Local Self-Governance Development in Russian History

Abstract.

Historically, development of the RF local self-governance clearly displays evolution of the citizens’ self-governance, struggle of the people for their rights to settle issues of local significance. It was as early as in the late XVIII century, when empress Ekaterina the Great awarded towns with the Letter of Grant, pursuant to which town assemblies were established in communities with the authority to solve problem-bearing urban economy issues. In the mid of the XIX century, large-scale national reforms were implemented including the Zemstvo Reform (1864) and the Urban Reform (1870). Actualization of the reforms resulted in unprecedented for the tsarist Russia system of communal self-governance – independent of the state. Although this system existed only until the year 1890 (when emperor Alexander the III resubordinated town and zemstvo assemblies to provincial governments), its significance cannot be overestimated. It was for the first time in Russia, when involvement of the general public in local self-governance was legislatively stipulated.

After 1917, situation in the country changed radically. Soviet system came to take the place of people’s communal self-governance. Local Soviets were established in towns, rayons, settlements, and villages; those were elected bodies and supervision authorities. They reported to higher soviets and formed executive committees (ispolkoms) with the purpose of carrying out executive-and-regulatory authorities. Thereby, during the whole soviet period in Russian history local governance existed as a structural element of public administration.

Restitution of people’s self-governance at the local level took place in the early 90-s of the XX century with passing of the new RF Constitution, which legally fixed independence and organizational severality of the local self-governance within the system of public administration. In 1995, the Local Self-Governance Act was passed providing establishment of the so-called municipal entities (towns and rayons) in the Russian Federation jurisdictions. Implementation of this Act did not lead to expected outcomes and failed to provide the population with tangible opportunity to participate in local self-governance. Elimination of these defects of the legal framework became major task of the government on the way of reforming the local self-governance.

It was in 2003, when passing of a new Local Self-Governance Act marked beginning of a new reform stage. A new system of local self-governance is expected to come into being over the period of 2005-2009. New municipal entities (referred to as urban and rural communities) are being formed within the boundaries of existing towns and rayons. Any community with the population exceeding 100 residents is entitled to become an independent municipal entity.

The Samara oblast is among the reform leaders. During 2005, the oblast territory gave rise to 304 urban and rural communities; head officials of these communities and representative bodies’ deputies were elected in the communities in October 2005. All in all, more than three thousand deputies and local self-governance elective officials occupied their offices in the Samara oblast. Residents of villages and towns managed to elect worthy representatives of their neighborhoods to get involved in sovereignty of the people.
Communities draft their local budgets designed to become a real financial tool of local self-governance; property assets owned by the communities are also specified.

1. Reforms in the Russian Federation System of Local Self-Governance

Development of local self-governance in the pre-revolutionary Russia was impulsed by zemstvo and urban reforms implemented by Alexander II, though rudiments of zemstvo and urban self-governance existed at earlier stages of Russian statehood.

Making brief analysis of the key trends in development of local governance through the middle of the XIX century, one may recognize several stages of great history-making significance.

First stage – middle of the XVI century. In the XVI century the system of local governance exercised by aldermen (commonly referred to as “kormleniye”) was substituted for special-purpose self-governance bodies – gubnye and zemstvo institutions. In the 30-s of the XVI century gubnye elected institutions established with the purpose of prosecuting robbers and judging them came into existence. They were of all-estate nature; all the uyezd (the lowest territorial unit of the Russian Empire) dwellers could participate in them.

The decree of the year 1555 issued by Ivan the Terrible abolished institutions of kormleniye and introduced zemstvo institutions. They were not of all-estate type and operated within the limits of volosts. The zemstvo authority was exercised by zemstvo headmen and by zemstvo clerks.

Second stage – the second half of the XVII century. Over the given period of time, the system of office-voevode administration was implanted at the local level. Yet gubnye and zemstvo institutions existed, despite being abolished under Peter the Great.

Notwithstanding the tendency towards centralization of the governance system during the period when Peter the Great was at power, certain elements of local self-governance existed both in Moscow (Burmisterskaya Chamber) and in the provinces, where in the 20-s of the XVIII century institutions gave way to town councils (also called magistrates) – elected estate-community-based institutions involved in urban self-governance.

Third stage – the last quarter of the XVIII century. Under the reign of Ekaterina II fundamentals of local self-governance were laid, which existed up to the zemstvo reform. A number of acts were issued which regulated the local governance system: Establishment of Provinces (1775), Letter of Grant to the Nobility of 1785, Charter for Rights and Benefits of Towns (1785).

The whole system of self-governance was based on the estate principle. Instituted were provincial and zemstvo nobility assemblies with the purpose of electing public officers of local administration and court. Managing of estate affairs required establishment of such positions as marshals of provincial and uyezd nobility.

Besides, established were zemstvo law courts (both provincial and uyezd ones) as well as bodies with delegated authority – common town (city) Dumas.

In whole, describing the pre-reform stage of local governance one may draw conclusion on its estate nature based on priority of nobility’s self-governance bodies, absence of independent elected bodies and consequently – alienation of the governance system from the general public.

Under conditions of formation of local self-governance in the Russian Federation, the experience of carrying out zemstvo and urban reforms over the period of the second half of XIX century through early XX century is of especial importance. These reforms can be broken down into three main stages:

- effect of the Regulations on Provincial and Uyezd Zemstvo Institutions (of 1864) and the Urban Act (of 1870);
- effect of the Regulations on Provincial and Uyezd Zemstvo Institutions (of 1890) and the Urban Act
(of 1892);

- reforms by the Provisional Government.

Pursuant to the Regulations of the year 1864, *all-estate zemstvo institutions* came into being.

Representative bodies locally were uyezd and provincial zemstvo assemblies elected for a three-year period. To carry out the everyday work, members of the uyezd and provincial zemstvo assemblies elected executive bodies – upravas. Chair of uyezd uprava was approved in this capacity by the Governor, chair of the provincial uprava – by the home affairs Minister. Uprava members occupied their office without any approval. It is significant that executive bodies of the zemstvo reported only to the bodies of representation.

Worth while mentioning is that the law provided for segregation of authority of uyezd and provincial zemstvo institutions. Office description of provincial institutions included issues related to the province in general or several of its uyezds; terms of reference of the uyezd institutions – to affairs of “each uyezd taken separately”.

So, the following issues were primarily under jurisdiction of uyezd zemstvo institutions:

- distribution inside the uyezd the all-national and provincial levies, which were given to uyezd zemstvo institutions;
- preliminary distribution of all-provincial duties amounts with regard to each uyezd and ways of their enforcement;
- communication of facts and figures as well as conclusions on the uyezd economic situation to the provincial zemstvo;
- issuing permits for opening, relocation and changing of biddings terms, bazaars (markets) and fairs;
- establishing and managing communication routes, surveillance (by instruction of provincial uprava) of proper maintenance of all-provincial communication routes passing through the uyezd.

Below are the terms of reference of the provincial zemstvo institutions:

- distribution of levies and duties as per uyezds;
- permission for opening new quays on navigable rivers and fairs, putting off and changing terms of the existing ones;
- submission of applications (via the Governor’s office) describing valid-reason for ranking zemstvo road structures and roads as national ones;
- issuing instructions on mutual zemstvo insurance in the event of fire;
- administration of complaints about actions of zemstvo boards.

The Regulations emphasized non-governmental nature of the zemstvo institutions, their independence and self-sufficiency in handling executive matters within their jurisdiction.

It was in December 1864 when uyezd councilors were elected in the Samara province, while in February 1865 the first in Russia constituent provincial zemstvo assembly was convened. In September 1865 the first sessions of uyezd zemstvo assemblies were held province-wide.

In that way, the Regulations of 1864 stipulated for creation in Russia a distinctive institution of all-estate local self-governance, which played an outstanding role in the economic and cultural life of the country.

On June 12, 1890 the new Regulations on Provincial and Uyezd Zemstvo Institutions became operative. The strongest positive feature of the zemstvo institutions was increase in their competence: the issues on which they were able to pass binding resolutions were supplemented with new ones; the assemblies were entitled to elect special divisional curators – to observe enforcement of resolutions; the circle of persons entitled to perform duties of chairpersons and members of upravas was expanded (not only councilors but also persons enjoying full electoral qualification could occupy these positions), etc.
Parallel with the zemstvo reform, the urban self-governance reform was conducted in Russia. Pursuant to the Supremely Approved Urban Act of June 16, 1870, urban economics and town improvement was vested in the urban self-governance bodies. Bodies with representative capacity were Town Dumas, which were elected for a four-year term. Town Head (Mayor) presided in the Duma. Persons who were elected town heads could start fulfilling their duties only after commissioning: in uyezd towns – by Governors, in provinces – by the home affairs Minister, in capitals – by the Emperor. The scope of jurisdiction of the town Dumas was broad enough. Noteworthy is that political matters were out of town Dumas’ terms of reference. Duma elected of its members a subordinate executive body – town uprava chaired by the Town Head. Uprava was in charge of direct town management and societal governance, enforcement of Duma’s decisions, drafting town estimated budgets, collection of levies and disbursement of town funds. Operations of the uprava were audited by the Duma. Uprava’s reports together with the respective findings by the Duma were “published for general public’s notice”.

In the author’s opinion, the Regulations of 1870 shall be treated as a major step ahead in establishing urban self-governance in Russia.

Town Dumas – within the scope of their competence and authority – managed to achieve certain success and proved their sustainability.

It is significant that zemstvo self-governance institutions at the given stage of societal development were not included into the public bodies system.

Later though the period of national reforms was followed by a counter-reform period. The Urban Act of 1892 entitled the Governor to exercise control of “correctness and lawfulness of the urban non-governmental administration”. This wording opened up opportunities for provincial officials to unjustified interference with the town institutions’ performance. The new Act equaled elected functionaries of urban self-governance with government officials and put them into disciplinary dependence on “the administration”. Town heads and uprava members reckoned as public servants and were promoted and given state awards. Consequently, not a single office within the urban governance chain could be occupied without prior consent given by “the administration”. Consent was necessary even for temporary staff.

The Urban Act of 1892 had also positive implications. For example, the earlier existing statutory prohibition to occupy concurrently societal governance positions by persons being relatives was extended over a wider relations circle. The new Urban Act eliminated provisions impeding initiatives of executive bodies, additional limitations were introduced to put obstacles in the way of abusing public office for private gain: it was not allowed to “get involved in contractual relations and deliveries in town procurement” and also “participate in procuring property, selling of which was part of the respective officials’ terms of reference”.

Thus it is quite evident that the Regulations of 1890 and the Act of 1892 implemented a “state concept” of the local self-governance.

Over the period of its existence, the Samara zemstvo took part in tackling important issues: development of public education and health care, statistical accounting, veterinary and insurance. During famine in the Samara province, zemstvo bodies succeeded in drawing government’s attention to the peasants’ problems and taking measures against regular failure of crops.

The last in the pre-revolutionary time attempt to increase the role of self-governance was made by the Provisional Government. On March 3, 1917 the Government adopted Declaration proclaiming reform of local self-governance. The Law on Electing Councilors of Town Dumas and on District Authorities was passed on April 15, 1917. This law – for the first time in Russia – introduced universal suffrage in electing members of urban self-governance bodies. The right to vote was given to all citizens over 20 years of age irrespective of sex, nationality
and creed; with all these provisions, there was no obligation to be townsman or own estate property in the town. But representatives of administration and local law enforcement agencies officials (militiamen) were not entitled to participate in elections.

The legal framework of reforming the self-governance system was provided by the Regulations on Volost Zemstvo ratified on May 21, 1917. According to it, self-governance bodies came into being in the smallest administrative-and-territorial unit – the volost. Volost zemstvo assembly was referred to as the representative body of local self-governance. Voting right with respect to volost councilors was granted to all citizens irrespective of sex, nationality and religion, who had come to the age of 20, if they resided in the relevant volost by the time voters’ registers were made up. Election of the volost zemstvo deputies was made per majority system, while proportional voting was practiced in electing members of uyezd zemstvo assemblies. Towns constituted separate electoral districts. Majority-type voting was allowed. Towns with population of at least 50 thousand and principal towns of provinces did not elect councilors to uyezd zemstvo being equal to uyezd zemstvo in terms of their status. Provincial councilors were elected by uyezd assemblies and town Dumas. As compared with the Regulations of 1890, their total number grew significantly. Only elected councilors were members of zemstvo assemblies.

With all this going on, over the period of February-October 1917 Russia had implemented reform directed towards decentralization and democratization of the governance system.

Analysis of the historical experience enables highlighting major principles of local self-governance formation and development in the pre-revolutionary Russia:

- social-and-political multistructural development on the basis of ethno-political, cultural, religious and other traditions;
- segregation of authority resources by principle of their utilization efficiency at each level;
- enjoyment of broad spectrum of rights in economic and executive fields by the local self-governance entities;
- prohibition for local self-governance bodies to participate in national politics and focusing all their work on satisfying first-priority needs of the residents.

It is our opinion that the above principles keep being relevant and in this or that form must be reflected in the local self-governance system of the Russian Federation.

After 1917 in Russia dominated the concept, according to which all representative bodies – from top to bottom – were integrated into a unified public authority system. Local Soviets of People’s Deputies constituted the lowest element of a uniform state machine. Knitted together into a rigid state vertical line, they functioned as a democratic screen of monopoly-style power of the party.

In February 1918 all provincial and uyezd institutions were eliminated; their administrative staff merged into the local Soviets system. Consequently, ideas of local self-governance, which imply independency and self-sufficiency of self-governance bodies, collided with practical tasks of the soviet state.

In conformity with the RSFSR Constitution of 1918, the state jurisdiction system included oblast, provincial (okrug), uyezd and volost congresses of Soviets, urban and rural Soviets as well as executive committees elected by them. Urban and rural Soviets were elected directly by the people. Congresses of Soviets were elected in several stages.

In the province of Samara, the first meeting of the provincial congress of Soviets was held on December 6-11, 1917. Congresses of Soviets were regarded as supreme government bodies at the local level; between sessions their part was played by executive committees.

Under the USSR Constitution of 1936, all elements of the RF representative system were strictly centralized.
Congresses of Soviets were abolished, and at all levels Soviets turned into bodies of representation, while executive committees – into executive-regulatory bodies.

In the Kuibyshev oblast local Soviets were established practically in all administrative-and-territorial units, these Soviets had hierarchic structure (village and settlement Soviets, rayon Soviets) and reported to the Kuibyshev oblast Soviet.

Local Soviets were the most numerous governance bodies. Specifically, there were more than 28 thousand Soviets in RSFSR. Term of office of local Soviets was two years. Local Soviets’ terms of reference included elaboration and implementation of territorial social-economic development programs, participation in drafting budgets and some other powers.

The main characteristic feature of the Soviets system organization was the democratic centralism, which allowed for formal independence of local governance bodies subject to overall strong centralization of the political authority. Superior Soviets controlled the rule-making and current activity of the subordinate Soviets; they were entitled to reverse law-conflicting resolutions of the subordinate Soviets. From this it follows that the local governance system had a number of disadvantages.

Firstly, local Soviets – in view of the prevalent system – were unable to manage local community issues, as they were under control of oblast Soviets.

Secondly, pressure was exercised against the local Soviets by local communist party management that strictly observed the general policy of the party.

Thirdly, local Soviets were in fact dependent on the executive bodies, which organized activity of the local Soviets. All resolutions taken at the sessions of Soviets were subject to prior preparation of executive committees, passing of these resolutions was mere formality.

2. Reforming of the municipal governance

The first practical step in reforming the municipal governance was adoption on April 9, 1990 of the Law of the USSR on General Fundamentals of Local Self-Governance of Local Economics in the USSR.

Distinctive features of this important regulatory document were as below. Firstly, awareness of necessity to define in clear terms the basic principles of local self-governance existence, functions and structure of its bodies. In accordance with the Law, the local self-governance system included local Soviets, territorial non-state people’s self-governance bodies (Soviets and committees of microrayons, house, street, neighborhood, rural committee and other bodies) as well as local referendums, assemblies, gatherings of citizens, other forms of direct democracy. The level of village Soviet, settlement (rayon), town (town district) was defined as the primary territorial level of local self-governance.

Secondly, awareness of necessity to backup independence and self-sufficiency of self-governance bodies by solid financial and economic groundwork. The basis of local economics should be made up by communal property. It included property created or purchased by local self-governance bodies using funds at their disposal as well as property transferred to them gratis by the Federal and Republic bodies. Municipal enterprises enjoyed paramount title of utilizing local natural resources and material-and-technical facilities. Local Soviets were entitled to raise issue of transferring to them companies and institutions owned by other proprietors but having major importance for delivering communal-household and social-cultural services to the people. Mutual relations with companies located within the territorial coverage of the local Soviet were to be defined on the basis of agreement. All companies were to contribute to the local budget by means of transferring part of their income (profit); and they were not allowed to alter their plans in part governed by agreement with the local Soviet. The local Soviets were given the right (limited
by their terms of reference) to independently work out and approve plans of social-and-economic development of the respective territory on the basis of available material resources and funds, maximum utilization of local capabilities and manufacturing reserves. Logistics of the local self-governance and of the local economics facilities was based on contractual relations under consideration of full-scale economic independence of economic activity privies. It could be actualized by force of wholesale and retailing. Material resources distributed in a centralized manner were to be allocated to the extent that ensured fulfillment of plans and budget execution. It was for the first time that the local self-governance bodies were at a liberty of establishing foreign economic relations, participate in them on the principle of foreign currency self-accounting in compliance with the active law provisions.

Beginning of the next stage is linked to passing on July 6, 1991 of the Law of RSFSR on Local Self-Governance in RSFSR, according to which local representative bodies in rayons, cities, city districts, settlements and rural communities (respective Soviets of People’s Deputies) were elected by the people on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage, under secret voting, for a 5-year term. The executive-and-administrative body reporting to the respective Soviet and to the higher executive-and-administrative bodies within the limits of their competence was the local administration. It was managed by the administration head, who was elected on the principles of universal, direct and equal suffrage, under secret voting, also for a five-year term. Administration head was exercising his authority on one-man command principles. In all matters, bodies and structural divisions of local administration were subordinated to him. Thus, formation of local self-governance in the Russian Federation entailed transition from the executive-collective form of activity to the one-man command principle in managing local executive machine.

Local Soviet was entitled to countermand formal notes issued by local administration that conflicted with the applicable law and the Soviet’s decisions taken within its jurisdiction. Local administration head was given the right to appeal against the respective decision issued by the Soviet. The Soviet was entitled to impeach credibility of local administration head. Decision was deemed taken if at least two thirds of the total deputies’ number voted for it. Local administration head, in his turn, enjoyed the right to appeal against resolutions of the respective local Soviet related to this administration. Reasoning from the above, it is possible to draw conclusion that an attempt was made to introduce a kind of “checks and balances system” locally.

It is universally recognized that practicability and efficiency of the local self-governance in many respects was dependent on material resources and funds at its disposal. Local self-governance bodies were assigned the right to require transfer or selling to municipal ownership enterprises, their structural divisions, other assets owned by the state (provided these assets were of special significance for communal, household and social-and-cultural servicing of people). They hold paramount title as against public agencies in respect of purchasing houses, works and other facilities located within their coverage territory that might be used for local needs. Local self-governance finance base was made up of budget and off-budget funds, loan proceeds, hard currency means and resources available to territorial non-state self-governance bodies. There was also a contract-based possibility of pooling resources of local self-governance bodies, on the one hand, and funds of companies, institutions, organizations, and private individuals, on the other hand – with the purpose of financing construction projects, repair and technical maintenance of facilities of social and manufacturing infrastructures.

Hence, the 1991 year Law, on the one hand, created prerequisites for converting local Soviets into bodies of true sovereignty of the people able of satisfying daily wants of the local residents, on the other hand – constrained this process by uniformity of organizational mechanism of local self-governance performance.

Democratic reformations in the Russian Federation resulted in trend towards evolving of local self-governance out of the state jurisdiction, which existed in the pre-revolutionary period.
The Russian Federation Constitution adopted in 1993 finally secured this status – local self-government bodies were not integrated into the state jurisdiction. Article 132 described the scope of local-significance issues, required their obligatory solution by local self-governance bodies providing necessary authority for action. Thereby, the local self-governance constitutionally consolidated in the Russian Federation; it could be described as a specific authority level because segregation of local self-governance bodies from the public authority domain resulted in specific vertical-style separation of public power.

Important event in establishing the local self-governance system in our country was passing of the Federal Law # 154-FZ (of August 28, 1995) on General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Governance in the Russian Federation. The Law described local self-governance as residents’ independent activity at their responsibility – directly or via local self-governance bodies, with the purpose of tackling matters of local significance. Entitlement of Russians to local self-governance was actualized by such basic provisions of the Law as: recognition of equality of citizens; the right to elect and to be elected to the local self-governance bodies; equal access to municipal service.

In that way, key principles of local self-governance development in the Russian Federation were defined; these principles gave way to wide variety of forms of putting it into practice.

However the population of Russia – due to a number of reasons – as before failed to participate fully in executing sovereignty of the people via the local self-government institution. And it was not by chance that the local self-governance reform was declared as one of the most important constitutional-and-legal reforms in the Russian Federation. Under consideration of historic experience in promoting local self-governance in Russia and application of advanced foreign experience, reform had been launched the legal background of which was the Federal Law # 131-FZ (of October 6, 2003) on General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Governance in the RF. The Law laid the groundwork for new two-level system of local self-governance, under which the population will most closely approach municipal authority and in reality take part in its execution.


In the frame of Local Self-governing reform in the Russian Federation we can see serious changes of territorial and structural organization of municipal units, financial-economic basis of local governing, in the field of cooperation between state and municipal institutions.

Samara Oblast became first of the Russian regions where fundamental changes of Local Self-governing organization were made on the legislative level and successfully are being realized in practice. Since January, 1, 2004 till now Samara State Duma passed more than a hundred laws on the development of Federal Law on Local Self-governing. In Samara Oblast there were formed 304 new municipal units, 12 of them have urban Settlement status and 292 – rural Settlement status. There were defined the boundaries of municipal units and urban districts, their regulations are being edited very actively.

International Market Institute (IMI) and its subdivision – Public and Municipal Administration Department as a basic institute of higher education authorized by Samara Oblast Government, within the jurisdiction of Russian Public Service Academy under the auspices of the President of the Russian Federation has developed a complex of the measures aimed at forming the precise system of vocational training for municipal servants, deputies and elective officials of the Local Self-governing. This system includes the improvement of professional skills and professional retraining, generalization of the work experience, the scientific analysis of the problems that municipal servants have at their professional sphere.
The municipal elections were held on October, 9, 2005. The law on Local Self-governing in Samara Oblast comes into force on January, 1, 2006. Nowadays it is necessary to carry out a short-term professional training of municipal servants and deputies of representative bodies according to new rules of municipal Self-government.

IMI introduces several new educational programs and curricula to improve the organization of training for municipal servants. They include a week courses of qualification improvement for various categories of audience: heads of Settlement, chairmen of Settlement representative bodies, heads of the local administration staff, economic division and department servants. Program of the courses reflects the specific character of each group of audience.

For example, for head of settlement training we use the complex approach that includes the analysis of various aspects of municipal unit activities: legal bases of local governing, organizational bases of local governing, financial and economic bases of local governing, management in municipal units.

Professional skill improvement of chairmen in settlement representative bodies is aimed at study of a role and a place of a representative body in local management, a representative body work organization and its competence.

Servants in financial sphere pay special attention to development, implementation of the local budget, the municipal property management, realization of target program on economic settlement development.

Additional to the week programs we introduced one-day courses of qualification improvement carried out together with Samara Oblast legislative and executive powers. Activities of various categories of municipal servants are covered there: budgetary process, a local economy, social an cultural sphere, cooperation with nonprofits.

Conclusion.

Realization of the reform requires significant organizational and financial resources. Regional authorities and local self-governance bodies (of the already existing towns and rayons) take over the main commitments in terms of the Act enforcement. There are a lot of issues demanding long-term and laborious efforts. Specifically, one of the crucial issues to be solved in the coming time is the issue of adequate separation of public and municipal assets as well as land title of ownership for communities and rayons. Another issue of no less importance is related to sources of local budgeting. Pursuant to the new legal framework, major budget revenues shall be generated by funds collected via regional and municipal foundations of financial assistance to communities; there must be also local sources of forming the budget.

It was acknowledged at the national level that major priority of the local self-governance reform in Russia is training, retraining, and advanced training of local self-governance bodies’ staff. For this purpose, the Russian Academy of Public Service (abbreviated in Russian as RAGS) affiliated with the RF President’s Office proposed a number of urgent organizational and financial measures as to training of personnel for municipal authorities and assumed obligation to perform training via the country-wide chain of higher schools within its jurisdiction. Major part is assigned to special-purpose R&D-and-training centers having at their disposal relevant material and organizational facilities.

Program of vocational retraining and advanced training for municipal officials is already under implementation across the Samara oblast – based on the International Market Institute (IMI) incorporated into the RAGS network; IMI has got a ten-year practical experience and enjoys all necessary resources for efficient operation in terms of adding value to the reform under consideration.