

**PUBLIC OPINION AND PUBLIC POLICY: AN INTERACTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DECISION-MAKING IN UKRAINE**

**OPINIÃO PÚBLICA E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS: UMA ANÁLISE INTERACTIVA DA INTERAÇÃO ENTRE OS CIDADÃOS E O GOVERNO NO CONTEXTO DA TOMADA DE DECISÕES NA UCRÂNIA**

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**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** O artigo tem como objetivo analisar a interação entre a opinião pública e as políticas públicas na Ucrânia, focando em como as relações entre cidadãos e governo influenciam os processos de tomada de decisão. O estudo busca identificar mecanismos e ferramentas que melhorem a participação cidadã na governança, com ênfase no desenvolvimento sustentável.



**Metodologia:** O estudo utiliza uma metodologia multifacetada, incluindo generalização, síntese, análise jurídica comparativa e modelagem. Também adota uma abordagem de análise interativa para explorar as tendências do impacto da opinião pública nas decisões governamentais. A pesquisa baseia-se em uma revisão de atos legais ucranianos, fontes acadêmicas e ferramentas de comunicação eletrônica que facilitam o engajamento dos cidadãos.

**Originalidade:** O artigo apresenta uma análise única da interação entre cidadãos e governo na Ucrânia, examinando o papel da opinião pública como ferramenta crítica no processo de tomada de decisão. O estudo introduz um modelo de participação pública e destaca a importância da governança sustentável, contribuindo para a literatura sobre engajamento democrático em estados pós-soviéticos.

**Resultados:** A pesquisa identifica quatro níveis críticos de envolvimento público na tomada de decisões, com ênfase na necessidade de um diálogo mais intenso entre o governo e os cidadãos. Os resultados revelam que, embora existam mecanismos de participação cidadã, há lacunas na garantia de representação equitativa e processos decisórios inclusivos.

**Conclusão:** O estudo conclui que a Ucrânia desenvolveu um sistema único de interação entre cidadãos e governo, que precisa ser ampliado para melhorar o engajamento público. A transição para uma abordagem cooperativa e baseada em parcerias é essencial para aprimorar a governança democrática e garantir que as políticas reflitam as necessidades da população.

**Palavras-chave:** Opinião pública. Políticas públicas. Desenvolvimento sustentável. Engajamento cidadão. Ucrânia. Tomada de decisão.

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The article aims to analyze the interaction between public opinion and public policy in Ukraine, focusing on how citizen-government relationships influence decision-making processes. The study seeks to identify mechanisms and tools that enhance citizen participation in governance, emphasizing sustainable development.

**Methodology:** The study employs a multifaceted methodology, including generalization, synthesis, comparative legal analysis, and modeling. It also incorporates an interactive analysis approach to explore the trends of public opinion's impact on government decisions. The research is based on a review of Ukrainian legal acts, scholarly sources, and electronic communication tools that facilitate citizen engagement.

**Originality:** The article presents a unique analysis of Ukraine's citizen-government interaction, examining the role of public opinion as a critical tool in the decision-making process. The study introduces a model of public participation and highlights the importance of sustainable governance, contributing to the literature on democratic engagement in post-Soviet states.

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**Results:** The research identifies four critical levels of public involvement in decision-



making, with an emphasis on the need for enhanced dialogue between the government and citizens. The findings reveal that while mechanisms for citizen participation exist, there are gaps in ensuring equitable representation and inclusive decision-making processes.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that Ukraine has developed a unique system of citizen-government interaction, which requires further expansion to improve public engagement. Transitioning to a cooperative and partnership-based approach is essential for enhancing democratic governance and ensuring that policies reflect the population's needs.

**Keywords:** Public opinion. Public policy. Sustainable development. Human capital. Intellectual security. Interactive analysis. Interaction between citizens and government. Decision-making.

## INTRODUCTION

Since achieving independence, Ukraine has embarked on the path of establishing itself as a democratic society that upholds universally recognised human and civil rights, particularly the rights to freedom of thought and expression. The relationship between the government and its citizens plays a crucial role in this process, taking on various forms of interaction.

The ability to freely express one's opinions is a hallmark of a democratic and transparent society. In contrast, in authoritarian regimes, public opinion may diverge from official government positions, but individuals are unable to openly voice their dissent. Public opinion wields a significant influence not only in politics and governance but also in a wide array of human endeavors, including literature, art, marketing, and consumer culture (DAVISON; PHILLIPS, 2024).

Recent research has shown that public opinion directly impacts consumer behaviour, including the choice of products, their branding, and their origins (PONOMARENKO, 2023). However, this study focused on examining how public opinion shapes the decisions made by the Ukrainian government and the ways in which citizens directly engage in the decision-making process. The study's main focus is on analyzing public opinion as a key component of society, representing the perspectives and attitudes of individuals on specific issues.

It is important to recognise that the state and society are interlinked, with active citizen participation contributing to a more democratic system of governance. Conversely, when citizens are passive and disengaged from state affairs, it can create



opportunities for undemocratic practices to prevail.

## Research problem

Democracy inherently fosters citizen engagement and discussion on various issues, such as elections and legislative changes, where government decisions are involved. Within the realm of citizen communication, researchers identify three types of government behavior:

1) Autocratic behavior, which involves restricting citizens' access to foreign information and controlling the national information space.

2) Active behavior, which includes counter-propaganda efforts to control media and promote information that aligns with the national ruling elite.

3) Liberal behavior, which supports citizen rights to access information from any source and encourages the free flow of information (KARPCHUK; YUSKIV, 2019).

In a direct democracy, only the third liberal type, emphasizing openness and equality, is feasible. However, practical implementation is often more complex.

In contemporary societies, communication processes operate according to two conflicting models of governance that are guided by distinct principles of interaction between government entities and the public - persuasion-based governance and coercion-based governance (BORYSENKO; CHERNOKALOVA, 2020, p. 58-62).

Persuasion-based governance relies on influence and techniques for shaping public opinion, utilizing "soft power" for engaging in reciprocal communication with society members. This approach emphasizes two-way communication (dialogue) with established mechanisms for soliciting feedback, fostering more interactive exchanges. On the other hand, coercion-based governance hinges on the exercise of power in its traditional form, centering on the concept of "legitimate violence" (BORYSENKO; CHERNOKALOVA, 2020, p. 58-62).

This model entails one-way horizontal communication lacking feedback, often resorting to power dynamics to suppress dissenting information critical of the authorities. The exchange between authorities and the public can be seen from different angles. State authorities see communication with citizens as a way to share information and ideas, shaping public opinion and inspiring political engagement to advocate for their needs and interests. On the other hand, citizens<sup>1</sup> view political communication as a dialogue between political figures, involving the exchange of information in the pursuit



or exercise of power. This dynamic requires the intentional sharing and selective reception of information for the political process to function effectively (KARPCHUK; YUSKIV, 2019). These contrasting perspectives highlight the divergent views on communication between the government and society, with the government aiming to influence citizens, while citizens expect a reciprocal exchange of information. This divergence forms the basis for analyzing the interaction between society and government in decision-making processes.

The article posits a hypothesis that the interaction between public authorities and citizens during decision-making is a complex phenomenon shaped by various mechanisms, instruments, and factors. The author suggests that public opinion may not directly dictate government policy details, but it does establish the parameters within which policymakers must operate. It is often the public's response to contentious issues that prompts officials to address popular demand or at least consider it in their decision-making, while also avoiding unpopular choices.

## Objectives (purpose) of the study

The study revealed that Ukraine has established a unique system of interaction between its citizens and the government, which necessitates a thorough analysis to enhance strategies and mechanisms for citizen engagement in the country's political landscape. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to conduct an interactive examination of the relationship between citizens and the government within the context of decision-making processes in Ukraine.

The specific goals of this study included:

- Exploring the concept of public opinion, its characteristics, and the factors that shape citizens' perspectives on political issues;
- Investigating the correlation between public opinion and public policy, and how public sentiment influences government decisions in Ukraine;
- Examining the primary mechanisms and tools that enable public participation in decision-making processes in Ukraine;
- Identifying challenges in establishing effective communication channels between citizens and the government in contemporary circumstances;
- Proposing recommendations for enhancing the current communication framework between the government and its citizens.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Citizen engagement in governmental decision-making processes is crucial for the development of a democratic state, a topic that has sparked extensive discussion among scholars. Ukrainian and international researchers have explored various aspects of the relationship between the state and its citizens.

Studies have delved into the mechanisms and channels of communication between government bodies and the public (Vasylykovskiy, 2022), the impact of citizens on policy changes (PERSSON, 2021), the role of communication in public administration (BORYSENKO & CHERNOKALOVA, 2020), the concept of feedback between authorities and the public (LIZAKOWSKA, 2020), and citizens' perception of their role in democracy (SZOSTEK; ORLOVA, 2022). Research has also focused on the challenges of government-citizen interaction during periods of martial law in Ukraine (Thayer, 2022, 2023) and the concept of political dialogue (DENYSIUK, 2022, p. 13-20). Additionally, there are studies on the relationship between the government and the public in the context of Ukraine's integration into the EU (BURYK; CHERNIAKHIVSKA, 2022, p. 19-26; ZUBENKO, 2022).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of government communication through online platforms such as social media and e-government services (MIKHALCHENKO, 2021; KRYVOSHEIN, 2023). The impact of the Internet on public opinion, specifically online public opinion, has also become a significant area of inquiry (HUANG, 2020; HAISHENG, 2022).

Furthermore, this research is grounded in the theoretical analysis of key communication models between authorities and citizens proposed by Surnina-Dalerei O. These models include R. Hiebert and C. Walsh's "marketing" policy communication model, D.E. Grunig's two-way symmetrical model, H. Buurm's market exchange concept model, S. Horsley and R. Burker's crisis communication model in the public sector, and S. Horsley and B.F. Liu's contemporary public communication management model (Surnina-Dalecorey, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct a thorough examination of the interaction between citizens and the government in decision-making processes, the author utilizes the method of interactive analysis. This approach helps to identify trends in how public opinion



influences decision-making procedures carried out by government entities. The author begins by exploring the concept of public opinion as a social phenomenon, paving the way for a deeper investigation into the ways in which citizens and government bodies communicate in the decision-making process.

The examination of the bilateral relationship between citizens and the State is grounded in scientific methods such as generalization and synthesis, with theoretical concepts being formed through the use of analogy. Comparative legal analysis is employed to study legal acts, while the use of modeling allows the author to present their own interpretation of public opinion.

The authors employ a methodical and interactive strategy to explore the relationship dynamics between citizens and the government from multiple perspectives. Various scholarly sources, both domestic and international, are consulted to analyze citizen-state relations within the framework of citizen engagement in decision-making processes. Furthermore, Ukrainian laws, official documents from the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2010) regarding citizen involvement in public policy formation, as well as data from government and NGO websites are examined. Electronic communication tools used by both the government and citizens are also utilized as sources of information for the research.

## The public opinion concept

The concept of public opinion has evolved significantly in recent years, especially with the rise of social media and other digital platforms that allow for instant sharing of opinions and perspectives. This has led to the democratization of public opinion, with individuals having more power than ever before to influence public discourse and decision-making.

Additionally, the role of public opinion in shaping governmental policies and actions has become more prominent, with political leaders frequently seeking to gauge public sentiment before making important decisions. This has led to a greater focus on public opinion polling and surveying as a means of understanding the views and preferences of the population.

Furthermore, the concept of public opinion has expanded beyond traditional political issues to encompass a wide range of societal concerns, such as environmental issues, social justice, and human rights. This broader understanding of public opinion reflects the increasing interconnectedness of global society and the recognition that



public sentiment can drive change on a global scale.

In conclusion, it is evident that the study of public opinion continues to evolve, influenced by advancements in technology and changes in society. It is crucial for policymakers, researchers, and the general public to understand and analyze public opinion in order to navigate the complexities of today's world.

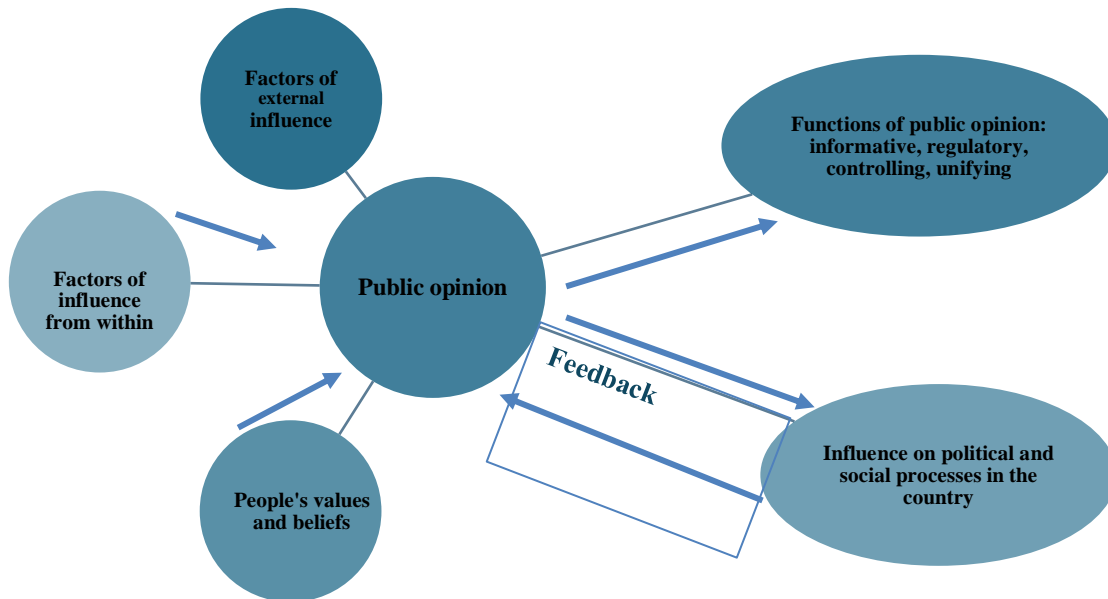
Various factors can impact the formation of public opinion, including external factors such as media, social networks, and public policy, as well as internal factors like national mentality and worldview (YATSENKO, 2022). Political science research identifies two main groups in society who play key roles in shaping public opinion: the attentive public and the issue public. The attentive public is made up of individuals who are highly interested in politics and can influence governmental actions through their knowledge and involvement, while the issue public consists of people knowledgeable about specific political issues and feel confident in expressing their views on them.

There is also a perspective that suggests decision-makers often prioritize the desires of elite groups over the broader population. This theory raises the question of whether governmental decisions are influenced by the preferences of certain privileged segments of society, rather than taking into account the views of all citizens. However, there is ongoing debate over whether this approach is a result of inherent flaws in the political system or a deliberate choice to cater to influential groups.

Furthermore, public opinion can also serve as a check on government power, holding policymakers accountable for their decisions and actions. By monitoring public sentiment and feedback, policymakers can better understand the needs and concerns of the population, ultimately guiding their policy-making processes.

In conclusion, the formation of public opinion is a dynamic and multifaceted process that plays a crucial role in shaping governance and societal norms. It is important for policymakers to engage with diverse perspectives and opinions in order to make informed decisions that benefit the greater good. As a result, the connection between public opinion and public policy, whether it be direct or reverse, plays a significant role in shaping democratic processes within the country, especially influencing decision-making by governing bodies. Figure 1 illustrates the broad scope of public opinion as a concept.





**Figure 1** - The concept of public opinion

Source: authors' own development, generalisation to the section “The Concept of Public Opinion”

**Public opinion as a tool for making management decisions**

Public opinion plays a crucial role in the decision-making process of public authorities, as it serves as a key tool for interaction between society and the government.

Vasylovskiy (2022) identifies various forms of interaction between public administration bodies and the public, which can be initiated either by the state authorities or by the public itself.

Some of the forms of interaction initiated by state authorities include engaging with leaders of public associations and organisations, conducting public opinion polls, organizing meetings and public hearings, seeking management consultations, conducting public expertise, as well as holding negotiations and mediations. Additionally, congresses of public and socio-political associations and trade unions play a significant role in this process (RUDENKO; ZAIKA, 2023). On the other hand, forms of interaction initiated by the public include public participation, citizen initiatives (whether individual or group-based), and citizen appeals. These forms of engagement help ensure that the voices and perspectives of the public are taken into consideration



in decision-making processes (VASYLKOVSKYI, 2022).

Citizen participation in the decision-making process of public authorities hinges on access to information, which allows for transparency and accountability. Public authorities must inform the public about upcoming reviews, discussions, and management decisions. Citizens have the right to access information at every stage of policy development to actively participate in the decision-making process (LIZAKOWSKA, 2020). The diversity of sources for obtaining information on relevant issues promotes the involvement of a wide range of citizens embodying the principles of sustainable development and intellectual security of the nation. To facilitate effective interaction between the public and government, feedback from the population and businesses is crucial for the development and implementation of management decisions, highlighting the importance of public administration (BUBLIY; VASILKOVSKY, 2022).

The influence of public opinion on government policy's social aspect is often underestimated. Recent research in Europe has shown that the public's demand for improved transport infrastructure to accommodate citizens with reduced mobility drives change and the adoption of more inclusive modes of transportation, such as optimizing infrastructure (SAPIŃSKI; POCHOPIEŃ, 2023). Similarly, the public's call for increased social responsibility from large corporations, including higher charity spending and a more open and accessible approach, has prompted changes in Ukrainian legislation (VICEN; RUZINSKA; YEVSTAKHEVYCH, 2021). Government decisions in the economic realm are influenced by various factors, including market conditions and economic stability, but public opinion and citizens' needs are also crucial considerations. Providing channels for public discussions and debates and ensuring that decisions align with public approval can significantly enhance the effectiveness of economic policy goals (Tretiak et al., 2022).

Additionally, citizen engagement plays a vital role in the successful execution of financial policies at the state level. It is essential to incorporate public feedback into budget creation and implementation to ensure transparency and accountability. In the realm of local budgeting, a common obstacle is the lack of incentive for participants to prioritize the needs of the community and adapt to changing demographic landscapes (GAVKALOVA et al., 2022, p. 107-117). To address these challenges, fostering public participation throughout the budgeting process and monitoring its progress is crucial.

Research has shown that policies aligned with public sentiment have a higher



likelihood of achieving positive outcomes. For example, environmental conservation efforts are more impactful when there is widespread awareness and support from the community. This encourages active community involvement in decision-making to safeguard cultural heritage, promote public welfare, and preserve the environment. International discussions on environmental rights have spurred the introduction of numerous environmental laws and initiatives (SHEVCHUK, 2021).

Therefore, we advocate for enhancing democratic practices and improving public administration to enhance the well-being of society, while acknowledging that instability within a state can have adverse effects (BLAHUTA et al., 2022, p. 417-426).

To achieve this, it is essential to implement strategies that foster collaboration between government entities and the public, emphasizing transparency, accessibility to information, and genuine consideration of public feedback in administrative decision-making processes.

## **The current state of government-citizen engagement in decision-making: successes and challenges for Ukraine**

A variety of mechanisms for public engagement in decision-making are carried out within a legal framework that includes laws and regulations governing the extent and process of citizen participation in government decisions. Article 38 of the Constitution of Ukraine guarantees Ukrainian citizens the right to participate in public affairs (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 1996).

Notably, Ukraine does not have a singular law specifically addressing citizen involvement in decision-making by public authorities. Instead, different regulations in various legal documents outline this participation. For example, the Law of Ukraine "On Social Dialogue" establishes principles for communication between authorities, local self-government bodies, and workers' organizations, enabling the latter to participate in decision-making processes related to their working conditions. The Law of Ukraine "On Local Self-Government" regulates citizen participation in decision-making at the local level and establishes public hearings as a means for citizens to voice their opinions to local authorities on current issues (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 1996).

Moreover, the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution "On Ensuring Public Participation in the Formation and Implementation of State Policy" outlines procedures



for conducting public consultations, including public discussions, electronic consultations, and opinion surveys. It specifies the subjects on which the government should engage with the public, as well as processes for submitting proposals and comments. Temporary advisory bodies within government ministries are also established to facilitate public involvement in policy-making. However, this resolution pertains only to executive authorities and not to other state agencies or local self-government bodies. To remedy this gap, a draft law on public consultations has been introduced to parliament to establish standards for involving all stakeholders in decision-making processes (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 1996).

It is crucial to note that Ukraine lacks a comprehensive legislation specifically addressing citizen engagement in decision-making by public authorities. Instead, various provisions in different documents outline the mechanisms for such participation. For example, the Law of Ukraine “On Social Dialogue” defines the principles for communication among authorities, local self-government bodies, and workers' organizations, allowing the latter to take part in decision-making processes regarding their working conditions (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 2010). The Law of Ukraine “On Local Self-Government” regulates citizen participation in decision-making at the local level and establishes the principles of public hearings as a platform for the public to express their views to local authorities on pertinent issues (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 1997).

Furthermore, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Ensuring Public Participation in the Formation and Implementation of State Policy” delineates the procedures for conducting public consultations, including public discussions, electronic consultations, and public opinion surveys. It specifies the issues on which the government must engage with the public, as well as the processes for submitting suggestions and feedback. Temporary advisory bodies are also to be set up within government ministries to facilitate public involvement in policy-making. Nevertheless, this resolution pertains solely to executive authorities and does not extend to other state agencies or local self-government bodies. To address this gap, a proposed law on public consultations has been introduced to parliament to establish guidelines for involving all relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes.

It is essential for Ukraine to adhere to the standards set by the Council of Europe and the European Union in order to shape the relationship between the government and its citizens. Ukrainian legislation is currently being adjusted to meet these



international standards to ensure that citizen participation in government decision-making aligns with EU requirements (Szostek & Orlova, 2022).

As Ukraine prepares for post-war reconstruction and eventual EU membership, it is important to create channels for communication between the government and the public, especially during the planning and implementation stages of reconstruction and when making decisions regarding EU standards. However, challenges persist in the relationship between the government and the public, including the government's hesitation to share decision-making power with society, citizens' lack of engagement in public administration processes, and attempts by political groups to exploit the system for their own gain. The involvement of civil society organizations in politics and the emergence of pseudo-communities are also areas of concern (BURYK; CHERNIAKHIVSKA, 2022, p. 19-26).

A crucial issue is the level of understanding among citizens regarding their role in government decision-making processes. A study conducted before the Russian invasion, which included focus groups from various regions of Ukraine, highlighted the significance of citizens comprehending their role in a democratic system for the stability of democracy. Those who do not grasp this concept struggle to distinguish between democratic and non-democratic systems, often believing that a democratic state prioritizes the well-being of its people and listens to their opinions.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, it is clear that there is a critical necessity to improve the political knowledge and awareness of citizens regarding the operations of the state as a intricate organization. The duty to educate and involve citizens in decision-making processes on local and national levels falls on the state. Positive advancements towards a democratic society can only be achieved through a successful collaboration between state authorities and the public.

In assessing the current state of democracy in Ukraine, it is vital to acknowledge the challenging circumstances of the full-scale military aggression starting on February 24, 2022, and the declaration of martial law. Despite these tough conditions, the ongoing conflict has created a sense of unity within Ukrainian society on crucial issues, especially the immediate requirement for medical aid for those impacted by the conflict. The demand for medical assistance has significantly risen, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Efficient coordination among the government, NGOs, and society is necessary to address the medical needs of those affected by the war in Ukraine. The collaborative



efforts have led to positive developments in the field of medicine, responding to emergency situations and ensuring medical assistance is provided to those in need (ILINA-STOHNIIENKO; MALETS, 2022). The coordinated responses of all parties have played a pivotal role in addressing the challenges presented by the conflict.

A significant illustration of the consequences of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces and the implementation of martial law is the swift enactment of legislation regarding prisoner exchanges. Prior to this conflict, Ukraine's criminal laws did not cover the specifics of prisoner of war status or the procedures for exchanging prisoners. However, in response to the urgent need to repatriate Ukrainian military personnel from Russia, there was a prompt and streamlined revision of the laws. This enabled government initiatives to be swiftly implemented, facilitating the exchange of prisoners of war and the safe return of Ukrainian citizens who were held captive (KAPLINA, 2022).

## **Electronic communications between the government and the public**

The evolution of new concepts and technologies has revolutionized communication, particularly in the public administration sector. Criticized in the past for its lack of innovation and bureaucratic complexities, public administration has embraced e-communication as a solution. The transition to electronic communication, which began several years ago, accelerated in 2020 amidst the unexpected challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (IACOB; HRESTIC; ISTRATE, 2021). This shift towards electronic tools has enabled quicker and more effective communication between government authorities and the public.

In Ukraine, electronic communication has proven to be a game-changer for public administration, especially during times of martial law. Government institutions can now engage with the public efficiently, provide timely access to information, and involve citizens in crisis management. Social media platforms have become crucial for fostering interaction between citizens and authorities, facilitating real-time information sharing (TAIIER, 2022). Additionally, instant messengers, email, websites, and mobile apps have streamlined communication between government bodies and various stakeholders during emergencies.

While tools like Telegram channels provide quick communication during crises, their effectiveness is limited without internet access (TAIIER, 2022). " The abundance



of information sources has improved the spread of political information, but the push for innovative technologies in government operations has created a competitive environment for capturing audience attention. The integration of electronic communication has significantly transformed public administration, increasing its responsiveness and transparency to public needs (KRYVOSHEIN, 2023).

A significant aspect of communication between authorities and citizens on social media is obtaining feedback. However, this interaction is often superficial and creates the false impression of engagement. Therefore, we concur with the viewpoint that communication with authorities on social media lacks relevance, as the focus tends to be more on politicians' personalities and direct interaction with them rather than on discussing political ideas and government social programs (KRYVOSHEIN, 2023).

One major benefit of electronic communications is the rapid and effective transmission of information, enabling authorities to promptly gather data, make informed decisions, and react to situations. Additionally, electronic technologies facilitate increased participation of individuals and organizations in governance. A noteworthy illustration of citizen-government engagement in decision-making is the emergence of e-government, which has gained significance as various government functions undergo digital transformation (TAIIER, 2023; TURII, 2017).

Mikhailchenko (2021) emphasizes that e-government involves the creation of a technical infrastructure within a state to facilitate digital communication between the government and its citizens. This utilization of information technology allows for improved communication and engagement between the state and the public, ultimately leading to significant changes in how government decisions are made. E-government also enables the expansion of services provided by the state, reduces costs, and streamlines relationships between government agencies, citizens, and other societal institutions through the standardization and unification of state automated systems (BUBLIY; VASILKOVSKY, 2022; SURMINA-DALECOREY, 2020; TRETAYAK et al., 2022).

## A. Influence of public opinion on the Internet on politics

In this context, it is intriguing to analyze public sentiment in the online realm, which possesses distinct attributes compared to traditional forms of public opinion: virtual nature, absence of censorship, anonymity,<sup>1</sup> and a diverse range of topics for discussion (HUANG, 2020). Online public opinion refers to the collective expression of



viewpoints or sentiments by the public through internet platforms concerning societal issues or topics of public interest within a specific historical context and social setting (HUANG, 2020).

While public opinion voiced on social media platforms and websites may not directly influence or mold public policies, governmental bodies do consider this feedback when formulating specific policies. In this sense, it can be argued that online public opinion plays an indirect yet noteworthy role in the decision-making process.

Public opinion on the Internet has a dual impact on public policy. While engaging in online discussions can bring awareness to pressing social issues and prompt positive changes, it may also overlook the voices of marginalized groups like those with low incomes or the elderly (HAISHENG, 2022). Anonymity online can be problematic as it allows for the spread of unverified information. Moreover, the rise of online communities as new players in public policy introduces a dynamic shift in decision-making processes (BORYSENKO & CHERNOKALOVA, 2020).

### The mechanism of interaction between citizens and government in the decision-making process in Ukraine

Public participation in the decision-making process is facilitated through a comprehensive mechanism illustrated as a multi-level pyramid (Figure 2). At the top of the pyramid are the government's actions aimed at involving the public, which are supported by underlying, essential yet less apparent factors.

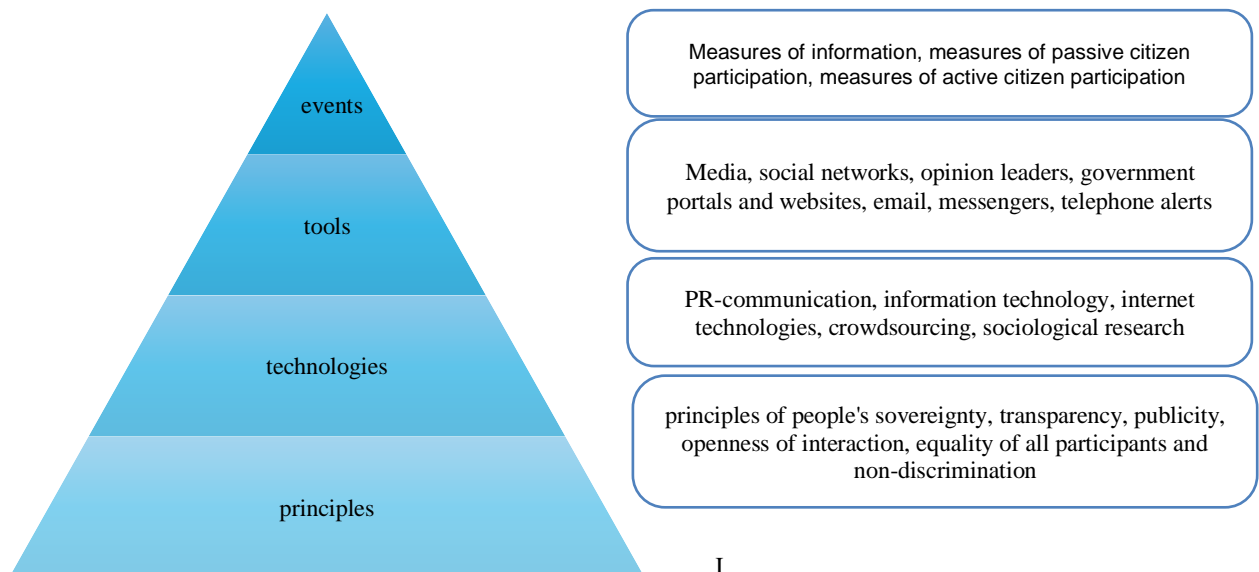


Figure 2- Mechanisms of interaction between citizens and the government in the





decision-making process in Ukraine  
Source: authors' own development

The pyramid's foundation is rooted in democratic principles, guiding the government's efforts to engage the public in decision-making. These principles encompass people's sovereignty, transparency, openness, equality, and non-discrimination. To facilitate citizen participation in governmental activities, various technologies are utilised, such as PR communication, information technology, Internet platforms, crowdsourcing, and sociological research (BORYSENKO; CHERNOKALOVA, 2020, p. 58-62). In fostering a relationship between the government and the public, a range of tools are employed, including traditional media, social networks, opinion influencers, government websites, email, messaging apps, and phone alerts. This toolkit continues to evolve with the introduction of new technological advancements.

Today, the government has implemented various measures to involve the public in decision-making, which can be categorized into three main groups:

- Informing citizens - this includes public announcements, publishing draft documents on official websites, issuing press releases, and conducting press conferences.
- Passive citizen participation - such as utilizing online petitions, surveys, and monitoring systems.
- Active citizen participation - involving round tables, public consultations, public councils, social dialogues, and public control mechanisms.

One notable international effort that Ukraine has joined is the Open Government Partnership. As part of this initiative, the Cabinet of Ministers has developed an Action Plan for the period of 2023-2025 (CABINET OF MINISTERS OF UKRAINE, 2023).

As part of its participation in the Open Government Initiative (<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/tag/partnerstvo-vidkritij-uryad>), has made significant strides towards openness and reform of public administration as part of its involvement in the Open Government Initiative. A new approach called "co-creation" has been introduced, which involves partnership at all stages of reforms, from problem analysis to solution implementation. The development of the E-Youth digital platform and a programme to enhance transparency in scientific research are key components of this initiative (CABINET OF MINISTERS OF UKRAINE, 2023).<sup>1</sup>

The core values of the Open Government Partnership Initiative in Ukraine focus



on providing access to information, increasing public participation in decision-making, ensuring accountability of public authorities, and leveraging technology for transparency and accountability. Various e-democracy tools have been implemented to foster direct dialogue between citizens and the government, with promising examples listed in Table 1 (CHALTSEVA; SHVETS, 2020, p. 63-71). The initiative includes the development of the E-Youth digital platform, which will facilitate dialogue between young Ukrainians, the public, and the authorities, as well as a programme to ensure transparency and accessibility of information on scientific research.

**Table 1** Online resources for communication with citizens in the decision-making process

Title	Official website	Functionality
A single portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	<a href="https://www.rada.gov.ua/">https://www.rada.gov.ua/</a>	The ability to receive notifications of important political events and decisions, issues for public discussion; submission and signing of electronic petitions; online broadcasts of the work of legislators
Government portal	<a href="https://www.kmu.gov.ua/">https://www.kmu.gov.ua/</a>	All the options of the Verkhovna Rada portal, the possibility of electronic appeals, and a single hotline number.
Government contact centre	<a href="https://ukc.gov.ua/appeal/">https://ukc.gov.ua/appeal/</a>	Submitting an electronic appeal
Ukraine's recovery plan	<a href="https://recovery.gov.ua/">https://recovery.gov.ua/</a>	The “I have an idea” feature allows people to express their thoughts and suggestions on the strategy for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine
Diia public services portal (+ mobile application)	<a href="https://diia.gov.ua/">https://diia.gov.ua/</a>	Submitting appeals through the Interaction functionality
Handbook for Civil Society Activists (supported by USAID)	<a href="http://dovidnyk.org.ua/">http://dovidnyk.org.ua/</a>	Information on various forms of implementing their civic initiative and participation in various practices of interaction between the government and citizens
Community smart interaction	<a href="https://edu.gurtom.mobi/gromada/">https://edu.gurtom.mobi/gromada/</a>	The site was created by civil society activists to communicate directly between local authorities and citizens without intermediaries and bureaucratic procedures (unfortunately, since 24.02.2022, the activity has been suspended until the end of the war)
E-dem platform	<a href="https://e-dem.ua/">https://e-dem.ua/</a>	A platform for communication between the authorities and the public

Source: own elaboration of the authors, based on Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2024), Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2023)

According to Borysenko & Chernokalova (2020), the primary objective of the



Ukrainian government should be to deliver high-quality services to its citizens by engaging them in decision-making and collaborating with civil society organizations. This contemporary approach to political governance underscores the significance of transparency, public participation, and cooperation in establishing efficient and responsive governance structures.

According to Denysiuk (2022), the foundation of social (political) dialogue is open communication and mutual respect between all parties involved, leading to understanding and agreement among political actors. This type of dialogue is essential for public participation in government decision-making.

The highest level of participation in a democratic society is social (political) dialogue, where the public engages in regular exchanges of opinions and suggestions, as well as public hearings using electronic communication tools.

In democracy, the blending of public opinion and public policy is crucial. This is achieved through the representation of public opinion in politics and by considering public opinion in government activities (IACOB; HRESTIC; ISTRATE, 2021). Clarity, efficiency, and coherence should guide communication in public administration, with a focus on understanding public opinion. The public's role in decision-making is evolving towards ongoing collaboration through electronic communication. It is recommended to establish a dedicated body or official responsible for engaging citizens and ensuring compliance with rules (GIULIANI, 2022). Politicians should prioritize investing in education, promoting public awareness, and bridging the gap between government perspectives and public opinion to improve policy-making.

## CONCLUSIONS

In summation, it is incumbent upon the Ukrainian executive branch to ensure the provision of high-caliber services that align with the populace's requisites.

Additionally, the government should actively seek feedback and input from citizens through various channels such as public consultations, surveys, town hall meetings, and public hearings. This will help in ensuring that government policies and decisions reflect the needs and preferences of the population.

Furthermore, the government should actively engage with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to foster collaboration and partnership in addressing public issues. This approach shifts the role of the government from a



position of dominance to one of cooperation and partnership with civil society.

The next level of public engagement involves consultations, where authorities seek input from the public on various issues and provide opportunities for feedback and comments. It is crucial to allocate sufficient time for receiving input and addressing concerns raised by the public.

The third level, active involvement, entails the direct participation of civil society representatives in the decision-making process alongside government officials. This includes sharing expert opinions, proposing topics for discussion, drafting decisions, and suggesting amendments. There is room for improvement in the process of selecting public representatives to ensure a fair and inclusive representation of the society.

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