

# **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**MECHANISMS AND STRATEGIES OF STATE AND  
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE CONDITIONS  
OF WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE**

Mariupol State University (Ukraine)  
University of Economics and Humanities (Poland)

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AND RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE**

**Collective Monograph**

<https://doi.org/10.36228/PASD24>

**Kyiv-Bielsko-Biala, 2025**



Recommended for publication by the Academic Council of Mariupol State University  
(Protocol number 7 from 26.02.2025)

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Public Administration for Sustainable Development: Mechanisms and Strategies of State and Regional Administration in the Conditions of War and Reconstruction of Ukraine: Collective Monograph / The general ed. Chechel A., Zharova L., Śleziak M. Kyiv - Bielsko-Biala (Poland): University of Economics and Humanities, 2025. 285 p.

**ISBN 978-83-63649-18-0 (online edition)**

The monograph is dedicated to the pressing issues and prospects of Ukraine's recovery after the armed conflict. The study focuses on public administration reforms aimed at strengthening the country's potential during the war and in the reconstruction phase, as well as the role of these reforms in the process of European integration. The authors examine a wide range of topics, from the organizational and legal mechanisms for engaging citizens in local governance to strategies for managing public finances in wartime. Attention is given to decentralization, sustainable regional development, crisis management in the field of water use, and the restoration of key economic sectors. Particular emphasis is placed on the analysis of women's social entrepreneurship and its impact on social processes in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as a comparative study of migration policies in Ukraine and EU member states. This monograph represents a contribution from scholars and experts, offering a critical perspective and comprehensive approaches to addressing public administration and economic development challenges in the post-war recovery period of Ukraine. It aims to serve as a guide for policymakers, researchers, and all those involved in the process of recovery and sustainable development of the country, providing a solid foundation for long-term changes. The monograph is designed for scientists, graduate and undergraduate students who are researching these above-mentioned problems in the Public Administration scientific sphere.

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### ***1.3. Organizational and legal mechanism for ensuring public participation in management decision-making at the local level <sup>1</sup>***

*<https://doi.org/10.36228/PASD24/1/3>*

In Ukraine, there are several dozen mechanisms for citizen participation, provided for in normative-legal documents at various levels, from the Constitution to local self-government bodies' decisions. These mechanisms differ in methods of engagement, mandatory application, detail and definition of implementation procedures, effectiveness, frequency, convenience, and simplicity of use.

An important aspect of this rationality is the establishment of properly coordinated interactions between state authorities and local self-government, considering the subsidiarity principle. This becomes particularly significant in times of war when all levels of governance naturally tend towards the centralisation of management decisions. Therefore, a top priority today is defining the primary tasks that should be entrusted to the bodies of local self-government of regions and territorial communities. This is to ensure, on the one hand, their maximum efficiency in managing the resource potential of respective territories, and on the other hand, to establish coordination among all governmental institutions to address the urgent needs of the front and the economic recovery.

Primarily in this context, attention should be drawn to the issues of business relocation and the movement of civilians from the eastern regions of the country to its central and western parts. It is here that local self-government bodies face the most war-related challenges. This primarily involves the need to coordinate work with regional and district military administrations to provide temporary accommodation for relocated enterprises and internally displaced persons. In the near future, this may also include creating suitable conditions for the long-term stay of those who decide to remain in relocation areas for an extended period or permanently.

Despite the presence of various mechanisms for involving residents in municipal governance, there is currently a high level of distrust and apathy among citizens regarding public participation issues. To understand the effectiveness of existing engagement methods, it is

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<sup>1</sup> The author of the chapter: **Alina Nadezhdenko**, PhD in Public Administration, Associate Professor of the Department of Public Management and Administration, Mariupol State University, Kyiv (Ukraine).

necessary to regularly monitor and evaluate the current implementation practices and use of these mechanisms. Evaluation should occur both at the level of the normative-legal framework, existing methodological recommendations, and in analysing strategies for implementation and motivation for involving residents in municipal management. An important element of citizen participation in socio-political life and decision-making processes in the city is also the cooperation between city authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs, NGOs, initiatives, and activists).

Civil society organisations, on the one hand, represent the interests of their members, the interests of various social groups, and broader societal interests. On the other hand, they themselves are a mechanism for citizen participation in city governance. Therefore, cooperation between the authorities and civil society organisations is a strategically important task for building democracy, proper governance, trust, and consensus in the community. Evaluating existing practices of interaction between civil society representatives and city authorities will help identify the main barriers to establishing such interaction and strengthen the role of civil society in city governance.

The following scholars have conducted research on the issue: S. Alexeyeva, V. Babayev, O. Balinska, N. Bortnik, T. Garasymiv, I. Zharovska, R. Igonin, M. Kelman, V. Kovalchuk, I. Lychenko, L. Luts, V. Makarchuk, M. Nikyforak, V. Ortynskyi, O. Ostapenko, B. Stetsiuk, S. Slyvka, A. Subbot, Y. Tykhomirov, Y. Shemshuchenko, and others.

*The purpose of the research* is to develop and justify the principles for forming an effective organisational and legal mechanism to engage the public in making managerial decisions at the local level, aimed at promoting more active citizen participation in addressing issues related to their local environment and improving the interaction between local authorities and the population.

The objectives of the study include exploring the theoretical aspects of creating the organisational and legal mechanism for interaction between local authorities and the public, analysing international experience in ensuring public participation in decision-making, identifying the problems and potential of electronic democracy, developing a theoretical model of the organisational and legal mechanism for public participation in decision-making, and formulating recommendations for improving the

public management mechanism for cooperation between local authorities and the public at the local level.

Data from various sources were used to investigate the organisational and legal mechanisms ensuring public participation in decision-making at the local level. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how these mechanisms operate. The primary sources included legislative acts regulating public participation mechanisms, particularly laws on democratic principles and citizen involvement in decision-making, enabling the analysis and evaluation of the legal framework underpinning public participation in local governance.

In addition to legislative acts, data from analytical reports and academic studies were employed to assess the effectiveness of measures engaging the public in management processes. This allowed for an analysis not only of the legal aspects but also an evaluation of the practical impact of initiatives aimed at increasing public participation in municipal or regional management.

The research utilised methods of legal analysis to substantiate and evaluate the legislative mechanisms of public participation. Comparative methods were also employed to analyse public participation practices in different countries, while generalisation, systematisation, and classification methods were used to structure and evaluate the collected data.

One of the most pressing needs of modern Ukrainian society is the sustainable development of territorial communities in small towns and rural areas. Research in recent years, supported by state statistics, indicates a decline in the rural population and small towns due to migration to large industrial centres both within Ukraine and abroad. The primary cause of this situation is the lack of local opportunities to meet essential needs in employment, medical and social assistance, quality education, and the upbringing of children and youth, which collectively impact well-being and socialisation. These issues are addressed at the local level by local self-government bodies.

The development and improvement of local communities result from the participation and efforts of the citizens themselves. In other words, the effectiveness of addressing local issues significantly increases when ordinary citizens voluntarily participate in the process. Both foreign and domestic experience demonstrate that without citizen participation, regional policy becomes detached from "territorial governance." To



implement democratic standards of public participation, the state must create conditions for active citizen involvement in shaping state policy. Accordingly, effective mechanisms for informing the public about the activities of government bodies and local self-government must be developed to promote public participation in the development, discussion, and adoption of both national and local decisions, as well as in monitoring their implementation. However, the experience of developed democracies and the demands of the time underscore that public participation is a necessary, beneficial, and critically important mechanism for the positive influence of society on government activities in the interests of citizens<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand, public participation serves as a source of additional intellectual resources for government bodies and is, therefore, both beneficial and necessary for them (assuming that officials recognise this undeniable fact). It is clear that in Ukraine, government bodies and civil society institutions still need to navigate the challenging path of intelligently and consciously implementing mutually beneficial mechanisms of public participation, which will contribute to profound systemic reforms in Ukraine for the benefit of individuals and local communities.

It is axiomatic that in democratic countries, citizens' participation in government affairs cannot be limited to elections alone. Such limitations could lead to societal dissatisfaction, with an increased likelihood of confrontation and conflict. By integrating various approaches and interpretations, public participation can be defined as a system of actions, methods, tools, and mechanisms (united by algorithmic logic) for citizen involvement in defining and solving their problems.

In the context of governance, public participation allows for the consideration of social factors in planning, minimising social and political risks through management decisions, adjusting plans and government behaviour according to the interests of specific social groups, and involving these groups in management decisions.

The war has united Ukrainian society. Today in Ukraine, the divisions into social strata, political forces, professional associations, and even interest groups have practically disappeared. With rare exceptions,

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<sup>2</sup> Kolyanko, O. V. (2021) Interaction of state authorities and local self-government with the public. *Bulletin of Lviv Trade and Economic University. Series: Economic Sciences*. 65. 116–122. <https://doi.org/10.36477/2522-1205-2021-65-16>.

everyone is united in the singular goal of driving the occupier beyond our state borders. At the same time, the patriotic surge and emotional uplift propelling Ukrainians towards victory should not undermine the foundations of healthy rationalism. Such rationalism is essential not only for effective military logistics management but is also rightly considered one of the cornerstones of our future post-war state rebuilding and economic recovery.

Thus, public participation allows, on the one hand, for the minimisation of social and political risks and, on the other hand, for the identification, formulation, and defence of the community's interests during these challenging times for our state. Analysing the nature of public participation in 22 countries, N. Kenneth and J. Heiko<sup>3</sup> note that this form of activity, alongside human happiness, democracy, and economic prosperity, is a crucial condition and component of modern human life. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the phenomenon of participation among both researchers and practitioners.

In academic studies, the phenomenon of participation is examined in the context of social networks, social capital, social identity, problems of local communities, partnerships, civil society, and more. Understanding new social practices has led, on the one hand, to the differentiation of participation issues, highlighting its various types as distinct areas of study: political, civic, social, individual, horizontal, vertical participation, participation in community life, and so on. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of participation processes is being studied, considering the fields, norms, rules, and technology of participation implementation.

In a broad sense, participation today is characterised as a "situational practice" implemented within a specific territorial and social space with inherent political, social, cultural, and historical features. The condition for participation is societal interests, carried out by uniting individuals into communities of varying degrees of formalisation. According to modern theorists of civil society, as a platform for voluntary collective actions around common interests, public participation is understood as one of the principles of civil society based on constitutional democracy. It provides a real opportunity for citizens to publicly express their positions, unite with

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth, N., Heiko, G. (2008). Patterns of Participation: Political and Social Participation in 22 Nations. Discussion Paper SP IV 2008–201. P. 44.

like-minded individuals for exchanging ideas, propagate their views, exert organised influence on authority, participate in elections, and more. In this context, civic participation refers to the least politicised forms of political participation, involving not just residents but citizens – individuals with an active political culture or a culture of participation.

Contemporary academic literature presents a range of approaches to defining the concept of "participation". Such breadth in interpreting participation results in qualitative diversity in its types. Generalising the types of participation in the literature, they can be systematised as follows: by domains of participation – political participation; civic participation; public participation; participation in community life, etc. By the degree of structure – structured – unstructured; institutionalised and non-institutionalised; informal – formal. By the degree of involvement of subjects in the participation process – passive – active; individual – collective; one-time – ongoing (continuous). By orientation – vertical (aimed at involving citizens in the process of social governance) – horizontal (aimed at collective action within an association or community). Regarding social changes – oriented towards resistance to social changes – stimulating changes. By motivation – aimed at satisfying personal interests – altruistic, unpaid – paid. According to the chosen strategy – anticipatory – reactive.

The problem of effectively engaging the public in the processes of developing and implementing political and managerial decisions remains pertinent in the reform process in Ukraine.

It is important to emphasise that neglecting the participation of citizens and NGOs in the processes of developing and implementing state policy at all levels can lead to a further increase in negative perceptions of authority, potentially reaching a critical point (complete rejection of it and attempts to remove it from power). Negative attitudes towards authority and administrative obstacles in attempts to monitor its "compliance with the law" systematically undermine the foundations of social security and may trigger the so-called "society versus authority conflict".

This conflict poses a threat to national security primarily by destabilising political stability in the country. Conversely, effective practices of partnership interaction between government bodies and the public gradually increase the level of mutual trust.



This study will examine the prevalent forms of collaboration, as observed in international contexts, that facilitate public participation in local-level decision-making processes. The development of inter-municipal cooperation varies significantly in different countries. Some of these differences are related to culture, traditions, and patterns of development in specific localities.

For example, in countries with strong municipal autonomy, cooperation is the only way for small settlements to effectively provide numerous services to residents (France). In other countries, inter-municipal entities are large, but their cooperation plays only a limited role (United Kingdom). A particularly interesting example is inter-municipal cooperation in France. During the decentralisation process, which granted local self-government bodies numerous powers, municipalities felt the need to combine their resources to implement new responsibilities and provide quality services. This need arose due to the large number of small communities in the country. In France, there are 36,682 communes, 87% of which have fewer than 2,000 residents. Under these circumstances, local entities cannot independently decide on providing quality services to the population. This led to extensive inter-municipal cooperation in France, which proved to be a more flexible mechanism than municipal mergers. The majority of inter-municipal communities in France belong to the public-law cooperation structure with their own tax regime. Partnership in this format is an integrated form of territorial cooperation as it involves creating a supra-municipal level of governance. The prevalence of this cooperation model in France is due to legislative requirements for cooperation. Consequently, there are no communes in France that are not covered by inter-municipal cooperation.

Unlike France, the Polish model of cooperation is not as integrated since it operates on the principles of voluntariness and equality, without creating supra-municipal bodies of higher administration.

However, the most formalised and widespread form of cooperation among Polish local governments is the creation of inter-municipal associations (syndicates). This legal and organisational form of cooperation is outlined in the Law on Communal Self-Government for the joint execution of public tasks. If a commune joins an inter-municipal association, the tasks delegated by the commune to the syndicate cannot be carried out independently. The syndicate is a legal entity with its own

management body and executive authority, registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration.

A vivid example of such cooperation is the establishment of the inter-municipal union of Gostkowo-Nepar in the Greater Poland Voivodeship, registered in 2009 and still active today. This union was initiated by the communes of Majska Górka and Krobia, which include the villages of Gostkowo and Nepar, respectively. The purpose of the cooperation was to delegate specific powers in the field of education, including the creation and management of schools and kindergartens. The communes of Krobia and Majska Górka paved the way in this matter, as any cooperation between municipalities in the field of education was previously limited to inter-communal agreements on providing educational services. This partnership undoubtedly exemplifies good practice in addressing issues related to small rural schools and the social conflict surrounding this issue. Furthermore, this inter-municipal cooperation enabled the implementation of decisions beneficial to various interest groups. For example, the union's statute specified that parents and teachers are also included in the assembly (supervisory body), demonstrating an unprecedented application of the concept of joint management in inter-municipal relations, involving the most important group of participants aside from local government officials<sup>4</sup>.

Another example of municipal cooperation that demonstrates a comprehensive approach to problem-solving is a five-member association registered in the Klęszew commune in the Lodz Voivodeship in 1991. The goals of this association include environmental protection, as well as the prevention of environmental degradation and destruction due to industrial development.

Therefore, considering the lengthy and complex process of consolidation and Poland's accession to the European Union, which provided municipalities with access to EU structural and investment funds requiring urgent decisions from local self-government, Poland was able to

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<sup>4</sup> Markowski, T. (1999). Zarządzanie rozwojem miast. Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 248.

address a range of local problems and develop its financial and economic potential through inter-municipal cooperation<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, cooperation among territorial communities is a universal tool for local development that all local self-government bodies with common interests can utilise without exception. In light of the European experience of inter-municipal partnership and examining the state of cooperation among territorial communities in Ukraine, it is essential to consider the possibility of employing a new approach to cooperation among territorial communities that ensures more comprehensive activities in specific partnership areas. One should consider applying a cluster approach in organising cooperation among territorial communities, which involves expanding the range of cooperation entities, including representatives from other sectors in addition to local self-government bodies.

The activities of any state authority should primarily aim to improve the quality of life of the population. This should be the primary goal of cooperation among territorial communities.

This postulate is supported by the World Bank's definition of local economic development, which states that the goal of local economic development is to create the economic potential of the local territory to improve its economic future and quality of life. It is a process through which authorities, private, and non-governmental partners work together to create better conditions for economic growth and job creation.

Given the above, it is worth considering another type of cooperation that allows for the combined efforts of not only territorial communities and their governing bodies but also other interested parties (stakeholders) – such as the private sector, public organisations, and research institutions – to achieve a common goal of economic growth. This involves expanding the range of cooperation participants and utilising a cluster approach in organising partnerships within the territorial development system.

In the context of this study, the cluster approach implies broadening the circle of collaborators, which is quite common in Europe. In most cases, local governments create "functional enterprises" to manage public services, infrastructure, and social facilities. These enterprises are created

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<sup>5</sup> Klasik, A. (1996). Zarządzanie rozwojem lokalnym. Zarządzanie rozwojem gminy w zespołach miejsko-przemysłowych, materiały konferencyjne pod redakcją Floriana Kuźnika. Katowice, Forma studio. 16-28. (In Poland)



under either public or private law. Under private law, this is a joint activity aimed at generating profit. However, the enterprise belongs to the municipality. Private shareholders can cooperate with local authorities within the framework of public-private partnerships.

Moreover, several local governments can enter into agreements with a private company for the provision of services. This is an outsourcing mechanism for inter-municipal cooperation, which is very common in Eastern Europe. In this case, local public services are often provided by private law enterprises<sup>6</sup>. This solution can be feasible and cost-effective. Additionally, the quality of services provided by private enterprises can be significantly higher than that which a municipality can offer. There is a trend towards expanding the reach of such enterprises to provide services to a larger number of residents in territorial communities.

For instance, municipalities may need to build a road. However, the investment required to purchase construction equipment is too high, even if they combine their resources. In this case, a sensible solution would be to involve a private construction company that already possesses the necessary equipment and machinery for road construction. Thus, applying the cluster approach in organising cooperation among territorial communities will introduce a new sectoral form of cooperation, ensuring more comprehensive activities in specific areas. This type of partnership should include a comprehensive set of measures in the chosen area of cooperation, eliminating the need for a system of agreements to achieve the ultimate goal. Such comprehensive interaction of material, financial, and human resources of local governments will allow for a holistic approach to solving important issues, improving the quality of life of the population, and ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities.

To improve the provision of administrative services and infrastructure, various forms of inter-municipal cooperation are employed, and each of the studied EU countries has its own peculiarities. Therefore, depending on the form of cooperation used and whether there is a delegation of powers, a classification of approaches to organising cooperation can be developed:

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<sup>6</sup> Kartashov, A. V. & Radchenko, O. V. (2016). Civil society and politics. Political ABC. International Republican Institute.

- direct form of rural-urban cooperation (with the formation of a joint coordination body) + with the delegation of powers from local communities (examples of this form of cooperation include Rennes, France);
- direct form of rural-urban cooperation (with the formation of a joint coordination body) + without the delegation of powers from local communities (examples of this form of cooperation include Nuremberg, Germany; the Central Zone of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland; Brabant, Netherlands);
- indirect form of rural-urban cooperation (without the formation of a joint coordination body, usually based on a contractual basis) + with the delegation of powers from local communities (examples of this form of cooperation include Forlì-Cesena, Italy; Extremadura, Spain);
- indirect form of rural-urban cooperation (without the formation of a joint coordination body, often based on a contract) + without the delegation of powers from local communities (examples of this form of cooperation include Castelo Branco, Portugal; Prague/Central Bohemia, Czech Republic).

Researching territorial communities is challenging due to their historical diversity and the various approaches to understanding these entities. Different terms are used to describe them, such as community, gmina, commune, community, Gemeinde, Gemeinschaft, and commune. Despite differences in researchers' approaches, most agree that a key feature of a territorial community is its ability to independently address certain issues, acting on the principles of self-organisation, self-governance, and self-responsibility.

A territorial community can be considered the basic structural unit of society, as it encompasses primary elements such as individuals, families, and work collectives. Local communities integrate through public associations, corporate and governmental structures that maintain the integrity of this social organisation. Moreover, these communities represent not only a shared living space but also a unity of socio-economic relations, cultural and political life, reinforced by historical traditions and local culture.

In the communities of the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany, and Switzerland, community centres actively operate, catering to various age groups. The primary areas of activity for these centres include educational,

recreational, and health-related services. One of the key tasks these organisations undertake is social inclusion, helping individuals who have lost social ties with the community (such as the elderly, individuals with physical and mental disabilities, and teenagers) reintegrate into society. Family centres are established to strengthen relationships between adults and children, while youth centres cater specifically to young people<sup>7</sup>.

Depending on whether their activities are carried out exclusively within the territorial community or extend beyond it, we can identify internal and external functional roles. The nature of external functions arises from relationships between neighbouring territorial communities, the community and the state, and communities from different countries. These connections are regional (local), national, and international, respectively. However, the division between external and internal functions is conditional since communities are not isolated from each other or the state. External functions are derived from internal functions and can be seen as their extension.

As territorial communities are subjects of governance, these functions include general management functions such as planning, organising, motivating, coordinating, and controlling. These are relatively distinct types of managerial activities that emerge in the process of specialisation and labour division. It is through these actions that the essence of management and its internal "technology" are revealed. Territorial communities in some countries have significant experience in implementing the planning function.

For instance, in Bavaria, "the strongest aspect is the mobilisation of the public in the planning process initiated by citizens". In the USA, strategic city development plans are adopted considering citizens' proposals and reflect the interests and priorities of the entire community. Legislation allows territorial communities to determine in their charters the procedures for organising public hearings, the functioning of local councils, and more. This function is also evident in the example of France, where the association of communes in the field of city development, housing, and land use planning became a significant innovation after the Law on Cooperation was passed in 1966. The basic premise of this form of

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<sup>7</sup> Slozanska, H. & Polishchuk, V. (2019). Social work in the community abroad: history and modern development trends. *Social Work and Education*. Vol. 6, No. 4. Ternopil-Aberdeen, 390-407.



cooperation is the adoption of a comprehensive policy for cities and their suburban areas.

In addition to general management functions, several other technological functions warrant attention. Specifically, the financial and budgetary functions of territorial communities are closely linked to the financial foundation of local self-government. This includes the right to communal ownership—the right of the territorial community to possess, use, and dispose of its property efficiently, economically, and effectively, at its discretion and in its interests, both directly and through local government bodies. at its discretion and in its interests, both directly and through local government bodies.

The normative function of territorial communities involves the creation of regulatory legal acts and is realised by local communities both directly through various forms of activity (local referendums, general meetings of citizens, local initiatives, public hearings) and indirectly through acts of local government bodies and officials. A key regulatory legal document is the charter of the territorial community. The informational function is demonstrated in the dissemination of information among the residents of the settlement, as well as in providing information by members of the territorial community to other subjects of local self-government. Direct communication – informing residents by government bodies – helps increase the community members' knowledge about local affairs, ensures the formation of the socio-political orientation of residents, public opinion, and is a prerequisite for increasing population activity. Feedback enables authorities and officials to continuously monitor the implementation of relevant decisions, compare achieved results with defined goals, identify deviations, side effects, and public sentiments, and make necessary adjustments in a timely manner.

It is also pertinent to distinguish specific technological functions aimed at creating a system of local self-government by territorial communities. These system-forming functions include the establishment of relevant bodies, the election of village, settlement, and city heads, deputies of local councils, the premature termination of the powers of the council, the recall of deputies and elected local government officials, the merging of the territorial communities of neighbouring villages into one territorial community, and the separation of a territorial community from a village community.

When studying the activities of territorial communities as subjects of local self-government, it is important to consider the experience of addressing local problems not only in Ukraine but also in other countries with established democratic traditions. In the United States, the most common forms of participation by territorial communities in decision-making (public hearings, written public comments on projects and local development strategies, resident participation in the boards of directors of community agencies, citizen-based commissions, task forces, advisory committees, etc.) are enshrined in law. Additionally, community jury sessions, public forums, various resident surveys, and meetings between residents and local government officials are conducted.

The participation of territorial communities in solving local problems is usually preceded by a broad information campaign conducted by municipalities to explain the nature of the issues to be addressed. During this campaign, residents are presented with project plans, decisions, etc. Various community bodies are often established to conduct public hearings. In this way, residents can provide their feedback and suggestions to municipalities regarding local issues both directly and through community bodies.

Citizen involvement in the United States occurs at all levels of governance, though it is most prominent at the local and regional levels. Community members influence government bodies and address issues in various areas of local life, including education, crime prevention, healthcare, social services, the economy, and environmental protection.

In examining the activity of community members in Poland, it is noteworthy that the idea of public participation in preparing local programmes and government decisions has been widely promoted, especially in recent years, and this is reflected in the practices of solving problems in gminas (municipalities). To ensure transparency in their activities and to gain public support, local self-government bodies can involve community members in the budget preparation process by holding public discussions, debates, and publishing the budget draft. It is significant that modern technologies are widely used in Poland to ensure interaction between authorities and community members. In 90.5% of gminas, the Internet is utilised for public participation in local issues. These data confirm that in Poland, community members actively

participate in addressing local issues and significantly influence local self-government bodies and officials.

Based on the national concept and international documents, regional and local acts should be developed to promote the sustainable development of communities, as these documents are crucial in determining the pace of sustainable development. Territorial communities also most promptly address the implementation and realisation of sustainable development principles in Ukraine. At the local level, the theory of sustainable development is primarily implemented through a concept and an action plan that adapt general scientific approaches to the needs of the territorial community.

The concept of sustainable development of a settlement is a comprehensive system of principles, objectives, and measures aimed at transitioning a village, settlement, or city to the principles of balanced (sustainable) development. This concept should form the basis for the development of strategies, local projects, and socio-economic development programmes, general plans, public transportation logistics, the functioning of the municipal system, and other initiatives aimed at implementing local policies.

The basic local documents can include the following: charters of territorial communities; documents on joining the Aalborg Charter; the concept of sustainable development of the territorial community, including sustainable development indicators; the concept of sustainable development of the territorial community, or the strategic development plan; and the local action plan.

Local self-government bodies in their activities can be guided by the following international documents: the Aalborg Charter ("European Cities Towards Sustainability"); the Aalborg Commitments; the Lisbon Action Plan: From Charter to Action; the Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities; the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat II); and the Hannover Call of European Mayors at the Dawn of the 21st Century. All these international documents and activities provide a valuable methodological basis for managing the development of cities, villages, and settlements, as well as a platform for exchanging experiences in Ukraine. However, the most important element of local legal regulation is the charter of the territorial community.

The charter is developed and adopted by the representative body of local self-government or directly by the population. In this document, in our opinion, the principles of sustainable development of the territorial community should also be reflected. The theory of sustainable development should cover all aspects of human activity that impact the environment (both social and natural). The level of local sustainable development pertains to the system of local self-government bodies, which is the focus of this study. This specifically includes supporting subsistence farming at the rural community level, urban planning technologies, implementing quality standards for urban living, environmental protection, and the sustainable development of the territorial community.

Key principles of sustainable governance are crucial for achieving sustainable development: the state's responsibility for sustainable development and nature conservation; public participation in decision-making processes at the local level. A strategic approach to sustainable development involves transforming the entire philosophy of thinking and political activity, transitioning from developing and executing fixed plans that quickly become outdated to creating an adaptive system that can continuously improve; shifting responsibility from just the state to societal responsibility for development; moving from centralised and controlled decision-making to transparent negotiations, cooperation, and coordinated actions; focusing on quality results in management processes rather than just laws or regulatory acts; transitioning from sectoral to integrated functional planning; moving away from costly "projects" (and consequently, dependence on external aid) to development primarily funded by the country's own resources.

Thus, research data indicates that territorial communities in foreign countries exert a certain influence on decision-making processes by local self-government bodies and are capable of making decisions on specific issues themselves. By addressing various problems in their respective communities, local communities demonstrate their agency in various spheres of local life: political, economic, social, and cultural. The most significant activity of territorial community members is evident in addressing issues related to living conditions, infrastructure, safety and crime prevention, service provision, education, healthcare, environmental protection, and more.

Subsequently, we can explore the attainment of a specific degree of citizen involvement in local self-governance by examining the methods employed by local government bodies to engage with the community and its members. The choice of method for community involvement in decision-making depends on the issue at hand and the preferences of local authorities. It also reflects the professionalism of non-governmental organisations interested in engaging citizens and promoting community development. The method chosen will also depend on the level of citizen involvement in local self-governance.

Today, in our view, the main methods of citizen engagement in decision-making can be conditionally classified according to certain levels:

*Level I. Providing Information:* TV or radio interviews, coverage of government meetings by the press, a regular programme or series of publications in the media, media notifications about management services for citizens, promotional materials, press information packages, press releases, press conferences, informational bulletins, brochures, posters and informational boards, "wall press" and exhibitions of printed materials, reading rooms, local archives, reference and information centres, distribution centres for official forms and instructions, informational mailings, ceremonial events, local cable TV and video production, public relations services, personal websites.

*Level II. Informational Communication with Citizens:* protest and civil disobedience actions and working with participants, contact persons, working in clubs, Saturday breakfasts, business lunches with leaders of community groups, group discussions, engagement of public organisations, newspaper coupons with questions, "hotlines," suggestion boxes, special leaflets with questions, consultation hours for citizens, public opinion polls, "group portrait" of the community, public hearings, telephone surveys, open days, "hotlines" for complaints, citizen complaint representatives, narrow-circle public meetings, public debates.

*Level III. Dialogue with the Community:* ombudsmen, neighbourhood associations, mentorship for community leaders, joint event planning, citizen participation services in decision-making, open decision-making events, joint official discussions.

*Level IV. Partnership with the Community:* joint responsibility: advisory commissions, committees and councils; supervisory commissions, committees and councils; specialised commissions, committees and

councils; commissions, committees, and councils with oversight powers; commissions, committees and councils on regulatory issues; mixed commissions, committees, and councils; expert consulting services; special task forces or commissions.

*Level V. Public Governance: Direct Democracy:* general meetings of citizens, referendums.

The method chosen depends on the specific stage of decision preparation. Regardless of the method selected, it is essential to ensure that citizens have the opportunity to express themselves, interact with local government bodies and other citizens, participate in shaping approaches, and contribute to the development of an action plan or the corresponding decision.

Thus, in the process of implementing reforms in Ukraine, the issue of effectively engaging the public in the processes of developing and implementing political and administrative decisions remains pertinent. It is important to stress that neglecting the participation of citizens and NGOs in the processes of developing and implementing state policy at all levels can lead to a further increase in negative perceptions of the government, potentially reaching a critical point, such as complete rejection and attempts to remove it from governing the state. Negative attitudes towards the government, coupled with administrative obstacles in attempts to ensure its "lawfulness", systematically undermine the foundations of public safety and can lead to the so-called "conflict between society and government"<sup>8</sup>.

This conflict poses a threat to national security, primarily by destabilising political stability in the country. Conversely, effective practices of partnership interaction between government bodies and the public gradually increase the degree of mutual trust. In addition to political stabilisation, such practices also enhance the efficiency of state institutions. It is important to note that the development of new information and communication technologies and the emergence of innovative forms and tools for engaging citizens in policy development significantly expand the opportunities for public influence on decision-making processes, making them transparent and, thus, more effective.

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<sup>8</sup> Vysokiy, M. S. & Nahorniak, T. L. (2021).ff Interaction of local self-government bodies with the public in Ukraine. Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University (Vinnytsia). 160–162.

In this context, Ukraine can accelerate its progress by utilising the tools of e-democracy, a modern form of public administration practised in EU countries. Among the primary means of e-democracy available in Ukraine and supported by the relevant legal framework, the most popular are electronic requests, e-petitions, e-consultations, participatory budgeting, open data, and e-ordering of administrative services. Additionally, with the gradual and steady development of e-governance in Ukraine, there are prospects for the introduction of e-voting and e-elections.

According to city authorities and civil society, the most effective methods of engaging residents are "remote engagement" mechanisms, which involve a system of mandatory feedback, such as appeals and electronic petitions. The most common interaction mechanisms function as feedback from residents, but they are not effective for anticipating decisions. At the same time, the most significant influence on decision-making is exerted by public activists with higher levels of social capital; those who have the opportunity to meet with officials in person are more active and persistent.

To ensure the implementation of democratic standards of public participation, the state must create conditions for active public involvement in the formation of state policy. It is necessary to develop effective mechanisms for informing the public about the activities of state and local government bodies, thereby promoting their involvement in the development, discussion, and adoption of both national decisions and decisions at the community level, as well as in monitoring their implementation.

Effective public engagement is crucial for the successful implementation of reforms and the development of political and administrative decisions. Neglecting the participation of citizens and NGOs can lead to increased negative perceptions of the government, potentially destabilising national security. In contrast, fostering partnership interactions between government bodies and the public enhances mutual trust, political stability, and the efficiency of state institutions.

The organisational and legal mechanisms for ensuring public participation in local decision-making processes are critically important for the development of democratic processes and the sustainable development of communities. These mechanisms include the development



and implementation of local regulatory acts that govern the procedures and forms of public participation, such as consultations, public hearings, electronic petitions, referendums, and other forms of citizen engagement in the decision-making process.

An important aspect is the use of international standards and principles, particularly documents such as the Aalborg Charter, the Lisbon Action Plan, and the Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities, which provide a methodological basis for organising effective interaction between local self-government bodies and the public. Public involvement not only increases the level of trust in government bodies but also promotes a better understanding of the needs and expectations of local residents, enabling more informed and effective administrative decisions.

Therefore, an effective organisational and legal mechanism for ensuring public participation in decision-making is fundamental to building open, transparent, and accountable local governance. It contributes not only to the improvement of the quality of life in the community but also ensures the stable development of territorial communities, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders and ensuring sustainable development at the local level.