



РОССИЙСКАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ: ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ И СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ

RUSSIAN TRANSFORMATION: POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

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Institutional aspects of the political and administrative integration of the Kherson region into the socio-economic space of Russia

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Abstract. The study discusses the issues related to the institutional mechanisms of integration of the Kherson region into the political, administrative and socio-economic space of the Russian Federation. The authors analyze the complex process of embedding a new subject of the Russian Federation into the system of public administration, the legal, financial and managerial environment of the country. The authors compare the integration processes of the Kherson region with the experience of integrating the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in 2014–2016, revealing both common features and significant differences due to the military-political situation, personnel shortages and infrastructure problems. The research uses both general and specialized academic methods, such as synthesis, deduction, comparative analysis, sociological survey, as well as analysis of the legal framework and scientific literature. Based on the analysis of regulatory acts and a sociological survey conducted by 131 experts in the field of public administration (civil servants, teachers, heads of authorities of the Kherson region) the main barriers to integration have been identified, including staff shortages, problems with information systems and legal regulation. The experts emphasize the need for a systematic personnel policy, professional development, transition to Russian standards for the provision of public services, and enhanced cooperation with the federal government. Special importance is attached to measures and tools that contribute to the legitimization of the new government — the restoration of infrastructure, transparency of governance and public involvement in integration processes. The study emphasizes that successful integration requires not only the technical adaptation of the newly annexed region to federal standards, but also a comprehensive systemic transformation aimed at such results as managerial efficiency, social legitimacy and strategic planning. The conclusions and

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recommendations obtained are of interest to specialists in the field of economics, political science, state and municipal administration and may be in demand when developing state policy in the field of management of new territories.

Keywords: institutional mechanisms, integration processes, political and institutional challenges, special military operation, new territories, administrative efficiency, social legitimacy

Contribution. All the authors participated in the development of the research concept, the collection, processing and analysis of data, the writing of the manuscript text, and the formulation of conclusions.

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Институциональные аспекты политико-административной интеграции Херсонской области в социально-экономическое пространство России

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Аннотация. Рассмотрены вопросы, связанные с институциональными механизмами интеграции Херсонской области в политико-административное и социально-экономическое пространство Российской Федерации. Проанализирован сложный процесс встраивания нового субъекта РФ в систему государственного управления, правовую, финансовую и управлеченческую среду страны. Особое внимание уделено сравнению интеграционных процессов, происходящих в Херсонской области, с опытом интеграции Республики Крым и города Севастополя в 2014–2016 гг., выявляются как общие черты, так и существенные различия, обусловленные военно-политической обстановкой, кадровыми дефицитами и инфраструктурными проблемами. В рамках исследования использованы как общенаучные, так и специализированные методы и приемы, такие как синтез, дедукция, сравнительный анализ, социологический опрос, а также анализ правовой базы и научной литературы. На основе анализа нормативных актов и проведенного социологического опроса 131 эксперта в сфере государственного

управления (государственные служащие, преподаватели, руководители органов власти Херсонской области) выявлены основные барьеры интеграции, включая кадровый дефицит, проблемы с информационными системами и правовым регулированием. Эксперты в своих оценках делают акцент на необходимости системной кадровой политики, повышения квалификации специалистов, перехода на российские стандарты оказания государственных услуг и усиления взаимодействия с федеральным центром. Особое значение придается мерам и инструментам, способствующим легитимации новой власти — восстановлению инфраструктуры, прозрачности управления и вовлечению общественности в процессы интеграции. В исследовании подчеркнуто, что успешная интеграция требует не только технической адаптации вновь присоединенного региона к федеральным стандартам, но и комплексной системной трансформации, нацеленной на такие результаты, как управленческая эффективность, социальная легитимность и стратегическое планирование. Полученные выводы и рекомендации представляют интерес для специалистов в области экономики, политологии, государственного и муниципального управления и могут быть востребованы при разработке государственной политики в сфере управления новыми территориями.

Ключевые слова: институциональные механизмы, интеграционные процессы, политико-институциональные вызовы, специальная военная операция, новые территории, административная эффективность, социальная легитимность

Вклад авторов. Все авторы участвовали в разработке концепции исследования, сборе, обработке и анализе данных, написании текста рукописи, формулировке выводов.

Финансирование. Статья подготовлена в рамках исследования, проводимого авторским коллективом Федерального государственного бюджетного образовательного учреждения высшего образования «Государственный университет управления» при поддержке Российского научного фонда в рамках реализации научного проекта №24-18-00722 на выполнение научно-исследовательской работы на тему: «Социально-экономическая и политико-административная трансформация современного Юга России. „Новые“ и „старые“ регионы: сравнительный исторический анализ и перспективы развития».

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Introduction

The political, administrative, and socio-economic integration of the new regions into the Russian Federation is a complex, multifactorial, and lengthy process that requires the development of sustainable institutional mechanisms capable of ensuring not only legal and managerial continuity, but also the formation of a new systemic identity of the region within the Russian state. Regarding the Kherson region, which became part of Russia as a result of the 2022 referendum and subsequent legislative procedures, this process is becoming particularly acute and important, since it is being implemented in the context

of a special military operation (SVO) and the stage of reconstruction, covering both the physical infrastructure and the institutional framework of regional governance.

In this study, integration is understood as the process of purposefully forming stable legal, administrative, economic, and socio-cultural ties between a new region and central and regional institutions of the Russian Federation, aimed at achieving systemic coherence in the functioning of government, ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, and integrating the region into the all-Russian economic and managerial field [1]. Unlike a simple administrative affiliation, integration involves not only a formal legal transformation, but also a deep institutional restructuring, including personnel renewal, regulatory and legal adaptation, government reform and the creation of conditions for long-term sustainable development of the region.

Of particular importance in this process are institutional aspects, understood as a set of formal and informal rules, procedures, structures and norms that determine the functioning of public authority and its interaction with civil society and the economy [2]. In the conditions of the SVR, the institutional integration of the Kherson region is forced to accelerate and is implemented in a partial combat situation, which places increased demands on the flexibility, adaptability and legitimacy of the management structures being formed. The key areas at this stage are: the formation of a loyal and competent cadre from among both local residents and specialists from other regions of Russia; the creation of temporary civil administration bodies that are gradually transforming into permanent authorities; the introduction of the Russian legal framework and financial and budgetary system; as well as the establishment of a management vertical that ensures the implementation of federal policy on the ground.

In the post-war period, the tasks of institutional integration have expanded significantly. In addition to consolidating the results achieved, the authorities face the task of building a stable, effective and legitimate regional governance system capable of restoring the economy, social sphere and infrastructure. Institutional stability will ensure not only economic growth, but also long-term political stability in the region.

In the light of the above, the study of the institutional aspects of the integration of the Kherson region is extremely relevant.

The aim of the study is to analyze and evaluate the current challenges and mechanisms of integration of the Kherson region into the political, administrative and socio-economic space of the Russian Federation.

Methods and materials

Within the framework of this research, both general scientific and specialized cognitive methods have been applied, allowing a comprehensive analysis of the complex and multifaceted process of integration of the Kherson region into the Russian state.

General theoretical methods include deduction and abstraction. The deductive approach was used to substantiate the initial hypothesis that the successful integration of new regions is impossible without a stable institutional framework, including legal transformation, personnel policy, decentralization of management and the formation of a new regional identity. The abstraction made it possible to identify the key institutional mechanisms that determine the effectiveness of integration processes and consider them in isolation from the current military-political situation to focus on long-term trends.

Special research methods include:

1. Sociological survey — as part of the empirical stage of the study, an expert survey was conducted among 131 civil servants, heads of government authorities of the Kherson region and specialists in the field of public administration, including representatives of provisional administrations, local governments and specialists in economics and social policy. The survey covered key aspects: assessing the effectiveness of the management vertical, the level of adaptation to the Russian legal system, the perception of a new regional identity, readiness for personnel changes, and expectations from federal support. The data obtained made it possible to identify real challenges and barriers to institutional integration, as well as to identify priorities for further development of management structures.

2. Analysis of regulatory documents — the study covered federal laws, presidential decrees, government resolutions, as well as regional regulations adopted in the Kherson region since its incorporation into the Russian Federation. Special attention is paid to the Federal Constitutional Law No. 8-FKZ dated 04.10.2022 “On the admission of the Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new Subject within the Russian Federation — the Kherson Region”¹, the state program for the restoration and development of new regions², as well as regulatory acts regulating the transition to the Russian financial, educational, medical and cultural systems. This method allowed us to trace the dynamics of legal transformation and assess the degree of its consistency with the practice of local government.

3. Comparative analysis — a comparison is made with the process of integration of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol (2014–2016).

¹ Federal Constitutional Law No. 8-FKZ dated 04.10.2022: On the Admission of the Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new Entity within the Russian Federation — the Kherson Region”. *ConsultantPlus*. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_428186/ (accessed: 28.08.2025) (In Russ.).

² Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 12/22/2023 No. 2255 (as amended on 16.09.2024) “On Approval of the State program of the Russian Federation ‘Restoration and Socio-economic Development of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Lugansk People’s Republic, Zaporizhia region and Kherson region’”. *SPS Consultant Plus*. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_466292/ (accessed: 28.08.2025) (In Russ.).

Literature review

The study of the institutional aspects of the integration of new regions into the Russian Federation is actively developing in modern Russian science. Different Russian authors consider this process from various points of view — legal, economic, cultural and managerial.

The institutional aspects of the development of new territories are studied in the work of Dolbnya N.V. [3]; the issues of building state and municipal administration of the newly joined regions are considered in the works of Rybalchenko I.V., Demin A.V. [4]; Channova S.E. [5]. Several authors (Ivashchenko O.D. [6], Vasilyeva R.I., Doroshenko S.V. [7], etc.) in their works consider the problems of successful integration of the newly joined territories into the socio-economic and political space of the country and determine the prospects for their sustainable development within the Russian Federation.

The works of N.V. Sheremetyeva [8] analyze the process of embedding new territories into the Russian cultural space. The author emphasizes that integration is not limited to a formal change of borders, but requires deep spiritual and cultural reintegration, including the preservation of identity while forming a common cultural identity. Sheremetyeva notes the importance of a special federal law regulating cultural relations in the new territories and defines the key organizational tasks facing state and local authorities until 2026–2027. Her research highlights the need for an integrated approach that includes educational, awareness-raising and information measures.

Borblik K.E. [9] offers a socio-economic description of the new regions, including the Kherson region. Based on the analysis of statistical data until 2022, he concludes that the region has a high economic potential, especially in industry and agriculture, but also points to a significant lag behind the national average due to the policy of the previous state. The author emphasizes the importance of the Program for the Development of new regions of the Russian Federation, which is already showing the first results in economic recovery and attracting investments.

In his research, Gorlanov K.A. [10] analyzes the social aspects of improving the standard of living in the Kherson region, such as social protection of the most vulnerable categories of the population in the region, restoration and creation of conditions for sustainable development.

The experience of integration of Crimea is considered in the works of Voronin I.N. [11] and Zotkin A.A. [12]. Voronin analyzes the economic results of the first five years after the accession, highlighting the key areas of public investment — transport, energy, tourism and social infrastructure. At the same time, he points to existing risks, such as limited access to the international financial system and the absence of major global retailers.

A.A. Zotkin [12] focuses on political and institutional challenges, including the difficulties of forming a new regional elite, the legacy of Ukrainian political culture and the problems of integration of the Crimean Tatars. The author introduces the concepts of “institutional explosion” and “institutional mimicry”, emphasizing that

external threats and isolation have become factors that accelerate loyalty, but not always the effectiveness of management. These findings are particularly relevant for the Kherson region, where there is also tension between the requirements of the federal center and local management practices.

Thus, the literature review shows that the process of integrating new regions is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires a synthesis of legal, economic, cultural and managerial approaches. Research points to the importance of not only formal legal mechanisms, but also “soft” factors such as identity, trust, personnel policy, and public perception.

The results of the study

This section is devoted to the analysis of institutional mechanisms that ensure the administrative and political integration of the Kherson region into the public administration system of the Russian Federation. Special attention is paid to the comparison with the process of integration of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol (2014–2016), as well as the interpretation of data from an expert survey conducted among representatives of the civil service, university professors, heads of local governments and regional authorities.

1. Comparative analysis of integration processes: Kherson region — Republic of Crimea, federal city of Sevastopol

The process of integrating new territories into the Russian system of public administration has both common features and significant differences depending on the historical and political context, the level of infrastructural development and the degree of institutional readiness. A comparison of the key integration processes of the Kherson region and the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol allows us to identify key institutional features that determine the effectiveness of administrative integration (Table).

The data shown in Table indicate that the Kherson region, due to its geopolitical location and historical context, represents a special case of integration into the socio-economic space of the Russian Federation. Integration processes in the Kherson region are complicated by both external (military) and internal (institutional) factors in comparison with the factors that operated during the period of integration of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol.

2. Integration challenges and priorities: expert survey data

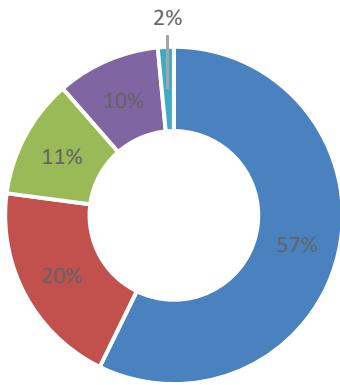
The results of the survey of 131 experts in the field of public administration (civil servants, teachers, government leaders) provide a deeper understanding of institutional barriers and strategic directions for strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the new administrative system. The expert survey was conducted in July 2025.

Comparative characteristics of the key integration processes of the Kherson region, the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol

| Criteria | Integration of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol (2014–2016) | Integration of the Kherson region (2022 – present) |
|--|--|---|
| The existence of an integration law | Federal Constitutional Law No. 6-FKZ dated 03/21/2014 "On the Admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the Formation of New Subjects within the Russian Federation – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol" | Federal Constitutional Law No. 8-FKZ dated 04/10/2022 "On the admission of the Kherson Region to the Russian Federation and the formation of a new subject within the Russian Federation – the Kherson Region" |
| The procedure for joining the Russian Federation | The Republic of Crimea was admitted to the Russian Federation in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Article 4 of Federal Constitutional Law No. 6-FKZ of December 17, 2001 "On the Procedure for Admission to the Russian Federation and the Formation of a New Subject of the Russian Federation within it" | The Kherson Region is admitted to the Russian Federation in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Article 4 of Federal Constitutional Law No. 6-FKZ of December 17, 2001 "On the Procedure for Admission to the Russian Federation and the Formation of a new Subject of the Russian Federation within it". |
| Availability of a relevant federal executive authority responsible for the integration procedure | Ministry of the Russian Federation for Crimean Affairs | No |
| Incorporation of the region into the federal district | The Crimean Federal District was created (abolished in 2016, the regions included in it are included in the Southern Federal District) | No (the new territories that became part of Russia in 2022 are not included in any of the federal districts as of 01.09.2025) |
| The presence of a state program of socio-economic development for the period of integration | Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 750 dated 08.11.2014 "On Approval of the Federal Target Program 'Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol until 2025'" (extended based on Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 63 dated 01.30.2019 "On Approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation 'Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol'") | Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 12/22/2023 N 2255 "On Approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation 'Restoration and Socio-economic Development of the Donetsk People's Republic, Lugansk People's Republic, Zaporizhia region and Kherson region'" |
| Key milestones and challenges | The Republic of Crimea (2014–2016) was characterized by relatively rapid and centralized institutional integration. The main stages included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creation of a temporary administration under the control of the federal center; – mass replacement of government personnel with loyal specialists from Russia; – rapid transition to Russian standards for the provision of public services; – implementation of the Russian legal framework and financial system; – infrastructure development with the active support of the federal budget. One of the key success factors was the high level of public legitimacy generated by the 2014 referendum and broad support for integration by a significant part of the population. In addition, Crimea received the status of an autonomous entity within the Southern Federal District, which simplified the coordination of interaction with federal structures | The Kherson region (starting in 2022) is facing more complex institutional challenges: The process is taking place under conditions of partial occupation and military instability, which makes it difficult for the authorities to function fully. There are serious staff shortages; according to the survey, 79% of experts pointed to the "lack of experienced staff in government" as the main administrative barrier; There are problems with information systems, digital infrastructure, and legal regulation (67% of experts identified it as a priority area for improvement) |

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on the analysis of the regulatory framework.

2.1. Assessment of the current state of integration (fig. 1, 2)



- 3 – satisfactory / there are both successes and difficulties
- 2 – unsatisfactory / serious problems are observed
- 4 – good / integration is proceeding in the prescribed manner
- 1 – extremely unsatisfactory / the process is not organized
- 5 – very good / the process is organized efficiently and consistently

Fig. 1. The results of the survey of respondents to the question: “How do you assess the current process of administrative integration of the Kherson region into the public administration system of the Russian Federation?” (single choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

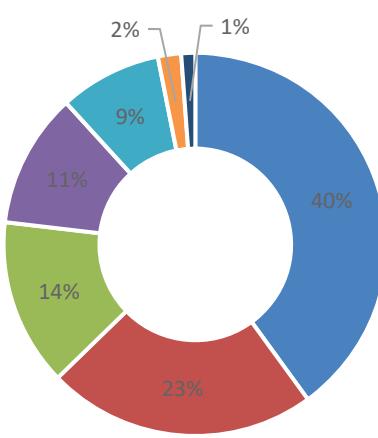
Most experts rate the process of administrative integration as satisfactory, but with serious difficulties (see Fig. 1):

57% of respondents chose the rating “3 — satisfactory / there are both successes and difficulties”;

20% — “2 — unsatisfactory / serious problems are observed”;

Only 2% of experts consider the process to be organized efficiently (rating “5”).

This indicates the recognition of some progress, but at the same time — the presence of systemic problems that require urgent solutions.



- Lack of experienced staff in government agencies
- Insufficient transparency and effective control over the execution of decisions
- Problems with information systems and digital infrastructure
- Difficulties in the interaction between the federal and regional levels of government
- Non-compliance of the management structure with the requirements of Russian legislation
- I find it difficult to answer
- Other

Fig. 2. The results of the survey of respondents to the question: “What administrative barriers, in your opinion, are the most significant in the integration of the Kherson region into the Russian system of public administration?” (multiple choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

At the same time, it is worth noting the problems identified by experts on the path of integration processes (see Fig. 2), among which the lack of experienced personnel in government bodies (40%), insufficient transparency and effectiveness of control over the execution of decisions (23%) and problems with information systems and digital infrastructure were most often noted.

2.2. Key institutional transformations

Along with the identified problems, experts propose several priority changes in the structure and functioning of the executive authorities of the Kherson region to overcome the above-mentioned administrative barriers and successfully integrate into the socio-economic system of the Russian Federation (Fig. 3). Among the measures outlined by the expert community are professional development of state and municipal employees and specialists (42%), the transition to Russian standards for the provision of public services (27%), reform of the civil service system and changes in the powers and subordination of authorities (11% each). This indicates the need not only to copy Russian institutions, but also to adapt human resources to new legal and managerial realities.



Fig. 3. Results of the survey of respondents to the question: “What changes in the structure and functioning of the executive authorities of the Kherson region, in your opinion, are the most important for successful integration into the system of the Russian Federation?” (multiple choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

In addition, experts have identified key factors contributing to the legitimization of the new government (Fig. 4):

These data show that the legitimacy of the new system in the eyes of experts is based not so much on formal procedures as on practical results — the restoration of normal life, the availability of services and the involvement of citizens in integration processes.

2.3. The role of the federal center and the coordination structure

The results of expert assessments concerning the role of the federal center and the coordination structure during the period of integration processes are interesting.

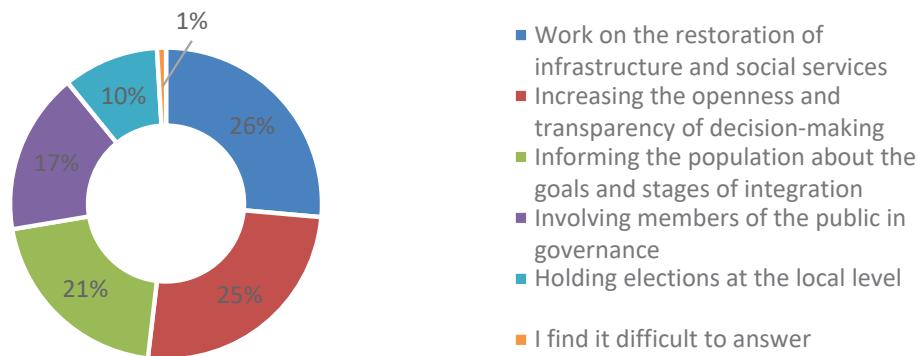


Fig. 4. Results of the survey of respondents to the question: “What measures, in your opinion, contribute to strengthening the legitimacy of the new administrative and political system in the Kherson region?” (multiple choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

It captures the diverse opinions of the expert community regarding the creation of a separate federal district specifically for new territories (including the Kherson region), as was done during the integration of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol: 35% of experts believe that such a decision is necessary, 35% agreed that the creation of a separate federal district is not required, and 30% consider this decision to be of little importance for the impact of integration processes. Therefore, he does not express a definite opinion on the need to create a new federal district or its absence, which indicates uncertainty in the strategic vision of the long-term institutional architecture. The issue of a key coordinating body at the federal level has also caused controversy (Fig. 5).

Different opinions may be due to the professional experience of the interviewed experts and their experience in interdepartmental cooperation.

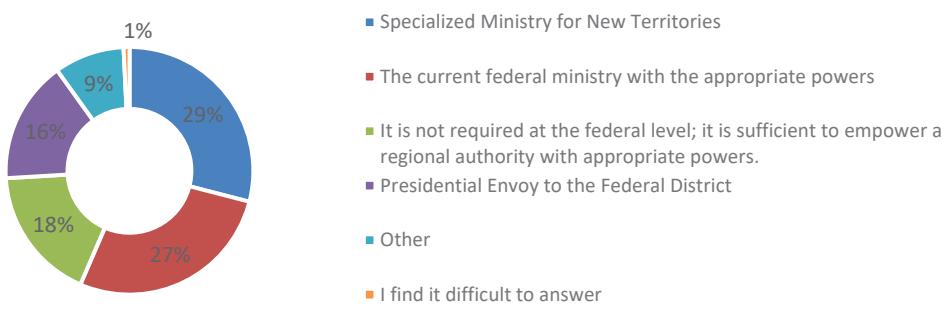


Fig. 5. The results of the survey of respondents to the question: “Which federal body, in your opinion, should play a key coordinating role in the administrative integration of the Kherson region?” (single choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

The expert community has highlighted the following aspects in the issues of interaction between the federal center and regional authorities (Fig. 6).

More than half of the experts surveyed (56%) believe that it is necessary to transform and refine legal regulation and control processes, as well as issues of personnel interaction and appointment procedures. This factor may indicate the basic difficulties (peculiar only to the initial stage) in the integration of the Kherson region into the socio-economic space of Russia.

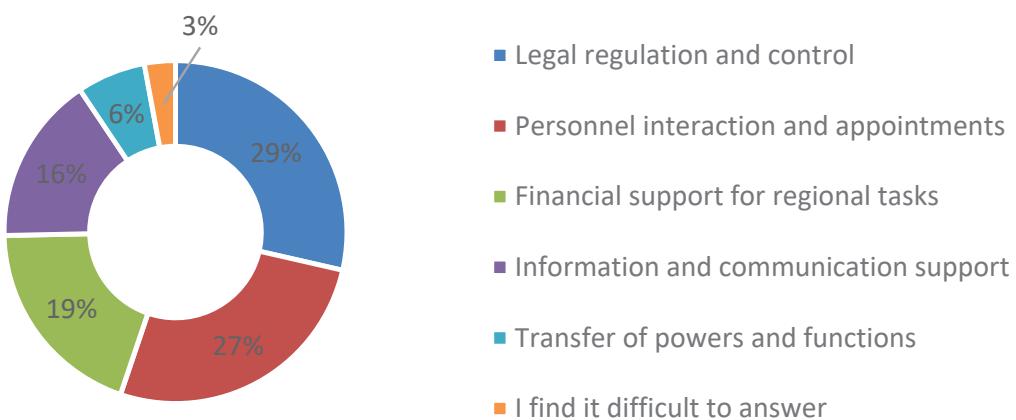


Fig. 6. The results of the survey of respondents to the question: “Which aspects of the interaction between the federal and regional authorities require the most improvement?” (single choice)

Source: developed by E.A. Mitrofanova, M.B. Polyakov, V.I. Mokrushin independently based on sociological research.

Conclusion

The conducted research has shown that the institutional aspects of the integration of the Kherson region demonstrate both the possibility of borrowing the experience of the Crimea, and the presence of unique challenges taking place against the background of the current military situation and related personnel shortages. Unlike in Crimea, where integration was supported by an internal consensus, in the Kherson region, practical efficiency is becoming a key factor in strengthening legitimacy — rebuilding infrastructure, transparency of governance, and information work with the population. The key role in this process is played by institutional aspects that determine governance mechanisms, the legal framework and organizational structures that ensure a smooth transition and sustainable development.

The expert assessment made it possible to clarify the institutional barriers and strategic directions for strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the new administrative system. According to experts, successful integration requires:

1. The systematic personnel policy, including training and certification.
2. Strengthening cooperation between the federal and regional levels, especially in the areas of legal regulation and staffing.

3. Creation of a mechanism for public participation in management.
4. Making a strategic decision on the coordination center, whether it is a specialized body or an enhanced mission.

Thus, the institutional integration of the Kherson region is not only a technical process of bringing the management system to Russian standards, but also a complex political project requiring a combination of administrative efficiency, social legitimacy and strategic consistency.

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