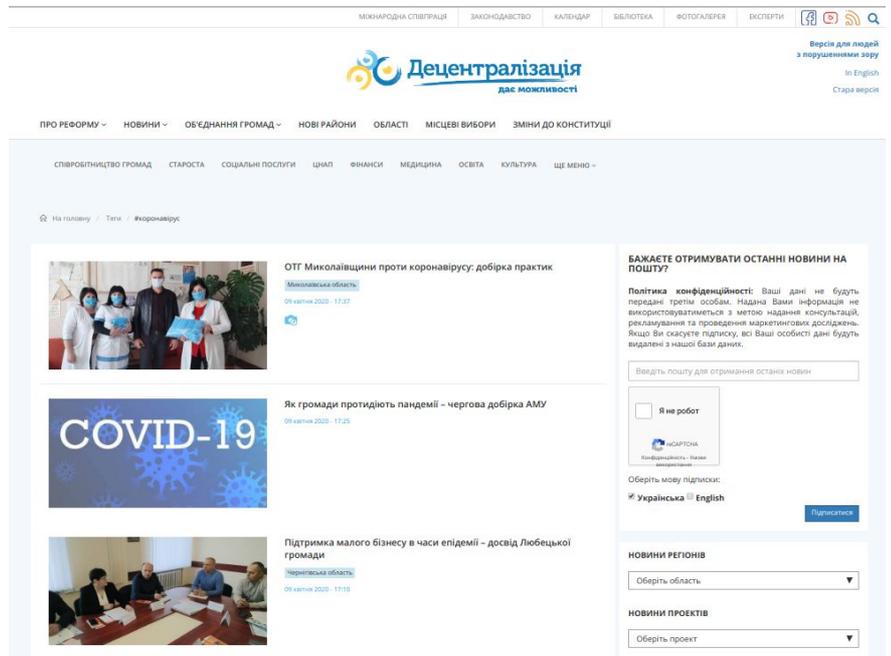


When COVID-19 epidemic broke out in Ukraine, the central government introduced the national quarantine and took a number of measures including socio-economic support to vulnerable groups and SMEs, as well as simplified medical procurement and ensured support for healthcare workers. However, it is the local authorities who found themselves on the frontline of fighting the COVID-19 crisis and implementing all the introduced measures. At the same time, the information on how to tackle the emerging crisis at the local level was non-available.



UKRAINIAN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS



▲ Protective gear for medical staff



▲ Delivering food packages and disinfecting hallways, Mykolaiv reg.

▼ Disinfecting streets, Vinnitsia reg.



So the Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralization Support Project DESPRO initiated creation of the section “Local Self-Government in Response to Coronavirus” on the Decentralization web portal in March 2020. The primary goal of such a section is giving the platform for disseminating successful COVID-19 response practices by communities across the country. Additionally, the section provides materials on **Ukrainian and European** communities’ response, methodological recommendations on crisis communication and organization of remote work for governing bodies, etc.

In 3 weeks of its activity, the section has generated over 37 thousand views.

Launch of the #coronavirus section encourages Ukrainian communities to share their experience and success stories of fighting the pandemic, to learn and exchange. This process helps bringing productive ideas to COVID-19 response in communities and create cohesion among local self-governments. It is necessary, especially for rural areas, to feel nationwide unity in fighting the virus and take security measures seriously. Decentralization portal in this regard is the primary source of trustworthy fact-checked information tailored specifically for local self-governments. Since 2015, more than 3 million users visited the portal, over 500 thousand are returning users.

The Decentralization editorial staff and journalists continue to cover communities’ response to COVID-19, as the continuation of quarantine poses new challenges in healthcare, education, business and fiscal measures, and public communication. Other projects of international technical assistance funded by EU, USAID and Sweden now also support this information and communication effort. This coordinated approach ensures timely and multi-faceted information feeding into the work of local self-governments tackling the COVID-19 crisis and simultaneously going through the on-going decentralization and local self-governance reform in Ukraine.