposal, promise or giving to a voter or a participant of referendum participant for committing or not committing any actions related to the indirect exercise by the voter of his/her election right or right to participate in the referendum (refusal to participate in voting, voting at the electoral booth (referendum) more than once, voting for an individual candidate in the elections, candidates of a political party, local organization of a political party, or withdrawal from such voting, transfer of the election ballot to another person).

Indirect bribery is defined in the mentioned Resolution as the performance of the electoral campaign by means of providing illegal benefit or free of charge goods (except for the goods which contain visual representations of the name, symbols, flags of a political party, the cost

of which does not exceed the size established by law), works, services, enterprises, institutions, organizations (Resolution of the Central Election Commission, 2019).

Currently, according to part 14, Art. 74 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Election of People’s Deputies of Ukraine” the entities that may be granted an unlawful benefit in the specified manner include voters, in addition to enterprises, institutions and organizations: “granting voters, institutions: giving electioneers, institutions, organizations free or on a voluntary basis, of goods, services, works, valuable partners, credits, lottery tickets, other material valuables, which is accompanied by requests or offers to vote for or not to vote for a certain party or candidate or by mentioning the name of the party or the name of the candidate is indirect bribery of the voters”(Law of Ukraine, 2011).

We suggest reviewing the most common ways of implementing direct and indirect bribery of election officials.

The experience of election districts in recent years, as well as the analysis of judicial and investigative practice, testifies to the mass character of direct vote buying with a purpose of benefiting a certain candidate for the election. Here the general mechanism often includes two stages.

On the first stage, there is a search for potential voters, who can be given monetary reward or other “material reward” for committing any actions connected with their indirect exercise of their voting rights. Such actions may include, in particular: falsified will of a voter at the time of voting or refusal to participate therein; voting at the polling station more than once; handing over one’s ballot paper to another person; election commission member’s refusal to participate in its work; withdrawing one’s candidacy for the relevant elected position, etc.

It is noteworthy that in some cases those who intend to “buy” votes are looking for an active member of society who is aware of the residents of a certain locality and has credibility in a certain social environment. Such person is promoted among the socially disadvantaged groups of the population, who, due to their precarious material status, are willing to accept the suggestion to improve their income status – among the student environment, elderly people (pensioners), persons on parental leave, residents of rural areas, etc. Such intermediary person will directly offer, promise and reward voters for voting in favor of the desired candidate (of a political party) (Kubareva, 2020).

In other cases such search is made indirectly, when a promise of material incentives for the relevant actions of the voter are provided by: a) virtual pre-election trade on the Internet through social networks Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.; b) the use of anonymous phone calls with an offer receiving an illegal benefit in exchange for voting for one of the

candidates for the elected office; c) distribution of leaflets with the promise of an undue benefit (for example, to write off debts for communal services in case of voting for one of candidates, etc.) (Taran *et al.*, 2020).

In order to bribe voters, as well as to “sell” citizens’ votes offenders actively use Internet, where dozens of messages appear with approximately the following content: “How to sell your vote in the upcoming elections?”, “For how much you can sell your vote in the elections?”, “Is it possible to officially sell your vote on elections?” etc. At the same time, in some foreign countries (Germany, Denmark, Canada) selling one’s vote constitutes a criminal offense.

Sometimes violators conclude “agreements” with the voter, whose vote they intend to buy with indicating passport data and signatures of voters or, even, are selected receipts on the obligation to vote for a particular candidate in the elections (candidates from a political party, local organization of a political party). Simultaneously with signing such “document” voter receives a so-called “social card” with a certain amount on his account, which can be obtained after a certain period of time after election results have been posted.

It can also be a plastic card for receiving discounts on purchases of goods in a certain store – again after the elections. As a rule, specified cards are provided to the voter not directly from the respective candidate, but instead created by “charitable foundations” specifically for this purpose. For example, during 2015 local elections the “social card” of Charitable Foundation “Nash Krai” was used for the purpose of bribery in Luhansk region (Antipov and Topchiy, 2017).

Foreign authors also critically refer to the conclusion of agreements with voters in order to buy their votes (Levitt, 2007).

At the next stage, illegal benefit for the “correct” vote is directly transferred. Having switched to one of the above-mentioned ways to change their will at the elections, perpetrators, as a general rule, transfer the money step by step:

1. on the eve of voting (1-2 days before or on the day of the election) they give a part of material reward;
2. after the will is fulfilled and the proof of the vote for the required candidate’s favor, they give the rest of the money. At the same time, verification of “correctness” of the election is carried out differently. Sometimes it is necessary to put against the name of a particular candidate a specific mark, which is distinguished from all the others. In practice, there are cases when voters are obliged to throw their ballots to specially designated ballot box, which is monitored by an individual person, who puts specific marks on the list of bribed

persons compiled in advance (Verdict of the Ostroh District Court of Rivne Region, 2016).

However, in 74.6% of the criminal cases that we have reviewed, in order to confirm the fact of voting with a purpose of obtaining an illegal benefit, the mechanism of photographing the ballot paper after direct voting in the booth at the polling station has been used. As a rule, for the purpose of identification, the voter had to take, along with the ballot, a photo of his/her passport or any other document identifying a person. After that, the photo must be sent via a mobile social media app (Viber, WhatsApp, Telegram, Messenger, etc.).

Such actions directly violate the secrecy of the vote. Thus, according to Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Local Elections”, photographing, video fixating by any means the results of the voters’ will in the voting booth, as well as demonstration of the results of voluntariness in the voting room by the voter are explicitly prohibited (Law of Ukraine, 2015).

However, the mere fact of photographing does not entail the person may be held liable for violation of the voting confidentiality [Article 159 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine] a person can be prosecuted only in case of proof of intentional disclosure of the content of the declaration of will (Research, 2019).

Academic literature describes various technologies of bribery of electors. B. Vishnevskiy identifies several basic ways of corrupting the election officials. The first one is “conditioning” –virtuous activity of a prospective candidate before the start of the election. The other is the “agreement”, when candidates formally conclude factual agreements providing for the work (services) to be performed by the election candidates, while the payments are made in reality. The third technology – “carousel”, also called “clean ticket”, “turntable” or “helicopter”, is quite widespread.

The mechanism of this method is the following: the voter is asked to take a clean ballot out of the polling station for a fee. This ballot is filled in by the “purchasers” and is offered to another voter for casting his/her vote. After that, the latter presents his blank ballot to the “buyer” and receives a reward. The fourth technology, called a “bus”, consists of a mass drive of the voters to the polling stations and handing out the following rewards. And the last one, the “dumping”, is the provision of free services on behalf of the name of the candidate or an organization that supports it, the sale of goods at reduced prices or for free (Vishnevsky, 2018).

Implementation of voter bribery through an extensive network usually includes the following steps:

1. Compilation of voter lists with their personal data, as well as information about their political favorites. Such activities are carried

out in different ways: survey (questionnaire) under the guise of sociological research, collection signatures for relevant social projects, etc.; involvement of knowledgeable electoral subject's process (members of election commissions, observers) or representatives of local authorities (at such as heads of village councils).

It should be noted that such uncontrolled collection of passport data creates practical possibilities for illegal influence on the will of the electorate by means of bribery (Hryhorova, 2019).

2. Recruitment of agents for the purpose of selecting trustworthy persons to form a "bribery network". Agitators, as a rule, are people "from the local community", which are characterized by three features: a great freedom to disarrange their own time; a search for various kinds of making additional income; communicability (Dirty election technologies, 2019). So called "recruitment" of agents is carried out, mainly among employees of the budgetary sphere, by announcing it 3-4 months prior to elections.

Representatives of the candidate hold meetings of the employees of the budgetary sphere, as a rule, in public places, where they carry out advocacy and public debate. Such meetings are occasionally accompanied by the distribution of informational materials in the form of newspapers, leaflets, calendars, stationery, and displays of photographs, demonstration of films about the achievements of the candidate in question.

3. Providing authorized persons with the lists of voters who have already indicated to vote for the desired candidate. The list is determined by the election headquarters of an individual election candidate (candidates of a political party, local organization political party).
4. Visiting places of residence (houses, apartments) where potential voters are invited to vote in the election for an individual candidate (candidates of a political party), the election law does not contain any provisions on the right to vote for a candidate (or candidates of a political party). It is explained to them that they will receive material compensation for their services. In addition, on the day of election they offer to take a photo of their ballot with a "checkmark" next to a particular name. All this is accompanied by distribution of campaign products of the appropriate political force and by inclusion of data to the lists.
5. Payment of money to trusted persons who carried out agitation for the benefit of an individual candidate for a particular candidate in the elections (candidates of a political party, local political party organizations), who, in turn, one week before the elections begin to deliver money to each household (according to the lists). At the same time there are cases of transferring money by the agents to

individuals who will vote from the place of residence (Kubareva, 2020).

Classic schemes of organizing voter bribery by forming “nets” can be supplemented with various elements and stand out with certain features. Indeed, during organization of election campaign in the past Presidential elections one of the candidates has organized mass bribery scheme using personal ID cards with QR code.

It should be added that activities of recruiters (agitators) are distinguished by variability and versatility. Indeed, after receiving illegal funds from the organizers intended for the voters, they try to make this procedure cheaper (for example, by buying expired products, alcohol of dubious quality and offering them wholesale to voters). Sometimes recruiters’ resort to various types of falsification, by fabricating photo reports in particular (Devitskiy and Zhmurov, 2017).

We would like to emphasize that campaigning itself is not a criminal offense. At the same time, according to part 6 of Art. 57 of the Election Code of Ukraine (Electoral Code of Ukraine, 2019) and part 6 of Art. 64 of Law of Ukraine “On the Election of the President of Ukraine” (Law of Ukraine, 2019), it is prohibited to conduct pre-election campaigning accompanied by giving voters money or free of charge or on preferential terms for goods, services, works, securities, loans, lotteries. Such pre-election campaigning or giving money to voters, also providing goods, services, works, securities, loans, lotteries, whether free of charge or on preferential terms, accompanied by appeals or offers to vote or not to vote for a certain candidate or mentioning his name, is considered bribery of voters, thus making it a criminal offense.

In this aspect, we note that voters with a low level of financial well-being become quite profitable for majority candidates. Having renovated kindergartens and schools or roads, they easily win the electorate. Thus, the level of material wealth is closely related to the scale of voter bribery. During the parliamentary election campaign of 2012, voter bribery has become massive, in large due to the charitable funds. Pro-government political forces used budget funds for territories where candidates from the government were nominated (Polishchuk, 2018).

The next “grey” technology, which was widely used in previous election campaigns in Ukraine and contained elements of voter bribery is the so-called “carousel”. The essence of the technology is quite simple: one of the bribed voters takes his blank ballot out of the polling station and gives it to the senior scheme member. Next, a corresponding mark is placed on this ballot for the “necessary” candidate. The ballot is given to the next participant of the “merry-go-round” scheme (Polishchuk, 2015; Horodok *et al.*, 2016).

Not only election tickets, but also certificates for the right to participate in elections can be bought. Such certificate is issued to the electorate if he or she for personal reasons cannot exercise their election right in that locality (election office) where he/she was included into the list of electors. Analysis of criminal prosecutions indicates that such certificates are often purchased from the voters for the purpose of their further use for voting by nominees.

There are also cases of bribery involving the use of corrupted personal ID cards which, among other things, provide the possibility of voting for a certain candidate repeatedly and/or at several electoral offices.

Without obtaining a transparent certificate, it is possible to change one's place of participation in elections by changing the registration of the place of residence, which, as numerous examples demonstrate, has been also actively used by election officials during machinations to bribe voters (Hryhorova, 2021).

It is worth mentioning that in some cases voters were not informed in general about the fact that registration of their place of residence has changed (Verdict, 2016), and in some cases even their personal presence at the site of crime was unnecessary (Verdict, 2015). Here we would like to draw attention to the extremely low level of legal culture and the imprudence of voters who have completely irresponsibly handed over their passports to outsiders without realizing all the possible consequences of such actions.

In some places, the act of bribing voters to vote at polling stations in other constituencies through fictitious registration was massive in scale, distinguished by extreme audacity and has significantly influenced results of the elections.

Considering scientific and technological progress and social development, criminal vote-buying technologies are currently not standing still, but are being actively improved over time with the use of social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), means of mobile communication, contracts for campaigning and other services, thus disguising de facto "vote sales".

It should be noted that in future parliamentary and presidential elections, except traditional food rations and entertainment, experts expect new one's forms of bribery to surface. According to forecasts of the all-Ukrainian public organization "Committee of Voters of Ukraine", among the "trends" of the next election campaign will be financial assistance to military servicemen and their families (donation of apartments, cars, furniture, household appliances, medical assistance – funds for operations and prosthetics), material assistance to immigrants from occupied territories (Bribery, 2021).

Researchers also point at the direct relationship between falsification of voting results and voter turnout during elections. Expression of the voter's will today have a sufficiently low index of participation in the elections, which indicates legal nihilism of the population, its low electoral activity. However, even in developed democratic countries there are legal norms that impose liability for non-appearance of voters at elections, for example, in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Greece, Egypt, Luxembourg, Turkey, Pakistan and other countries (Punishment, 2018).

As a rule, the transfer of undue benefits to voters is carried out in two stages: before voting and after it, provided that the voter has been bribed in a specific manner.

Conclusion

One of the forms of electoral corruption during the electoral process is bribery of voters, which means forcing the will of the active subject (candidate) over the passive one, satisfying his needs of a property or non-property nature and determining behavior of the latter. This is one of the most widespread and most harmless forms of corruption. Unconscious consent of citizens for the purpose of the unknowing acquiescence of citizens for the purpose of obtaining material benefits, without considering the consequences, is negatively reflected both in the development of society and the state as a whole.

The most widespread method of committing voters' bribery and the one causing a serious threat of spoiling real results of the voting is recognized to be creation of "electoral nets". Serving as a form of indirect bribery of voters, this technology was implemented by using the scheme of marginal marketing in the organization of election campaign by setting up a large-scale buying of votes. Specific features of such malignant network are: its mass character with involvement of a wide circle of participants with various roles; significant territorial expansion; implementation of the malicious intent through clearly planned step-by-step activities within the limits of a temporary criminal group.

The study of the peculiarities of the organization of "electoral nets" is of great importance for the development of an effective methodological approach to the investigation of malpractices related to electoral bribery. The implementation of such proceedings in practice is accompanied by a whole series of complications related, in addition to the latent nature of these crimes, to the difficulties of their documentation, including the need to use special knowledge related to both organization of the election process and the need to investigate digital traces, which often represent evidence base.

The main task of the administrative activity of our state at the current stage of development can be defined as ensuring and maintaining public trust in the election results (both on the part of the participants of the election process and on the part of the international community), through the mechanisms of their active involvement in the election process at all stages of its implementation. Therefore, further scientific research on the mentioned topic seems promising, taking into account the fact that voter bribery technologies are constantly changing and improving and, accordingly, investigation of illegal activities related to their implementation has to be transformed, while meeting new challenges.

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