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IMPROVING MUNICIPAL RESPONSIVENESS THROUGH AI-POWERED IMAGE ANALYSIS IN E-GOVERNMENT

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Abstract. *Integration of Machine Learning (ML) techniques into public administration marks a new and transformative era for e-government systems. While traditionally e-government studies focused on text-based interactions, this one explores the innovative application of ML for image analysis, an approach that enables governments to address citizen petitions more efficiently. By using image classification and object detection algorithms, the model proposed in this article supports public institutions in identifying and quickly responding to evidence submitted by citizens in picture formats, such as infrastructure issues, environmental concerns or other urban issues that citizens might face. The research also highlights the Jevons Paradox as a critical factor, wherein increased efficiency from the citizen side (especially using mobile platforms and apps) may generate higher demand which should lead to scalable and robust solutions. Using as a case study a Romanian municipality that provided datasets of citizen-submitted images, the author analysed and proved that ML can improve the accuracy and responsiveness of public institutions. The findings suggest that adopting ML for e-petition systems can not only enhance citizen participation but also speed up administrative processes, paving the way for more transparent and effective governance. This study contributes to the discourse on e-government 3.0 by showing the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform public service delivery, ensuring sustainable (and scalable) solutions for the growing demands of modern urban governance.*

Keywords: *machine learning, image analysis, e-Government, citizen engagement, innovation.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *mašininis mokymasis, vaizdų analizė, e. valdžia, piliečių dalyvavimas, inovacijos.*

Introduction

The adoption of digital technologies has transformed public service delivery, evolving through stages from basic electronic systems to e-government 3.0, which integrates emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) (Vrabie and Dumitrascu 2018). This evolution underscores the need for innovative solutions to enhance citizen engagement, service delivery, and governance.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are transformative tools for public administration, moving beyond textual data applications like chatbots to address the growing demand for image-based submissions in public service systems. This shift addresses urban challenges where visual data is increasingly used to report issues such as infrastructure damage, illegal activities, and environmental concerns (Digi24 2015, C. Vrabie 2024).

One of the central challenges faced by public administrations is balancing efficiency with the increasing volume of citizen interactions (Glaukande and Mzini 2019). The Jevons Paradox provides an insightful framework to understand this dynamic. This paradox suggests that improvements in efficiency,

often enabled by technological advancements, can lead to an increase in overall demand, potentially overwhelming the very systems designed to improve performance (Alcott 2005). In the context of e-government, the ease of submitting petitions or complaints through digital platforms can result in an increased number of submissions, necessitating scalable and robust solutions to handle the growing workload. Machine Learning however, offers a promising approach to address this paradox by streamlining processes and enhancing the capacity of public administration systems.

The progression to e-government 3.0 signifies a new era where technologies like ML are not simply supportive tools but integral components of governance capable of assisting public servants in their duties. By incorporating such techniques, governments can process large volumes of data, identify patterns, and predict outcomes with greater accuracy. For instance, ML models trained on citizen-submitted images can automatically detect and classify issues such as potholes, unauthorized constructions, or public infrastructure damages. These systems not only reduce the pressure on human operators but also enable faster response times, thereby improving citizen satisfaction and trust in government institutions.

In this study, the author focuses on the application of ML for image analysis in e-government systems. Using datasets from a Romanian municipality, the author explored how ML models can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of public service delivery. The research builds on the premise that modern citizens demand prompt, effective, and transparent governance, which is often constrained by limited public budgets and administrative inefficiencies. By leveraging ML for image analysis, public administrations can overcome these limitations, ensuring that citizen concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The integration of ML into public administration also addresses the increasing complexity of citizen interactions. Unlike textual data, which requires natural language processing (NLP) for analysis, image data demands sophisticated computer vision techniques, including object detection, segmentation, and classification. These techniques enable systems to “understand” visual data in much the same way that humans do, identifying key features and categorizing them based on predefined criteria (C. Vrabie 2022). For example, a citizen might submit an image of a damaged road, which the ML model can analyze to determine the severity of the issue, its location, and the necessary response. This capability not only enhances the precision of issue identification but also facilitates the prioritization of resources for addressing critical concerns.

As the study will demonstrate, the shift to image-based e-petition systems align with the broader goals of e-government 3.0, which aims to create more inclusive, transparent, and efficient governance structures. By integrating ML into these systems, governments can achieve several key objectives such as (1) enhancing citizen participation – mobile platforms make it easier for citizens to report issues, fostering greater engagement and participation in governance (C. Vrabie 2015), (2) improving service delivery – ML models enable faster and more accurate processing of citizen submissions (Rahmat, Vrabie and Soesilo 2023), ensuring that services are delivered in a timely manner (Tirziu and Vrabie 2017) and (3) increasing transparency and trust – automated systems provide consistent and impartial responses, reducing the potential for bias or error and enhancing public trust in government institutions (Zankova 2021, Tirziu and Vrabie 2016).

To illustrate these concepts, the study utilizes a case study from a Romanian municipality, which has been at the forefront of adopting smart city technologies. The municipality provided anonymized datasets comprising citizen-submitted texts and images related to various urban issues. These datasets were processed using state-of-the-art ML models, demonstrating the potential of algorithms to enhance public service delivery. The results reveal that ML can significantly reduce the time and effort required for issue identification and resolution, while also improving the accuracy and consistency of responses.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on e-government 3.0 and the role of emerging technologies in governance. By also focusing on image analysis, the research highlights a critical area of innovation that has received relatively little attention in the existing discourse. While much of the most

recent literature on e-government emphasizes textual data and natural language processing, this study underscores the importance of expanding the scope of AI applications to include visual data. This shift is particularly relevant in the context of smart cities, where visual information often forms the basis of citizen interactions with public administration systems.

Literature review

The rapid evolution of e-government has been characterized by the adoption of emerging technologies that enhance public service delivery and citizen engagement. Initially, e-government systems focused on text-based interactions and basic electronic service delivery (e-government 1.0). Later, social media and Web 2.0 technologies brought a participatory dimension to governance (e-government 2.0) (Garuckas and Kaziliūnas 2008). Today, e-government 3.0 leverages cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and the Internet of Things (IoT), promising transformative improvements in governance processes (C. Vrabie 2023).

AI applications in public administration have drawn significant attention in recent literature, with many studies emphasizing their role in automating repetitive tasks and improving governance efficiency. For example, (Chen, Ahn and Wang 2023) and (Noordt and Misuraca 2022) highlight the potential of AI to enhance transparency, citizen participation, and decision-making in public administration, while (Kolkman 2020) discusses the applicability of algorithmic models for policy-making. However, much of this research has focused on text analysis, neglecting the increasing role of image analysis in governance.

Recent advancements in computer vision, a branch of AI that enables machines to interpret visual data, offer immense potential for e-government applications. Technologies such as object detection, image segmentation, and visual classification have been widely adopted in various domains, including urban planning, environmental monitoring, and public safety. For instance, (Chui, Roberts and Yee 2022) and (Ahn and Chen 2022) discuss the societal benefits of applying deep learning for social good, including its use in public infrastructure management. Similarly, (Zhao, et al. 2022) highlight the impact of digital advancements, including AI-driven visual analytics, on sustainable development goals.

The role of computer vision has been explored in specific contexts. (Kumari, Agarwal and Mittal 2021) developed cross-domain sentiment analysis models to improve human interactions, while (Yu, et al. 2022) proposed knowledge-enhancing methods for classification tasks, demonstrating their relevance to both textual and visual data. In the context of e-government, these advancements can be applied to analyze citizen-submitted images of urban issues, such as damaged infrastructure or environmental hazards, enabling automated classification and prioritization of tasks. Building upon advancements in computer vision, researchers have explored its potential in diverse applications, including urban safety diagnostics. Back in 2013, (Zaki, et al. 2013) implemented computer vision techniques to address pedestrian safety issues at a major intersection in Vancouver, Canada. Their approach involved automated analysis of video sequences to identify pedestrian-vehicle conflicts and traffic violations, such as jaywalking. This methodology enabled proactive safety evaluations, providing valuable data for developing countermeasures and improving urban planning. Similarly, deep learning models have been leveraged for slum mapping (Wurm, et al. 2019), urban green space assessments (Helbich, et al. 2019), and safety analytics, demonstrating the versatility and impact of these technologies in urban contexts.

E-petitioning, a critical application in e-government, has traditionally relied on natural language processing for analyzing textual petitions. Authors such as (C. Vrabie 2023) and (Hashem, et al. 2023) have explored the role of AI in triaging and responding to petitions, emphasizing the benefits of automation in reducing administrative workload. However, the integration of image-based petitions remains an under-explored area. With the growing prevalence of mobile technologies, citizens increasingly submit images alongside or instead of textual descriptions to report issues. This trend underscores the need for integrating computer vision techniques into e-government systems to enhance their capabilities.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of ML in automating administrative processes. (Davenport and Ronanki 2018) discuss the application of AI for automating routine decision-making tasks in the public sector. Similarly, (Scholl and Bolívar 2019) emphasizes the regulatory and competitive benefits of AI adoption in governance. While these studies provide a foundation for understanding the potential of AI, they do not adequately address the specific challenges associated with visual data in governance.

Recent work in computer vision has focused on improving the accuracy and interpretability of image analysis models. For instance, Residual Neural Network (ResNet) (Gu, Bai and Kong 2022), You Only Look Once (YOLO) (Redmon, et al. 2015) and more recent Joint Embedding Predictive Architecture (JEPA) (LeCun 2024) architectures have become standard for tasks such as object detection and segmentation, enabling machines to identify patterns and anomalies in visual data with high precision. In the context of e-government, these models can be adapted to analyze citizen-submitted images, identifying issues such as potholes, unauthorized constructions, or waste disposal problems. The ability to automate these tasks can significantly enhance the efficiency of public service delivery.

Beyond technical advancements, the societal implications of AI and computer vision in governance have been a focus of recent studies. (Eom and Lee 2022) explore how digital government transformation, driven by AI, can address complex societal challenges, while (Sorrell 2009) as far as 2009 revisits the Jevons Paradox in the context of technological advancements, highlighting the potential for increased demand to offset efficiency gains. This paradox is particularly relevant to e-government systems, where the ease of submitting image-based petitions may lead to an increased number of submissions, necessitating scalable solutions.

In the context of smart cities, (Vlahovic and Vracic 2014) and (Twizeyimana and Andersson 2019) emphasize the role of digital governance in enhancing urban management. Computer vision techniques have been applied to monitor urban environments, detect anomalies, and predict maintenance needs, demonstrating their relevance to e-government applications. For instance, (Madan and Ashok 2023) discuss governance maturity as a critical factor in AI adoption, while the afore mentioned authors (Ahn and Chen 2022) highlight public employees' positive perception of AI technologies, particularly in tasks involving visual data.

The Romanian discourse on e-government 3.0, as reflected in the works published on platforms such as *scrd.eu*, emphasizes the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in public administration, highlighting its potential to enhance governance efficiency and societal well-being. Scholars like (C. Vrabie 2023) underscore AI's capacity to drive innovation in smart cities, improving citizen engagement and administrative responsiveness. Meanwhile, (Sarcea 2024) delve into the critical intersection of AI and cybersecurity, advocating for robust AI-driven mechanisms to protect public sector digital infrastructures and ensure data integrity. Addressing the cultural dimensions of e-government adoption, (Iqbal and Genie 2022) alongside with (Schachtner 2021 and Schachtner 2022) highlight how societal norms and local cultural factors shape citizens' behavioral intentions toward e-government platforms, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive and inclusive designs. Beyond governance, the discourse also explores AI's cross-sectoral impact, as seen in (Iancu, Vrabie and Ungureanu 2021), (Stankevičiūtė and Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė 2023) and (Zota and Clim 2023), who discusses digital and AI's application in education and also healthcare to improve service delivery, illustrating its broader public good potential. This body of research reflects a forward-looking vision for Romania, where e-government 3.0, powered by AI, not only enhances administrative capabilities but also aligns with the principles of sustainability, transparency, and citizen-centric governance (Stoicescu, Bițoiu and Vrabie 2023).

Other international journals, such as, *Public Policy and Administration* has published several articles that delve into the integration of digital tools within public administration, highlighting its transformative potential and associated challenges. For instance, in the article "Evolution of E-government in the States of the Eastern Border of the European Union," the author analyzes the differences in e-government

development among EU member states, emphasizing the role of technological advancements in enhancing public service delivery (Žilinskas 2014). Similarly, (Žilionienė 2004) provides an early overview of key documents guiding e-government development, underscoring the importance of strategic planning in integrating digital technologies into public administration. These studies underscore the overall significance of electronic tools in facilitating democratic processes and improving public service delivery. Additionally, the journal has explored the ethical and practical implications of technology deployment in governance, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that leverages technological advancements while safeguarding public trust and ensuring accountability (Čeičytė and Petraitė 2014). These contributions provide valuable insights into the later evolving discourse on AI's role in public administration, offering guidance for policymakers and practitioners aiming to harness AI for public good.

While much of the existing research has focused on textual data, the growing prevalence of image-based citizen interactions calls for a broader perspective. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the potential of computer vision techniques in e-government applications. By integrating visual analytics into e-petition systems, public administrations can enhance their capacity to process and respond to citizen concerns, ensuring more efficient and inclusive governance. The following sections build on this foundation, presenting a case study and methodology for implementing ML-driven image analysis in public administration systems.

Materials and methods

This study aims to demonstrate the application of Machine Learning techniques for processing and analyzing images to enhance e-government systems, particularly in handling citizen petitions. Starting from a rather old initiative, namely Civic Alert (Digi24 2015, HotNews 2016), the author is proposing an enhanced system that adapts and expands by integrating advanced computer vision and natural language processing techniques. The steps undertaken in the process are detailed as follows:

- *Data collection and anonymization* - for this study the datasets were obtained from a municipality in Romania known for its advanced smart city initiatives. The data covered a full year (2022):
 - Images (5,712 images paired with location data) - citizens submitted photographs documenting public infrastructure issues such as damaged roads, illegal parking, and waste disposal.
 - Textual data (12,935 textual entries comprising complaints, suggestions, and inquiries) - accompanying descriptions of the images and standalone textual petitions submitted via multiple channels, including emails, mobile apps, and web platforms. While this study focuses exclusively on image analysis, details regarding the text analysis methodology and findings can be found in a previously published article, which the author recommend consulting for additional insights: "E-Government 3.0: An AI Model to Use for Enhanced Local Democracies" (C. Vrabie 2023).
- *Dataset description and distribution* - the dataset was categorized into three primary classes based on the issues reported:
 - Infrastructure damage (45% - including potholes, damaged sidewalks, and broken streetlights);
 - Waste disposal (30% - improper garbage disposal, illegal dumping sites, and overflowing bins);
 - Illegal parking and miscellaneous (25% - vehicles obstructing public spaces, abandoned cars, and other urban concerns such as graffiti and fallen trees or branches).
- *Environmental and visual conditions* - the dataset was categorized into three primary classes based on the issues reported:
 - Lighting Conditions - approximately 35% of the images were taken under low-light or nighttime conditions, requiring the model to handle variations in brightness and contrast. The rest of the dataset included images captured during daylight, with varying degrees of shadows.

- Weather conditions - around 20% of the images were taken under adverse weather conditions, including rain, snow, or fog. These factors introduced additional challenges such as reflections, blurring, and obstructions.
- Clutter and occlusion - nearly 25% of the dataset featured cluttered scenes with multiple overlapping objects or partially visible issues, simulating real-world complexities in urban environments.
- Seasonal variation - as mentioned, the dataset covered a full year (2022) therefore all seasons, ensuring a diverse representation of conditions such as wet roads during autumn or snow-covered infrastructure in winter.

The diversity of the dataset presented several challenges, including distinguishing between similar issues (e.g., wet spots versus potholes) and identifying issues in visually complex or low-quality images. However, these challenges mirror real-world scenarios that municipal systems encounter, making the dataset an ideal benchmark for testing the proposed solution.

- *Preprocessing* - data preprocessing ensured the datasets were clean, standardized (by TensorFlow/Keras (TensorFlow 2024)), and anonymized:
 - Resizing, cropping and normalization - images were resized and cropped to 256x256 pixels to standardize input dimensions for ML models and normalized to fit within a [0, 1] range.
 - De-noising - filters such as Gaussian blur were applied to reduce noise.
 - Augmentation - techniques like rotation, flipping, and zoom were employed to increase dataset variability, improving model robustness.



Figure 1. Image transformation – preprocessing (visual representation¹)

Source: Author.

- *Feature extraction* - to enable ML algorithms to understand the input data, feature extraction techniques were applied (in this study, both Faster R-CNN and ResNet were used in complementary roles within the image analysis pipeline):
 - Region proposals - using models like Region-based Convolutional Neural Network (Faster R-CNN),

¹ Computers interpret pictures as data. Images are seen as arrays of numbers, where each pixel is represented by its coordinates (two numbers) and its color values (three numbers, one for each RGB channel). For example, a 256x256 pixel image could be represented by an array of 327,680 numbers. When computers compare images, they actually compare the arrays (transformed into vectors) corresponding to each image. In the illustration, the author provides a visual representation of the numerical data associated with each picture.

the most relevant regions of interest (ROIs) in the images were identified for issue classification. These regions were localized areas in the images that potentially contained urban issues (e.g., potholes, waste). This object detection step was crucial for analyzing complex scenes containing multiple issues or cluttered backgrounds.

- Convolutional features - a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) pre-trained on ImageNet (for this study the author was using ResNet-50 (Viso.ai 2023)) was used to extract visual features such as edges, shapes, and textures. At this step the ROIs identified by Faster R-CNN were processed to extract high-level features and classify the detected issues into predefined categories such as “infrastructure damage,” “illegal parking,” and “waste disposal.” The ResNet was fine-tuned on the dataset, as described in the methodology, for increased accuracy in identifying urban issues.

Integrating both Faster R-NN for object detection and ResNet for classification ensured a robust pipeline capable of handling both tasks in an effective manner.

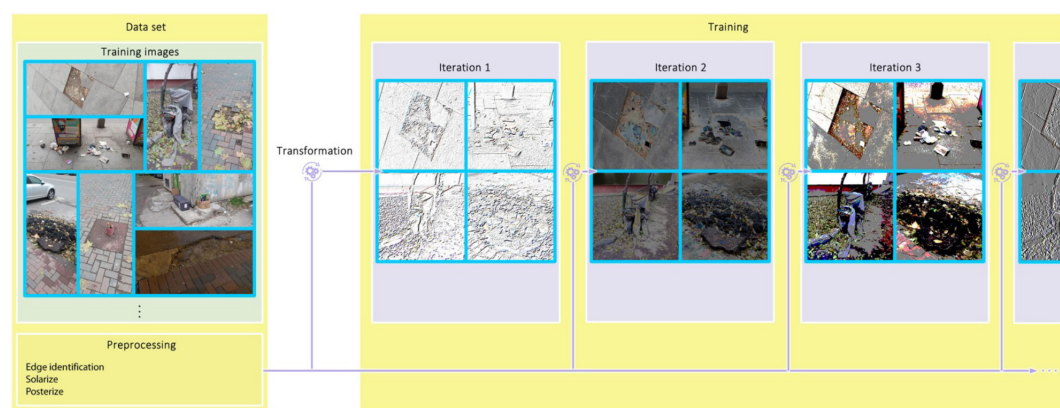


Figure 2. Feature extraction (visual representation)

Source: Author.

- *Data annotation* - a team of experts (municipal public services analysts) manually annotated a subset of the dataset to create training and validation labels. For images, categories included “infrastructure damage,” “illegal parking,” and “waste disposal.”
- *Model development* - a fine-tuned ResNet model was trained to classify issues based on visual features extracted from citizen-submitted images after they were preprocessed by TensorFlow/Keras. The model architecture included convolutional layers for feature extraction, followed by fully connected layers for classification.
- *Model training and validation*
 - Training - data was split into training (4570 pictures - 80%) and validation (1142 pictures - 20%) sets. Augmented datasets were used during training to prevent overfitting.
 - Hyperparameter optimization - parameters such as learning rate, batch size, and number of epochs were optimized using grid search.
 - Evaluation metrics - models were evaluated based on accuracy, precision and recall. Confusion matrices were generated to analyze misclassifications.

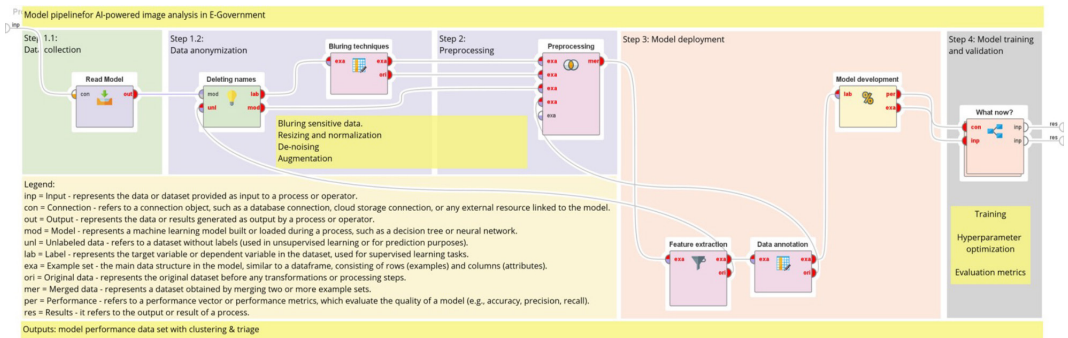


Figure 3. Model pipeline (visual representation)

Source: Author.

Results

This study tested the efficiency and accuracy of an image classification model integrated into an e-government system for analyzing citizen-submitted visual data and automating subsequent actions. The proposed system processes urban issue reports by analyzing images, classifying the identified problems, generating relevant documents for responsible authorities, and promptly communicating resolutions to citizens. The results below include specific benchmarks achieved using nothing more than a Dell XPS 9510 laptop with the following specifications: 11th Generation of Intel Core i9-11900H @ 2.50 GHz CPU, equipped with an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3050 Ti GPU, 32 GB of RAM with a running 64-bit Windows 11 Pro operating system, demonstrating its capability as the sole hardware for this application.

The image classification model, based on the Faster R-CNN architecture, was trained and evaluated using a dataset of 5,712 images submitted by citizens. The system, implemented and tested exclusively on the afore mentioned laptop, demonstrated the following capabilities:

- Accurately identify urban issues
 - The model effectively detected and classified common urban problems, including potholes, waste disposal issues, illegal parking, fallen branches or trees, abandoned animals, water leaks, abandoned vehicles, graffiti and acts of vandalism as well as other types of damaged public infrastructure, all grouped for this study into three primary classes: infrastructure damage, waste disposal, and illegal parking/miscellaneous issues. Metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score were computed for each class to evaluate performance in a more granular manner.
 - Achieved a classification accuracy (number of correct prediction / total number of predictions) of 92.8% on the validation dataset, with precision (true positives / (true positives + false positives)) and recall (true positives / (true positives + false negatives)) values of 0.93 and 0.91, respectively.
 - Misclassification rates were minimal, with errors occurring primarily in visually ambiguous images (e.g., poor lighting or highly cluttered scenes).

CLASS	PRECISION (%)	RECALL (%)	F1-SCORE (%)
Infrastructure Damage	94	92	93
Waste Disposal	91	90	91
Illegal Parking / Miscellaneous	89	85	87

These results indicate that the model performs slightly worse on the “Illegal Parking / Miscellaneous” class, likely due to higher intra-class variability and visual ambiguity in the dataset.

- *Rapid data processing*
 - On the Dell XPS 9510 laptop, each image was processed in an average of 3.1 seconds, including identifying regions of interest and generating output.
 - The complete workflow, including classification, report generation, and citizen communication, was executed in under 7 seconds per case.
- *Automated report generation* - the system integrates classification results into an automated workflow, with the following functionalities:
 - Generating actionable reports - upon detecting an issue, the model generates a report tailored to the responsible authority. These reports are formatted to comply with administrative requirements (“compare and comply” function²), minimizing the need for human intervention.
 - Citizen answer - simultaneously, the system drafts a message for the citizen, acknowledging receipt of the report and providing details of the actions initiated using “compare and comply” function.
- *Better time management* - by automating the analysis and response processes and utilizing nothing more than the afore mentioned laptop for computation, the system demonstrated significant improvements in time management and human labor optimization. While traditional methods required an average of 8 minutes per case to analyze images, identify issues, and prepare responses, using the proposed ML system, this was reduced to less than 7 seconds per case, representing a time savings of approximately 98.5%. This efficiency would allow municipal staff to focus on strategic tasks rather than repetitive administrative duties.
- *Performance on limited hardware* - the Dell XPS 9510 laptop, handled all computations smoothly without additional external hardware. The system processed up to 500 cases per hour under normal operating conditions, demonstrating the scalability and efficiency of the setup for medium-sized municipalities.
- *Scalability* - while suitable for smaller municipalities or localized e-government services, the model supports scalable workflows, capable of handling larger data volumes with modest adjustments to batch processing or model optimization.

The results indicate that a not expensive hardware solution should be enough for implementing an ML-powered e-government system focused on image classification for small municipalities, however, as the volume increases better hardware solution should be taken into consideration. The system’s ability to process reports efficiently, generate actionable outputs, and communicate with citizens demonstrates its potential to revolutionize public administration workflows. The reduction in processing time, enhanced responsiveness, and scalability makes this approach particularly suitable for municipalities aiming to enhance service quality while optimizing resource use.

Discussion

This study demonstrated the effective integration of machine learning techniques, particularly image classification, into e-government workflows for handling urban issues. By leveraging a robust system architecture powered by widely available hardware, such as the Dell XPS 9510 laptop, the proposed solution achieved significant advancements in time efficiency and labor optimization predicting an increased citizen engagement. The system’s ability to process images, generate actionable reports, and communications with citizens highlights its potential to enhance public service delivery in a scalable and cost-effective manner.

² This capability is able to read the legislation and, comparing with the identified issue, to refer to specific regulations in use (IBM Watson - <https://www.ibm.com/docs/en/cloud-private/3.2.x?topic=paks-watson-compare-comply-element-classification>).

Machine Learning in e-government plays a pivotal role by automating administrative practices, streamlining workflows, and enhancing citizen trust through precise and timely feedback. These improvements to the initial project – Civic Alert, demonstrate the transformative role that AI-powered systems can play in modern governance.

The system's scalability demonstrates AI's capacity to support data-driven governance and optimize resource allocation. By efficiently processing large data volumes and integrating metadata analysis, it provides actionable insights essential for urban planning and addressing high service demand.

However, implementing such advanced technologies requires addressing practical and ethical challenges, including hardware capabilities, system optimization, citizen readiness, and avoiding disparities in technology access. The study reflects AI's broader applicability to public administration theory, offering a framework for scalable implementation in governance and contributing to the discourse on data-driven and ethical decision-making.

Limitations

While the results of this study are promising, several limitations were identified, which should be considered in future research and system development.

- Image quality and ambiguity - poor-quality or ambiguous images submitted by citizens occasionally led to misclassifications or required manual intervention for validation. Enhancements in preprocessing techniques, such as brightness adjustment and noise reduction, can improve model performance in such scenarios. Additionally, public education campaigns on submitting high-quality images could mitigate this issue.
- High-resolution image processing - processing high-resolution images (e.g., 4K) resulted in slightly increased computational demands and longer processing times. Although resizing images during preprocessing alleviated this issue without significant accuracy loss, further optimization is necessary to handle such data more efficiently.
- The current study acknowledges that the reported accuracy (92.8%) is based on a single train-validation split and may not fully capture the model's generalization ability. This limitation is particularly relevant given the constrained variety of conditions in the dataset (e.g., specific urban characteristics, lighting, and weather conditions). A truly independent test set was not used in this study due to the dataset's size and the exploratory nature of the research. Future iterations of this work will prioritize the inclusion of a separate test dataset to provide a more reliable assessment of the model's performance under unseen conditions.
- System scalability - the Dell XPS 9510 laptop performed well for the workloads but exhibited thermal throttling under sustained peak conditions. This limitation suggests the need for enhanced hardware to maintain consistent performance.
- Model generalization - while the model performed well on the provided dataset, its generalization to other municipalities or regions with different urban characteristics remains untested. Expanding training datasets to include diverse conditions and issue types would increase the model's adaptability and robustness.
- Legal and ethical considerations - automated citizen communication must be carefully crafted to avoid misinterpretation or errors, particularly in legal contexts. Further refinements in the natural language processing modules used for citizen feedback are needed to ensure clarity and compliance with administrative standards.
- Hardware dependence - while the Dell XPS 9510 laptop demonstrated sufficient computational capabilities for this study, municipalities with higher data volumes may require more powerful hardware or even distributed computing systems to maintain efficiency.

Future research

Firstly, the author emphasizes that this study is intended as a proof-of-concept rather than a fully operational solution for municipalities. Achieving a final-release version would require collaborative efforts from a dedicated team to develop and refine the proposed solution.

Secondly however, to address the above limitations, future research should focus on several key areas such as:

- Model optimization - enhancing the ML model's efficiency and accuracy, particularly for ambiguous or high-resolution images, through advanced algorithms and preprocessing methods.
- Broader testing - deploying the system in diverse municipal contexts to evaluate its adaptability and scalability.
- Citizen education - developing guidelines or educational materials to assist citizens in submitting clear and relevant data.
- Infrastructure improvements - exploring hardware upgrades or cloud-based solutions to handle larger datasets and sustained high workloads.

Despite its limitations, this study establishes a strong foundation for integrating AI-driven image classification into e-government workflows. By addressing the outlined challenges and limitations, future iterations of this system can achieve even greater efficiency, scalability, and citizen satisfaction, paving the way for widespread adoption of advanced e-government technologies.

Conclusions

The integration of state-of-the-art ML techniques into e-government workflows exemplifies the transformative impact of AI on public service delivery. This study showcases how AI enhances administrative efficiency and responsiveness by identifying urban issues, generating reports, and providing timely feedback to citizens with high accuracy and performance using widely available hardware.

The results confirm that the proposed model successfully processed images of urban problems, including potholes, waste, illegal parking, and damaged infrastructure, with a classification accuracy of 93%. The system demonstrated the ability to complete the entire workflow, from image analysis to generating actionable reports and citizen notifications, in an average of 7 seconds per case. This time efficiency marks a drastic improvement over traditional manual processes, which typically take up to 8 minutes per case, resulting in a 98.6% reduction in processing time.

The automated system not only streamlined workflows but is capable to enhance citizen engagement by providing immediate and personalized responses. Citizens could receive confirmation of their submissions, details of the actions initiated, and updates on the status of their reports, fostering transparency and trust in government operations. Simultaneously, the system is capable of generating detailed, actionable reports for municipal departments, formatted to administrative standards and ready for implementation.

In addition to its operational efficiency, the system demonstrated scalability, processing up to 500 cases per hour on the Dell XPS 9510 laptop. This performance underscores its potential to handle high volumes of reports, particularly during peak periods such as post-disaster scenarios. The integration of metadata analysis further amplified its utility, enabling the generation of heatmaps and data-driven insights to prioritize resources and inform urban planning strategies.

The adoption of this technology also highlights significant labor optimization benefits. By automating repetitive tasks, the system reduced reliance on large administrative teams, allowing human resources to focus on complex decision-making and strategic initiatives. This shift not only improved the quality of public services but also reduced operational costs, making the solution a viable and cost-effective option for municipalities.

Despite its advantages, the study identified certain challenges. Processing high-resolution or low-quality images occasionally led to delays or misclassifications, which required manual intervention. These limitations emphasize the importance of continuous improvements in preprocessing techniques and citizen education on submitting high-quality images. Furthermore, the system's sustained operation under peak loads occasionally caused minor thermal throttling, highlighting the need for optimized workload management.

Overall, this study illustrates the transformative potential of integrating ML-powered image processing into e-government systems. The demonstrated improvements in efficiency, accuracy, and citizen satisfaction underscore the feasibility of deploying such solutions for enhanced urban governance. By leveraging widely available hardware, municipalities can implement scalable and cost-effective systems that address urban challenges proactively. Future research should focus on optimizing the model for faster processing, expanding its capabilities to address more complex issues, and enhancing its robustness in diverse operational conditions. The adoption of such systems marks a pivotal step toward realizing the vision of e-government 3.0, characterized by transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centric governance.

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SAVIVALDYBIŲ OPERATYVUMO GERINIMAS PASITELKIANČIAMS DIRBTINIO INTELEKTO VALDOMĄ VAIZDŲ ANALIZĘ E. VALDŽIOJE

Anotacija. Mašininio mokymosi (angl. Machine Learning, ML) metodų integravimas į viešąjį administravimą žymi naują ir transformuojančią e. valdžios sistemų erą. Tradiciškai e. valdžios studijose daugiausia dėmesio buvo skiriama tekstinei srovei, o šioje studijoje nagrinėjamas novatoriškas ML taikymas vaizdų analizei - metodas, leidžiantis vyriausybėms veiksmingiau nagrinėti piliečių peticijas. Naudojant vaizdų klasifikavimo ir objektų aptikimo algoritmus, šiame straipsnyje siūlomas modelis padeda valstybės institucijoms nustatyti ir greitai reaguoti į piliečių pateiktus įrodymus paveikslėlių formatu. Pavyzdžiui, infrastruktūros

klausimus, aplinkosaugos problemas ar kitas miesto problemas, su kuriomis gali susidurti piliečiai. Tyrime taip pat pabrėžiamas Jevonso paradoksas kaip kritinis veiksnys, kai didesnis efektyvumas iš piliečių pusės (ypač naudojant mobiliąsias platformas ir programėles) gali sukelti didesnę paklausą, kuri turėtų lemti keičiamo dydžio ir patikimus sprendimus. Remdamasis Rumunijos savivaldybės, kuri pateikė piliečių pateiktų vaizdų duomenų rinkinius, autorius išanalizavo ir įrodė, kad ML gali pagerinti viešųjų institucijų tikslumą ir operatyvumą. Išvados rodo, kad ML taikymas e. peticijų sistemose gali ne tik padidinti piliečių dalyvavimą, bet ir pagreitinti administracinius procesus, atveriant kelią skaidresniam ir veiksmingesniam valdymui. Šis tyrimas prisideda prie e. valdžios 3.0 diskurso, parodydamas dirbtinio intelekto (DI) potencialą transformuoti viešųjų paslaugų teikimą, užtikrinant tvarius (ir pritaikomus) sprendimus, atitinkančius didėjančius šiuolaikinio miestų valdymo poreikius.

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LIETUVOS SAVIVALDYBIŲ TARYBŲ NARIŲ DARBOTVARKĖS PRIORITETAI: REGIONINIAI SKIRTUMAI IR MIESTO-KAIMO DICHOTOMIJA

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Anotacija. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama išsiaiškinti Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių nuostatas apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus, t. y., kurie darbotvarkėms tikslai jiems yra prioritetiniai. Kaip tyrimo objektas pasirinkti savivaldybių tarybų nariai, išrinkti 2023 m. kovo 5 d. rinkimuose, nes prieš šiuos rinkimus pasikeitė teisinė įstatyminė bazė ir savivaldybių tarybų narių vaidmuo pasikeitė. Siekiant atsakyti į iškeltą šio tyrimo klausimą, pasitelkiama tarptautinio tyrimo „European councilor“ anketinė apklausa (analizuojamas tik Lietuvos atvejis). Atlikta kiekybinių duomenų analizė atskleidė, kad vietos politikų nuostatos apie darbo-tvarkės prioritetus netolygiai pasiskirsčiusios po šalies teritoriją ir skirtinguose regionuose išryškėja skirtingi tradiciniai (socio-ekonominiai), teritorijų plėtros ir aplinkos kokybės gerinimo probleminiai aspektai. Taip pat analizuojant nuostatas išryškėjo centro-periferijos (miesto-kaimo) dichotomija, ypač teritorijų plėtros aspektais.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: savivaldybių tarybų nariai, nuostatos, darbotvarkė, teritoriniai netolygumai, Lietuva.

Keywords: municipal councillors, provisions, agenda, territorial inequalities, Lithuania.

Įvadas

Regioninė poliarizacija labai dažnai sutinkama elektoriniuose tyrimuose. Ji atsiranda dėl visuomenės erdvinės diferenciacijos, kuri neišvengiama dėl gyventojų, tame tarpe ir pačių vietos politikų, skirtingų ekonominių, demografinių bei socialinių charakteristikų pasiskirstymo, o šie skirtumai ypač pastebimi tarp centrų ir periferijų (Burneika ir kt. 2017b). Centro-periferijos dichotomijos modelis dažnai

naudojamas regioniniuose tyrimuose ir tarp miesto-kaimo (centro-periferijos) dažnai vyksta įvairūs konfliktai (ekonominiai, socialiniai, politiniai ir kt.) (Friedman 1973; Lee 1994; Eskelinen ir Snickars 1995; Pociūtė 2014). Kalbant apie miesto ir kaimo skirtumus, pastebima, kad tiek vietos rinkėjams, tiek jų išrinktiems atstovams mažesniuose miestuose ar kaimiškose (periferinėse) teritorijose būdinga dėmesį telkti į vietos specifines problemas, susijusias su vietos bendruomenės klausimais, todėl tokioms teritorijoms mažiau būdingos globalios problemos (Rudokaitė 2014; Burneika ir kt. 2017b). Tyrimuose pristatoma miesto-kaimo dichotomija leidžia nustatyti tik tam tikriems regionams būdingas specifines problemas, kas leidžia sėkmingiau vykdyti regioninę politiką (Baranauskienė 2021).

Šio tyrimo klausimo aktualumą taip pat rodo savivaldos politinės sistemos pokyčiai. Naujausi Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų ir merų rinkimai įvyko 2023 m. kovo 5 dieną. Šie rinkimai išskirtiniai, nes pasikeitus teisei bazei (įsigaliojus LR rinkimų kodeksui (Lietuvos Respublikos rinkimų... 2022)), pasikeitė ir savivaldybės institucinė sąranga (Lietuvos Respublikos vietos... 1994). Meras, renkamas ne daugiau kaip trims kadencijoms, kuris tapo vykdomąja valdžia bei įgijo daug daugiau galių (Lietuvos Respublikos vietos... 1994). Savivaldybės administracija, kuriai vadovauja tiesiogiai išrinktas meras, rengia tarybos sprendimų projektus. Meras negali balsuoti posėdžiuose, tačiau turi „veto“ teisę ir gali motyvuotai perduoti savivaldybės tarybai pakartotinai svarstyti tarybos priimtus teisės aktus. Meras, o ne taryba renka administracijos direktorių, jo pavaduotojus ir vicemerus. Taip pat 2023 m. kovo mėn. išrinkti merai nebeturi savivaldybės tarybos narių mandato, todėl nėra įskaičiuojami į bendrą išrinktų tarybos narių skaičių. Taigi, kaip matoma, savivaldybių tarybų narių vaidmuo keičiasi, o jo įtaka formuojant vietos valdžios politinę darbotvarkę tampa labai dinamiška. Tačiau reikia pažymėti, kad įstatymo pataisos padidino opozicijos teises savivaldybių tarybose ir jie gali rūpimus klausimus įtraukti į vieno savivaldybės tarybos posėdžio darbotvarkę kas šešis mėnesius.

Savivaldybių tarybų nariai (išrinkta gyventojų vietos valdžia) turi įteisintą galią priimti sprendimus vietos lygmeniu. Priimant sprendimus vietos valdžia susiduria su iškylančiais iššūkiais, tokiais kaip savo pačių vaidmens suvokimu (kaip politinių lyderių) (Jon ir Cole 1999; Klok ir Denters 2013), priimamų sprendimų svarba (formuojant politikos procesus ir sudarant politinę darbotvarkę) ir poveikiu priimtiems vietos sprendimams (Heinelt ir Egner 2022; Swianiewicz 2024), tinkamu reagavimu į piliečių poreikius (De Groot, Denters ir Klok 2010), viešųjų paslaugų vystymu, pasiekiamumu ir kokybe (Bučaitė-Vilkė ir kt. 2019), piliečių įsitraukimu į vietos valdymą (Heinelt ir Egner 2022), bendradarbiavimu bei tarpininkavimu tarp vietos gyventojų, valdžios ir verslo bei tarpsavivaldybiniu bendradarbiavimu (Haus ir Heinelt 2005; Egner, Sweeting ir Klok 2013; Bučaitė-Vilkė ir kt. 2019); gyventojų pasitikėjimu politikais ir pačių pasitikėjimu savo ir kitų partijų, institucijų nariais (Walenta-Bergman 2022) bei daugelis kitų dalykų, kuriems didelę įtaką daro didžiausias pastarųjų metų iššūkis – gyventojų skaičiaus kaita (ypač neigiama periferinėse šalies teritorijose).

Yra gausu tyrimų tiesiogiai susijusių su savivalda ir šiame straipsnyje analizuojamais klausimais. Vietos politinės lyderystės aspektai dažniausiai analizuojami dalyvaujamosios demokratijos, politinės komunikacijos ir politinių savivaldos sistemų kontekste (Kersting ir Vetter 2003; Heinelt 2010) bei per skirtingas valdymo efektyvumo, interesų atstovavimo ir komunikacijos su vietos bendruomene strategijas (Baldersheim ir Daloz 2003; Haus ir Heinelt 2005; Lowndes ir Leach 2004a, 2004b; Haus ir Sweeting 2006). Taip pat analizuojamas ir tarybos narių politinis vaidmuo vietos darbotvarkėje (Hanssen Klausen ir Vabo 2006; Haus ir Klausen 2011; Klok ir Denters 2013) ir interesų derinimo strategijos (Getimis ir Hlepas 2013).

Taip pat ir Lietuvoje yra pavienių mokslininkų, analizuojančių piliečių (bendruomenės) įtraukimą į savivaldą (Guogis, Gudelis ir Stasiukynas 2007; Bučaitė-Vilkė ir Žilys 2016; Bučaitė-Vilkė 2019, 2021), savivaldos rinkimų sistemą ir politinį dalyvavimą, decentralizavimo reformas (Astrauskas 2007; Slavinskaitė ir Ginevičius 2016), savivaldybių funkcijų ir galių kaitą (Burbulytė-Tsikarishvili, Dvorak ir Žernytė 2018), savivaldybių bendradarbiavimą (Bučaitė-Vilkė 2019; Bučaitė-Vilkė ir kt. 2019; Bučaitė-Vilkė, Civinskas ir Lazauskienė 2018; Lazauskienė ir Bučaitė-Vilkė 2019). Vis tik galima teigti, kad vietos politikų lyderystė ir bendruomenių įgalinimas iki šių dienų nėra sulaukę didelio dėmesio Lietuvoje. Galima paminėti tik kelis

bandymus, kurie tik iš dalies atskleidžia vietinės politinės lyderystės pokyčius, jų požiūrį į piliečių dalyvavimą savivaldoje (Dvorak 2009; Lazauskienė ir Bučaitė-Vilkė 2018, 2019). Taigi, galima teigti, kad savivaldos politikai kaip vietos lyderiai, gebantys telkti bendruomenes bei gyventojus ir atstovauti jų interesus, spręsti aktualias teritorijoms problemas, vis dar nėra tinkamai identifiкуotas kaip empirinių tyrimų objektas.

Šiame straipsnyje pateikiamos Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių nuostatos apie svarbius vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus. Straipsnio autoriams buvo svarbu išsiaiškinti kokie darbotvarkės klausimai yra svarbiausi: socio-ekonominiai, aplinkos kokybės gerinimo, teritorijų plėtros (vystymo) aspektai ir ar yra minėtų aspektų regioninių skirtumų, ar yra skirtumų tarp miesto ir kaimo savivaldybių? Norint išsiaiškinti iškeltus klausimus buvo suformuluotas šio tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybos narių nuostatų apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslų svarbą erdvinio pasiskirstymo pjūviu, analizuojant skirtingų savivaldybių politikų prioritetus bei miesto ir kaimo savivaldybių dichotomiją.

Iškeltiems klausimams ir užsibrėžtam tikslui atskleisti buvo naudojami kiekybiniai duomenys, gauti pasitelkiant Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių anketinę apklausa iš „Kaip keičiasi vietos politiko vaidmuo savivaldoje: lyderystė, institucijos ir bendruomenės“ (Nr. S-MIP-23-17) projekto, kurio tikslas – išanalizuoti vietos politikų (savivaldos tarybos narių) formuojamus normatyvinius ir institucinius lyderystės pokyčius, siekiant įvertinti vietos politikos formavimo, demokratijos ir gyventojų atstovavimo aspektus bei atsižvelgiant į savivaldybių institucinės struktūros reformų kontekstą Lietuvoje. Anketinė apklausa atlikta 2024 m. vasario-kovo mėnesiais (n=694). Minėta anketinė apklausa yra „European councilor“ sudedamoji apklausos dalis (tokio pat pobūdžio apklausa vyko 29-iose Europos šalyse). Šia apklausa buvo siekiama atskleisti savivaldos tarybos narių požiūrį į besikeičiančias vietos politiko funkcijas, vaidmenis bei galios pozicijas; taip pat atskleisti kaip pasikeitė institucinis santykis su tiesiogiai renkamu meru (po savivaldybių tarybų rinkimų 2023 m.); svarbu buvo įvertinti ir komunikacijos bei interesų derinimo strategijas tarp skirtingų suinteresuotų grupių; įvertinti darbotvarkės suderinimą su aktualiomis vietos problemomis; kiek yra autonomijos priimanč kolektyvinius sprendimus dėl vietos klausimų ir kita.

Teorinis konceptas

Kalbant apie vietos politikų elgsenos tyrimus, nemažai mokslininkų skiria itin daug dėmesio elektoriniams (rinkimų) tyrimams. Tačiau žymiai mažiau dėmesio skiriama politikų nuostatoms įvairiais pjūviais analizuoti (nuostatos dėl vietos demokratijos, bendruomenių dalyvavimo, viešojo valdymo reformų ir pan.). Anksčiau vykdyti moksliniai tyrimai tiek Lietuvoje, tiek užsienyje (Massey ir Delton 1988, 1998; Legeby 2010; Savickaitė ir kt. 2013; Ramonaitė ir kt. 2014; Baranauskaitė ir Tučas 2014; Gaidys 2014; Baranauskaitė ir kt. 2015; Ubarevičienė ir kt. 2015; Burneika ir kt. 2017b) atskleidė, kad politinių preferencijų teritorinis pasiskirstymas (erdvinė diferenciacija) koreliuoja su sociodemografinėmis bei socioekonominėmis charakteristikomis, todėl visuomenės erdvinė diferenciacija tik didelė, kas ir nulems dar didesnius skirtumus tarp rinkėjų politinių preferencijų teritorinio pasiskirstymo. Politinėms gyventojų preferencijoms jau ilgą laiką daug dėmesio skiria užsienio mokslininkai (Cohen ir Dowson 1993; Massey ir Denton 1998; Walks 2005, 2006), kurie aiškina, kad gyventojai linkę rinktis gyventi ir būti tarp asmenų su panašia rinkimine elgsena. Taip pat, daug dėmesio skiriama priemiestinių ir metropolinių teritorijų politinei elgsenai, kuriai, pasak autorių (Kaufman 2004; Johnston ir Pattie 2006; Bilodeau 2009), įtaką daro socialinė aplinka bei imigrantai ar atvykėliai. Taip pat pastebėta, kad naujakuriai į priemiestines teritorijas atsineša savo politines preferencijas ir pažiūras, kurios, dažnu atveju, skiriasi nuo senbuvų (Baranauskaitė ir kt. 2015; Ubarevičienė ir kt. 2015; Burneika ir kt. 2017b).

Elektorinės elgsenos erdviniams tyrimams Lietuvoje pradėta daugiausia dėmesio skirti XXI amžiuje. Atlikta nemažai tyrimų, skirtų rinkėjų politinės elgsenos ir aktyvumo teritorinei diferenciacijai (atsižvelgiant į rinkėjų socioekonominius, sociodemografinius ir kitus rodiklius), kur analizuojami ne tik nacionaliniai, bet ir savivaldybių tarybų rinkimai savivaldybių, apygardų, apylinkių teritoriniais lygmenimis. Ypač daug dėmesio skiriama Lietuvos didžiųjų miestų ir jų priemiestinių teritorijų (metropolinių regionų

(Vilniaus, Kauno ir Klaipėdos)) gyventojų politinėms preferencijoms bei jų erdvinei analizei, elektorinių struktūrų diferenciacijai (Savickaitė ir kt. 2013; Baranauskaitė ir Tučas 2014; Ubarevičienė ir kt. 2015; Baranauskaitė ir kt. 2015; Burneika ir kt. 2017a, 2017b; Burneikaitė 2018; Vidzbelis 2020). V. Petrulis analizavo etninio gyventojų statuso ir politinių preferencijų sąsajas Vilniaus metropoliniame regione (Petrulis 2009), taip pat daug dėmesio skyrė ir Prezidento rinkimams (Petrulis 2007). Taip pat dėmesys skirtas tautinių mažumų rinkiminiam erdviniam aktyvumui ne tik Lietuvos metropoliniuose regionuose, bet ir kitose šalies teritorijose (Burenikaitė 2018; Vidzbelis 2020). Apie tautinių mažumų politinį dalyvavimą Lietuvoje analizavo Visockaitė (2015), tačiau jos tyrime nėra erdvinės analizės, remiamasi kokybiniais (interviu) ir kiekybiniais (anketinės apklausos) duomenimis. Analizuotas jaunimo aktyvumas Seimo rinkimuose tiek visoje Lietuvoje, tiek ir skiriant dėmesį metropoliniams regionams (Vidzbelis ir Burneika 2023), partijų ir kandidatų populiarumas (Vikšraitienė ir Tučas 2019), politinės teritorinės įtampos Lietuvoje (Kavaliauskas ir Valiūnaitė 2003; Kavaliauskas ir kt. 2004). Taip pat dėmesys skirtas decentralizacijai ir savivaldai (Daugirdas ir Mačiulytė 2006; Mačiulytė ir Ragauskas 2007).

Politinės darbotvarkės formavimui, kaip atskiram procesui, nemažai dėmesio skiria mokslininkai (Kingdon 1995; Dye 1998; Sabatier 1999; Parsons 2001; Furman ir Šerikova 2007). Jų teigimu, politinės darbotvarkės sudarymas (pagrindinių problemų identifikavimas tiek vietos, regiono ar šalies mastu) – svarbiausia pradinė politikos procesų formavimo dalis (Schattschneider 1961; Dye 1998; Nefas 2010; Šerikova 2013; Howlet ir Ramesh 2003). Ne visos problemos patenka į darbotvarkę ir tik nuo pačių politikų ir gyventojų noro priklauso ar problemų sprendimo imsis valdžios institucijos (Kraft ir Furlong 2004), o piliečių įsitraukimas į valdymo procesus – vienas iš pagrindinių demokratinės valstybės tikslų (Carreira, Machado ir Vasconcelos 2016).

Tačiau analizuojant darbotvarkės formavimo procesus iškyla esminių klausimų, kaip vietos politikai konstruoja darbotvarkes, kokie keliami ir diskutuojami strateginiai klausimai ir koks pačių politikų įsitraukimas sprendžiant vietos klausimus? Remiantis klasikinės J. W. Kingdon (1995) daugialypių srautų prieigos (angl. Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)) analitiniais argumentais, politinės darbotvarkės formavimą lemia problemos išgryninimas, politiniai veiksmai ir politikos formavimas (Kingdon 1995). Šie aspektai svarbūs tiriant sprendimų priėmimo mechanizmo analizę vietos lygmeniu, akcentuojant mikro lygmens politikos formavimą ir interesų derinimo strategijas. Šiuo atveju ypač aktualus piliečių interesų atstovavimo aspektas, vietos politikos sprendinius derinant su makro lygmens nacionalinės politikos prioritetais. B. D. Jones ir F. R. Baumgartner (2005) analizuodami politikų išskiriamus darbotvarkės prioritetus pastebėjo, kad nors nacionalinio lygmens politikai atsakingi už prioritetų formavimą, vis dar mažai dėmesio skiria savivaldos politikai, nors jos įgyvendinimui vietos gyventojų balsas itin svarbus. Tyrėjų manymu, politinių partijų ideologija, ekonominiai svertai ir elektorato iniciatyvos tampa pagrindiniais vietos politikos formavimo veiksniais (Jones ir Baumgartner 2005). Visiškai priešingai nacionalinio lygmens politikams, kurių sprendimus riboja itin griežti teisėkūros suvaržymai, tačiau pastebėta, kad vietos politikai labiau susiduria su tiesioginiu pragmatiniu spaudimu, įskaitant visuomenės lūkesčius, finansinius apribojimus ir biurokratinis suvaržymus (Denters ir Rose 2005). Taip pat tokie kaip vietos žiniasklaida, bendruomeninės organizacijos ir elektroninės vietos dalyvavimo priemonės tampa itin svarbiu įrankiu formuojant vietos politinius prioritetus (Denters ir Rose, 2005; Pratchett ir kt. 2009).

Kaip matoma iš tyrimų gausos, erdviniai tyrimai daugiausia naudojami gyventojų rinkiminėms preferencijoms atskleisti bei paaiškinti preferencijų diferenciaciją. Tačiau erdviniai tyrimai Lietuvoje beveik nenaudoti vietos politikų nuostatomis atskleisti. Savivaldybių tarybų narių veiklos profilio (konkrečiai kalbant apie vietos darbotvarkės tikslų svarbą) erdvinis pasiskirstymas, taip pat kaip ir rinkėjų preferencijos, priklauso nuo asmeninių socioekonominių charakteristikų, kurioms įtakos turi asmens gyvenamoji vieta (šiuo atveju savivaldybės geografinė padėtis). Vietos politikų darbotvarkės prioritetų erdvinė analizė leidžia identifikuoti tam tikras specifines regionines problemas, atskleisti problemų panašumus bei skirtumus tarp centrinių (miesto) ir periferinių (kaimiškų) teritorijų. Tik nustačius problemų erdvinę diferenciaciją, sėkmingai šalyje gali būti vykdoma regioninė politika (Baranauskienė 2019, 2021).

Metodologija

Šiame tyrime naudojamas apklausos tyrimo metodas, kurio pasirinktas atlikimo būdas – apklausa raštu (klausimyno nuoroda buvo išsiųsta visiems Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų nariams), kuri taikoma įvairiuose moksliniuose bei taikomuosiuose socialiniuose tyrimuose (Gaižauskaitė ir Mikėnė 2014). Apklauskos dalyviai buvo klausiami „eile iš anksto numatytų klausimų, su iš anksto nustatytomis atsakymų kategorijomis“ (Luobikienė 2005, p. 79). Šiame straipsnyje pasirinkti analizuoti klausimai, norint išsiaiškinti respondentų nuostatas, todėl tam tinkamiausia naudoti Likerto vertinimo skalę, paprastai prašant nurodyti „savo sutikimo ar nesutikimo su kiekvienu iš teiginių laipsnį“ (Gaižauskaitė ir Mikėnė 2014, p. 175), kur dažniausiai sutikimai vertinami 5 balų skalėje (Gaižauskaitė ir Mikėnė 2014).

Vykdyta anketinė apklausa yra „European councilor“ sudedamoji apklausos dalis¹. Lietuvoje anketinė apklausa „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ atlikta 2024 m. vasario-kovo mėnesiais. Tyrimo tikslinė grupė – Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų nariai, kurie buvo išrinkti 2023 m. kovo 5 d. savivaldybių tarybų rinkimų metu. Vykdyta visuminė apklausa, anketos buvo išsiųstos visiems išrinktiems 1 498-iems² savivaldybių tarybų nariams (60 savivaldybių), remiantis naujausiais savivaldybių rinkimų rezultatais (1 lentelė) (Lietuvos Respublikos vyriausioji... 2024). Asmeniniai tarybų narių elektroniniai paštai buvo gauti iš savivaldybių internetinių svetainių (elektroniniai paštai skelbiami viešai). Duomenims surinkti panaudota „Qualtrics“ apklausos programinė įranga. Norint surinkti duomenis asmeniniais elektroniniais paštais buvo išsiųsti kvietimai su keliais priminimais. Galutinė imtis – 694 (tai sudaro 46,3 proc. visų tarybų narių) (1 pav.). Pagal galutinę imtį buvo analizuojami surinkti apklausos duomenys. Detalesnei duomenų analizei taikomas klasterinės analizės metodas, kuris naudojamas nustatyti tam tikrų objektų panašumams, suskirstant juos į panašias grupes (Vaitkevičius ir Saudargaitė 2006). Šiame darbe išskiriami miesto ir kaimo savivaldybių klasteriai, kuriais remiantis analizuojami iš miesto (klasteriui priskiriami šešios didžiausios Lietuvos miestų savivaldybės: Vilniaus, Kauno, Klaipėdos, Šiaulių, Panevėžio ir Alytaus) ir kaimo (visos kitos likusios 54 savivaldybės) savivaldybių tarybų narių surinkti apklausos metu gauti duomenys.

Sudarytame klausimyne naudojami 48 uždari klausimai ir vienas situacijos

1 lentelė. Bendras renkamų savivaldybės tarybos narių skaičius

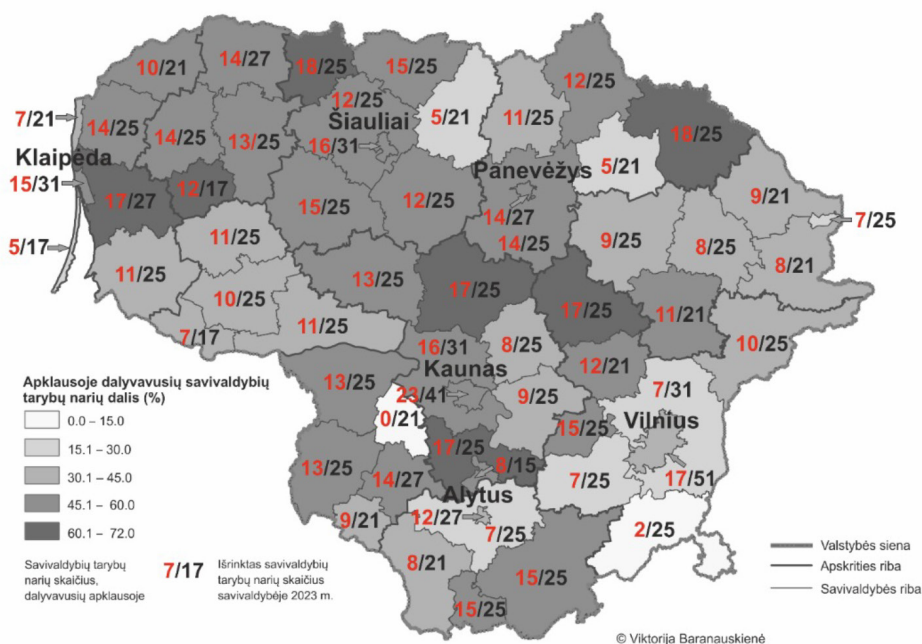
SAVIVALDYBĖS TARYBOS NARIŲ SKAIČIUS	GYVENTOJŲ SKAIČIUS SAVIVALDYBĖJE
51	>500 000
41	250 000–500 000
31	100 000–250 000
27	50 000–100 000
25	20 000–50 000
21	10 000–20 000
17	5 000–10 000
15	<5 000

Šaltinis: Lietuvos Respublikos rinkimų kodekso patvirtinimo, įsigaliojimo ir įgyvendinimo konstitucinis įstatymas 2022

¹ „European councilor“ apklausa vykdyta 29-iose šalyse (apklausa pradėta 2023 m. birželį ir baigta 2024 m. gegužės mėnesį). Apklausa atliko tarptautinis mokslininkų tinklas, kuris daugiau nei 20 metų daugiausia dėmesio skiria vietos politinių veikėjų apklausoms. (pvz., merų, tarybos narių). Iš viso 2024 m. apklausta 12 000 vietos politikų.

² Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų rinkimai vyksta 60-yje Lietuvos savivaldybių, kur ketveriems metams (nuo 2002 m.) yra renkami savivaldybių tarybos nariai, o nuo 2015 m. šių rinkimų metu tiesiogiai yra renkami ir savivaldybių merai. Mandatų skaičius (savivaldybių tarybos narių skaičius) kiekvienoje savivaldybėje priklauso nuo rinkėjų skaičiaus konkrečioje savivaldybėje. Būtina paminėti, kad iki 2000 m. savivaldybės tarybos nariai buvo renkami 56-e savivaldybėse, o pasikeitus Lietuvos teritorijos administraciniam suskirstymui (Lietuvos respublikos teritorijos... 1994) 2002 m. – 60-yje. Taigi, šiame darbe, sudaryta respondentų kartoschema, atsižvelgiant į naują teritorinį administracinį suskirstymą, kuris įsigaliojo nuo 2000 metų.

vertinimas³. Apklausą buvo siekiama įvertinti įvairius vietos politikos lyderystės ir savivaldybių tarybų narių valdymo aspektus. Klausimyną sudarė aštuoni klausimų blokai: A blokas skirtas savivaldybių tarybų narių darbotvarkės aspektams ir prioritetams išryškinti; B blokas skirtas tarybų narių požiūriui į vietos demokratiją atskleisti; C blokas skirtas tarybos nario pareigų suvokimui ir atsakomybėms įvertinti; D blokas skirtas tarybos nario vaidmeniui atskleisti; E blokas skirtas išsiaiškinti tarybos narių taikomus komunikavimo ir informacijos gavimo/sklaidos būdus; F blokas skirtas tarybų narių portretams (pateikiama bendra informacija apie respondentus); G blokas skirtas išsiaiškinti pasitaikančius agresijos aspektus prieš tarybų narius ar jų artimuosius ir H blokas skirtas atskleisti tarybų narių ateities planus po kadencijos užbaigimo. Šiame straipsnyje pateikiama A bloko vieno klausimo analizė: „Jūsų nuomone, kiek turėtų būti svarbūs šie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslai?“ Analizuojamas klausimas leido atskleisti savivaldybių tarybų narių išskiriamus prioritetus tarp vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslų. Anketinės apklausos duomenys buvo apdorojami naudojantis „IBM SPSS Statistics“ ir „ArcGIS Pro“ (kartografinėi analizei) programinėmis įrangomis.



1 pav. Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių dalis, dalyvavusi vykdytoje apklausoje

Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

Kaip jau minėta, klausimyną užpildė 694 savivaldybių tarybų nariai (46,3 proc. visų atsakiusių) (informacija apie respondentus pateikiama 2 lentelėje). Iš jų daugiau nei ketvirtadalį sudarė moterys, o 45,0 proc. – vyrai. Didžiausią respondentų dalį sudarė vyresni nei 44 metų amžiaus (58,9 proc.) ir dauguma jų turi aukštąjį išsilavinimą (71,0 proc.). Apie penktadalį apklausoje dalyvavusių tarybų narių buvo pirmą kartą išrinkti, o kitiems tai jau ne pirmą kadenciją (2 lentelė).

³ Situacijos vertinimo klausime buvo pateikiama tam tikra situacija ir vertinamas respondento pasirinktas poelgis tam tikru aspektu. Buvo sukurti keturi skirtingi situacijų variantai, vienas iš variantų buvo parenkamas atsitiktiniu būdu.

2 lentelė. Sociodemografiniai respondentų rodikliai

SOCIODEMOGRAFINIAI RESPONDENTŲ RODIKLIAI	N=694	%	SOCIODEMOGRAFINIAI RESPONDENTŲ RODIKLIAI	N=694	%
Lytis:			Išsilavinimas:		
Vyras	312	45,0	Pradinis arba vidurinis	18	2,6
Moteris	178	25,6	Aukštasis (universitetinis ar kitas prilygstantis)	493	71,0
Nenurodė	22	3,2	Neatsakė	183	26,4
Neatsakė	182	26,2			
Darbo patirtis tarybos nario pareigose (metų iš viso):			Gimimo metai:		
Mažiau nei 1 m.	132	19,0	1997 m. ir vėlesni	7	1,0
1-5 m.	179	25,8	1996-1981 m.	84	12,1
6-10 m.	65	9,4	1980-1965 m.	212	30,5
11-20 m.	86	12,4	1964-1946 m.	194	28,0
21+ m.	45	6,5	1945 m. ir ankstesni	3	0,4
Neatsakė	187	26,9	Neatsakė	194	28,0

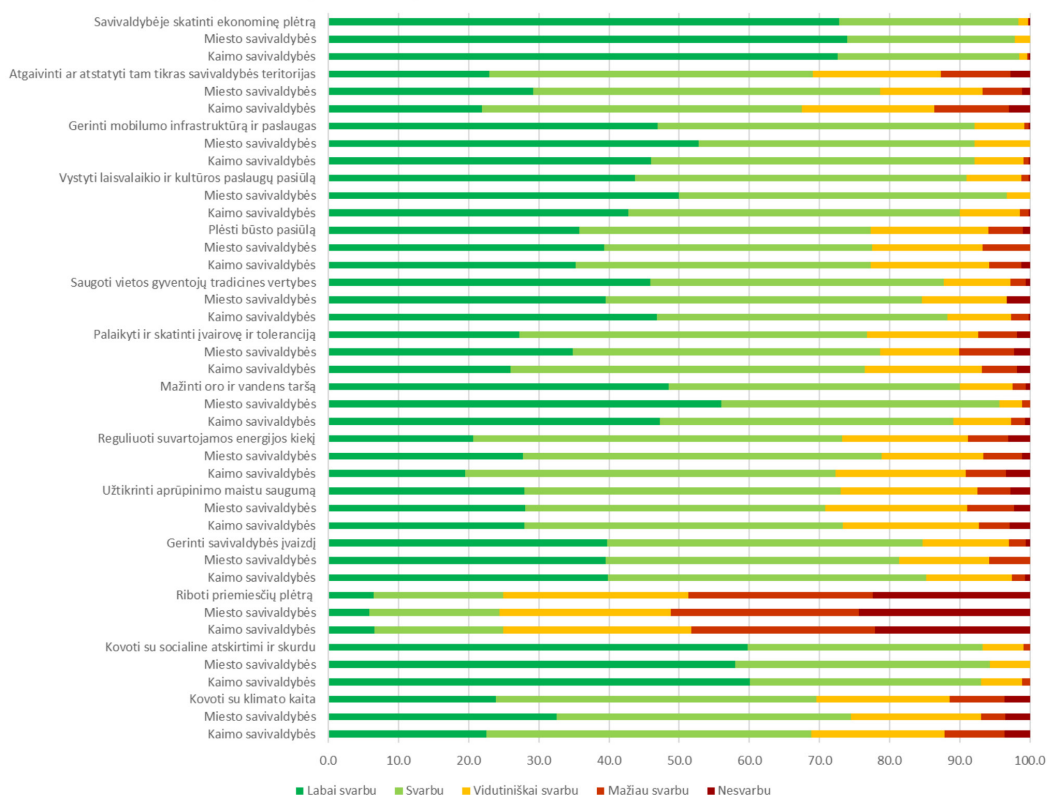
Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

Rezultatai

Tyrimo metu buvo bandoma išsiaiškinti, kokie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslai yra svarbūs savivaldybių tarybų nariams. Respondentams buvo pateiktas platus tikslų spektras, nuo socialinių iki gamtinių (aplinkos gerinimo) tikslų (viso keturiolika) (2 pav.). Iš pateiktos diagramos matoma, kad beveik visiems savivaldybių tarybų nariams pagrindinis tikslas yra „savivaldybės ekonominės plėtros skatinimas“ („labai svarbiu“ ir „svarbiu“ aspektu laiko 98,4 proc. respondentų), o „labai svarbiu“ jis daugiausia laikomas tarp miesto savivaldybių tarybos narių (73,9 proc.), tačiau aktualesnis – kaimo savivaldybių tarybos nariams („labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ paminėjo 98,4 proc., o miesto – 97,8 proc.). Taip pat prie didelę reikšmę turinčių tikslų galima priskirti „kovą su socialine atskirtimi ir skurdu“ („labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ pasirinko 93,2 proc.), tačiau daugiausia šis aspektas rūpi miesto savivaldybės tarybos nariams (94,3 proc.), tai paaiškinama tuo, kad miestuose matomi didžiausi socialiniai skirtumai tarp gyventojų, tačiau didesnė dalis gyventojų patiria atskirtį ir skurdą kaimuose (Skučienė 2019; Skučienė ir Gabnytė 2018; Zabarauskaitė ir Gruževskis 2015). Trečias pagal reikšmingumą tikslas – „gerinti mobilumo infrastruktūrą ir paslaugas“ (išskyrė 92,1 proc. respondentų pažymėjusių „labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ tiek kaimo, tiek miesto tipui priskiriamose savivaldybėse). Nors šis tikslas bendrai reikšmingas yra visų tipų savivaldybių tarybų nariams, tačiau miestų savivaldybių vietos politikams jis yra svarbesnis (miesto „labai svarbu“ pažymėjo 52,8 proc., o kaimo – 46,0 proc. respondentų). Taip pat prie reikšmingų infrastruktūrinių vystymo tikslų galima priskirti „laisvalaikio ir kultūros paslaugų vystymo“ tikslą, kurį paminėjo 90,9 proc. respondentų, tačiau ir šis daugiau rūpi miesto tarybų nariams, nors puikiai žinoma, kad su didžiausiomis paslaugų ir transporto infrastruktūros problemomis susiduria periferiniai šalies regionai (Baranauskienė 2021). Prie jau paminėtų aspektų, galima priskirti ir vieną iš aplinkos gerinimo – „oro ir vandens taršos mažinimą“. Kaip reikšmingą vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslą jį išskyrė 90,0 proc. atsakiusių į šį klausimą, tačiau aktualiausias yra miesto tipui priskiriamiems savivaldybių tarybų nariams (paminėjo 95,6 proc.).

Tyrimas atskleidė, kad mažiausiai aktualus vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslas yra „priemiesčių plėtos ribojimas“, kuris reikšmingas apie ketvirtadaliui savivaldybių tarybų narių. Šis aspektas vienodai mažai reikšmingas tiek miesto, tiek kaimo savivaldybių tarybų nariams, kas parodo, jog nematomos akivaizdžios sparčiai augančių priemiesčių teritorijų gyventojų problemos, ypač didžiausių miestų (Vilniaus, Kauno, Klaipėdos). Kiti mokslininkų tyrimai ir šio projekto kokybinio tyrimo duomenys (kurie čia neanalizuojami) atskleidė, kad priemiestinėse teritorijose trūksta išvystytos viešųjų paslaugų infrastruktūros, prasti keliai, o į šias teritorijas mažai investuojama, nes priemiesčių teritorijų gyventojai dirba mieste ir naudojami miestų paslaugų infrastruktūra, o priemiestinės teritorijos atlieka tik „miegamųjų rajonų“ funkcijas (Burneika ir kt. 2017b; Baranauskienė 2021). Taip pat mažiau reikšmingas tikslas buvo „atgaivinimas ir atstatymas tam tikrų savivaldybių teritorijų“ („labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ pažymėjo tik 69,0 proc. respondentų). Taigi, kaip matoma iš gautų tyrimo duomenų, tarybų nariams mažiau rūpi (aktualūs) tikslai, susiję su teritorijų plėtos aspektais. Vis tik šioje vietoje galima paminėti, kad analizuojant apklausos duomenis miesto ir kaimo pjūviais buvo pastebėtas didžiausias skirtumas tarp „labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ atsakymų. Teritorijų atgaivinimo ir atstatymo tikslas svarbesnis yra miestų savivaldybėms (miesto savivaldybėse šį tikslą paminėjo 11,2 proc. daugiau nei kaimo (atitinkamai 78,7 proc. ir 67,5 proc.). Prie mažesnės svarbos tikslų galima priskirti ir „kovą su klimato kaita“ (paminėjo 69,5 proc. respondentų). Visi kiti tikslai, pateikti savivaldybių tarybų nariams, buvo panašiai svarbūs visiems („labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ vertinami nuo 73,0 proc. iki 87,7 proc.) (2 pav.).

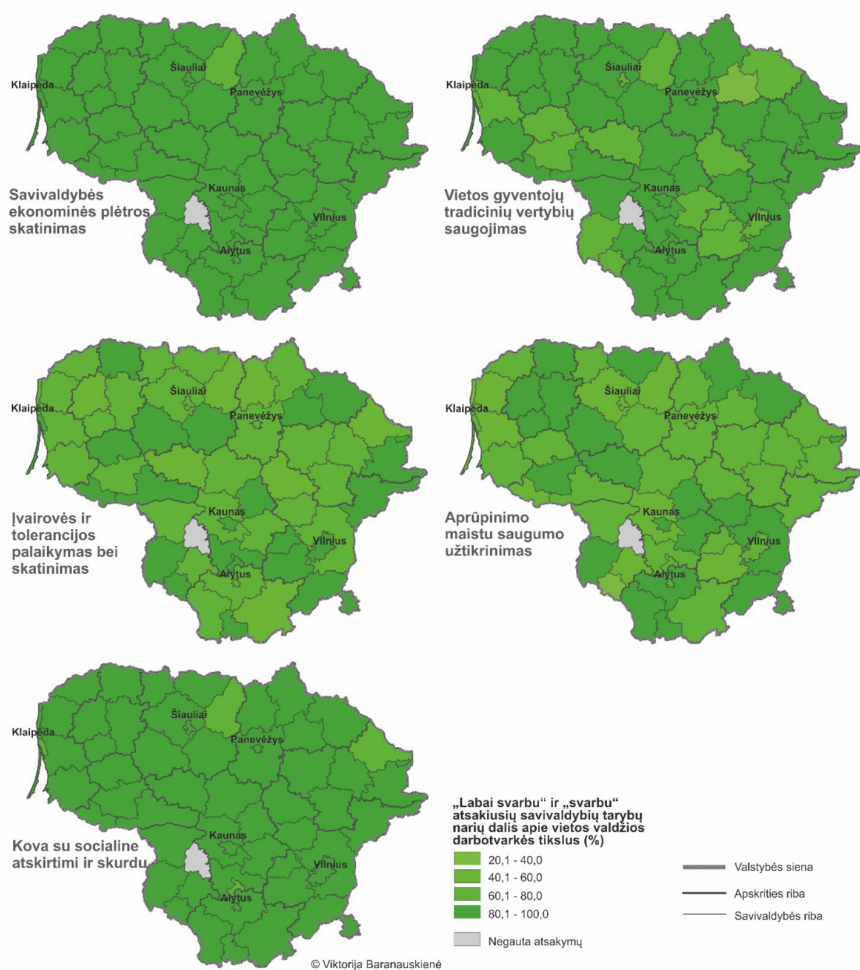
Jūsų nuomone, kiek turėtų būti svarbūs šie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslai?



2 pav. Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybos narių nuostatos apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus

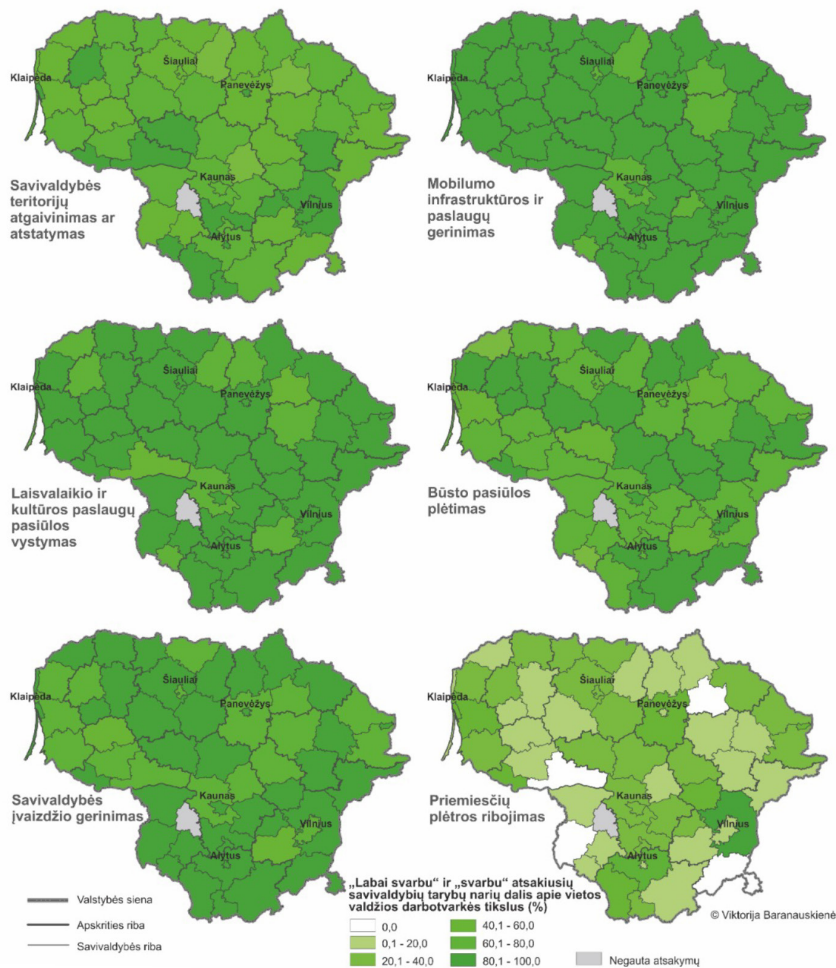
Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

Aptarus pagrindinius Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus šalies ir miesto bei kaimo savivaldybių klasteriais, toliau pateikiama šalies erdvinė (teritorinė) analizė savivaldybių lygmeniu, kuri atskleidžia visai kitokį šalies vaizdą. Vizualinei kartoschemų analizei, kartoschemos suskirstytos į tris grupes (3–5 pav.). 3-iaame paveiksle pateikiami tradiciniai vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslai, apimantys įvairius socioekonominis teritorijos aspektus, 4-ame – teritorijos plėtros (vystymo) ir 5-ame – aplinkos kokybės gerinimo tikslai. Kaip matoma iš pateiktų kartoschemų (3–5 pav.) vietos politikų nuostatos apie darbotvarkės tikslų svarbą yra pasiskirsčiusios netolygiai po šalies teritoriją. Vietos politikų nuostatos, susijusios su tradiciniais aspektais, gana panašiai pasiskirsčiusios po visą šalies teritoriją (3 pav.), kas rodo jų svarbumą ir aktualumą visoms šalies teritorijoms. Tik didesniu nuostatų skirtumu pasižymi „įvairovės ir tolerancijos palaikymo bei skatinimo“ ir „aprūpinimo maistu saugumo užtikrinimo“ tikslai, kurie mažiau aktualūs yra Vakarų, Vidurio ir Rytų Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų nariams.



3 pav. Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių nuostatos apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus, susijusius su tradiciniais (socioekonominiais) problemineis aspektais

Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

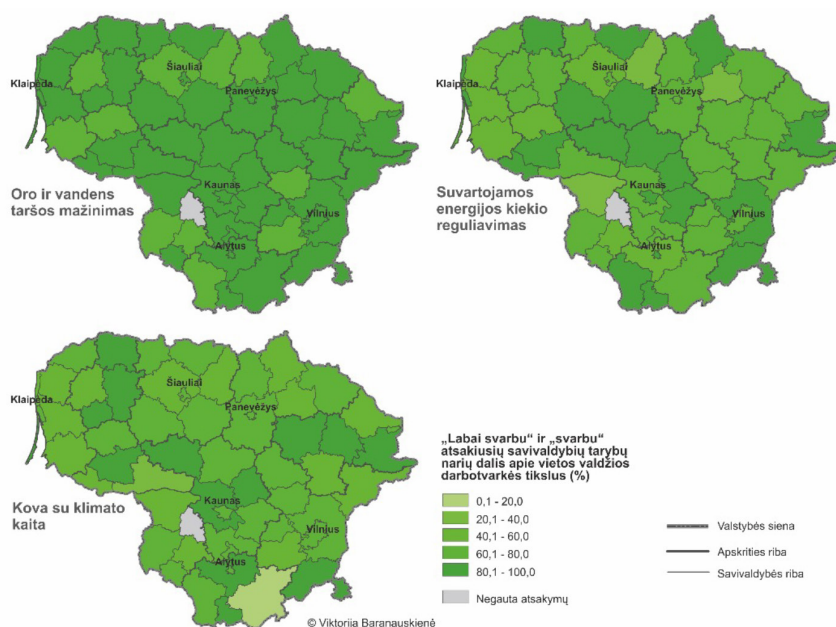


4 pav. Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių nuostatos apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus, susijusius su savivaldybės teritorijos plėtros aspektais
Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

Tuo tarpu tikslų, apimančių savivaldybių teritorijų plėtrą, erdvinis pasiskirstymas ženkliai skiriasi (4 pav.). Priemiesčių plėtros ribojimai visai neaktualūs Kupiškio, Šalčininkų, Vilkaviškio ir Jurbarko r. savivaldybių vietos politikams, esantiems šalies periferinėse teritorijose, nutolusiose nuo didesnių centrų (dalis savivaldybių patenka į pasienio regioną, kur nėra patrauklus urbanizuotų teritorijų vystymas). Aktualiausias šis aspektas didžiųjų miestų priemiestinėms teritorijoms, ypač Vilniaus r. sav. (83,3 proc. apklausoje dalyvavusių vietos politikų šį darbotvarkės tikslą pažymėjo kaip „labai svarbiu“ ir „svarbiu“), kur pastaruoju metu vyksta sparti Vilniaus priemiesčio plėtra. Būsto pasiūlos plėtimo klausimai svarbūs ne tik didžiųjų miestų savivaldybėms, kur jaučiamas didžiausias jų trūkumas, bet ir rekreaciniu potencialu pasižyminčioms teritorijoms, kur dažniausiai išsigijimas būstas tampa antraisiais namais (Kriaučiūnas ir kt. 2024). Kartografinė analizė atskleidė, kad „savivaldybės teritorijų atgaivinimas ir atstatymas“ mažiausiai

aktualus labiausiai nuo didžiųjų šalies centrų nutolusių teritorijų savivaldybių tarybų nariams, ypač tose savivaldybėse, kurios pasižymi gyventojų senėjimo procesais. Galima daryti prielaidą, kad vietos politikai puikiai supranta, kad į tokias teritorijas sudėtinga pritraukti jaunimą, verslo investuotojus, nes jos yra nepatrauklios ir vietos gyventojai patiria socioteritorinę atskirtį (Baranauskienė, Burneika ir Kriaučiūnas 2024; Baranauskienė 2021; Baranauskienė ir Burneika 2021). „Savivaldybės įvaizdžio gerinimas“ yra svarbus visos šalies vietos politikams, tačiau kiek mažiau svarbus patrauklesnėms savivaldybėms, kurios ir taip pasižymi puikiais socioekonominiais rodikliais, t. y. jos yra patrauklesnės, ar daugiau gyvena jaunesnio amžiaus gyventojų (ypač Vakarų Lietuvoje). Tuo tarpu tikslai, susiję su infrastruktūros plėtra, tiek laisvalaikio ir kultūros paslaugų vystymu, tiek mobilumo infrastruktūros (susisiekimo paslaugomis) ir jų paslaugų gerinimu, yra labai svarbūs visos šalies savivaldybių tarybų nariams, nes ši problema yra gana aktuali visos šalies gyventojams (tame tarpe ir savivaldybių tarybų nariams), ypač periferinėse šalies teritorijose (Baranauskienė 2021).

Vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslai, susiję su aplinkos kokybės gerinimu, pagal svarbą šalies savivaldybėse vertinami skirtingai (5 pav.). Svarbiausiu tikslu laikomas oro ir vandens taršos mažinimas, kuris svarbus visų savivaldybių tarybų nariams. Tuo tarpu suvartojamos energijos kiekio reguliavimas mažiau aktualus tų savivaldybių tarybų nariams, kur labiausiai naudojama atsinaujinančių energijos išteklių energija (vėjo, saulės elektrinių ir pan.), ypač Šiaurės rytų ir Vakarų Lietuvoje (Lietuvos respublikos energetikos... 2023). Darbotvarkės tikslai, susiję su klimato kaitos klausimais skirtingų teritorijų vietos politikams rūpi skirtingai, tačiau mažiausiai svarbus klausimas – Varėnos r. savivaldybėje (pažymėjo kaip „labai svarbu“ ir „svarbu“ 20,0 proc. respondentų).



5 pav. Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių nuostatos apie vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus, susijusius su aplinkos kokybės gerinimo aspektais

Šaltinis: „Lietuvos tarybos nariai“ apklausos duomenys 2024

Išvados

- Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad vis tik savivaldybių tarybų nariams yra sudėtinga išskirti prioritetinius vietos valdžios darbotvarkės tikslus, nes daugelis pateiktų aspektų buvo išskirti kaip prioritetiniai, tam greičiausiai įtakos turėjo pasikeitęs tarybos narių vaidmuo ir politinės darbotvarkės sudarymo principai. Taip pat įtakos galėjo turėti tai, kad didelė dalis respondentų (apie ketvirtadalį) pareigas eina pirmą kadenciją, todėl, tikėtina, turi mažiau politinio darbo patirties. Tai patvirtina ir politinių vaidmenų koncepcija, kuri aiškina, kad politinių atstovų veiklos kryptis priklauso ne tik nuo jų įgytos patirties, bet ir nuo institucinių pokyčių ir organizacinių struktūrų (Heinelt ir Egner 2022). Be to, tarybos narių vaidmens pokyčiai ir nauji politinės darbotvarkės sudarymo principai rodo, kad vietos valdžios politika tampa dinamiškesnė ir labiau decentralizuota, atspindėdama daugiapakopio valdymo aspektų įžvalgas (Lowndes ir Leach 2004b).
- Kaip rodo empiriniai duomenys, daugumai savivaldybių tarybų narių (ypač didžiųjų miestų) itin svarbi savivaldybių plėtra (vystymas), tokie kaip savivaldybės ekonominės veiklos bei paslaugų prieinamumo (pasiekiamumo) skatinimas. Tačiau erdvinė vietos valdžios (politikų) darbotvarkės tikslų svarbos analizė atskleidė, kad tikslai susiję su teritorijų plėtra ir aplinkos kokybės gerinimu nevienodai aktualūs visiems tarybos nariams. Tai ypač priklauso nuo savivaldybės geografinės padėties, socioekonominių ir demografinių teritorijos charakteristikų bei galimai įtakos turi vietos bendruomenės, verslo ir politinių partijų interesai bei teritorijos finansiniai ir biurokratiniai suvaržymai (Jones ir Baumgartner 2005; Denters ir Rose 2005).
- Erdvinė vietos politikų darbotvarkės tikslų svarbos analizė atskleidė, kad šalyje egzistuoja centro-periferijos (miesto-kaimo) dichotomija. Periferinių teritorijų savivaldybių tarybų nariams labiau rūpi tikslai, susiję su vietos problemomis, pvz., tokiomis kaip laisvalaikio, kultūros bei mobilumo infrastruktūros gerinimu, o centrų (miestų) žvelgia ir į platesnio masto problemas (pvz., kova su klimato kaita) bei daugiau dėmesio skiria teritorijų vystymui. Ši dichotomija atitinka miesto ir kaimo politikos skirtumų koncepciją, pagal kurią miestų valdžia labiau linkusi spręsti strateginius augimo klausimus, o kaimiškos savivaldybės – reaguoti į specifines vietos problemas (Eskelinen ir Snickars 1995). Tokiu būdu erdvinė darbotvarkės tikslų analizė leidžia nustatyti probleminius regionus, kurie tampa svarbia regioninės politikos formavimo dalimi.

Straipsnis parengtas įgyvendinant Lietuvos mokslo tarybos (LMTLT) Mokslininkų grupių programos projektą „Kaip keičiasi vietos politiko vaidmuo savivaldoje: lyderystė, institucijos ir bendruomenės“, su-tarties Nr. S-MIP-23-17.

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PRIORITIES ON THE AGENDA OF LITHUANIAN MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS: REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND URBAN-RURAL DICHOTOMY

Abstract. *This paper aims to ascertain the attitudes of Lithuanian municipal councillors with regard to the objectives of the local government agenda, i.e. which objectives are considered priorities by these individuals. The object of the research was selected to be members of municipal councils elected in the 5 March 2023 elections due to the alterations to the legal framework and the role of municipal councillors that occurred prior to these elections. To address the research question, the present study utilised the questionnaire survey from the international study “European councilor” (with a focus on the Lithuanian context). The quantitative data analysis revealed that the attitudes of local politicians towards the agenda’s priorities exhibited geographical variation across the national territory, with distinct traditional (socio-economic), territorial development and environmental quality improvement issues being prominent in different regions. The analysis of attitudes has also highlighted the centre-periphery (urban-rural) dichotomy, particularly in terms of territorial development.*

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Abstract. Agriculture has become one of the key sectors of Ukraine's economy. It plays a vital role in ensuring the security of the Ukrainian and global food markets. To have qualified and competent employees, an effective remuneration policy must be designed to provide decent wages. The purpose of the research is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of the remuneration policy from the point of view of the implementation of the concept of decent work and to analyze the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector of Ukraine to determine the directions for its improvement. The analysis of scientific literature, the ILO's target priorities of decent work, and the parameters of decent pay led to the creation of a system of 31 indicators with defined standards and methodological principles for determining each of them and a methodology for calculating a composite indicator. The analysis of wages in the agriculture sector in Ukraine was carried out according to the developed indicators, and a composite indicator was calculated. The study showed that the agriculture sector belongs to the industries with the composite indicator of decent wages below the average level. It has been proven that the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector of Ukraine is currently not favorable and negatively affects the human and innovative potential of the sector. To overcome the identified problems, recommendations were made regarding the development of a remuneration policy in the agriculture sector based on the principles of decent work, namely, ensuring a decent level of wages,

eliminating arrears in wages, developing a transparent remuneration policy, increasing the effectiveness of social dialogue in regulating wages, strengthening the responsibility of social partners, implementation of measures to create equal opportunities in practice.

Keywords: wages, tariff system, sectoral agreement, social dialogue, evaluation.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: darbo užmokestis, tarifų sistema, sektorių sutartis, socialinis dialogas, vertinimas.

Introduction

Agriculture is an essential driver of structural change (McArthur & McCord, 2017) and economic growth (Awokuse & Xie, 2015), contributing to the increase in the local gross output (Loizou et al., 2019). Agriculture plays a particularly significant role in ensuring food security (Filippini et al., 2019; Pawlak & Kołodziejczak, 2020), reducing poverty (Cervantes-Godoy, Dewbre, 2010; Ogebe, 2020), and increasing economic activity and employment opportunities in the rural areas (Anriquez & Stamoulis, 2007).

Agriculture has become one of the key sectors of Ukraine's economy. Agriculture has effectively integrated into the global food system. It is essential to ensure the security of the Ukrainian and global food markets. In the context of the military aggression of the Russian Federation, Ukraine's agricultural sector is an essential factor in ensuring national security, preserving Ukraine's national identity and sovereignty, and maintaining stability in major global food markets (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024).

According to the State Statistics Service, Ukraine's agriculture generated 8.6% of the country's GDP in 2022, and the share of food and agricultural products in exports from Ukraine was 53%. Over 30% of Ukraine's population lived in rural areas in 2022. 17.2% of the country's population was employed in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. The share of arable land in the country's territory is over 50%. These conditions make Ukraine unique regarding its agricultural potential (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024).

Ukraine is one of the key guarantors of food security on a global level, providing a share of sunflower oil production in world production in the 2022/23 marketing year at 27.8%, barley – 4%, wheat – 2.7%, corn – 2%, sugar – 0.8%. The share of sunflower oil exports in global exports is 40.3%, corn is 15%, barley is 8.4%, wheat is 7.9%, and sugar is 1.1%. Considering that, according to the United Nations, about 9% of the world's population is undernourished, this contribution of Ukraine is quite significant (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024).

Human resources are a key factor in shaping organizational effectiveness (Sundaray, 2011), innovation development (Vasilieva, 2016), and competitive advantages of enterprises (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). Employee engagement, job satisfaction of employees, and their satisfaction with financial remuneration impact the business performance of agricultural companies (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Jankelová et al., 2020).

Labor remuneration is one of the crucial and, at the same time, the most problematic issues in the Ukrainian agricultural sector. Low wages lead to a reduction in the number of employees and increased staff turnover in agricultural enterprises (Gladun, 2016; Lanchenko et al., 2020).

Therefore, providing agriculture enterprises with competent employees and increasing their involvement and motivation requires developing an effective and fair remuneration policy and paying employees decent and competitive wages.

Among the priorities of the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) for Ukraine are improved protection, the level, and equality in earnings. According to the DWCP, the main challenges of the wage policy are wage arrears, a low minimum wage, setting a wage rate for a first-class worker based on the living wage, and gender gaps in rewards. Another significant shortcoming of the remuneration policy is that the social partners are not involved in setting the minimum wage rate (ILO, 2020).

Another key priority of the DWCP for Ukraine is improved social dialogue with strengthened positions of social partners and improved collective bargaining at the sectoral level (ILO, 2020). In connection with this, collective wage regulation should be essential for ensuring a decent wage.

This article analyzes the literature and core documents of the ILO regarding the assessment of wages from the point of view of the decent work concept and current problems of wages in the agriculture sector. Based on the literature analysis, the target priorities of the decent work of the ILO, and parameters of a decent wage, the indicators of the assessment of the remuneration from the decent work concept point of view, and the method of calculating the composite indicator were given. Then, the agriculture sector's wages were analyzed according to the developed indicators, and a composite indicator was calculated. Recommendations on constructing a remuneration policy in agricultural sector based on the decent work concept were formulated based on the identified problems. Then, this research discusses issues, perspectives, and conclusions.

Literature review

The fourth industrial revolution has impacted the agricultural sector and farms (Cowie, Townsend & Salemin, 2020; Lezoche et al., 2020; Barrett & Rose, 2022). Globalization, integrated value chains, rapid technological and institutional innovations, and environmental constraints have profoundly changed the context of agriculture's role (Byerlee et al., 2009) and economic structure in rural areas (Rosner & Wesołowska, 2020). This influences requirements for human resources, labor conditions, and employee rewards (Kryukova, 2016; Min et al., 2019; Yurchuk & Ludvik, 2021).

Working in agriculture is hard (Girdziute et al., 2022), with the highest risk indexes (Cecchini, 2018), and can hardly be called prestigious. Young people tend to leave rural areas in search of alternative activities in urban areas (Girdziute et al., 2022). The decline in the agricultural labor force is becoming a common trend in Europe (Simões & Brito do Rio, 2020; Girdziute et al., 2022).

Ukrainian researchers emphasize the problem of population migration, especially young people from rural areas, high staff turnover, and lack of highly qualified specialists in agricultural enterprises (Tomilin, 2014; Perevuznyk & Holovachko, 2019; Lanchenko et al., 2020). Therefore, the issue of attracting young people to work in agriculture and retaining current employees remains relevant.

Increasing the provision of agricultural enterprises with human resources and efficient work is possible if employees are motivated by high incomes and social benefits (Gaida, 2019). Many studies show that higher wages attract more qualified and competent applicants (Dal Bó, 2013; Adeosun & Ohiani, 2020; Rozsa & Machova, 2020; Rajibul & Kijima, 2021). Material rewards are an effective tool for the engagement of employees in work (Zakrevska, 2018) and their performance (Wahyuni et al., 2023). In addition to high wages, other important factors include the reputation of an organization (Lawong, 2019) and brand name (Adeosun & Ohiani, 2020), work-life balance (Rozsa & Machova, 2020), as well as a sense of belonging and uniqueness (Huang et al., 2020).

In this regard, the remuneration policy in the agricultural sector should attract and retain skilled and competent employees and increase their motivation to improve performance and engage in innovative activities. At the same time, studies of Ukrainian scholars (Bondarevska, 2012; Kaflevska & Krasnyak, 2013; Perevuznyk & Holovachko, 2019; Dovgal, 2020; Vitvitskyi & Bezhenar, 2021; Dvornik, 2022) showed that there are many problems concerning remuneration for labor in the agriculture sector.

The main problems of a remuneration policy in Ukrainian agriculture are low wages (Bondarevska, 2012; Kaflevska & Krasnyak, 2013; Vitvitskyi & Bezhenar, 2021); inadequate wage differentiation and wage arrears (Perevuznyk & Holovachko, 2019); shadowing of incomes (Vitivitskyi & Bezhenar, 2021); the discrepancy between an increase in wages and an increase in efficiency as well as the inability of wages to fulfill their functions (Dvornik, 2022).

Insufficient labor remuneration harms the attitudes of employees toward work (Bondarevska, 2012), does not contribute to the retention of skilled and young specialists in rural areas, and does not create opportunities for an increase in labor productivity (Kaflevska & Krasnyak, 2013).

Considering that labor remuneration plays a crucial role in the human resources policy of agricultural enterprises, it is reasonable to analyze the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector in the context of

the decent work and priorities set by the International Labor Organization (ILO) related to rights, social justice, and social partnership (ILO, 2001; ILO, 2008; ILO, 2016).

The set of decent work indicators identified by the ILO includes average hourly earnings and labor share of GDP (ILO, 2016). Statistical indicators for measuring decent work suggested by Anker et al. include a share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (Anker et al., 2002). Among the decent work indicators suggested by Bescond et al. is a low hourly pay rate (Bescond et al., 2003). Statistical indicators of decent work, designed by Ghai, contain wage employment. Industrial countries use two indicators: the proportion of employees receiving an income less than half of the national median wage and a measure of the absolute poverty line a day per person. The absolute poverty line is a good indicator for developing countries (Ghai, 2003).

Bonnet et al. divided decent work indicators into input, process, and output categories. The input indicators include government commitment to income security: ratification by the country of the Social Security Convention No. 102; the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention No. 131 and Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention No. 26; and the presence of the national law on the minimum wage. The process indicators contain the share of social security expenses in GDP and the percentage of the population covered by social security programs. The outcome indicators include the national poverty rate, GDP per capita, the Gini coefficient, and the wage share in GDP (Bonnet et al., 2003).

Ostermeier et al. worked out a new set of decent work indicators containing the working poverty rate, the share of employees receiving less than an absolute labor income, and the share of employees receiving less than 60% of the median labor income (Ostermeier et al., 2015).

Oya developed decent work indicators for agriculture and rural areas in addition to the indicators recommended by the ILO. They contain the percentage of employees' wages in farm income (Oya, 2015).

The assessment of remuneration in terms of the decent work concept in the healthcare sector of Ukraine has a more comprehensive set of indicators (Tsymbaliuk & Shkoda, 2022).

Despite many studies of remuneration in the agricultural sector, the analysis showed that there is a lack of comprehensive research on remuneration in Ukraine from the perspectives of the concept of decent work that combines various aspects: decent level of wages, competitiveness and objective differentiation of wages, effective wage structure, and use of innovative approaches and social dialogue tools in the development of remuneration policy.

The purpose of the research is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of the remuneration policy from the point of view of the implementation of the concept of decent work and to analyze the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector of Ukraine to determine the directions for its improvement.

Methodology

Taking into account the ILO target priorities of decent work (guaranteeing rights, social justice, development of social partnership, etc.), we can determine the main parameters of decent labor remuneration: decent amount, objective differentiation, absence of arrears, transparency and awareness of employees, lack of discrimination and provision of equal opportunities, implementation of collective wage regulation, use of modern approaches and payment models.

Indicators have been defined to assess wages from the decent work concept perspective (Table 1), standards for each indicator have been determined, methodological principles for determining unit indices, and a composite indicator have been developed. The expert survey method was used to determine the indicators' reliability. Scientists and specialists in social and labor relations and wages were the experts in the survey.

Table 1. *Indicators for evaluating remuneration from the decent work perspective*

INDICATOR	STANDARD
Growth rates of real wages in the industry, %	≥ 110
The ratio of the average wages in the industry to the average wages in the country's economy	≥ 1
The share of employees who receive wages lower than the living wage	Absent
Gini coefficient in the industry	[0.20, 0.35]
Decile coefficient in the industry	[6, 8]
The share of the basic salary in the wage fund in the industry, %	>60
Wage arrears in the industry, UAH	Absent
The ratio of women's wages to men's wages, %	100
Availability of a sectoral agreement	Yes
Recognition of the agreement by the partners as a normative act	Yes
Timeliness of concluding a sectoral agreement	Yes
Designation by the sectoral agreement of the officials who are responsible for the implementation of its provisions	Yes
Regulation of labor remuneration norms under the law by a sectoral agreement, %	$\rightarrow \max (100)$
The ratio of the number of obligations of social partners regarding labor remuneration in the current sectoral agreement as compared to the number of commitments in the previous sectoral agreement, %	>101
The ratio of the number of provisions that contain specific obligations in the sectoral agreement on remuneration to the total number of obligations on remuneration, %	$\rightarrow \max (100)$
The number of provisions of the sectoral agreement that contain higher obligations of partners compared to the obligations provided for in previous agreements, %	100
Obligations regarding growth rates of wages under the sectoral agreement	$\rightarrow \max (\geq 110)$
Obligations to increase the share of wages in gross costs of products sold, performed works, and services under the sectoral agreement	Yes
Obligations regarding the share of the basic salary in the wage fund, under the sectoral agreement, %	$\rightarrow \max (>60)$
Ratio of the wage of the 1st category worker and the minimum amount provided by the law, under the sectoral agreement, %	$\rightarrow \max (\geq 110)$
Range of 6-grade tariff scale for remuneration of workers under the sectoral agreement	≥ 2
Range of the salary scheme for remuneration of managers and specialists under the sectoral agreement	≥ 4
The differences between the basic salaries of employees of two neighboring categories, under the sectoral agreement, %	≥ 10

INDICATOR	STANDARD
The use of analytical methods for evaluating positions and tasks during the development of the labor remuneration system under the sectoral agreement	Yes
Use of flexible payment models as per the industry agreement under the sectoral agreement	Yes
Compliance of the list, amounts, and procedure for payment of additional compensations and allowances with the law and the provisions of the general agreement under the sectoral agreement	Yes
Availability of provisions regarding the introduction of programs for personnel participation in profit and (or) in share capital in the sectoral agreement	Yes
Availability of provisions regarding the introduction of social packages in the sectoral agreement	Yes
Availability of provisions regarding the introduction of social security programs (number of social security programs) in the sectoral agreement	yes ($\rightarrow$ max)
Availability of provisions regarding compliance with gender equality in remuneration in the sectoral agreement	Yes
The level of coverage of employees by collective agreements in the studied industry, %	$\rightarrow$ max (100)

Source: Authors.

In the case of a study of remuneration from the decent work perspective in various industries, unit indices (I_i) are determined through the standardization procedure.

In the case of a wage study in a particular industry, unit indices are determined in the following order:

- if the actual value of a specific indicator does not meet the established standard, then the unit index (I_i) of this indicator is equal to 0;
- if the actual value of a specific indicator corresponds to, is within, or exceeds the established standard, then this indicator's unit index (I_i) is equal to 1.

The formula determines the composite indicator of decent remuneration (K)

$$K = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n I_i}{n}, \quad (1)$$

where n is the number of indicators.

The value of the composite indicator of decent remuneration can be in the range of 0 to 1.

An essential stage of developing a toolkit is defining the ranges of the composite indicator of decent remuneration levels. To determine the ranges of levels, a methodological approach was used, through which the entire set of values is divided into equal intervals:

$$\text{If } K \in \left\{ \begin{array}{l} [0,8; 1] \\ [0,6; 0,8) \\ [0,4; 0,6) \\ [0,2; 0,4) \\ [0; 0,2) \end{array} \right\}, K \in \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{high level} \\ \text{above-average level} \\ \text{average level} \\ \text{below-average level} \\ \text{low level} \end{array} \right\}. \quad (2)$$

Empirical data and analysis

One of the most important indicators that characterizes the remuneration policy from the decent work perspective is the level and dynamics of wages. The dynamics of nominal and real wages in the agriculture sector of Ukraine in 2010-2022 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Dynamics of nominal and real wages in the agriculture sector of Ukraine in 2010-2022*

	NOMINAL WAGES, UAH	CONSUMER PRICE INDEX UNTIL 2010, %	REAL WAGES, UAH	GROWTH RATES OF REAL WAGES, %
2010	1422	100	1422	-
2011	1786	104.6	1707.46	120.07
2012	2024	104.39	1938.88	113.55
2013	2269	104.91	2162.81	111.55
2014	2476	131.04	1889.5	87.36
2015	3140	187.77	1672.26	88.50
2016	3916	211.06	1855.4	110.95
2017	5761	239.97	2400.89	129.40
2018	7166	263.49	2719.8	113.28
2019	8738	274.29	3185.66	117.13
2020	9734	288.01	3379.74	106.09
2021	11733	316.81	3703.44	109.58
2022	12243	401.08	3052.51	82.42

Source: The State Statistics Service of Ukraine (ukrstat.gov.ua).

Nominal wages in the agriculture sector increased during the studied period. However, the growth rate of real wages did not have positive dynamics. Moreover, in 2014, 2015, and 2022, due to the military aggression of the Russian Federation, the occupation of part of the Ukrainian territory, the emigration and internal migration of Ukrainians from less safe regions, the closure of some enterprises, the reduction of production volumes, and as a result, the recession of the economy, and significant inflation real wages has significantly reduced. This negatively characterizes the remuneration policy from the perspective of decent work.

It is necessary to investigate not only the rate of wage growth but also *the ratio of the average wages and the dynamics of its growth in the studied industry with similar indicators in the country's economy in general and in other industries in particular*. The changes in average monthly wages in the agriculture sector and the economy of Ukraine in 2010-2022 are shown in Figure 1.

Traditionally, wages in the agriculture sector are among the lowest in the economy of Ukraine, lagging behind the average wages in this industry compared to the average wages in the economy of Ukraine. Moreover, the difference grew yearly, as shown by the data in Figure 1.

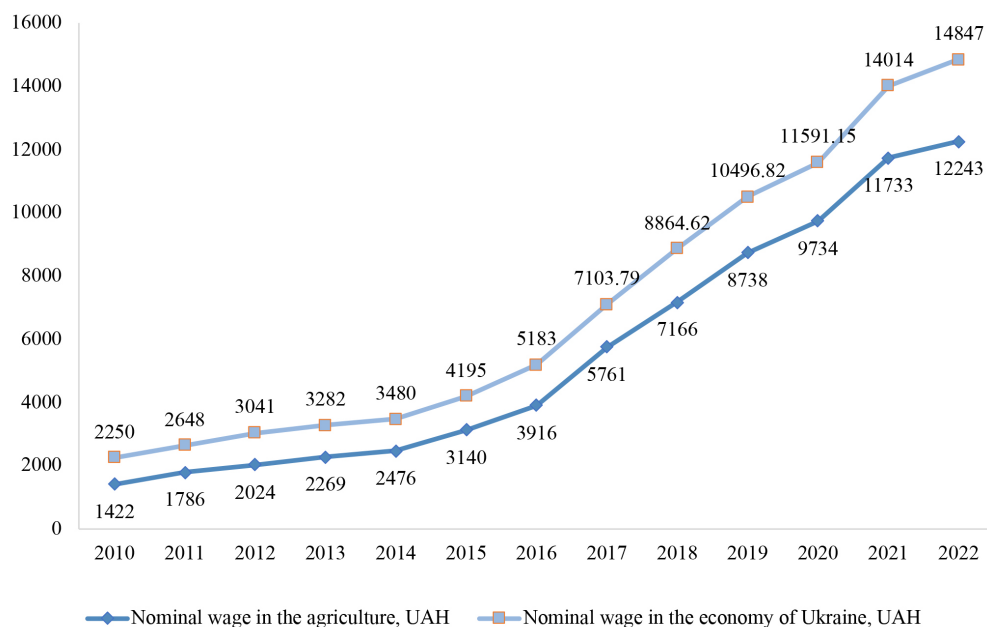


Figure 1. Dynamics of the average monthly wages in the agriculture sector and the economy of Ukraine in 2010–2022

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine (ukrstat.gov.ua).

Such a tendency negatively characterizes the remuneration policy for agriculture workers and does not contribute to attracting and retaining professionals, especially young ones. A low level of wages demotivates employees, leads to a loss of interest in their work, and encourages employees to look for jobs in other industries with a higher level of salaries. This negatively affects the availability of employees in agriculture enterprises and the creation of prerequisites for the development of the sector, which is essential for the recovery of the economy in the post-war period.

An important indicator is the *share of employees who receive wages lower than the living wage*. It is important to note that Ukraine's legally established living wage is not an adequate social standard. It does not consider all goods and services necessary for a person's physical, professional, and cultural development. Therefore, it is advisable to use the indicators of the living wage calculated by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. The actual living wage for non-disabled people as of January 2022, according to the Ministry's calculations, was UAH 6,032.

The State Statistics Service of Ukraine does not publish data on the share of employees who receive wages lower than the living wage, so it is impossible to establish the percentage of such employees. However, in January 2022, the minimum wage was at UAH 6,500. If taxes and fees are deducted, the net amount received by the employee is UAH 5,232.5, which is less than the actual living wage. Since some of the employees received wages at the minimum wage level, it can be argued that some of the employees in the agriculture sector of Ukraine received wages lower than the actual living wage.

Indicators of *wage differentiation* occupy a special place in the system of indicators for assessing the remuneration policy from the decent work perspective. It is appropriate to use two indicators to determine the differentiation of wages: *the Gini coefficient* and *the decile coefficient*. Since there is no data on those industry indicators on the website of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, we cannot consider these indicators when analyzing the agriculture sector's remuneration policy from a decent work perspective.

According to the available statistical data, in December 2021, more than 50% of employees in the agriculture sector received a salary of less than UAH 9,000 (Figure 2). This indicates a very low level of workers' income in this sector of the economy. At the same time, the mode and median value of the average wage are significantly lower than the arithmetic mean (see Figure 1). The distribution of full-time employees according to the amount of wages paid in the agriculture sector (see Figure 2) also indicates a low differentiation of incomes of employees in the industry.

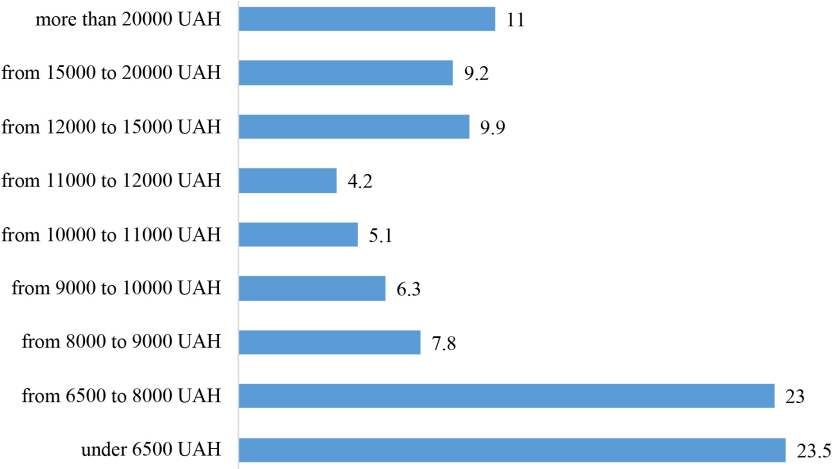


Figure 2. Distribution of full-time employees according to the amounts of wages paid to them in the agriculture sector in December 2021, %

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine (ukrstat.gov.ua).

The share of the basic salary in the wage fund is also an important indicator. In 2021, the share of the basic salary in the wage fund in the agriculture sector was 76.6%, which is positive and meets the established standard. Since the basic salary is a permanent and stable part of an employee's remuneration, in contrast to extra payments, bonuses, and one-time rewards, a high proportion of the basic salary creates a sense of safety, stability, and security, which constitute basic human needs. Therefore, the indicator of the share of the basic salary in the wage fund positively characterizes the remuneration policy from the perspective of decent work.

Wage arrears are one of the leading indicators that characterize the remuneration policy from a decent work perspective. The trend of this indicator in the agriculture sector of Ukraine in 2010-2022 is shown in Figure 3.

Despite the decrease in the wage arrears in the studied period, their presence negatively characterizes the remuneration policy from the decent work perspective in the agriculture sector, as it does not allow employees to meet their basic needs.

An essential part of the concept of decent work is eliminating any forms of discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Ensuring gender equality and the absence of discrimination is one of the priorities of the ILO Decent Work Country Program for Ukraine. In this connection, the ratio of women's wages to men's is an essential indicator for analyzing remuneration policy. According to data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the ratio of women's wages to men's in the agriculture sector in 2021 was 77.7%, much lower than the average level for the economy of Ukraine (81.6%). Gender wage gap negatively characterizes the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector in terms of creating equal conditions and opportunities and non-discrimination, which does not meet the provisions of the decent work concept.

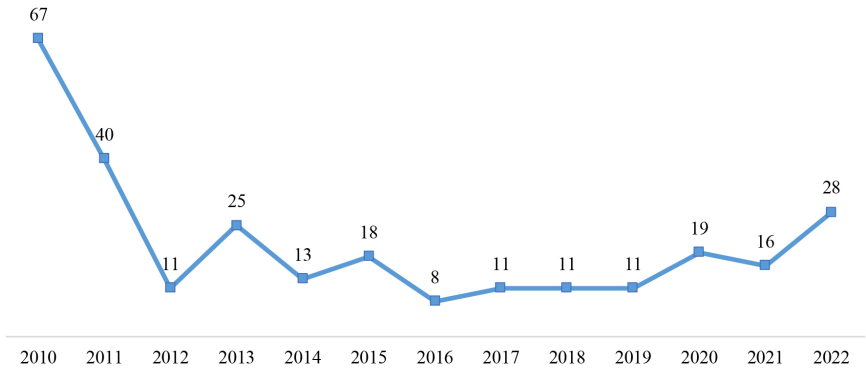


Figure 3. Dynamics of wage arrears in the agriculture sector of Ukraine in 2010-2022, as of January the 1st of the corresponding year, UAH million

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine (ukrstat.gov.ua).

Representation and social dialogue are important areas that define the concept of decent work. Thus, an essential factor in implementing decent work is equal representation of the main parties of labor relations and the development of social partnerships in regulating labor remuneration.

Based on this, *the presence of the Sectoral Agreement between the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine and the Trade Union of Employees of the Agriculture Sector of Ukraine for 2023-2025* (hereinafter referred to as the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025) positively characterizes the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector.

An effective practice in the regulation of labor relations is *the recognition of the agreement by the partners as a normative act*, which emphasizes the obligations and responsibilities of social partners to fulfill the norms of the sectoral agreement. Unfortunately, the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 does not contain such a provision. This does not contribute to strengthening the role of collective bargaining in developing the remuneration policy based on the decent work concept.

The current sectoral agreement in the agriculture sector is concluded for 2023-2025, which meets the established standard for the indicator “*timeliness of concluding a sectoral agreement*”. It is a positive characteristic of the remuneration policy.

The previous sectoral agreement in the agriculture sector was concluded for 2014-2016, and the term was extended until the new agreement’s adoption. A prolonged absence of a new agreement that would meet the current realities in the economy and social and labor sphere can negatively affect employee remuneration, material well-being, and social security. This negatively characterizes the remuneration policy from the perspective of the decent work concept.

The designation by the sectoral agreement of the officials responsible for implementing its provisions is also an important indicator that characterizes the effectiveness of the sectoral agreement in regulating labor relations. The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 contains the section “Control of the implementation of the agreement”. This section states that the representatives of the parties are responsible for the violation or non-fulfillment of the agreement provisions following Ukraine’s legislation. The agreement defines the officials who are the parties’ representatives and who, accordingly, are responsible for implementing the agreement provisions.

An important indicator for assessing remuneration from a decent work perspective is *the regulation of labor remuneration norms under the law by a sectoral agreement*. Table 3 contains the results of evaluating the level of regulation of labor remuneration norms under the law by the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025.

Table 3. *Level of regulation of labor remuneration norms under the law by the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025*

Remuneration norms that must be regulated by a sectoral agreement under the Law of Ukraine “On Collective Bargaining and Agreements” (Article 8)	Norms of the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025	Assessment of the level of the regulation (yes, no)
1. Minimum wage guarantees by the qualification based on a unified wage scale	—	No
2. Minimum amounts of additional payments and increases, considering the specifics, work conditions of professional groups and categories of employees	3.16, 3.17, 3.19, 3.30, Appendix 6	Yes
3. Minimum social guarantees, compensations, benefits	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.21, 3.32	Yes
4. Utilities and amenities, medical, cultural services	6.7, 6.11, 6.14, 6.15	Yes
5. Rehabilitation and recreation	6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.8, 6.12, 6.13, 6.14, 6.20, 6.21	Yes
6. Conditions for the growth of wage funds	3.24, 3.25, 3.31, 3.47	Yes
7. Inter-qualification (inter-job) ratios in labor remuneration	3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Yes
8. Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men	3.43, 6.16, 6.17	Yes

Source: Authors.

The analysis proved that almost all the principles and norms of implementing the remuneration policy are regulated by the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025. The current sectoral agreement lacks commitments to minimum wage guarantees by the qualification based on a unified wage scale. At the same time, the current sectoral agreement stipulates the obligation to establish differentiation in remuneration based on qualifications or positions. Because the agreement does not put all categories, professions, and positions on the *unified wage scale*, we can assume that according to this indicator, the remuneration policy meets the established standard.

A comparison of the number of obligations of social partners regarding labor remuneration in the current sectoral agreement and the number of commitments in the previous sectoral agreement is shown in Table 4.

According to the data in Table 4, the number of obligations of social partners is increasing, which is a positive characteristic. The number of remuneration and social security obligations in the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 increased mainly due to employers' recommendations and obligations regarding resolving specific issues by collective agreements in enterprises. This proves the decentralization trend in regulating social and labor relations: the reduction of the role of sectoral agreements and the strengthening of collective agreements at the organizational level.

The number of obligations of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine and trade unions remains small, with a relatively high share of joint obligations of partners. This does not contribute to strengthening the responsibility of the specified partners in regulating social and labor relations regarding remuneration.

The provisions of the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 on remuneration contain specific obligations of social partners, which positively characterize the agreement on wages

regulation and remuneration policy in general. However, part of the obligations duplicate legislative norms and norms of the general agreement concluded at the national level, and there is no expansion of the list or an increase in the amount of payments and rewards. In addition, the agreement lacks specific tools for implementing certain provisions, which may result in the non-fulfillment of the obligations by the partners and make it impossible to monitor the implementation of them.

Table 4. *A comparison of the number of obligations of social partners regarding labor remuneration in the current sectoral agreement and the number of commitments in the previous*

Agreements/obligations	The number of joint obligations / the parties have agreed	The number of recommendations/ obligations of employers	Obligations of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine	The number of obligations of trade unions	The total number of obligations of the partners
Sectoral agreement for 2023-2025					
obligations regarding remuneration for labor	28	16	3	7	54
social security obligations	12	27	1	3	43
<i>all obligations</i>	40	43	4	10	97
Sectoral agreement for 2014-2016					
obligations regarding remuneration for labor	23	10	4	7	44
social security obligations	11	17	0	3	31
<i>all obligations</i>	34	27	4	10	75
Sectoral agreement for 2011-2013					
obligations regarding remuneration for labor	37	0	0	7	44
social security obligations	4	9	0	0	13
<i>all obligations</i>	41	9	0	7	57

Source: Authors.

The number of provisions of the sectoral agreement that contain higher obligations of partners compared to the obligations provided for in previous agreements is the next important indicator for assessing the remuneration policy. The analysis of the content of the sectoral agreements proved that certain norms of the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 contain obligations that improve conditions of payment for labor as compared to the obligations provided for by the Sectoral Agreements for 2011-2013 and 2011-2013. It is a positive fact that the Sectoral Agreement for 2023-2025 contains regulations on wages that were not provided for in previous agreements. At the same time, part of the norms of the Sectoral Agreement for 2023-2025 duplicates the norms of previous agreements and, as we have already noted, legislative norms. Some obligations provided for in the previous agreements were not included in the Sectoral Agreement for 2023-2025 (for example, those that concern the rate of growth of the wage fund, the minimum share of the basic salary, the payment of retirement benefits), which does not contribute to

the improvement of material well-being of employees of the agriculture sector. Based on this, it cannot be assumed that the remuneration policy of the agricultural sector meets the established standard.

The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 does not specify details on *the growth rates of wages*. The agreement only states that the growth rate of average wages should be higher than the predicted consumer price index for the corresponding year. This norm applies only to enterprises in the industry where wages are less than 1.5 times the minimum wage. Because of the low level of wages in the agricultural sector, this provision does not contribute to ensuring decent remuneration for labor.

The sectoral agreement also does not specify *the obligation to increase the share of wages in the gross costs of products sold, performed works, or services*. It is only indicated that collective agreements at the organizational level should regulate these issues. The obligations of the social partners regarding *the share of the basic salary in the wage fund* remained unresolved.

The next block of indicators assesses *the tariff conditions of labor remuneration*. The traditional approach to developing tariff conditions of labor remuneration is mainly used in agriculture enterprises. It involves the development of a tariff scale for workers' wages and salary schemes for managers and specialists.

The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 provides the wage of the 1st category worker not less than 115% of the minimum wage. This significantly exceeds the minimum state guarantees and creates the basis for ensuring a decent wage.

As for the differentiation of the basic salary, the ranges of tariff scales and salary schemes are minimal and do not meet the established standards. The differences between the basic salaries of employees of two neighboring categories do not exceed 10%, which is the minimum necessary difference to consider the work complexity, the level of responsibility, and qualification requirements. Therefore, the tariff conditions of labor remuneration specified by the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 do not provide objective differentiation of the basic salary and, therefore, do not create conditions for fair and decent remuneration.

The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 allows for the introduction of innovative approaches to the design of basic salaries (based on a system of grades and using unified wage scale). However, the agreement does not stipulate specific obligations or recommendations for introducing such approaches. There are also no recommendations for introducing flexible payment models that allow for individualization of the basic salary and better consideration of employees' competencies, performance, and achievements.

An essential indicator of assessing remuneration from the decent work perspective is compliance with *the list, amounts, and procedure for payment of additional compensations and allowances with the law and the provisions of the general agreement*.

Additional compensations and allowances (by type, amount, and payment procedure) provided for by the Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 correspond to the legislative norms and the norms of the general agreement. Moreover, the agreement contains a broader list of additional compensations and allowances. Some of them are at a higher rate than those stipulated by the legislation. This positively characterizes the remuneration policy and encourages employees to improve their professional competencies, perform additional functions, etc.

The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 does not provide for obligations regarding introducing *programs for personnel participation in profit and (or) share capital, social packages, and social security programs*. Although the agreement provides for some social guarantees, their list is limited and does not correspond to leading companies' advanced practices of personnel reward schemes. This does not create additional competitive advantages for agriculture enterprises in the labor market, does not contribute to increasing the attractiveness of work, and does not create a sense of security and care from the employer for employees, which negatively characterizes the remuneration policy.

The presence of provisions regarding gender equality in remuneration in the sectoral agreement is a significant indicator for assessing remuneration from a decent work perspective. The Sectoral Agreement in the agriculture sector for 2023-2025 contains norms for ensuring gender equality in labor remuneration, which positively characterizes the remuneration policy from a decent work perspective. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, the ratio of women's wages to men's in agriculture in 2021 was 77.7%, which negatively characterizes the remuneration policy in terms of creating equal conditions and opportunities and non-discrimination, which does not meet the provisions of decent work concept.

The next indicator is *the level of coverage of employees by collective agreements in the studied industry*. According to data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, as of the end of 2021, only 58.4% of employees in the agriculture sector were covered by collective agreements. This indicator is significantly lower than the average in the economy of Ukraine (70.2%). On the one hand, this indicates the lack of protection of the interests of employees in labor relations, particularly those related to decent wages. On the other hand, this shows the low trust of employees in the institution of social partnerships and collective agreement regulation, as well as trade unions as defenders of their interests.

Generalized information concerning unit indices of decent remuneration in the agriculture sector is given in Table 5.

The composite indicator of decent remuneration in the agriculture sector is equal to

$$K = \frac{10}{29} = 0.34.$$

Table 5. Generalized information concerning unit indices of decent remuneration in the agriculture sector

Indicator	Standard	Actual value	Unit index, Ii
1	≥ 110	82.42	0
2	≥ 1	0.82	0
3	There is none	is	0
4	[0.20, 0.35]	n/a	-
5	[6, 8]	n/a	-
6	>60	76.6	1
7	There is none	28 million	0
8	100	77 _ 7	0
9	Yes	Yes	1
10	Yes	No	0
11	Yes	Yes	1
12	Yes	Yes	1
13	→ max (100)	100	1
14	>101	129.3	1
15	→ max (100)	100	1
16	100	<100	0
17	→ max (≥110)	absent	0
18	Yes	absent	0
18	→ max (>60)	absent	0
20	→ max (≥110)	115	1
21	≥2	1. 8	0
22	≥4	2. 6	0
23	≥10	<10	0
24	Yes	No	0
25	Yes	No	0
26	Yes	Yes	1
27	Yes	absent	0
28	Yes	absent	0
29	yes (→ max)	absent	0
30	Yes	Yes	1
31	→ max (100)	58.4	0

Source: Authors.

The agriculture sector belongs to the industries with a below-average level of decent remuneration per the defined ranges. Based on the analysis, it is necessary to note that the remuneration policy in the agricultural sector of Ukraine is currently not favorable and negatively impacts the human and innovation potential of the industry.

Discussion and recommendations

The conducted research made it possible to identify the most critical problems in the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector that potentially inhibit the development of the industry, negatively affect the development of rural areas, and cause the outflow of people, especially young ones. Since numerous studies indicate that agriculture plays a particularly significant role in ensuring food security (Filippini et al., 2019; Pawlak & Kołodziejczak, 2020), then these problems can potentially lead to a food crisis both in Ukraine and in the world.

The study confirmed the presence of some problems in the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector, as diagnosed by previous studies of Ukrainian scientists. This applies to low wages (Bondarevska, 2012; Kaflevska & Krasnyak, 2013; Vitvitskyi & Bezhenar, 2021), inadequate wage differentiation, and wage arrears (Perevuznyk & Holovachko, 2019).

At the same time, this study revealed other problems related not only to the consequences of an ineffective remuneration policy but also to the tools of its development: the ineffectiveness of social guarantees of the state, ineffective social dialogue and contractual regulation of wages, the lack of innovative remuneration models and approaches to the development of wages components, social benefits, and rewards.

In this regard, an essential basis for developing a remuneration policy based on the principles of decent work is to increase social standards in remuneration (minimum and living wages) and to adjust the minimum basic salary (tariff rate of the 1st category) to the minimum wage set based on a substantiated living wage. This requires legislative changes in the methodology for determining the living wage and appropriate amendments to the labor legislation of Ukraine. Collective bargaining of the minimum wage at the sectoral level should also become an effective tool for ensuring decent wages. Some studies showed that the government's legislated minimum wage is lower than the wage floor set within collective agreements (Gautie & Schmitt, 2010; Boeri, 2012).

To increase the attractiveness of work in the agriculture sector and attract competent, qualified specialists, it is essential to form a remuneration policy based on the principles of decent work. For this purpose, it is recommended to take the following measures:

- guaranteeing a decent level of remuneration for labor, primarily through the increase of minimum wage;
- the elimination of arrears in wages;
- forming a transparent remuneration policy, increasing employee awareness;
- the introduction of modern approaches and models of remuneration, in particular the grade systems, flexible models of remuneration, the bonus system based on key performance indicators, the formation of a social package based on the cafeteria approach;
- ensuring the objective differentiation of the basic salary that takes into account the work complexity and the qualifications of employees during the development of the tariff conditions of labor remuneration, and the introduction of tools for strengthening the individualization of wages taking into account the individual performance of employees, their contribution to collective results, and personal achievements, etc.;
- increasing the effectiveness of social dialogue in regulating remuneration, expanding collective agreements with new content, strengthening the responsibility of social partners for the fulfillment of their obligations, spreading the norms of the sectoral agreement to all enterprises of the industry;
- the introduction of measures to create equal opportunities in practice (not only their declaration), in particular, an increase of minimum guarantees in wages, equal opportunities for women and men for professional and career growth, etc.

Further research should be directed at studying the degree of satisfaction of agricultural employees with various aspects of the remuneration policy, analyzing the factors that significantly influence the attraction of employees, their retention at enterprises, and motivation. It is essential to study the employees' perception of remuneration as fair and sufficient for the reproduction of the labor force and the degree of consideration of the efforts expended and the results achieved. The results obtained should be compared with the results of the assessment of the remuneration policy from a decent work perspective.

An important direction in the expansion of research on labor remuneration in the agriculture sector is the study of trends and changes occurring in the economy of Ukraine, especially in the post-war period. In the context of ensuring decent wages, it is essential to study the impact of the structure of agricultural production, the ownership of production farms, and state subsidies to the agricultural sector on labor remuneration. It is also essential to study changes in the remuneration policy under the digitalization of production and management processes, the development of innovative technologies, and the implementation of the principles of sustainable development of rural areas, etc.

Conclusion

As the study shows, agriculture is an essential driver of structural change and economic growth, contributing to increased local GDP, poverty reduction, and economic activity and employment opportunities in rural areas. It has become one of the key sectors of Ukraine's economy. Agriculture has effectively integrated into the global food system. It plays a vital role in ensuring the security of the Ukrainian and global food markets.

Following the need for the development of the agriculture sector and the growth of its role in the post-war recovery of the economy of Ukraine, it is essential to provide this sector with qualified and competent employees, increase their motivation for innovative development, and improve their performance. This, in turn, requires an effective human resource management policy aimed at attracting and retaining the employees necessary for the development of the industry. As shown by numerous research results, a key role in this is played by the remuneration policy that should ensure a decent level of wages, competitiveness, objective differentiation of wages, effective wage structure, and use of innovative approaches and social dialogue tools in developing remuneration policy.

Despite many studies of remuneration in the agricultural sector, the analysis showed a lack of comprehensive research on remuneration based on decent work in Ukraine. Based on the literature analysis, the target priorities of the decent work of the ILO, and parameters of a decent wage, a system of 31 indicators with defined standards and methodological principles for determining each of them, and a methodology for calculating a composite indicator were developed.

The analysis revealed the most critical problems in the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector that potentially inhibit the development of the industry, negatively affect the development of rural areas, and cause the outflow of people, especially young ones. These problems include low wages, especially compared to wages in other sectors of the economy, low differentiation of employees' incomes, wage arrears, gender wage gaps, lack of modern approaches and payment models, and ineffective collective bargaining.

Following the analysis of the remuneration policy in the agriculture sector of Ukraine as per developed indicators, it was founded that the remuneration policy is currently not favorable, does not create competitive advantages when compared to other types of economic activity, and does not make it possible to attract promising, and especially, young professionals. This situation also leads to the outflow of employees to enterprises of other types of economic activity with higher incomes and competitive social packages. This does not contribute to the development of the industry, which remains one of the key ones in Ukraine's economy.

To increase the attractiveness of work in the agriculture sector and attract competent, qualified professionals, primarily young ones, it is essential to develop a remuneration policy on the principles of decent

work. For this purpose, it is recommended to take such measures as ensuring a decent level of wages, the elimination of arrears in wages, developing a transparent remuneration policy, providing the objective differentiation of salaries, increasing the effectiveness of social dialogue in regulating wages, strengthening the responsibility of social partners, implementation of measures to create equal opportunities in practice.

Managers of enterprises in the agriculture sector, policymakers, and social partners (employers and trade unions) should pay attention to the indicators of evaluation of remuneration from the decent work perspective that received zero values per the developed methodology. It is invaluable to study the best experience of creating a remuneration policy from a decent work perspective in the agriculture sector and other industries of the economy in Ukraine and abroad.

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DARBO UŽMOKESTIS UKRAINOS ŽEMĖS ŪKIO SEKTORIJE DERAMO DARBO POŽIŪRIU

Anotacija. Žemės ūkis tapo vienu iš pagrindinių Ukrainos ekonomikos sektorių. Jis atlieka gyvybiškai svarbų vaidmenį užtikrinant Ukrainos ir pasaulio maisto rinkų saugumą. Norint turėti kvalifikuotus ir kompetentingus darbuotojus, turi būti sukurta veiksminga atlyginimų politika, užtikrinanti tinkamą darbo apmokėjimą. Tyrimo tikslas – pagrįsti darbo užmokesčio politikos tyrimo teorinius ir metodinius pagrindus deramo darbo koncepcijos įgyvendinimo požiūriu bei išanalizuoti Ukrainos žemės ūkio sektoriaus atlyginimų politiką, siekiant nustatyti kryptis jo tobulėjimui. Išanalizavus mokslinę literatūrą, TDO tikslinius deramo darbo prioritetus ir atitinkamo darbo užmokesčio parametrus, buvo sukurta 31 rodiklio sistema su apibrėžtais standartais ir kiekvieno iš jų nustatymo metodikos principais bei sudėtinio rodiklio apskaičiavimo metodika. Pagal sukurtus rodiklius buvo atlikta Ukrainos darbo užmokesčio žemės ūkio sektoriuje analizė, apskaičiuotas sudėtinis rodiklis. Tyrimas parodė, kad žemės ūkio sektorius priklauso pramonės šakoms, kurių sudėtinis deramo darbo užmokesčio rodiklis yra mažesnis už vidutinį lygį. Įrodyta, kad Ukrainos žemės ūkio sektoriaus atlyginimų politika šiuo metu nėra palanki ir neigiamai veikia sektoriaus žmogiškąjį ir inovacinį potencialą. Nustatytiems nesklaidumams išgyvendinti pateikiamos rekomendacijos žemės ūkio sektoriaus darbo atlygio politikai, pagrįstos deramo darbo principų plėtojimu, būtent, užtikrinant tinkamą darbo užmokesčio lygį, stiprinant socialinio dialogo efektyvumą atlygio klausimu, įtvirtinant socialinių partnerių atsakomybę, įgyvendinant lygių galimybių kūrimo priemones.

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NEDIRBANČIO, NESIMOKANČIO IR MOKYMUOSE NEDALYVAUJANČIO JAUNIMO GALIMYBIŲ DARBO RINKOJE SUBJEKTYVUS VERTINIMAS

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Santrauka. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas nedirbančio, nesimokančio ir mokymuose nedalyvaujančio jaunimo (18-35 metų amžiaus) subjektyvus galimybių darbo rinkoje vertinimas. Nuosekliai aptariami naujausi teoriniai diskursai ir empiriniai tyrimai NEET jaunimo tematika bei pristatomi 2023 m. Lietuvoje atlikto jaunimo gyvenimiškų galimybių sociologinio tyrimo (anketinės apklausos) rezultatai. Anketinės apklausos metu išryškėjo reikalingų savybių ir galimybių gauti tinkamą darbą subjektyvus vertinimas (N=161). Įsidarbinamumo galimybes riboja neatitikimas tarp individualių asmens savybių ir asmeninių aplinkybių (įsipareigojimai šeimai, sveikatos būklė). Beveik du trečdaliai apklaustųjų pritaria, kad profesinės kompetencijos kaip aukšta profesinė kvalifikacija yra svarbūs norint susirasti tinkamą darbą. Mokslinis tyrimas atliktas įgyvendinant Lietuvos mokslo tarybos finansuojamą mokslininkų grupių projektą „Lietuvos jaunimo gyvenimiškų galimybių diferenciacijos socioekonominiai veiksniai Lietuvoje“ (reg. Nr. S-MIP-22-42, sutarties data 2022-03-18).

Reikšminiai žodžiai: nedirbantis, nesimokantis ir mokymuose nedalyvaujantis jaunimas; įsidarbinamumas; užimtumo galimybės; subjektyvus vertinimas

Keywords: young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs); employability; employment opportunities; subjective assessment

Įvadas

Socialinės ir ekonominės krizės, COVID 19 sukelta pandemija neigiamai paveikė jaunimo situaciją darbo rinkoje (ILO, 2022; Eurofound, 2021; EBPO, 2021). COVID 19 pandemija turėjo neigiamą poveikį ne tik jaunimo užimtumui, bet ir darbo sąlygoms, jaunų žmonių darbo paieškoms ir galimybėms įsidarbinti, dėl ko jie tapo dar labiau pažeidžiama grupe, rizikuojančia atsidurti už darbo rinkos ribų (ILO, 2022; Eurofound, 2021; EBPO, 2021 ir kt.).

Darbo rinkos požiūriu itin pažeidžiama yra NEET (nedirbančio, nesimokančio ir mokymuose nedalyvaujančio) jaunimo grupė. Nors nedirbančio, nesimokančio ir mokymuose nedalyvaujančio jaunimo (toliau NEET) sąvoka mokslinėje literatūroje ir vertinama nevienareikšmiškai, tačiau vis plačiau naudojama apibūdinant jaunimą, kuris nedalyvauja darbo rinkoje, mokymuose ir studijose. Pastaraisiais metais ši

konceptija įgijo didelį populiarumą ir siūlo tarptautiniu mastu palyginamą rodiklį, kuris atspindi įvairesnį vaizdą nei jaunimo nedarbo lygis ir leidžia vertinti jaunimo padėtį už darbo rinkos ribų (Furlong, 2006; Holte ir kt., 2019).

Jaunimo užimtumo galimybių gerinimas – vienas iš strateginių Europos Sąjungos (ES) tikslų, įtvirtintas daugelyje strateginių dokumentų ir teisės aktų, e.g. Europos užimtumo strategijoje, strategijoje Europa 2020, Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvoje (2013; 2021) ir kt. Dar 2010 metais Europos Komisija, siekiant didinti jaunimo užimtumą, išskyrė NEET kaip tikslinę grupę ir šiai grupei parengė aktyvių jaunimo politikos įtraukties priemonių paketą (European Commission, 2010).

Mokslinėje literatūroje NEET jaunimo problematikai skiriamas vis didesnis dėmesys. Mokslininkai nagrinėja NEET jaunimo įsidarbinamumą (Mazzocchi et al. 2024), NEET jaunimo perėjimą iš švietimo sistemos į darbo rinką (Rocca et al. 2022; Unt et al. 2021), aktyvių darbo rinkos politikos priemonių ir užimtumo tarnybos vaidmenį NEET jaunimo galimybėms įsidarbinti (Simoes, Marta 2024; Ribeiro et al 2024) ir kt.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti nedirbančio, nesimokančio ir mokymuose nedalyvaujančio jaunimo (18-35 metų amžiaus) Lietuvoje galimybių darbo rinkoje subjektyvų vertinimą. Tyrimo klausimai: kaip 18-35 metų nedirbantis, nesimokantis ir mokymuose nedalyvaujantis jaunimas vertina savo galimybes darbo rinkoje (susirasti tinkamą sau darbą)? Kokios savybės yra svarbios norint susirasti tinkamą darbą?

Tyrimo metodai – mokslinės literatūros analizė, anketinė apklausa, kiekybinių duomenų analizė.

NEET jaunimo įsidarbinamumo ir galimybių darbo rinkoje teorinės prielaidos

Mokslinėje literatūroje NEET rodiklis apibūdina neaktyvius 15-29 m. asmenis. Šis rodiklis apima bedarbius ir visus jaunos žmonės nedalyvaujančius darbo rinkoje, ir tuos, kurie nesimoko, nestudijuoja ir nedalyvauja mokymuose (Redmond, McFadden, 2023; Simões et al., 2022; Vyšniauskienė, Krauledaitė, 2022; Papadakis, Kyridis ir Papargyris, 2015, etc.). Pastaraisiais metais ši koncepcija įgijo didelį populiarumą ir siūlo tarptautiniu mastu palyginamą rodiklį, kuris pateikia detalesnį vaizdą nei jaunimo nedarbo lygis ir atspindi skirtingą jaunimo padėtį darbo rinkoje ir už jos ribų (Furlong, 2006; Holte ir kt., 2019).

Pagal Tarptautinės darbo organizacijos (TDO) apibrėžimą, NEET rodiklis yra jaunų asmenų, kurie nesimoko, nedirba ir nedalyvauja mokymuose, santykis su atitinkamos amžiaus grupės 15–24 metų ar 15–29 metų jaunimu (ILOSTAT, 2022). Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad NEET jaunimas yra heterogeniška grupė, pasižyminti skirtingomis charakteristikomis, išskiriami penki pagrindiniai NEET jaunimo grupės tipai: 1) trumpalaikiai ir ilgalaikiai bedarbiai; 2) jauni asmenys, turintys šeiminių išpareigojimų, sergantys ar turintys negalią; 3) dėl įvairių priežasčių neveiksnūs jauni asmenys, gyvenantys asocijalų, rizikingą gyvenimo būdą; 4) aktyviai ieškantys darbo; 5) savanoriškai pasirinkę NEET statusą, keliaujantys, užsiėmę meninėmis, muzikinėmis veiklomis, savišvieta ir kt. (Eurofound, 2012).

O'Higgins, Brockie (2024) teigia, jog NEET jaunimas yra grupė asmenų, kurie dėl įvairių priežasčių negali sėkmingai integruotis į darbo rinką (O'Higgins, Brockie, 2024). Robertson (2016) nurodo, jog didžioji dalis jaunimo susiduria su iššūkiais, kurie atsiranda pereinant iš švietimo sistemos į darbo rinką, karjeros pasirinkimo metu ir pan. Be to, NEET statusui būdinga trukmės priklausomybė: būti NEET šiandien padidina tikimybę likti NEET rytoj (O'Higgins et al., 2023). Heglum ir Nilsen (2024) teigia, kad NEET sąvoka yra siekiama įvertinti jaunimo situaciją, kurie susiduria su marginalizacijos procesu, yra nepalankioje padėtyje bei susiduria su socialinės atskirties rizika. Pažymėtina, kad vienas iš pagrindinių motyvų, paskatinsius Jaunimo garantijų (JG) kūrimą, ir buvo siekis užkirsti kelią ilgalaikių perspektyvų blogėjimui jaunimui, kuris ilgą laikotarpį nedirba ir nesimoko (Ralston et al., 2022).

Mokslinėje literatūroje vis plačiau nagrinėjami įsidarbinamumo gebėjimai, kurie yra reikalingi individams gauti darbą įvairiais jų gyvenimo laikotarpiais (Brewer 2013; Rasul et al., 2013). Remiantis Tarptautinės darbo organizacijos sudarytu sąrašu, darbo rinkoje yra reikalingi tokie įgūdžiai kaip mokymasis mokyti (angl. *learning to learn*), komunikacija, komandinis darbas ir problemų sprendimas (ILO, 2013).

Remiantis Berntson, individualūs asmens ištekliai, tokie kaip turimos žinios, įgūdžiai, socialinių tinklų, kitaip tariant, socialinio kapitalo turėjimas, su demografija susiję aspektai, turi įtakos asmenų įsidarbinamumui (Berntson cit. pg. Mühlböck, Steiber, Kittel, 2022).

EBPO pabrėžia, kad įsidarbinamumas reiškia gebėjimą rasti darbą ir prisitaikyti prie darbo rinkos reikalavimų (OECS 2015). Anot Dacre ir Sewell, įsidarbinamumo sąvoka siekiama apibūdinti asmenų gebėjimus: įsidarbinti, išlaikyti darbą, reikalui esant gauti naują darbą, kitaip tariant, asmens įsidarbinamumas priklauso nuo jo turimų įgūdžių, žinių, asmeninių savybių bei bendro supratimo, o tai jam padeda sėkmingai įsitraukti ir išlikti darbo rinkoje (Dacre, Sewell, cit. pg. Mamucevska Bojadjieva et al. 2022). Lotko, Razgale, Vilka (2016) įsidarbinamumą pateikia kaip sudėtingą problemą, ypač jaunimui, kuri apima socialinius, ekonominius, švietimo ir kitus aspektus, kurie reikalingi pasirengti ir išlikti darbo rinkoje. Didesnį įsidarbinamumo lygį lemia aukštesnis išsilavinimo lygis (EBPO cit. pg. Dilytė – Kotenko, 2023).

Mokslinės literatūros įsidarbinamumo tematika analizė atskleidė, kad dažniausiai yra minimi komunikaciniai, komandinio darbo, problemų sprendimo ir technologiniai gebėjimai (Elena et al. 2021). Įsidarbinamumo gebėjimai yra žinios, gebėjimai, kompetencijos, kurias turi turėti individai norėdami gauti ir išlaikyti darbą, padaryti pažangą ar karjerą darbe, sėkmingai pakeisti darbą į geresnį.

McQuaid, Lindsay (2005) teigimu, asmenų įsidarbinamumui įtakos turi individualūs veiksniai: asmens sveikatos būklė, turimi įgūdžiai ir kompetencijos, bendras pasiruošimas darbo rinkai (Lotko, Razgale, Vilka, 2016). Remiantis Tomlinson, Nghia (2020), įsidarbinamumas priklauso nuo pačio asmens, t.y. nuo to, kiek jis turi prikaupęs įgūdžių ir gebėjimų, kurie tiesiogiai susiję su darbo gavimu ir jo išlaikymu, tad asmuo privalo maksimaliai didinti savo vertę darbo rinkos atžvilgiu, kad galėtų įsitraukti į ją ir joje išlikti.

Mokslininkai išskiria suvokiamo įsidarbinamumo sąvoką, kuri reiškia pačio asmens suvokimą apie savo galimybes rasti ir išlaikyti darbą. Tomlinson, Nghia (2020) pabrėžia, jog svarbu, kad asmuo turėtų įgijęs tinkamus gebėjimus, kurie reikalingi darbui bei, kad tuos gebėjimus mokėtų tinkamai pateikti darbdaviams, kuriems reikalingi darbuotojai, kurie patenkintų jų darbo konkrečius poreikius.

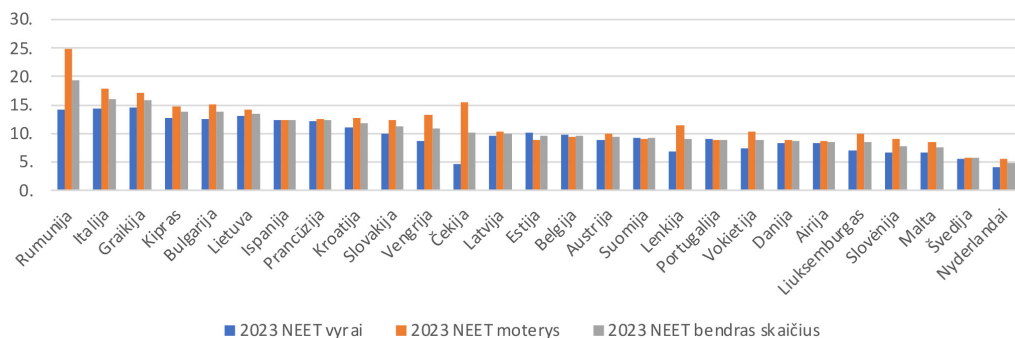
NEET jaunimas Lietuvoje ir socialinės politikos atsakas

Jaunimas yra pažeidžiama grupė, kuri susiduria su didesne rizika netekti darbo, lyginant su vyresniais asmenimis (Brazienė 2021 et al.). Lietuvos darbo rinka bei jaunimo užimtumas patyrė ženklų COVID 19 poveikį, kai jaunimo užimtumas sumažėjo labiau nei vidutiniškai Europos Sąjungoje (Vyšniauskienė, Krauledaitė 2022). 2021 atliktas tyrimas atskleidė, jog nuo COVID 19 labiausiai patyrė žalą žemesnį išsilavinimą turinčios moterys ir kaimiškose vietovėse gyvenantys jauni asmenys (Brazienė 2021 et al.). COVID 19 pandemija, sukėlus didelį poveikį ir pokyčius kasdieniame gyvenime, turėjo neigiamą poveikį NEET rodikliams, todėl NEET rodikliai apskritai padidėjo.

Remiantis ES darbo rinkos tyrimo duomenų antrine analize, EU LFS antrinių duomenų analize Europos šalyse ir Lietuvoje (žr. 1 pav.), NEET jaunimo grupė 15-29 metų amžiaus 2023 metais sudaro nuo 4,8 proc. Nyderlanduose iki 19,3 proc. Rumunijoje. Lietuvoje šis rodiklis pastaraisiais metais svyruoja nuo 12,9 proc. 2014 metais iki 13,5 proc. 2023 metais.

Lietuvoje skatinant jaunimo įsidarbinamumą ir galimybes darbo rinkoje, įgyvendinamos nacionalinio lygmens ir ES priemonės. NEET jaunimo įsidarbinamumo ir užimtumo galimybių kontekste svarbus yra Užimtumo įstatymas (2016; aktuali redakcija 2023-07-01), pagal kurį bedarbiai iki 29 metų yra papildomai remiami. Be to, įtvirtintas platus aktyvių darbo rinkos politikos priemonių spektras: parama mokymuisi, parama judumui, remiamasis įdarbinimas, parama darbo vietoms steigti ir kt.

2013 metais Europos komisija pasiūlė naują politikos iniciatyvą pavadinimu Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyva/programa (angl. *Youth Guarantee Programme*, (YGP), kurios tikslas buvo sumažinti jaunimo nedarbą. Šia ES iniciatyva buvo siekiama sumažinti jaunimo nedarbą ir padidinti pažeidžiamų jaunų žmonių, pirmiausiai nedirbančio, nesimokančio ir mokymuose nedalyvaujančio jaunimo jaunimo grupės socialinę įtrauktį.



1 pav. NEET jaunimas ES pagal lytį (2023 Europoje), %.

Šaltinis: Labour Force Statistics database (LFS)

2013 metais patvirtintos jaunimo garantijų programos pagrindinis tikslas buvo tas, kad „valstybės narės turėtų užtikrinti, kad jaunesni nei 25 metų jaunuoliai per keturis mėnesius nuo mokyklos baigimo arba darbo praradimo galėtų susirasti kokybišką darbą, atitinkantį jų išsilavinimą, įgūdžius ir patirtį, arba įgyti išsilavinimą, įgūdžius ir patirties, reikalingos norint susirasti darbą ateityje per pameistrystę, stažuotę ar tęsiant mokymąsi“ (Europos Komisija, 2014 m.). Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyva buvo siekiama išspręsti dvi pagrindines problemas, turinčias įtakos NEET įtraukimui į darbo rinką: perėjimą iš švietimo sistemos į darbo rinką ir paramą įsidarbinimui. Tuo pačiu jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvų įgyvendinimas apėmė ženklų pokytį, t.y. perėjimą nuo pasyvios darbo rinkos politikos prie aktyvios jaunimo grupės atžvilgiu.

Lietuva kaip ir kitos Europos Sąjungos šalys parengė Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvos įgyvendinimo planą. Lietuvoje, kaip ir kai kuriose Europos Sąjungos šalyse (pavyzdžiui Bulgarijoje, Čekijoje, Danijoje, Estijoje, Latvijoje, Lenkijoje ir k.t.), jaunimo garantijų iniciatyva orientavosi ne į 15-24, bet į 15-29 metų amžiaus grupę. Atsižvelgiant į 2020 m. spalio 30 d. Tarybos rekomendaciją „Tiltas į darbo rinką. Sustiprinta (reinforced) jaunimo garantijų iniciatyva (2021), buvo pakeista 2013 m. balandžio 22 d. tarybos rekomendacija dėl Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvos nustatymo. Lietuvoje buvo patvirtintas Jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvos įgyvendinimo veiksmų planas (2021). Šiuo planu Lietuvoje siekiama padėti jauniems asmenims sugrįžti į mokymąsi, studijas arba įsilieti į darbo rinką. Šiuo planu taip pat siekiama identifikuoti neaktyvius jaunos asmenis, tiekti ankstyvasias intervencijas, papildomus gebėjimus ugdančias ir socialines kompetencijas, įgūdžius didinančios, pagalbos pažįstant save, profesinių interesų identifikavimo, psichologinės socialinės reabilitacijos paslaugas bei įvairias konsultacijas.

Tyrimo metodologija

Straipsnyje pristatomi sociologinio tyrimo, atlikto 2023 metais rezultatai. Tyrimas atliktas įgyvendinant mokslininkų grupių projektą „Lietuvos jaunimo gyvenimiškų galimybių diferenciacijos socioekonominiai veiksniai Lietuvoje“ (P-MIP-22-332). Tyrimo metu anketinės apklausos būdu buvo apklausti 1209 respondentai nuo 18-35 metų amžiaus. Anketinė apklausa buvo atlikta tiesioginio interviu PAPI (angl. paper-and-pencil interviewing) ir CAWI (angl. computer-assisted web interviewing) būdais. Apklauskos duomenų rinkimas buvo vykdomas laikantis visų etinių ir kitų tyrimo kokybės keliamų reikalavimų pagal pasaulinės viešosios nuomonės tyrimų asociacijos (angl. WAPOR) tyrėjų narystės organizacijos standartus.

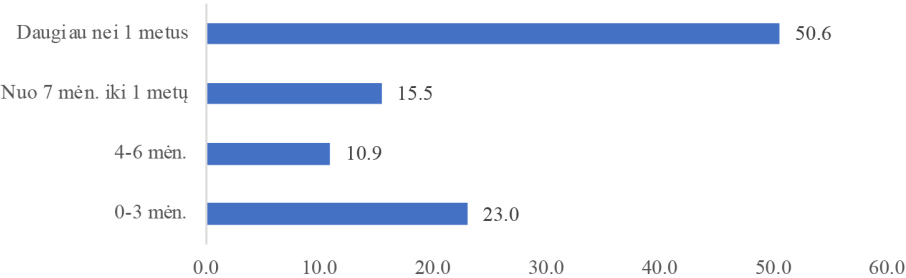
Teorinės tyrimo prielaidos remiasi subjektyviu įsidarbinamumo ir užimtumo galimybių vertinimu (Pengnate 2018; OECD 2015; Brewer 2013, etc.). Remiantis mokslinės literatūros analizę buvo sukonstruotos matavimo skalės skirtos matuoti įsidarbinamumo ir galimybių darbo rinkoje vertinimui.

Apklausoje dalyvavo 161 asmenys, kurie pagal išskirtas charakteristikas atitinka NEET jaunimo grupės apibrėžimą. Socio-demografinių charakteristikų pasiskirstymas NEET jaunimo grupės imtyje pateiktas 2 lentelėje. NEET grupėje moterų buvo 68,9 proc., o vyrų – 29,8 proc. Apklausoje dalyvavę respondentai buvo suskirstyti į tris amžiaus grupes: 18-24, 25-29 ir 30-35 m. Pagal amžiaus pasiskirstymą daugiausiai respondentų buvo tarp 30-35 metų amžiaus (44,1 proc.). Pagal aukščiausią įgytą išsilavinimą NEET grupėje išsiskyrė respondentai su aukštuoju (35,4 proc.) ir viduriniu (34,8 proc.) išsilavinimu. Pagal gautus duomenis galime spręsti, kad tipinis atlikto tyrimo NEET jaunimo grupės atstovas buvo 30-35 metų amžiaus moteris su aukštuoju (arba viduriniu) išsilavinimu.

Tyrimė dalyvavusių NEET jaunimo grupės atstovų buvo teirautasi apie jų nedarbo trukmę. Nedarbo trukmė buvo suskirstyta į kelis intervalus: nuo 0 iki 3 mėn., 4 iki 6 mėn., nuo 7 mėn. iki 1 metų ir ilgiau nei 1 metai. Iš tyrimo duomenų matome, kad daugiau nei pusė NEET jaunimo dalyvavusių tyrimė (52,8 proc.) neturi darbo ilgiau nei vienerius metus (detaliau žr. 2 pav.). Galima daryti prielaidą, jog tai rodo ilgalaikio nedarbo problemą šioje jaunimo grupėje. Atsižvelgiant į ilgesnį nei 1 metų nedarbo laikotarpį, tai gali reikšti poreikį ilgalaikėms nedarbo mažinimo priemonėms arba profesiniam mokymui.

1 lentelė. NEET jaunimo grupės socio-demografinės charakteristikos, N=161, %

Socio-demografinės charakteristikos	%	Socio-demografinė charakteristika	%
Lytis		Šeiminė padėtis	
Vyras	29,8	Niekada nevedęs/ netekėjusi	40,4
Moteris	68,9	Šiuo metu gyvenu kartu su partneriu / partnere	20,5
Kita (nenoriu nurodyti)	1,2	Vedęs / ištekęjusi	36,7
Amžius		Išsiskyręs/usi	1,2
18-24	32,3	Našlys/ė	1,2
25-29	23,6	Neigalumas	
30-35	44,1	Taip	9,3
Išsilavinimas		Ne	90,7
Pradinis/ Pagrindinis	14,9	Darbingumo lygis	
Vidurinis	34,8	0-25 proc. darbingumo lygis	33,3
Aukštesnysis	11,8	30-55 proc. darbingumo lygis	60,0
Aukštasis	35,4	Kita	6,7



2 pav. Tyrimė dalyvavęs NEET jaunimas pagal nedarbo trukmę, N=161

Rezultatai

Savybių, reikalingų susirasti tinkamą darbą, subjektyvus vertinimas

Savybių, reikalingų susirasti tinkamą darbą, subjektyvus vertinimas buvo atliktas taikant 12 teiginių (detaliau žr. 2 lentelėje). Vertinimui buvo pasitelkta penkiabalė Likerto skalė, kur 1 reiškė *visiškai nesutinku* ir 5 - *visiškai sutinku*. Tolimesnėje analizėje kategorijos visiškai sutinku ir sutinku, bei visiškai nesutinku ir nesutinku buvo apjungtos ir pateikiamos bendrai.

Panagrinėkime gautų rezultatų pasiskirstymus NEET jaunimo grupėje. Beveik du trečdaliai tyrime dalyvavusių respondentų sutinka arba visiškai sutinka, kad komunikaciniai gebėjimai (74,5 proc.), komandinio darbo gebėjimai (72,7 proc.) ir gebėjimas save pristatyti (72,7 proc.) yra svarbios savybės, norint susirasti tinkamą darbą. Įdomu tai, kad kitos savybės kaip aukštasis išsimokslinimas ar darbo patirtis respondentų įvardijamos kaip šiek tiek mažiau reikšmingos. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidžia, kad darbo rinkoje svarbiausi veiksniai yra socialiniai ir technologiniai įgūdžiai, užsienio kalbų mokėjimas bei asmeninės savybės. Aukštasis išsilavinimas ir profesinė kvalifikacija, nors ir svarbūs, tačiau yra mažiau reikšmingi nei komunikaciniai ar komandinio darbo gebėjimai. Detalesnis NEET jaunimo grupės subjektyvių savybių, svarbių norint gauti reikiamą darbą vertinimas pateiktas 2 lentelėje.

2 lentelė. NEET jaunimo grupės savybių, reikalingų susirasti tinkamą darbą, subjektyvus vertinimas, N=161, %

Nr.	Savybės, svarbios norint susirasti tinkamą darbą	M ¹	Sd.	NEET, N=161, %		
				Visiškai nesutinku, nesutinku (%)	Nei nesutinku, nei sutinku (%)	Sutinku, visiškai sutinku (%)
1	Komunikaciniai gebėjimai	3,92	0,887	4,4	21,1	74,5
2	Gebėjimas save pristatyti	3,90	0,995	6,2	21,1	72,7
3	Komandinio darbo gebėjimai	3,89	0,919	5,6	21,7	72,7
4	Užsienio kalbų mokėjimas	3,79	1,069	11,8	19,3	69,0
5	Asmeninės ambicijos	3,75	0,964	9,3	24,8	65,8
6	IT gebėjimai	3,67	0,992	10,6	26,1	63,4
7	Naudingi kontaktai/pažintys	3,66	1,067	10,6	32,9	56,5
8	Aukšta profesinė kvalifikacija ir kompetencija	3,63	1,082	15,5	21,7	62,7
9	Aukštasis išsimokslinimas	3,54	1,019	13,7	29,2	57,1
10	Lyderystė	3,53	0,962	12,5	31,7	55,9
11	Verslumas	3,50	0,963	12,4	35,4	52,2
12	Trūksta darbo patirties	3,45	1,006	16,2	33,5	50,3

¹ Vertinimas 5 pakopų Likerto skalėje: 1 - visiškai nesutinku iki 5 visiškai sutinku. M (vidurkis), Sd - standartinis nuokrypis nuo vidurkio.

Galimybių, norint gauti tinkamą darbą subjektyvus vertinimas

Galimybių, reikalingų susirasti tinkamą darbą, subjektyvus vertinimas buvo atliktas taikant 11 teiginių (detaliau žr. 3 lentelėje). Vertinimui buvo pasitelkta penkiabalė Likerto skalė, kur 1 reiškė *visiškai nesutinku* ir 5 - *visiškai sutinku*. Tolimesnėje analizėje kategorijos visiškai sutinku ir sutinku, bei visiškai nesutinku ir nesutinku buvo apjungtos ir pateikiamos bendrai.

3 lentelė. NEET jaunimo grupės galimybių gauti tinkamą darbą subjektyvus vertinimas, N=161, %

Nr.	Galimybės gauti tinkamą darbą	M ²	Sd.	NEET, N=161, %		
				Visiškai nesutinku, nesutinku (%)	Nei nesutinku, nei sutinku (%)	Sutinku, visiškai sutinku (%)
1	Sudėtinga rasti tinkamai apmokamą darbą	3,65	1,033	9,9	36,0	54,0
2	Sudėtinga rasti tokį darbą, kuris man leistų rūpintis šeimos nariais	3,43	1,139	18,6	34,8	46,6
3	Sudėtinga rasti tokį darbą kokį norėčiau dirbti	3,30	1,084	20,5	35,4	44,1
4	Man trūksta įgūdžių lyginant su tuo, ko reikalauja darbdaviai	3,24	1,023	20,5	38,5	41,0
5	Trūksta darbo patirties	3,17	1,141	26,1	36,6	37,3
6	Mano turimos kompetencijos yra patrauklios darbo rinkoje	3,12	1,1	21,7	39,8	38,5
7	Trūksta bet kokio darbo	3,05	1,139	31,1	34,2	34,8
8	Trūksta darbo pagal mano įgytą kvalifikaciją	3,02	1,063	26,7	43,5	29,8
9	Man sudėtinga rasti informaciją apie įmones, kurios ieško darbuotojų	2,79	1,086	36,6	41,6	21,7
10	Aš turiu kontaktų tinklą, kuriuo galiu pasinaudoti, kad gaučiau naują darbą	2,63	1,166	42,9	33,5	23,6
11	Sudėtinga rasti darbą dėl mano sveikatos problemų	2,50	1,163	52,8	29,8	17,4

Kalbant bendrai apie galimybes gauti norimą darbą ir kaip NEET jaunimo grupė jas vertina, įdomu pastebėti, kad net trečdalis respondentų šioje klausimų grupėje pasirinko tokių galimybių nevertinti, t.y. pasirinkti pasyvią poziciją, kur Likerto skalėje 3 reiškia „nei nesutinku, nei sutinku“. Taip aiškiai neišreiškiant savo vertinimo ir nuomonės. Tai gali būti susiję su NEET jaunimo grupės susidomėjimo stoka, apatiškumu ar net pesimizmu, ypač, jei darbo ieškoma ilgesnį laikotarpį.

² Vertinimas 5 pakopų Likerto skalėje: 1 - visiškai nesutinku iki 5 visiškai sutinku. M (vidurkis), Sd - standartinis nuokrypis nuo vidurkio.

Daugiau nei pusę apklaustųjų pritaria, kad jiems yra sudėtinga rasti tinkamai apmokamą darbą (54 proc.), sudėtinga rasti darbą, kuris leistų rūpintis šeimos nariais (46,6 proc.). Daugiau nei 40 proc. apklaustųjų ieško pasitenkinimo darbu ir savirealizacijos galimybių, nes jiems yra sudėtinga rasti darbą, kurį norėtųsi dirbti. Panaši atsakiusių dalis (41 proc.) mano, kad jiems trūksta įgūdžių, kurių reikalauja darbdaviai, o 37, 3 proc. trūksta darbo patirties. NEET jaunimas jaučia stoką informacijos ne tik apie įmones, kurios ieško darbuotojų (43,5 proc. atsakė „nei sutinku, nei nesutinku“), bet ir žinių apie tai, kas vyksta darbo rinkoje - ar pagal jų įgytą kvalifikaciją trūksta darbuotojų ar ne (41,6 proc. atsakė „nei sutinku, nei nesutinku“).

Socialinio kapitalo trūkumą pažymi klausimas apie kontaktų tinklą, kuriuo galima pasinaudoti siekiant naujo darbo. 42,9 proc. NEET jaunimo nepritaria teiginiui taip patvirtindami, kad negalėtų remtis į asmenis savo aplinkoje ieškant darbo. Daugiau nei pusę apklaustųjų (52,8 proc.) nepritarė, kad sveikatos problemos trukdo susirasti darbą. Šis atsakymas yra įdomus, nes atsižvelgiant į NEET grupės socio-demografines charakteristikas (žr. 1 lentelę), trečdalis respondentų turi 0-25 proc. darbingumo lygį, o daugiau nei pusę NEET jaunimo (60 proc.) turi tik 30-55 proc. darbingumo lygį. NEET jaunimas su žemesniu darbingumo lygiu neidentifikuoja savo sveikatos kaip kliūties norint gauti tinkamą darbą.

Išvados

- NEET jaunimo grupė darbo rinkos požiūriu yra pažeidžiama socialinė grupė, kadangi šiai grupei priklausantys asmenys dažnai stokoja reikiamų savybių sėkmingai dalyvauti ir išlikti darbo rinkoje, tampa kliūtimi įsidarbinti arba norint pakeisti darbo vietą.
- Apibendrintai mokslininkai išskiria keletą esminių gebėjimų, kurių trūkumas gali sąlygoti nedarbą arba NEET statusą arba mažinti galimybes darbo rinkoje įskaitant karjerą. Atlikto tyrimo metu išryškėjo reikalingų savybių ir galimybių gauti tinkamą darbą subjektyvus vertinimas. Įsidarbinamumo galimybes riboja neatitikimas tarp individualių asmens savybių ir asmeninių aplinkybių (įsipaigojimui šeimai, sveikatos būklė).
- Išryškėjo savybės, reikalingos gauti tinkamą darbą. NEET jaunimo grupės požiūriu svarbiausios savybės yra „minkštosios“ savybės, t.y. kaip komunikaciniai gebėjimai, gebėjimas save pristatyti, komandinio darbo gebėjimai. Darbo patirtis, verslumas ar lyderystė, pasak NEET jaunimo grupės, yra mažiau reikšmingos savybės norint susirasti tinkamą darbą.

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Justina Krauledaitė, Rūta Brazienė

SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Abstract. *This paper examines the subjective assessment of the labour market opportunities of young people (aged 18-35) who are not in employment, education or training in Lithuania. It consistently discusses the latest theoretical discourses and empirical research on NEET youth and presents the results of a sociological study (questionnaire survey) on youth life chances conducted in Lithuania in 2023. The results of the survey (N=161) revealed a subjective perspective on the necessary qualities and opportunities for employment. The study found that employment opportunities are often limited by a mismatch between individual characteristics and personal circumstances, such as family commitments or health conditions. Nearly two-thirds of respondents agree that professional competencies, such as high professional qualifications, are important for finding a suitable job. The research was carried out within the framework of the Lithuanian Research Council-funded research project "Socio-economic factors of differentiation of life chances of Lithuanian youth in Lithuania" (reg. no. S-MIP-22-42, contract date 2022-03-18).*

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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ADVOCACY ROLE WITHIN INCLUSIVE MIGRATION POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION'S WESTERN COUNTRIES

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Abstract. *The increasing role of non-governmental organizations in advocating for inclusive migration policies in the European Union Western region countries such as Germany, Spain and Italy highlight the need for a deeper understanding of their influence, strategies, and challenges. This research examines the complexities of NGO advocacy, aiming to explore the strategies used by these organizations to amplify the voices of migrants in EU policymaking processes. Through a combination of literature review, semi-structured interviews, and policy analysis. The study identifies the challenges that non-governmental organizations face, such as legal restrictions or financial limitations, and explores how addressing these challenges can inform the development of more effective strategies to enhance NGO influence on migration policies.*

Keywords: *migration, non-governmental organizations, policy-making, advocacy, European Union*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *migracija, nevyriausybinės organizacijos, politikos formavimas, advokacija, Europos Sąjunga*

Introduction

Migration is a vital issue in the European Union, and the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has become increasingly significant. NGOs serve as mediator and negotiators between policymakers and migrant communities, working to ensure that inclusive migration policies reflect the needs and rights of all individuals. (European Commission, 2020). There have been a few migrations crisis in the European Union, particularly in western region countries, where it was witnessed that non-governmental organizations have emerged as key players in shaping migration discussions, advocating for policies that promote and emphasize integration. However, their advocacy and not only, efforts often meet with challenges, including limited financial resources, and restrictive legal environments (Bagavos, Kourachanis, 2022). These challenges were also mentioned by Spencer (2017) who also included lack accountability and expertise while receiving and managing funds. This article seeks to clarify the nature of the constraints and the role of non-governmental organizations via advocacy within the scope of complex migration policy landscape in the European Union. By identifying the challenges and strategies that are used, this paper aims to explore deeper understanding of how non-governmental organizations navigate this migration policy environment in the European Union. Furthermore, one of the aims is to explore the advocacy role of NGOs within European Union migration policies, focusing on the tools and mechanisms they employ to influence decision-making, which were mentioned by Dany (2019). In order to determine the underlying factors contributing to these challenges, it is essential to examine existing theoretical frameworks such as Advocacy Coalition Framework (Ansell, Torfing, 2022), Multi-Level Governance (Panizzon, van Riemsdijk, 2018) that elucidate the origins and dynamics of these obstacles.

The structure of the article proceeds as follows: firstly, the significance of non-governmental organizations in advocating for inclusive migration policies in the European Union is discussed, outlining the research problem and objectives. Furthermore, the theoretical approach and framework that is related to inclusive migration policies is presented. This section examines key theories such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Multi-Level Governance, and Institutionalism. Last parts of the paper, explain the methods of the article and inform research results, highlighting the findings from interviews, focusing on challenges faced by NGOs. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the key insights from the research results and insights for future NGO advocacy efforts.

Theoretical Perspectives on NGO Advocacy in Migration Policies

Non-governmental organizations are often involved in migration processes, especially when it comes to inclusivity. One of these examples in the past decade was Germany, where organizations that directly or indirectly working with migrants assisted or were directly involved in inclusion processes, such as assisting with administration, translation, cultural integration (Hoehne, Scharrer, 2023). Hence there are different tools that NGOs use to enhancing efficiency in this process and its advocacy tools. Namely for this reason, Zhou (2022) stated that one of the first signs of an inclusive migration policy among the member countries, is whenever the hosting country is open to welcome migrants, and they are not deported back to their home countries or not allowed to enter the hosting country by turning them back at the border. The organizations that directly work with migrants, at the same time work with local governments and institutions, which also includes advocacy and promotion of development. These actions align with various programs and initiatives organized at both the national level and within the EU (Cuttitta et al., 2022). Generally, the common activities that are recognized in all the member countries are that non-governmental organizations are raising awareness, providing information trying to influence any policies while using advocacy or lobbying (Uifalean, 2015). The European Union entrusts and relies on the non-governmental organizations that do directly work with them or at state levels to handle migration management. However, this reliance allows the EU to use NGOs as instruments for influencing policy changes. On the other hand, participation and direct interactions with migrants set a certain level of expectations from the governments, which could create possible tensions about how other instruments are used in the whole integration process (Irrera, 2016). However, it is important to note that the levels of engagement vary among different countries and some of them expect to be involved as an instrument in the policy implementation, and other countries use NGOs for more advisory purposes (ECRE, 2019).

Moreover, NGOs influence inclusive migration policies through different actions and channels. Dellmuth and Tallberg (2017) analysed various strategies NGOs employ for advocacy. They elaborate that non-governmental organizations try to use different communication channels and often involve partnerships with other organizations or for instance businesses in private sector. In addition to actions and tools that are being used by non-governmental organizations, Hudson (2002), described and indicated examples of activities such as raising awareness or initiating discussions that non-governmental organizations use during the advocacy process. This helps to have a better understanding of the strategies and aims that NGOs have during policy-making processes. Junk (2015) further examined NGO behaviours, explaining why NGOs use advocacy to initiate or increase the possibility of policy change.

These actions can be interpreted together with advocacy coalition framework theory, that elaborates in the field of coalition politics and public policy. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant because it explains how groups of actors with shared policy beliefs such as non-governmental organizations and policymakers engage in long-term policy advocacy. The framework recognizes that policy subsystems operate over extended periods, aligning well with the slow and incremental nature of EU migration policymaking (Sabatier, 1998). Its empirical applications are extensive, demonstrating the Framework's utility in understanding the dynamics of advocacy coalitions and the influence of policy beliefs (Satoh, et.al.,

2021). Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasize that, the policy process is characterized by competition among coalitions of actors advocating for specific beliefs about policy problems and solutions (Chicowore, 2018). This competition occurs within various policy subsystems, where actors, deeply concerned about particular issues, strive to actively and consistently influence relevant public policies.

These coalitions are characterized by coordinated political activities, defining them as groups unified by common policy beliefs and collaborative efforts. The application of the advocacy coalition framework enables the research to better capture the most important aspects of coalition-building, resource mobilization and advocacy strategies, while also accounting for the external pressures that influence the policy-making process. Furthermore, multi-level governance theory that was introduced and explained by Gary Marks in the early 90s provides a framework on how non-governmental organizations could possibly operate within European Union's governance structure in relation to migration policies (Panizon, van Riemsdijk, 2018). The theory highlights by emphasizing the shared distribution of competencies among various actors, including different types of NGOs, civil society organizations, and professional bodies, in policymaking and implementation. Additionally, it is said that the multi-level governance theory notably represents the links between the EU institutions and non-governmental organizations. As (Zuern, 2020) stated and emphasized the great importance on the simultaneous concept of vertical and horizontal relationships within multi-level governance systems. The systems are characterized by the links between political institutions at the same level and by the links between different levels institutions such as non-governmental organizations. The main argument is that as the territorial scale increases, the community weakens, which limits the authority. However, as the territorial scale decreases, the community may become stronger, and the scope of authority expands. The Advocacy Coalition Framework and Multi-Level Governance theories were chosen in order to explain how non-governmental organizations influence migration policies in the European Union. Advocacy Coalition Framework highlights the role of NGOs in building long-term coalitions and shaping policies through sustained advocacy, while Multi-Level Governance theoretical framework demonstrates how NGOs operate across different levels of governance, from local to EU institutions. These approaches offer a clearer understanding of non-governmental organizations engagements they emphasize collaboration, policy influence, and strategic advocacy within complex governance structures

Conceptualization and operationalization of the role of NGOs in inclusive migration policies in the European Union

In the continuous process of migration policies and its governance, the conceptualization of migrants and migration has been changing within different aspects and involving different stakeholders and institutions in the European Union. Therefore, migration in different regions and countries have been more widely seen as a security problem; however, political refugees have been looked more into as individuals that require more protection and have to be more efficiently integrated and managed in the European Union (Irrera, 2016)

At the moment the core migration policy and its instruments in the EU member states include visa and entry document regulations, extradition documentation and agreements in the country and within other countries and relocation of migrants and refugees. These policies are formalized through various legal frameworks and programs implemented by the European Union, such as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (European Commission, 2024). Within local laws and formalized by different programmes ran by the European Union. It is important to emphasize that target groups, place of discharge and levels of bureaucracy, complexities are shaping migration processes and highlight the needs of improvements (Czaika, 2023). In addition to these, for decades developed mechanisms and policies another essential policy named The Cohesion Policy is one of the core policies that are used in the EU since the start of the union. As of early year 2000, a substantial

part of the European Union 's budget has been processed and directed for Cohesion Policy. Usually, these policies support and promote for different types of training initiatives including practice, financial support for employment of migrants in public and private sector (Guia, et. al., 2022).

From an economical point of view, efficient integration in the European Union is a sign of a decreased gap between population that is native or has already fully integrated, in relation to equal job opportunities, job qualities, and similar salary wages.

According to Thiel et al. (2023), to monitor and evaluate these integration policies in every member state, there is the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) that evaluates the performance and results across different governments within various dimensions. Few of those include human and fundamental rights, equal opportunities, and strategies. In the Figure 1. the presented criteria include education availabilities, residency documentation and permits, and health. According to the data tool and analysis that was last done in 2023 the results showed that the integration policies tend to improve with a very slow pace (MIPEX,2020).

In the complex landscape of inclusive migration policies within the European Union, it can be said that these policies have undergone recognizable and important transformations. From the initial emphasis, there has been a shift toward focus on essential integration policies such as visa regulations, relocation initiatives and solving bureaucratic complexities. This changing and adapting environment shows the need for continuous adaptation and flexibility to challenging integration and inclusion policies in the European Union.

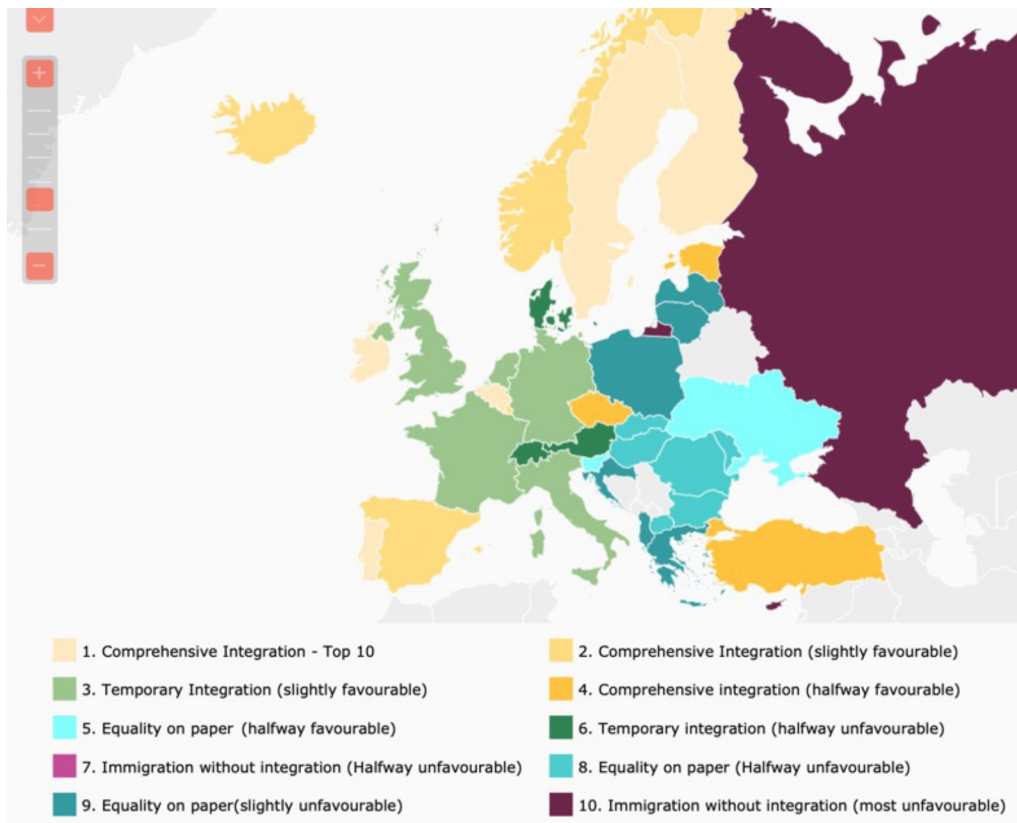


Figure 1. *The Migration Integration Policy Index 2020 ranking ranks (MIPEX,2020)*

In the wider context of policy change, the Advocacy Coalition Framework contributes by placing particular emphasis on policy-oriented learning. In this way, it offers a valuable perspective on the processes involved in the development of policy. The policy-oriented learning is that it involves relatively stable changes in thought processes or behavioral intentions, which originate from experiences and/or new information. These changes are focused on achieving or revising policy objectives. Furthermore, this framework suggests that such learning is carried out with the intention of better comprehending the environmental factors that could affect the advancement of policy goals (Sabatier, 1997, p.192). Moreover, it conceptualizes the policy process as occurring within specific policy systems, where diverse advocacy coalitions, united by shared belief systems, compete and collaborate to influence policy outcomes.

As Sotirov and Memmler (2011) stated, advocacy coalition framework approach examines the processes of policy making by its geographical and topical boundaries. This conceptualization views the policy subsystem as an arena of competing interactions among multiple advocacy coalitions. Each coalition comprises diverse actors, including governmental and non-governmental individuals and groups, representing varying institutional affiliations and levels of government. Despite these differences, these actors share a common belief system and engage in coordinated actions.

Based on the complexity and institutions involved in EU, where multiple actors with diverse interests and beliefs interact within multi-level governance structures, this approach can be the most compatible.

Methodology

In order to better understand the influence of non-governmental organizations, during the analysis, qualitative methodology was included. Qualitative research methods were chosen due to their ability to capture insights regarding complexities and interactions between non-governmental organizations and public institutions. According to Zapata – Barerro and Yalaz (2022, p. 420). Qualitative research has an important role in showing that terms related to migration that are not fixed but shaped by social and political factors. Even though these categories are created by society and governments, they have real effects on how countries function. Qualitative research is especially useful in understanding how labels are experienced in daily life by individuals, organizations, and institutions.

Secondary data analysis was selected in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of legal frameworks shaping migration governance in the European Union. This approach was chosen because it allows for a systematic examination of existing policies, institutional mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks that influence NGO advocacy efforts and migrant integration policies. Furthermore, by using secondary data, which helps to identify gaps in policy implementation and highlights the intersection between legal structures and NGO advocacy strategies. The analysis included EU policy documents, migration reports, and academic literature. The documents analyzed include key regulations such as the Schengen Borders Code (Regulation EU 2016/399), the Dublin Regulation (Regulation EU 604/2013), and the Reception Conditions Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU). Table 1 outlines the key EU documents analysed.

Data collection aimed to understand the operational dynamics and challenges faced by non-governmental organizations in the context of EU migration governance.

As there were various regulations that were presented during the years and due to multiple factors in the region and the development is continuous. EU migration and asylum policies includes several significant directives and regulations as presented in the Table 1 which are selected from 2013 and in relation to inclusive migration policies and its changes. Key regulations such as the Schengen Borders Code (Regulation EU 2016/399) and the Dublin Regulation (Regulation EU 604/2013) have shaped the EU's approach to managing migration. Recent updates, including the European Parliament and Council's 2024 regulations and directives, continue to refine these frameworks, addressing various aspects of asylum and migration management (Wagner et. al., 2024).

Table 1. Regulations and directives related to inclusive migration in the European Union

Schengen borders code 2016	Regulation EU 2016/399
Visa list 2018	Regulation EU 2018/1806
Immigration Liaison Officers Network Regulation	Regulation EU 2019/1240
Dublin Regulation 2013 (recast)	Regulation EU 604/2013
Asylum Procedures Directive (recast)	Directive 2013/32
The European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013	Regulation (EU) 2024/1351
The European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection	Directive (EU) 2024/1346

Semi-structured interviews were selected due to the flexibility and possibility in the discussions during the interviews enabling to deepen the insights on challenges and to identify the impact that might not be visible in the EU policy documents. It complemented the secondary data analysis by providing a broader policy context and insights on implementation of documents. This data collection and overview methodology allowed to have a better understanding of how migration policies translate into practice, particularly on how the formal policy frameworks and practical stakeholder experiences align.

Between April and June is 2024 interviews were done with 3 stakeholders, including NGO representatives, policymakers. Participants were selected for their expertise and regional representation across the EU, ensuring diverse insights. The interviews aimed to examine the practical barriers NGOs face, such as financial constraints, legal restrictions, and the impact of securitization policies. Data from these interviews was transcribed and analysed using thematic coding to identify key patterns and align findings with the theoretical frameworks of Multi-Level Governance and Advocacy Coalition Framework.

Participants were selected to ensure representation of experts in migration governance and non-governmental organizations.

In the transcript interviews, several significant themes and subtopics have been identified, illustrating the intricate challenges and operational dynamics encountered by government entities, non-governmental organizations, and community services in the context of policy shifts and crises. The primary categories that have emerged include *Government Policies and Actions*, *Non-Governmental Organizations*, *Financial Issues*, *Community Services*, and *Crisis and War Impact*. Within these categories, key subtopics such as the financial instability, the essential services provided by non-governmental organizations, and the fiscal pressures resulting from crises and wars are prominently discussed.

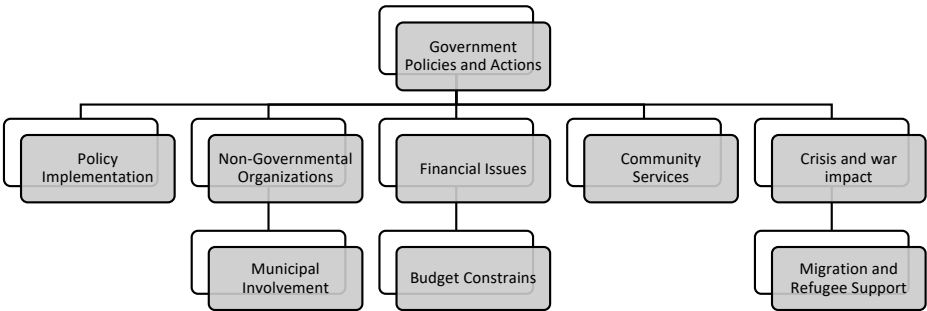


Figure 2. Themes and subtopics of the interviews

This coding framework is structured to systematically categorize the collected data and establish linkages to the theoretical frameworks of Multi-Level Governance and the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The conceptualization of Multi-Level Governance in this paper highlights the characteristics of vertical and horizontal governance interactions (Piattoni, 2009). Furthermore, the focus on how GOs interact across multiple governance levels—ranging from local municipalities to EU institutions—examining the extent to which decentralized decision-making enables or constrains their influence on migration policies. The horizontal governance perspective in Multi-Level Governance is also relevant, as non-governmental organizations collaborate with other civil society actors for example other organizations, private sector companies, associations to form networks that strengthen advocacy efforts and service provision. By viewing these dynamics, this paper explores whether Multi-Level Governance proposes inclusive governance by allowing non-state actors to participate in policy formulation and implementation or whether it leads to fragmented and inconsistent policy application across member states. Additionally, the Advocacy Coalition Framework allows to have insights on the role of non-governmental organizations as part of advocacy coalitions. In particular, on how their policy beliefs shape the engagement with policymakers. It investigates the formation of coalitions between non-governmental organizations and governmental actors and the extent to which external factors, such as migration crises or political transformations, drive policy change. Additionally, it examines how NGOs refine their strategies in response to institutional feedback, historical precedents, and evolving political dynamics, reinforcing their influence within the policymaking process.

By integrating MLG and ACF, this research provides a nuanced perspective on the mechanisms through which NGOs operate within complex governance structures and their ability to advocate for more inclusive migration policies. The combination of these theoretical perspectives allows for a comprehensive understanding of both institutional constraints and strategic opportunities available to non-governmental organizations in EU migration policymaking. The ongoing analysis of the interviews reveals several critical themes reflecting the intricate challenges and operational dynamics encountered by government entities, non-governmental organizations.

Results

There have been multiple migration crises in the European Union that affect more than 4 million refugees, for instance such as Syrian refugee crisis that was happening in 2015, following the Libyan crisis back in 2017 that had affect and consequences for most of European member states (UNHCR, 2015). In order to control the migration flow, one of the most significant milestones developments was the Tampere Programme, initiated in 1999. This programme laid the foundation for the EU's comprehensive approach to migration by focusing on these key elements: controlling migration flows, ensuring integration and cooperation with the countries of origin (European Council, 1999). Afterwards, suggestions and recommendations to improve the inclusivity in relation to migration policy making, the European Agenda on Migration (2015) proposed four pillars for structural reforms, including reducing incentives for irregular migration. This was succeeded by the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which further delineated the EU's migration policy objectives. After this agenda, an updated one was presented, called New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024.¹ While reaffirming these commitments, remained notably short and vague, focusing on continued cooperation with origin and transit countries to combat illegal migration and human trafficking.

In addition to these regulatory measures, the EU has made significant financial investments in supporting non-government organizations. The financial reports that were presented by EU institutions about non-governmental organizations activities, showed that the EU is a major funder of NGOs working with migration reflecting its commitment to upholding democratic values and fundamental rights (OECD,

¹ Presented by the European Council in 1999 the document influenced the EU's migration and asylum policies https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm

2020). As the fundings from European Union is one of the ways to get financial support, it is important to mention private fundings such donations or sometimes self-fundings. Therefore, getting different sources of funding is crucial to perform their roles in advocacy, community support, and humanitarian aid. Public support for these organizations translates into tax exemptions, access to deliberative fora, and formal participant status in European policy processes (Ackermann et. al.,2023).

Despite this support, financial instability remains a significant challenge for both governmental bodies and NGOs. Secure and diversified funding mechanisms are essential for ensuring stable operations and effective advocacy (Ackermann et. al.,2023).

The selected EU migration and asylum regulations and directives demonstrate the European Union's evolving approach to managing migration flows, border security, asylum procedures, and the integration of migrants. While some regulations, such as the Schengen Borders Code (2016) (Regulation EU 2016/399) and the Visa List (2018) (Regulation EU 2018/1806), focus on controlling entry and movement within the EU, others, including the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013) (Directive 2013/32) and the recent 2024 Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (Regulation EU 2024/1351), address asylum processing and international protection. Examining these regulations reveals patterns, missing elements, and how they complement each other in shaping EU migration governance.

One major trend across these documents is the balance between border security mechanisms and the rights of asylum seekers. The Schengen Borders Code (2016) provides a framework for border control measures to ensure security within the Schengen Area, enabling reinforcement of internal border checks under exceptional circumstances. Meanwhile, the Visa List Regulation (2018) categorizes third-country nationals who require or are exempt from visas for short stays, contributing to a tiered approach to migration governance based on country of origin. However, these regulations primarily emphasize border management and security, with less emphasis on humanitarian considerations or asylum protections.

Conversely, the Dublin Regulation (2013) (Regulation EU 604/2013) establishes responsibility-sharing rules for asylum applications but has been widely criticized for placing disproportionate burdens on frontline states (e.g., Italy, Spain, and Greece). This issue was partially addressed by the 2024 Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management, which repeals the Dublin Regulation and introduces a solidarity-based mechanism to redistribute asylum seekers across member states. This shift suggests a gradual move from security-driven policies toward a more burden-sharing model, though implementation challenges remain.

Another key pattern is the increased focus on external cooperation with third countries and inter-agency coordination within the EU. The Immigration Liaison Officers Network Regulation (2019) (Regulation EU 2019/1240) enhances cooperation among EU member states and non-EU countries through designated liaison officers, aiming to improve intelligence-sharing on migration flows, border crossings, and asylum trends. This regulation complements both the Schengen Borders Code and the Visa List Regulation, reinforcing border externalization as a critical EU migration strategy.

However, despite efforts to enhance cooperation, the Immigration Liaison Officers Network does not address concerns regarding human rights violations in third-country migration management agreements. The lack of oversight mechanisms raises concerns about how liaison officers engage with countries that have poor asylum systems or restrictive migration policies.

A significant development in EU migration governance is the enhancement of asylum reception standards through the 2024 Directive on Reception Conditions (Directive EU 2024/1346). This directive replaces the previous 2013 Reception Conditions Directive, setting higher standards for material reception conditions, including housing, healthcare, and employment access for asylum seekers. Compared to its predecessor, the 2024 directive provides more uniform standards across member states, addressing discrepancies in reception conditions.

However, while the 2024 Directive improves legal safeguards for asylum seekers, it does not fully resolve the issue of disparities in asylum processing efficiency and integration policies across EU states. The Asylum Procedures Directive (2013) (Directive 2013/32) remains the main legal framework governing asylum application procedures, but it has been criticized for its slow and inconsistent implementation across the EU. The 2024 asylum regulations attempt to streamline processes, but without strict enforcement mechanisms, differences between member states may persist.

While these policies collectively form a comprehensive framework for managing migration, gaps remain in human rights protections and migrant integration efforts. The Schengen Borders Code, Visa List Regulation, and Immigration Liaison Officers Network Regulation focus on controlling migration flows, but they do not adequately address the rights and protections of asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. On the other hand, the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013) and the 2024 Reception Directive aim to standardize protections, but enforcement mechanisms remain weak.

Moreover, while the 2024 Asylum and Migration Management Regulation improves solidarity mechanisms, it does not fully resolve tensions between frontline states and Northern European countries regarding responsibility-sharing. The regulation removes the rigid structure of the Dublin Regulation, but actual implementation will determine its effectiveness.

The documents reveal inconsistencies between border security priorities and asylum protections. While the European Union has progressively strengthened cooperation mechanisms and reception standards, implementation gaps and legal inconsistencies between member states remain key challenges. The 2024 policy updates indicate a trend toward more centralized migration governance, though it is unclear how effectively these changes will address long-standing issues of burden-sharing and procedural delays.

The results of the interviews showed that non-governmental organizations face multiple structural and operational challenges in advocating for inclusive migration policies within the European Union. During the interviews several topics were recognized that are mentioned and presented in Table 1 with citations that indicate the relation to the categories. One of the focus areas during the interview, was on the redistribution of resources and the involvement of municipalities in providing local services. Government policies play a pivotal role in addressing migration and integration challenges.

Another category defined and its related subcategories that was motioned and recognized during the analysis were non-governmental organizations in migration policies and as a subcategory its roles and functions. As it appeared during the analysis, non-governmental organizations are responsible for a wide range of services, including advocacy, community support, and humanitarian aid. Individuals emphasized the role of NGO and what support services and influence they do have in terms of migration.

Furthermore, one of the representatives emphasized of financial challenges that non-governmental organizations face, affecting the ability of both governmental and NGOs to deliver services effectively. During the data analysis it appeared that there is a need for more secure and diversified funding mechanisms in order to have stable influence and continuous service. It was also mentioned that it does directly affect the opportunities to advocate for improved policies and propose more efficient services.

As it appeared services that are provided by non-governmental organizations are essential in supporting the integration and well-being of immigrants and refugees. Participants acknowledged the importance of these services in aiding integration but pointed out inconsistencies in service provision. Effective community services have a profound impact on the lives of beneficiaries, aiding in their integration and overall efficiency, including any influence of improvement of processes or advocacy.

The impact of crises and wars on migration patterns and the subsequent response required from governments and NGOs is a critical issue discussed in the interviews. Geopolitical instability exacerbates the challenges faced by both migrants and service providers. Migration and refugee support systems are heavily influenced by such events, with the fiscal strain caused by crises and wars affecting the availability of funding and resources.

Table 2. Government Policies and Actions

Category	Subcategory	Citations	Inter- viewee Code	Description of Interviewee	Date and Duration of Interview
Government Policies and Actions	Policy Imple- mentation	“Um, and we don’t necessarily have follow-through in terms of implementation. In different countries within the organization itself, we do it to help governments with implementation as part of our work. And then we look at monitoring and evaluating the impact of our recommendations to see how we can constantly improve the advice that we’re giving. Um, so that’s very important. But, um, you make a good point that sometimes a challenge we face is the fact that, um, it can occasionally be seen as performative.”	I-01	Female, policymaker, political science degree	2024-05-15, 45 minutes
Government Policies and Actions	Municipal Involvement	“Um, and we don’t necessarily have follow-through in terms of implementation. In different countries within the organization itself, we do it to help governments with implementation as part of our work. And then we look at monitoring and evaluating the impact of our recommendations to see how we can constantly improve the advice that we’re giving. Um, so that’s very important. But, um, you make a good point that sometimes a challenge we face is the fact that, um, it can occasionally be seen as performative.”	I-02	Female, policymaker, political science degree	2024-05-15, 45 minutes

The table with categories related to government policies and actions, presents the role of the challenges in policy implementation and the level of municipal involvement. Interviewees highlight issues in achieving follow-through on policy recommendations and the role of monitoring and evaluation in improving policy effectiveness. There is also mention of the perception of some government actions as performative, suggesting gaps between policy goals and actual outcomes.

Table 3. Non-Governmental Organizations in Migration Policies

Category	Subcategory	Citations	Interviewee Code	Description of Interviewee	Date and Duration of Interview
Financial Issues	Budget Constraints	“Of course, we also attend human rights meetings, but when it comes to the kind of advocacy that is more important, and what would be needed, it’s always finance.”	I-04	Female, head of department	2024-05-30, 55 minutes

The table 3 presents the financial issues that impact migration-related advocacy, particularly budget constraints. The interviewee highlights that financial limitations often restrict NGOs’ abilities to engage in advocacy efforts and address human rights issues. This suggests that while NGOs are dedicated to supporting migrant communities, financial challenges remain a significant barrier to achieving their goals.

Table 4. Crisis and War Impact

Category	Subcategory	Citations	Interviewee Code	Description of Interviewee	Date and Duration of Interview
Crisis and War Impact	Migration and Refugee Support	“ Perhaps some of them have engaged in some advocacy objectives anyway... to try to quell as much as possible that resistance against foreigners”	I-05	Female, head of department	2023-08-18, 55 minutes

This table addresses the impact of crises and war on migration and refugee support. The interviewee discusses efforts to reduce societal resistance to migrants and engage in public advocacy, especially in the context of conflict-driven migration. The emphasis is on the role of advocacy in easing tensions between migrants and host communities, highlighting the social challenges that accompany crisis-induced migration. The interviews provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and dynamics faced by government bodies. As it appeared during the interviews that changing policies in the European Union already have and will impact the influence and possibilities for non-governmental organizations to advocate in relation to migration policies.

During the analysis, patterns of certain topics and categories were indicated. Table 5 resents the common categories and how they relate with each other. The analysis shows that what the experts from the interview mentioned, does also represent in the reports or regulations.

Table 5. Common categories identified during the analysis

Category	Categories from Interviews	Categories from secondary data
Government Policies and Actions	• Need for more municipal involvement • Challenges of centralized policy implementation	• EU policy frameworks like CEAS and Dublin Regulation shaping migration management • Increasing focus on border management (Schengen Borders Code)
Non-Governmental Organizations	• NGOs in service provision and advocacy • Collaboration between NGOs and private sector/international bodies	• NGOs facing with restrictive EU policies • NGOs leveraging EU directives like the Asylum Procedures Directive to promote migrant rights
Financial Issues	• Budget constraints affecting NGO service provision • Call for diversified and secure funding mechanisms from municipalities	• Funding challenges exacerbated by EU migration crises and economic pressures • EU funding to? civil society? through budget allocations and programs
Crisis and War Impact	• Increased migration flows due to geopolitical instability • NGOs under pressure to adapt services in response to crises	• EU policies focusing on irregular migration and returns in response to crises • EU's external action policies shaping co-operation with non-European Countries that manages migration
Community Services	• NGO services critical for migrant integration • Inconsistencies in service provision across different regions	• Reception Conditions Directive (2024) setting standards for fair treatment • EU-level policies offering a basis for NGO advocacy on migrant integration

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings presented in the analysis of EU policy documents and stakeholder interviews with insights into the structural and operational challenges that non-governmental organizations face in advocating for inclusive migration policies within the European Union, particularly in the Western Europe. Given the limited number of interviews, the discussion first examines EU migration and asylum regulations to have a better understanding on how non-governmental organizations operate in advocacy context. These documents reveal a policy landscape that prioritizes border security and migration control over inclusive integration measures, which is then further elaborated upon through qualitative findings from stakeholders.

The EU policy documents analyzed—including the Schengen Borders Code (2016), the Dublin Regulation (2013), and the newly introduced 2024 Asylum and Migration Management Regulation—demonstrate policy changes in the EU migration policy making. While initially regulations primarily focused on border management and state security, more recent legislative efforts, such as the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive, seek to standardize integration efforts across member states.

Interviewees talked about the importance of municipal-level support in ensuring effective migration management and integration efforts. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations remain intermediaries between policymakers and migrant communities, yet their ability to effect policy change is challenged by legal frameworks, limited funding opportunities, and varying levels of governmental engagement. These challenges closely align with the structural constraints identified in EU policy documents, particularly in relation to the financial and administrative limitations imposed on non-governmental organizations advocating for migrants' rights.

Furthermore, the application of theoretical frameworks such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework and Multi-Level Governance theories illustrate the role of coalition-building and shared policy beliefs in influencing migration governance. Findings from interviews and policy analysis confirm that non-governmental organizations actively engage in advocacy efforts and coalition-building to represent migrant communities better, yet their influence varies depending on national political climates, legal environments, and financial constraints.

One of the key insights from the research is that while NGOs have successfully formed partnerships and contributed to migration policymaking, in European countries such as Germany or Spain there are still inconsistencies in governance and funding structures, which continue to challenge the organizations to keep the ability to drive systemic change. Future efforts should focus on enhancing non-governmental organizations capacity through diversified funding streams, and fostering stronger institutional partnerships.

Ultimately, the research highlights the persistent divide between legal frameworks and practical implementation in EU migration governance. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort among the European Union institutions, national governments to ensure that NGO advocacy efforts are not only recognized but effectively integrated into policymaking processes. By strengthening NGO capacities and fostering more robust institutional collaboration, the EU can work toward a more sustainable and inclusive migration policy framework that benefits both migrant communities and host societies

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NEVYRIAUSYBINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ ADVOKACIJOS VAIDMUO ĮTRAUKIOS MIGRACIJOS POLITIKOS KONTEKSTE EUROPOS SĄJUNGOS VAKARŲ ŠALYSE

Anotacija. Šio straipsnio tikslas - remiantis literatūros šaltiniais išnagrinėti nevyriausybinių organizacijų vaidmenį, siekiant įgyvendinti įtraukią migracijos politiką Europos Sąjungoje. Tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti nevyriausybinių organizacijų taikomas strategijas, kurios padeda stiprinti migrantų, pabėgėlių ir prieglobsčio prašytojų balsą politikos formavimo procese. Nors yra svarbūs tarpininkai tarp migrantų ir politikos formuotojų, jų veikla dažnai susiduria su iššūkiais, tokiais kaip riboti teisiniai rėmai, nepakankamas finansavimas ir politinė opozicija. Tyrimo metu bus analizuojama mokslinė literatūra ir atliekami pusiau struktūruoti interviu su NVO atstovais bei politikos analitikais, siekiant identifikuoti šias kliūtis ir pasiūlyti veiksmingesnes advokacijos strategijas. Tyrimo rezultatai padės geriau suprasti NVO vaidmenį formuojant įtraukią migracijos politiką ES ir jų įtaką socialinei sanglaudai bei migrantų teisių apsaugai. Tai prisidės prie įtraukesnės visuomenės kūrimo bei politikos formuotojų ir praktikų veiksmingumo didinimo.

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MORALINĖS VAIZDUOTĖS RAIŠKA COVID-19 VALDYMOI SKIRTUOSE LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMO DEBATUOSE

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Santrauka. Tyrimo aktualumas remiasi gausiai nagrinėjama, bet neišsemia politikos bei moralės santykio filosofija. Pagrindinė tyrimo koncepcija – moralinė vaizduotė, kurią teoretikai sieja su dvejomis subjekto gebėjimais: gebėjimu įžvelgti moralinius situacijos aspektus (įžvalga) ir gebėjimu įsivaizduoti galimybių daugį (įžvalgų kiekis), t. y. alternatyvius probleminės situacijos sprendimus iš moralinės perspektyvos. Lyginant su sprendimų priėmimu verslo valdymo sektoriuje, kur moralinė vaizduotė empiriškai nagrinėta daugiau, politinės diskusijos ir svarstymai yra platesni savo tematikomis, o jiems įtakos turi didesnis ir įvairresnis veikėjų bei idėjų ratas. Tikslas – analizuojant per įžvalgos ir galimybių daugio numatymo komponentus atrasti politiniuose debatuose moralinės vaizduotės raišką ir jos sąlygas.

Tyrimo empirinis pagrindas – su COVID-19 pandemijos valdymu susiję Seimo debatai. Tyrinėjama, kiek politikai geba įžvelgti moralinių klausimų, susijusių su nagrinėjama situacija, spektrą ir kiek plačios (ypač iš moralinės perspektyvos) yra galimų sprendimų, siūlymų išspręsti problemą, diskusijos, darant prielaidą, jog šie du moralinės vaizduotės apibrėžimais pagrįsti komponentai nusako moralinės vaizduotės kaip gebėjimo charakteristiką subjekto atžvilgiu.

Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad politiniame disкурсе galima aptikti (ir toliau tyrinėti) moralinės vaizduotės komponentus, naudojant turinio teminės analizės metodą. Taip pat tyrimas atskleidė, kad galėtų būti vertingas tolesnis moralinės vaizduotės ir ideologijos sąveikos tyrinėjimas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: moralinė vaizduotė, politiniai debatai, COVID-19, teminė analizė.

Keywords: moral imagination, political debates, COVID-19, thematic analysis.

Įvadas

Moralinė vaizduotė apibūdinama kaip netipinių įžvalgų ieškojimas moralinėms problemoms spręsti. Ši koncepcija gali padėti kūrybiškai pažvelgti į problemas krizių akivaizdoje ir pamatyti plačiausią perspektyvą. Moralinės vaizduotės sąvoka šiuo aspektu gana plačiai tyrinėta verslo vadybos studijose, kurios dekonstruoja ir analizuoja galimus šios sąvokos komponentus, nustatinėdamos jų hipotetines sąsajas su (kokybiškesnių ar naudingesnių) sprendimų priėmimu organizacijose. Pagrindiniai koncepcijos operacionalizavimo ir empirinio tyrinėjimo pradininkai buvo organizacijų valdymo tyrėjai Patricia Werhane (1999; 2009; 2015), Brian Moriarty (2009), Deborah Vidaver-Cohen (1998) ir Lindsay Godwin (2012). Remdamasi I. Kanto bei A. Smitho įžvalgomis, organizacinės etikos teoretikė Patricia Werhane 1994 m. publikuotuose tyrimuose iškėlė klausimą apie moralinės vaizduotės vaidmenį vadybiniame etiškų sprendimų priėmimo procese. Autorės tyrimai plėtoti verslo etikos srityje, taip pat modelio taikymo galimybių ieškota inovacijų kūrimo procesų etikai praturtinti (Lehoux, 2000; Umbrello, 2018). Kaip socialinį procesą moralinę vaizduotę tyrinėjo Hargrave (2009).

Tuo tarpu politikos moksluose moralinės vaizduotės empirinio tyrimų beveik nėra, nors kaip minėta vieni koncepcijos pradininkų buvo filosofai-politikos teoretikai. Politikai nagrinėti dažniau pasirenkamos kitokios koncepcijos, kaip politinės nuostatos, vertybės ar ideologijos. Vis tik, žvelgiant į jau minėtus vadybinius sprendimų priėmimo tyrimus empirinio moralinės vaizduotės tyrimo modelio plėtojimas politikos moksluose turėtų leisti atidžiau pažvelgti į atsiribojimo nuo konvencinių sprendimų būdų galimybes, įvertinti, ar ir kiek įvairias galimybes išnaudoja politikai, priimdami sprendimus įtemptais moraline prasme klausimais. Tiesa, šių dviejų disciplinų kontekstai reikšmingai skiriasi – tyrinėjant moralinę vaizduotę politikos moksluose svarbūs tampa aspektai, kurių organizacijų vadyboje mažiau, būtent politinės vertybės ir ideologinės nuostatos, itin platus skirtingų interesų laukas, didesnė atsakomybė bendrojo gėrio atžvilgiu ir kt. Tačiau reikšmingos kritinės situacijos (moraline prasme įtemptos) pasirinkimas empiriniam tyrimui turėtų padėti atskleisti moralinės vaizduotės potencialą politikams peržengti ideologinius rėmus dėl bendresnių teisingų sprendimų radimo.

Tokiu atveju šiame straipsnyje pasirinkta COVID-19 pandemija, kilusi 2019 metų pabaigoje, sparčiai sukėlė pasaulinę krizę, kurios valdymui beprecedenčių sprendimų skubiai ieškojo vyriausybės, sveikatos organizacijos bei įvairaus dydžio bendruomenės. Tyrimai parodė, kad inovatyvių sprendimų paieškos ne tik viešojo valdymo srityje įvykus krizei suintensyvėja¹. Pirmosios COVID-19 pandemijos bangos metu, iki antrosios bangos suskaičiuota arti 500 inovatyvių sprendimų, skirtų krizės suvaldymui įvairiuose valstybės valdymo lygmenyse.²

Taigi šio tyrimo tikslas – aptikti ir išnagrinėti moralinės vaizduotės raišką politiniame diskurse – Seimo debatuose – remiantis moralinės vaizduotės apibrėžimuose (pateiktuose vadybinėse studijose) išskiriamomis charakteristikomis: paveikiamų grupių bei galimų veikimo būdų įžvelgimu. Kaip empirinė tyrimo medžiaga pasirinkti Seimo debatai, skirti COVID-19 pandemijos valdymui pirmosios bangos metu. Debatai pasirinkti kaip svarbus parlamentinės politikos diskursas, kuriame priimami sprendimai darant pasirinkimus, leidžiančius vertinti moralinio pasirinkimo aspektą. Atlikta posėdžių, skirtų problemų sprendimų ieškojimui bei politikos formulavimui, stenogramų analizė.

Straipsnį sudaro šios pagrindinės dalys: politikos ir moralės konteksto aprašymas, moralinės vaizduotės definicijų nagrinėjimas, metodologijos bei tyrimo rezultatų pristatymas ir išvados.

Politikos ir moralės klausimas

Moralės ir politikos sankirtoje kyla fundamentalių politinės filosofijos klausimų apie valdžios prigimtį, etiką ir politinių lyderių atsakomybę. Vienas iš pagrindinių moralės aspektų politikoje – etiško veiksmo pasirinkimas, moraline prasme įtemptos situacijos įvertinimas. Politinių sprendimų priėmėjai susiduria su sudėtingais sprendimais, kurie gali turėti reikšmingų pasekmių jų rinkėjams ir visuomenei, kaip, pavyzdžiui, nutiko ir pandemijos metu, kai reikėjo įvertinti pasekmes skirtingoms visuomenės grupėms, priimti sprendimus dėl vakcinų, veiklos apribojimų ir kt. Politikams svarbu atsižvelgti ne tik į trumpalaikę savo sprendimų naudą, bet ir į ilgalaikes bei plataus masto etines pasekmes. Tai apima įvairių suinteresuotųjų šalių interesų analizę bei teisingumo ir sąžiningumo principų laikymąsi (Sandel 2010). Kita vertus, moralinė vaizduotė leidžia pasirinkti ir sprendimus, kurie gali suderinti konvencionalios etikos požiūriu nesuderinamus interesus (Johnson 1993).

Moralė politikoje susijusi su vertybių ir principų vaidmeniu viešajame valdyme (ten pat). Politiniai lyderiai viešose kalbose dažnai tvirtina, kad veikia vadovaudamiesi tam tikrais idealais, tokiais kaip teisingumas, lygybė ar laisvė. Tačiau gali kilti nesutarimų dėl to, ką šios vertybės reiškia praktikoje ir kaip joms turėtų būti teikiama pirmenybė priimant politinius sprendimus konkrečiais klausimais. Politinių sprendimų priėmimą dažnai lydi moralinės dilemos, reikalaujančios vertybinių pasirinkimų arba prieštarų

¹ OECD. Embracing Innovation in Government. September, 2020.

² OECD. OPSI COVID-19 Innovative response Tracker, 2020, < <https://oecd-opsi.org/covid-response/> > [Žiūrėta 2024-09-17]

interesų subalansavimo. Intensyvesnės temos šiuo klausimu yra karo ir taikos (tarptautinių santykių), mirties bausmės, aborto teisės, ekonominės socialinės nelygybės, migracijos ir pan. Tokie prieštaringi pasirinkimai kelia iššūkius, siekiant abstrakčius moralės principus pritaikyti konkrečioms situacijoms konkrečiais politiniais veiksmais. Politikos teoretikė Hannah Arendt pabrėžia moralinio sprendimo svarbą politiko kasdienybėje, pažymėdama, kad „politika nėra vaikų darželis; politikoje paklusnumas ir parama yra tas pats“ (Arendt 1963). Tai rodo sudėtingą moralinių įsipareigojimų ir politinio lojalumo sąveiką. Tuo tarpu filosofas Michaelas Walzeris teigia, kad „neišvengiami politikos kompromisai yra moralės filosofijos dalykas“ (Walzer 1973), pabrėždamas, kad politiniai veikėjai dažnai susiduria su situacijomis, kai reikia sudėtingų etinių kompromisų, kad pasiektų didesnę gerą. Ši įtampa tarp moralinių idealų ir pragmatizmo viešajame valdyme verčia politikus operuoti neapibrėžtuose etikos kontekstuose, turint prievolę nepamiršti teisingumo ir sąžiningumo kaip pagrindinių etinių principų. Taigi, moralės politikoje tema implikuoja nuolatinę įtampą siekiant suderinti sprendimo etiškumą ir efektyvumą.

Vienas iš demokratijos tyrinėtojų Robert Dahl pabrėžė demokratinį principų svarbą, teigdamas, kad „svarbiausia demokratijos savybė yra tų, kurie valdo vadovaudamiesi savo interesais, nebuvimas“ (Dahl 1998). Organizacijų vadybos tyrimuose moralinės vaizduotės tema toks atraminis lygmuo gali būti, pvz., įmonės pelningumas, įvaizdis ar tvarumas (Whitaker Godwin 2012), politikos moksluose tiriant moralinę vaizduotę, galima išvesti, kad pagrindinis politinio veikėjo įsipareigojimas demokratinėje visuomenėje susijęs su bendruoju geriu.

Anot James Mumford, pandemija atskleidė neįprastų dalykų apie įprastus žmones: „mes, giliausiai susiskaldžiusių Vakarų tautų atstovai, demonstruojame, kad vis dar galime susitelkti kartu tam, kad pasiaukotume dėl bendro gėrio. Tokių pamokų nereikėtų prarasti. Turime rasti būdus padaryti šį solidarumo jausmą nuolatine naujojo normalumo dalimi, kai pandemija baigsis“ (Mumford 2020). Autorius taip pat teigia, jog būtent moralinė vaizduotė gali padėti įveikti giliai išsiskaldžiusį politinį gentiškumą (angl. Political tribalism), kuris, anot jo, paralyžiuoja Vakarų visuomenes.

Moralinė vaizduotė

Moralinė vaizduotė apima dvi plačias conceptualias sritis – vaizduotę, kuri implikuoja kūrybos dėmenį, ir moralę, kuri pirmiausiai asocijuojama su deontologine filosofija. Moralinis samprotavimas ir sprendimas, anot Kanto, yra visų pirma racionalus (Kant 1949), tačiau vaizduotė gali padėti nustatyti tikslą ir pasirinkti veiksmą (Johnson 1993).

Analizuojant skirtingų autorių moralinės vaizduotės definicijas, tarp kitų galima išskirti du dėmenis: skirtingų veiksmų galimybių numatymas bei skirtingų paveikiamųjų įžvelgimas (1 lentelė). Šiuo paremtas tyrimo dizainas, išskiriant du pagrindinius moralinės vaizduotės komponentus.

Kaip teigia moralinės vaizduotės teoretikas Markas Johnsonas, „turime įsivaizduoti, kaip įvairūs mūsų suvokiami veiksmai gali keisti mūsų tapatybę, keisti įsipareigojimus, santykius ir paveikti kitų gyvenimus. Pasitelkę vaizduotę turime ištirti, ką tai gali reikšti, kalbant apie galimybes sustiprinti prasmę ir santykius, kad galėtume atlikti tą ar kitą veiksmą. Mums reikia gebėjimo įsivaizduoti ir įgyvendinti savo moralinio supratimo, charakterio ir elgesio pokyčius. Trumpai tariant, mums reikia vaizduotės racionalumo, kuris vienu metu būtų įžvalgus, kritiškai tiriantis ir keičiantis. (p. 187)“. Darcia Narvaez savo tekste „The Development of Moral Imagination“ (2014) remiasi Johnu Dewey, vaizduotę apibūdinusio kaip dramos repeticiją, kurios metu žmonės kūrybiškai interpretuoja ir repetuoja alternatyvius veiksmų būdus, kad tikėtini rezultatai ir poveikis kitiems lemtų moralinius sprendimus. Tai apima ateities bendrakūrą su kitais per dialogą ir grįžtamąjį ryšį apie įsivaizduojamas alternatyvas kartu ugdant ryškų suvokimą ir lankstų reagavimą į kiekvieną situaciją (Narvaez, 1993).

Pirmasis moralinės vaizduotės sąvoką paminėjęs Edmundas Burke'as³ pastebėjo, kad: „visas valdymas – iš tikrųjų kiekviena žmogaus nauda ir patenkinimas, kiekviena dorybė ir kiekvienas protingas

³ Burke moralinę vaizduotę paminėjo pirmasis savo veikale Apmąstymai apie Prancūzijos revoliuciją 1790 m.

1 lentelė. Moralinės vaizduotės apibrėžimai

Gebėjimas suvokti, kad konkuruojančių ekonominių santykių tinklas tuo pat metu yra ir moralinių ar etinių santykių tinklas.	Powers and Vogel, 1980
Mūsų gebėjimas išplėtoti ir vertinti skirtingus veiksmų kelius, kuriuos tik iš dalies lemia duotas moralės taisyklių turinys, kad sužinotume, ką daryti konkrečioje situacijoje yra geriausia moraliniu požiūriu.	Larmore, 1987
Gebėjimas artikuliuoti ir nagrinėti alternatyvas, pasverti jas ir galimas jų pasekmes, atsižvelgiant į jų poveikį kitiems savo planams ir interesams bei galimą jų poveikį kitų interesams ir jausmams.	Jacobs, 1991
Gebėjimas išsiaiškinti įvairias galimybes tam tikroje situacijoje ir įsivaizduoti galimą pagalbą bei žalą, kuri gali atsirasti dėl tam tikro veiksmo.	Johnson, 1993
“Kai tenka priimti etinį sprendimą, gebėjimas įsivaizduoti įvairius alternatyvius pasirinkimus, pasekmes, sprendimus, naudą ir žalą.”	Hartman et al., 2014
tai sudėtingas mąstymo procesas, apimantis savirefleksiją apie priimtą pasaulėžiūrą, siekiant suvokti jos ribas, atsiribojimą nuo jos, įsivaizduojant galimus moralinius konfliktus, bei naujų galimybių svarstymą ir vertinimą iš moralinės pusės, apimant tiek vyraujančius, tiek alternatyvius mąstymo modelius.	De Angelo, Ianulardo, 2024

veiksmas – pagrįsta kompromisais ir mainais“ (Burke 2005). Burke'o „moralinė vaizduotė“ – tai etinio suvokimo galia, peržengianti asmeninę patirtį ir trumpalaikius įvykius; aukščiausia jos forma pasireiškia poezijoje ir mene. Ji siekia suvokti teisingą tvarką ir sieloje, ir valstybėje.

Moraliniams klausimams būdinga įtampa išryškina abstrakčių moralės principų pavertimo konkrečiais politiniais veiksmais iššūkius. Dar labiau apsunkina šiame procese moralės subjektyvumas, todėl subjektui natūraliai kyla įvairių teisingumo, sąžiningumo ir atitinkamų aukštesnės, pvz., valstybės valdžios, ribų interpretacijų. Vadinas, moralės ir politikos santykis yra ne tik jau egzistuojančių etinių apibrėžimų taikymas politinėms situacijoms, bet veikiau dinamiška sąveika, kurią formuoja galios dinamika, konkuruojantys interesai ir nuolat kintantis supratimas, kas yra teisingas, kas yra teisinga (Rawls 1971).

Moralinės vaizduotės teoretikai pabrėžia, jog ši koncepcija pasireiškia veikiau kaip kognityvinis procesas (Johnson 1993) ar proceso schema (Fesmire 2003), nei kaip asmeninė, įgimta, nekintama subjekto charakteristika (tuo, beje, moralinė vaizduotė skiriasi nuo moralinio jautrumo ar moralinės sėkmės).

Martha Nussbaum, pabrėžia, kad moralinės vaizduotės lavinimas per literatūrą ir meno formas gali praturtinti moralinį diskursą, taip suteikdamas gelmės ir politikos debatams. Taigi, moralinė vaizduotė yra itin vertinga priemonė politikoje, leidžianti kurti labiau humaniškas ir įtraukias politikos paradigmas (Nussbaum 2010).

Sąvokos empirinis taikymas lig šiol geriausiai išplėtotas verslo valdymo, konkrečiai, verslo etikos studijose, daugiausiai moralinę vaizduotę siejant su vadovavimo procesams reikalinga ar juos paveikiančia, taip pat ir organizacijos etiką veikiančia charakteristika (Werhane 1999; Werhane ir Moriarty 2009; Whittaker Godwin 2012). Verslo etikos ekspertė Patricia Werhane moralinės vaizduotės dedamąsias apibendrina remdamasi Kanto perskyromis, kaip analogijomis. Werhane apibūdino ir išskyrė moralinės vaizduotės apibrėžimą, siūlydama vertinti ją kaip procesą, kuriame aptiktume „bent keturis dalykus: (1) atitūkimą nuo savo vaidmens, konkrečios situacijos ar konteksto; (2) suvokimą, kokią schemą subjektas taiko ir/arba kuri veikia konkrečiame kontekste; (3) kūrybišką naujų galimybių, naujų būdų interpretuoti patirtis ir naujų sprendimų esamoms dilemoms įsivaizdavimą; ir (4) senojo konteksto, jo apimties arba naudojamų konceptualių schemų spektro ir naujų galimybių įvertinimą“ (Werhane 1999).

Laikant prototipu organizacinės etikos tyrėjų modelio principus, kai politikos moksluose operacionalizuojame moralinės vaizduotės sąvoką, išlieka esminiai determinantai, darantys įtaką sprendimui – moralinė įžvalga, gebėjimas matyti poveikio mastą bei scenarijaus alternatyvas.

Tyrimo metodologija

Empirinė tyrimo medžiaga – tikslingai atrinktos Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo debatų, skirtų COVID-19 pandemijos valdymui Lietuvoje, stenogramos, įtraukiant klausimus, svarstytus pirmosios bangos metu. Analizuotos kovo mėnesį vykusių keturių Seimo debatų posėdžių⁴ stenogramos eksportuotos į Microsoft Word dokumentą, apimtis – 100396 žodžiai, duomenų kodavimui naudota programa MAXQ-DA24, skirta kokybinei analizei ir mišriems metodams, lentelės sudarytos Microsoft Word formatu. Naudotas kokybinis metodas – teminė analizė.

Politiniai sprendimai dauguma klausimų demokratijose pagrįsti viešomis išankstinėmis diskusijomis (Lapesa, 2020), politiniai debatai yra esminis parlamentinės politikos aspektas (Bachtiger 2014). Parlamentiniai debatai, anot Habermaso, atlieka esmines legitimizavimo ir socialinės integracijos funkcijas (Habermas 1996). Kadangi COVID-19 krizė neturėjo precedento, pasirinktuose debatuose tikėtasi, kad jų dalyviai intensyviau ieškos sprendimų, scenarijų, kurie išplėstų ankstesnes praktikas ir galimų veiksmų spektrą, taip pat beprecedentiškumas ir įtampa turėjo teigiamai koreliuoti su pasisakymų spontaniškumu, kas turėjo tiksliau atspindėti politikų požiūrį. Rutininiai darbotvarkės klausimai, šiuo atveju, buvo svarstomi ekstremaliomis sąlygomis, aptariant daug lig tol neaptartų scenarijų ir situacijų, kur negaliojo nei buvę įprasti apibrėžimai nei sprendimai. Šį tyrimo lauko pasirinkimą lėmė vaizduotės komponento tyrimo dalis, kaip ir laikotarpį – pati krizės pradžia buvo intensyviausias naujų pasirinkimų metas.

Teminė analizė pasirinkta kaip sistemingas ir lanksčiai pritaikomas metodas esminėms kokybinių duomenų reikšmėms ir įžvalgoms analizuoti. Šiuo atveju tokia analizė tinkama sudėtingos patirties bei socialinio reiškinių tyrimui. Anot teminės analizės metodologijos autorių Brown ir Clarke, teminė prieiga leidžia užfiksuoti svarbius tyrimo klausimui aspektus bei rasti tam tikrą atsako sistemiškumą bei reikšmės lygį (Brown, Clarke 2006). Moralinę vaizduotę dekonstruoti nėra paprasta. Tai tarpdisciplininio tyrimo objektas, kurio pagrindiniai elementai taip pat reikalauja atskiros dekonstrukcijos. Ankstesniuose tyrimuose pagrindiniais moralinės vaizduotės determinantais laikomas moralinis dėmesingumas (angl. *Moral attentiveness*) ir kūrybiškumas (Whitaker Godwin 2012).

Šiame tyrime išskirti tokie moralinės vaizduotės komponentai, išvedant juos iš aukščiau pateiktų sąvokos definicijų (1 lentelė): 1) išreikštas sprendimo poveikį patiriančių subjektų ir / arba socialinių grupių įžvelgimas; 2) išreikštas sprendimo variantų ir / arba galimybių veikti įžvelgimas. Papildomai buvo stebima, kaip koreliuoja partinė pasisakančiojo priklausomybė (ideologinės nuostatos) su teikiamais pasiūlymais veiksams ir priemonėms.

Šių komponentų reikšmė ir minėtame organizacijų valdymo srities tyrime (Whitaker, Godwin 2012), ir šioje politinių debatų analizėje priklauso nuo to, kiek tiriamajame kontekste subjektas identifikuoja kiekvieną iš jų. Priklausomai nuo to, kiek iš pasisakymuose išreikšti komponentai, tolesnėje analizėje debatų dalyviui priskiriamas moralinės vaizduotės gebėjimas.

Pagrindinis tyrimo metodologijos ribotumas – tas, jog kliaujamasi tik pasisakymų analize. Viena vertus, tyrimo tikslas ir metodologija neįtraukia plačios neuromokslų ir / ar psichologijos srities klausimų apie subjekto moralinių intencijų kilmę (Narvaez 1993). Kita vertus, vieši debatai pasirinkti kaip tinkamesni duomenys negu, pavyzdžiui, individualūs interviu, kuriuose politikas gali apgalvoti ir pateikti atsakymą, kuris tinkamesnis teigiamo įvaizdžio palaikymo prasme, nėra pakankamai spontaniškas. Debatai kritinio periodo tema, įtraukiant labiau įtemptas ir daugiau visuomenės grupių paliečiančias temas, taip pat pasirinkti kaip kontekstas, kuriame didesnė tikimybė pastebėti spontaniškesnes reakcijas tam, kad

⁴ Nr. 382, 383, 384, 385

rezultatas leistų formuluoti tikslesnes išvadas. Vaizduotės komponentas svarbus, kaip išsivadavimas iš konvencijos, statiško (Sabolius, 2009), šiuo atveju – etinės sistemos, todėl spontaniškos išvalgos momentas pasirinktas kaip daugiau atskleidžiantis apie moralinės vaizduotės raišką procese.

Atrinkti LR Seimo debatai, vykę pirmosios COVID-19 bangos metu ir antrosios bangos pradžioje. Iš visų šio laikotarpio Seimo debatų stenogramų atrinkti debatai tomis temomis, kuriose tikėtasi etinio pasirinkimo diskusijos apie paveikiamas visuomenės grupes, subjektus, o taip pat ir galimus sprendimus, remiantis nustatytais kategorijomis (2 lentelė).

Veiksmų temos kategorijos (2 lentelė) išskirtos pagal Lowio potencialių politinės darbotvarkės problemų klasifikaciją į paskirstomosios politikos (naujų išteklių paskirstymo), perskirstomosios (esamų išteklių perskirstymo), reguliatyvinės (veiklos reguliavimo ir kontrolės) bei institucinės (Lowio 1964; 1972). Koreliacijoje su kategorijomis, išvesti veiksmų ir socialinių grupių temų kodai duomenų susisteminiui.

Kiekvienas debatų dalyvis, įvardijęs keletą galimų sprendimo variantų / scenarijų ar paveikiamų grupių prie jau paminėtų diskutuojant, pažymėtas rezultatų lentelėje, nurodant pasisakymų kiekį (3 lentelė). Debatų dalyvių pasisakymai buvo vertinami pagal tai, kaip plačiai jie išvelgia sprendimo poveikį (kiek skirtingų visuomenės grupių bus paveikta) ir kaip geba išreikšti empatiją, taip pat pagal tai, kiek skirtingų sprendimų siūlo esamai situacijai spręsti. Daugiausiai kartų pažymėti debatų dalyviai buvo tie, kurie daugiausiai dėmesio skyrė kiekvieno siūlomo sprendimo poveikiui, įtraukdami daugiau paveikiamų grupių į diskusijos temą.

Jei pasisakymuose buvo stebimas vienas, kitas arba abu komponentai, jie buvo papildomai vertinami pagal tai, ar tarp pasisakiusių pasireiškė vieningumo, ir pritarimo elementas, nepaisant to, kokiai partijai priklausė pasisakiusieji, keliant tolesnio tyrimo klausimą, ar šis pritarimo elementas galėtų neutralizuoti partines ideologines įtampas.

Rezultatai

Debatų dalyviai analizuojamos tyrimo imties ribose pasisakė ir apie poveikį patiriančias grupes ir apie galimus veikimo variantus, papildydami jau pateiktus pasiūlymus. Pagal tai galima daryti prielaidą, jog minėti moralinės vaizduotės komponentai tokio tipo politiniuose pasisakymuose gali būti aptinkami ir nagrinėjami.

2 lentelė. Kodų kategorijos.

Temos	Kategorijos
Socialinės grupės	Sveikatos priežiūros darbuotojai
	Žemų pajamų gyventojai ir šeimos
	Vyresnio amžiaus gyventojai
	Mažumos ir imigrantai
	Ugdymo personalas
	Vaikai ir jaunimas
	Gyventojai su negalia
	Verslininkai
Veiksmai	Finansinė parama (naujų ir esamų išteklių paskirstymo)
	Veiklos apribojimai (veiklos reguliavimo ir kontrolės)
	Socialinė pagalba (naujų ir esamų išteklių paskirstymo)
	Psichologinė pagalba (naujų ir esamų išteklių paskirstymo)

3 lentelė. Rezultatų lentelė.

Paminėjimai grupės	Paminėjimai sprendimai	Dalyvis	Paminėtas vieninigumas / pritarimas
	4 persikvalifikavimas, išmokos, informavimas, sąlygų šeimoms sudarymas	L. Kukuraitis	1
	2 netikslingų projektų stabdymas, tyrimas	J. Dagys	1
	1 Lengvatos verslui, siekiant išsaugoti darbuotojų darbo vietas	M. Navickienė	
1 neįgalių vyresnių nei pradinukai vaikų globėjai	1 nedarbingumo galimybė	D. Šakalienė	
2 smulkus verslas, bankai/ bankų klientai	6 darbuotojų tyrimas, lengvatos verslui, lengvatų diferencijavimas, mokesčių atidėjimas, lanksčios sąlygos	M. Majauskas	4
1	1 kreditų mokėjimų atidėjimas	P. Gražulis	
7	4 sąlygų darbuotojams sudarymas, moralinio pavyzdžio rodymas, subsidijos, papildomos garantijos	T. Tomilinas	2
	2 sąlygų darbuotojams sudarymas, tarpinis modelis verslui	G. Skaistė	
1	2 karantino proporcingumas	S. Gentvilas	1
1 gamybos darbuotojai		J. Razma	
1 Seimo administracijos darbuotojai,	2 kaukių užsakymas, nuotolinio darbo diegimas	M. Puidokas	1
1 viešojo transporto vairuotojai		V. Bakas	
		R. Šalaševičiūtė	1
1 farmacininkai		A. Matulas	
1 medikai dirbantys židiniuose		A. Sysas	1

Paminėjimai grupės	Paminėjimai sprendimai	Dalyvis	Paminėtas vienin- gumas / pritarimas
2 papildomos profesijos, šeimos	1 persikvalifikavimas	V. Čmilytė- Nielsen	
1 gydytojai rizikos zonoje (neužkrečiamos ligos)		J. Sabatauskas	
1 Teikiantys paslaugas sergan- tiems užkrečiamomis ligomis	1 draudimo taikymas	A. Vinkus	
1 sveikatos priežiūros darbuotojai	2 nuotolinio tobulinimas valstybės tarnyboms, kokybės kontrolė	E. Pupinis	

Kalbant apie poveikį patiriančių socialinių grupių temas, pačių grupių paminėjimų skaičius nebuvo svarbus. Kaip apibrėžta metodologijoje, svarbu buvo, ar pasisakiusysis įvardija platesnį grupių ratą, ar įvardija dar nepaminėtą socialinę grupę, argumentuodamas, sprendimo svarbą. Dažniausiai pasisakymuose, kurie buvo vertinami, buvominimizemų pajamų gyventojai ir šeimos, verslo atstovai bei sveikatos priežiūros darbuotojai. Kalbant apie sprendimų pasiūlymus, šių pasiūlymų buvo minima daugiau.

Pirmiausia, ką leidžia patvirtinti tyrimo rezultatai, tai, jog moralinė vaizduotė pasireiškia veikiau, kaip tam tikras kognityvinis procesas nei kaip asmeninė savybė ar polinkis, kaip ir apibrėžia aukščiau cituoti autoriai (Johnson 1993; Larmore 1987). Kaip teigė Werhane, moralinę vaizduotę apibrėždami kaip kognityvinį procesą, darome prielaidą, kad ji gali būti individualiai taikoma selektyviai priimant kiekvieną sprendimą, o taip pat veikiamą individualių vidinių veiksmų (Werhane 2002). Debatuose galimų veiksmų, o ypač paveikiamų grupių spektrą diskutuodami ir argumentuodami išplečia visi aktyvūs dalyviai taip moralinės vaizduotės procesą įveiklinantys tarpusavio sąveikoje. Tai labiausiai atsiskleidžia, kai bandoma atrasti ir įvardyti kuo daugiau skirtingų paveiktų grupių bei argumentuoti šių grupių pažeidžiamumą:

Gerbiamas ministre, iš tikrųjų keistas pirmas išpūdis pamačius šį įstatymo projektą, kad vis dėlto tas prastovų finansavimas asmenims priklauso nuo amžiaus. Šiuo atveju ar nėra vėl lipama ant to paties grėblio ir nėra stigmatizuojama to amžiaus grupė mūsų Lietuvos piliečių arba gyventojų, kurie turi darbą, tarsi duodant tiesiogiai nuorodą darbdaviams. Štai jūs juos leiskite į prastovą, nesvarbu, ar šis žmogus yra labai reikalingas gamyboje, ar nelabai, bet pirmiausia atsikratykite jų. Aš labai bijau, kad po to pasipils atleidimai, būriai tokių žmonių (Julius Sabatauskas).

Taip pat labai svarbu yra ligos išmoka neįgaliems vaikams (ačiū Seimo nariams už pasiūlymus), seneliams (ačiū Vyriausybei) ir papildomos garantijos dirbantiems pirmose eilėse: gydytojams, prekybos centrų darbuotojams, policininkams ir kitiems (Tomas Tomilinas).

Dabar čia parašyta, kad kai darbuotojui yra įtarimų ir sveikatos problemų, darbdavys kiekvienam tokiam darbuotojui besąlygiškai privalo pasiūlyti nuotolinį darbą. Ar tikrai tam darbuotojui, kuris dirba prie konvejerio, bus tokia galimybė? Aš manau, kad čia turėjo būti pasakyta - jei yra galimybė, pasiūlo nuotolinį darbą. O jei tokios galimybės nėra, tai darbuotojas turi būti iš karto nušalinamas. O čia atsiranda prievolė darbdaviui kiekvienu atveju pasiūlyti nuotolinį darbą. Tai ar taip gali būti? Ar tikrai komitetas čia teisingai suredagavo tą 31 straipsnį? (Jurgis Razma).

(...) visų mūsų tikslas turėtų būti, kad kuo daugiau žmonių šitos krizės akivaizdoje ilgą laiką išlaikytų savo darbo vietas, o dabartinėje situacijoje patirtų kuo menkesnius nuostolius. Tačiau jūsų siūloma 40 % ir 60 %. Ar tai nėra nesudėvimos klumpės verslui, ypač žinant, kad yra nedideli verslai, šeimos verslai, kurie jau šiandien, netekdami pajamų, susiduria su sunkumais išlaikyti tą darbo vietą, kai yra reikalavimas, kad darbo vieta turi būti saugoma net šešis mėnesius. Ar jie, matydami grėsmę ir nežinomumą, nepriims tiesiog sprendimo šiandien atleisti tuos žmones nežinodami, ar jie galės tą vietą išsaugoti pusę metų? (Monika Navickienė).

Debatų dalyviai diskusijos metu įvardija vis papildomas skirtingas grupes, kurioms reikalingus sprendimus reikia derinti su teikiamu projektu (vaikų su negalia tėvai ir globėjai, skirtingų verslų atstovai, dirbantieji pagal individualią veiklą, paskolas turintys mokėti uždaromų verslų atstovai, etc.). Gan dažnai naudojamas asmeninio patyrimo naratyvas (kalbantysis susiduria su tiesiogiai situaciją patiriančiu pažįstamu asmeniu). Tokiu būdu paminimi būtent retesni, labiau išskirtiniai atvejai, kurie nebūna įtraukti į svarstomo pasiūlymo pritaikymą daugumai. Susidaro įspūdis, jog pavyzdžio formulavimas tokiu būdu atrodo įtikinamesnis nei būtų tiesiog teorinės situacijos modeliavimas. Viena vertus taip išreiškiama didesnė empatija tai interesų grupei, apie kurią tarsi niekas nepagalvojo, tačiau kita vertus, tai gali būti ir retorinė priemonė. Bet kuriuo atveju, tai traktuojama, kaip išskirtinės situacijos (papildomos interesų grupės) paminėjimas.

Debatuojantieji ne tik papildo jau pateiktus veiksmų ir / ar paveikiamųjų sąrašus. Svarbus aspektas, kad pasiūloma pažvelgti į sprendimą iš kitos pusės, rodant empatiją kitai interesų grupei. Pavyzdžiui, kalbant apie išmokas prastovs patiriantiems darbuotojams, bei, formuluojant teikiamo projekto punktus, verslininkų kaip darbdavių padėtį, jų įvairovę ir galimas situacijas įtraukiantys kalbėtojai taip pat papildo prielaidas sprendimui. Teikiant siūlymą apie atlyginimų priedus sveikatos priežiūros darbuotojams, reikia įtraukti ir pačių sveikatos priežiūros įstaigų padėtį, kuriems turi būti numatyti atitinkami asignavimai, ir pan.

Didelis skaičius pasisakymuose keliamų klausimų vis dėlto kvestionuoja pateiktus sprendimus, bet nepateikia argumentų ir pasiūlymų alternatyvų sprendimams, tokie atvejai nebuvo žymimi lentelėje ir nepatenka į iškeltų moralinės vaizduotės komponentų apibrėžimą. Keliant klausimus debatuoja tema argumentavimas leidžia daryti prielaidą dėl pasisakiusiojo įtraukimo / neįtraukimo į rezultatų suvestinę pagal išskirtus komponentus. Argumentavimo detalumą taip pat galima susieti su aukščiau pateiktu konkrečių istorijų / pavyzdžių pateikimu – tai kelia daugiau pasitikėjimo kalbančiojo intencija. Vėl gi, reikėtų papildomo tyrimo siekiant pilnai atmesti kalbančiųjų siekimą tiesiog tinkamai pasisakyti.

Kitas svarbus iš pastebėtų aspektų – diskutantų vieningumas priimant sprendimus visuomenei svarbiais klausimais, kurį, tikėtina, skatina pirmiausia beprecedentė gilėjančios krizės situacija. Reiškiamas palaikymas ir raginimas palaikyti bei balsuoti vieningai, pvz.:

Čia, matyt, nėra labai svarbu, kas ir ką pateikia, svarbu, kad yra rastas bendras sutarimas. Čia, man atrodo, gražus pavyzdys, kai Seimas išdiskutavo ir patobulino Vyriausybės pateiktus projektus (...) (Mykolas Majauskas).

(...) mes visi esame sutelkti dėl to, kad turime įveikti viešąjį interesą atitinkantį tikslą, pasiekti tokį tikslą. Šiuo atveju nereikia sakyti, kad vien valstybė arba vien žmogus, darbuotojas turi būti atsakingas. Tai verslai taip pat turi būti atsakingi ir turi žiūrėti atsakingai į situaciją. Visi kartu. Tik kartu įveiksime. Mes tai galime. (Tomas Tomilinas).

Viena vertus, tokį vieningumą tarp skirtingų partijų atstovų skatina skubus išeičių iš netikėtos padėties ieškojimas, tačiau, žvelgiant iš moralinės vaizduotės koncepcijos perspektyvos, daugiausiai koncentruojamasi būtent į bendro gėrio užtikrinimą. Tai vėl gi sąlygoja riboti laiko ištekliai bei neužtikrintumas dėl priemonių pakankamumo. Tačiau tai gali palaikyti teorines prielaidas, kad moralinė vaizduotė gali koreliuoti su partiškumo ribų įveikimu, skatinti empatiją, tvaresnį ir įtraukesnį požiūrį į valdymą ir pilietinį dalyvavimą (de Vreese Esser Aalberg Reinemann Stanyer 2018).

Pagal aukščiau tekste paminėtą J. Mumfordą, moralinės vaizduotės principai suteikia geriausią galimybę spręsti painiausius moralinius klausimus, priartinant sprendimus arčiausiai prie gėrio, atsisakant ideologijos – politinio identiteto (Mumford 2020). Pandemijos pateikti u (ždaviniai ištis paskatino skirtingų politinių partijų atstovus susitelkti, vadinasi, galimai palikti nuošalyje ideologines nuostatas ar partinius interesus dėl bendrojo gėrio, kuris buvo ypatingai rizikingoje situacijoje, pavyzdžiui, Mykolo Majausko pasiūlymas dėl PVM lengvatos smulkiajam verslui:

Taip, sutinku, kad kaip konservatoriui ši siūlymą buvo šiek tiek sudėtinga registruoti ir diskutuoti, bet aš labai tikiuosi, kad mes rasime sutarimą. (Mykolas Majauskas)

Pasak rašytojos ir filosofės Iris Murdoch, „moralūs žmonės nebūtinai kūrybiškesni, bet greičiau jų platesnis pasaulėvaizdis, kas leidžia atskirti teisingą nuo neteisingo aiškiau ir su mažesnėmis abejonėmis“ (1993). Moralinės vaizduotės raiškos atskleidimas per metodologijoje išskirtus komponentus antrina Murdoch minčiai apie platų subjekto pasaulėvaizdį. Moralinė vaizduotė tiek verslo valdyje, tiek politikoje reiškia gebėjimą kūrybiškai mąstyti apie etines dilemas, matyti už savo perspektyvos ribų ir suprasti politinių pasirinkimų pasekmes, tenkančias įvairioms visuomenės grupėms. Moralinės vaizduotės teoretikų išgrynintais apibrėžimais paremtas tyrimas leido išskirti politiniuose debatuose epizodus, kuriuose moralinė vaizduotė reiškiasi per platų paveikiamų grupių rato matymą bei galimybių veikti variantų – idėjų generavimą.

Moralinės vaizduotės koncepcijos elementai pasirodė ten, kur sprendimas reikalavo naujų ir kuo daugiau socialinių grupių aprėpiančių įžvalgų. Įtempta situacija pandemijos metu politinius lyderius ir piliečius skatino apsvarstyti platesnį politinių sprendimų poveikį žmogaus orumui, socialiniam teisingumui ir bendruomenės gerovei. Akivaizdžiai sudėtingoje situacijoje mažiau dėmesio buvo teikiama ideologiniams atitikimams, daugiau – realiai veikiantiems sprendimams formuluoti. Galima daryti prielaidą, jog lyginant su labiau populistiniu kontekstu, kur įtampa mažėja, pasisakymuose ir sprendimų siūlymuose būtų daugiau demagogijos, tačiau tą turėtų parodyti palyginamasis tyrimas. Moralinės vaizduotės komponentų pasireiškimas vis dėlto susijusi su ideologinio rigidiškumo silpnėjimu bendram gėriui kurti, jų plėtojimas leidžia ieškoti naujoviškų sudėtingų socialinių problemų sprendimų integruojant etinę dimensiją į politinį procesą.

Išvados

Moralinės vaizduotės raišką politinių debatų kontekste galima aptikti ir nagrinėti naudojant teoriją paremtų komponentų – gebėjimu įžvelgti moralinius situacijos aspektus (įžvalga) ir gebėjimu įsivaizduoti galimybių daugį (įžvalgų kiekis), t. y. alternatyvius probleminės situacijos sprendimus iš moralinės perspektyvos – išskyrimą. Metodą, kuris plėtotas vadybos etikos tyrimuose, galima taikyti ir politikos moksluose, taip sprendžiant aktualią moralinės vaizduotės operacionalizavimo problemą empiriniuose politinių mokslų tyrimuose.

Moralinė vaizduotė reiškiasi kaip minties eiga, gebėjimas, procesas, ne apibrėžta charakteristika, ką pabrėžia teoretikai (Johnson 1993; Fesmire 2003; Werhane 1999).

Tyrimo duomenys leido įvertinti ir palyginti moralinės vaizduotės išskirtų komponentų raišką atskirų politikų pasisakymuose.

Esama pagrindo toliau tęsti moralinės vaizduotės ir ideologijos koreliacijos tyrimą politikos moksluose, įtraukiant į metodologiją palyginimą, pvz., kritinės situacijos laikotarpio debatus su viešais rinkiminiais debatais, kuriuose įtampa darant sprendimą, tikėtina, mažesnė nei siekis „užsidirbti“ rinkėjų balsų, taikant į partijos elektorato lūkesčius. Kitas kelias galėtų būti – metodologijos papildymas pusiau struktūruotais interviu, kuriuose parengtų konkrečių situacijų pateikimas politiniam veikėjui galimai leistų atskleisti papildomą argumentaciją. Toks kelias leistų palyginti, kaip politikas samprotauja etiniais klausimais nesant platesnės auditorijos.

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Laima Zakaraitė

THE MANIFESTATION OF MORAL IMAGINATION IN THE DEBATES OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA ON COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

Abstract. *The relevance of the study is based on the widely studied, but inexhaustible philosophy of the relationship between politics and morality. The main concept of the study is moral imagination, which theorists associate with two abilities of the subject: the ability to see the moral aspects of a situation (insight) and the ability to imagine a multitude of possibilities (insight quantity), i.e. alternative solutions to a problematic situation from a moral perspective. Compared to decision-making in the business management sector, where moral imagination has been empirically studied more, political discussions and deliberations are broader in their topics, and they are influenced by a larger and more diverse circle of actors and ideas. The goal is to discover the manifestation of moral imagination in political debates and its conditions through the analysis of the components of insight and foresight of possibilities. The empirical basis of the study is the Seimas debates related to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study examines the extent to which politicians are able to perceive the spectrum of moral issues related to the situation under consideration and how broad (especially from a moral perspective) the range of possible solutions, proposals for solving the problem, and discussions are, assuming that these two components based on definitions of moral imagination define the characteristics of the ability of moral imagination in relation to the subject. The results of the study show that it is possible to detect (and further study) components of moral imagination in political discourse using the thematic analysis of content. The study also revealed that further research into the bond between moral imagination and ideology could be valuable.*

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PROSPECTS OF APPLICATION OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR KAZAKHSTAN: EXPERIENCE OF GERMANY AND POLAND

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Abstract. *The article aims to identify the shortcomings of local self-government in Kazakhstan and to create ways to overcome them based on the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the experience of individual states. The article highlights the main challenges faced by the state, namely financial constraints, overlapping powers, insufficient centralisation and low level of democratic participation. The author also examines the example of Poland and Germany in the context of the local self-government system and analyses the possibility of its application to the realities of Kazakhstan. The author's main focus in this study is on the steps that the government of Kazakhstan can take to bring its legislation in line with the standards and principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Among them, the author identifies the following: legislative and institutional reforms; financial independence; changes in control and coordination mechanisms; decentralisation; and increased public participation.*

Keywords: *local self-government, Kazakhstan, European Charter of Local Self-Government, local authorities, administrative reforms.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *vietos savivalda, Kazachstanas, Europos vietos savivaldos chartija, vietos valdžia, administracinės reformos.*

Introduction

The European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted by the Council of Europe (1985), has been a cornerstone in shaping local governance systems across Europe. Its primary aim is to grant local authorities the political, administrative, and financial autonomy necessary for independent public administration. The Charter has profoundly influenced governance structures throughout the continent by emphasizing key principles such as subsidiarity, local autonomy, and financial sufficiency. Although Kazakhstan is not a member of the Council of Europe and, accordingly, has not signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government, this does not exclude the possibility of using its provisions as guidelines for reforming the local governance system (Consulate General of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Strasbourg, 2021). Such countries as Germany and Poland which have most successfully implemented the Charter's principles can stand out as exemplary cases for Kazakhstan (Komarov, 2016).

Thus, in Germany, a federal state with a long-standing tradition of municipal autonomy, local governments enjoy extensive decentralization and financial independence, making it a model of sustainable governance. This decentralization has allowed local governments to occupy key positions in public administration, with the necessary powers and resources to solve local problems independently (Asaubayev, 2016). Poland also followed the path of decentralization after a series of reforms initiated in the 1990s. The reforms, largely driven by Poland's accession to the European Union, empowered local governments by devolving decision-making processes and financial independence (Chebotarev, 2023). Given these factors, Germany and Poland were singled out as exemplary cases for Kazakhstan; they show how effective the decentralized systems are and how local self-governance can be successfully reformed in a post-socialist context.

Kazakhstan faces a very different set of challenges in its local governance model. While the need for local government reform has become more evident in recent years, the road to modernization remains fraught with obstacles. Since taking office, President Kasym-Jomart Tokayev has placed decentralization at the center of his governance agenda, recognizing its potential to improve decision-making and increase popular participation (Cornell, Starr and Barro, 2021). This commitment was reinforced by the August 2021 adoption of the Local Self-Governance Development Concept 2025 (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021), which outlined key reforms to strengthen local government structures. However, despite this political will, the reality on the ground reveals a number of entrenched problems that hinder effective local governance.

One of the main obstacles is the highly centralized nature of decision-making. Local authorities, including *akims* and *maslikhats*¹, are often limited in their ability to solve local problems because of their dependence on directives from higher government bodies. This centralization limits their ability to act independently, as they are often required to follow strict instructions and approval processes (Gladkova, 2013). In addition, local authorities lack financial autonomy as they are highly dependent on central government funding. This dependence limits their ability to invest in infrastructure, social services, and other important public projects, thereby reducing their effectiveness in meeting local needs (Fenenko, 2004).

The merging of local government functions with state administrative responsibilities, especially in the role of *akims* and *maslikhats*, further complicates the situation. This confusion of responsibilities leads to a governance structure in which local governments are more accountable to central government bodies than to the population they serve (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001). In contrast, the European Charter advocates a clear separation of roles between the state and local governments, giving local authorities the independence to act in the interests of their citizens (Council of Europe, 1985).

¹ In Kazakhstan's local governance system, *akims* and *maslikhats* are local executive and representative bodies. *Akims* are the heads of local executive bodies, appointed by the president (at the regional level) or higher-level authorities (at district and city levels). They are responsible for implementing national policies, managing local administration, and overseeing economic and social development. *Maslikhats* are elected local representative bodies tasked with approving local budgets, overseeing the work of *akims*, and addressing community concerns.

In addition, Kazakhstan's rigid legal and regulatory framework further hinders the development of local self-governance. For example, public organizations must obtain permission from akims to hold basic meetings, which limits the ability of citizens to self-organize and participate in local governance (Asau-baev, 2016). Such regulatory control contradicts the principles set out in the European Charter, which encourages local communities to take the initiative in solving local problems with minimal state interference.

Despite these challenges, the potential for local government reform in Kazakhstan remains significant. Drawing on the experience of Germany and Poland, Kazakhstan can undertake similar reforms aimed at increasing the financial independence of local governments and enabling them to make decisions more autonomously (Chebotarev, 2023). A sustained commitment to decentralization, combined with the support of international organizations and the willingness of the local population to change, offers opportunities for effective modernization of local governance. Thus, the article put forward the hypothesis that the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is a key to a more effective system of local governance in Kazakhstan. A research question is as follows: what is the extent to which the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government can be applied in Kazakhstan and what reforms are needed to improve its local government system based on European experience? Consequently, the article seeks to assess the applicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government to Kazakhstan and identify necessary reforms for improving the country's local government system based on European experiences. The research is framed as a comparative analysis of local governance models in Germany, Poland, and Kazakhstan, with Germany serving as a federal model of decentralization and Poland representing a post-socialist transformation similar to Kazakhstan.

Literature Review

The development of local self-governance in Kazakhstan has attracted considerable academic interest, especially with regard to the problems associated with centralization and the potential for decentralization reforms. The need for greater autonomy and financial independence of local governments is a recurring theme in the literature. Many scholars point to the European Charter of Local Self-Government as a vital framework for reforms in Kazakhstan to bring the governance structure in line with more established European models (Duisenov et al., 2015; Zhumagulov et al., 2022; Maksat et al., 2024). Duisenov et al. (2015) analyzed Kazakhstan's local governance approach. The researchers note that a governmental approach is typical for Kazakhstan, whereas a more societal approach prevails in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. This distinction underscores the necessity for Kazakhstan to delineate clearly between state governance and local self-governance functions. Moving further, Maksat et al. (2024) analyze international experiences in reforming local self-government and decentralization mechanisms, highlighting the significance of the European Charter of Local Self-Government as a foundational framework for these reforms.

Beisembayeva, Musina, and Sartova (2014) argue that although the Constitution of Kazakhstan formally establishes the principle of local self-government, the practical implementation of this structure is hindered by deep-rooted centralization. Local authorities, despite their legal basis, remain largely dependent on the central authorities both in terms of administrative decisions and financial resources. This centralization, they argue, does not allow local governments to fully meet the needs of local communities effectively and independently. Without greater decentralization, the system is likely to continue to struggle to fulfill its role as a mechanism for citizen engagement and local problem solving (Beisembayeva, Musina and Sartova, 2014).

Chebotarev (2023) explores the structural barriers to genuine local autonomy in Kazakhstan. He argues that local governments often function as mere extensions of the central government, with neither financial independence nor decision-making authority. Chebotarev (2023) compares Kazakhstan's system to those of Poland and Germany, where decentralization and legal protections have allowed local governments to better serve their communities. He supports the adoption of a similar system in Kazakhstan, where municipalities should be given both the legal authority and financial resources necessary for effective governance.

The Concept of Local Self-Governance Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025, adopted by Presidential Decree in 2021, recognizes many of the problems discussed in the literature. The document outlines reforms to increase the autonomy of local governments, in particular through the creation of independent local budgets. However, it also recognizes the persistent inequalities between richer and poorer regions that can undermine the effectiveness of these reforms. The Concept emphasizes that without a more equitable distribution of financial resources, poorer regions will continue to struggle to provide adequate public services even if they are granted greater autonomy (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021).

The European Charter of Local Self-Government is often cited as a reference point for decentralization reforms in Kazakhstan. Asaubayev (2016) examines how the principles of the Charter such as subsidiarity, financial independence and clear division of responsibilities between local and central governments - have been successfully implemented in countries such as Germany. He claims that the application of these principles in Kazakhstan can significantly improve the efficiency of local governance by giving municipalities the necessary tools to operate autonomously. Asaubayev (2016) also emphasizes the crucial role of financial independence, noting that local governments in Kazakhstan often lack the financial resources to function effectively under the existing centralized governance model.

The introduction of direct elections of rural akims is an important step towards decentralization in Kazakhstan. Ahmetov and Ospanova (2021) analyze this reform, arguing that while it represents progress, it does not go far enough to ensure accountability and transparency. They call for further reforms to strengthen electoral processes and create mechanisms for greater public scrutiny. Without these improvements, they argue, direct elections of akims will have limited impact on improving local governance.

In the study of European models of local governance, Fenenko (2004) examines how local governments in various European countries are able to generate their own revenues through local taxes, allowing them to operate independently. Fenenko (2004) notes that financial dependence on central government transfers severely limits the ability of local governments to plan and implement projects based on local needs, thereby limiting their autonomy. He emphasizes that without financial independence, local governments will find it difficult to make decisions tailored to the specific needs of their communities. Although Fenenko (2004) focuses mainly on European countries, the principles of financial autonomy he discusses are highly relevant to Kazakhstan, where similar problems of centralization prevail. This argument is echoed in the work of Asaubayev (2016), who argues that without such reforms, local governments in Kazakhstan will continue to face challenges in providing effective services and autonomously meeting local needs.

Bergström et al. (2021) emphasize that innovative approaches to local government are increasingly being introduced in European countries. These innovations aim to expand autonomy and increase transparency. Particular attention is paid to electronic platforms, which are designed to involve citizens in decision-making processes at the local level. Karim (2023) emphasizes the importance of administrative-territorial reform for improving the efficiency of local governance in Kazakhstan. He argues that the current administrative division does not always meet the practical needs of local communities, resulting in inefficiencies in service delivery. Karim (2023) advocates a reassessment of territorial boundaries to ensure that local governments are both geographically and administratively adapted to meet the needs of their populations. This, he argues, is an essential element of any successful decentralization reform.

Muzaparov (2023) is critical of the pace of decentralization in Kazakhstan. While he recognizes the government's commitment to reform, he argues that implementation has been slow and inconsistent. Muzaparov (2023) emphasizes the need for a clearer institutional framework delineating the responsibilities of local and central authorities and creating mechanisms for resolving conflicts between them. Without such a framework, he warns, Kazakhstan's decentralization efforts may remain superficial, lacking the depth necessary for genuine local autonomy.

In conclusion, the literature on local self-governance in Kazakhstan consistently highlights several critical problems, including centralization of power, financial dependence, and limited public participation.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government offers a valuable framework for addressing these problems, as evidenced by successful reforms in countries such as Germany and Poland. However, implementing these principles in Kazakhstan will require not only legal reforms, but also a broader institutional and cultural commitment to decentralization and local autonomy.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the feasibility of applying the European Charter of Local Self-Government to Kazakhstan's local governance system. The research focuses on the cases of Germany and Poland, which serve as models due to their successful implementation of the Charter's principles. The study's methodological framework is based on general scientific and special scientific methods, including comparative, historical-legal, formal-legal, and modeling methods and predictive assessment.

The formal-legal method was one of the key methods in the methodological framework since it helped interpret legislative texts and regulatory frameworks regulating local self-government in Germany, Kazakhstan, and Poland, namely: Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Law on Local Governance and Self-Governance in the Republic of Kazakhstan, President's Decree "On Approval of the Concept of Development of Local Self-Governance in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025", Constitution of the Republic of Poland, the Act on the Municipal Government of Poland. This method was critical to include because it ensured a precise evaluation of how Kazakhstan's domestic legislation aligns with the European governance standards, outlined above.

The key legislative acts and policy reforms in Kazakhstan were also analyzed within the context of the evolution of local self-governance. This became possible with the application of a historical-legal method. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Law on Local Self-Governance were examined by this method, which helped to determine the extent to which legislative frameworks supported or hindered local self-government. The historical-legal method identified whether Kazakhstan's reforms align more with European models or retain characteristics of its post-socialist governance legacy. The trajectory of decentralization efforts in Kazakhstan and the influence of European vs. post-socialist governance models were determined by this method. Thus, this method was crucial for determining whether Kazakhstan's decentralization was a structural transformation or merely a procedural adjustment within a centralized system.

The comparative method provided a structured framework for assessing governance models and their applicability to Kazakhstan. It allowed to identify key similarities and differences between the local governance systems of Kazakhstan, Germany, and Poland. By applying this method, the study also determined structural and institutional barriers, preventing decentralization in Kazakhstan. Legislative and financial adjustments necessary to align Kazakhstan's local governance system with the European Charter's principles were examined within the framework of this method.

This study also employed predictive assessment, a method used to forecast the impact of adopting the European Charter's principles in Kazakhstan. The method drew upon Germany's and Poland's decentralization experiences to predict potential benefits and risks for Kazakhstan. It outlined different reform scenarios, assessing their feasibility based on Kazakhstan's political, economic, and institutional realities. A risk analysis was conducted to anticipate barriers to reform implementation, such as political resistance, financial constraints, and administrative capacity gaps.

The modeling method served as the core analytical tool for formulating recommendations in this study. Constructing an adaptive governance model, it simulated how Kazakhstan's local self-government system could align with the European Charter's principles. This model integrated findings from formal-legal, comparative, and historical-legal methods and predictive assessment, ensuring contextually relevant and practically feasible recommendations. It outlined institutional, financial, and legislative adjustments, predicting their impact on decentralization. Supporting methods provided empirical and theoretical

foundations, but modeling enabled a structured policy framework, demonstrating the necessary reforms for enhancing local governance while addressing potential implementation challenges.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on international legal principles and political science theories on decentralization and local autonomy. Local self-government is generally defined as the right and ability of local governments to regulate and manage local affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population (Shah and Shah, 2006). This concept is closely related to theories of decentralization that distinguish between administrative, political, and financial decentralization (Rondinelli, 1981). Administrative decentralization implies the delegation of authority in decision-making to lower levels of government. Political decentralization involves electing local representatives, while financial decentralization provides for financial independence and the ability to form local budgets (Martinez-Vazquez and McNab, 2003).

Results

Analysis of the current state of local self-governance in Kazakhstan

According to the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe, 1985), full-fledged self-government implies that local authorities have sufficient rights and resources to address public issues under their own responsibility. This model is based on the following principles: subsidiarity (transfer of decisions to the lowest level where they can be implemented effectively); local democracy (direct participation of citizens through elections, public hearings, etc.); transparency and accountability (creation of mechanisms for control and reporting to the community). In addition to the European context, the idea of strengthening the role of local authorities is reflected in broader global studies. Thus, Crook and Manor (1998) emphasize the importance of effective interaction between central and local authorities in developing countries; the researchers also highlight the need to ensure the economic capacity of communities. Excessive centralization leads to a slowdown in the initiative of local authorities and decreases the quality of public services. The counterbalance is the expanded autonomy of local authorities, but it requires adequate financial resources and transparent accountability mechanisms (Bergström et al, 2021). Other scholars expressed a similar opinion. Fleurke & Willemse (2006) note that excessive dependence on central resources and excessive control from above offset any formal mechanisms of autonomy. In addition, the researchers successfully emphasize the need for an appropriate scope of delegated competencies. As well as the possibility of their full practical implementation (Fleurke & Willemse, 2006).

Since key aspects of the analysis of local self-government primarily cover the institutional dimension, a clear demarcation of powers between central and local authorities is crucial. Legal consolidation of the status of municipalities in regulatory acts, such as the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe, 1985), the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (Parlamentarischer Rat, 1949), and the Law on Local Governance and Self-Governance in Kazakhstan (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001), determines the basis for interaction between different levels of government by ensuring clear legal frameworks for local authorities and their functions. This creates the prerequisites for a transparent system of governance. In addition, it allows local authorities to make decisions with regard to the specifics of each community. No less important is the issue of financial security. The presence of their own tax base or guaranteed transfers from the central government ensures the real autonomy of local authorities. In countries with developed traditions of local self-government, such as Germany, Poland, and France, municipalities have more opportunities to form budgets in accordance with local needs. Germany, for example, follows the principle of subsidiarity, granting local governments significant financial independence (Parlamentarischer Rat, 1949). Similarly, Poland's decentralization reforms, particularly the Act on the Municipal Government (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 1990), allow municipalities to raise and manage their own revenue sources. France also provides strong financial autonomy to municipalities, as outlined in its Local Government Code, enabling them to levy local taxes and allocate funds based on

community priorities (Sharavara and Nekriach, 2023). This leads to an increase in efficiency in solving social and economic problems.

Another determining factor is the level of public participation. It contributes to the accountability and transparency of management. Tools of direct and representative democracy if used strengthen trust in local governments and ensure active interaction between the authorities and the community (Sharavara and Nekriach, 2023). The effectiveness of the implementation of powers plays perhaps the most important role in the indicators of the maturity of local self-government. The ability of municipalities to provide quality public services while maintaining autonomy from the central government indicates the viability of such a model. Taken together, these aspects allow a comprehensive assessment of the level of development of local self-government. Thus, the analysis of the key factors of local self-government provides insight into how different aspects interact to shape the level of local autonomy.

With this in mind, it is useful to consider how these concepts are illustrated in specific national contexts. In the case of the current study, the study focuses on Kazakhstan. Local self-governance in Kazakhstan still has significant problematic issues despite numerous legislative reforms aimed at increasing its effectiveness. The foundation of self-government is laid in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995), which legally enshrines the right to self-government. However, the framework laid down in this Constitution, as well as in the Law “On Local State Administration and Self-Governance”, has not fully empowered local authorities to act autonomously (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001). Key problems such as overlapping powers of local and central authorities, lack of resources, and fiscal dependence continue to prevent the full realization of the potential of local self-governance (Kemelbekov, 2019). The main aspect that determines the effectiveness of local self-government is the participation of the population. Local self-government committees are an effective tool for realizing the constitutional rights of citizens and solving social problems of the local population (Zhumagulov et al., 2022).

One of the most acute problems is the financial dependence of local authorities on central government transfers. The lack of fiscal autonomy limits their ability to independently generate revenues and control local budgets. Although reforms such as the introduction of independent local budgets in 2018 aim to address this problem, rural areas still face a lack of financial resources (Gladkova, 2013). Chebotarev (2023) asserts that such dependence limits the ability of local authorities to respond effectively to the specific needs of local communities, significantly reducing their ability to promote regional development. In practice, fiscal independence remains largely theoretical, as local authorities are highly dependent on central funding and cannot generate sufficient revenues on their own.

In addition to fiscal problems, unclear delineation of responsibilities between local and central governments exacerbates administrative inefficiencies. The Law “On Local State Administration and Self-Governance” lacks clear definitions of roles and responsibilities for each level of government, leading to duplication of functions and reduced accountability (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001). As a result, even elected local leaders are often limited in their decision-making capacity, as central authorities retain significant control over key issues (Asaubayev, 2016).

Reforms aimed at democratizing local governance, such as the introduction of direct elections of village akims in 2007, were intended to increase accountability and political participation. However, these efforts have not led to significant changes in power dynamics (Karim, 2023). Central authorities continue to dominate decision-making processes, especially in wealthier regions such as Almaty and Atyrau, which enjoy significant natural resources such as oil and gas. These regions have benefited more from local government reforms, while economically disadvantaged rural areas remain heavily dependent on the central government (Asaubayev, 2016).

The lack of resources in rural areas further undermines the effectiveness of local self-governance. For example, that rural areas struggle to provide basic public services such as health care, infrastructure, and

utilities due to insufficient and inconsistent transfers from the central government. Growing inequalities between richer and less developed regions create additional obstacles to infrastructure development and effective local governance in rural areas (Balabiev, 2014). Without improved resource allocation and fiscal independence, local governments in these regions will continue to face serious challenges in meeting the specific needs of their communities.

Despite the government's efforts to implement initiatives such as the Concept for the Development of Local Self-Governance in Kazakhstan until 2025 (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021), the uneven distribution of resources continues to limit the success of these reforms. The introduction of independent local budgets and increased fiscal decentralization has not yet sufficiently addressed resource constraints. While richer regions have more opportunities for independent local governance, poorer rural areas remain dependent on non-permanent transfers from the central government (Shalbolova and Kenzheliyeva, 2018). Such inequalities exacerbate regional disparities, limiting the impact of reforms on rural development (Karabin et al., 2021).

The current state of local self-governance in Kazakhstan emphasizes the need for further reforms to address systemic problems such as financial dependence, resource constraints, and overlapping responsibilities between local and central governments. Achieving true decentralization will require not only a redistribution of budgetary resources, but also increased autonomy for local governments, both financially and politically. This goal is critical to improving the effectiveness of local government and enabling local authorities to better serve their communities. In the next section, we look at the broader implications of fiscal and resource inequality and how these issues affect the sustainability and outcomes of local government reforms in Kazakhstan.

Comparative analysis of local self-government in Kazakhstan and selected European countries

When considering local self-government in Kazakhstan in the broader context of European models of governance, it becomes clear that there are significant differences in both the implementation of decentralisation principles and the financing of local government. The European Charter of Local Self-Government has served as a model for promoting democratic governance at the local level. Many European countries have successfully implemented the principles set out in this Charter, creating robust and autonomous local governments (Council of Europe, 1985). In contrast, Kazakhstan, although making progress towards decentralisation, still faces challenges in fully implementing these principles. Several European countries provide compelling examples of how effectively local government systems can function if they are guided by the principles of decentralisation and financial independence.

Germany and Poland, in particular, stand out as countries where the principles of the Charter have been successfully implemented (Kaczperczyk, 2021). In Germany, the basis of the local government system is the principle of subsidiarity, according to which local authorities are responsible for the management of affairs closest to their constituents (Urda, 2024). This decentralized structure allowed municipalities to manage essential public services such as education, public transportation, and housing with minimal central intervention. Similarly, in Poland, decentralization reforms in 1999 created a powerful system that allows local governments to perform important functions, including infrastructure and social services (Sauer, 2013).

We have chosen Poland and Germany for comparative analysis with Kazakhstan because their experience of decentralization and local self-government development can be useful for Kazakhstan. Poland went through a post-socialist transformation, like Kazakhstan, but successfully implemented the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, ensuring a high level of autonomy for local authorities. Germany, with its deep-rooted traditions of local self-government and the principle of subsidiarity, shows a successful example of decentralized governance with strong financial independence of municipalities. Both of these examples can serve as models for improving the Kazakh system.

Models of decentralization in Kazakhstan and Europe differ significantly. In European countries such as Germany and Poland, decentralization is characterized by the gradual transfer of both administrative and financial powers to local governments. German municipalities, for example, are able to generate revenues through local taxes, such as property taxes, which provides them with the necessary resources for effective governance (Fenenko, 2004). Poland also allocates a significant portion of the national budget directly to local governments to finance local projects. It is worth emphasizing that in Kazakhstan local self-government is regulated by the Constitution and a number of legislative acts. However, the local self-government system is in its infancy, facing some problems that require solutions (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995).

If we take Poland as an example, this country has gone through a process of large-scale decentralization after the fall of the socialist regime, which was made possible by the adoption of the Constitution (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 1997) and the The Act On the Municipal Government (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 1990). Poland was one of the first post-socialist countries to integrate the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which ensured a high level of legal and administrative autonomy for gminas (municipalities), powiats (districts) and voivodeships (regions). Local authorities have clearly delineated powers and independence in decision-making (Sharavara and Nekriach, 2023).

In turn, in Germany local self-government has deep historical roots and is regulated at both the federal and state levels. The Basic Law of Germany (Parlamentarischer Rat, 1949) guarantees the right to local self-government. Each federal state has its own laws regulating the activities of municipalities, which ensures a high level of decentralization. In Germany, the principle of subsidiarity is actively used, which means that decisions are made at the lowest level of government, which is able to implement them effectively (Schneider, 2023).

Analyzing the levels of local government, in Kazakhstan it is still in the process of reform. The legislation provides for a clear division into akimats (state executive bodies) and maslikhats (representative bodies), however, the functions of local bodies are often duplicated by state authorities, which reduces their independence and effectiveness (Pitulko, 2023). As already noted regarding Poland, the local government system is divided into three levels. Each level has its own competence and funding, which ensures a clear division of powers and responsibilities. Gminas play a key role in local governance and enjoy significant financial and administrative autonomy (Sauer, 2013).

In turn, Germany has several levels of local government: communities (Kommunen), districts (Landkreise) and cities with special status (kreisfreie Städte) (Schefold, 2013). Each of them has certain autonomy in matters of local importance, such as planning, budget management and the provision of social services. Local authorities have the right to make decisions that directly affect their territory, which is an important aspect of local democracy (Ruge and Ritgen, 2021).

The issue of financing local government bodies is of particular importance to us. Models of decentralization in Kazakhstan and Europe differ significantly. In Germany and Poland, decentralization is characterized by the gradual transfer of administrative and financial powers to local governments. For example, German municipalities have the opportunity to generate revenues through local taxes, which provides them with the necessary financial resources for effective management (Fenenko, 2004). It should be noted that Poland also allocates a significant part of the state budget directly to local governments to finance local projects. Communities and counties have their own budgets, which are formed from local taxes, subsidies and grants from the central government. However, the key aspect is the ability of local authorities to decide how to effectively allocate funds to solve local problems (Chyrkin, 2022).

However, in Kazakhstan, local governments remain heavily dependent on central government transfers, and independent local budgets introduced in 2018 have proven insufficient to meet local needs. Many rural regions continue to experience financial deficits, especially in areas requiring significant investment in public services and infrastructure. Unlike in European countries, where local governments are key decision-makers with financial resources at their disposal, local governments in Kazakhstan often act as administrative bodies implementing central decisions, without the autonomy to address specific local issues (Kemelbekov, 2019).

Local governments in Kazakhstan remain dependent on central government transfers, and fiscal equalization mechanisms that exist in Europe are lacking. Independent local budgets are insufficient, and central government transfers are often inconsistent, exacerbating regional disparities. Richer regions such as Almaty and Atyrau, with access to natural resources, are able to generate more revenue, while poorer rural regions continue to struggle with limited resources (Chebotarev, 2023). The lack of a transparent and predictable system of fiscal transfers not only increases the gap between richer and poorer regions, but also limits the ability of local governments to implement meaningful development projects.

Another key difference is the ability of local governments in Europe to borrow funds to implement large-scale infrastructure projects, which gives them greater flexibility in managing local development. In contrast, local governments in Kazakhstan lack the financial independence or legal framework to undertake such borrowing, which further limits their ability to implement long-term development strategies (Kemelbekov, 2019). When comparing Kazakhstan with the selected European countries, it becomes clear that financial and political autonomy are crucial for effective local self-government. European countries such as Germany and Poland have demonstrated that strong local governments can play a key role in regional development if they have the necessary financial resources and political power (Frintrup and Hilgers, 2024). Kazakhstan has made progress in developing a legal framework for local self-government, but the lack of genuine autonomy, both financial and political, continues to hinder the effectiveness of local self-government.

It is also worth noting some differences that are inherent in issues of civic participation. Thus, in Kazakhstan, civic participation in local government processes is limited. Although there are formal mechanisms for citizen participation through elections of maslikhats, the low level of involvement of the local population and the lack of authority of local authorities reduces trust in these structures. In contrast, in Poland and Germany, local government plays an important role in strengthening democratic processes. Citizens can participate in decision-making through public initiatives, referendums, and direct elections of mayors and municipal councils. A high level of public participation contributes to more transparent and effective governance (Urda, 2024; Sauer, 2013).

Comparing the local government system in Kazakhstan with the systems of Poland and Germany, several key differences can be identified: more developed legal and financial autonomy in European countries, better distribution of powers between levels of government and a high level of civic participation. We have clearly demonstrated the differences between local governments below in Table 1. The introduction of best practices from these countries, such as decentralization and financial autonomy, can contribute to the development of local government in Kazakhstan and increase its effectiveness.

Table 1. *Comparative analysis of local government systems in Kazakhstan, Poland and Germany*

Criteria	Kazakhstan	Poland	Germany
Legal basis	Constitution (Article 89), 1995, the system in the reform process	Constitution 1997, The Act On The Municipal Government, 1990	Constitution, 1949, laws at the land level
Levels of self-government	Akimats and maslikhats, duplication of functions	Gminas, povets, voivodeships, clear division of powers	Communities, districts, cities with special status, high autonomy
Financial independence	Dependence on the central budget	High level of autonomy, own taxes and subsidies	High financial independence, local taxes, share of national taxes
Civic participation	Low level of public involvement	High level of participation through elections and public hearings	High level of participation through elections, referendums, initiatives

Source: Prepared by Authors

A comparative analysis of local government systems in Kazakhstan, Poland and Germany shows significant differences in the level of decentralization and autonomy of local governments. While Poland and Germany provide their municipalities with a high degree of financial and administrative independence, the local government system in Kazakhstan is still in the development stage. Poland and Germany demonstrate successful examples of clear division of powers and active involvement of citizens in local governance, which contributes to increased trust and efficiency of local governments. Kazakhstan should pay attention to the European experience to improve its local governance, especially in matters of financial decentralization and involvement of the population in decision-making.

Prospects for the adaptation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan and its impact on regional development

Adaptation of the principles and provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is an important step for improving local governance and ensuring greater regional autonomy. This process may open up new opportunities for reforming local self-government, but significant obstacles need to be overcome. As Chebotarev (2023) emphasizes, the centralized system of governance in Kazakhstan creates barriers to the transfer of powers to the local level, hindering the implementation of the principles enshrined in the Charter. The absence of a clear legal framework and a shortage of local resources exacerbate this situation. Key opportunities for implementing the Charter's principles in Kazakhstan include support from international organizations and the willingness of local authorities to implement reforms. Existing legislative initiatives can serve as a basis for creating an effective system of local self-government.

The Charter's principles of subsidiarity and financial autonomy should be the focus of the new reforms. For example, Article 4 of the Charter states that local authorities shall be provided with the necessary resources to carry out their functions, emphasizing the importance of funding to ensure autonomy (Council of Europe, 1985). However, significant obstacles remain, such as the lack of transparency in the allocation of financial resources and weak public involvement in local governance processes. Without active citizen participation and community involvement, the success of the new principles may be limited (Rakymbayev, 2023).

The principles of the Charter, including financial independence and subsidiarity, can be adapted to the conditions of Kazakhstan by creating a clearer legal basis for local authorities. Asaubayev (2016) emphasizes the need to develop legal mechanisms that allow local authorities to effectively and independently manage resources. The implementation of the principles set out in the Charter, such as the need to hold open elections and ensure the representation of local communities, can significantly enhance the legitimacy of local authorities. The introduction of independent local budgets, as outlined in the Concept of Local Self-Government Development until 2025 (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021), can be a decisive step in this direction.

Adaptation of the Charter principles will also require significant changes in the legislative and administrative frameworks of Kazakhstan. It is worth emphasizing the need to amend the legislation on local self-government to ensure clear mechanisms for the distribution of powers between central and local authorities. The principles of the Charter, such as the need for adequate financial support for local authorities, may lead to a revision of existing financing models. According to Article 9 of the Charter, the financing of local self-government must be guaranteed by laws establishing adequate resources (Council of Europe, 1985). As practice shows, without a clear mechanism for financial support for local authorities, such as local taxes and grants, the effectiveness of local self-government may suffer (Muzapar and Rakimbayev, 2023).

The potential impact of implementing the principles of the Charter can be seen in improving the quality of services at the local level. Research shows that financial independence of local authorities can lead to improvements in education, health care and infrastructure, which ultimately improves the quality

of life of citizens (Karim, 2023). The successful implementation of the principles of the Charter in Europe demonstrates that local authorities with access to financial resources can respond more effectively to the needs of their communities, adapting the services provided to real demands.

The implementation of the Charter's principles is particularly important for rural areas, which often face resource constraints and inadequate services. The application of the Charter's principles can lead to improved infrastructure and the quality of social services. For example, in Poland, the introduction of local self-government has significantly improved service delivery in rural areas, which, as Kaczperczyk (2014) notes, has increased citizens' trust in local authorities and their willingness to participate in governance. Kazakhstan can use similar experiences to improve the quality of life in its regions.

Decentralization and empowerment of local authorities can contribute to more active citizen involvement in decision-making processes and improved interaction between local authorities and the population. Creating conditions for open meetings and direct elections of local leaders can significantly increase trust in local self-government (Muzapar, 2023). Successful examples of decentralization in Europe show that active citizen participation in governance allows for more accurate identification and resolution of local problems, which leads to an improvement in the quality of life and social stability.

We agree with the opinion of Alibekov (2014), who insists on the necessity of ratification by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the main provisions of which should be taken into account in the State Program On Local Self-Government in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which should be submitted for public discussion. Based on the results of such discussion, it seems appropriate for the Parliament of the Republic to develop and adopt a separate Law "On Local Self-Government in the Republic of Kazakhstan", which should replace the law in force since 2001.

We believe that decentralization and empowerment of local authorities play a key role in the development of local communities. Delegation of powers to the local level allows authorities to make decisions that better meet the needs and interests of a particular region. Local authorities, being closer to citizens, can respond faster to emerging problems and allocate resources more accurately. In addition, financial independence allows municipalities to independently determine priorities in budget allocation, which leads to improved infrastructure, the creation of new jobs and the development of necessary socio-economic programs.

Discussion

The adaptation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan represents a significant opportunity to improve local governance and empower regional authorities. Implementing the principles of the Charter can pave the way for transformative reforms in local self-government, but significant obstacles need to be overcome. Kazakhstan's highly centralized system of governance creates challenges for devolving powers to the local level, which hinders the implementation of the principles of the Charter. The lack of a clear legal framework and a lack of resources at the local level exacerbate this situation (Chebotarev, 2023). Key opportunities for implementing the principles of the Charter in Kazakhstan are the support of international organizations and the willingness of local authorities to implement reforms. Cooperation with international organizations and foreign countries can not only contribute to the development of local self-government, but also attract additional resources and experience that will strengthen regional reforms.

We believe that the successful implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan requires a consistent and structured approach that includes several key steps aimed at reforming the legal and administrative framework, creating a sustainable financial system and involving citizens in governance. The first stage should be a comprehensive assessment of the existing local self-government system (Komarov, 2016). At this stage, it is important to identify weaknesses, such as duplication of functions between state and local authorities, lack of financial resources and unclear

distribution of powers. This will allow for a better understanding of which aspects need to be reformed in order to create an effective system of self-governance.

Based on the results of the assessment, it is necessary to proceed to the development of legislative changes. This will require amendments to legal acts and the adoption of a new Law on Local Self-Governance, which will ensure the legal autonomy of local authorities. The principles of the Charter should be enshrined in legislation to clearly delineate the powers between state and local bodies, and to consolidate the financial independence of municipalities (Alibekov, 2014).

The financial base plays a key role in successful decentralisation, so establishing a financial and economic base for local self-governance is an important step. It is necessary to develop mechanisms for the introduction of local taxes and fees, as well as redistribution of part of national taxes in favour of municipalities (Sadyrbaev, 2017). For less developed regions, grants and subsidies can be envisaged to ensure equal opportunities for all municipalities.

An important element of the reforms is the establishment of control and monitoring mechanisms. This is necessary to ensure transparency and accountability of local authorities. The introduction of internal and external audit systems, as well as the creation of public councils and committees that will monitor the activities of municipalities will increase public confidence and improve the quality of governance.

Involvement of citizens in the governance process is also an important element of successful implementation of the Charter principles. Mechanisms of public hearings, referendums and petitions can significantly increase public participation in decision-making at the local level, which will strengthen democracy and the accountability of local bodies to citizens (Nurlanova et al., 2015).

It is necessary to launch pilot projects in selected regions to successfully test the reforms. Selecting several regions for experimentation will allow testing new governance mechanisms, assessing their effectiveness and making adjustments before full-scale implementation of the reforms. After successful pilot projects, the reforms can be gradually introduced throughout the country, adapting them to the specifics of each region. Regional peculiarities may require additional adjustments to make the local self-governance system fit local conditions. At the last stage, it is important to regularly evaluate the results of reforms and adjust the strategy as necessary. Assessing the successes and challenges of reforms based on monitoring data and feedback from the population will allow for timely changes in legislation and practices.

We believe that the step-by-step plan we have developed will help Kazakhstan to implement the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, ensuring the creation of an effective and decentralised system of local governance that will contribute to sustainable socio-economic development of the regions.

We should also not ignore the fact that successful adaptation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan requires a number of reforms at the state level aimed at creating favourable conditions for the functioning of the decentralised system of governance. These reforms should address both structural changes in governance and the provision of central government support.

First, institutional reforms are needed to delineate the division of powers between central and local government. It is important to clearly define the functions and areas of responsibility of local authorities to avoid duplication of tasks. This will require a revision of existing management models and the creation of new legal and regulatory frameworks that will enshrine the autonomy of local authorities in decision-making on socio-economic issues.

Second, to successfully implement the principles of the Charter, Kazakhstan will need financial reform aimed at redistributing budgetary powers. An important step will be to increase the share of local budgets in the overall system of state financing. It is necessary to ensure that municipalities have sufficient financial resources to fulfil their tasks, as well as the ability to generate their own revenues through local taxes and fees. This will require a revision of the system of inter-budget transfers so that central authorities can provide regions with flexible financial instruments for their development (Sadyrbaev, 2017).

A third important aspect will be the reform of state control and coordination. While local authorities should be given more powers, centralised oversight should be maintained to ensure that local actions are in line with national strategic objectives (Cornell, Starr and Barro, 2021). This will require the establishment of coordination and feedback mechanisms between central and local governments. It will also be necessary to improve the system of control over the use of budgetary funds and ensuring their targeted use.

Thus, reforms at the state level should cover not only legislative changes, but also financial, institutional and technical aspects. This will ensure the successful adaptation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the creation in Kazakhstan of a sustainable, decentralized system of governance that will effectively respond to the needs of the regions and promote their development.

We also believe that international cooperation is a key element in accelerating the process of adapting the European Charter of Local Self-Government and modernising the governance system as a whole. International organisations, partner countries and financial institutions can provide significant assistance to Kazakhstan in implementing the necessary reforms.

First of all, international financial organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development can provide Kazakhstan with both financial support and expertise (Karybaev, Saimova and Irzhanov, 2023). These institutions have extensive experience in financing decentralisation programmes and supporting local self-governance, and their involvement will help Kazakhstan attract the necessary resources for reforms aimed at the financial sustainability of local authorities (Dosmagambetova, 2014). In particular, international loans and grants can be used to finance infrastructure projects in the regions, modernise municipal services and strengthen the financial independence of local governments (Balabiev, 2014).

Equally important is Kazakhstan's participation in international platforms for sharing knowledge and experience (Karybaev, Saimova and Irzhanov, 2023). Kazakhstan can benefit from cooperation with organisations such as the Council of Europe, the International Association of Cities and Local Authorities, as well as cooperation with other countries on the basis of bilateral agreements. This will enable it to utilise the experience of international colleagues to develop its own models and solutions appropriate to local conditions. Ultimately, international cooperation can play an important role in monitoring and evaluating ongoing reforms, which will allow Kazakhstan not only to implement successful decentralisation practices, but also to verify the effectiveness of the reforms.

Conclusions

To summarise, the adaptation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan represents an important step towards strengthening local self-governance and ensuring regional autonomy in the broader context of democratic development. Although Kazakhstan is not a member of the Council of Europe and has not signed the Charter, its provisions can serve as a valuable resource for the development and reform of the local self-government system in the country. For example, the principles enshrined in the Charter promote transparency, accountability and citizen involvement in governance processes. Thus, by adopting the Charter, Kazakhstan will be able to strengthen the role of local authorities, which will allow them to respond more effectively to regional problems and improve the quality of services provided. The Charter also stipulates that local governments should have the necessary resources to fulfil their functions, thereby promoting financial independence.

However, there are obstacles to the full realisation of these principles that need to be overcome. The deeply entrenched centralised governance structure in Kazakhstan creates significant challenges for the devolution of powers to local authorities. The current legislative framework lacks clarity in the allocation of responsibilities between central and local government, creating confusion and inefficiency in governance. To address this problem, legislative reforms are needed to create clear mechanisms for the division of powers and resource allocation. In addition, a culture of public participation needs to be developed for

the successful adaptation of the Charter. Involving citizens in decision-making increases the legitimacy of local governments and ensures that policies reflect the priorities of the communities they serve. Mechanisms for open dialogue and consultation should be established to promote civic engagement and trust in local governance.

The potential consequences of introducing the Charter principles in Kazakhstan are significant. Improved quality of public services, greater responsiveness to local needs and increased public engagement are just some of the expected benefits. The experience of European countries that have successfully implemented these principles, such as Germany and Poland, serves as a valuable example for Kazakhstan. Thus, it can be argued that the adaptation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan is a strategic imperative to promote democratic governance and regional development.

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EUROPOS VIETOS SAVIVALDOS CHARTIJOS TAIKIMO KAZACHSTANUI PERSPEKTYVOS: VOKIETIJOS IR LENKIJOS PATIRTIS

Anotacija. Straipsnyje, remiantis Europos vietos savivaldos chartijos principais ir atskirų valstybių patirimi, siekiama nustatyti Kazachstano vietos savivaldos trūkumus ir sukurti būdus jiems įveikti. Straipsnyje akcentuojami pagrindiniai iššūkiai, su kuriais susiduria valstybė – finansiniai suvaržymai, sutampančios galios, nepakankama centralizacija ir žemas demokratinio dalyvavimo lygis. Autorius taip pat nagrinėja Lenkijos ir Vokietijos pavyzdį vietos savivaldos sistemos kontekste ir analizuoja jos pritaikymo galimybę Kazachstano realybėms. Šiame tyrime autorė daugiausia dėmesio skiria žingsniams, kurių gali imtis Kazachstano vyriausybė, kad jos teisės aktai atitiktų Europos vietos savivaldos chartijos standartus ir principus. Tarp jų autorius išskiria: teisėkūros ir institucines reformas; finansinę nepriklausomybę; kontrolės ir koordinavimo mechanizmų pokyčiai; decentralizaciją; padidėjus visuomenės dalyvavimas.

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TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFER IN EU CIVILIAN MISSIONS: BUREAUCRATIC HETERARCHY AND AGENT-DRIVEN OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract. *This study examines the integration of emerging technologies into EU civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions. Using Multi-Level Governance and Principal-Agent theories as initial conceptual frames, the research investigates the complexities of EU governance like bureaucratic heterarchy, and the dynamics of agent-driven opportunities. Based on interviews with European External Action Service (EEAS) staff, EU mission personnel, and EU Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives, the findings reveal systemic obstacles such as bureaucratic irregularity, information asymmetries and expertise gaps, which hinder effective technological transfer to host countries. Despite strategic frameworks like the Civilian CSDP Compact, technological transfer remains highly uneven and fractured, relying on proactive agents operating under informal mechanisms. The study concludes that empowering proactive agents can help to advance technological integration and enhance the operational impact of civilian CSDP missions, making them more capable to support host countries.*

Keywords: *Civilian CSDP Missions, Multi-Level Governance (MLG), Principal-Agent Theory (PA), Technological Transfer, Proactive Agents, Bureaucratic Heterarchy, EU Governance*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Civilinės BSGP misijos, Daugiapakopis valdymas (MLG), Principalo-agento teorija (PA), Technologijų perdavimas, Proaktyvūs agentai, Biurokratinė heterarchija, ES valdymas*

Introduction

The European Union declares intention to become a worldwide digital leader by 2030. The crucial role of technologies is also starting to appear in the strategic frameworks for EU Civilian CSDP missions. EU civilian CSDP Missions serve as outposts showcasing the EU's capabilities to host countries. With the emphasis on transferring institutional know-how, they provide a relevant case for examining how EU's high-level technology and innovation-related commitments translate into concrete actions and who are key actors driving this process. Because EU decision-making is often incremental and shaped by multiple governance layers, diverse national interests and varying levels of expertise, it is challenging to track down how and to what extent strategic-level priorities get implemented and enabled in recipient countries. Limited access to implementers, particularly in sensitive areas such as the security sector, represents an additional complication for understanding the current state of affairs. This study takes up the task of mapping out and conceptualising how the EU operates within this rapidly changing field, uncovering overlooked yet influential actors and offering insights to enhance policy uptake and implementation in emerging technologies and similar domains. We argue that the EU actorness is best understood as bureaucratic heterarchy, where proactive agents, or so called „champions“ can play a critical role in navigating information asymmetries and advancing technological innovation. We examine this proposition drawing

upon interview data from representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of EU countries, the EEAS, and EU civilian CSDP Missions.

This paper draws upon Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Principal-Agent (PA) theories as a conceptual building blocks. The Multi-Level Governance (MLG) theory is used as an initial inspiration to account for EU's complex and overlapping decision-making structures, while the Principal-Agent (PA) theory complements it by highlighting delegation challenges, information asymmetries, and the role of specific (proactive and/or reactive) agents in shaping policy outcomes. By slightly reconfiguring these perspectives and providing a unique conceptual lens, the study contributes to a better understanding of how governance structures and agent dynamics impact policy transfer. Our primary contribution lies in mapping the dynamics of governance and identifying key movers within a particular policy field. We believe that this case study can also be relevant in conceptualizing EU actorness beyond civilian CSDP Missions.

The paper begins by outlining key terms, presenting theoretical foundations and the methodological approach followed by a detailed analysis of the findings. It then evaluates the role of key actors, emphasizing the interplay between proactive and reactive agents – “champions” within a context of fragmented responsibilities and informal mechanisms. Finally, the study offers conclusions and recommendations for fostering technological innovation in recipient countries and improving the effectiveness of civilian CSDP missions.

1. Context and Concepts

We use this section to provide some contextual background for this research project, clarify key terms and define the scope of the work. For the purposes of this paper, Industry 4.0 refers to the ongoing trend of digitalization and automation in the security sector and encompasses Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS), the Internet of Things, AI, Big Data and other similar technologies (Nosalska et al., 2020; Oesterreich & Teuteberg, 2016). We use “Industry 4.0” interchangeably with the term of emerging technologies and key enabling technologies (KETs). Our domain of analysing the uptake of such technologies relates to civilian CSDP missions, which are engaged in supporting security sector reforms in host countries in order to fight crime more effectively. Here, the *security sector* is a broad term and includes all security-related national governmental structures and organisations that have a mandate to protect their citizens from violence and crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016; USAID, 2009). For integrating KETs into the context of EU Civilian CSDP Missions, we use the 2023 CSDP Civilian Compact (Council of the European Union, 2023) as a reference point. Adopted by the EU, this strategic framework and political commitment aims to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This document is particularly significant for the purposes of our research as it marks the first instance, where besides other expected deliverables (such as promotion and protection of human rights, systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective and others), technologies were explicitly incorporated into the framework for civilian CSDP Missions: “*to follow a more systematic approach towards technological innovation for civilian CSDP (EEAS, 2023)*”. The document also outlines plans for close collaboration between the EEAS, European Commission services, and Member States to strategize and allocate resources for emerging technologies and to enhance digital support for civilian CSDP missions. Policy transfer refers to the process by which policies, administrative arrangements or governance practices are adopted from one political or institutional setting and implemented into another (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). In the context of EU civilian CSDP missions, policy transfer involves translating EU-level strategic priorities mentioned in Civilian CSDP Compact of 2023 —such as security sector reform (SSR), rule of law, and the domain of technologies—into practical deliverables within host countries where the missions are present. This process is inherently complex as it requires the alignment of multiple actors, including the European Commission, EEAS (CPCC, SecDefPol, PCM), Member States, CSDP Missions and host-country institutions. In order to make sense of this complexity, we now turn to the theoretical discussion and lay out the main conceptual frames of this paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the challenges of knowledge transfer in EU civilian CSDP missions requires a theoretical lens that accounts for the complex nature of decision-making and implementation. While managerial theories of agile governance (Batista et al., 2022) or institutional budgeting approaches (Jones & McCaffery, 1994) could provide insights into micro-level project coordination and resource allocation issues, they have less to say about structural complexities, delegation dynamics, frictions and power asymmetries that define the fragmented system of EU governance. Instead we draw on Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Principal-Agent (PA) theories as initial analytical building blocks to explore to what extent emerging technologies are integrated into civilian CSDP missions and transferred to recipient countries.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2001), the MLG theory focuses on the intricacies of delegation and collaboration across EU governance levels, involving diverse actors ranging from subnational entities to EU institutions. It can be approached as a “*mean coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies*” (The Committee of the Regions, 2009). In the context of KET uptake and transfer within civilian CSDP Missions, this multi-actor structure includes the Political and Security Committee (PSC) that oversees political control and strategic direction for Civilian CSDP Missions, acting as a bridge between member states and operational activities. Also, one needs to mention the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) that provides detailed advice on civilian crisis management, supporting PSC decision-making. Furthermore, we have the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), composed of foreign ministers, that makes overarching decisions on CSDP missions, while the European External Action Service (EEAS) (European Union, 2011) ensures operational coordination.

Within the institutional framework of the EEAS, the Policy and Coordination Mission Unit (PCM), Security and Defence Policy Directorate (SecDefPol), and Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) focus on supporting EU Member States in planning and managing CSDP missions. Here, the PCM ensures coordination within the EEAS, bridging civilian and military dimensions through strategic reviews of civilian CSDP missions. SecDefPol provides strategic direction and policy development, while CPCC is responsible for operational planning and the day-to-day management of missions. The European Commission plays a complementary role, contributing through financial oversight, development assistance, and logistical support for missions (Klok, 2023). Given this intricate web of actors in play, the MLG seems to provide a useful initial impetus for mapping out the functioning of these institutions, but it also arguably puts too much emphasis on the vertical levels of governance. At the same time, it is necessary to include more individual role and responsibility-driven perspectives in order to capture further nuances of EU governance dynamics in CSDP missions.

2.1 Understanding the roles using PA Theory

Hooghe & Marks (2001) indicate that the MLG framework can be effectively supplemented with the PA theory, delineating the complexity of roles and responsibilities within the EU governance structures. This initial suggestion is taken up by T. Delreux & J. Adriaensen (2017), who utilize PA to analyze political relationships within the European Union, highlighting the dynamics of delegation and discretion among various political actors, while Niemann & Plank (2019) examine the dynamics between principals (e.g., parliaments) and agents (e.g., agencies), highlighting the need for understanding agent autonomy. A number of other scholars also use PA to understand the processes of EU external action. For example, Dijkstra (2017) explores the delegation of foreign policy functions from member states to the European External Action Service (EEAS). Kostanyan (2016) is also working on the topic, while adding the European Commission as a horizontal principal vis-à-vis the EEAS.

Applying PA theory for civilian CSDP Missions, we sought to map out all the principals and agents mentioned in previous sections (see Figure 1). Also, we introduce the concept of an intermediary principal-agent, that according to Tallberg (2002), Hooghe & Marks (2001) is an entity that simultaneously acts as a principal by delegating authority to lower-level agents and as an agent by receiving directives from higher-level principals. We start this mapping exercise with EU citizens that can be regarded as the ultimate principals, delegating decision-making powers to member states' representatives in government (including Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs)) and different EU bodies (Dijkstra, 2017; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Going further we identified several intermediary principal-agents, which acts as both a principal and an agent. One of those is the European Commission serves as the agent for both EU entities and EU citizens, but since it controls financial resources, it impacts the CSDP missions as well. Delving further, within the context of the EU Council, the composition of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) consists of foreign ministers of EU member states delegated from national MFAs, who are both agents and intermediary principals, overseeing EU foreign policy. Additionally, within the Council of the EU, bodies such as the Political and Security Committee (PSC) (typically senior diplomats from their respective MFAs) and CIVCOM (also experts seconded from the MFAs of Member States), even not being formally part of FAC, have the intermediary principal status for political guidance of Civilian CSDP Missions by providing advice and recommendations to FAC. Going down another set of steps, the EEAS acts as a "service" and its internal entities function as agents of the EU member states and their collective decision-making bodies such as the PSC and the FAC. Member states delegate authority to these agents, who are tasked with translating political directives into coherent strategies and operational actions. PCM, being part of the EEAS, serves as yet another intermediary principal-agent, ensuring that the principals' goals are consistently applied across various services. Thus, they are responsible for strategic reviews of the CSDP Mission. SecDefPol acts as an agent, providing policy guidance aligned with strategic directives and as a principal since the provided Strategic review documentation is obligatory for execution within EEAS and for the missions. Directly accountable for mission implementation, CPCC acts as the operational-level agent responsible for executing civilian CSDP missions and as the principal for the Head of such missions. Furthermore, we identify civilian CSDP Missions as the ultimate internal "doers" or agents. While CSDP Missions themselves operate as agents for the EEAS and its sub-departments, they also follow political directives provided by the PSC and CIVCOM, sometimes directly, sometimes through CPCC. Lastly, host countries are designated as external (non-EU) agents since they have to proceed with specific reforms as a prerequisite for receiving incentives from the EU. This bouquet of PA roles and responsibilities already anticipates multiple potential tensions and gaps in implementing policy agenda.

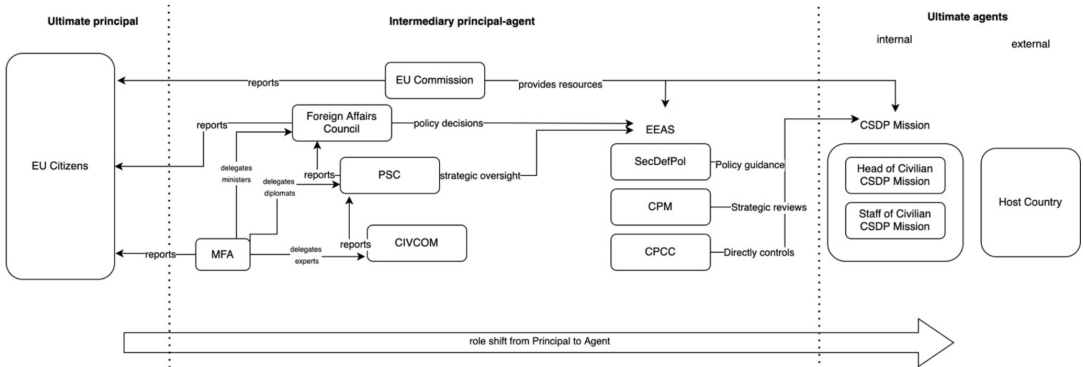


Figure 1. PA roles and responsibilities (created by author)

Given the revealed complexity of EU governance structure, the excessive length of task management ladders with many intermediary “duals”, and the highly fractured interest in civilian CSDP missions among Member states, we revisit the MLG framework and argue that its rather structured and hierarchical delegation of authority across different levels of governance is quite optimistic and simplistic in the context of the European Union. Instead, we loosen its core assumptions of levels proposing that such a governance structure is better understood as a bureaucratic heterarchy, where authority is distributed across multiple levels and institutions without such a clear and consistent hierarchical order (Halberstam et al., 2009). Approached as a structure with segmented and often relatively equal policy opportunities at multiple levels, heterarchy gives a qualitatively different chance to advance or stall new policy agenda. It not only falls in line with EU’s cultural inclination towards unanimity (Schulz & Konig, 2000) and the principles of collegiality (Craig, 2021), but also organically meshes with the core Principal-Agent dilemma of aligning the interests and information levels of relevant actors.

If such policy, as in the case of technological uptake in civilian CSDP missions, requires speciality knowledge and resources, policy advancement can painstakingly slow and limited as there are many potential stalling (veto) players (G. Tsebelis, 2010) or unexpectedly fast if proactive agents turn into policy entrepreneurs within inert bureaucratic structures (A. Lašas, 2010). As per Beckert (1999), Panagopoulos (2013), such proactive agents within organizations can influence institutional change through their strategic choices and actions. Therefore, because of the large number of intermediary “duals”, which combine both principal and agent roles and the requirement for specialty knowledge, one needs to take into account the levels of entrepreneurship and anti-entrepreneurship of principals and agents. Noting these complications of actorship, we argue that there are three analytical dimensions for understanding the nature of EU actorness in civilian CSDP missions: EU’s heterarchical structure, its long and winding list of PA roles and responsibilities, and the varying levels of actor motivation (interest in policy advancement or stalling).

Based on the discussion above, we put up two broad propositions for test. First, we argue that the concept of bureaucratic heterarchy is a superior conceptual frame in the analysis of the dynamics of technological uptake into civilian CSDP missions. Second, we assert the relevance of motivational factor in EU policy making. In particular, we insist on the important role of bureaucratic/policy entrepreneurs as the agents of change or stasis. Before considering evidence for such propositions, we turn to the discussion of methods used in this research endeavour.

3. Research methods

This section is subdivided into two parts. The first one overviews data collection approaches and methods, while the second deals with the selection of participants.

3.1 Data collection

The questionnaire development involved a broad literature review on policy dynamics and relevant theoretical issues with the focus on institutional complexity, actor roles, and decision-making asymmetries. Additionally, prior studies on EU external action specifics provided insight into key challenges and actors involved in technology transfer. The interview questions were designed to directly address the study’s main objectives. To begin with, we sought to map out the primary actors and their roles. Questions regarding technological advisors, monitors, and mentors aimed to clarify the presence and function of actors within CSDP missions. Next, we pursued the issues surrounding institutional and operational opportunities and barriers. Queries on the challenges of seconding or contracting technological experts explore recruitment and expertise gaps in missions. Finally, we wanted to evaluate strategic integration and policy alignment vis-à-vis the 2023 CSDP Compact, i.e. the extent to which policy developments can be traced to practical implementation.

Data was collected using a semi-structured expert interview method, a qualitative research technique involving prepared, but at the same time open-ended conversations to comprehensively explore participants' experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This method can offer valuable insights from research participants, namely provide an opportunity to reveal more nuanced perspectives, experiences and perceptions of the respondents on the technology transfer into civilian CSDP missions and related challenges. The questions were intentionally designed in such a way that the subjects would not feel cornered to share information they do not want to share, but instead would be guided by questions as gateways for more in-depth discussion. Due to the potential sensitivity of the issues discussed, it was decided to anonymize interviewee identities so that the participants would speak more openly and would feel free to bring up more controversial topics. The coding scheme was developed to systematically analyze interview responses by categorizing data into key thematic areas, including governance structures, technological engagement, and agent behavior within the CSDP missions. Codes were assigned based on institutional roles (EEAS, CPCC, PCM, SecDefPol, MFAs, and MS). A university Research Ethics Committee approved the implementation of this scientific research by protocol No. M4-2024-19 of November 28, 2024.

3.2 Participants

For this study, 12 experts who met the selection criteria—being directly involved in the strategic planning and implementation of civilian CSDP missions—were identified and invited to participate through personal contacts, all of whom agreed to take part in the research. It included staff who are or recently were EEAS representatives, namely 4 from CPCC who directly oversee the running of missions (CPCC1, CPCC2, CPCC3, CPCC4), 1 from PCM (Peace, Crisis Management Directorate), who carry out strategic reviews of the Missions and lead the EU civilian CSDP missions, 1 from SecDefPol (SEC1), who coordinate and develop strategies and policies, 2 Heads of Civilian CSDP Missions who lead the missions (HOM1, HOM2), 2 Mission staff members (MS1, MS2) who are related to the technological domain, and 2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives who have or had roles representing their countries in different relevant formats - Political, Security Committee, CIVCOM, etc (MFA1, MFA2).

The majority of interviews were conducted in Belgium at the European External Action Service (EEAS). Additional interviews with participants such as EU Mission members and representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs were conducted online, as these individuals were physically located in various regions across Africa, Asia, and Europe.

4. Results

The results section is structured on key themes covered during the interview process. Some subsections are more closely aligned with the exploration of substantive policy dynamics from agenda setting to its implementation, while others focus on key actors and their roles. In all cases, the underlying issue of the technological transfer in EU civilian CSDP missions acts as the thematic red thread weaving through the entire section.

4.1 Objectives and Strategies

We began many interviews focusing on the objectives of CSDP missions. Surprisingly, respondents highlighted a persistent lack of clarity in the objectives of civilian CSDP missions. For example, CPCC3 stated that "EU Member States don't have the capability or willingness for proper strategic dialogue," leaving the missions' purpose ambiguous. S/he added that EEAS focuses on short-term priorities dictated by Member States within a 6 to 18-month timeframe. CPCC4 echoed these points by referring to the absence of a shared vision.

Divergent priorities further complicate mission objectives in general. PCM1 noted that France and Belgium view civilian missions as stabilizing forces for Commission projects, while Sweden and Ireland prioritize long-term goals. HOM2 remarked that “the lack of a common vision impacts missions on the ground,” citing Somalia’s anti-piracy efforts as an example. SEC1 summarized the issue, asking whether these missions are “just a political signal or aimed at achieving substance.”

Resource allocation was identified as a major challenge. CPCC1 criticized the establishment of three new missions without additional funds, stating that “funds were taken from other missions” and lamenting the Council’s lack of financial responsibility. Despite this, missions continue to be launched without adequate budget adjustments and without sufficient regard to key priorities stated in the 2023 CSDP Compact.

4.2 Technology as a topic

Respondents agreed that technologies are engaged in CSDP missions only in a limited capacity. CPCC3 criticized the delayed technological commitments outlined in the CSDP Compact, stating: “In 2026, nobody will care about the compact because something new might be available in 2027. So it’s too late.” SEC1 acknowledged the lack of responsibility within CSDP structures, explaining that “strategy informs processes, but the solution provider is not in CSDP or SecDefPol, so we cannot write such a document.” This view clashed with CPCC representatives, who insisted that SecDefPol should lead the technological strategy. CPCC1 noted that technological transfer for the host countries are often overlooked because “diplomats and MFA’s representatives lack knowledge of the subject.” SEC1 largely agreed this assessment arguing that technological decisions are often uninformed due to insufficient expertise.

4.3 Technological expertise

According to a number of interviewees, technological expertise within CSDP missions is constrained by systemic challenges. A significant issue is the lack of qualified experts provided by Member States. CPCC1 stated that “EU MS don’t give good experts because they are better paid at home.” CPCC2 largely agreed pointing out that vacancies for seconded positions often remain unfilled for over a year. SEC1 and CPCC4 also supported this position, noting the difficulty of finding individuals proficient in both policy and technology. On their part, HOM2, PCM, and SEC1 observed that secondment practices fail to attract skilled technological experts, yet Member States resist adopting contractor-based solutions.

Continuing with the topic, CPCC1, CPCC2 explained that host countries such as Ukraine and Moldova often have more advanced capacities in areas like cybersecurity, limiting the EU’s added value. SEC1 and CPCC2 noted this imbalance as well, while CPCC1 reported internal resistance to tools like AI and OSINT. MS2 described staff reactions as dismissive, stating that “they looked at me as if I was trying to sell magic.” In turn, CPCC2 highlighted how even basic topics like cybersecurity are misunderstood by decision makers, such as conflating cybersecurity with general internet activities.

The value of specialized teams of technological experts and visiting experts were mentioned by CPCC representatives. Also, HOM1 and HOM2 highlighted such visits as effective short-term solutions, particularly in Moldova, where deployments last three to six months. However, CPCC2 noted that such approaches fail to address long-term needs as strategic topics like cyber strategy development in Moldova require sustained presence, but are overlooked because of the lack of long-term planning.

4.4 Key Actors and Their Roles

4.4.1 EU Member States

Member States shape CSDP missions, though their levels of involvement and influence vary. CPCC4, CPCC3, MFA1, HOM1, and SEC1 agreed that political actors such as CIVCOM and PSC, who represent

Member States, often have “very limited understanding of technologies”, hampering mission progress and the adoption of innovative solutions. As example of this, MS1 claimed to have presented an Austrian initiative to the member states and CPCC for “an algorithm to predict crisis developments based on an EU Horizon project”. Even though it was EU project “ready to be deployed”, it received no interest. Additionally, CPCC3 noted that pushing new initiatives requires “somebody with high enough status to put it on the agenda” to ensure Member State backing.

However, the backing can take place even outside EU institutional framework, but have impact on CSDP missions. For example, CPCC2 recalled a situation when the Netherlands had a bilateral agreement with Moldova, where €4 million were allocated to the Moldova mission’s project cell funds directly for the support of reforms, while Moldova’s internal mission budget was just €1.2 million for two years. CPCC2 explained that this lump sum “investment” enabled the Netherlands to “signal to Moldova” (show that Netherlands are important actors) and thus shape CSDP Mission’s mandate.

In turn, CPCC4 pointed out disparities among Member States, using Austria as an example of setting a precedent by transferring funds directly to EU missions, but “still not being players (important actors) compared to others”. MS1 emphasized that larger states like Germany, Poland, France, and Italy hold greater influence than countries like Austria. MFA1 supported this view, stating that PCM is politically driven by France, which focuses on “military planning” while seeking to “limit how much others know.”

4.4.2 Individual initiative

In addition to the size of the state, the importance of personal drive was also emphasized by interviewees. The Austrian MFA representative was highlighted as an example of a proactive actor within the CSDP framework. CPCC1 described him/her as demonstrating that “the most effective way to bring something new” is through a proactive representative from a Member State, where substantive progress can be achieved during informal meetings in informal settings (like restaurants) after working hours .

MFA1 credited the same Austrian MFA representative for successfully introducing technological topics into the recent version of the civilian CSDP Compact through the CIVCOM delegate. This was achieved by gathering “input from the experts,” presenting it logically, and ensuring no resistance from decision-makers. According to MFA1, this success reflected the broader reality that the “CSDP world is just a sum of ambitions of different actors.” However, CPCC1 observed that while the representative promoted the topic effectively, Austria, the home country of the above-mentioned individual, ultimately did not second personnel to the initiative. As noted by CPCC1, “someone saying that it is needed is not enough; they should be ready to second”.

CPCC3 noted the Austrian MFA representative’s leadership in the “Innovation in Cluster 6” initiative, which focused on raising awareness and providing practical examples of technological applications for the EU member states. However, SEC1 remarked that Cluster 6 would likely “die of natural causes” because the mentioned Austrian MFA representative, who had driven the effort, left the position and no longer led the cluster.

4.4.3 EEAS

The EEAS and its internal Units (CPCC, PCM and SecDefPol) were consistently described as limited in their capacity to effectively operate in the context of CSDP missions. SEC1 stated that overall, the EEAS is “not a player”. This view was supported by MFA1 and HOM2, who noted that “EU Member States do not allow them to address core issues, like looking into illegal migration from Somalia.” MFA1 characterized the EEAS as “a service, not an institution,” lacking financial resources and authority necessary to drive significant initiatives. SEC1 emphasized that the “biggest internal problem is the lack of knowledge on technologies,” further limiting EEAS’s ability to propose or implement innovative solutions. MFA1 also criticized the lack of internal coordination within the EEAS, pointing out that “PCM, CPCC, and

SecDefPol only realized at a conference how little they knew about each other's work on managing data."

Furthermore, MFA2 added that while CPCC has minimal power, it still resists external input from different entities outside EEAS, remarking that "nobody wants new players" when Member States bilaterally assist host countries. CPCC1 highlighted different leadership priorities within the EEAS, between managing directors for CPCC and SecDefPol. According to CPCC1, the director overseeing SecDefPol and PCM is "not interested in the civilian CSDP component," focusing instead on military missions.

Reflecting on technological uptake, CPCC1 and HOM1 noted that new ideas rarely emerge from within the CPCC, with strategic proposals primarily expected from PCM and SecDefPol. However, CPCC1 and PCM1 stated that this is unlikely due to a lack of expertise and understanding of CSDP dynamics. PCM1 explained that "if a technological expert were present in PCM, topics would be deployed quickly, but currently no one has the expertise to take it forward." MFA1 supported this view, stating that even when technological needs are identified in host countries, "nobody in EEAS understands technology, and there is no transfer of knowledge back to headquarters." CPCC1 added that even though strategic reviews within the PSC present opportunities to introduce new elements to mission mandates but noted that these proposals for new requirements "have to be fed earlier" as groundwork during the preparation phase.

4.4.4 European Commission

The European Commission's role as the financial driver of missions was underlined by MFA1, who described it as the "wallet" for CSDP operations. CPCC4 also emphasized the importance of the Commission's financial power, stating: "If you want to be an important player, you need money, and the Commission has the money." CPCC2 criticized the inflexibility of Commission instruments such as the Rapid Response Pillar (EU, 2025) noting that "funds are committed for years with limited flexibility". PCM1 pointed to the lack of clarity in responsibilities while providing support to host countries between the EEAS civilian Missions and the Commission projects, leading to inefficiencies in delivery.

4.4.5 Missions and Local Counterparts

Moving the focus to the recipient non-EU countries, CPCC1 and CPCC2 highlighted challenges in technological capacities, noting that e.g. in the Moldova mission, it is "difficult to get capacities in technological areas, such as in cyber". Thus the Missions often act as intermediaries, for example connecting EU agencies like Cert EU and ENISA with Moldova's government.

PCM1 pointed out that missions can propose changes to profiles or introduce technological roles to Member States, either directly or through CPCC. CPCC1 explained that there is a possibility to include staff with specific profiles to the civilian missions as long as the overall number of staff does not change, but the interest is limited: "when numbers don't change, Member States are not so interested." However, discussing the same issue, HOM1 provided a specific example when a new officer with the profile in digital transformation was attracted to the Ukrainian mission. However, HOM1 also noted a diminishing role for Heads of Mission, stating that CPCC has begun "micromanaging" and "censoring everything," limiting their direct access to political bodies like the PSC. Despite these challenges, HOM1 acknowledged that even though PCM are doing the mission reviews, missions still play a key role during the strategic review process by preparing host countries and introducing innovative ideas to be considered during the reviews.

Regarding the role of local counterparts, CPCC3 emphasized their importance in pushing the EU to include technologies on the "menu" (making it a support option). This observation was also supported by HOM2. In turn, CPCC3 noted that not missions are equal, but missions in Moldova and Ukraine are particularly effective at advocating for technological advancements, describing that their request for technological support has more chance of success due to the overall interest of the member states.

4.4.6 Entrepreneurship in action

We conclude the results section with the systemic description of two specific scenarios, revealed by the interviewees as discussed above (see Figure 2). They demonstrate how policy entrepreneurship works within the examined EU policy area and how difficult it is to make a substantive and lasting difference in technological transfer vis-a-vis recipient countries.

Scenario 1 (solid lines) contains five distinct action steps. To begin with, we see the national CIVCOM delegate from Austria, advocating for the inclusion of technological topics in strategic documentation (Step 1). The CIVCOM expert then advises the national PSC representative to advance the topic further (Step 2). Although the PSC representative lacks technological expertise, s/he holds a key political role and directs the SecDefPol unit of EEAS to take action (Step 3). Consequently, SecDefPol incorporates the technological priorities into the draft of the Civilian CSDP Compact 2023, which is then submitted to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) for approval (Step 4). In turn, the FAC endorses the document, as it aligns with the recommendations of CIVCOM and PSC (Step 5). However, without a concrete plan for implementation from the MFAs, the commitment remains on paper only, demonstrating that mere acknowledgment of the need is insufficient without tangible secondment efforts. As a result, the high-level policy fails to translate into actionable measures within the EEAS and CSDP missions on the ground.

Scenario 2 (dotted lines) follows a very different route, circumventing all of the EU external action-related bureaucracy. A member state (Netherlands) bypasses the traditional EU decision-making structures by providing financial resources directly to a recipient country (Moldova), which are then allocated for distribution within the CSDP Moldova Mission (Step 1). This amount is nearly three times the mission's budget and thus ends up significantly shaping its activities. As the host country works closely with the CSDP Mission, this substantial funding begins to influence the mission's priorities and scope over time (Step 2). The impact becomes evident when both the CSDP Mission and the host country reports their progress to the EEAS during the Mission's Strategic Review process and through daily operations (Step 3).

Together with other interview data, these two scenarios provide an impulse to reconceptualize the dynamics of EU external action within CSDP missions. We turn to this reconceptualization in the next section.

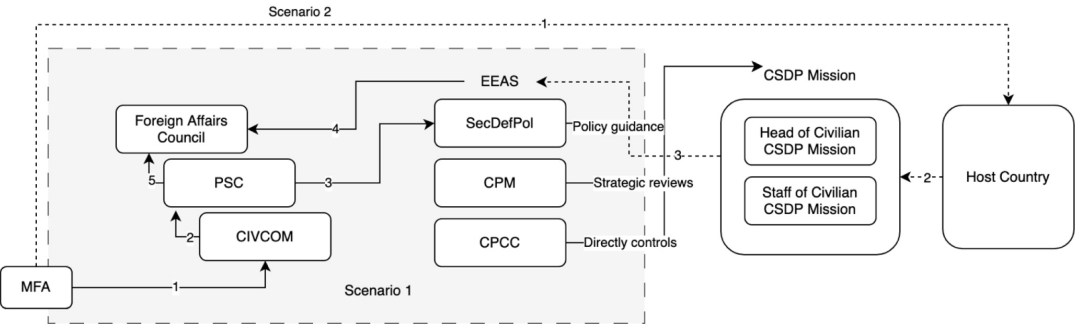


Figure 2. Two scenarios of policy entrepreneurship in CSDP missions (created by author)

5. Discussion

The results discussed above points us in two directions. First, we need to reconsider the actual nature of EU decision-making vis-à-vis its CSDP missions. A related second, it is necessary to evaluate the role of individual agents within the EU bureaucratic structure. These two topics are explored in greater detail next.

5.1 Bureaucratic heterarchy

The findings provide some support to proposition that EU governance in civilian CSDP missions is best understood as a bureaucratic heterarchy rather than a multi-level-based governance framework. Here, the traditional dispersion of authority across various decision-making levels is challenged with overlapping roles among institutions such as the EEAS (PCM, SecDefPol, CPCC) and the European Commission. The observed inequalities among Member States also challenge clear hierarchies. The European Commission seems to act as both agent and principal, wielding significant influence as the financial driver of missions, while PSC and CIVCOM, intermediaries between principals and agents, often lack the technical expertise to guide initiatives. Decision-making relies on informal mechanisms, exemplified by the Austrian MFA representative, who advanced technological priorities through personal advocacy and informal channels talking to diplomats in restaurants. Divergent Member State priorities further complicate governance and exemplifies the fragmentation of EU actorness. For instance, France and Belgium focus on short-term stabilization, while Sweden and Ireland seem to prioritize long-term goals. States like the Netherlands use bilateral agreements, such as with Moldova, to directly shape mission mandates, highlighting the unevenness of EU agenda setting and implementation process. This also demonstrates ongoing competition in shaping policies illustrating the non-hierarchical and often negotiated nature of governance within the EU. In addition, challenges of accountability and transparency persist with information asymmetry and fragmentation within EEAS entities stalling technological initiatives, limiting coordination, and signaling the presence of the more flexible heterarchical governance model. This fluid system, while complex and sometimes unpredictable, provides opportunities for agents like civilian CSDP missions to drive (or stall) change, if key stakeholders and financial resources are aligned.

5.2 Proactive vs. reactive

The interview data highlights the driving role of proactive agents (entrepreneurs) in introducing policy innovations and reactionary agents (anti-entrepreneurs) in hindering progress. Though limited in scope, this finding seems to align with PA Theory. The case of the Austrian MFA representative or anti-entrepreneurship by skeptical member states or EEAS bureaucrats can clearly impact the success of civilian CSDP missions. Proactive agents can drive innovation and align stakeholders, while reactionary agents have opportunities to hinder progress through passivity or resistance to change. The Austrian MFA representative exemplified the influence of proactive engagement, successfully integrating technological priorities into the CSDP Compact and leading initiatives like Innovation Cluster 6. Proactive agents also include the Heads of Missions, who have the ability to “calibrate” staff job descriptions to introduce innovation discreetly or prepare host countries for strategic review processes, thereby increasing the likelihood of new topics being incorporated into the subsequent EU support “menu”.

In contrast, reactionary sceptical agents, particularly within EEAS, were noted for their lack of expertise and resistance to innovation as the potential of technological tools was not properly understood by them or ignored due to the “military planning” mindset and/or different agenda of PCM drivers. Furthermore, timely support was lacking due to the lack of clarity about bureaucratic mandates and responsibilities.

Once Member State representatives with their own short-term goals are added into the picture, the long-term strategy of the CSDP missions gets significantly obscured and increasingly reminds of the proposed framework of bureaucratic heterarchy.

Systemic barriers, including institutional resistance, resource constraints, and fragmented coordination, further limit opportunities for policy entrepreneurship and enhance opportunities for anti-entrepreneurship. Despite these challenges, some proactive agents demonstrated their ability to navigate institutional constraints, showing that success depends not only on assigning roles but also on the quality and initiative of the agents involved. Empowering skilled proactive agents is essential for advancing mission objectives and overcoming bureaucratic inertia.

6. Conclusions

This study focused on assessing to what extent current EU organizational structures, its operational rules and expertise are able to take up technological priorities and what that tells us about the nature of EU actorness. The findings demonstrate that the EU governance, particularly in the context civilian CSDP missions is more fluid, flat and opportunistic rather than structured, hierarchical and consistently multi-layered. Our study finds that the practical implementation of policies is shaped less by formal governance levels and more by competing priorities and resource constraints. Informal mechanisms and individual actors can play critical roles in advancing (or stalling) initiatives.

From a PA theory perspective, the research highlights significant issues related to delegation, accountability, and agency autonomy. The classic PA assumption of principals controlling agents through delegation mechanisms is challenged in the civilian CSDP framework, where intermediary actors—such as PSC, CIVCOM, EEAS, and the European Commission—simultaneously act as both principals and agents. The study illustrates that expertise gaps and divergent priorities among Member States create a system where agents often operate with significant discretion, shaping policy implementation. Additionally, the study finds that bureaucratic entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in advancing technological adoption, while reactionary anti-entrepreneurs act as gatekeepers, stalling progress due to bureaucratic inertia, limited expertise or competing policy objectives.

In terms of policy recommendations, this research suggests that the effectiveness of technological transfer in civilian CSDP missions is closely linked to the ability to strengthen coordination mechanisms within all actors as well as to enhance technological expertise within decision-making bodies. Finally, recognizing and supporting the role of bureaucratic entrepreneurs could improve the agility and responsiveness of EU governance.

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Paulius Klikūnas

TECHNOLOGIJŲ PERDAVIMAS ES CIVILINĖSE MISIJOSE: BIUROKRATINĖ HETERARCHIJA IR Į AGENTUS ORIENTUOTOS GALIMYBĖS

Anotacija. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas naujų technologijų integravimas į ES civilines bendrosios saugumo ir gynybos politikos (BSGP) misijas. Naudojant daugiapakopio valdymo ir užsakovo, ir agento teorijas kaip pradinįs conceptualius rėmus. Tyrimo nagrinėjamas ES valdymo sudėtingumas, pavyzdžiui, biurokratinė heterarchija ir agentų valdomų galimybių dinamika. Remiantis interviu su Europos išorės veiksmų tarnybos (EIVT) darbuotojais, ES misijų darbuotojais ir ES užsienio reikalų ministerijos atstovais, išvadose atskleidžiamos sisteminės kliūtys, tokios kaip biurokratinis netolygumas, informacijos asimetrija ir kompetencijos spragos, kurios trukdo veiksmingai perduoti technologijas priimančiosioms šalims. Nepaisant strateginių sistemų, tokių kaip Civilinės BSGP susitarimas, technologijų perdavimas tebėra labai netolygus ir fragmentiškas, priklausantis nuo aktyvių subjektų, veikiančių pagal neformalius mechanizmus. Tyrimo daroma išvada, kad iniciatyvių subjektų įgalinimas gali padėti paspartinti technologinę integraciją ir padidinti civilinių BSGP misijų operatyvinį poveikį, kad jie galėtų geriau remti priimančiąsias šalis.

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