

Tools for Involving Citizens in Municipal Governance: Russia Case Study

ESMIRA JANALI ABDULLAYEVA, YURI KOVRIZHNYKH & NATALIA PSHENICHNAYA

Abstract The article considers the experience of citizens' involvement in municipal governance on the example of those regions of the Russian Federation, where the practices of budget initiation are implemented. Index of public participation for such regions is defined; qualitative and organizational aspects of citizen participation in governance at the municipal level are defined; the main tools of communication between citizens and authorities are analyzed. Despite the widespread availability of both online and offline tools for citizen participation in municipal government, civic engagement remains low, which is explained by the insufficient level of communication between municipal authorities and citizens.

Keywords: • participative governance • project • civic engagement • municipality • communications

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1 Introduction

A systemic dialogue between all levels of government and the public improves the quality of decision-making on important issues of state and public life. According to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, local self-government means the right and real ability of local governments to regulate and manage, within the framework of the law, a substantial share of public affairs within their competence in the interests of the local population (Council of Europe, 1985). This requires appropriate mechanisms and procedures that, on the one hand, enable citizens to influence the decision-making process and, on the other hand, make these decisions quickly and effectively. In the framework of modern research, the effectiveness of policies at the local level is usually correlated with the expansion of the rights of local communities, the extension of the powers of local authorities and the broader concept of decentralization (Balaguer-Coll et al., 2010). As communities around the world become more diverse, decentralized governance becomes more important to provide effective solutions to community problems. Government administrative decisions may influence the specific content of the measures taken in relation to the allocation of resources and funding. This is of special importance as each community has unique social challenges that require authentic organizational approaches. Addressing community problems effectively requires community organization where community resources are used effectively, while citizens are also motivated to help improve the situation at the local level.

Speaking about improving the efficiency of local self-government, it should be understood that in this case it is not only about not only using the best world practices in the field of local self-government in the legislative and law enforcement areas in terms of political, legal and administrative levers of influence, but also about finding ways and tools for involving citizens in municipal government. The latter, in particular, is of increased relevance for the countries of the Global North and the Global South.

Within the framework of this study, efficiency is considered as a general philosophical category that characterizes the achievement of the desired result with the least amount of time and effort, and in this case is considered as a qualitative one.

The effectiveness of local self-government is directly related to the issues of community development - a concept that has become firmly established in the political and legal everyday life of countries and international organizations in recent decades. The importance of community development is recognized at the international level as one of the priority areas for the development of legal regulation, to which countries should strive. It is important to note that the definition of community development is based on the idea of the role of society not only as a recipient of public goods, but also as an active participant in the formation of these

benefits. To have a positive impact on community development initiatives, local governments must not only work with communities, but also hold them accountable.

The current trend of incorporating public opinion into local development processes, developing appropriate strategies and programs demonstrates the interest of the authorities in increasing the level of public participation in addressing issues of local importance. Such purposeful process of formation of effective civil society is a demonstrative manifestation of democracy, as it significantly affects the essence and specificity of interaction of municipal bodies and population, and thus there is a democratization of power and harmonization of legal relations between the public and the authorities. As a result of citizens' involvement in municipal governance, changes occur in the subject-object relations of municipal authorities and citizens: the public, which acted as an object of government activity, turns into a subject - that is, it begins to influence and control government, and to demand solutions to those issues that it considers to be of primary importance. Local communities become the main element of municipal self-governance, and the right of citizens to participate in the management of local affairs is an integral part of the democratic principles of most modern states (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016).

Satisfaction of individual and group interests is possible in the presence of local resources, initiative and autonomy of the population. For the development of self-government of local communities, residents should be aware of the main goal of their activities - the development of the territory, the creation of favorable living conditions by solving common problems to better satisfy public interests, etc. In contrast to developed countries with a strong democratic tradition (Narbón Perpiñá & De Witte, 2018), there is a fairly low level of citizen participation in local issues for developing countries. This situation is due to the fact that the vast majority of citizens are unaware of their rights in this sphere, the practical absence of opportunities to participate in solving local problems, the lack of effective mechanisms for implementing the right to local self-government, the limited financing of territorial community activities, and the lack of experience in municipal activities of members of territorial communities.

Today, various tools of direct participation of the territorial community and its members in local self-government are the main elements of effective governance (Sofyani et al., 2020): public opinion polls; deliberative mechanisms of decision-making on local issues through the activities of public committees, commissions, partnership councils; public meetings of the population or certain groups. At the same time, due to the development of information technology, such tools as Internet surveys and/or remote participation in various hearings are becoming especially popular. This raises the question of evaluating the effectiveness of tools for involving citizens in municipal government. At the current stage of social development, the main tools of citizen involvement in municipal government are

electronic tools, in particular e-voting, e-petitions, and participatory budgeting (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2014; Gilman, 2016). The widespread use of the Internet makes it possible for these tools to involve a significant portion of the population in municipal government, as they greatly simplify participation in government. Traditional instruments of citizen involvement (hearings, roundtables, advisory councils, stakeholder meetings) are often ineffective due to a crisis of trust, the reluctance of residents to take responsibility for the processes that occur in their community, and a lack of understanding of authorities' actions.

This study intends to consider a number of different tools for involving citizens in municipal government in terms of their effectiveness. To achieve the goals of the study, a number of tasks are envisaged, in particular, using the example of the administrative-territorial subjects of the Russian Federation, to consider the role of individual state initiatives, within the framework of budgetary decentralization, from the point of view of public participation; identify organizational and administrative features of citizens' participation in municipal government, as well as problems that arise when citizens are involved in local government. Based on the results obtained, the study proposes a number of recommendations to improve the efficiency of involving citizens in municipal government.

1.1 Literature Review

Considering Russian theoretical developments that cover the aspects of involving citizens in municipal government, it can be noted that modern research is devoted to such issues as the problem of increasing the social activity of citizens and involving them in municipal government (Kropotova et al., 2021), mass media as a special tool for involving the population in municipal government (Mikhailenko, 2017), grassroots democratic initiatives and legal problems of involving citizens in municipal administration (Razdyakonova, 2019), direct and participatory democracy as a means of involving the population in the decision-making process at the local level (Cherkasov, 2018), digital transformation of the system of municipal government in Russia (Volkova, & Potapov, 2021), forms and types of decentralization of state and municipal governance (Safarov, 2021).

Currently, in the Russian bibliography in the profile area, there are few studies devoted to the applicability of econometric and statistical tools to study various aspects of citizen involvement in municipal government. It looks promising to study the existing problems of the profile direction from the standpoint of the applicability of the Local Autonomy Index as a tool for assessing the state of municipal institutions. The latter is a relatively new tool for quantitative measurement of the state of local self-government as a social phenomenon, developed by European experts (Larichev, 2021). The Local Autonomy Index of, even with a formal approach to determining the values of indicators, is quite flexible and allows you to identify the main gaps and weaknesses that lead to a decrease in the autonomy of

municipal institutions. In profile studies, it is noted that Russia took the penultimate place in the aggregate ranking of 57 countries, and the overall average value of the Russian index (about 14 points) is less than half the average of the European Union states and is comparable to the index value in such countries as Moldova, Belarus and Israel. The dynamics of the Russian index also quite convincingly indicates a significant decrease in local autonomy in the country over the past years (Emil, 2022).

Despite the fact that the study of existing problems in the field of local democracy and local self-government from the point of view of interpreting the index of local autonomy looks quite appropriate at the present time, nevertheless, today only a few Russian studies in the profile direction can be found.

Turning to the review of international sources, one should turn to the theoretical context. The concept of local government in scientific literature is considered through the rights of both an individual and the territorial community as a collective entity. In this connection, researchers distinguish two groups of rights. First, individual rights, belonging to each citizen, and which can be realized independently of other members of the territorial community. Second, collective rights, the realization of which is possible only through collective action of all or most members of the territorial community. In this connection, the following forms of realization of these rights are distinguished (Narbón Perpiñá & De Witte, 2018):

- individual - participation in local referendums, local elections; service in local government; compensation at the expense of local government for material and moral damage caused by illegal decisions, actions or omissions of local government, their officials in the exercise of their powers. This form also includes obtaining comprehensive and reliable information on the activities of local government bodies, familiarization with documents and materials of local government bodies; direct participation in public hearings, meetings of citizens, and local initiatives (Aichholzer & Rose, 2020).
- collective - holding meetings, rallies, marches and demonstrations, of which the executive authorities or local self-government bodies are informed in a timely manner; sending collective appeals to local self-government bodies, their officials; holding meetings of citizens. Territorial community may also initiate consideration by the council of any issue attributed to the jurisdiction of local self-government (the right to local initiative); holding public hearings (Krause et al., 2019).

Thus, the variety of forms of participation by members of the territorial community in addressing local issues can be presented as: participation in professional activities; participation through public and political organizations; direct public activity; influence on decision-makers; direct influence on the social environment; charity, assistance to other members of society; care for one's own family (Cho et al., 2021; Narbón Perpiñá & De Witte, 2018).

The following methods and tools for involving the public in the development and decision-making process at the local level are highlighted (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2021; Díaz-Cayeros et al., 2014).

- 1) Raising public awareness. The tools of communication and information include publications in the media, television and radio broadcasts, and electronic means of communication.
- 2) Public consultations (are implemented through the use of the following tools - public hearings, roundtables, advisory councils, stakeholder meetings, and the like).
- 3) Public control over authorities' activities - investigation of the quality of public services, monitoring these services and the activities of the authorities, the activities of supervisory boards, a public jury and the creation of coalitions of non-governmental organizations.
- 4) Strategic planning for community development. The main goal is to develop local socio-economic strategies for the long term to strengthen the economic position of the community and improve the standard of living of its residents. Strategic planning with the involvement of the community provides an opportunity to focus on local problems and to use the community's own resources (Leon-Moreta, 2016).

Acceptability, appropriateness and, ultimately, the effectiveness of the above methods of engagement, individually or in combination depends on the problem to be solved, on the progressiveness of the local government, on the existence of various institutions that are interested in involving the public and contributing to society, and, most importantly, on the activity of the public itself (Asgarkhani, 2005). It has been established that, at the local level, tools for involving citizens in municipal government can only be effective if supported by local government, if there is real dialogue between the government and society, and if there is adequate funding for involving citizens in consolidated decision-making processes (Elelman & Feldman, 2018). The transition to new forms of interaction between citizens and municipal authorities is associated with broader processes of decentralization of governance, the introduction of innovative forms of horizontal cooperation between a state and civil society, and the need to find new mechanisms that can correct the shortcomings of representative democracy (Cho et al., 2021). There is a global trend towards the formation of processes of digital participation of citizens in municipal government (United Nations E-Government Survey, 2016) using such tools as:

- Internet submission of information, including open government data,
- electronic campaigns, electronic petitions,
- co-participation (the practice of public service delivery, in which citizens participate in the creation of public policies and services),
- hackathons, crowdfunding, workshops,

- public policy discourse, including crowdsourcing, online consultation and discussion, visualization of arguments,
- electronic voting and/or polling (Jimenez, 2020; OECD, 2019).

The need to clearly define the stages of the public involvement process is the reason for developing the most convenient typologies. The most popular of modern typologies is the one developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (International Association for Public Participation, 2007), which distinguishes five levels of civic influence (from weak to strong): informing, consulting, attracting, cooperation, authority (delegation). The advantage of this typology is that each level of participation is described in terms of both the authorities (organizer) and society (participants). Numerous attempts to describe and systematize the empirical experience of different countries are reflected in several fundamental works, such as:

- ‘Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making’ (OECD),
- ‘Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government’ (UK),
- CLEAR (EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY),
- ‘Guide to Evaluating Participatory Processes’ (experience of Catalonia, Spain),
- ‘Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation’ (international experience) (OECD, 2005, 2019; C.L.E.A.R., 2008).

Research is geographically represented in almost all countries with the most developed forms of democracy (the USA and European countries). The following methodologies have been developed to assess the effectiveness of public participation processes in municipal government:

- ‘Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making’ (OECD, 2005),
- ‘Involve’ (OECD, 2019),
- ‘CLEAR’ (C.L.E.A.R., 2008),
- ‘Guide to Evaluating Participatory Processes’ (Parés & March, 2013).

The evaluation criteria include the following (OECD, 2019): goals of public participation, context and form of participation, levels of involvement, stakeholders, costs, products, results.

In terms of individual countries, one can note that European citizens are actively involved in municipal government (Cochrane, 2020; Fred, 2020; Narbón Perpiñá & De Witte, 2018):

- Tilburg (The Netherlands) – Testing the model of managing a city as a business structure, with the corresponding objectives of developing and

implementing a business plan to replenish a city budget, as well as to stop the relocation of residents to other localities in the country,

- in Denmark, during the active experimentation with new forms of participation in local government, during the second phase of local government reform, they moved away from the traditional involvement of citizens in municipal government and attempted to apply another form – ‘targeting’ management, where citizens are viewed not as residents of the municipality in general, but as consumers of municipal services. However, this model has certain disadvantages, since residents cannot influence municipal politics as citizens, that is, they do not participate in all the affairs of the municipality. At the same time, individuals who have not participated in local life at all have been given the opportunity to influence, which will allow them to be inclined to more active forms of political participation in the future (Aichholzer & Rose, 2020),
- In Germany, residents and citizens (residents with voting rights) have the right to attend public meetings of the municipal council. The council must hold residents' meetings, hold hearings, allocate time for questions and answers, and inform the public about important community issues. Residents exercise their right to participate in decision-making by submitting special applications, and citizens exercise their right to participate by filing citizen demands and decisions,
- In the United States, 90% of states require local governments to enshrine and implement the principles of openness and transparency in community meetings and related documentation. In particular, any resident of a district can attend a meeting of a council or commission of a municipality and speak on any issue, subject to prior appointment. Commissions are formed from members of the public, which work on a voluntary basis in accordance with the needs of a city in different directions (transportation, city development, parks, etc.), inform the public about the decisions made, as well as bring to a city government demands, proposals from community residents, etc.
- In Romania, citizens are involved in the form of advisory bodies made up of representatives of the local community (public transport committee, budget committee, education committee, pensioners' committee).

The authors analyze the effectiveness of participatory governance on the example of budgeting in Russia. The study shows that participatory budgeting has not only increased the participation of citizens in public management decisions and the volume of fiscal revenues to the budget, but also increased coordination and partnership of representatives of state power and the population. In addition, participatory practices have increased the share of public spending on the provision of priority services for citizens (Beuermann & Amelina, 2018).

It should be noted that the experience of such public institutions demonstrates an improvement in the process of involving citizens in local government, as well as the

authorities' awareness of citizens' needs, thereby strengthening the democratic principles of municipal relations. Thus, research in this area has a significant impact on the development of local communities in many of the world's developed democracies, which raises the need to adapt approaches to the existing situation in developing countries.

2 Materials and Methods

The purpose of the study is to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of various tools for involving citizens in municipal government. The analytical section includes the administrative-territorial units of Russia. To achieve the objectives of the study, there was determined the index of public participation for Russian Federal regions where budgetary initiation practices are implemented; there were identified qualitative and organizational aspects of citizen participation in municipal governance.

The study was conducted in several stages. At the first stage of the study, the index of public participation was determined for the regions, where the practices of budget initiation are implemented (Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, 2019a, 2019b). Namely, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Republic of Bashkortostan, Stavropol region, St. Petersburg, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Yaroslavl region, Krasnoyarsk region, Altai region, Komi Republic, Kirov region, Kemerovo region, Leningrad region, Novgorod region, Orenburg region, Ryazan region, Sakhalin region, Tver region, Ulyanovsk region, Kaluga region, Novosibirsk region.

The index of public participation (IPP) (Ahmad, 2006) was calculated using the following formula:

$$IPP = X1 + X2 + X3 + X4 - X5,$$

where

X1 – the number of formal meetings held during the year,

X2 – the number of discussions of draft decisions per year,

X3 – the number of opinion polls conducted per year,

X4 – the number of decisions made during the year in which the opinion of the public was taken into account,

X5 – the number of decisions made in a year, regardless of public opinion.

The percentage ratio between the number of decisions made during the year in which public opinion was taken into account and the number of decisions made during the year regardless of public opinion was also determined ($X4/X5$). The study covered data for the year 2020.

This index was determined for each of the regions under consideration. For the index of public participation, only quantitative indicators were estimated. The source of data was materials presented on the websites of the respective regions and open statistical data. However, according to the authors, this approach is not representative, because it assesses only quantitative indicators, without taking into account qualitative and organizational aspects. Therefore, at the same stage, all citizens' appeals (phone calls, electronic inquiries, electronic petitions) were analyzed to determine the main communication tools between citizens and authorities.

Further, the study resorts to the use of sociological tools - a standardized opinion poll, which has the character of a structured / semi-structured accordingly. At the second stage of the study, qualitative and organizational aspects of citizen participation in government were taken into account, as a qualitative indicator was chosen Municipal Capacity Index, the development of which belongs to the international non-governmental organization Global Communities. Data for the analysis were obtained through an Internet survey of residents of the respective cities, which contained the following questions:

- rate on a 5-point scale the leadership and management of the municipal budget (strategic planning, effective management, human resources and hiring),
- on a 5-point scale, rate financial management and budgeting (budget development and implementation; revenue generation; purchasing; community property management; financial reporting and auditing),
- evaluate on a 5-point scale the provision of services (service planning; service coverage and access of citizens; feedback mechanisms regarding the provision of services; satisfaction with services by citizens; information and explanatory work),
- on a 5-point scale, rate public participation (provision of public information; transparency of local government; information technology for democracy; gender focus; youth involvement).

Additional questions:

- 1) How do you perceive the policy of interaction and communication of local regional authorities?
- 2) How ready are you to communicate with the authorities through modern forms?
- 3) What are the preferred channels of communication and methods of interaction with the local government in obtaining information about events held by the authorities?

The weak side of these tools should include significant resource intensity, and the strong side - an in-depth and detailed study of information sources. This forms a good basis for further development of the roadmap of local government

development, the ability to track the dynamics and compare with other united territorial communities, as well as to use evaluation tool.

Respondents were given the opportunity to choose several answers. The survey was voluntary, conducted with the help of Google forms. People were invited to the survey, whose profiles in social networks (Facebook, Vk) represented the cities in question. The gender and age characteristics of the respondents were also taken into account. A total of 2,211 respondents were interviewed (2,201 agreed to participate in the survey).

Based on the analysis, the most effective tools of citizens' involvement in municipal governance were identified. At the third stage of the study, recommendations were developed to improve citizens' involvement in municipal governance by means of the most effective tools. In the fourth stage, an information experiment was conducted, which showed the impact of differentiation of digital information channels about municipal governance on the growth of citizens' readiness to participate in it.

The information experiment was conducted to reveal the impact of a deeper differentiation of information on the degree of citizens' readiness to participate in participatory budgeting. Three popular digital tools actively implemented in other countries around the world have been added to the proven digital communication channels: contact and information center, e-petition portal, "Your House" application, "Preschool Education System" service, digital platform of urban public transport, SMS services and e-mail messages. These tools realize such important functions of participatory citizen engagement as educating, controlling, and guiding. More residents will be motivated to participate in municipal budgeting as long as they have:

- access to knowledge about municipal budgeting,
- control over distribution of funds for the needs of the city; and
- opportunities to participate in identifying urgent city problems.

It is necessary to hold webinars on the basics of digital participatory budgeting among the population interested in participatory budgeting (educational function). Local authorities can also introduce into participatory practice interactive websites to track the stages of implementation of municipal financing projects (to increase budget transparency and highlight the areas of public investment). On interactive sites with maps of the city residents can mark "problem areas" and leave online requests for their solutions: street lighting, disruptions of heat and water supply, poor quality roads, the degradation of green spaces, etc. Research is limited to regional data on public participation in budget initiatives. The paper discusses the experience of involving citizens in municipal management on the example of those regions of the Russian Federation where the practices of budget initiation are implemented.

3 Research Results

At the first stage of the study, IPP was determined for the regions, where the practices of budget initiation are implemented (Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, 2019a, 2019b). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Determination of IPP for Regions Where Budgetary Initiation Practices Are Implemented

Region	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	IPP	X4/ X5
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	100	70	80	30	48	328	0.63
Republic of Bashkortostan	110	70	75	64	44	363	1.45
Stavropol region	118	30	73	47	71	339	0.66
St. Petersburg	240	46	39	63	52	440	1.21
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	204	37	54	64	79	438	0.81
Yaroslavl region	245	64	32	67	52	460	1.29
Krasnoyarsk region	210	44	45	32	38	369	0.84
Altai region	121	37	66	47	77	348	0.61
Komi Republic	222	41	70	45	36	414	1.25
Kirov region	171	66	34	67	49	387	1.37
Kemerovo region	159	69	70	42	67	407	0.63
Leningrad region	136	42	55	64	51	348	1.25
Novgorod region	161	44	44	37	56	342	0.66
Orenburg region	112	71	41	59	35	318	1.69
Ryazan region	178	45	56	33	63	375	0.52
Sakhalin region	227	34	38	41	75	415	0.55
Tver region	142	59	42	36	38	317	0.95
Ulyanovsk region	108	62	36	62	59	327	1.05
Kaluga region	183	80	55	37	35	390	1.06
Novosibirsk region	221	41	60	57	38	417	1.50

The profile of these regions is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Index of Public Participation for the Regions Where the Practices of Budget Initiation Are Implemented

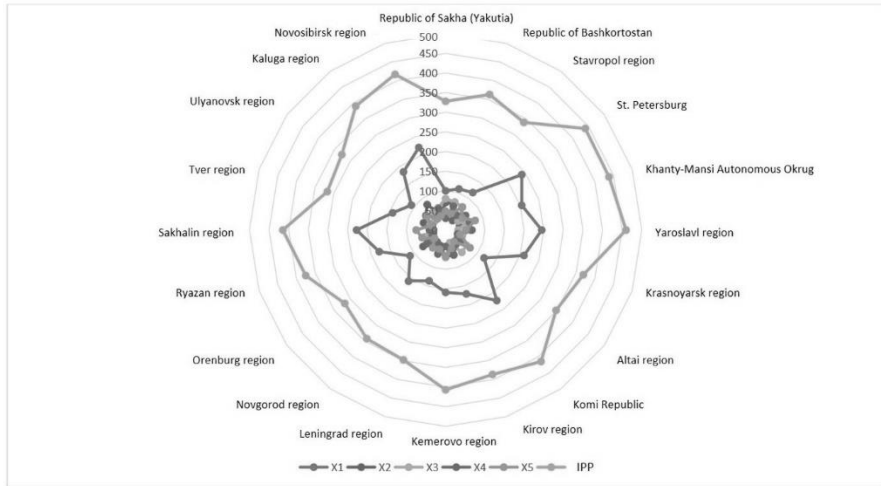
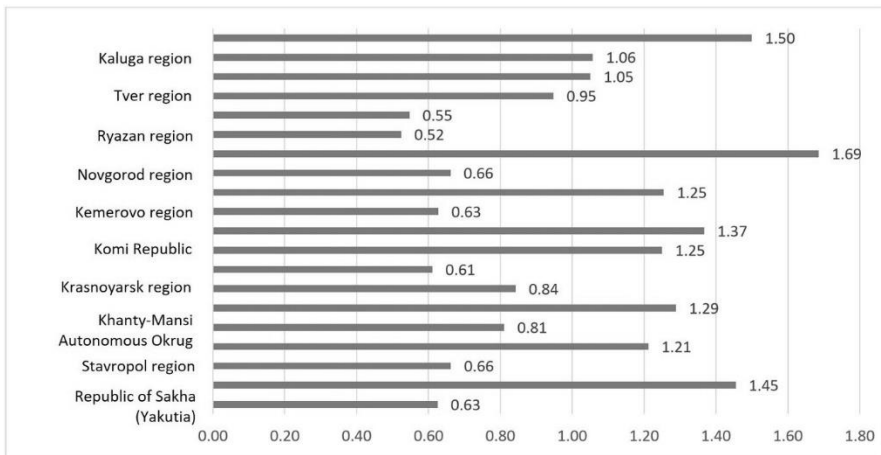


Figure 2: Ratio between the Number of Decisions Made with Citizens' Opinions Taken into Account and the Number of Decisions Made without Taking Citizens' Opinions into Account



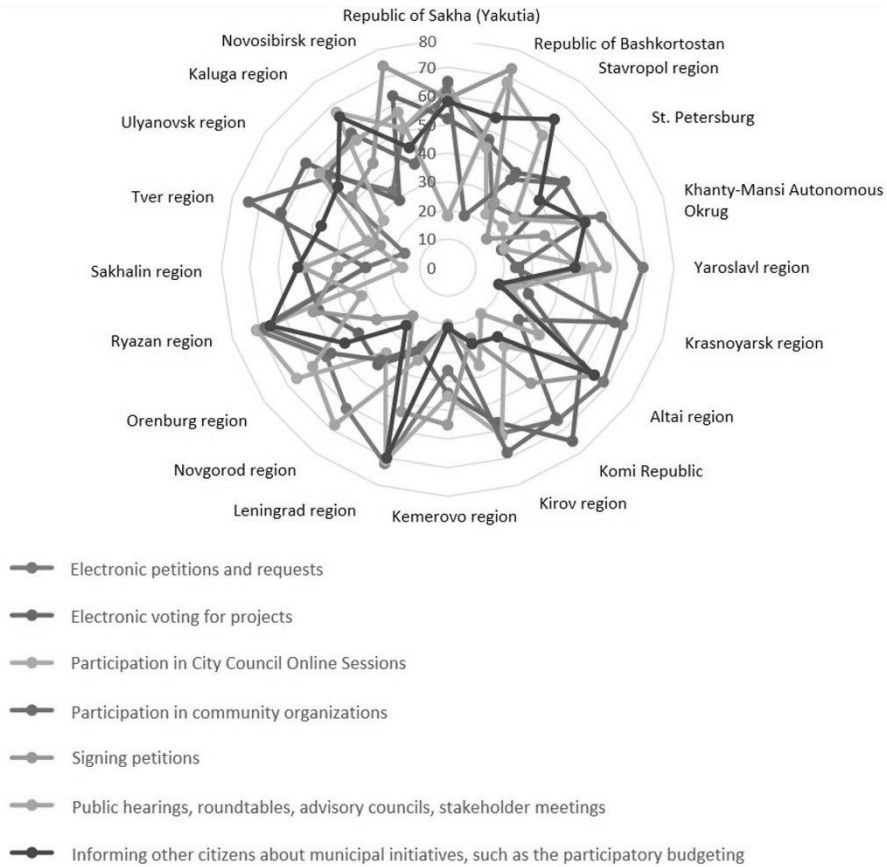
Considering the qualitative characteristics of communications, the authors note that the average number of contacts per day is 142, the average number of requests per day is 151. In almost 90% of cases, citizens ask only one question, two - in 7% of cases. On Monday, the greatest number of calls/requests was received (average - 25% on Monday). Requests were received: from individuals - 85%; from legal entities - 9%, the rest - from associations of citizens without legal entity status. Requests were received: by e-mail and/or phone - 57%; through authorities - 22%; personally - 12%; by mail - 4%; from other bodies, institutions, organizations - 5%.

Table 2 presents the main tools used by citizens to participate in municipal government by region. The main tools of citizens' involvement in municipal government were general meetings, public hearings, petitions, public councils, youth councils, consultations, and participatory budgeting.

Table 2: Main Tools Used by Citizens to Participate in Municipal Government
by Region, % of the Total Number

Region	Electronic petitions and requests	Electronic voting for projects	Participation in City Council Online Sessions	Participation in community organizations	Signing petitions	Public hearings, roundtables, advisory councils, stakeholder meetings	Informing other citizens about municipal initiatives, such as the participatory budgeting
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	60	52	64	65	59	18	58
Republic of Bashkortostan	47	46	44	19	73	68	55
Stavropol region	27	41	23	38	28	57	64
St. Petersburg	30	51	24	50	17	29	40
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	57	20	21	51	36	50	51
Yaroslavl region	69	25	51	24	47	56	45
Krasnoyarsk region	65	30	56	62	21	24	19
Altai region	68	58	55	31	64	40	64
Komi Republic	66	75	34	65	50	20	30
Kirov region	61	57	62	68	26	36	28
Kemerovo region	36	44	45	21	55	20	21
Leningrad region	72	31	71	29	53	34	70
Novgorod region	61	42	37	40	21	68	25
Orenburg region	53	39	66	51	31	59	45
Ryazan region	71	48	71	68	50	32	66
Sakhalin region	29	51	16	29	39	51	53
Tver region	16	62	28	74	25	30	47
Ulyanovsk region	56	62	28	53	42	56	48
Kaluga region	33	29	67	58	45	55	65
Novosibirsk region	51	63	51	38	74	57	44
Mean value	51.4	46.3	45.7	46.7	42.8	43	46.9

Figure 3: The Main Tools Used by Citizens to Participate in Municipal Government by Region, % of The Total



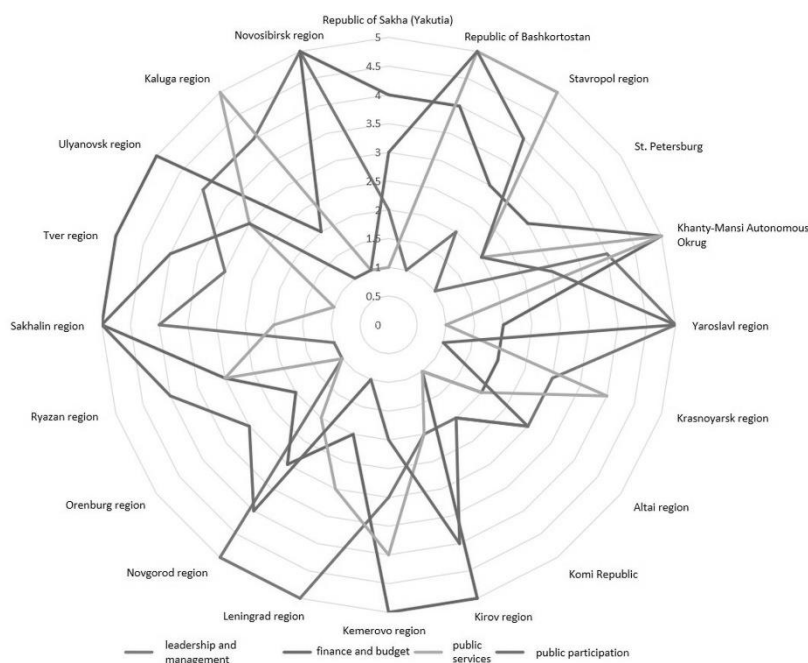
At the same time, of the electronic tools of citizen participation, the most widespread was the participatory budgeting, while electronic petitions and voting did not attract citizens. Positive is the fact that in 10 regions of the 20 considered, the number of decisions taken considering citizens' opinions is more than the number of decisions without taking into account citizens' opinions. However, the implementation of budget initiation (Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, 2019a, 2019b) in the regions under consideration did not increase civil activity of the population - the number of civil associations and participants of various public hearings, petition signatories and projects did not increase significantly over the period 2015-2020. In general, the authors note that the activity of citizens is not high both in the use of traditional tools of participation in municipal government and in the use of electronic tools.

In the second stage of the study, based on the Internet survey analysis, the authors note that, in general, citizens assess regional governance as mediocre; and public participation in governance, in their opinion, varies - that is, the ability of local government to involve citizens in local development management is a problematic aspect. This requires additional attention to the implementation of a program-targeted approach to local development management, which provides more opportunities for civil society representatives to influence the formation of local policies.

Table 3: Citizens' Attitudes toward the Quality of Government by Region

Region	leadership and management	finance and budget	public services	public participation	Total score
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	2	4	1	3	10
Republic of Bashkortostan	1	4	5	5	15
Stavropol region	2	3	5	4	14
St. Petersburg	1	3	2	2	8
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	4	5	5	3	17
Yaroslavl region	5	2	1	5	13
Krasnoyarsk region	3	2	4	1	10
Altai region	3	2	2	3	10
Komi Republic	2	1	1	2	6
Kirov region	2	5	2	4	13
Kemerovo region	3	5	4	2	14
Leningrad region	5	2	3	1	11
Novgorod region	5	3	2	4	14
Orenburg region	1	2	1	3	7
Ryazan region	1	3	3	4	11
Sakhalin region	4	5	2	5	16
Tver region	3	5	1	4	13
Ulyanovsk region	4	5	3	3	15
Kaluga region	4	2	5	1	12
Novosibirsk region	5	5	1	1	12
Mean value	3	3.4	2.65	3	12.05

Figure 4: Citizens' Attitudes to the Quality of Governance by Region



It was also found that:

77.2% of citizens consider the information provided by the city government to be interesting.

50.4% of citizens consider themselves well informed about the initiatives of city authorities.

The greatest confidence in their own knowledge about the initiatives of the city authorities is demonstrated by citizens belonging to the following age groups - aged 25 to 35 years (54.6%) and 36 to 55 years (50.8%); the total average score of communication policy of the authorities is 4.48 points on a 10-point scale. Openness of authorities in communicating with citizens makes up 4.56 points, specificity - 4.59 points, objectivity - 4.36 points, responsiveness - 4.39 points. In addition, the inclusion of city residents in the voting based on age distribution demonstrates an uneven participation of citizens. Thus, the most active are the representatives of the youth and middle age category. At the same time, one can say that the residents of 56 years and older are almost excluded from this process. Consequently, there is a problem of general accessibility of different groups and social strata to the decision-making process.

36.3% are aware of the activities of local authorities and 33.8% - of the provision of online services. To the least extent, citizens consider themselves aware of the initiatives of the authorities to implement public control (62.8%) and involvement of citizens in decision-making by the city authorities (62.8%), citizens are sufficiently involved in the practices of interaction with the authorities through online communication channels, in particular:

- Contact Information Center - 52.1%,
- Electronic petition portal - 27.1%,
- City ground public transport online service - 21%,
- service of SMS and E-MAIL messages – 18.6%.

According to the results of the study, the readiness of citizens to use modern forms is as follows:

43.5% of citizens expressed their desire to use online platforms on topical problems of life and functioning of the city,

43% - thematic online portals and forums on topical problems of life and functioning of the city,

42.9% - online forms of electronic surveys of citizens on various topics,

42.3% - online services to support electronic petitions,

41.7% - online services for electronic consultations with representatives of the city government.

Only a third of citizens (34%) are ready to use web-conferencing on the most relevant topics of governance and local community life as a modern form of communication with local authorities (55.2% of citizens do not support this form of communication).

Only a third of citizens (35.8%) support the use of newsletters and RSS feeds for current events and local government initiatives (53.2% do not support this form of communication).

- citizens' readiness to use modern (online) forms of interaction with the city government is age-related: with the increase in the age of citizens (mostly starting from 36 years and older) the share of citizens who are ready to use online forms of interaction with the government decreases. Citizens aged 56 and older mostly deny the possibility of communication with the authorities using online channels,
- traditional channels of information transmission, namely, TV/print media (newspapers, magazines)/FM-radio stations and wired radio/brochures/booklets/flyers are the dominant and desirable channels of information for citizens. Modern channels of communication, namely E-mails/Internet/SMS/social networks as channels of communication with the city authorities are perceived by about 58% of citizens. 15.8% of citizens are

ready to communicate with the authorities and have access to important information about the services at the regional level; 6.7% of respondents are ready to receive information from officials during interviews and meetings.

Analyzing the results of the survey, the authors note that the problem is the lack of communication between the municipal government and citizens. A feature of modern municipal government is the use of Internet technologies as a qualitatively new means of access to information resources of society, means of production and effective use of information. In this context, ensuring the stable further development of society requires the modernization of the system of its management by the authorities in the direction of creating an effective information and communication connection between the government and society.

Based on the data obtained, the following recommendations have been developed:

- In the context of improving the effectiveness of the general meeting of citizens at the place of residence:
 - to recommend to local councils to regulate the order of holding general meetings with citizens at the place of residence or to amend the existing procedure so that meetings would be held regularly and would have a real impact on local decision-making;
- in the context of increasing the effectiveness of information:
 - local authorities and public organizations are recommended to constantly inform each other and the public about their activities and cooperation through websites, the media, open events, press conferences and briefings, public hearings, announcements, and banners; the potential of social networks must be maximized;
 - information about regulatory documents adopted by local councils should be publicly available to citizens (e.g., on the website);
 - prior to informing, an analysis of information needs should be conducted, which can take the form of surveys, public opinion surveys, etc.; local authorities and public organizations should discuss and determine together the most effective channels for informing the public.
- in the context of enhancing the effectiveness of consultations:
 - public consultations can take place in various formats (public hearings, roundtables, social and expert surveys, online discussions, questionnaires, the work of public receptions and trust boxes, trainings and seminars, public expertise, holding visiting receptions by public organizations with the subsequent delivery of citizens' positions to local authorities in the form of information notes, etc.).
 - an effective public awareness campaign must be implemented by local authorities and public organizations prior to public consultations.
 - off-line consultations should be held at a convenient time for citizens.
 - local authorities must constantly inform the public organizations and society about the legal acts considered and adopted by them.

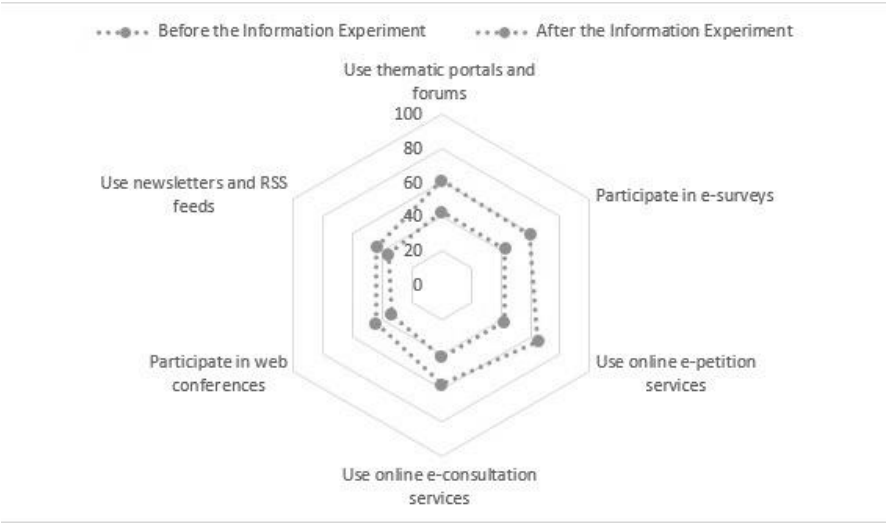
- representatives of local authorities must take part in the meetings organized in the respective territory.
- local governments are recommended to carefully identify experts for expert consultations. For this purpose, it makes sense in cooperation between local authorities and public organizations to create an electronic base of industry experts who can be consulted on a topical issue.
- individual citizens should have the right to address a local government body or a specific elected official through the media; both citizens and public organizations should be able to put a certain important issue on the agenda of a session of the relevant local council.
- in the context of increasing dialogue and partnership:
 - dialogue and partnership of local authorities and public organizations should be regulated.
 - local self-government bodies should promote the development of self-management bodies of the population.
- in the context of increasing the effectiveness of public consultations:
 - at the normative level, expand the list of forms of public consultations that can be used by local governments;
 - to establish the legal consequences of non-compliance by the authorities with the established procedures for public consultations;
 - specify the list of issues mandatory for public consultation (in particular, more clearly define the list of draft acts relating to issues of great public importance);
 - oblige local authorities to make public all suggestions gathered during public consultations, regardless of the form of consultation;
 - to make it obligatory for local authorities to take into account the results of public consultations when making final decisions (in particular, the positions of the beneficiaries of a certain policy);
 - to extend the universally binding nature of the norms governing public consultations to local government bodies;
 - provide an opportunity for individual citizens to make proposals on issues that should be the subject of public consultation;
 - since issues of local significance are the subject matter of all local government bodies, local executive authorities and local self-government bodies should be involved in the consultation process without fail;
 - provide mechanisms for ensuring the representativeness of various social groups in public consultations; it is worth considering the possibility of introducing voluntary registration by the relevant authorities of interested persons to participate in consultations with the publication of information about such persons;
 - to oblige the authorities to prepare regular reports on the implementation of public consultation plans;
- in the context of increasing the efficiency of public councils:

- to strengthen the general openness of the work of initiative groups within a public council by constant publication of their composition, current documents, and decisions made on the official website of the authority under which a public council is formed;
- provide for mandatory advance notification by the initiative group of delegates of civil society institutions about their non-participation in the constituent assembly, indicating the grounds for such a notification;
- to introduce a clear procedure for appealing against unlawful actions/inaction of the initiative groups with regard to the participants of the constituent assembly;
- it is expedient for public councils to elect deputy chairmen of a public council in thematic directions, who can be simultaneously chairmen of standing committees of a public council;
- allow public councils to adopt their own regulations, which will allow them to structure and at the same time simplify the process of organizing their work;
- to coordinate the content of the provisions on public councils with the regulations of the authorities under which such public councils are formed;
- in the context of increasing public expertise of local authorities:
 - to provide for the possibility of submitting electronic requests for public expertise of government bodies' activities;
 - to make it mandatory for the results of public expertise to be taken into account in government decision-making;
 - to provide at the legislative level mechanisms to prevent conflicts of interest in conducting public reviews of local authorities' activities.

To increase the effectiveness of consultation and dialogue mechanisms, local authorities should be encouraged to hold systematic meetings with representatives of civil society organizations, as well as their training to identify community needs and develop collaborative ways to address them.

The results of the information experiment showed a significant increase in the willingness of citizens to participate in making public decisions (Figure 5). Thus, the desire to use online platforms on current issues of life and functioning of the city increased 1.3 times. Willingness to use thematic Internet portals and forums on topical problems of life and functioning of the city increased 1.4 times. Motivation of citizens to participate in electronic surveys also increased 1.4 times. Willingness to use online services to support e-petitions increased 1.5 times. Willingness to use online e-consultation services with city authorities increased 1.4 times. Willingness to participate in web conferences increased 1.4 times, and willingness to use newsletters and RSS-channels increased 1.2 times.

Figure 5: Changes in the Structure of Readiness of Public Participation in Municipal Decision-Making after the Expansion of Information Differentiation



The weighted average growth index of public participation readiness is 1.37.

4 Discussion

The results of the study show that the implementation of programs of participatory governance and citizen involvement in municipal government, despite their rapid introduction and active popularization, are still at the initial stage. At the moment, the low level of involvement and awareness of residents on the implementation of programs calls into question the effectiveness of this mechanism of public participation. In addition, the inclusion of regional residents in voting on the basis of age distribution demonstrates uneven participation of citizens. Thus, the most active are the representatives of the youth and middle age category. At the same time, one can say that the residents of 60 years and older are almost excluded from this process. Consequently, the problem arises of the general accessibility of various groups and social strata to the decision-making process. This situation is contrary to global trends, where all categories of citizens are involved in voting (Aichholzer & Rose, 2020).

According to the UN, local governance includes a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which individuals and their associations can articulate their interests and needs, resolve their differences and exercise their rights and responsibilities at the local level (He, 2003). This, in turn, requires partnerships

between local government agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector to ensure shared, transparent, accountable and equitable service delivery and local development. Achieving long-term positive effects related to improving local governance requires empowering local governments and building their capacity to function as participatory institutions that are responsive to and accountable to the concerns and needs of all citizens. At the same time, improving the mechanisms of functioning of local self-government is associated with strengthening democracy at the grassroots level and empowering citizens, communities and organizations, such as civil society organizations and NGOs, to participate as equal partners in local governance and local development processes (He, 2003).

The liberal approach to governance draws attention to the significant shift from the state to the private sector. The work of governments is now increasingly driven by public-private partnerships, as well as formal and informal networks, including state and non-state institutions, organizations and institutions. Over a long period, as a separate trend that goes beyond the traditional studies of public administration, it should be noted the emergence of both research and applied interest related to the need to transform public administration, with an emphasis on forms of grassroots democracy and the expansion of the functions of local authorities (Balaguer-Coll et al., 2010).

From a liberal-democratic perspective, views on expanding grassroots democracy look progressive and promising, as they are intended to promote the expansion of freedoms and participation in the formation and implementation of policy. However, attempts to implement such a model are associated with pragmatic obstacles due to historically determined features of the state structure, form of government, stability of state institutions, etc. What is applicable for a unitary state with a relatively monolithic ethnic composition can be difficult to implement in the conditions of countries with a multi-structural socio-economic structure. Obviously, from the point of view of the existing Russian model of local self-government, the implementation of such an approach, associated with a significant expansion of local powers, looks rather utopian. The existing contradictions, apparently, are connected not only with the unwillingness of the authorities to grant a number of powers to local communities, but also with the low awareness and interest of the communities to take on additional functions.

The practice of local government in the Russian Federation has once again demonstrated one of the main problems of the system of public administration - the unreadiness of civil society institutions at the local level to lobby the interests of the territorial community to exercise public control at the local level (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2014). At present, there is no understanding at the levels of local administrations that involving citizens in local (regional) government matters is mutually beneficial. Through public participation, effective decisions can be made due to a deeper and broader understanding of problems and issues. Power decisions

and proposals are readily accepted by the public if their opinions are taken into account in the preparation process for making these decisions. A well-functioning citizen engagement process encourages individuals and groups to become more involved in community affairs, thereby extending responsibility and accountability for what happens in the community to citizens. Including citizens in the decision-making process, especially those who will be directly affected by the adopted programs, increases mutual understanding, minimizes conflicts, and creates conditions for broad public consensus in decision-making.

Analysis of the projects presented on the websites showed that they are mainly aimed at solving current problems. This suggests that the potential benefits associated with participatory budgeting are more vague today. The main disadvantages include:

- 1) The problem of public accessibility. The number of citizens involved in the implementation of 'participatory budgeting' programs is still small.
- 2) Involving only 'active' citizens and representatives of civil society. For most 'passive' citizens, budgeting issues are difficult to understand. This is labor-intensive work, which is understood by people with appropriate training.
- 3) Lack of widespread discussion and opportunities for public discussion of draft decisions.

This situation can be explained primarily by the authorities' unpreparedness for openness and transparency. Formally, the activities of the executive branch and local government bodies are open and the bodies themselves are willing to cooperate with the public, but only on a certain range of issues that do not involve land allocation, money and business schemes.

- 1) Voting is often open lists in online access. This contradicts the principle of secret voting and makes a person and his/her decision an object of pressure from initiative groups.
- 2) Information campaigns - using only the electronic form of participation makes it difficult for certain public groups to access.
- 3) The problem of the reliability of offline voting results. These can include certain technical peculiarities during voting.

Full implementation of the principle of budget process publicity and transparency increases the level of public confidence in the authorities at various levels; it is one of the factors of successful state socio-economic policy implementation; it deepens the democratic principles of the formation and development of society. Therefore, despite the above comments, today the program 'participatory budgeting' is one of the most promising innovations (Gilman, 2016), because the principle of integrating citizens in the process of decision-making on budgeting at the local level can be understood as direct democracy in action, so the implementation of this program has its advantages:

- 1) Mobilizing residents to address socially significant issues.
- 2) The ability of local authorities to have a vision of the public's needs.
- 3) Developing the necessary competencies of citizens, given that the participatory budgeting program acts as a kind of training tool on local government issues.
- 4) Ensuring transparency and accessibility to basic budget information.
- 5) Formation of mutual responsibility for decision-making and implementation on the part of both local authorities and the public.
- 6) Shaping political culture of collaborative type.

Despite the fact that today alienation between city residents is becoming a universal form of human relationships, the emergence of electronic tools for citizen involvement in municipal governance is becoming an integrative mechanism in the process of social interaction. The phenomenon of solidarity, emerging within a group, contributes to its cohesion, the understanding of mutual functional dependence, social integration and, as a consequence, the involvement of residents in social processes. Therefore, the idea of introducing such tools is innovative, because it should be understood as a response to the changes taking place in society.

5 Conclusions

Local initiatives are a mechanism for ensuring the participation of residents of a village, settlement, or city in addressing local development issues, the potential effectiveness of which depends on at least two factors: the availability of legal means for citizens to use such a mechanism and their willingness to do so. The second factor is directly related, above all, to the maturity of civil society itself and its ability to organize itself. However, the practice of local government in the Russian Federation has once again demonstrated one of the main problems of the public administration system - the unreadiness of civil society institutions at the local level to lobby the interests of the territorial community to exercise public control at the local level.

It has been established that the level of communication and involvement of citizens in municipal governance is insufficient, which is explained by insufficient communication between the authorities and citizens. This is also connected with the issues of low involvement of administrative and local self-government bodies endowed with power functions and the lack of grassroots initiative in matters of community development. It is shown that today in local government of the Russian Federation there is an insufficient level of citizen participation in municipal government, which gives rise to the following negative trends:

- lack of responsibility of local self-governments for the results of their own activities,
- lack of real influence of citizens as a collective subject of management on the processes of managed development,

- lack of program-targeted approaches in the management of local development,
- lack of consideration for the interests of all stakeholders and public control to ensure the high performance of local authorities,
- inability to move from representative democracy to participatory democracy at the municipal level.

Nevertheless, having investigated the issue of public participation in decision-making processes, the authors conclude that reforming public administration system in the Russian Federation brings the institute of political participation of citizens closer to world and European standards. Today, both online and offline tools for citizen participation in municipal government are used at the municipal level in Russia. The efficiency of each of them will depend on three main factors:

- 1) Regulation of these mechanisms at the local level,
- 2) Public awareness of these mechanisms,
- 3) Availability to the public of relevant knowledge and skills in the use of a particular mechanism.

There should also be training for government officials, on whom an adequate and professional response to the relevant public inquiries depends. The study is based on both statistical data and Internet surveys. The weak side of these tools should include significant resource intensity, and the strong side - deep and detailed study of information sources, which forms a good basis for further development of the roadmap of local government capacity, the ability to track the dynamics and compare with other united territorial communities, as well as use the tool for self-assessment.

In further research, it is planned to make a comparison between the level of citizens' involvement in municipal governance for the Belgorod region. The de facto region will become a zone for the implementation of the models created in the work and tracking of the identified trends. Today, the Belgorod Region is starting to implement mechanisms of initiative budgeting. This public institution is new for the Russian Federation, and the Belgorod region is a unique territory for the implementation of the first precedents of full-fledged bottom-up budgeting.

Potentially of great importance for the growth of citizens' involvement and interest in the processes of municipal governance is differentiated information about the expenditure of budgetary funds for the city and the opportunities to monitor, control, and inform the city authorities about the urgent problems of the city. The results of the information experiment showed that the index of growth of citizens' interest in municipal government after the differentiation of information presentation (the addition of three digital channels for education, control and interactive participation in solving urban problems) increased by 37%.

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