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PUBLIC INVESTMENT AS A TOOL FOR FOSTERING INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION AMONG LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE WESTERN REGION OF UKRAINE

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Abstract. *This article examines the current characteristics and trends in the development of cooperation among territorial communities in the Western region of Ukraine. It analyzes the dynamics of intermunicipal cooperation agreements and assesses the level of activity among the region's oblasts in implementing mechanisms for interaction between local communities. Particular attention is paid to the role of budgetary investments in financing joint infrastructure, social, environmental, and security projects. It has been established that under martial law, cooperation among territorial communities is shifting from local initiatives to more comprehensive and strategically oriented solutions aimed at enhancing the resilience of territories, developing social services, and supporting internally displaced persons.*

Key words: *budget investments, local communities, intermunicipal cooperation, local governments, regional development.*

During the decentralization process in Ukraine, local governments were granted additional financial powers. However, limited budgetary resources and shifting priorities in local budget expenditures during wartime complicate the implementation of large-scale socio-economic development projects in the territories under their jurisdiction. This necessitates the pooling of financial resources and the improvement of budget fund utilization efficiency during the implementation of joint investment projects by territorial communities within the framework of intermunicipal cooperation. It also enables the implementation of joint infrastructure and social projects based on mutual benefit for the territorial communities. At the same time, across Ukraine's regions, there is an "uneven" development of this type of cooperation, caused by insufficient coordination between local self-government bodies and the lack of information regarding funding for joint territorial community projects, which complicates the assessment of the effectiveness of public investments in infrastructure, social, or economic projects involving multiple territorial communities. Cooperation among territorial communities, combined with the rational use of budgetary investments, helps to strengthen the financial capacity of communities, ensures the sustainable development of

territories, and creates conditions for the large-scale implementation of joint socioeconomic and infrastructure projects. A new promising direction could be the digitalization of intermunicipal cooperation – the creation of an electronic platform for managing joint community projects, where agreements, implementation stages, financial contributions, and performance indicators would be recorded in real time. This will reduce administrative costs, strengthen trust among participants in inter-municipal cooperation, and ensure a long-term impact on the socio-economic development of the western regions.

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