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Implementation of sustainable development goals in ukrainian communities: the path to a sustainable future

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Abstract. *The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the UN is particularly important for Ukraine, which is under martial law and seeks integration into the European space. Local communities play a key role in the implementation of the SDGs, since it is at this level that decisions are made that*



directly affect the quality of life of the population. **The purpose of the article** is to analyze the practices of implementing the SDGs in territorial communities of Ukraine within the framework of the TransLearnN project and to identify effective approaches to sustainable development. **Methods.** The study used systemic analysis, expert assessment and strategic planning methods. A substantive study of the development strategies of 12 united territorial communities of Ukraine was conducted. A case analysis of specific practices and problems in the implementation of the SDGs was applied, taking into account regional characteristics and the level of institutional capacity of communities. **Results.** The study showed that most communities have already integrated the SDGs into their socio-economic development strategies. The main areas are economic development, social sphere, infrastructure modernization, environmental safety and institutional sustainability. Typical challenges were also identified, including lack of resources, lack of qualified personnel and low level of population involvement. Within the framework of the TransLearnN project, communities received advisory support from scientists, which allowed to improve the quality of strategic planning. **Conclusions.** The implementation of the SDGs in Ukrainian communities is not only possible, but also necessary to achieve national stability and post-crisis recovery. Effective implementation of development strategies requires support from the scientific community, international partners and civil society. The participation of communities in projects such as TransLearnN creates new opportunities for increasing institutional capacity and sustainable development. The best practices of individual communities can be scaled up for implementation in other regions. The SDGs should be considered not only as a political declaration, but as a practical tool for transforming society. An important direction for further research is the quantitative assessment of the impact of implemented strategies on the socio-economic indicators of communities. Thus, the proposed study contributes to the formation of a scientific and practical approach to the implementation of sustainable development in Ukraine at the community level.



Keywords: *sustainable development, territorial community, strategy, SDGs, management, international projects.*

**Впровадження цілей сталого розвитку у громадах України: шлях до
стійкого майбутнього**

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Анотація. *Реалізація Цілей сталого розвитку (ЦСР), затверджених ООН, є особливо важливою для України, яка перебуває в умовах воєнного стану та прагне до інтеграції в європейський простір. Місцеві громади відіграють ключову роль у впровадженні ЦСР, оскільки саме на цьому рівні приймаються рішення, що безпосередньо впливають на якість життя населення. Метою статті є аналіз практик впровадження ЦСР у територіальних громадах*



України в межах проєкту TransLearnN та визначення ефективних підходів до сталого розвитку. **Методи.** У дослідженні використано системний аналіз, експертне оцінювання та методи стратегічного планування. Проведено змістовне вивчення стратегій розвитку 12 об'єднаних територіальних громад України. Застосовано кейс-аналіз конкретних практик та проблем у впровадженні ЦСР, з урахуванням регіональних особливостей та рівня інституційної спроможності громад. **Результати.** Дослідження показало, що більшість громад вже інтегрували ЦСР у свої стратегії соціально-економічного розвитку. Основними напрямками є розвиток економіки, соціальна сфера, модернізація інфраструктури, екологічна безпека та інституційна сталість. Виявлено також типові виклики, серед яких – нестача ресурсів, відсутність кваліфікованих кадрів і низький рівень залучення населення. В межах проєкту TransLearnN громади отримали консультативну підтримку від науковців, що дозволило підвищити якість стратегічного планування. **Висновки.** Впровадження ЦСР у громадах України є не лише можливим, а й необхідним для досягнення національної стабільності та посткризового відновлення. Ефективна реалізація стратегій розвитку потребує підтримки з боку наукової спільноти, міжнародних партнерів і громадянського суспільства. Участь громад у проєктах на кшталт TransLearnN створює нові можливості для підвищення інституційної спроможності та сталого розвитку. Найкращі практики окремих громад можуть бути масштабовані для впровадження в інших регіонах. ЦСР слід розглядати не лише як політичну декларацію, а як практичний інструмент трансформації суспільства.

Ключові слова: сталий розвиток, територіальна громада, стратегія, ЦСР, управління, міжнародні проєкти.

Problem statement. Sustainable development is a key guideline of global policy, but its practical implementation at the level of territorial communities in Ukraine remains insufficiently studied. This problem becomes especially relevant in



conditions of martial law, when communities are forced to adapt development strategies to new challenges. Despite the presence of a regulatory framework and international support, many communities face difficulties in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main problems are the lack of institutional capacity, low level of strategic planning and limited involvement of the population. At the same time, communities are the basic units of socio-economic transformation, therefore it is at this level that it is important to implement sustainable practices. The scientific and practical task is to study the existing experience of implementing the SDGs in communities and identify effective support mechanisms. Solving this problem will allow to increase the efficiency of local governance, strengthen social cohesion and ensure the comprehensive reconstruction of Ukraine. That is why the analysis of cases of SDG implementation within the TransLearnN project as a tool for community development is relevant.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In recent years, the issue of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been actively covered in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers.

In particular, J. Sachs [1] and L. Daly [2] focus on the need to localize the SDGs in public administration systems. The works of Wilson (2012) [3] and Dobrowolski and Kożuch (2021) [4] address the issues of the institutional capacity of communities to implement the principles of sustainable development. The UN and UNDP reports [5, 6] emphasize the importance of involving the public in the formation of development strategies. Studies by the European Economic Commission [7] indicate that a key factor for success is a partnership between government, business and civil society. Methodological recommendations of the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine [8] provide practical tools for strategic planning for communities, but do not cover the real level of implementation on the ground.

The DOBRE projects [9], GIZ [10] and USAID HOVERLA [11] have gathered significant experience in developing community strategies, but their compliance with the SDGs has not been analyzed. The works of Ukrainian authors (Kravchenko, 2020



[12]; Lysenko, 2022 [13]; Tymoshenko, 2023 [14]) focus on the general economic dimension of strategic development, leaving out the environmental and social components.

Studies by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine [15] illustrate the status of implementation of individual SDG indicators, but do not contain analytics on the impact of community strategies. There is also a gap between the theoretical principles of sustainable development and the practice of their implementation in the strategy of ATCs. There are no holistic interdisciplinary approaches that take into account the role of higher education in the transformation of communities.

In addition, the experience of interaction between the academic environment and communities within international projects has not been sufficiently studied. Thus, there are a number of gaps in the existing scientific literature that require analytical understanding. The proposed study aims to fill these niches by analyzing the experiences of 12 communities within the TransLearnN project.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem.

Despite the existence of numerous studies, there are still unresolved issues regarding the assessment of the effectiveness of SDG implementation at the level of individual territorial communities. The impact of advisory support from academic institutions on the quality of strategic planning in communities has not been sufficiently analyzed. The reasons for this are the fragmented empirical data, the lack of systematic monitoring, and weak feedback between communities and researchers. These aspects are critically important for understanding the real level of integration of the SDGs into local policies and adjusting state support. In the article, the authors seek to explore these gaps using the example of communities participating in the TransLearnN project, focusing on the analysis of strategies, institutional capacity, and the effectiveness of interaction with the scientific community.

Formulation of the objectives of the article (definition of tasks).

In the context of decentralization and the challenges of post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, it is important to clearly formulate research goals that will not only deepen



the scientific understanding of the problem, but also provide practical guidelines for communities.

1. To analyze the practical experience of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in territorial communities of Ukraine within the framework of the TransLearnN project, taking into account military challenges and the needs of post-crisis recovery.

2. To identify the main barriers and factors of success in implementing sustainable development strategies at the community level, as well as to assess the role of scientific and advisory support in this process.

3. To propose effective managerial and organizational approaches to integrating the SDGs into community development strategies as a tool for increasing their institutional capacity and resilience.

Presentation of the primary material of the study. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved by the UN in 2015, have become a global roadmap for building a fairer, safer and more ecological world by 2030. For Ukraine, which is actively integrating into the European community, the implementation of the SDGs at the level of local communities is of strategic importance [5]. Communities are the basis of change, where each initiative has a real impact on the quality of people's lives. It should be noted that although the SDGs are global in nature, their achievement is possible only with the active participation of local authorities, public organizations, businesses and citizens [7].

The implementation of the SDGs in communities allows:

- To attract resources of international technical assistance;
- To increase the level of transparency and accountability of local authorities;
- To create effective strategies for socio-economic development;
- To raise the environmental awareness of the population.

That is why one of the important tasks of the international project Transformational Learning Network for Resilience Enabling Ukrainian higher education to ensure a sustainable and robust reconstruction of (post-war) Ukraine



(TransLearnN) and, in particular, the working group WG 2. Working group for sustainable Community Ukraine development has become the exchange of experience and the establishment of communication between Ukrainian HEI partners, scientists, students, associated partners, environmental organizations, experts and united territorial communities. The goal of joint communication is to identify problems that have arisen in communities under martial law in Ukraine with the involvement of scientists and experts from organizations that are associated partners and other environmental organizations to provide consulting assistance to united territorial communities on the implementation of the SDGs in them.

To this end, within the framework of the TransLearnN project, a working group was formed of scientists, experts, researchers and practitioners from partner universities in Ukraine and the EU who have experience in community development or certain aspects thereof with the involvement of representatives of united territorial communities (UTCs). The group has 74 participants, including 7 universities - members of the consortium, 5 universities interested in cooperation, 4 associated partners of consortium members, 5 environmentally oriented enterprises and 12 united territorial communities. That is, this powerful composition of academic and non-academic experts was gathered into a team to study strategic adaptive management approaches to reconstruction in Ukraine, in particular in UTCs, and to identify sustainable paths for sectors in times of crisis. As for the qualitative composition of the group, in addition to 7 universities - members of the consortium, it includes 5 partner universities of the project (National University of Water Management and Environmental Management, Odessa National Maritime University, Ukrainian State University named after Drahomanov, National University of Water Management and Environmental Management, Odesa Maritime Academy), 4 associated partners - members of the consortium (State Enterprise "State Research Institute of Road Traffic named after M.P. Shulgin", Separate Division of Kyivpastrans, Directorate for Construction and Maintenance of Transport Facilities and Auxiliary Infrastructure, SE "State Research Institute of Road Transport", PrJSC "AK "Kyivvodokanal"), 5



environmentally oriented enterprises (Research Institution "Ukrainian Research Institute of Environmental Problems", Nizhny Dniester National Park, Holosiivsky National Park, TM "Eco-service", NGO "Ecological Safety of the Regions of Ukraine") and 12 united territorial communities (Hayvoronivka City Council, Kirovohrad region; Kaharlytsky City Council; Zazimsky Village Council, Brovary district, Kyiv region; Velikodolynsky Village Council, Odessa district, Odessa region; Yavorivsky District State Administration; Kutsurubsky Village Council; Vinnytsia United Territorial Community; Feodosiivsky Village Council, Obukhiv district, Kyiv region; Molohivsky Territorial Community; Biliaivsky City Council; Dmytrivsky Territorial Community; Starobohorychansky Village Council, Ivano-Frankivsk region).

The advisory work of WG 2. Working group for sustainable Community Ukraine development was carried out in several stages: studying the experience of implementing the SDGs in Ukrainian communities; studying the status of implementing the SDGs in communities of the TransLearnN project; identifying problem areas regarding the implementation of the SDGs in communities and providing advisory assistance to resolve them.

Studying the experience of implementing the SDGs in Ukrainian communities. It should be noted that today there are successful examples of implementing the SDGs in Ukrainian communities. Namely:

1. Hola Prystan, Kherson region — implementation of environmental practices, such as waste sorting and use of energy from renewable sources.
2. Trostyanets, Sumy region — development of infrastructure and support for small and medium-sized businesses in accordance with SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).
3. Chervonohrad, Lviv region — projects on energy efficiency and modernization of housing and communal services, corresponding to SDG 11 (resilient cities and communities).

Attention should be paid to the main challenges that arise in communities in implementing the SDGs. Among the main difficulties are lack of funding, shortage of



specialists in sustainable development planning, low level of awareness of the population. However, their solution is possible through:

- Educational campaigns;
- Development of partnerships with international organizations;
- Institutional strengthening of communities;
- Digitalization of management processes.

The Sustainable Development Goals are not just a declaration, but a concrete tool for transforming communities. Their implementation in Ukraine is possible with cooperation and responsibility at every level — from the state to an individual community [15]. The future of the country begins with decisions that are made today.

1. Zazimska rural territorial community (Kyiv region).

The community formed and approved in 2024, during the work in the TransLearnN project, the Community Development Strategy until 2027, which includes three main strategic goals:

- Economic growth of the community: aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the local economy and investment attractiveness.
- Social protection of the community: provides for improving the quality of life of the population and strengthening social infrastructure.
- Environmental safety of the community: includes environmental protection measures, the introduction of alternative energy sources and environmental monitoring.

However, the community faces a number of problems that affect sustainable development, namely: environmental challenges associated with the active flow of the Desna River, which leads to erosion of the banks and requires bank fortification. Also, there is a need to streamline the waste management system and introduce garbage sorting. Infrastructure problems: insufficient level of infrastructure provision, in particular in the transport sector and municipal services, limits the availability of quality services for the population. Socio-economic challenges: migration of the working-age population and low income levels of residents create additional



difficulties for the community. Therefore, to overcome problems aimed at improving the environmental situation, developing infrastructure and supporting local businesses, the Zazim community actively joined the TransLearnN project.

2. Feodosiivska rural territorial community (Kyiv region).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to find specific information in open sources about the implementation of the SDGs in the development strategy of the Feodosiivska community. However, during meetings with the community leadership, the need for systematic planning of the community's future and the need to develop a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Feodosiivska community of Obukhiv district of Kyiv region was identified. Therefore, the task of the WG2 working group was to actively assist in the development of the Development Strategy for the Feodosiivska community of Obukhiv district of Kyiv region until 2027. In this regard, in March 2024, a strategic session was held with the participation of business representatives, scientists and the public, in order to involve various parties in the strategic planning process. However, in the process of strategic management, the community faces a number of problematic aspects, including insufficient involvement of community residents in strategic planning. The community also faces challenges in waste management: according to the Regional Waste Management Plan of Kyiv Oblast, the Feodosiivska community has an area of 4,912.32 hectares and a population of 14,280. This requires effective planning and implementation of municipal waste management measures, which can be a difficult task without adequate infrastructure and resources. Among the issues facing the community is the need to strengthen institutional capacity: for effective strategic management, it is necessary to ensure proper training of personnel, implement modern management methods, and establish effective communication between different community structures.

3. Kaharlytskyi Urban Territorial Community (Kyiv Oblast)

Kaharlytskyi Urban Territorial Community (Kyiv Oblast) is actively working on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the development of a Development Strategy for the period until 2027. In September 2023,



a working group was created to analyze the socio-economic state of the community, conduct a SWOT analysis, and form a strategic vision for the development of the community. The main areas of SDG implementation in the Kaharlytskyi community:

1. Economic development and business support: it is planned to create favorable conditions for the development of small and medium-sized businesses, attract investments, and support local initiatives.

2. Infrastructure development: modernization of transport and utility infrastructure, improvement of road quality, and provision of access to quality utility services are envisaged.

3. Social sphere and quality of life: attention is focused on improving the quality of education, healthcare, and social protection of the population.

4. Environmental sustainability: it is planned to implement environmental protection measures, including waste management and conservation of natural resources.

5. Public participation and transparency: the community actively involves residents in the strategic planning process through online surveys and public discussions, which contributes to more effective implementation of the SDGs.

In addition, the Kaharlytskyi community takes into account the provisions of the Kyiv Region Development Strategy for 2021–2027, which defines the priorities for the sustainable development of the region, including the development of human potential, innovative economy and environmental safety. Thus, the Kaharlytskyi urban territorial community integrates the Sustainable Development Goals into its strategic activities aimed at ensuring sustainable and harmonious development of the territory.

4. Haivoronsk Urban Territorial Community (Kirovohrad Region)

The community has a Strategic Development Plan until 2027, which includes:

- Modernization of technoparks of municipal enterprises: promotes economic growth and creation of new jobs.
- Improvement of the solid waste management system: provides for the introduction of waste sorting and recycling.



- Development of tourism and recreational potential: aimed at preserving cultural heritage and developing green tourism.

5. Dmytrivska Rural Territorial Community (Kyiv Region)

The community is already actively implementing the Sustainable Development Strategy for 2019–2027, which was developed with the participation of the community and experts from the DOBRE project. The Development Strategy of the Dmytrivska community was developed with the support of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation within the framework of the European Renaissance of Ukraine initiative.

It includes:

- Three strategic objectives: economic development, social protection and environmental security.
- 14 operational objectives and 53 tasks covering various aspects of sustainable development, including education, health and infrastructure.
- Public consultations: conducted using the Council of Europe CivicLab methodology to ensure public participation in planning.

The Community Development Strategy for 2024–2027 is based on three key strategic objectives: economic development, social protection and environmental security. These objectives are aimed at ensuring the sustainable development of the community and improving the quality of life of its residents. Economic development: the community strives to create favorable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship and attracting investments, in particular, supporting small and medium-sized businesses by providing advisory assistance, facilitating access to financing and participating in development programs. Development of agriculture by introducing modern agricultural technologies, supporting farms and cooperatives. Tourism potential, in particular the development of green tourism, the creation of recreational areas and the promotion of the cultural heritage of the community. Ensuring the social well-being of residents is a priority for the community. It is carried out by improving the educational infrastructure: modernization of schools and



kindergartens, the introduction of inclusive education. Healthcare: improving the material and technical base of medical institutions, ensuring access to quality medical services. Social programs: supporting vulnerable groups of the population, in particular people with disabilities, pensioners and large families. The community pays significant attention to environmental protection and environmental safety. The strategic goal for environmental safety is waste management: creating an effective system for collecting, sorting and disposing of solid household waste; preserving natural resources, namely the development of nature reserves, recreational areas and environmental education of the population. That is why, within the framework of the TransLerN project and with the participation of the administration of the Dmytrivka Village Council, an educational campaign on household waste management was launched, including in preschool and general education institutions.

Conclusions. Summarizing the results of the study, we can conclude that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the level of territorial communities of Ukraine is not only possible, but also a necessary step to ensure the systemic transformation of the state in the post-war period. An analysis of the practices of 12 communities within the TransLearnN project showed the presence of both positive cases and typical difficulties caused by a lack of resources, limited access to professional expertise and weak participation of citizens in strategic planning.

An important role in increasing the institutional capacity of communities is played by intersectoral interaction, in particular partnerships with universities and international projects. Advisory support from the scientific community contributes to the formation of high-quality strategic documents that take into account the specifics of the territories and comply with the principles of sustainable development. At the same time, to ensure the sustainability of such initiatives, it is necessary to create permanent mechanisms for supporting communities, including training personnel, monitoring the implementation of strategies and updating goals in accordance with environmental changes.



The experience of TransLearnN participating communities demonstrates that even in conditions of military instability, it is possible to implement strategic management based on the SDGs. Support for such processes should become a priority of state regional policy, which requires the integration of the SDGs into national recovery programs. A scientific approach to analyzing the effectiveness of local governance creates a basis for the formation of evidence-based development policies. An important direction for further research is the quantitative assessment of the impact of implemented strategies on the socio-economic indicators of communities. Thus, the proposed study contributes to the formation of a scientific and practical approach to the implementation of sustainable development in Ukraine at the community level.

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