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**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE PROSECUTION
AUTHORITIES WORK WITHIN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT**Elena N. Astashkina (a), Elena S. Kurokhtina (b)*, Kristina G. Beketova (c),
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Abstract

Modern society undergoes global and inevitable changes in political, social and economic spheres of life. These changes, in their turn, trigger other qualitative changes in the intra-system organization of the way legal relations are exercised. First of all, rapid change involves the organizational, informational, and technical aspects of how governmental authorities are functioning and interacting with one another. The Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation plays one of the most significant roles in upholding various governmental activities. The article covers the issues of digital transformation of the Russian prosecution authorities in the context of information society development. The information space development and the digitalization of management processes, being the strategic goals of Russia, involve not only the adoption of the most advanced technologies but also the reinforcement of management in public bodies. The authors examine the successful foreign digitalization practices in the sphere of the prosecution authorities' work. The authors have found that, depending on the purposes of data accounting and the mode they are used, it is possible to create a unified or distributed repository for each type of data. Both options equally ensure the availability of the stored information to the employees of the prosecutor's office. Nonetheless, the general availability of data should imply that there is reliable information security of the digital platform as well as the information security of the workflow in the prosecutor's office. To provide all that, it is necessary to work out new unconventional approaches and countermeasures.

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1. Introduction

On the one hand, scientific and technological progress implies the development of high technologies, the introduction of electronic document management, and the use of artificial intelligence in all areas of legal relations. All these innovations raise our life to a fundamentally new level. On the other hand, the high-tech activities of public bodies are accompanied by problems that people have never faced before.

There are the issues of material support and doubts about the effectiveness of digital technologies, which make it necessary to duplicate information through paper-based media. The human factor is also of great importance, i.e. the availability of knowledge and skills for the use of high technologies in the context of radical technical re-equipment.

2. Problem Statement

The development of the information space and the digitalization of management processes, being the strategic goals of Russia, involve not only the adoption of the most advanced technologies but also getting public authorities management to a new qualitative stage.

For a decade, the Russian prosecution authorities have been busy with the state unified statistical recording of data on crime rates, crime reports, investigative work, inquiries, prosecutor's supervisions as well as federal statistical surveillance based on primary statistical data provided by state bodies. During this period, the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation has been paying special attention to the main areas for the strategic development of legal statistics through the State Legal Statistics Automated System. The system has been developed in compliance with the provisions of the Concept of Digital Transformation of Prosecution Authorities and Organizations Until 2025. (the Order of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation No. 627 of 14 September 2017 "On Approval of the Concept of Digital Transformation of Prosecutor's Offices and Organizations Until 2025").

The concept provides for a radical change in collecting and processing legal statistics, strengthening the coordinating role of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation, and creating a single legal statistics information space. The prosecution authorities are involved in processing primary crime records and reports. They are also responsible for official statistical information on crime rates and the detection of crimes. Besides, the prosecution authorities provide information and analytical support for law enforcement agencies.

If we achieve the goals, objectives and principles, based on up-to-date ideas about the nature of statistical information and the nature of the corresponding work, which are set out in the concept of creating the State Automated Legal Statistics System, it would improve the quality of decision-making in all affected authorities. In particular, the concept assumes the following:

a) The creation of a single federal database, starting with crime reports, which will make it possible to analyze not 2 million objects, but about 30 million reports of accidents and crimes annually. This will allow us to assess practically all the problems recorded by law enforcement agencies but not only selectively registered crimes;

b) Technological solutions for direct interaction of users with the federal database, which will qualitatively improve their ability to quickly and fully access information;

c) The possibility of monitoring through the federal database to the level of reporting a crime and information about a specific criminal case, which will, on the whole, radically increase the transparency of the criminal procedure;

d) The creation of a number of services for citizens, which might be related to the implementation of their rights in the sphere of criminal procedure (obtaining information on crime reports or initiated criminal cases).

However, Russian prosecution authorities are now undergoing an active digital transformation, which primarily concerns the modernization and improvement of the unified secure data transmission network. Thus, the network capacity and circuit reservation have been improved. Also, “the network capacity has already been increased, channel redundancy and additional switching points with RSNNet are going to be set up” (Shekk, 2019, p. 7). Unfortunately, the process of digitalization is deemed complicated by the problems of the technological character and the use of human potential. This is true for a set of measures aimed at improving the legislative framework of criminal law statistics, equipping the employees of the Russian prosecution authorities with the necessary software and hardware, ensuring fast and smooth operation of the State Automated Legal Statistics System, the certification of special software, and the check-ups if the system meets information security requirements.

Modern conditions raise the issue of measures that must be taken at the federal level to ensure the digitalization of the Russian Prosecutor's Office. Russian scholars are seldom interested in making studies on the governmental and legal basis for digitalization. All such studies have a narrow focus, while to solve the issue it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach, taking into account the best international practices.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the current Russian legislation provisions regulating the information support of the prosecution authorities, official statistics, materials on national and international prosecution practice, and scientific concepts related to the digital transformation of prosecution authorities.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our study is to examine the activities of the Russian prosecution authorities and organizations in the context of the ongoing digital transformation, taking into account the experience of the prosecutor's offices in other countries. We are also going to formulate proposals for further improvement of the digitalization aspects of the Russian prosecution authorities' work.

5. Research Methods

The main method of this study is the dialectical method *of cognition*. In addition, such general scientific methods as analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction have been used along with logical and structural methods. As for specific scientific cognition methods, we have harnessed statistical and legal ones.

6. Findings

The public policy in the Russian Federation is *currently* aimed at the formation of a unified information space, the development of the country's information infrastructure, and the creation and application of Russian developments in the field of telecommunication technologies.

In the context of the digital transformation of the whole public administration sector and overall digitalization, the gradual transition of prosecutors to a digital work environment is very important. This will significantly improve the quality of supervisory activities and the efficiency of the prosecutor's response to violations of the law.

The concept of 'digitalization' is not new to modern history. This term was popularized in the mid-1990s by the American computer scientist Negroponte (1995). He introduced the concept of 'digital economy'. Wachal (1971) considered the problem of 'society's digitalization' in the context of the computer technology expansion and its effects.

The term 'digitalization' is relevant not only in the field of computer technology but also in the field of public administration and security, where the prosecution authorities have the leading role.

Currently, the Russian digital community is evolving with reference to the practices of the United States, Europe, and Asia, since the concept of 'digital state' has already been actively used in many countries (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983).

As for the measures taken for digital transformation in the public sector, the most relevant is the provision of state and municipal services in digital form. This innovation increases the requirements for the quality of prosecutor's supervision over law enforcement. High-quality prosecutor's supervision is very important in the context of global digitalization of all legal relations. We support Khatov's (2019) opinion that it is really necessary to formulate the concept of the unified information space for the prosecution authorities, other law enforcement and controlling authorities as well as the courts of Russia. This will surely help reinforce law and order (p. 41).

Thus, the examination of the work, done both digitally and non-digitally, reveals that the future lies in the results of digital progress.

The digital transformation of the prosecution authorities requires amending the system of training prosecutors because their qualification standards have changed. The results of the hardware and software operational testing depend on the reliability of the information provided by the accounting entities. Since the quality and reliability of the uploaded information depends on the quality of the primary accounting documents and their being submitted on time, the Saratov State Law Academy has started training such specialists at the grassroots level. When those students graduate and start working for the prosecution authorities, the newcomers will not have to go through the training stage, which would surely delay the

workflow. The training discipline ‘Statistical Accounting in the Prosecutor’s Office’ was introduced and successfully tested by those who specialize in prosecution activities (specialty 40.05.04). The future practitioner skill-building is also facilitated by scientific and practical conferences held together with the heads of the prosecution authorities and law enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation. The conferences cover the pilot operation of the State Legal Statistics Automated System and its implementation in the territories of the Russian Federation.

While prosecutors’ competencies are continuously developing, it is planned to actively introduce modern information educational tools, such as remote technologies and electronic educational resources.

In this regard, the experience of other countries is very indicative.

For example, the US National District Attorneys Association offers training courses for prosecutors where they study advanced information technologies and learn how to investigate digital crimes or preserve evidence. The American prosecutors also acquire the nuances of federal and local digital resources (Digital Prosecutor Course, 2021). It would make sense to introduce regular courses of that type in Russia for both experienced prosecutors and recent graduates. At the same time, special attention should be paid to the quality of law students’ training with a focus on the development of their practical skills related to advanced digital technologies.

For the integrated functioning and improvement of the federal public servant skills, it is necessary to digitalize all the processes. This will provoke a high-quality environment for managing educational processes, combining them with the systems of professional activities and staffing support.

Despite the high-level requirements imposed by the legislators on the public prosecution officers, the process of their training and professional development provides for constant monitoring and reporting. The digitalization of monitoring and reporting will reduce the cost of labor resources and time spent on these activities.

To know how serious the workload on prosecutors is, it is relevant to use tools for recording the time spent on achieving performance objectives. This will help fairly distribute work among employees, eliminating overloads and attention declines. All these things are covered by the state program ‘Digital Economy of the Russian Federation’. Within the program, it is also supposed to analyze the big data generated in the largest state information systems (GIS, Housing and Public Utilities, Pension Fund, etc.).

Depending on the purposes of data accounting and the mode they are used, it is possible to create a unified or distributed repository for each type of data. Both options equally ensure the availability of the stored information to the employees of the prosecutor's office. Nonetheless, the general availability of data should imply that there is reliable information security of the digital platform as well as the information security of the workflow in the prosecutor’s office. The process of creating an information security system is complicated by a number of subjective and objective factors. We agree with scholars who mention such factors as insufficient financial support, mistrust of technical innovations, and lack of necessary awareness about what window of opportunity will open up when the employees start using certain information systems (Ivanchenko & Kistanova, 2020, p. 8).

The Edict of the Russian President of 9 May 2017, No 203 ‘On the Strategy for the Information Society Development in the Russian Federation within 2017–2030’ emphasizes that the pace of technology development has significantly exceeded the capabilities of most people in acquiring and using

knowledge. There has been a shift in the perception of the world from science, education, and culture to entertainment, especially on the Internet. This has formed a new model of the superficial perception of information. It also makes it easier to influence people's views and preferences, contributes to patterned behaviours, and gives an advantage in achieving economic and political goals to those countries and organizations, which possess communication technologies not only in Russia but also at the international level (the Edict of the Russian President of 9 May 2017, No 203 'On the Strategy for the Information Society Development in the Russian Federation within 2017–2030', par. 16).

After analyzing the studies of foreign and Russian scholars as well as the rules of Russian law, it is possible to formulate the following proposals. Firstly, the political, economic, financial, and social consequences of digital transformation, in the country in general and in the country's prosecution authorities in particular, are now unpredictable. In particular, this may directly affect the right to the protection of personal data. In this regard, we need a mechanism for the successful functioning of the Prosecutor's Office in the digital sphere and a mechanism to ensure the protection of human and civil rights at the highest level.

Secondly, on the one hand, scientific and technological progress has become an integral part of our lives. On the other hand, it has changed our lives radically. This is about cyberspace development, distance learning as well as professional and everyday activities.

That is why there is a need to complete the prosecution authorities' digital transformation and the improvement of digital public administration as fast as possible.

7. Conclusion

The authors emphasized not all the problematic aspects of the digital transformation of prosecution authorities in Russia. However, it is impossible to highlight all the most acute points of the studied process. Digital transformation concerns all the areas of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation. It involves the functions fixed by law and the cooperation not only with other state authorities but also with the citizens.

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