

# Addressing contemporary issues in public administration: Effective strategies for improving efficiency and transparency in public services



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**Abstract** In contemporary global public administration challenges, the interaction mechanism between civil society and government authorities becomes extremely important to ensure sustainable development and social well-being. Therefore, the relevance of this research is driven by the need to find an effective strategy to enhance efficient and transparent communication between the public and local government authorities. This work aims to analyse and assess the effectiveness of public administration mechanisms in the context of government-public interaction based on international experience and to develop effective ways and strategies for further application of participation tools. The study employs various methods, such as statistical data analysis, comparative methods, and population surveys. Firstly, it was established that government and local authorities should create favourable conditions for the development of public initiatives, avoid interference in the formation and activities of civil society institutions, use transparent mechanisms to support their work and involve the public in making and implementing government decisions. Thus, such communication will ensure the development of our state, strengthening its economic potential and defence capability. Particular attention was paid to the mechanisms for involving the public in decision-making in the Mykolaiv City Council, and practical advisory councils and their functions were identified. This allowed for the proposal of modern forms of participation to support the functioning of public services in the studied community. The practical significance of this work lies in the fact that the research results can serve as a basis for developing and implementing effective strategies and public administration programs in the context of communicative interaction between the government and the public, which will contribute to their sustainable social and economic development.

**Keywords:** territorial communities, decentralisation, local self-government, transparency, sustainable development, European integration

## 1. Introduction

Since 2014, the strategic trend of socio-economic development in Ukraine has been the decentralisation process, which includes reforming the administrative-territorial structure. This initiative involves changing the state's approach to the organisation and financing of local self-government, particularly by moving away from the strict centralisation that has been in place since Soviet times. Effective public administration facilitates the implementation of public policy, which stems from shifting the focus from the responsibility of well-known leaders to the personal involvement of every citizen and civil organisation.

However, the issue of public administration in the development of participatory democracy, the liberalisation of state power, and the partnership cooperation between government structures at all levels of management is complex and multifaceted. The lack of practical strategies and mechanisms for cooperation between civil organisations and public service bodies can lead to unsuccessful strategic and insufficient socio-economic development. Insufficient attention to public administration issues in the participatory process can result in miscommunication between the authorities and citizens and a lack of understanding of their real problems. After all, civil organisations are created to assist the authorities and monitor their activities.

Therefore, studying the mechanisms of public administration in the context of developing strategic goals for the effectiveness and transparency of applying interaction tools between public services and public authorities becomes a



relevant and vital issue for ensuring the establishment of effective and accountable state institutions. These institutions shape public policy and successfully implement it for the state's sustainable development.

Research in this area is developing quite actively. The works of leading domestic authors have already outlined the main ways to address these issues, but several problems remain unresolved. These problems are related to the optimal use of communicative interaction tools between local government bodies and the public and the mechanisms for involving the public in managing the restoration of territories during the war and post-war periods in Ukraine.

In her work, Sydorenko (2022) examines modern trends in public administration and emphasises the critical factor of economic development in institutional transformation. The author focuses on the conceptual model of public administration in managing public policy but does not specify the mechanisms of such management. In the joint work of Goncharuk, Pyrohova, Suray, Prokopenko and Prudius (2023), measures for implementing a new model of public administration are proposed. Unfortunately, only state control over the activities of public authorities is highlighted, which does not seem to align fully with democratic values. The collective authors Diachenko et al. (2022) noted the necessary modern directions of innovative activities to ensure the growth and sustainable development of Ukraine's economy when developing the relevant concept for 2026. Han's (2024) perspective in the Nepali context is quite interesting; public trust in local authorities' accountability is a priority compared to responsibility and control.

The leading indicator of such trust among Nepali citizens is the transparency of government activities. Similarly, Acharya (2022) notes the immaturity of the functions of local authorities in Nepal due to a lack of technical knowledge and experience in local governance. This again suggests that highly qualified civil service personnel are an undeniable goal of public administration development strategies. The level of public trust in civil servants was noted in the work of Wesley (2024). Using urban planning as an example, the need to create an effective mechanism for interaction between authorities and the public was noted in the work of Gornyk et al. (2023), emphasising innovative technical monitoring tools such as sensors or detectors. Zhygan (2023) noted the priority of decentralisation reforms of power relations through the stimulation of local economic development and the implementation of an anti-crisis model of public administration. Korotych (2022) spoke about an effective and accountable public institution that forms state policy and successfully implements it for sustainable state development.

Authors Kondratenko et al. (2022) investigate the theoretical and methodological aspects of strategic planning for developing Ukraine's regions. Progoniuk and Husenko (2022) emphasised the necessity of digital modernisation of the public administration system as an essential paradigm for sustainable development goals and rethinking the state's role in interacting with civil society. Author Lemke et al. (2021) expressed the need for digital governance. Allen, Tamindael, S. Bickerton, and Cho (2020) stressed that digitalising public administration could mean more significant opportunities for citizen co-production, e-participation, crowdsourcing, and open governance.

Borshch et al. (2021) discussed adopting the European experience in providing public services. Yongzheng et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of public participation in democracy and the critical role of local accountability in influencing citizens' subjective well-being. Devas and Grant (2023) hold a similar position but argue the impossibility of poor citizens influencing decision-making in Kenya and Uganda. Renée Irvin and Stansbury (2024) highlighted the conditions under which community participation can be expensive and ineffective while also pointing out cases of positive public participation. Soonhee and Jooho (2019) studied online and offline citizen participation in policy development and the relationship between such participation and perceptions of government transparency. Ressler et al. (2021) wrote about improving citizens' subjective well-being through non-profit organisations, which are potential political levers of such well-being. According to Whetsell (2024), the public emerges when social interaction creates an unregulated influence on the community, which regulates state actions.

Based on the analysis of previous studies, this article aims to systematise and analyse the most effective approaches to public administration in developing strategies for enhancing the efficiency and transparency of public services. Specifically, the main tasks of the research are to analyse modern communication tools for interaction between local government bodies, using the example of the Mykolaiv City Community of the Mykolaiv District of Mykolaiv Region, and public services, as well as to identify current trends in strategies for improving the effective and transparent functioning of public services in response to the impacts of administrative reforms on crisis phenomena.

## 2. Methods

To address the research tasks, various methods and materials were used to analyse public administration regarding the strategic goals of enhancing the efficiency and transparency of tools for interaction between public services and public authorities and to develop approaches to improve the management of communication links.

The research is based on a complex of general scientific methods (analysis and synthesis are essential for assessing the current interaction between the Mykolaiv City Council and the public. The analysis of statistical data includes careful accounting and analysis of numerical indicators. The first step was to collect available statistical data concerning the number of citizen appeals. The collected data were aggregated and processed, focusing on aspects such as problematic issues, the number of individuals who contacted the public authority; chronological, logical-semantic, systematic, institutional, and

situational approaches, modelling, and decomposition) and unique methods (comparative analysis is a powerful tool for studying positive international experiences in applying participation tools. Nepal was chosen for the analysis. This method was used to study approaches and strategies for effective interaction with public services.

The comparative analysis provided a deep understanding of which strategies and practices were successful in different countries and how this could be applied in Ukraine. Population surveys are an essential method for collecting data and obtaining feedback and opinions from citizens on various issues, including the effectiveness of the public administration system in organising public services. The research aimed to analyse the perceptions and opinions of Mykolaiv region residents regarding the prospects and problems of developing participatory forms of interaction between the public and public authorities in the region. The survey was conducted online using a specially created web platform for Typeform questionnaires. Respondents were recruited through social networks and forums. In total, about 200 questionnaires were completed. The anonymous questionnaire included a series of questions aimed at studying the opinions and views of respondents on critical aspects of public interaction with public service bodies (Appendix). Specifically, the questions were directed at assessing the current interaction between local self-government bodies and the public, identifying priority areas for development, and identifying possible obstacles to proper interaction.

The results were subjected to statistical analysis and comparison to identify critical trends and perspectives. The research results provided valuable input into developing recommendations for public administration and regional development in the Mykolaiv region.

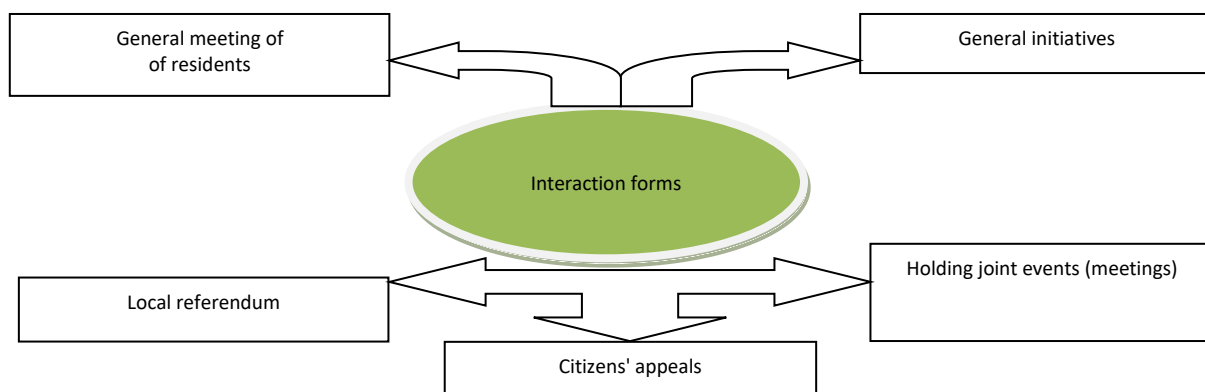
### 3. Results and Discussion

At the beginning of the study, we questioned the existence of a comprehensive document on citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Currently, the Presidential Decree of Ukraine No. 487/2021, dated September 27, 2022, approved the National Strategy for Promoting the Development of Civil Society in Ukraine for 2021-2026. The main principle of the state's activity in supporting civil society is respect for its autonomy. Following recent guidelines, one of the strategic directions of the Mykolaiv City Council is the community partnership with operational goals of open governance, participatory development principles, and multi-sectoral partnership, as outlined in the Development Strategy of the Mykolaiv City Territorial Community until 2027.

As of February 1, 2013, the region's population was 1,172.9 thousand people, which is 2.6% of Ukraine's population, ranking 17th among the regions of Ukraine. This included 795.9 thousand urban residents (67.9%) and 377.0 thousand rural residents (32.1%). Specifically, the population of the city of Mykolaiv was 496.0 thousand people. As of January 1, 2022, the population was 470.0 thousand people, making Mykolaiv a medium-sized city in Ukraine. However, the current demographic situation in Mykolaiv is characterised by a further decrease in population due to natural decline and the war, which has caused significant outflows of people from the city.

Considering the harmful risks of population loss in the region, the Mykolaiv city community aims to establish transparent relationships with the public, civil society organisations, media, political parties, commercial entities, and other organisations within its Development Strategy. This ensures accountability, participation, and understanding of government policies and public initiatives.

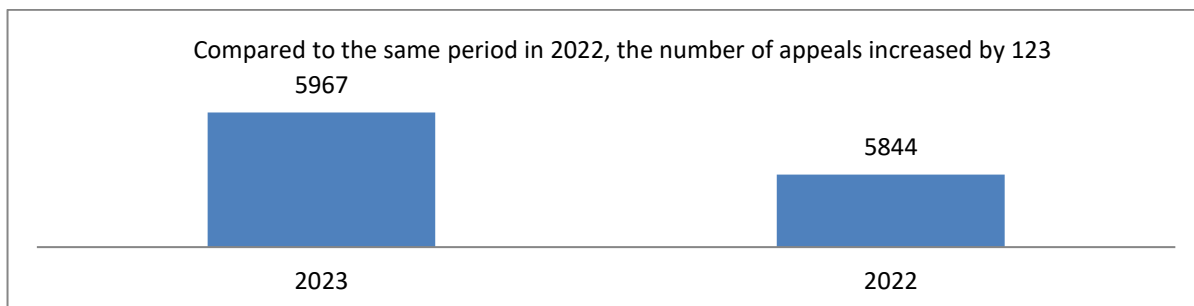
The legislation provides numerous forms of interaction between public authorities and the public. For the studied community, the following forms are provided (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Forms of Mykolaiv City Council Interaction with the Public. *Source:* Mykolaiv City Council (2024).

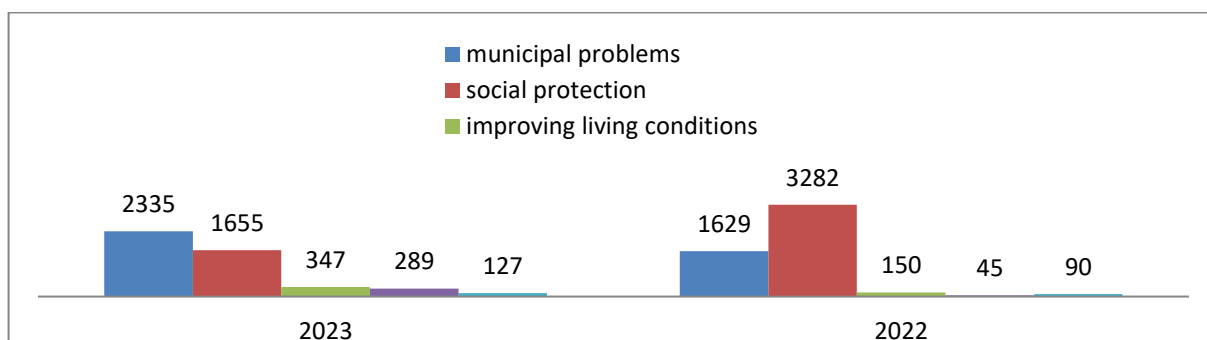
According to the updated data from the website of the Mykolaiv City Council as of January 4, 2024, the Department for Citizen Appeals of the Department for Ensuring the Activities of the Executive Bodies of the Mykolaiv City Council provided a summary of the work with citizen appeals received by the executive committee of the Mykolaiv City Council during 2023 (Figure 2).





**Figure 2** Comparative Chart of Citizens' Appeals in 2022/2023. *Source:* Mykolaiv City Council (2024).

In total, 6135 issues were raised in the appeals. The majority of the issues raised by the city's residents during 2023 concerned the following topics (Figure 3):



**Figure 3** Issues Submitted by Citizens in 2022/2023. *Source:* Mykolaiv City Council (2024).

Compared to 2022, the focus of problematic issues has shifted to the communal services sector. Two years ago, Russian troops blew up the water supply system that provided water to the city. The city was without water for almost a month, and saline water from the estuary was introduced. Currently, there is also the problem of power outages for energy-saving purposes. All of this determined the main issues of most citizen appeals in 2023.

At the same time, the number of vulnerable citizens needing support from the authorities has increased. We also studied the number of appeals from such citizens (Table 1).

**Table 1** Appeals from citizens needing social protection.

Category/social status of applicants	January-December 2022	January-December 2023	Comparison (+, -)
Participants of the war	5	4	-1
Child of war	63	83	+20
Person with a disability as a result of war	9	22	+13
Participant in military operations	21	66	+45
Veteran of labour	15	19	+4
Veteran of military service	2	-	-2
Person with a disability in group I	75	136	+61
Person with a disability in group II	215	189	-26
Person with a disability in group III	241	111	-130
Participant of the ATO/JFO	11	20	+9
Child with a disability	1	1	-
Large families	39	38	-1
Single mothers	36	38	+2
Pensioners	1222	1138	-84
People affected by the Chernobyl disaster	1	1	-
Participant in the liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident	2	3	+1
Internally displaced persons	106	251	+145
Released from captivity	-	3	+3

*Source:* Mykolaiv City Council (2024).



In total, 6135 issues were raised in the appeals. The majority of the issues raised by the city's residents during 2023 concerned the following topics (Figure 4):



Figure 4 Public boards at mykolaiv city council. Source: Mykolaiv City Council (2024).

They are generally regarded as informal public structures working with state and local government authorities in specified areas and organisational formats. Another direct public service is the homeowners' associations of multi-apartment buildings. As of 01.11.2016, the city had registered 535 homeowners' associations in 592 buildings (total building area: 2317.05 thousand m<sup>2</sup>). Since the beginning of 2016, 234 homeowners' associations have been created in the city (compared to 8 in the corresponding period of 2015), 123 commissions were convened for the transfer of buildings to the balance of the associations, and 106 buildings switched to self-maintenance (Mykolaiv City Council, 2024).

Survey results became a significant component of the study as they provided direct feedback from citizens regarding the most effective forms of public interaction with government authorities. One of the main aspects of the survey was question No. 4, which concerned the possibility for citizens to participate in the activities of local self-government bodies. Respondents were asked to select 4 out of 12 options they had participated in or considered the most effective and transparent communication. The results indicated that most respondents prioritised the following forms of participation: general citizen meetings (85% of respondents chose this form), self-organisation bodies (important for 70% of respondents), electronic petitions (considered adequate by about 68%), and meetings between local council leaders and officials with the public (important for 45% of respondents) (Figure 5).

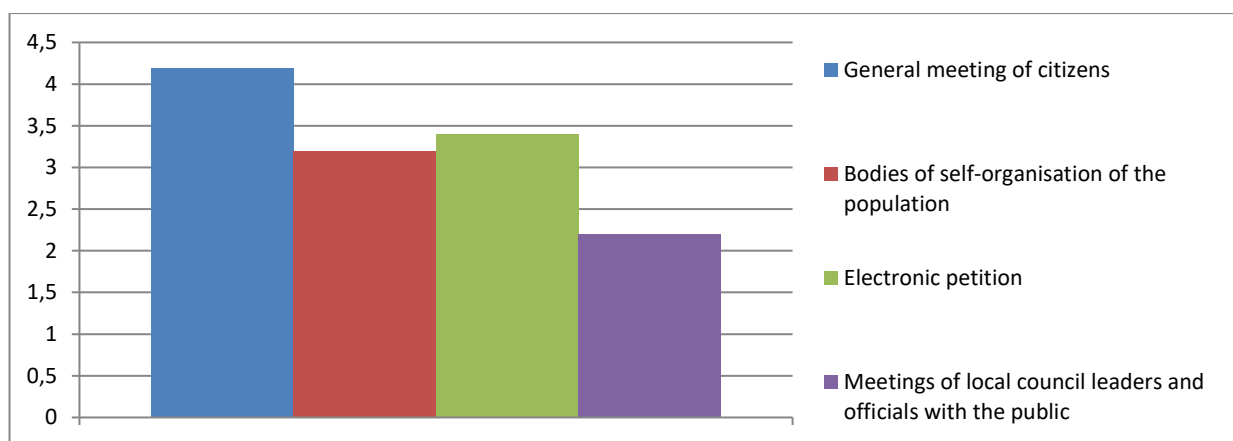


Figure 5 The most effective forms of communication between local authorities and the public.

Such statistical reporting is necessary for further research into the effectiveness and transparency of public interaction with government bodies, as it highlights the current problematic aspects of the studied authority. This will allow for the development of more adapted and effective strategies for building efficient and accountable state institutions that formulate and successfully implement state policy for the country's sustainable development.

Focusing on positive international experiences is essential, considering each country's unique history, political landscape, and cultural characteristics. The most exciting thing for us is the experience of public interaction with officials in Nepal, which is based on the principle of complete trust. Trust in authority and active public participation interact with each other: successful cooperation between the authorities and the community to achieve common goals helps increase trust, creating even more effective cooperation with reduced energy, time, and resources to achieve new common goals. This enables the development of more adapted and effective strategies for the interaction between the authorities and the public.

Analysing all of the above, it should be noted that the study revealed that the interaction process between public services and public authorities is a complex and multifaceted task. In such conditions, it is necessary to consider that the prospect of developing such relations requires the government and public organisations to implement comprehensive strategies and programs to develop effective mechanisms for promoting communication links between the public and relevant territorial communities. In particular, the following interaction paths are proposed:

1) *Xj -Effective public information.* This systematically disseminates information through various communication channels to reach the general public, a specific segment, or even individuals.

2) *Public participation in the budget process at the local level.* We recommend regulating the mechanism of public participation in the local budget process by using public consultations and public councils, engaging the media, preparing information in an accessible form for the public, using interactive communication tools, and implementing a participatory budget. We suggest establishing a process for transferring municipal property (improvement and cultural heritage objects, sports infrastructure) to public sector organisations (CSOs), i.e., public associations and charitable organisations.

3) *Establish trust-based cooperation and partnerships between local government bodies and the public.* Using the management system experience in Nepal as an example, build such relationships so that as many public representatives as possible fully trust the authorities and are confident in their readiness for honest and professional cooperation.

4) *Establish dialogue and cooperation between the authorities and the community.* This involves creating advisory groups of invited citizens as experts and advisory committees as a permanent consultation forum.

5) *Pay attention to the communication strategy.* This includes linking with the plan for the renewal and development of territorial communities, serving as a tool for their implementation, and being based on defined goals and objectives.

6) *Use informal measures of public discussion.* These include focus groups, workshops, working sessions, seminars, town hall meetings, and group discussions. For instance, group discussions like the "World Cafe" – a globally recognised method accidentally discovered by David Isaacs and Juanita Brown – involve using several communicative platforms to work on a specific task with a pre-defined topic.

7) *Crowd participation technologies.* Crowdsourcing is a procedure that involves engaging a wide range of people to perform tasks and contribute ideas to achieve specific goals set by the organiser. The crowdsourcing method reduces process costs and utilises people's collective knowledge, which is particularly important when making decisions for a broad audience. Public participation is favourable for crowd technologies, such as participatory budgeting.

8) *Delegation of powers from the government to NGOs* has economic advantages worldwide. It can reduce costs, mobilise public potential, and attract funds from other sources, including international sponsors.

These measures can serve as specific steps in implementing comprehensive strategies to enhance the efficiency and transparency of public services in interaction with local self-government bodies.

The research results showed that the trends in modern public administration regarding the strategic goals of increasing the efficiency of interaction between authorities and the territorial community in Ukraine are a pressing issue due to the complications of such relationships. These complications are particularly evident in the involvement of civil society organisations in the political process, artificial activation during election periods, and the disregard of public opinion by authorities when making final decisions. Particular attention should be paid to the role of public organisations and local authorities in implementing recovery programs. The ability to cooperate and coordinate the actions of various stakeholders plays a vital role in improving recovery processes.

Among the study's key findings is that effective public administration requires considering the specifics of each case and coordinating actions among all participants in the process. Moreover, it is essential to ensure transparency and openness in public bodies' work, which will increase public trust in the decisions made (Diachenko, 2022).

Similar problems in public administration, such as organising interaction strategies between local governments and the public, are studied in Ukraine and abroad. Some authors focus on the latest participation tools, particularly on modern paradigms of trust and dialogue. Other studies aim to analyse existing gaps in both practical activities and legislative levels.

In his work, Karataş (2019) studied the chronological order of the formation of new public management with an ideological approach to public governance, which faced significant criticism in the 2000s. The author marked this approach with post-new public management (Post-NPM). However, criticism of the new term focused on the logic of the private sector, the client's point of view, and the unclear conditions of its implementation. Authors Christensen and Ghjlj (2022)

continued to consider public management, describing the complexity and ambiguity of any reform, assuring that radical reforms do not necessarily lead to more effective and better control.

Kliuchnyk et al. (2023) studied the peculiarities of public management and public administration in territorial communities under war and post-war conditions, paying attention to the separation of powers of city, village, and settlement council heads and city administration heads during wartime. However, one of the shortcomings in this work is the insufficient study of public participation in the wartime management process. This aspect can be vital to ensuring broad public support and improving the quality of decisions made in critical situations. Aguilar (2022) explored the links between public policy and human rights, considering the role of citizen participation, which reveals tension at the institutional level and the very concept of development. While his work is essential, it is more important to consider the position of citizens who feel the strain at the institutional level. This is an important aspect of development, as citizens have the right to influence the processes in the country and determine their future. Considering the territorial scope of the research, attention should be paid to Ukrainian scientists Andrienko et al. (2022), who see civil society organisations, initiatives, and movements connecting through a system of partner organisations, coalitions, and networks to protect their rights and interests. Civil society institutions that make and implement critical social decisions should be recognised on par with public authorities as subjects of public administration. The authors propose improving the regulatory framework by involving business structures to finance the activities of public organisations and effective constructive public initiatives in state management processes. The authors support the idea of improving the legal framework by involving business structures in financing the activities of public organisations and promoting public participation in public administration processes. However, it is also essential to pay attention to public participation in local self-government, as it is a crucial aspect of developing democracy and ensuring transparency and openness in decision-making at the local level.

Overall, public administration's development of strategies to increase the effective interaction of the public and public authorities is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a responsible and research-based approach. Practical cooperation of all parties, consideration of innovative approaches, and consideration of the best international experience can significantly facilitate the process of communicative interaction between the public and authorities and contribute to the state's sustainable development.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The results of this work confirmed that modern trends in public administration strategies for the effective functioning of public services are only possible with decentralisation and the development of local self-government. An essential element is the active participation of public organisations and residents in governance and strategic decisions. Creating transparent and effective mechanisms for interaction between authorities and the public is essential, as local self-government bodies, through delegated powers, become the intermediary link between government bodies and public service institutions.

It should be noted that analysing international experience has been an essential source for identifying critical success factors in enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the interaction between public authorities and the public. By comparing international examples, it was determined that integrated strategies, international support, and cooperation between different levels of government and public organisations are crucial success factors.

In turn, the survey results confirmed that residents' active participation is a crucial success factor in communication between authorities and the public. Public organisations and citizens are significant in making strategic decisions and influencing decision-making.

The study's general conclusion is that public administration strategies for communicative interaction between authorities and the public require a regulatory approach and consideration of the multifaceted influence of factors. Public participation in managerial and governmental powers is a complex task that requires planning, coordination, and cooperation among all interested parties.

For further research in public administration strategies to improve the efficiency and transparency of the interaction between authorities and the public, it is recommended to focus on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of implemented strategies in practical activities. This will allow for an assessment of how the steps taken and decisions made contribute to achieving set goals and improving the lives of residents. Additionally, an important direction for further research is the study of the impact of different management models on the sustainability and resilience of strategies for engaging government bodies, local self-government bodies, civil society institutions, and businesses in cooperation.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

The authors of this study confirm that they followed all necessary ethical standards, including using questionnaires.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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