



**Self-government bodies  
in Russia by the  
example of Kazan city  
(regulatory aspect)**



**SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES IN RUSSIA BY THE EXAMPLE OF KAZAN  
CITY (REGULATORY ASPECT)**  
**ORGANISMOS DE AUTOGOBIERNO EN RUSIA SEGÚN EL EJEMPLO DE LA  
CIUDAD DE KAZAN (ASPECTO REGLAMENTARIO)**

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**Abstract**

The paper discusses the features concerning the normative-legal regulation of the communicative activity of local authorities in one of the key entities of modern Russian politics. It has been established that the existing legislative framework stimulates the development of dialogue forms of communication between municipal authorities and the population, and contributes to the institutionalization of local self-government. At the same time, the proclamation of the information transparency principles in the activities of municipal authorities requires clarification of the procedures for information support in certain regulatory legal acts.

**Keywords:** local government, legislative support of local self-government, local authorities, municipal law, political communication, public relations, PR-activity of local authorities.

El documento discute las características relativas a la regulación normativa-legal de la actividad comunicativa de las autoridades locales en una de las entidades clave de la política rusa moderna. Se ha establecido que el marco legislativo existente estimula el desarrollo de formas de comunicación de diálogo entre las autoridades municipales y la población, y contribuye a la institucionalización del autogobierno local. Al mismo tiempo, la proclamación de los principios de transparencia de la información en las actividades de las autoridades municipales requiere una aclaración de los procedimientos para el apoyo de la información en ciertos actos legales reglamentarios.

**Palabras clave:** gobierno local, apoyo legislativo del autogobierno local, autoridades locales, ley municipal, comunicación política, relaciones públicas, actividad de relaciones públicas de las autoridades locales.



## **Introduction**

With the adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation in December 1993, local self-government designed to independently resolve issues of local importance was introduced in Russia. This system of power relations is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, municipal authorities are excluded from the system of state authorities [1, Art. 12], on the other hand, municipalities can be vested with state powers in the manner prescribed by federal law to increase the efficiency of their activities, in order to improve the quality and standard of living of the population of a certain territory according to local circumstances.

The dual nature of local authorities in the Russian Federation contributes to the formation of a flexible communication system that allows quickly informing the public about the activities of the local government. Despite the fact that today municipal power in Russia is the most socially oriented form of public power, as it is as close as possible to the population, to the environment where public interests are accumulated, civic initiatives are ripening, and public opinion is being formed. In this regard, the institution of access to information at the municipal level is of particular relevance, given that the possibility of obtaining information about local authorities and their activities is the most important of the political rights of citizens.

In the development of information technology, not only the population is interested in the openness of local governments, but also representatives of local administrations need feedback from the public to correct decisions made and ensure the legitimacy of management. Information interaction between municipalities and the public is becoming a necessary condition for the transparency of their political and economic activities.

## **Materials and methods**

In order to study the communicative activities of the local Russian self-government bodies by the example of the municipal entity of the Kazan city, two methods were used: content analysis and the method of political and legal analysis.

Content analysis is a quantitative method by which the texts of the media were analysed. The purpose of the study in July 2019 is to determine the amount of materials in the Internet media with a link to the official portal of local authorities of the city of Kazan ([www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru)) for a certain period of time: from January to June 2019. Mass media material corresponding to the content of the news published on [www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru) and having a link to the official portal of MSG bodies of the Kazan city was accepted as a unit of analysis. We studied all the media materials on the Internet containing these signs. During the study, the frequency (regularity) of the appearance of the signs regarding the category of analysis in the texts was recorded.

In total, materials from 38 Internet media sites were analysed.

Processing of the results was carried out using the Microsoft Office Excel software package.

The method of political and legal analysis allows us to study the practice of municipal reform of Russia in terms of implementing the norms of federal legislation on the implementation of information transparency in the activities of municipalities. The authors of the paper analysed the implementation of the Russian Federation Constitution norms and



federal laws in the practical activities of modern local self-government bodies as an entity of modern Russian politics by the example of the municipality of the Kazan city.

The methodological basis was the information published by local authorities in the Kazan city and on the official Internet-portal, materials from the Internet media, federal legislation texts, messages from a collection of documents and legal acts of the municipality of the Kazan city.

### **Discussion**

Over the past decade, the Russian Federation has developed a tendency to form a bilateral symmetrical model of communication between local governments and the population. Its specificity is the focus on identifying the attitude of public groups to a particularly significant issue regarding the activities of power structures and establishing effective feedback that allows local authorities to quickly respond to changes in social well-being. Therefore, a successful solution to the tasks facing local authorities is impossible without a working mechanism of public relations and, first of all, its legislative support.

The current legal regulation in this sphere of public relations in Russia contributes to the development of a bilateral symmetrical model of the communication model. A significant role is played by the provisions of federal legislation, which have consolidated the definition of information on the activities of municipal bodies, the principles of access to that information, the methodology for its obtaining, as well as information which is not subject to publication and determining the organization of municipalities on the Internet and other mass media [2, Art.. 4]. Important are those provisions that delegate to municipalities the authorities to establish a print periodical where all local laws, bills, as well as information on the socio-economic, political and cultural situation of the municipality, must be published [3, clause 7, article 17]. This once again confirms the binding nature of the bilateral information interaction between the population and local authorities.

A modern media environment with its multichannel structure, interactivity, and high-speed data transfer contributes to an effective way of providing information on the activities of state and municipal bodies to citizens and organizations. The transition to the electronic sphere minimizes personal communication of citizens with municipal officials without compromising the effectiveness of the tasks being solved. The official website of municipal authorities is becoming an effective communication tool that allows in practice to implement the legislative principles of accessibility, openness, timeliness, reliability of the provision of information on the activities of local authorities [2, Article 4].

Pursuant to federal law, the official portal ([www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru)) of the municipality of the Kazan city is posted on the Internet; it publishes all the necessary information about the activities of the municipality. From the main page, the user is given access to the news feed, photos and video materials, the “Directions of Work” block where information on urban sectors (services, questions and answers, documents), projects and events is grouped. The average daily traffic to this site for the period from 2013 to 2019 amounted to 5208 unique visitors, with an average number of views of 14271 [5, p. 261]. The content of the Internet portal [www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru) is carried out by its editorial staff: correspondents and content managers.



The Executive Committee of the Kazan city and the Kazan City Duma created services responsible for communication with the public ("external environment"). The functions of the press service are performed by the department of public relations and mass media of the apparatus of the Kazan City Duma. The municipal government institution "Kazan City Public Centre" has in its structure a department for monitoring the media, an editorial office of the portal "kzn.ru", a department for working with social networks, a department for photo and video production, as well as an editorial office of the "Collection of documents and legal acts of the municipality of the Kazan city" [6].

Holding by the local government of public hearings and public discussions on pressing issues for the population seems to be an important aspect of the symmetrical communication model formation. The official information system "Public Discussions" at [dispute.kzn.ru](http://dispute.kzn.ru) has been operating since July 2018. It is designed to ensure the right of Kazan residents to participate in the discussion of municipal legal acts. This resource allows for the availability, publicity and transparency of public discussions. The user has an opportunity to make suggestions on the subject of public discussion online. Since August 2018, more than 100 public discussions were organized on this site [7, p.141].

Also, municipalities use direct channels of communication between local authorities and residents of the municipality in their practice. The experience of the "Internet Reception" service at the [www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru) portal shows that it effectively ensures the right of citizens to apply to local authorities of the city of Kazan, contributes to the operational solution of urban problems while performing the function of "feedback" with the public. So, for 2018 in the local government Kazan there were registered more than 34 thousand written appeals of citizens. Of the total number of written appeals, 24 thousand were received in the form of an electronic document, according to which the city authorities made a decision in one form or another [8].

## Results

Currently, the official portal of Self-Government of the Kazan city ([www.kzn.ru](http://www.kzn.ru)) is the base for the rest of the Internet media covering the life of the Kazan municipality. This is confirmed by the data of the study which was carried out by the authors of the paper in order to determine the amount of materials taken by the online media editions from the official portal of the local government in Kazan. Content analysis of 38 sites (tab. 1) showed that information from the [kzn.ru](http://kzn.ru) site is often published on other resources. So, in the first half of 2019, 2.3 thousand news was posted on [kzn.ru](http://kzn.ru) [9]. Over the same period, over 1 thousand materials were posted on the Internet media with a link to the portal [kzn.ru](http://kzn.ru).

The number of materials in the Internet media with reference to [kzn.ru](http://kzn.ru)

(January - June 2019)

No.	Source	The number of published materials with a link to <a href="http://kzn.ru">kzn.ru</a>
1.	Information and news site "KazanFirst" <a href="https://kazanfirst.ru/">https://kazanfirst.ru/</a>	194
2.	The site of the newspaper Kazanskiye Vedomosti <a href="https://kazved.ru/">https://kazved.ru/</a>	104
3.	Site of the regional tab of the newspaper "Argumenty i Fauty" <a href="http://kazan.aif.ru">kazan.aif.ru</a>	97



	<a href="http://www.kazan.aif.ru/">http://www.kazan.aif.ru/</a>	
4.	Internet portal TatCentre.ru <a href="http://tatcenter.ru/">http://tatcenter.ru/</a>	93
5.	Online newspaper Kazan 24 kazan24.ru	88
6.	Information Agency Tatar-inform <a href="https://www.tatar-inform.ru/">https://www.tatar-inform.ru/</a>	85
7.	Electronic newspaper "Business Online" <a href="https://www.business-gazeta.ru/">https://www.business-gazeta.ru/</a>	81
8.	The site of the newspaper Moskovsky Komsomolets <a href="https://kazan.mk.ru/">https://kazan.mk.ru/</a>	76
9.	Internet Magazine "Inde" <a href="https://inde.io/">https://inde.io/</a>	68
10.	The site of the newspaper "Vechernyaya Kazan" <a href="http://www.evening-kazan.ru/">http://www.evening-kazan.ru/</a>	66
11.	Internet newspaper Realnoe Vremya <a href="https://realnoevremya.ru/">https://realnoevremya.ru/</a>	52
12.	Network publication "Inkazan.ru" <a href="https://inkazan.ru/">https://inkazan.ru/</a>	43
13.	Network Edition "PROKAZAN" Prokazan.ru	36
14.	Portal "e-kazan.ru" e-kazan.ru	29
15.	Network Edition "Kazan REPORTER" <a href="https://kazanreporter.ru/">https://kazanreporter.ru/</a>	23
16.	The site of the newspaper "Komsomolskaya Pravda" <a href="https://www.kazan.kp.ru/">https://www.kazan.kp.ru/</a>	21
17.	The site of the newspaper "Respublika Tatarstan" rt-online.ru	9
18.	idelreal.org	7
19.	protatarstan.ru	7
20.	interfax.ru	5
21.	RBC Tatarstan	5
22.	tass.ru	5
23.	regnum.ru	4
24.	RIA News	2



25.	chelny-biz.ru	1
26.	dixinews.ru	1
27.	iz.ru	1
28.	kazned.ru	1
29.	business.ru	1
30.	Interfax.ru Fed	1
31.	gazeta.a42.ru	1
32.	meduza.io	1
33.	govoritmoskva.ru	1
34.	mendeleevskiy.ru	1
35.	fedpress.ru	1
36.	dorinfo.ru	1
37.	expert.ru	1
38.	kommersant.ru	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1142</b>

At the same time, according to the Medialogia company, the rating of media resources working in the Republic of Tatarstan is presented by the following sources: 1.Tatar-inform; 2.Business-gazeta.ru; 3.Realnoevremya.ru; 4.Tatarstan-24; 5.Chelninsky News; 6.Evening-kazan.ru; 7.Inkazan.ru; 8.Kazanfirst.ru; 9.Kazanreporter.ru; 10.Prokazan.ru [8].

### Summary

The presented research results allow us to conclude that www.kzn.ru is a source of information for the leading mass media of the region; it contributes to the implementation of the principles of openness and accessibility of information about the activities of the municipality.

### Conclusions

Thus, interaction with the media is the main activity of public relations of local authorities in Russia. In this process, the main role is played by the cooperation of municipalities and media outlets. Representatives of the media editorial office receive information not only on the official Internet sites but also through official requests to authorities. In the first case, the message content is fully controlled and set by the corresponding PR services, and in the second case, the municipality is obliged to provide data in accordance with the request. At the same time, the nature of the request and the answer to it can negatively affect the image of the municipal authority, discord with its positive image.



It is also important that the existing legal regulation in this sphere has certain shortcomings that impede the formation of a symmetrical model of two-way communication. Thus, the provisions of the federal legislation of Russia in the media enshrines the right of citizens to promptly receive through them (including electronic) reliable information about the activities of local governments and their officials [9, Article 38]. However, there is no legislative deadline for the authorities to provide such information to the editorial staff. It is indicated only that a delay is permissible if the required information cannot be submitted within seven days [9, Art. 40].

Thus, it seems advisable to clarify the mechanism for promptly providing information on the activities of government bodies to media outlets with a clear time frame.

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