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## A EUROPEAN PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT: EXPERIENCE FROM UKRAINE

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**Abstract.** *This study presents generalized European experience in the development of participatory democracy through the study of European regulations and strategies. The purpose of this study is to assess the level of community participation in the pilot region of Ukraine, on which the development prospects of this region are based, using the European tools of territorial administration. There is an objective relationship between the level of participation in the community and the state of its socio-economic development; therefore, increasing the level of participation can improve the welfare of citizens. During this study, with the application of analytical tools, this hypothesis will be confirmed or refuted. This study analyses the main methods of assessment of participation, based on which an original*

*method for estimating the integrated level of participation in united territorial communities is offered, taking into account the specifics of decentralization processes in Ukraine. The proposed method of assessing participation in the pilot region of Ukraine (Zhytomyrska Oblast as a leader of domestic decentralization processes) was tested. The connection between the level of participation and the level of economic capacity of the community was investigated based on: the comparison of indicators of the level of integrated participation; the results of ranking; and the multifactor grouping of united territorial communities according to the level of economic efficiency of their functioning. Measures to increase the level of participation in specific united territorial communities are proposed, taking into account the results of the assessment and European participatory approaches to the management of territorial development.*

**Keywords:** *decentralization, united territorial communities, participatory democracy, integrated development, regional policy.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *decentralizacija, vieningos teritorinės bendruomenės, dalyvaujamoji demokratija, integruota plėtra, regioninė politika.*

## **Introduction**

The strategic goal of the State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 695 dated 5 August 2020, is to build effective multilevel governance, in particular by “ensuring the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at the regional and local levels, which must be integrated into policy-making at all levels in the horizontal and vertical planes (at the basic, sub-regional, regional, and macro-regional levels, as well as at the level of inter-municipal cooperation)”.

European experience illustrates that in the modern world a guarantee of an effective decentralized system of territorial organization of public power and governance lies within the realm of participatory democracy. In particular, the Recommendation REC (2001) 19 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on citizen participation in local public life, adopted on 6 December 2001, states that it is citizens’ participation that constitutes the source of democracy, and citizens who are conscious and committed to the values of democracy are the lifeblood of any democratic system. The right of citizens to comment on the most important decisions, resulting in long-term commitments, or to make choices that are then difficult to change is one of the democratic principles common to all Council of Europe member states.

Considerable attention is paid to the regulation of relations between local self-government, the executive power, and members of the community. Thus, Recommendation 113 (2002) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on relations between the public, the local assembly, and the executive in local democracy (or in the institutional framework of local democracy), adopted on 4 June 2002, indicates that in important matters that are of public interest at the local level, an appeal to a referendum

should be provided for. Recommendation 182 (2005) on public participation in local affairs and elections, adopted on 17 May 2005, addresses the fact that the participation of citizens in elections is a defining element of any democracy. The Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the Right to Participate in Local Government Affairs of 16 November 2009 states that States Parties, within their jurisdiction, must ensure that everyone has the right to take part in local government affairs, and legislation must provide the means to facilitate the exercise of this right without unfairly discriminating against any person or group.

Despite the support of the European integration vector, however, Ukraine is currently not actively implementing the positive European experience of participation. Domestic united territorial communities created during decentralization reform do not have the tools to involve the public in the creation, development, and implementation of management decisions. Therefore, one of the priority tasks for Ukraine is to bring local self-government and territorial organization of power in line with European standards, in particular to introduce a participatory approach in territorial management as a form of decentralization of power. Every financially viable community needs to modernize its management system and bring it up to the European level. This approach allows for the prevention of resource waste, instead concentrating them at one level and supporting their use for the benefit of the community to solve pressing issues.

## **Literature Review**

Numerous international studies have emphasized that the conscious, active participation of citizens in the justification, development, and implementation of decisions can be implemented in different ways in the public life of communities. In this vein, Sherry Arnstein (1969) offered eight levels of public participation: manipulation, therapy, information, counselling, reconciliation, partnership, delegation of authority, and public control. As such, in Arnstein's opinion, different methods of citizen participation have different degrees of efficiency. In manipulation and therapy, participation is formal – the population receives information and their opinion is not taken into account in decision-making. When informing, consulting, or reconciling, citizens are informed – their opinions are listened to, but they have no influence on the decisions made. Citizens have a strong voice in addressing issues at the levels of partnership, delegation of authority, and public scrutiny. In turn, the American–Australian International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has developed five stages of public participation: information, counselling, engagement, cooperation, and empowerment (Levchenko, Velychko, and Kovshun 2018; Sherry, Ghaffar, and Bishai 2018; Polovchenko 2021).

A considerable number of analytical institutions are working on the assessment of participation. In particular, a group of World Bank experts developed a methodology for assessing participation according to four basic groups of indicators: leadership (number of change agents, level of women's involvement, external support for development programs, involvement of beneficiaries in activities); mobilization (availability of professionals capable of taking the lead, focusing on development programs and resources for

them, inclusion of women within their traditional roles, funding outside the community); cooperation (representation of interests of different groups in decision-making, support for public organizations, the degree of establishing partnerships between management and the community); and capacity building (availability of leadership training programs, opportunities for institutional partnerships) (Institute on Community Integration 2020).

The Institute for Community Integration of the University of Minnesota has developed 11 groups of community participation indicators: 1) community involvement (employment, meaningful activities, social connections, resources and settings to facilitate inclusion, transportation); 2) holistic health and functioning (individual health, strengthening, and prevention of health); 3) care support (access to resources, family caregivers, family counsellors, training and skills development); 4) selection and control (choice of services and self-direction); 5) leadership of consumers in the development of the system (evidence of significant participation of the educator, evidence of significant participation of consumers); 6) equity (availability, equal access, and distribution of resources, transparency and consistency); 7) human and legal rights (protection against ill-treatment and contempt, informed decision-making, optimization of the preservation of legal and human rights, confidentiality, support for individuals in exercising their legal rights); 8) human-centered planning (evaluation, coordination, planning); 9) provision of services and efficiency (delivery, satisfaction of human needs, implementation of goals); 10) system performance and accountability (data management and use, evidence-based practices, funding structures and service delivery); 11) labor force (adequate compensation of labor, cultural competencies, personality-oriented approach, safety and respect for the employee, staff turnover, availability of labor, involvement and support, personal choice and goals, personal freedoms and dignity, labor force participation) (Oakley 1991; Tkachenko 2019).

Experts from the World Employment Program divide rates of participation into quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative rates include: a) economic (the economic benefits of participatory projects measured using widely applied quantitative methods – including an analysis of the populations who have benefited directly, and quantifying these benefits to their lives and their future ability to maintain living standards), b) organizational (the percentage of adult residents within the project implementation area who have specific knowledge of the project; the percentage of adult residents within the project area who are official members of NGOs; the number of project groups or project group associations formed; the number of project team members who occupy positions in other official organizations; the frequency of attending project organization meetings); and c) indicators of development momentum (the number of project participants who are aware of and utilize the services of development agencies; the number of project participants who undergo formal training on projects; the number of links established with similar project groups; the internal stability or ability of project groups to maintain the momentum of their development). Qualitative indicators include: a) indicators of organizational growth (the internal structuring of the group of participation; the distribution of specific roles among members of the group; the leadership structure formed; the formalization of the group structure); b) indicators of group behavior (changes in the

nature of involvement of members of the group of participation; involvement in group discussions and decision-making; the ability to analyze and explain problems); and c) indicators of group independence (the increase in the capacity of the participatory group to propose and consider courses of action; the knowledge and understanding of public policies and programs by the members of the group; the group's changing relationship with the group facilitator; formalizing the group's independent identity) (ESPON 2013).

Experts from the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) identified 5 groups of indicators of participation in territorial governance: coordination between the actions of actors and institutions (management capacity, leadership, subsidiarity); the integration of policy sectors (completeness of public policy tools, intersectoral synergy); the mobilization of stakeholder participation (democratic legitimacy, public accountability, transparency); adaptability to changing contexts (reflexivity, adaptability); and localization (territorial assignment, territorial awareness) (ESPON 2013).

### **Materials and Methods**

The methodological framework of this study included both the general scientific and special methods of: comparative study, expert assessments, multifactor grouping, and strategic planning. An expert-analytical method was used to assess the level of participation in UTCs, based on the assessment of the degree of openness of the community budget and organizational opportunities to involve citizens in the management process. The advantages of this method include: the possibility to achieve the most complete organic combination of quantitative and qualitative estimates of participation in UTCs with the maximum use of the practical and theoretical knowledge of the expert; the minimization of assessment time; and the ability to interpret qualitative expert assessments in numerical form. Zhytomyrska Oblast was chosen as the leader of decentralization in Ukraine as a pilot region for testing this methodology. Considering international experience and domestic specificities, the following tools were selected for evaluation:

- informing: the availability and content of the official UTC website; the publication of the community passport; the promulgation of development strategy; the publication of passports of budget programs; the availability and publication of socio-economic development programs; and the availability of information about the center of administrative services;
- consultations: the availability of an effective mechanism for citizens' appeals; and the availability of petitions;
- dialogue and partnerships implemented through the participatory budgeting mechanism.

The assessment process comprised several stages: preparation for the assessment of participation in UTCs and the level of their development, during which the sources of information, directions, and tools of participation to be evaluated were determined; the research stage, which involved the analysis of publicly available sources of information about the community, the evaluation of the tools of participation, and the collection of data on the level of community development and the welfare of the population; and the final stage, where the results were summarized, evaluated, and compared. The proposed method involved assessing the quantitative and qualitative levels of individual elements

of participation, and of UTCs in general. The assessment was carried out in several areas (groups of indicators), and was based on numerical indicators and the experience and impressions of the experts. Each component was graded according to the system of “low”, “medium”, or “high” (Knieper and Biryukov 2019).

To perform a comprehensive assessment of participation, it was necessary to establish numerical equivalents to the positions of participation and to determine the weights for the areas of assessment. The total assessment of participation was determined according to the following formula:

$$\Pi = \sum_1^n A_i \times k_i \quad (1)$$

where  $A_i$  is the numerical equivalent of the position of participation in the  $i$ th direction of evaluation;

$k_i$  is the weighting factor of the  $i$ th direction of evaluation;

and  $n$  is the number of evaluation areas (9 areas within the framework of this study).

In some cases, the choice of a system of numerical equivalents depends on the tasks of the research. Weights for the areas of assessment of participation are set in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study. The more important the direction in the assessment, the higher its weight should be. The method of establishing weights in relation to the areas of assessment, depending on the purpose and objectives of the study, is to use expert assessments. The main idea of the method of expert assessments is to use the experience and knowledge of experts to assess poorly formalized tasks. To conduct the examination, the ranking method is then used (Perederii 2019; Dobrianskiy 2019).

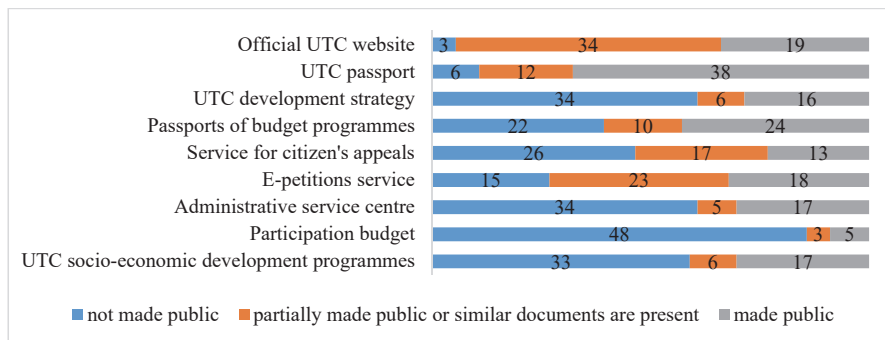
The examination was conducted by a group of experts who are qualified specialists in the field of public administration at the local level. Each expert arranged the criteria for the components of participation in order of their importance. The number 1 indicated the most important criterion – the number 2 less important, etc. According to the expert assessments of the significance of the directions of participation at the local level, the weight coefficients of the criteria were calculated. The sum of the weights was 1. During the expert assessment, information from the official UTC websites as of 2020 was analyzed. First of all, the user-friendliness of the website and the relevance and completeness of the information were assessed. The main focus was on the coverage of information on the use of budget funds and issues related to the budget process. Particular attention was paid to the study of tools for the interaction between government and community in the process of the development and implementation of management decisions.

## Results and Discussion

The summarized results of the assessment of the instruments of participation in UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast are presented in Figure 1. According to the information direction, the level of disclosure of general information in the united territorial communities is sufficient. This is because 53 UTCs have official websites, on which 50 have published a community passport or similar documents. At the same time, the analysis of available documents and information on the official websites of the communities in-

indicated that the publication of strategic and planning documents is low. Only 16 UTCs published the development strategy and additional supporting documents. Half of the communities did not post information on socio-economic development programs on their websites, and 22 communities did not post passports on budget programs.

According to the consultation direction, it was determined that the authorities do not always give the public the opportunity to express their opinions on specific issues of UTC management. Only 13 communities (23%) have an electronic service for citizens, and another 17 (30%) communities have published reception schedules on their websites, while in 26 communities the mechanism for appealing to community leaders has not been communicated to the population. One third of the communities have an electronic petition service, and the results of this process are available. Other UTCs do not have such a service, or if they do it has never been used.



**Fig. 1. The summary of the analysis of the instruments of participation in 56 UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast, 2020**

Low rates of use of participatory instruments in the areas of information and consultation also lead to a slight development of partnership and dialogue, which is usually implemented as part of the participation budget. Of the 56 UTCs surveyed in the Zhytomyrska Oblast, only 5 communities used the participation budget; three more had the appropriate service, but it was not used there.

According to the results of a comprehensive study of the information source, each instrument of participation was assessed, and the obtained estimates were used in the calculation of the integrated indicator of participation in UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast (Figure 2). In short: 6 urban and 11 rural communities had a high level of participation (values of the indicator from 1.21 to 2.0); 2 urban and 24 rural communities had an average level of participation (from 0.61 to 1.2); and a low level of participation (from 0 to 0.6) was typical of 13 rural communities.

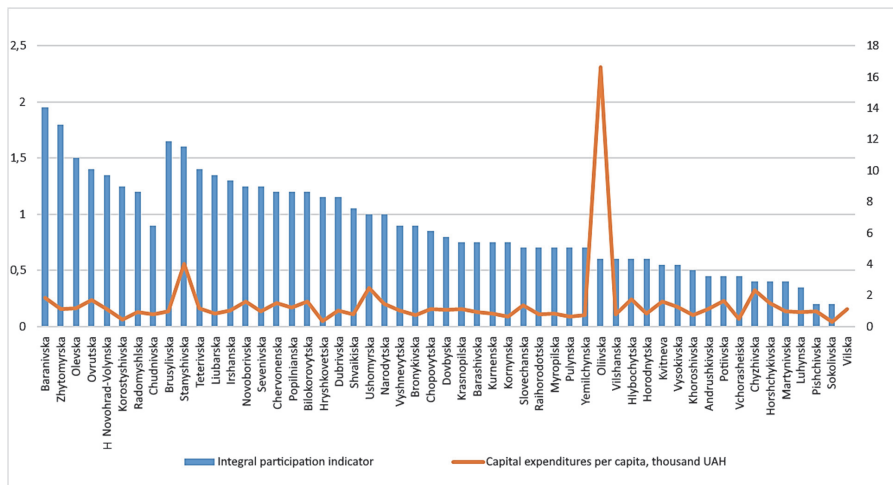


Fig. 2. The ranking of the urban and rural UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast according to the integrated indicator of participation, 2020

To test the research hypothesis, the indicators of the integrated level of participation in the community were compared with the state of socio-economic development. The study of the 53 UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast confirms that different initial conditions constitute a basis for obtaining fairly variable economic results of community activities. Thus, the difference between the UTCs with the highest and lowest revenues and expenditures of the general fund per capita in 2019 reached 92% and 82%, respectively. The maximum level of income per capita was UAH 21,200, and 70% of communities had incomes below the average in the region.

In order to rank and multifactorially group the UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast according to the level of economic efficiency of their operation, the main indicators of their financial capacity were scaled, including: income and expenditures of the general fund per capita, and capital expenditures per capita. As a result, 3 UTC groups were identified (Table 2).

Table 2. The grouping of the UTCs of the Zhytomyrska Oblast by indicators of financial capacity, 2020

Group No.	Number of UTCs	Income of the general fund per inhabitant, UAH	Expenditures of the general fund per inhabitant, UAH	Capital expenditures per inhabitant, UAH
1	7	<i>The average value of the indicator in the group</i>		
		12,827.86	13,495.94	5,286.52
2	25	<i>The average value of the indicator in the group</i>		
		4,305.86	6,750.48	1,356.764
		<i>Deviation from the level of the Group 1, %</i>		
		-66.4	-50.0	-74.3



Group No.	Number of UTCs	Income of the general fund per inhabitant, UAH	Expenditures of the general fund per inhabitant, UAH	Capital expenditures per inhabitant, UAH
3	21	<i>The average value of the indicator in the group</i>		
		2,879.67	5,150.18	808.28
		<i>Deviation from the level of the Group 1, %</i>		
		-77.6	-61.8	-84.7

The first group of communities with the highest indicators was composed of: Kvitneva village UTC; Novohrad-Volynska city UTC; Andrushkivska village UTC; Chyzhivska village UTC; Zhytomyrska city UTC; Ushomyrska village UTC; and Oliivska village UTC. The second group included 25 communities with an average value of the general fund income per capita of UAH 4,305.86, an average value of the general fund expenditure per capita of UAH 6,750.48, and an average capital expenditure per capita of UAH 1,356.76. These indicators are 50–75% lower than the corresponding indicators of the previous group. The third group contained 21 UTCs with deviations of, on average, 60–85% from the leading group. In particular, capital expenditures per capita in the communities of this group amounted to only UAH 808.28.

The comparison of economic efficiency indicators with the integrated indicator of the level of participation showed that the lowest value of the latter indicator for communities of the 1st group was 0.4, whilst for communities in the 2nd and 3rd groups this was 0.2. At the same time, the maximum value of the integrated indicator of participation in the 2nd economic group was 1.95. In the 3rd group, this value was 1.25, which indicates that in communities with a wider practice of involving citizens, the level of economic efficiency is higher. At the same time, the maximum values of the integral indicator of participation in the 1st and 2nd groups had a minimal difference between them, which indicates the ambiguity of the existing relationship and the presence of additional factors that mediate and determine the processes of decentralization.

## Conclusions

For further implementation of the participatory approach in territorial management in Ukraine, it is necessary to take into account the European standards of participatory democracy. In particular, it is necessary to improve the national legislation in this direction, which will enable: the petitions, proposals, and complaints of citizens to local councils or other local authorities; local referendums; and means of involving citizens in management (user committees, partnership councils, direct management of services by citizens, etc.). Based on this, it is recommended to adopt legislation that would promote partnerships between local and regional authorities and non-governmental organizations. In particular:

1. It is necessary to strengthen cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in the field of non-formal education, including through the training of women and young people on active citizenship and participation in local and

regional democracies, taking the example of the Council of Europe's work on gender, youth work, and assistance to the most disadvantaged individuals. It is also necessary to step up efforts to disseminate key Council of Europe documents, in particular those relating to NGOs, including international ones.

2. At the local level, to increase the level of participation in UTCs, it is necessary to start with an in-depth assessment of the state of citizen participation at the local level. Appropriate reference points should then be identified, followed by the implementation of a monitoring system to track any changes and identify the causes of any positive or negative trends in this participation, as well as an assessment of the impact of the measures taken. Particular attention should be paid to those categories of citizens who face greater difficulties in joining local public life, or to those who de facto remain on the margins of it.
3. The importance of equitable representation of women in local politics should be recognized alongside the potential of children and youth for the sustainable development of local communities, and the role that both of these groups can play should also be emphasized.
4. It is recommended to improve teaching on issues related to citizenship and to incorporate objectives into school curricula and teacher training programs that promote awareness of the responsibilities that each person has in a democratic society – in particular in the local community – regardless of whether that person is an elected official or local administrative officer, government or community employee, or ordinary citizen.
5. It is appropriate for Ukraine to develop a neighborhood democracy – to establish bodies at the sub-municipal level that can be given advisory and informational functions and possibly delegated executive powers.
6. Local people should be encouraged to participate – directly or through associations of neighbors – in the design and implementation of projects that directly affect their environment, such as the creation and maintenance of green areas and playgrounds, the fight against crime, and the creation of conditions for help/self-help (care for children, the elderly, etc.).

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## Europos piliečių dalyvavimas valdant teritorijas – metodų ir patirties diegimas Ukrainoje

Anotacija

*Tyrime pateikiama apibendrinta europinė patirtis plėtojant dalyvaujimąją demokratiją, tiriant Europos Sąjungos ir jos šalių narių reglamentus ir strategijas. Tyrimo tikslas – įvertinti bendruomenės dalyvavimo lygį bandomajame Ukrainos regione, kuriuo grindžiamos šio regiono plėtros perspektyvos naudojant europines teritorinio administravimo priemones. Tarp dalyvavimo bendruomenėje lygio ir regiono socialinio bei ekonominio išsivystymo būklės yra objektyvus ryšys; todėl padidinus dalyvavimo lygį galima pagerinti piliečių gerovę. Tyrimo metu pasitelkus analitines priemones, buvo planuojama patvirtinti arba paneigti šią hipotezę. Buvo analizuojami pagrindiniai dalyvavimo vertinimo metodai, kuriais remiantis siūlomas originalus integruoto dalyvavimo vieningose teritorinėse bendruomenėse lygio įvertinimo metodas atsižvelgiant į Ukrainos decentralizavimo procesų specifiką. Buvo išbandytas siūlomas dalyvavimo bandomajame (pilotiniame tyrime) pasirinktame Ukrainos regione (Žytomyro srityje kaip šalies vidaus decentralizacijos procesų lyderyje) vertinimo metodas. Ryšys tarp dalyvavimo lygio ir bendruomenės ekonominio pajėgumo lygio buvo tiriamas analizuojant integruoto dalyvavimo lygio rodiklius ir suvienytų teritorinių bendruomenių reitingo ir daugialypio grupavimo rezultatus (pagal jų funkcionavimo ekonominio efektyvumo lygį). Siūlomos priemonės skirtos padidinti dalyvavimo konkrečiose vieningose teritorinėse bendruomenėse lygį atsižvelgiant į vertinimo rezultatus ir europinę dalyvavimo bei decentralizavimo patirtį ir metodus.*

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