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The Interaction Between Local Self-Government Bodies and the Population as a Factor of Effective Governance

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ABSTRACT

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The article examines the interaction of local self-government bodies with the population as a key factor in effective governance at the local level. It is argued that, under conditions of decentralization and the transformation of public administration, the role of local institutions in ensuring transparency, accountability, and social cohesion increases; the quality of communication between authorities and citizens affects the effectiveness of management decisions, trust in institutions, and community resilience in crisis situations. The theoretical part of the study defines the multidimensional concept of “interaction between local self-government bodies and the population” through three components: informational, consultative, and partnership, on the basis of which a general model is proposed that views citizens as active participants in policy co-creation. The methodological framework includes the analysis of international standards (in particular, the Open Government Directive and the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation), a comparative analysis of foreign practices (USA, Canada, EU countries), and an assessment of Ukrainian institutional realities in the context of decentralization and martial law (analysis of legal acts, implementation of digital platforms such as e-dem, and cases of participatory budgeting). The empirical part identifies key patterns: technological platforms significantly expand citizens’ access to information and participation, but their effectiveness depends on the institutional capacity of local self-government bodies; predominance of uniform forms of participation (informing, formal consultation) does not ensure sustainable engagement and results in low citizen influence on decisions; advancing levels of engagement (collaboration, empowerment) improves the quality of decisions and citizen readiness to participate in their implementation. For practical assessment of “quality” interaction, a criteria matrix is proposed that combines IAP2 Spectrum levels with normative values of public participation, as well as an indicator system for quantitative and qualitative monitoring (level of awareness, degree of citizen input impact, availability of feedback, institutional stability of engagement channels, trust index). Based on the results, practical recommendations are formulated: to standardize local regulations on interaction mechanisms; integrate digital platforms into decision-making systems with clear feedback procedures; promote the transition from formal participation to collaboration and empowerment in selected areas; develop institutional capacity of local self-government bodies (training, creation of communication positions/offices, methodological standards for “good interaction”); and foster partnerships with civil society institutions and international programs (UNDP, donor initiatives) to support community resource and expert needs, especially under martial law conditions.

KEYWORDS

local self-government, public participation, engagement, participatory governance, transparency, digital platforms, institutional capacity, interaction quality criteria.



Взаємодія органів місцевого самоврядування з населенням як чинник ефективного врядування

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СТАТТЯ

АНОТАЦІЯ

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У статті досліджено взаємодію органів місцевого самоврядування з населенням як визначальний чинник ефективного врядування на місцевому рівні. Обґрунтовано, що за умов децентралізації та трансформації публічного управління роль місцевих інституцій у забезпеченні прозорості, підзвітності та суспільної згуртованості зростає; від характеру комунікацій між владою та громадянами залежить якість управлінських рішень, рівень довіри до інституцій і стійкість громад у кризових ситуаціях. Теоретична частина статті окреслює багатовимірне поняття «взаємодія органів місцевого самоврядування з населенням» через три складові: інформаційну, консультаційну та партнерську; на цій основі запропоновано узагальнену модель, що розглядає громадян як активних суб'єктів співтворення політики. Методологічна основа дослідження включає аналіз міжнародних стандартів (зокрема Open Government Directive та моделі IAP2 – Spectrum of Public Participation), порівняльний аналіз зарубіжних практик (США, Канада, країни ЄС) та оцінку українських інституційних реалій у контексті децентралізації й воєнного стану (аналіз нормативно-правових актів, практик запровадження цифрових платформ – e-dem – та кейсів партисипативного бюджетування). Емпірична частина виявляє такі ключові закономірності: технологічні платформи значно розширюють можливості доступу громадян до інформації й участі, проте їх ефективність залежить від рівня інституційної спроможності ОМС; переважання одноманітних форм (інформування, формальне консультування) не забезпечує стійкого залучення й призводить до низького відчутного впливу громадян на рішення; просування рівнів залучення (співробітництво, уповноваження) підвищує якість рішень і готовність громад долучатися до їх реалізації. Для практичної оцінки «якісної» взаємодії запропоновано критеріальну матрицю, що поєднує рівні Спектра IAP2 із нормативними цінностями громадської участі, та індикаторну систему для кількісного й якісного моніторингу (рівень поінформованості, ступінь впливу внесків громадян, наявність зворотного зв'язку, інституційна сталість каналів залучення, індекс довіри). На підставі отриманих результатів сформульовано практичні рекомендації: унормувати й стандартизувати локальні положення про механізми взаємодії; інтегрувати цифрові платформи в систему прийняття рішень із чіткими процедурами зворотного зв'язку; сприяти переходу від формальної участі до співробітництва і делегування повноважень у вибраних сферах; розвивати інституційну спроможність ОМС (тренінги, створення посад/відділів з комунікації, методичні стандарти «гарної взаємодії»); стимулювати партнерство з інститутами громадянського суспільства та міжнародними програмами (ПРООН, донорські ініціативи) для підтримки ресурсних і експертних потреб громад, особливо в умовах воєнного стану.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

місцеве самоврядування, громадська участь, engagement, партисипативне врядування, відкритість, цифрові платформи, інституційна спроможність, критерії якості взаємодії.

1. Introduction

In the context of modern management of territorial communities, there is a growing need to form effective mechanisms for interaction between local self-government bodies (hereinafter referred to as LSGs) with the population, which ensure transparency, accountability and sustainability of decision-making. Open government as a governance model is based on the principles of transparency, accountability and citizen participation, and also involves the active use of technological tools and innovative approaches that allow ensuring the availability of information and effective communication with the population [6, p. 18]. As a general rule, authorities and civil society institutions (hereinafter referred to as CSIs) should be open, accessible and ready for partnership.

The interaction between local self-government bodies and ICS is of particular importance under martial law, when communities face significant socio-economic challenges, and the rapid and effective exchange of information becomes critically important [16, p. 46]. ICS can act as partners of local self-government bodies in solving common problems, ensuring the receipt of up-to-date information, suggestions and feedback from the public. At the same time, one of the key areas of such interaction is the development and implementation of joint projects for community development, which contributes to increasing the effectiveness of management decisions and stimulates the active participation of citizens in the life of their territorial community [9, p. 11].

The successful implementation of the “win-win” strategy, in which local self-government bodies and ICS become equal partners, allows not only to improve the quality of management processes, but also to strengthen public trust in the authorities, increase social cohesion and ensure the sustainability of community development. In this context, systematic research and implementation of effective mechanisms of interaction with the public is becoming a scientifically grounded and practically necessary component of modern municipal management.

2. Literature Review

The problem of interaction between local self-government bodies and the population in modern Ukraine is one of the key issues in the context of building effective governance and a democratic society. In recent years, there has been a tendency to rethink the role of citizens in the processes of managing territorial communities, especially under martial law and decentralization reforms.

The Guidelines “Interaction of Local Self-Government Bodies with Civil Society Institutions in the Field of Open Government” [1] emphasize that effective interaction between the authorities and citizens is based on the principles of transparency, accountability and participation. The document identifies key tools of participation – electronic petitions, public hearings, participatory budgets – as means of forming an open model of governance that helps to increase trust in the authorities.

The scientific works of L. Hryshko [2; 3] reveal the specifics of the interaction of local self-government bodies with the public under martial law. The author focuses on the need for normative improvement of communication mechanisms, in particular through digital tools and institutional forms of citizen participation. She notes that ensuring the continuity of dialogue between the authorities and the population is the basis for social stability and resilience of local communities in crisis conditions.

An important analytical context is provided by the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021–2027 [4], which emphasizes a participatory approach as a prerequisite for the implementation of the policy of sustainable development of territories. The document defines the participation of citizens in the decision-making process as a factor in increasing the effectiveness of local policy, reducing the level of social tension and building trust in government institutions.

According to D. Yeremka [5], the modernization of the system of interaction between self-government bodies and the public in wartime should take place through the integration of the principles of open government and digitalization of management processes. The author highlights the key problems – the formality of participatory procedures, weak communication infrastructure and inequality of access to public participation tools, proposing the concept of “inclusive governance”.

I. Mishchuk’s research [6] deepens the understanding of systemic interaction between local self-government bodies and public authorities, emphasizing that the coherence of the vertical of governance and the activity of civil society is a necessary condition for increasing the effectiveness of governance at all levels.

In the report of V. Potapenko [9], it is emphasized that local self-government is an important factor in the stability of the rear under martial law, and the active interaction of the authorities with the population strengthens social capital and ensures the adaptability of communities to security challenges.

The work of O. Prydanyuk [10] emphasizes the importance of public initiatives, volunteer associations and public consultations for strengthening horizontal ties in the local government system. The researcher notes that citizen participation in decision-making increases the effectiveness of local politics, ensuring a balance between the interests of the authorities and the needs of the population.

The theoretical and methodological foundations of interaction between local authorities and the public are revealed in the work of F. Semenchuk [14], who proves that the effectiveness of local governance is determined not only by institutional mechanisms, but also by the level of trust, communicative culture and civic activity.

At the same time, T. Steshenko, O. Matsneva and V. Shmyga [15] explore the communicative aspect of interaction, emphasizing the role of open channels of information exchange and transparent decision-making procedures in strengthening the legitimacy of local authorities.

Foreign sources – in particular, in the materials of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [18; 19], as well as the OECD analytical report [20] – reveal universal approaches to the organization of public participation, defining five levels of public involvement: informing, consulting, engaging, cooperation and empowerment. These models are widely used in the practice of open government in the EU and the USA.

Thus, modern scientific opinion shows that effective interaction of local self-government bodies with the population is not only a managerial, but also a social and communication category. It provides for the creation of conditions for real participation of citizens in decision-making, increasing the transparency of government, developing trust and ensuring the accountability of local authorities.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to analyze the interaction of local self-government bodies with the population as a key factor of effective governance, to determine the levels of citizen participation in decision-making processes and to formulate criteria for assessing “qualitative” interaction. The article provides for the study of modern approaches to the organization of communications between local authorities and residents, the analysis of interaction channels and methods of public involvement that contribute to increasing transparency, responsibility and efficiency of management decisions.

4. Methods and Materials

In the process of studying the interaction of local self-government bodies with the population as a factor of effective governance, qualitative methods were applied, which made it possible to comprehensively analyze the essence, forms and features of communication between the authorities and the public. The methodological basis is a systematic approach that allows considering local self-government as an integral social and management system, where interaction with the population is an integral element of democratic governance.

The paper uses the analysis and synthesis of scientific sources, which provided the identification of the theoretical foundations of the concept of “interaction between government and community”, clarification of its content in the domestic and foreign scientific tradition, as well as systematization of approaches to assessing the effectiveness of communications in public administration.

The application of the comparative method made it possible to investigate different models of interaction between local self-government bodies and the population in the countries of the European Union and to identify practices relevant to the Ukrainian context. The comparison was based on the analysis of scientific publications, recommendations of the Council of Europe, OECD and documents regulating public participation in decision-making processes.

An important tool was the content analysis of Ukrainian regulations, in particular the Laws “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine”, “On Citizens’ Appeals”, “On Access to Public Information”, as well as local statutes of territorial communities. This method made it possible to find out to what extent the legislative framework promotes active participation of the population in decision-making and whether it provides accountability mechanisms for local authorities.

A structural and functional analysis was also applied, which made it possible to reveal the relationship between the functions of local self-government and forms of public participation, to determine the role of institutional and communication mechanisms in the formation of trust in the authorities.

The method of analysis of documents and practices of local governance is used, which includes the study of official websites of local self-government bodies, reports on the activities of public councils, community development programs, public consultations and other forms of cooperation with the population. This made it possible to assess the real mechanisms of interaction between the authorities and the community in Ukrainian conditions.

To summarize the results obtained, a logical-generalizing method was used, which contributed to the formation of analytical conclusions on the effectiveness of existing forms of citizen participation in the process of local self-government, as well as to outline the directions for improving the communication policy of local self-government bodies.

Thus, the selected methodological toolkit provided a comprehensive disclosure of the topic, allowing to combine theoretical analysis, legal assessment and study of practical experience of interaction between local self-government bodies and the population as a key factor of effective governance.

5. Results and Discussion

The interaction of local self-government bodies with the population is one of the key conditions for the development of democratic governance, since it is at this level that the closest clash of interests of the state and society takes place. In the current conditions of decentralization of power and transformation of management practices, the role of local self-government is growing significantly. Not only the quality of managerial decisions, but also trust in state institutions, the effectiveness of social policy implementation and the level of social cohesion depend on the nature of the relationship between local authorities and citizens. As F. Semenchenko notes, it is the interaction of the authorities and the public that forms the practice of joint governance, which is based on the principles of participation, partnership and openness [14, p. 45-46].

The concept of "interaction of local self-government bodies with the population" is multidimensional and includes a complex of organizational, informational and socio-communication processes aimed at coordinating the interests of the parties. Scientists distinguish three main components of this phenomenon – informational, consulting and partnership aspects. The information component ensures transparency and openness of the activities of local authorities, the consultation component creates conditions for public discussion of management decisions, and the partnership component provides for the joint participation of the authorities and the community in the implementation of socially significant programs and projects [3, p. 29]. This model of interaction corresponds to the modern paradigm of public administration, which considers citizens not as an object of influence, but as active subjects of policy co-creation.

International experience shows that effective interaction between the government and society is possible only under the conditions of implementation of three key principles – transparency, participation and cooperation. These principles are disclosed in detail in the Open Government Directive (USA, 2009). [21], which became the conceptual basis for the formation of similar initiatives in the OECD, EU and Council of Europe member states. The directive defines transparency as the "driving force of trust" between government and society. The principle provides for the openness of information about the structure of government bodies, their budgets, activity plans, audit results, as well as the creation of public online resources that guarantee citizens access to reliable data. Transparency in this context is not only a form of reporting, but also a mechanism for building trust and reducing uncertainty in management processes. The American city manager of the Cupertino district emphasizes: "Today, transparency means not only informing citizens about the decision, but also involving them in the process itself, providing an opportunity to express a position and offer an alternative" [22].

The second principle – participation – is focused on involving citizens in policy formation and control over its implementation. According to OECD analytical materials [20], active public participation contributes to increasing the legitimacy of power, improves the quality of managerial decisions, reduces social tension and expands the circle of people interested in policy implementation. The implementation of this principle in Ukraine is manifested through the development of tools for public hearings,

electronic petitions, participatory budgets, advisory and advisory councils at local authorities. Under the condition of effective functioning, such mechanisms create a two-way channel of communication between the authorities and the public, which allows taking into account the needs of different social groups when making decisions.

The principle of cooperation characterizes the highest level of interaction, which is based on partnerships between state institutions, local communities, business and public organizations. Its essence lies in the joint responsibility of the parties for the result of managerial decisions. According to Council of Europe experts, the partnership between the authorities and the public increases the effectiveness of public services and makes it possible to respond more quickly to the needs of local communities [16, p. 48]. In this context, the concepts of “interaction” and “cooperation” are interrelated and complementary elements that form a model of co-governance.

Speaking about the best foreign practices of local self-government, it is necessary to take into account the historical, cultural, financial and social characteristics of each country, which determine the specifics of the functioning of municipal units and the ways of carrying out their activities. Some municipalities, according to D. Jeryoik, prefer stability, avoiding dynamic changes to reduce risks [5, p. 59-60]. Such aspiration is characteristic of bodies that are satisfied with their status quo; However, a lack of motivation to develop can lead to falling behind societal expectations, growing public discontent, and losing trust. Other innovation-oriented municipalities run the risk of “exhausting” their own ideas or facing the “pioneer risk” that is typical of dynamic organizations.

In this context, the study of best practices is especially important, as it allows organizations to share experiences, analyze proven solutions and assess their suitability for adaptation in different environments. The Council of Europe report “Best Practices in Local Self-Government” defines the criteria by which the practice can be recognized as the best and be the object of study by other municipalities [10, p. 187]. Among these criteria, V. Potapenko, V. Barannyk and N. Bakhur distinguish the following: success – positive impact on the community and achievement of goals; transparency – availability of data and clarity of changes; adequacy (adequacy) – compliance with the conditions of application; copyability (replicability) – the possibility of application in other municipalities; sustainability is a long-term effect [9, p. 16].

Particular attention should be paid to the phenomenon of engagement, which characterizes not only the presence of communication between local governments and citizens, but also the depth, sustainability and quality of this interaction. Unlike traditional informing or formal participation, which involves mostly one-way exchange of information or formal consideration of citizens’ opinions, engagement includes an active partnership between the authorities and the public, which is manifested in joint training, coordination of actions, generation and implementation of solutions to current problems of municipal development. Involving the population involves the systematic creation of platforms and tools for two-way interaction that provide regular feedback and allow citizens to directly influence managerial decision-making.

The experience of the Member States of the European Union, in particular Poland, Estonia and the Czech Republic, demonstrates that the development of mechanisms of public engagement forms stable communication channels, increases the transparency of decision-making processes and contributes to the development of citizens’ responsibility for the state and prospects of their own territorial communities [6, p. 19]. At the same time, the implementation of such approaches involves a comprehensive assessment of the socio-cultural, economic and administrative conditions that determine the ability of the community to actively participate, and creates prerequisites for the adaptation of best practices of engagement in the local context.

The analysis of foreign practices, in particular in the United States and Canada, demonstrates the effectiveness of the use of technological platforms and public engagement programs. Thus, in 2018, the non-profit organization Common Sense California, with the support of Pepperdine University, launched a grant program for municipalities that successfully involve the population in local government. The program provided financial and informational support to municipal leaders, as well as workshops, lectures and group classes for about 50-75 representatives of local governments. The main goal was to show that active interaction with the population is not necessarily difficult or expensive, but brings real benefits for managerial decision-making [15, p. 133].

An example of the use of engagement tools was the city of Santa Barbara, which in 2019 used the UserVoice online platform to involve citizens in the formation of the city budget. The platform allowed residents to submit proposals, evaluate them, and vote for the highest priority projects. Such approaches

facilitated the participation of those citizens who could not attend public hearings, and provided a more representative reflection of public opinion [3, p. 29].

Another example is Douglas County, which combined priority-based budgeting with citizen engagement through the Peak Democracy online portal. Participants could distribute “virtual funds” between priorities, express their proposals and add sub-goals, which allowed local self-government bodies to receive objective information about the priorities of the population and assess the effectiveness of their programs [3, p. 29-30].

Of course, the successful implementation of such practices involves comprehensive interaction between local governments, ICS and the population, the use of various communication strategies, including online surveys, mobile applications, social networks and regular public events. The result is the formation of an active, responsible and transparent community, which is a key factor in effective governance in modern conditions.

Thus, the interaction of local self-government bodies with the population appears not only as a tool of communication, but as a system-forming factor of effective governance, which integrates the principles of openness, partnership and mutual responsibility. The development of these principles forms a new managerial culture focused on the co-creation of public welfare, strengthening trust in the authorities and increasing the capacity of communities for self-development.

Within the framework of further scientific research, it is advisable to clearly define the category of “qualitative” interaction of local self-government bodies with the population and formulate appropriate criteria for the level of this interaction, which provide the possibility of conducting a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative assessment of communication practices. The basis of the analytical study is the “Spectrum of Public Participation” model, developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [18; 19], which demonstrates the variability of the degree of influence of citizens on managerial decisions – from the missing level (informing) to the full (authorization). For each level, Spectrum offers a defined goal of engagement, a promise on the role of the public and examples of appropriate interaction tools, which makes it possible to justify the choice of communication methods depending on the goals of local policy and the expected level of citizens’ influence on the result (Table 1).

Table 1. Spectrum of Population Participation in Interaction with Local Self-Government Bodies

Level of participation	Purpose of interaction	A promise to citizens	Examples of ways to interact
Informing	Providing reliable and necessary information to understand problems, alternatives and solutions	We’ll keep you updated	Newsletters, websites, open days
Counseling	Receiving feedback from the population when considering alternatives	We listen to your opinion and let you know how it influenced the decision	Surveys, focus groups, public discussions
Attracting	Direct work with the population to form and evaluate alternatives	We will work together to make sure opinions are taken into account	Symposia, working groups, interactive hearings
Cooperation	Work with the population at different stages of decision-making (development, selection, monitoring)	We will take your advice into account and jointly look for solutions	Advisory committees, joint project councils
Authorization	Transfer of part of the powers/decision-making rights to citizens	We will implement the solutions you choose	Delegation of powers, citizen budgets, voting

Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of [18; 19].

According to Spectrum, five successive levels of participation are arranged in ascending order of the degree of population influence on decisions: informing, consulting, engaging, cooperation and empowerment (Table 1). Each of these levels has its own methodological goal and communicative promise regarding the role of the public in the process. The exclusive use of only the first two levels – informing and formal counseling – often leads to a superficial dialogue that does not meet the expectations of citizens and does not create sustainable partnerships. The transition to forms of practical involvement, cooperation and empowerment contributes to improving the quality of management decisions and the level of satisfaction of residents with participation in decision-making processes.

To build a methodology for assessing “good” interaction, it is advisable to base not only the classification of Spectrum levels, but also the normative values of public participation formulated by IAP2: the right to participate (persons affected by the decision have the right to be involved in the preparation of the decision); influence of public opinion (citizens’ contributions should be really considered and influence final decisions); sustainability of decisions (involvement of a wide range of stakeholders increases the likelihood of making sustainable decisions); inclusion of stakeholders (the process should ensure that stakeholders and potential stakeholders are called); transparency of procedures (participants should receive complete and accessible information for informed participation); feedback (participants should receive notifications about how their contribution was taken into account) [18; 19].

Based on these values, a criterion matrix is proposed that combines the levels of the Spectrum and the values of IAP2: for each project or event, the level of participation is determined on a five-point scale, the presence of elements of influence (absent / formal / effective), the degree of awareness of participants, the availability of feedback mechanisms and a tangible result in the form of including public recommendations in the final decision.

Evaluation of interaction practices requires a systematic analysis of communication channels; Based on IAP2 materials and the practice of leading administrations, a classification of channels into categories is proposed: online interaction, face-to-face (in-person) events and formal institutional mechanisms (Table 2). This classification allows you to compare tools in terms of availability, expected scale of coverage, and potential depth of impact.

Table 2. Classification of Channels of Interaction of Authorities with the Public

Category	Channel	Possibilities	Practical examples
Online interaction	Crowdsourcing	Mobilization of citizens’ resources through information technologies to solve problems (ideological competitions, collection of proposals)	Platforms for proposals for urban improvement; Collection of ideas for the public budget
	Online contests	Competition with rewards to find innovative solutions	Competitions for the best digital services for citizens, eco-initiatives, startups for local problems
	Wiki sites	Platforms for collaborative content creation and editing	Public portals where residents can add information about problem areas, comment on planning projects
	Online Listening/Chats	Real-time operational dialogue between citizens and officials	Zoom meetings, webinars, interactive Q&A sessions to discuss city plans
	Social Media	A wide channel of information and engagement (blogs, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	Publishing polls on Facebook, streaming public hearings, YouTube channel to cover council decisions
Face-to-face	Public hearings	Formal events to discuss draft policies with broad public participation	City Council sessions, public meetings on budget topics, urban planning projects
	Stakeholder Forum	Platforms for the exchange of views between different stakeholder groups	Working meetings with business associations, NGOs, educational institutions and residents on the development of territories
	Residents’ Forum	Local meetings to discuss the problems of the territory	Micro-meetings in the districts of the city to determine priorities in the repair of roads, parks, educational institutions
Formal methods	Population Relations Committees	Permanent advisory bodies gathering public opinion and recommendations	Public councils at city administrations; Advisory groups at departments
	Legislative procedures	Tools for Official Consideration of Participation in the Law-Making Process	Public hearings before the adoption of local regulatory acts; Submission of petitions to the council
Culture of “Open Government”	Staff Development	Improving the competencies of employees in terms of engagement tools	Trainings for administrative employees on digital communication, meeting facilitation, discussion moderation

Category	Channel	Possibilities	Practical examples
	Stimulating	Motivational Activities for Officials and Employees Responsible for Citizen Engagement	Allowances, bonuses for the effective implementation of public participation programs, internal competitions for innovative initiatives
	New Divisions/Positions	Creation of positions responsible for communication with the public	Digital Communication Departments, Open Government Office, Positions of Coordinators of Public Initiatives
	Standards of “good interaction”	Methods for assessing the quality of communications and engagement procedures	Internal feedback protocols, checklists for evaluating measures, transparency standards
	Recall Policy	Public feedback procedure on taking into account initiatives	Publication of reports on the implementation of citizens’ proposals, justification of the reasons for the rejection of initiatives
	Evaluation of results	System of indicators for achieving the goals of transparency, participation and cooperation	Monitoring the level of citizen satisfaction, the number of people involved, assessing the effectiveness of interaction channels

Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of [18; 19].

It should be noted that under martial law in Ukraine, effective interaction between local self-government bodies and civil society institutions is of particular importance for ensuring stability, security and development of territorial communities.

In Ukrainian realities, the principles of openness, participation and cooperation have become especially important in the context of the decentralization reform. Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine” (2020 edition) [12] and the State Strategy for Regional Development until 2027 [4] define the interaction of local authorities with the population as an integral element of strategic planning. The use of electronic management tools, public platforms and open databases has become a real indicator of democratic change. In addition, the Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine” provides for the right of local self-government bodies to create associations to increase the efficiency of the exercise of powers and protect the rights and interests of territorial communities, which is regulated in detail by the Law of Ukraine “On Associations of Local Self-Government Bodies” [11]. At the same time, according to the results of research by the United Nations Development Program [13], the institutional capacity of local communities remains uneven, which requires further improvement of the permanent mechanisms of citizen participation in the development of local policies.

A public or participatory budget is a significant mechanism for involving residents in the distribution of financial resources at the local level. It allows citizens and organizations to submit projects, contribute to their implementation, and participate in voting on proposals. During martial law, there is a decrease in the number of territorial communities allocating funds to participatory budgets due to the limitation of financial resources. However, for example, in Ternopil, as of November 3, 2023, 171 educational institutions were connected to the E-dem platform, 652 projects were submitted for a total amount of more than UAH 16 million, which demonstrates the active participation of citizens in the decision-making process even under restrictions [7].

Cooperation between local governments and civil society institutions in the implementation of joint projects, including grant projects, is an effective tool for solving specific problems at the local level. L. Hryshko notes that during martial law, international organizations provide support to the authorities in implementing initiatives aimed at preserving and developing the infrastructure of communities [2, p. 64-65]. Joint holding of meetings, forums, conferences, public discussions and surveys ensures the exchange of information and ideas between government representatives and civil society, contributing to increasing the level of trust and quality of management decisions.

According to Part 6 of Article 10 of the Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine” [12], local self-government bodies may establish advisory bodies to exercise their powers. The most common form is public councils, which are regulated by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated November 3, 2010 No. 996 “On Ensuring Public Participation in the Formation and Implementation of State Policy” [8]. The Public Council acts as a temporary consultative and advisory body established to promote public participation in the formation and implementation of state and regional policy. The resolution is advisory in nature for local self-government bodies.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the functioning of public councils and due consideration of the interests of the territorial community, it is advisable to systematically involve representatives of civil society institutions, in particular public organizations, associations, initiative groups and expert communities, in the process of developing regulations on their activities. This approach, in our opinion, allows us to adapt the regulations and procedures of public councils to the specific socio-cultural, economic and administrative conditions of each territorial community, ensures that various points of view and needs of stakeholders are taken into account. The involvement of CSI representatives helps to increase the effectiveness of citizens' participation in managerial decision-making processes, forms feedback and accountability mechanisms, and also ensures transparency and legitimacy of the actions of local self-government bodies. In addition, the integration of the expert potential of the public allows to improve the quality of strategic and operational decision-making, stimulates the development of partnership relations between the government and the community, and creates prerequisites for the sustainable and systematic implementation of joint governance practices at the local level.

6. Conclusions

The interaction of local self-government bodies with the population is a key factor in effective governance, as it affects the trust of citizens, the legitimacy of decisions and the development of territorial communities. Effective interaction is based on transparency, participation and cooperation, and the use of different forms and levels of participation – from informing to authorization – allows you to take into account the needs of citizens and improve the quality of management decisions.

The use of technological tools (online platforms, crowdsourcing, mobile applications) and the creation of advisory bodies ensures regular two-way exchange of information and feedback, which forms an active and responsible community. In modern Ukrainian conditions, especially during martial law, it is important to adapt procedures, increase the digital literacy of employees and citizens, as well as support for participatory mechanisms at the local level.

Thus, the development of transparent and partnership practices of interaction between local self-government bodies and the population contributes to building trust, increasing the efficiency of public administration and the formation of capable and responsible communities.

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