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THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN THE FORMATION OF THE NEW EU BUDGET PERIOD 2028-2034

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In the first publication, Mullan C., Syromolot E. identified the relevance of developing the Civic Diplomacy toolkit as a Good Governance tool for the development of territorial and cross-border cooperation in the context of initiatives to develop scientific cooperation to gain experience in the formation of modern European Union policies in the field of territorial development and to disseminate the best experience of direct participation of citizens in the development of territorial cohesion policy to increase the development potential of Ukrainian border regions within the framework of consistent steps of Ukraine, as a candidate country for membership in the European Union, towards European integration and the development of international territorial cooperation of Ukraine [1].

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to present the new experience of the European Union in forming priorities in the areas of implementation of territorial

cohesion policy with the participation of citizens of the European Union for the development of civic diplomacy in the border regions of Ukraine through familiarization and implementation of the best European experience of public participation at the interstate level in the formation of program instruments for the development of civic society of the European Union.

On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented a new multiannual financial framework for the new budget period 2028-2034 for a Stronger Europe in the amount of €2 trillion, equivalent to 1.26% of the EU's gross national income on average for the period 2028 to 2034 [2].

The presented long-term EU budget provides for financing of EU Member States and regions within the framework of territorial cohesion policy and agricultural policy through the implementation of national and regional partnership plans aimed at reducing regional disparities, developing investment and improving territorial development management in the context of addressing challenges for EU Member States and regions.

One of the features of the formation of the new EU budget was the creation of European Citizens' Panels as a mechanism for civic participation, under which 150 randomly selected citizens from all 27 EU Member States from March to May 2025 participated in three sessions proportional to the population of this EU Member State according to the criteria of education, geographical location, profession, 1/3 of which were young people aged 16 to 25.

It is worth noting that the European Commission is actively working on ways to ensure greater citizen participation in EU policy-making. One such example is the Conference on the Future of Europe [3], which ran from April 2021 to May 2022 and became a major pan-European democratic event, where citizen-led debates enabled people from across Europe to share their ideas on shaping Europe's common future through a digital platform and European citizens' panels, which attracted over 5 million visitors to the platform and over 700,000 event participants.

The EU Citizen Engagement Guidance [4], prepared by the European Commission, suggests different types of participation formats: 1. European Citizen

Panels, 2. Focus groups or co-creation workshops. 3. Online citizen engagement platform. 4. Citizen participation at the pan-European level. 5. Citizen participation at the decentralised level.

The key principles for ensuring citizen participation are defined as follows: clear expectations; a clear mandate and scope of application; multilingualism; representation of diversity; transparency; integrity; promotion of respectful dialogue and knowledge management; accountability; follow-up, feedback and assessment.

The new ecosystem of citizen engagement created consists of the following components, namely the following systems: “Support and Guidance”; Portal “Voice your opinion”; “Joint Activities”; “Communication Strategies”. It has its own life cycle and includes two stages, namely: 1. Policy Development and 2. Decision Making

The peculiarities of the functioning of European citizens' panels are that they are formed from randomly selected citizens who work on collective recommendations that contribute to the early stages of the policy development process by the European Commission and create a public report.

Since 2022, five panel thematic discussions have already been successfully held, namely: “Energy Efficiency”, “Fighting Hate in Society”, “Learning Mobility”, “Food Waste”, “Virtual Worlds”.

The essential factors for the functioning of the characteristics of the European Citizens' Panels are the following: Participants: around 150 randomly selected citizens representing the diversity of the EU. Time frame: three weekends of discussions (two offline, one online); Methodology jointly developed by professional facilitators, Professional facilitators and moderators to manage the plenary and working group sessions. Multilingualism: the possibility for participants to speak and work in their own language; Knowledge management: assistance from experts from academia, professional and civil society organizations; Outputs: Recommendations used in the development of the initiatives; Citizens' reports accompanying the initiative; feedback from participants.

The third and final session of the European Citizens' Panel on the new EU long-term budget took place in Brussels on 16-18 May 2025, where citizens from all 27 EU Member States put forward their ideas for a sustainable and flexible long-term EU budget. The panel agreed on a final set of 22 recommendations for the European Commission, as well as 11 guiding recommendations for the European Commission.

The final recommendations call for the new European budget to focus on ensuring environmental protection; reducing regional inequalities; combating rural depopulation, creating jobs and housing; delivering meaningful and sustainable integration of migrants and refugees: access to healthcare, production of medicines and cross-border medical care; ensuring opportunities for young people in the labor market; supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups; building stronger ties between citizens and the EU; developing renewable energy; strengthening EU diplomatic coherence through shared values, etc.

European Commission President von der Leyen, speaking on 20 May 2025 at the annual EU budget conference for 2025 [5], stressed the role of the EU budget in translating identified priorities into action, the need to apply flexibility in shaping the new budget, its ability to adapt to new geopolitical, economic and social realities, and to deliver where it matters.

An important component of the effectiveness of the new budget will be the coordination of actions between the European, national and regional levels, the private sector and other institutions, facilitating access to European funds and coordinated actions on the ground. Local authorities should be deeply involved in the development of reforms and investments, because each territory has its own specific needs and development characteristics and knows best how to address them through the creation of national and regional partnerships for investments and reforms..

Therefore, we believe that the experience of citizen participation in the formation of the new budget of the European Union through European citizen panels is relevant in our opinion from the point of view of involving citizens of the border regions of Ukraine in the formation of a policy for the development of international territorial cooperation, which necessitates the continued development of the Civic

Diplomacy toolkit as a tool of Good Governance for the development of territorial and cross-border cooperation.

Reference.

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3. Conference on the Future of Europe. URL: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/conference-future-europe_en
4. The EU in 2020; General report on the activities of the European Union. URL: https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a61dbcb9-9f3e-426f-8944-146c264e6c67_en?filename=Citizen%20Engagement%20daGuince_short1.pdf
5. Speech by President von der Leyen at the Annual EU Budget Conference 2025. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_25_1284

The materials of the conference are published in the author's editorial office.