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SOCIAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE POPULATION IN THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL: MODEL AND INSTRUMENTS

Abstract

The article substantiates a model of social mechanisms for improving the quality of life of the population in the system of public administration at the regional level of Ukraine. The relevance of the topic is determined by the need to transform the results of quality-of-life assessment into practical public-administration decisions under martial law and during post-war recovery. The paper proceeds from the premise that the quality of life should be considered not only as a multidimensional outcome of socio-economic development but also as an object of purposeful public influence through legal, institutional, financial, organizational, communication and participatory instruments.

The proposed model links the principles of social quality, human-centred governance and place-based regional policy. It includes a diagnostic block, a strategic and programme block, an implementation block, and a feedback block. Particular attention is paid to the distribution of responsibilities among national authorities, regional military and civil administrations, local self-government bodies, civil society organizations, business actors and international partners. The article systematizes instruments that can be used to improve living conditions in regions affected by war, displacement, infrastructure destruction and unequal access to public services.

The practical value of the study lies in the development of recommendations for regional policy: the institutionalization of quality-of-life objectives in regional strategies; the use of differentiated policy packages for frontline, de-occupied, relatively safe and recipient regions; the strengthening of municipal capacity; the introduction of transparent project selection; and the expansion of citizen participation in recovery planning. Two applied regional situations are considered: a frontline region where the priority is security and continuity of essential services, and a recipient region where the priority is social integration, labour-market adaptation and pressure on infrastructure. The results may be used in public-administration research, regional development planning and the preparation of practical recommendations for Ukrainian recovery policy.

Keywords: quality of life, social mechanisms, public administration, regional level, regional policy, recovery, social quality, Ukraine.

Problem statement. The full-scale war has changed the logic of public administration in Ukraine. Regional authorities and local self-government bodies have to perform several tasks simultaneously: protect the population, provide access to essential services, support internally displaced persons, maintain local economies, restore damaged infrastructure and prepare projects for long-term recovery. Under such conditions, the quality of life of the population becomes a direct criterion of administrative capacity. It shows whether the system of public administration is able to translate legal mandates, budgetary resources and partnership support into tangible improvements in everyday living conditions.

The previous stages of research on this topic made it possible to clarify the theoretical content of quality of life, to substantiate the social-quality approach, to develop the logic of monitoring and to test the possibility of index and cluster analysis for Ukrainian regions. However, the applied question remains insufficiently resolved: how exactly should public authorities act after the

diagnosis has been made? A ranking of regions, a monitoring system or a set of indicators does not automatically produce better living conditions. It becomes useful only when it is connected with a system of mechanisms, instruments, responsibilities and feedback procedures.

For this reason, the fifth article focuses on the management model and the instruments of influence. In the context of this study, social mechanisms are understood as a coordinated set of legal, institutional, financial-economic, organizational, communication and participatory instruments through which public authorities and local self-government bodies influence the conditions of daily life, reduce vulnerability and create opportunities for human development in regions and communities. This definition emphasizes that quality of life cannot be improved by one sectoral programme alone. It requires cross-sectoral coordination between social protection, health care, education, housing, employment, safety, transport, digital access, environmental protection and community development.

The regional level is especially important because it connects national priorities with the specific needs of territories. National authorities establish legal frameworks, budgetary rules and strategic priorities, while communities and regional institutions identify actual needs, organize services and communicate with citizens. The problem is that the link between these levels is often fragmented. Recovery projects may be prepared separately from social-policy goals; financial resources may be allocated without sufficient consideration of quality-of-life effects; participation mechanisms may be reduced to formal consultation. Therefore, the development of an integrated model of social mechanisms in the system of public administration at the regional level is both a theoretical and practical task.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern international approaches to quality-of-life governance increasingly emphasize multidimensional well-being rather than narrow economic growth. The OECD well-being

framework covers material conditions, quality-of-life dimensions, inequalities and resources for future well-being; this approach is relevant for Ukraine because it makes it possible to connect current social needs with resilience and sustainability [1]. The human-development approach of UNDP also underlines that social progress should be assessed through people's opportunities, capabilities and security, not only through income or aggregate output [2].

For Ukraine, the most important contextual evidence is provided by recovery and damage assessments. The Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment prepared by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations shows the scale of damage and the multidimensional character of recovery needs, including housing, transport, energy, education, health, social protection and livelihoods [3]. Such assessments demonstrate that the quality of life is influenced by both material destruction and the weakening of everyday access to services, mobility, income opportunities and security.

The OECD report on regional and municipal governance in Ukraine emphasizes the significance of multi-level governance, decentralisation and place-based reconstruction for post-war recovery [4]. This position is important for the present article because it supports the idea that social mechanisms should not be designed only at the central level. They must be differentiated according to territorial profiles and implemented through regional and municipal capacities. OECD policy work on public governance in Ukraine also stresses that reconstruction creates an opportunity to renew administrative systems, strengthen integrity and improve coordination between levels of government [5].

European discussions of social services and public-sector quality provide additional guidance. The European Social Network proposes principles of person-centred, rights-based, safe and outcome-oriented social services, which can be adapted to Ukrainian regions as service-quality standards [6]. The Council of

Europe and decentralisation-oriented programmes in Ukraine also highlight local resilience, democratic participation and trust in local authorities as conditions of effective governance during the war [7]. Together these approaches indicate that the improvement of quality of life requires not only infrastructure investment but also better institutions, user-oriented services and civic involvement.

The theoretical foundation of the article is the concept of social quality. It interprets quality of life through four interrelated dimensions: socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and socio-political empowerment. This framework is useful for public administration because it links measurable outcomes with institutional conditions and social relations [8]. In the Ukrainian context, it allows quality-of-life policy to be interpreted as a mechanism of resilience: the population should have minimum security, access to services, trust-based social ties and opportunities to influence decisions affecting everyday life.

Despite the growing body of international and national evidence, there remains a need for an applied model that translates these ideas into instruments of state and regional administration. A considerable part of the literature focuses either on measurement or on general recovery priorities. The present article therefore concentrates on the design of mechanisms: what types of instruments are needed, how they interact, who is responsible for them, and how they can be adapted to different types of Ukrainian regions.

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to substantiate a model of social mechanisms for improving the quality of life of the population in the system of public administration at the regional level and to determine the main instruments for its implementation in Ukraine under martial law and during post-war recovery. Achieving this purpose requires: clarifying the structure of the proposed model; classifying the mechanisms and instruments of public-administration influence; determining the role of key actors; and formulating practical recommendations for differentiated regional policy.

Presentation of the main material of the study. The proposed model is based on a transition from the logic of separate measures to the logic of an integrated public-administration cycle. The starting point of the model is the recognition that the quality of life is produced by a combination of objective conditions and subjective perceptions. Objective conditions include income, employment, housing, health care, education, safety, environmental quality, mobility and digital access. Subjective perceptions include trust, security, life satisfaction, perceived fairness and confidence in the future. Public administration can influence both groups of factors, but it must do so through different instruments.

The first element of the model is the diagnostic block. It provides evidence on territorial needs, vulnerabilities and resource capacity. This block should combine statistical indicators, administrative data, digital registers, service-use data, sociological surveys and information from civil-society organizations. It should also distinguish between different categories of regions: frontline territories, de-occupied territories, heavily damaged industrial regions, large urban centres, rural regions, western recipient regions and relatively stable communities. A uniform approach to all territories would be ineffective because the same policy instrument may have different results depending on the security situation, migration pressure, infrastructure losses and institutional capacity.

The second element is the strategic and programme block. At this stage, diagnostic information is converted into policy priorities, regional development strategies, recovery plans, social programmes and investment portfolios. The key requirement is that quality-of-life objectives should be explicitly included in strategic documents. For example, a regional strategy should not only declare the reconstruction of infrastructure but also define how reconstruction will improve access to education, health care, employment, housing and safe public space. This means that every significant project should be assessed according to its expected contribution to the quality of life of target groups and territories.

The third element is the implementation block. It consists of practical instruments, responsible institutions, financing channels and administrative procedures. Implementation should be organized through intersectoral coordination because most quality-of-life problems are complex. For instance, the problem of internally displaced persons is not only a social-protection issue. It includes housing, employment, education for children, psychological support, access to health care, community integration and local labour-market development. Therefore, public authorities need coordination platforms that unite regional administrations, local governments, service providers, NGOs, businesses and international partners.

The fourth element is the feedback block. It ensures that policies are adjusted on the basis of monitoring, citizen feedback and evaluation of actual results. Feedback should include both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative indicators show whether the situation has improved, while qualitative feedback explains why a programme works or fails. A mechanism without feedback risks becoming a formal administrative procedure. In contrast, feedback-oriented governance allows authorities to correct priorities, terminate ineffective measures and scale successful practices.

Within this model, normative-legal mechanisms create the formal framework for action. They include laws, government resolutions, regional strategies, local regulations, standards of social services, rules for project selection, public-consultation procedures and accountability requirements. In Ukraine, the updated logic of regional development policy should provide a legal basis for linking recovery planning with human-centred outcomes [9]. Normative instruments are effective when they clearly define responsibilities, rights of service users, minimum standards of access and procedures for coordination between levels of government.

Institutional mechanisms determine who acts and how institutions interact. At the national level, ministries and central executive bodies define policy frameworks, allocate resources and negotiate with international partners. At the regional level, military administrations and civil administrations coordinate emergency response, recovery projects and intermunicipal cooperation. At the community level, local councils, executive bodies and municipal service providers interact directly with citizens. Institutional mechanisms should reduce duplication and create stable channels of cooperation. A practical instrument may be a regional quality-of-life council or coordination platform that brings together public authorities, service providers, civil society, business and donor representatives.

Financial-economic mechanisms transform priorities into funded programmes. They include state subventions, local budgets, regional development funds, donor grants, public-private partnerships, social contracting, targeted assistance and project-based financing. For quality-of-life policy, the key challenge is not only the amount of resources but also their targeting. Funding should be linked with territorial needs and expected social outcomes. Transparent criteria for project selection are particularly important during reconstruction because large resources may create risks of inefficiency, corruption or politically motivated allocation. Quality-of-life indicators can therefore serve as a basis for prioritizing investments in housing, schools, medical facilities, accessibility, public transport and community infrastructure.

Organizational mechanisms concern administrative processes and service delivery. They include one-stop-shop service models, mobile service teams, digital platforms, integrated social-service centres, intermunicipal cooperation, case management and crisis-response protocols. These instruments are especially relevant in regions where institutions operate under security constraints or where the population is dispersed due to displacement. Organizational mechanisms should reduce the administrative burden on citizens. In practical terms, a person

who lost housing or moved to another region should not have to navigate disconnected institutions; the system should provide an integrated pathway from registration and needs assessment to assistance, employment support, schooling and health services.

Communication mechanisms influence trust, awareness and social cohesion. In wartime and recovery conditions, citizens often do not know which services are available, which documents are required, how to participate in recovery planning or how to report problems. Therefore, regional and local authorities need clear communication strategies, accessible language, digital and offline channels, feedback hotlines, public dashboards and regular community meetings. Communication is not merely information dissemination. It is a governance instrument that reduces uncertainty, prevents rumours, supports psychological resilience and builds trust between citizens and institutions.

Participatory mechanisms ensure socio-political empowerment. They include public consultations, participatory budgeting, citizen panels, community needs assessments, involvement of internally displaced persons, youth councils, veteran councils, disability-accessibility audits and co-design of social services. Participation is important because quality of life is experienced differently by different groups. A recovery project that looks rational from an engineering point of view may not correspond to the everyday needs of elderly people, families with children or people with disabilities. Participation helps authorities identify such mismatches before resources are spent.

The mechanisms described above should operate together. Normative instruments set rules; institutional instruments allocate roles; financial instruments provide resources; organizational instruments deliver services; communication instruments build trust; participatory instruments ensure legitimacy and responsiveness. If one element is missing, the system becomes weaker. For example, a community may have resources but lack participation, which creates

resistance and low legitimacy. Another community may have active citizens but lack institutional capacity to transform initiatives into programmes. The model therefore requires balance between administrative authority and social partnership.

A special feature of the Ukrainian case is the need for differentiated regional policy. Frontline and de-occupied regions require a mechanism package focused on security, continuity of essential services, emergency housing, evacuation logistics, mine-action coordination, psychological support and rapid restoration of basic infrastructure. For such territories, the quality-of-life objective is first of all to preserve life, ensure access to minimum services and maintain institutional presence. At the same time, these regions should not be treated only as zones of humanitarian response. They also need long-term plans for economic recovery, return of population and rebuilding of trust.

Relatively safe recipient regions face a different set of problems. They often receive large numbers of displaced persons, which increases pressure on housing, education, health care, social services and local labour markets. For these regions, the mechanism package should include integration of displaced persons into communities, expansion of municipal services, rental-housing support, labour-market programmes, inclusive education and conflict-prevention measures. The goal is to avoid competition between local residents and newcomers for limited resources and to transform migration pressure into human-capital potential.

Large metropolitan regions need instruments related to labour-market restructuring, transport accessibility, housing affordability, digital public services and the integration of recovery projects with economic modernization. Rural regions require different tools: support for primary health care, transport connections, local employment, community centres, digital access and intermunicipal cooperation. Thus, the same general model should be implemented through different policy packages. This is consistent with the place-based

approach to regional development, according to which policy must be adapted to territorial characteristics rather than imposed uniformly [4].

The practical application of the model can be illustrated by two regional situations. In a frontline region such as Kharkiv oblast, the quality-of-life agenda is inseparable from security. The priority instruments include protected educational spaces, mobile medical teams, emergency repair of housing, support for critical infrastructure, accessible information about evacuation and assistance, and psychological support for children and families. In this case, the social mechanism should work as a crisis-resilience system. Regional authorities coordinate security-sensitive priorities, communities identify micro-level needs, and partners support fast implementation. The main indicator of success is not only the number of rebuilt objects but also the continuity of essential services and the possibility for residents to remain connected with their communities.

A different situation can be observed in a recipient region such as Lviv oblast. Here the immediate security risks are lower, but the region faces pressure on housing, schools, medical facilities, employment and social integration. The mechanism package should include housing mediation, support for local employers, vocational training for displaced persons, expansion of social services, inclusion of newcomers in community decision-making and anti-discrimination communication. The success of governance should be measured through access to services, employment outcomes, social cohesion and the reduction of tension between groups. This example shows that improvement of quality of life is not limited to material reconstruction; it also includes social integration and trust-building.

An important requirement for the proposed model is digitalization. Digital tools can support needs assessment, project monitoring, public dashboards, service registration and citizen feedback. At the same time, digitalization should not replace human support, especially for elderly people, people with disabilities and

residents of communities with poor connectivity. Therefore, digital instruments should be combined with offline access points, mobile teams and community mediators. A human-centred digital state should simplify interaction with institutions rather than create new barriers.

Another requirement is transparency and accountability. Recovery and quality-of-life programmes will involve significant public and international resources. Citizens and partners need to understand why certain projects are prioritized, what outcomes are expected and how implementation is monitored. Public dashboards, open data on projects, independent audits and participatory monitoring can reduce risks and increase trust. In quality-of-life governance, accountability should be understood broadly: authorities should report not only on money spent but also on changes in living conditions.

The social-quality approach provides a useful normative compass for this model. Socio-economic security corresponds to instruments of income support, employment, housing and access to essential services. Social inclusion corresponds to the accessibility of services for vulnerable groups and the prevention of exclusion. Social cohesion corresponds to trust, solidarity and conflict prevention in communities. Socio-political empowerment corresponds to participation, accountability and the ability of citizens to influence decisions. Thus, the concept of social quality helps to connect specific administrative instruments with broader goals of human development and democratic governance.

The proposed model also changes the understanding of regional public administration. The region should not be only an object of national policy or a statistical unit. It should be treated as a platform where different actors coordinate resources and responsibilities in order to improve people's living conditions. This approach corresponds to the modern view of governance as network-based, partnership-oriented and evidence-informed. The state remains the key guarantor

of rights and standards, but it cannot achieve quality-of-life improvements without active communities, competent local institutions, civil society, business and international cooperation.

For practical implementation, the article proposes five steps. First, regional strategies and recovery plans should include explicit quality-of-life objectives and indicators. Second, each region should identify its territorial profile and corresponding mechanism package. Third, project selection should include social-effect criteria, not only technical readiness. Fourth, regional coordination platforms should be institutionalized to align public, civic, business and donor activities. Fifth, monitoring and citizen feedback should be used to adjust programmes regularly. These steps make it possible to transform the general idea of human-centred recovery into concrete administrative procedures.

It is also necessary to strengthen the professional capacity of regional and municipal officials. Quality-of-life governance requires skills in data analysis, project management, social-service design, communication, participatory methods, donor coordination and evaluation. Capacity-building programmes should therefore be treated as an essential component of the mechanism, not as an additional activity. Without competent public servants and service managers, even well-designed strategies may remain declarative.

Finally, the proposed model should be understood as flexible. Ukraine's recovery context is changing rapidly: security risks, migration flows, donor priorities, budget constraints and social needs may shift over time. Therefore, mechanisms must be adaptive. The combination of periodic monitoring, open feedback and differentiated regional packages allows the system to respond to changes while preserving strategic orientation toward human well-being, social cohesion and institutional trust.

Conclusion. The article substantiates a model of social mechanisms for improving the quality of life of the population in the system of public

administration at the regional level. The model is based on the integration of diagnostic, strategic-programme, implementation and feedback blocks. It translates the results of quality-of-life assessment into administrative action and connects regional development policy with the principles of social quality and human-centred governance.

The classification of mechanisms includes normative-legal, institutional, financial-economic, organizational, communication and participatory components. Their combined use makes it possible to move from fragmented measures to coordinated regional policy. The proposed approach emphasizes that quality-of-life improvement requires not only reconstruction of physical infrastructure but also access to services, social inclusion, trust, participation and institutional capacity.

The practical recommendations include embedding quality-of-life goals in regional strategies, differentiating policy packages for different types of regions, linking project selection with expected social effects, institutionalizing coordination platforms, developing municipal capacity and ensuring transparency through open data and citizen feedback. Applied examples of a frontline region and a recipient region demonstrate that the same general model should be adapted to different territorial conditions.

Further research should focus on testing the proposed model in selected Ukrainian regions, developing indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of specific mechanisms and analysing how different combinations of instruments influence the dynamics of quality of life during post-war recovery.

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