

## Public participation in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities

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**Abstract.** The purpose of the article is to generalize the theoretical foundations and justify the feasibility of using innovative tools to involve citizens in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities, spread the practices of participatory budgeting, which will contribute to the formation of an active civil society. The following methods were used to implement the tasks: abstract-logical; monographic and comparative; graphic; sociological survey method. The expediency of using the participatory budgeting mechanism for territorial communities is justified, which will contribute to the establishment of social dialogue between local self-government bodies and residents of the territorial community. A sociological survey was conducted to identify the realities of increasing public involvement in the decision-making process at the territorial community level. It was found that the respondents are equally concerned about urban and personal problems of planning the socio-economic development of the territory. Innovative mechanisms of public participation (consensus conference, consultative survey, guided visualization, world cafe, workshop, imagination, public development of alternatives) are proposed, which will contribute to the formation of an active civil society and increase the level of civic education. Public space is another innovative tool for the participation of community residents in the decision-making process. The conducted research contributed to solving the task and justifying the expediency of using innovative tools of public participation in the decision-making process, spreading the practices of participatory budgeting, which will contribute to the formation of an active civil society. The formulated author's conclusions and recommendations are characterized by a positive impact on the involvement of the public in the decision-making process, since the creation of a higher culture of decision-making and the activation of civil society at the level of the territorial community can contribute to receiving better services and improving the quality of life of the population

**Keywords:** local self-government, civil society, participatory budget, citizens' appeals, public hearings

### INTRODUCTION

The influence of society on state decision-making has been discussed since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, various forms of governance are united by the need for direct and centralized involvement of citizens, non-governmental organizations, and public movements in policy formation and implementation [1].

The National Strategy for Promoting the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine for 2021-2026 defines that the main tasks are to create favorable conditions for the development of public initiative, the formation of a system of civil society institutions,

the establishment of communications and interaction between them and the authorities [2]. Effective interaction with the public is also the foundation for the formation of a transparent system of decentralized state administration, as stated in the program of Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine until 2030 [3]. The Concept of the Reform of Local Self-Government and Territorial Organization of Power emphasizes the importance of maximum involvement of citizens in the decision-making process on local government issues and promoting the development of direct democracy [4].

#### **Article's History:**

Received: 17.04.2022

Revised: 06.06.2022

Accepted: 26.08.2022

#### **Suggested Citation:**

Kormyshkin, Yu. (2022). Public participation in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities. *Ukrainian Black Sea Region Agrarian Science*, 26(3), 20-31.

The concept of the development of civic education in Ukraine emphasizes that the citizen's participation should be comprehensive in the conduct of state affairs, in various social processes. Citizens should understand, take part in the discussion and make decisions related to management and thereby influence both their own life and the life of the community [5].

For this, citizens need to be both competent in public and political issues, as well as tools guaranteed by the government and understanding from public managers [6].

Many well-known domestic and foreign scientists made a significant contribution to the research of public participation in management. Thus, according to I. Shumlyayeva [7, p. 113], it is determined that the level of citizen participation in solving local issues in Ukraine is largely influenced by modern European trends in the democratization of management processes and the stimulation of citizen participation in local public life. The scientist suggested distinguishing three successive levels of citizen participation in decision-making at the local level. These levels are classified depending on the type of relationship, the degree of participation of members of the territorial community and the intensity of the process (low – basic information, medium – consultations with the public, high – partnership dialogue), the definition of forms on each of them has a corresponding meaning.

The results of research into the mechanisms of public involvement in the decision-making process [8, p. 3] show that an important element of citizen participation in socio-political life and the decision-making process is the cooperation of the city government with public associations (public organizations, self-organization bodies of the population, initiatives and activists).

According to F. Kamberi & B. Baliqi [1], community participation in decision-making is considered an essential characteristic of democracy and, in particular, of local self-government. Thus, local self-government bodies, with the help of various democratic forms, seek to involve the community in the decision-making process. The study provides a holistic approach to the development of communities in the municipality, the level of participation in decision-making processes, forms of communication between the local government and the community, as well as the impact of community development on the development of state policy at the local level. The methodology used here focuses on various studies and reports on local authorities and communities, as well as quantitative studies measuring public opinion. The general results of this work emphasize that, although there are institutional

mechanisms for participation in decision-making, there is a decrease in community participation in decision-making and in the process of developing local public policy strategies.

Scientists Laura Jankauskaite-Jureviciene & Ausra Mlinkauskiene [9], are convinced that participation in decision-making processes involves giving citizens, communities, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties the opportunity to influence the formation of policies and laws that affect them.

The study by N. Hertting & C. Kugelberg [10] emphasizes the role of participation mechanisms as a political resource for the local ruling elite or the mayor, as such mechanisms create an atmosphere of democratic will.

The position that public participation is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of management by involving citizens in the processes of forming management policy and decision-making is expressed by scientists M.S. Nyaranga *et al.* [11, p. 29]. We support the opinion of scientists, because such participation will contribute to the transparency, accountability and efficiency of any modern government. Scientists [11] emphasize the need to strengthen public participation by creating an independent institution that will manage public participation processes.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also supports the position of public participation in management decision-making. Thus, in the publication "Citizen participation in sustainable rural development" [12] it is emphasized that significant participation of citizens is necessary for effective development. Since rural development is a people-oriented programme, it is very important that people actively participate in rural development. As an important pillar of democratic transformations and the transformation of the civil service, local self-government is the place from which the solution to the problems of democratic development should begin. One of the important ways to strengthen democratic institutions without weakening the executive power is to ensure the active participation of citizens in the process of village development by providing a standing committee of local self-government.

Despite the large amount of scientific work in this field, a number of issues of the theoretical plan regarding forms of public participation in the decision-making process and practical recommendations at the level of territorial communities require further research.

The purpose of the article is to generalize the theoretical foundations of forms of citizen involvement in solving community problems, their legal regulation, and justification of the feasibility of using innovative

tools of public participation at the level of territorial communities. The set goal determined the solution of the following tasks: to systematize scientific views on the essence of the concept of "public participation"; carry out an assessment of the spread of the practice of participatory budgeting for local self-government bodies; to carry out a sociological study in order to determine the realities of public involvement in the decision-making process at the level of the territorial community; justify the expediency of using innovative tools to involve citizens in decision-making at the level of territorial communities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is aimed at consolidating and conducting a literature review with the aim of summarizing the theoretical foundations of public participation in the decision-making process by local self-government bodies and substantiating the feasibility of using innovative tools of public participation in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities, the spread of participatory budgeting practices, which will contribute to the formation of active civic society.

An analysis of the most important regulatory and legal documents describing public participation in the decision-making process was carried out in order to find out the ways, means and emerging problems of involving the public in the decision-making process at the territorial community level. The following methods were used in the research process: abstract-logical to substantiate the research methodology and determine theoretical generalizations; monographic and comparative – to systematize the scientific approaches of scientists to the theoretical aspects of public participation in the decision-making process and expand the methodological base in order to substantiate the feasibility of using innovative tools of public participation in the decision-making process, spreading the practice of participatory budgeting; graphic – for visualization of research results; sociological survey method – to reveal the realities of citizens' involvement in the decision-making process at the level of the territorial community. A voluntary sample was used for the sociological survey. The questionnaire was distributed among residents of the Berezan settlement territorial community with the help of social networks. This method of data collection was purposefully used to find out who and how active they are in social networks and how interested they are in the issues of the territorial community where they live. The survey consisted of several main research structures: clarification of the personal attitude of citizens to participation in decision-making processes and the approach of local

self-government bodies to the consideration of public opinion in the process of adopting documents on various aspects of territorial development. Out of 44 respondents, the distribution in age groups 18-29, 30-40, 41-50, 51-60 was almost even: 24.5; 25.4; 23.8 and 26.3%, respectively. It is interesting that persons aged 18-29 make up 12%; respondents aged 51 and over – 20%. The majority of respondents were women (73%). It is noteworthy that by education, about 88% of respondents have a complete higher education; 68% of respondents have a basic higher education and 20% have a professional and technical education. The surveyed residents of the community are representatives of various types of activities, namely: 32.1% of respondents are social workers; 16.2% – civil servants; 24.1% – entrepreneurs and farmers; 18.8% – run a household; 3.5% are studying; 5.3 – pensioners. It is worth noting that 16 respondents (36.4%) called themselves active members of the community.

The majority of respondents (64%) consisted of residents of the urban-type village of Berezanka, 36% of respondents were residents of other villages of the specified territorial community. Such activity of the residents of one settlement in answering the questions of the questionnaire can be based on the interest of the residents in the development of the settlement and the growth of well-being, raising the standard of living and social protection of the population.

The information provision was made up of normative and legal acts of Ukraine, in particular the Constitution of Ukraine [13], Laws of Ukraine "On Appeals of Citizens" [14], "On Local Self-Government in Ukraine" [15], "On Bodies of Self-Organization of the Population" [16] and others; European Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level [17]; Internet resources; monographic, periodical and reference publications; reporting materials of The Food and Agriculture Organization [12]; results of own research and calculations.

In accordance with the formulated goal, the stages of the research were: generalization of the theoretical foundations of the involvement of citizens in decision-making and their legal regulation; evaluation of the spread of the practice of participatory budgeting for local self-government bodies; conducting a sociological study in order to determine the realities of public involvement in the decision-making process at the level of the territorial community; justification of the feasibility of using innovative tools of public participation in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities.

The used methodology contributed to solving the task and justifying the expediency of using innovative tools of public participation in the

decision-making process, the spread of participatory budgeting practices, which will contribute to the formation of an active civil society.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At different stages of the management decision-making process, the level of participation of the public and non-governmental organizations may differ depending on the intensity of involvement. In 1969, Sherry Arnstein was the first to propose a typology of levels of citizen participation in the process of making managerial decisions regarding socio-economic development. In her article, the author describes the influence of society on government decision-making using a ladder model, where Manipulation and Therapy are on the first and second rungs, respectively, followed by Information, Counseling, Reconciliation, Partnership, Delegation of Powers, and Citizen Control on the top eighth [18, p. 9-10]. By stepping on such a ladder, society rises to the highest level – true civic participation. Note that all other modern forms of public participation to one degree or another are based on this foundation.

The Council of Europe, in accordance with the “Code of Best Practices for Public Participation in the Decision-Making Process”, distinguishes four levels of participation. These include: information, consultations, dialogue and partnership [19, p. 7].

According to the level of active participation of citizens in public life, the authors of the training manual “Personnel management in public authorities” [20] give the following gradation of their main types: absenteeism; observer; consumer; lobbyist; public figure; functionary.

As part of the “European Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level”, the principles of participatory democratic governance are defined, which are based on principles, rules and practices developed around the world [17].

Recommendations regarding public participation in the process of making political decisions were adopted by the Committee of Ministers on September 27, 2017 at the 1295th meeting of deputy ministers [21]. The recommendations state that public participation should be based on and motivated by principles that apply to all participants who publicly participate in solving the problems of territorial communities.

As L. Kovshun notes, “since civic participation is a global trend, each country and organization develops its own policy for its implementation” [22]. According to the activist, this requires, on the one hand, the presence of appropriate legal mechanisms and procedures that allow citizens to influence the resolution of the problems of territorial communities, and on the other

hand, provide the opportunity to participate in the adoption of these decisions. Let's explore the essence of the tools of public participation and public influence on the government, which are provided for by the current legislation of Ukraine. Citizen appeals are the easiest way for citizens to communicate with the authorities, with the help of which citizens of Ukraine have the right to submit comments, complaints and proposals to state authorities and local self-government bodies [14].

With the help of general meetings of citizens, you can decide on your own, without the intervention of the authorities, a significant part of your rights as a citizen. The Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government in Ukraine” refers to the competence of citizens' assemblies to resolve issues of local importance [15].

Local initiatives are another way of facilitating consideration by the local council of issues that affect the interests of citizens and are within the competence of local self-government bodies. It should be noted that the decision of the local council is issued based on the results of consideration of the local initiative [15].

A vivid example of such a level of citizen participation as delegation is the self-organization bodies of the population. Local councils can allow local residents to create various bodies of self-organization of the population and endow them with part of their own competence, finances, property [13, Article 140, 15, Article 14, 16, Article 2]. It is appropriate to note that the essence of the idea of creating a body of self-organization of the population consists in delegating part of the powers of the local government according to the principle of subsidiarity to the directly organized part of the community.

A local referendum is a form of decision-making by residents of a territorial community through direct voting. For global practice, a local referendum is a common form of direct democracy. Public decisions made at local referenda are binding [15].

Public hearings are the most common mechanism of local democracy. The leadership of the territorial community can hold public hearings, organize meetings with deputies and officials of local self-government. During such meetings, matters of local importance, which belong to the competence of local self-government [6], are discussed.

Electronic petitions are a modernized form of public participation. This is a form of petition that is signed online, usually through a form on a website. Visitors to the online petition sign the petition by adding their details, such as name and email address [23, Article 23].

Having studied the forms of public participation and their regulation by current legislation, we

believe that an important direction is the involvement of the public in the process of making administrative decisions, a tool of direct democracy, with the help of which every resident of the territorial community has the opportunity to join the budget process, understand its principles and influence decision-making regarding the expenditure part of the local budget, there is a public budget or a participation budget [24]. From the point of view of territorial development, this tool helps to use budget funds to solve issues that are vital, according to the users of project results (local communities). Participation in decision-making processes involves giving citizens, communities, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties the opportunity to influence the formulation of policies and laws that affect them [9]. The result of the implementation of the participation budget is an increase in the number and quality of the requested public and private goods and services provided to the population of the territory as a result of the development or reconstruction of public infrastructure facilities. We believe that the spread of such practice for territorial communities will contribute to the establishment of communication between the local government and the population of the territorial community, to create conditions for the participation of residents of the territorial community in the distribution of budget funds to meet their needs.

The creation of initiatives that allow citizens to be involved in the processes of making administrative decisions provide an opportunity to establish interaction between the authorities and the community. However, participation strategies and means of participation are also different and strongly depend on who organizes the participation and for what purpose. Public participation can take the form of constructive cooperation with local authorities to plan for socio-economic development, or it can be adversarial if initiatives are rejected. Ideally, public participation should lead to outcomes that serve the interests of as many members of the territorial community as possible, not just one group of stakeholders. According to V.S. Kravtsiva & I.Z. Supportive policies, which at the stage of development had wide public perception, are more successful than policies that are unknown to society [25]. Most of the decisions of the authorities concern the citizens of the territory. When people are aware of these decisions and feel that they have put effort into developing them, they are more likely to follow through on them.

A survey of 44 respondents was conducted to identify the realities of citizen involvement in the decision-making process at the territorial community level. To the question "To what extent are you personally

active in expressing your opinion or submitting proposals to the municipal government when preparing documents on social and economic development?" 39% of respondents stated that they are neither passive nor active. However, even more than a third of respondents answered that they are active (27%) and very active (9%). When examining the relationship between gender and social activity, it was observed that the percentage of responses between the different sexes for activity was very similar, with 50% of males saying they were inactive and 50% saying they were active. Accordingly, the female gender assessed their activity as follows: 53.1% are inactive and 46.9% are active. Respondents had to rate their level of activity on a 5-point Likert scale. To the question "Do you have enough information about the possibilities of public participation in the decision-making process at the level of the territorial community?" as many as 84% answered that the information is too limited.

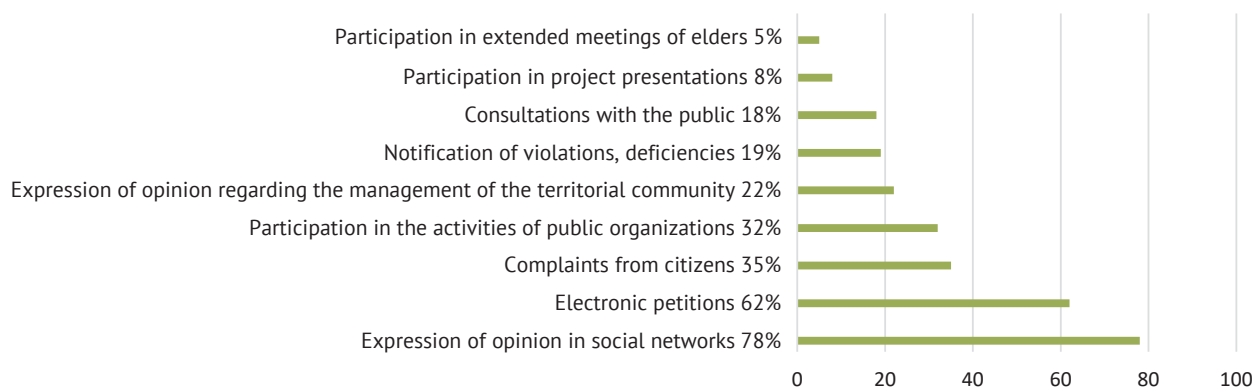
In addition, the question "From what sources do you learn about projects or decisions that are being considered in the community?" was considered. Respondents were able to choose several answers, but the vast majority (78%) indicated that the most popular source of information is social networks (for example, Facebook). Respondents also answered that they look for information about various social and economic development projects on the website of the territorial community (32%) and ask active members of the community (50%). Only 5% of respondents ask the community leaders about the socio-economic development issues that concern them, and none of the respondents answered that they received information about it from the head of the community or elders. The survey showed that residents of the Berezan territorial community are equally concerned about personal housing and local problems, but most often they discuss these problems not with governing bodies, but with friends and acquaintances (89%). Figure 1 below shows that respondents use social networks more often to communicate with government officials than to participate in project presentations or interviews with government officials. In addition, considering that 46% of respondents indicated that they did not communicate with representatives of local self-government bodies and did not send requests/complaints, it can be argued that most respondents express their point of view only in an informal setting that does not affect the planning of socio-economic development of the territory.

The majority of respondents believe that the residents of the Berezanka settlement territorial community are actively seeking to express their opinion or submit proposals regarding socio-economic planning



documents to representatives of the authorities (52%), however, it cannot be claimed that the majority of the residents of the Berezanka settlement think so, since the majority of respondents are residents of one territory. Examining the opinion of respondents about why citizens do not participate in public decision-making, it was observed that disappointment in self-governance prevails, since nothing is expected from participation (75%), they also do not trust their knowledge – 54% and 66% of respondents believe, that most citizens do

not have information about planning processes. Some respondents also chose answers that indicate a lack of personal interest – 36% do not have time for it, or 18% believe that it is not of interest to the population. Only 5% of respondents believe that citizens do not take part in public decision-making because they trust the decisions of council members. Table 1 below shows the views of the respondents regarding the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process at the level of the territorial community.



**Figure 1.** Forms of public participation in the decision-making process at the level of the Berezan settlement territorial community, which were used during 2021

**Source:** author's development

**Table 1.** The opinion of respondents regarding the participation of citizens in the decision-making process of the territorial community (on the example of the Berezan settlement territorial community)

Number of participants	Number of participants				
	Completely disagree	Disagree	Somewhere in the middle	Agree	Completely agree
The legislation provides sufficient opportunity for citizens to participate in the decision-making process	24	20	18	7	2
The management is interested in cooperating with the residents of the community	5	11	19	26	13
The information provided for decision-making is easy to understand	6	21	18	22	7
The community responds to the opinion of citizens	21	22	7	2	2
Citizens have enough information about opportunities to participate in decision-making	5	10	24	24	4
Citizens trust the decisions made by local government	5	10	24	24	4
Residents have sufficient competence to participate in decision-making	11.4	15.9	29.5	22.7	20.5
Citizens have the skills to participate in decision-making	9.0	20.5	25.0	20.5	22.7

**Source:** author's development

The statements were formulated according to two research constructs: trust in local self-government bodies and legislation and respondents' confidence in their knowledge. Respondents believe that local self-government bodies are not interested in cooperation with the population, and the information provided by the community is not clear and easy to understand. However, even if local self-government bodies do not respond to citizens' opinions, according to the respondents, citizens have enough information about opportunities to participate in the decision-making process and trust the decisions of the territorial community. From the responses regarding self-confidence, it can be seen that the respondents, although doubtful, agree that they have sufficient competence and skills to participate in decision-making. Indeed, more than half of the respondents believe that the TG should not only inform the public about ways and opportunities to participate in public decision-making, but also give advice and take more into account the needs and wishes of society before making decisions. The majority of respondents believe that there is an urgent need (84%) or a need (9%) for cooperation between the TG

and citizens in decision-making regarding socio-economic development planning. So, the sample population for the analysis was 44 respondents. From the survey, it was observed that respondents are equally concerned about local and personal issues when participating in the decision-making process of socio-economic planning, but they are more likely to discuss these issues with their friends and acquaintances and use social media than to participate in project presentations or interviews with government officials. Thus, different tools and mechanisms can be used to support public participation at all stages of the management process.

Any successful communication between different groups of people can be considered the result of conversations, dialogues or negotiations. However, activists of social and political life are constantly looking for new forms and practices of communication. These practices are built on the basis of the specifics of the development of individual territories, the formation of a culture of dialogue and many other factors. We study the practices described by the Analytical Center CEDOS [8]. The following can be the most adapted and possible for use in territorial communities (Fig. 2).

#### Consensus conference

- A conference at which communication between citizens from different social groups and experts allows to make the most comfortable decision for everyone

#### Advisory survey

- A tool that allows you to experimentally influence public opinion and see its change.

#### Guided visualization

- Imagine your day in the city a year from now and learn about the opportunities to change that future.

#### World Cafe

- Combines the characteristics of a free space and a chat cafe, where participants have a free discussion, but aim to create an outline for future projects.

#### Workshp

- A class during which several groups of experts approach the solution of a specific problem from different angles and, as a result, draw up a joint plan.

#### Predictions

- An event that allows you to understand and borrow best practices from the past for future use.

#### Public development of alternatives

- A group of activists asks community residents the question: "How to make our city better for life?" – and records thousands of answers, which he then presents to the community. The community chooses the most important projects and unites in working groups for their implementation.

**Figure 2.** Innovative mechanisms of public participation for territorial communities

**Source:** developed by the author based on research [8]

Public space is another innovative tool for the participation of community residents in the decision-making process. Public space is a component of the space within the settlements that are part of the community [26]. Public space can be created to provide opportunities for recreation, realization of communicative potential, satisfaction of social and public needs, sustainable and harmonious development of community territories.

The issue of effective participation and cooperation of civil society in authorities became the subject of scientific research by V.M. Semyanovsky [27]. The study emphasizes the need to reform the system of cooperation between authorities and citizens in Ukraine based on the use of European experience. The author emphasizes that Ukrainian legislation, together with international obligations and standards, lays a reliable legal basis for the wide participation of civil society not only in symbolic events, but also in defining the agenda, making decisions and drawing conclusions about events. We support the opinion of the author and are convinced that only a system of joint decision-making and implementation can guarantee continuous and effective feedback between people and the authorities. And scientists emphasize that in order to discover what attracts civic behavior, it is worth finding out how state support can promote active citizenship and contribute to the creation of an undeveloped civil society.

The work of L.S. Doskich [28]. The author justified the need to activate civil society institutions at the level of territorial communities and revealed the relationship between the effectiveness of the processes of local political activity and public participation. We are convinced that, at the same time, it is important to constantly search for new forms and practices of communication, which are built on the basis of the specifics of the development of individual territories, the formation of a culture of dialogue and many other factors. We believe that innovative mechanisms of public participation will contribute to the formation of an active civil society and increase the level of civic education. The authors [29] are of the same opinion. In their research, the authors [30] state that at the local level around the world, governments, communities and other organizational partners are experimenting with different approaches to increase public participation and influence on decision-making and action at the regional, city and/or district levels.

In the course of the conducted research, it was established that the tools of e-democracy are being implemented the most. The same conclusions were made in the studies of I.R. Tymchko [31]. At the same

time, the author revealed a low level of activity in the creation of self-organization bodies and the use of public control tools, at the same time it was noted that in the processes of solving the tasks of the development of territorial communities of the Carpathian region, there are active public and charitable organizations that contribute to the active involvement of additional financial resources.

The implementation of a participatory budget allows for an increase in the activity and involvement of the public in public participation in the decision-making process regarding the distribution of financial resources in local budgets [32]. Authors of a similar opinion [33], who proposed the main components that should be included in the process of participatory budgeting, the purpose of which is to promote the establishment of social dialogue between local authorities and residents of the territorial community and create conditions for the participation of residents of the territorial community in budget processes to meet their needs. We believe that participatory budgeting makes it possible to meet the urgent needs of the community in a relatively short period of time, stimulates economic development at the local level, and improves relations between institutions and representatives of both civil society and the government. This tool of direct democracy is more helpful for the socially protected majority to care for vulnerable minorities, such as the disabled, the unemployed, the internally displaced, the elderly, the homeless, and orphans.

Research by O.V. Ivanin [34] emphasize that despite the spread and availability of various forms of public participation and the opportunity for citizens to join the decision-making process on issues of social and economic development of the community, the direct participation of residents remains at a low level. There is a small part of active citizens or even civil society organizations that participate in communication with local self-government bodies, but such participation can hardly be called effective and one that expresses the opinion of the entire community.

Investigating the opinion of respondents about why citizens do not participate in public decision-making, it was observed that disappointment in self-governance prevails, citizens also do not trust their knowledge, and 66% of respondents believe that most citizens do not have information about planning processes. Some respondents also chose answers that indicate a lack of personal interest and believe that the population is not interested in this. Only 5% of respondents believe that citizens do not take part in public decision-making because they trust the decisions of council members. In turn, the study [35] indicates that the dominant or indecisive attitude of local



government officials and the emphasis on rules and expert knowledge can hinder the authentic participation of citizens in the decision-making process. Scientists [36] in the course of the conducted research conclude that the majority of respondents are sincerely interested in increasing objectivity and representation through citizens' dialogue.

Public participation in the context of the management of local self-government bodies allows taking into account social, environmental and other factors in the activity, reduces risks due to the joint implementation of management decisions taking into account the interests of certain social groups in them, as well as their involvement in the process of making management decisions. Scientists [37] have a similar position, who claim that urban development initiatives affect the everyday life of citizens, so citizens often participate in these processes themselves. The same opinion is supported by the authors [38] and they believe that, on the one hand, citizens should be aware and informed about the possibility of their participation in local affairs, decision-making regarding local development, and on the other hand, there should be a desire of local authorities to listen, take into account and adequately respond to the opinion of citizens. Indeed, in the course of our sociological research, it was established that more than half of the respondents believe that the TG should not only inform the public about ways and opportunities to participate in public decision-making, but also give advice and take more into account the needs and wishes of society before making decisions. We are convinced that only under such conditions, the involvement of citizens in solving local self-government issues will be mutually beneficial both for the residents of the respective territory and for the local self-government body.

## CONCLUSIONS

Forms of public participation and their regulation by domestic legislation are defined. It is substantiated that the most popular way of communication between citizens and representatives of the authorities is the tools of electronic democracy.

The expediency of using the participatory budgeting mechanism for territorial communities is substantiated, which will contribute to establishing a social dialogue between community leaders and members during decision-making, creating conditions for the participation of residents of the territorial community in the formation of the budget to meet their needs.

A sociological survey was conducted to identify the realities of citizen involvement in the decision-making process at the territorial community level. As a result, it was observed that the respondents are equally concerned about urban and personal problems of planning the socio-economic development of the territory, but they more often discuss these problems with their friends and acquaintances and use social networks than participate in project presentations or interviews with government officials. Thus, to support public participation at all stages of the management process, it is worth using innovative tools and mechanisms.

Innovative mechanisms of public participation (consensus conference, consultative survey, guided visualization, world cafe, workshop, imagination, public development of alternatives) are proposed, which will contribute to the formation of an active civil society and increase the level of civic education. Public space is another innovative tool for the participation of community residents in the decision-making process. The formulated author's conclusions and recommendations are characterized by a positive impact on the involvement of the public in the decision-making process, since the creation of a higher culture of decision-making and the activation of civil society at the level of the territorial community can contribute to receiving better services and improving the quality of life of the population. Further study of the forms of public participation in the decision-making process at the level of territorial communities necessitates a study of the degree of awareness of the population regarding the possibilities of such participation and the desire of local authorities to listen to the opinion of citizens, respond adequately to it, which will be mutually beneficial for all parties.

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## Участь громадськості в процесі прийняття рішень на рівні територіальних громад

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**Анотація.** Метою статті є узагальнення теоретичних основ та обґрунтування доцільності застосування інноваційних інструментів залучення громадян до процесу прийняття рішень на рівні територіальних громад, поширення практик бюджету участі, що сприятиме формуванню активного громадянського суспільства. Для реалізації поставлених завдань використовувалися такі методи: абстрактно-логічний; монографічний та порівняльний; графічний; метод соціологічного опитування. Обґрунтовано доцільність використання механізму партиципаторного бюджетування для територіальних громад, що сприятиме налагодженню соціального діалогу між органами місцевого самоврядування та мешканцями територіальної громади. Проведене соціологічне опитування щодо виявлення реалій активізації залучення громадськості до процесу прийняття рішень на рівні територіальної громади. Виявлено, що респондентів однаково хвилюють міські та особисті проблеми планування соціально-економічного розвитку території. Запропоновані інноваційні механізми громадської участі (консensusна конференція, консультативне опитування, керована візуалізація, світове кафе, воркшоп, уяви, громадська розробка альтернатив), що сприятиме формуванню активного громадянського суспільства, підвищенню рівня громадянської освіти. Ще одним інноваційним інструментом участі жителів громади в процесі прийняття рішень є громадський простір. Проведене дослідження сприяло розв'язанню поставленого завдання та обґрунтуванню доцільності застосування інноваційних інструментів участі громадськості в процесі прийняття рішень, поширенню практик бюджету участі, що сприятиме формуванню активного громадянського суспільства. Сформульовані авторські висновки та рекомендації характеризуються позитивним впливом на залучення громадськості до процесу прийняття рішень, оскільки створення вищої культури прийняття рішень та активізація громадянського суспільства на рівні територіальної громади може сприяти отримувannya якісніших послуг та покращенню якості життя населення

**Ключові слова:** місцеве самоврядування, громадянське суспільство, бюджет участі, звернення громадян, громадські слухання