



SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE USERS

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 24 th March 2026 Accepted: 20 th April 2026	This article analyzes the legal mechanisms for the protection of the rights of public service users. The aim of the study is to analyze the specifics of protecting the rights of public service users and the existing barriers. The article provides conclusions regarding the necessity of strengthening procedural guarantees and digital mechanisms for protecting the rights of public service users.

Keywords: legal guarantee, public service, e-government, digital environment, human rights, digital rights.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the sphere of public services occupies a special place in human society as a means of ensuring effective interaction between citizens and public authorities. Modern states increasingly consider the quality of public service delivery as one of the principal indicators of administrative efficiency and the effectiveness of governance. In recent decades, significant efforts have been made worldwide to simplify administrative procedures, eliminate excessive bureaucratic barriers, improve service accessibility and develop digital forms of interaction between citizens and state institutions.

International organizations have developed a system of indicators that assess the quality and effectiveness of public services. Among the most widely used instruments are the United Nations E-Government Development Index, the OECD Digital Government Index, the Worldwide Governance Indicators, the Global Innovation Index, the Business Enabling Environment Index, the Global Competitiveness Index, the European Quality of Government Index, the United Nations Public Service Awards and the Customer Satisfaction Index for Public Services. These indicators evaluate various dimensions of public service delivery, including administrative efficiency, legality, accessibility, digital maturity and citizen satisfaction.

Contemporary trends demonstrate that the development of public services is no longer limited to the digitalization of individual procedures. Instead, states are increasingly moving toward comprehensive digital transformation of public administration systems. Electronic government platforms, integrated databases, artificial intelligence technologies and automated decision-making systems are becoming essential components of modern public administration.

At the same time, the digitalization of public services creates new risks affecting the realization and

protection of citizens' rights. Technical failures in information systems, algorithmic errors, unlawful processing of personal data, violations of administrative procedures and shortcomings in digital service delivery may directly affect constitutional rights and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities.

Under these circumstances, the protection of public service users' rights acquires particular importance and becomes an integral component of the constitutional and administrative legal framework governing relations between individuals and the state. The effectiveness of such protection directly influences public trust in government institutions and the legitimacy of administrative decision-making.

The purpose of this study is to identify the specific features of protecting the rights of public service users through the analysis of international legal standards, doctrinal approaches, regulatory mechanisms and contemporary law-enforcement practice in the context of digital transformation of public administration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS. The research is based on international legal instruments, doctrinal sources and scientific literature devoted to public administration, administrative justice and the protection of human rights in the digital environment.

The normative basis of the study includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), OECD recommendations on digital government and good governance, and other international standards concerning public administration and the protection of individual rights.

The study employs a combination of general scientific and special legal research methods.



RESULTS.

– **legal status of public service users.** International human rights instruments establish a legal framework that indirectly determines the status of public service users. Although international treaties rarely use the term "public service user" explicitly, the rights associated with access to public services derive from universally recognized human rights and principles of public administration [1;3].

From a doctrinal perspective, a public service user should not be regarded merely as an applicant seeking administrative assistance. Rather, the user acts as a legal claimant entitled to demand the proper fulfillment of the state's positive obligations established by law. This approach distinguishes public service relations from ordinary consumer transactions and emphasizes the public-law nature of the relationship [4;10].

The legal status of public service users consists of three interconnected groups of rights.

The first group includes substantive rights, such as the right to equal and non-discriminatory access to services, the right to receive services within statutory time limits, the right to obtain lawful administrative outcomes and the right to personal data protection in digital environments [1; 2; 5].

The second group encompasses procedural rights, including the right to receive information concerning administrative procedures, the right to participate in decision-making processes affecting one's interests, the right to receive reasoned administrative decisions and the right to challenge unlawful actions or omissions of public authorities [6].

The third group includes implementation guarantees designed to ensure the effective realization of substantive and procedural rights. These guarantees involve the obligation of public authorities to act lawfully, proportionately and fairly, as well as the availability of administrative and judicial review mechanisms [4; 8].

– **international standards for the protection of public service users.** The protection of public service users' rights is grounded in several internationally recognized standards.

The first standard is equal access to public services. International human rights law requires states to ensure that all individuals have access to public services without discrimination based on race, gender, language, religion, social status or other prohibited grounds [1; 2].

The second standard concerns procedural fairness. Administrative procedures must be transparent, predictable and based on objective criteria. Individuals must be informed about the procedures affecting their rights and be provided with an opportunity to present

their position before adverse decisions are adopted [3; 6].

The third standard is the right to effective legal remedies. Users must have access to mechanisms capable of reviewing administrative decisions and restoring violated rights. Such mechanisms include both administrative complaint procedures and judicial review [1;3].

Together, these standards form the foundation of international legal protection for users of public services and serve as benchmarks for national legal systems.

– **mechanisms for the protection of public service users.** The protection of users' rights is implemented through a multilevel system of legal mechanisms.

Administrative protection constitutes the primary level of protection and includes complaint procedures, departmental review, internal audits, service inspections and administrative appeals against decisions and actions of public officials[4].

Judicial protection serves as an external mechanism of control over public administration. Courts verify the legality of administrative acts, assess compliance with procedural requirements and restore violated rights when unlawful actions are identified [3;6].

Institutional protection is carried out through specialized bodies and oversight institutions, including ombudsman institutions, anti-corruption agencies, personal data protection authorities and organizations responsible for monitoring the quality of public services. These institutions contribute to preventing systemic violations and strengthening accountability within public administration [8].

– **digital transformation of rights protection.** Digitalization has fundamentally transformed traditional protection mechanisms and contributed to the emergence of digital procedural guarantees.

Electronic complaint systems enable users to submit appeals remotely and monitor the status of their applications in real time. Information systems automatically record administrative actions and procedural deadlines, creating digital evidence that may be used in administrative and judicial proceedings.

Furthermore, the increasing use of automated decision-making systems has generated new categories of rights. These include the right to algorithmic transparency, the right to receive explanations regarding automated decisions, the right to request human review of algorithmic outcomes and the right to correct inaccurate personal data stored in public information systems.

These developments demonstrate that digital rights are becoming an integral component of the legal status of public service users.



In addition, elements of legal forecasting were employed to assess the impact of digital transformation on the future development of procedural guarantees and digital rights within public administration.

DISCUSSION. The results of this study support the doctrinal position that public services represent a legally significant form of implementing the state's positive obligations toward individuals.

According to E.B. Luparev, public services should not be viewed as optional administrative activities but rather as mandatory forms of fulfilling public responsibilities. From this perspective, violations of service standards may be interpreted as failures by the state to discharge its legal obligations to citizens [10].

The findings also correspond to the procedural approach developed by T.V. Kashanina and Yu.A. Tikhomirov. These scholars emphasize that the effectiveness of rights protection depends not only on the existence of substantive rights but also on the availability of effective procedural guarantees ensuring their practical implementation [4;6].

The study additionally confirms the relevance of foreign governance theories. Within the concept of good governance, scholars such as M. Engel, J. Pierre and B.G. Peters argue that transparency, accountability, citizen participation and responsiveness constitute key indicators of effective public administration and effective protection of citizens' rights [7;8].

The analysis demonstrates that digital transformation expands traditional administrative law mechanisms and contributes to the formation of a new generation of procedural rights. Consequently, protection mechanisms increasingly combine constitutional, administrative and technological elements [5;9].

The emergence of digital procedural guarantees indicates the gradual formation of a new model of administrative justice adapted to the realities of digital governance and algorithmic decision-making.

CONCLUSION: The conducted research demonstrates that the protection of public service users' rights has evolved into an independent legal institution possessing constitutional, administrative and digital dimensions.

The legal status of public service users includes substantive rights, procedural rights and implementation guarantees, all of which are essential for ensuring lawful and effective interactions between citizens and public authorities.

International legal standards establish fundamental requirements concerning equal access to services, procedural fairness and effective legal remedies. These

standards continue to influence the development of national legal systems and administrative practices.

The digitalization of public administration significantly transforms traditional mechanisms of rights protection and contributes to the emergence of new categories of digital procedural rights, including algorithmic transparency, human review of automated decisions and protection against digital errors.

Therefore, the level of protection afforded to public service users should be regarded as one of the key indicators of the quality of public administration, the effectiveness of digital governance and the maturity of a rule-of-law state.

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