

Viktor BORSHCHEVSKIY*, Julia TSYBULSKA** and VasyI CHEMERYYS***

Governance priorities for the post-war development and European integration of rural local communities in Ukraine

Rural local communities of Ukraine have faced serious socio-economic problems under the conditions of war. Among the most critical are the low level of entrepreneurial activity and pre-existing challenges related to the quality of governance. As a result, the resource potential utilisation of these communities has become less efficient, against a further backdrop of deteriorating human capital quality and investment attractiveness. All this creates a number of barriers to Ukraine's further integration into the EU and limits the prospects for post-war economic development of its rural economy. This being so, it is advisable to focus on the implementation of managerial innovations that can enhance the efficiency of governance of rural local communities in Ukraine and facilitate their adaptation to EU institutional standards. Primarily, this concerns the implementation of modern project management tools, activation of cross-sector partnerships, application of effective territorial marketing and branding means, and the dissemination of democratic public administration practices, among other measures. At the same time, significant attention should be given to the educational component, which should ensure that the managerial competence of local self-government employees in rural local communities is enhanced as well as stimulate the entrepreneurial activity of their residents. This will enable Ukraine to attract additional grant and investment resources amid the further deepening of Ukraine's European integration, particularly in the post-war phase of its development.

Keywords: Ukraine, rural communities, European integration, post-war development, efficient management, territorial marketing

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* Department of Public Administration of the Ukrainian Catholic University; Department of Spatial Development of the State Institution "Institute of Regional Research named after M.I. Dolishniy of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine", Lviv, Ukraine.

** Department of European Integration, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, Staszic Palace, Nowy Świat 72, 00-330 – Warsaw, Poland. Corresponding author email: jtsybulska@irwirpan.waw.pl

*** Department of Business Economics, Innovation and Extension in the Agro-Industrial Complex named after prof. I.V. Popovych, Lviv National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology named after S.Z. Hzhyskyi, Lviv, Ukraine.

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Introduction

Rural local communities of Ukraine, in the current socio-economic conditions, have faced a number of new challenges caused by the war and the intensification of global political instability. Some of them are in zones of active combat or under constant artillery or missile shelling, some are in liberated territories that, however, require a long time for demining and economic recovery, and some, although in relatively calm rear regions, despite apparent stability, are experiencing a significant decline in the quality of their human and social capital (primarily due to the outflow of part of the working-age population abroad). This is accompanied by a deterioration of the investment climate and is exacerbated by the loss of traditional markets for agricultural products, which is particularly dangerous in view of Ukraine's uncertain prospects for further European integration.

In many local communities, the situation is complicated by the influx of a large number of internally displaced persons and representatives of relocated businesses, forcing local authorities to address incomers' adaptation to the community's social and cultural environment, while lacking the necessary administrative and managerial experience. This is often accompanied by a shortage of necessary personnel and the absence of effective business communications with regional authorities, local businesses, and civil society institutions. Moreover, the military actions in the east of the country have negatively impacted the investment climate in most rural local communities of Ukraine. While large cities have been able to maintain investor interest to a degree,

the situation is much more challenging in rural communities, especially smaller and mono-functional ones.

All this highlights the urgent need to find adequate administrative approaches and management tools that can ensure sufficient efficiency in utilising the available resource potential of Ukraine's rural areas under current conditions and create a reliable institutional foundation for the further recovery of their economy in the post-war development phase, primarily in the context of aligning with EU institutional standards.

The aim of the article is to identify and analyse the key priorities for the development of rural local communities in Ukraine in the context of post-war recovery and European integration. The specific objectives include:

- To explore and propose innovative management practices that can enhance the efficiency of rural community governance, thereby improving the utilisation of natural and human resources.
- To identify effective strategies for attracting both domestic and foreign investment into rural areas, which is critical for economic modernisation and sustainable development.
- To propose measures for addressing socio-economic challenges such as depopulation, unemployment, and low levels of entrepreneurial activity in rural communities.
- To align the development strategies of Ukrainian rural communities with European Union standards, thereby facilitating smoother integration into the EU and ensuring that rural areas can benefit from this process.

The article aims to provide a comprehensive framework for policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to effectively navigate the complex process of rural development in the challenging context of post-war reconstruction and European integration.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the research conducted in the process of writing the article included theoretical postulates of regional economics, the theory of human and social capital, conceptual foundations of institutionalism, as well as the theories of neoclassicism and economic growth.

The methodology of the article is centred on a multidisciplinary approach that combines elements of economics, sociology, and management studies. The first methodological step involves identifying the primary socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities in Ukraine, particularly in the context of post-war recovery and European integration. The authors evaluate existing management practices in these communities, with a focus on identifying areas where improvements can be made. This includes an assessment of project management techniques, investment attraction strategies, and community engagement practices. Based on the findings from the literature review, case studies, and empirical data, the authors formulate a set of recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of rural community management. These recommendations are designed to align with European Union standards and best practices. The authors test several hypotheses regarding the factors that contribute to successful rural community development, such as the role of education, the impact of decentralisation, and the benefits of cross-sector partnerships.

The following methods were used in the work: analysis and synthesis – to identify the most pressing issues of development in rural local communities of Ukraine, comparisons – to outline the primary tasks for improving the efficiency of their economies in the context of European integration, scientific abstraction – to formulate proposals aimed at modernising the economies of the studied communities during the post-war recovery phase, graphical – for visual representation of research results, and monographic – to generalise the results of empirical observations. The base of scientific-analytical materials and primary data for the research comprised scientific publications of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, results of the authors' personal observations, as well as systematised materials from state and local authorities and expert communities of Ukraine.

Results

The development of most modern rural local communities in Ukraine is limited by existing financial-economic, social, and security problems. Some of these problems are common to all rural areas, including ageing and declining populations, fundamental technological changes in food systems, income inequality and the spread of poverty in rural areas, and the low institutional capacity of local

self-government bodies in rural local communities, among others (Dax *et al.*, 2023).

At the same time, it is evident that the problems of the rural economy in Ukraine have significantly worsened (and often been supplemented by new ones) following the large-scale Russian invasion. Moreover, missile strikes across the entire country have led to the damage of numerous infrastructure facilities in rural communities, a decrease in entrepreneurial activity, a deterioration in the investment climate, job losses, and the worsening condition of many social and engineering infrastructure facilities.

Given the nature of these described problems, and considering the objective difficulties currently faced by rural local communities in modern Ukraine, there is an urgent need to eliminate several destructive factors that reduce the efficiency of local community governance, thereby limiting the potential for their post-war development and European integration. These factors primarily include:

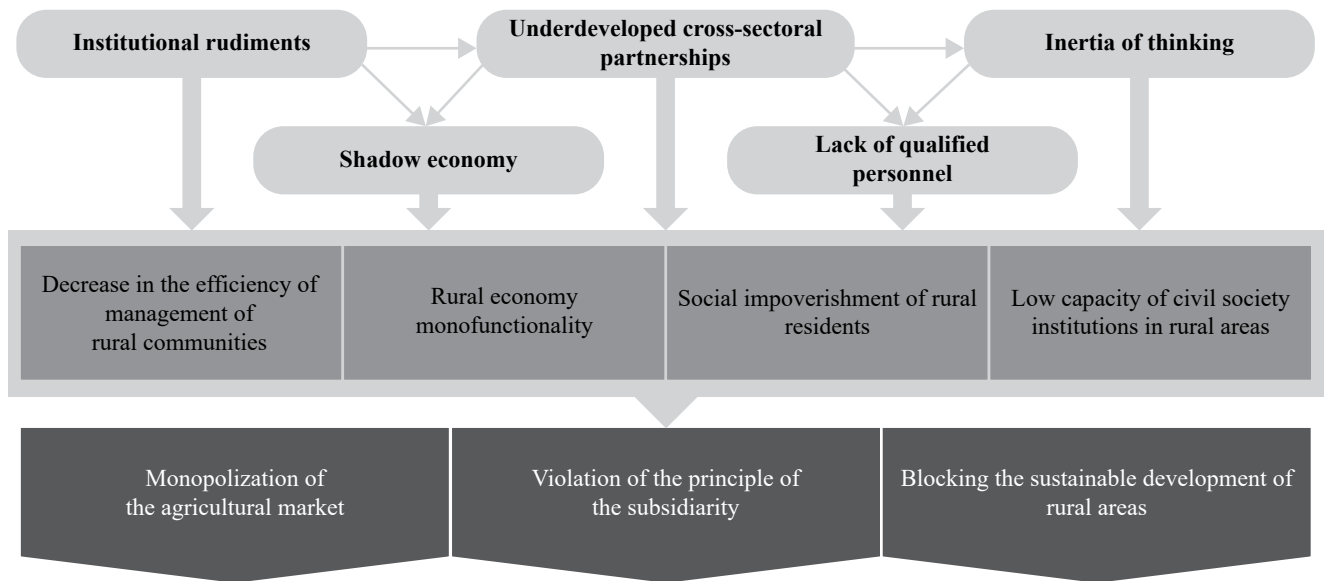
- Institutional remnants relating to the functions of local self-government bodies, which limit efficiency primarily due to their lack of any real capacity to influence the economic development of rural local communities;
- The inertia of community leaders' thinking, which has formed and become entrenched over a long period;
- The lack of qualified personnel, caused by the continuous outflow of the best specialists and managers to cities and abroad.

Another issue hindering the development of rural local communities is the low level of cross-sector partnership culture within them. Additionally, the development of participatory management and entrepreneurship in rural local communities is significantly hampered by the existing shadow redistribution of some goods and services within their boundaries, which distorts the structure of trade in the rural economy and increases the transaction costs of local businesses.

The shadow market also negatively affects the productivity of agriculture and the quality of public goods provided to rural residents. Specifically, there is a resource outflow from farms favoured by the market to large agrohholdings favoured by policymakers, leading to slower growth rates and losses in the economic efficiency of the rural economy (Kubakh, 2021).

The described problems and the factors contributing to their formation and entrenchment also reduce the potential for Ukraine's European integration, especially when the prospects for post-war recovery of the Ukrainian economy are taken into consideration (Figure 1). The preservation of institutional remnants and shadow resource redistribution reproduce negative post-Soviet management stereotypes; the inertia of community leaders' thinking and the deficit of qualified personnel decrease the management efficiency of self-governing bodies and limit their application of the subsidiarity principle, and gaps in the cross-sector partnership system block the development of civil society institutions, which are an important institutional component of the European integration process.

Therefore, the contemporary conditions for the development of Ukrainian villages and agriculture require a new



DISSONANCE WITH THE EU INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

Figure 1: Main problems of development of rural local communities in Ukraine in terms of prospects and priorities for deepening European integration.

Source: authors' composition

perspective on their development in the context of European integration, especially after the active phase of hostilities has ended. Specifically, the potential for the development of organic farming and livestock in Ukraine deserves attention. These sectors produce high added value, which is important for the transformation of the Ukrainian rural economy in the context of alignment with EU institutional standards. Although the value created in organic production is higher than that of agroholdings, this increase is fully compensated by its positive impact on the diversification of agricultural production (Zegar, 2018).

Decentralisation of power opens broad opportunities for diversifying the rural economy and developing self-organisation and local governance institutions within Ukraine's rural local communities, particularly in line with European integration policies. It aims to change the model of social organisation: instead of a "top-down" approach, a "bottom-up" society is formed, eliminating the contradiction between the citizen and the state (Riabokon, 2020). The new state mechanism should align with modern trends in spatial development and mobility, considering international migration trends and the impact of social transformations, which are integral elements of European integration (Mulska *et al.*, 2023).

The main criteria determining the direction of transformation in the management of rural local communities in Ukraine, considering the prospects of European integration, should include: the professionalisation of local self-government, increasing its competence and democratisation of the management process; the informatisation and digitisation of management; and the adaptation of innovative forms and means of community management that have proven effective in developed countries, particularly in EU member states (Hazuda *et al.*, 2015).

For example, Poland faced a situation where the adopted strategy of implementing a large number of diverse measures led to the fragmentation of resources directed at specific goals. This increased transaction costs associated with building, operating, and controlling the entire management system. Despite the transparency of the fund distribution system among different voivodeships, based on clear and published indicators (though their appropriateness could be debated), the distribution of funds among specific measures at the national level was overly secretive and difficult to explain scientifically, indicating a high degree of politicisation and subjectivity in this area (Zawalińska, 2009).

However, timely responses to the problem and the application of adequate management mechanisms allowed for the localisation of existing difficulties and threats. Therefore, creating a modern management system for the development of rural local communities, based on effective interactions between state, regional, and local authorities, is a primary priority in addressing the socio-economic problems of these communities, significantly increasing the potential of their economy and its efficient use.

It is also necessary to consider the differentiation in the socio-economic development of different rural areas and the regional specifics of their spatial location. This should ensure the rationalisation of management programmes for each rural community based on identifying its endogenous features in line with European integration policies. At the same time, the social responsibility of management should be ensured by the potentials of technical-economic and organisational-economic property relations and economic mechanisms (Kravchuk and Rakovych, 2018).

Another direction for stimulating the development of Ukraine's rural economy, considering its European integration priorities, is the combination of efforts by the population,

state authorities, and local self-government in implementing public-private partnership projects funded through grants and loans. It is important to ensure the transfer of new knowledge and technologies, provide technical assistance, and engage in joint labour, procurement, consultancy, and marketing activities by local authorities and businesses (Shvets *et al.*, 2021).

The educational component is gaining increasing significance in overcoming the existing capacity limitations of rural residents in Ukraine. Acquiring new knowledge and skills in the context of mastering modern business technologies and their practical application can significantly increase the efficiency of utilising the human capital of Ukrainian villages and contribute to positive shifts in the European integration progress of the rural economy in the post-war development stage.

For example, researchers note that prior to the large-scale invasion, certain positive shifts could be observed (albeit with some fluctuations) in many rural local communities in Ukraine in terms of institutional development, infrastructure quality, market environment dynamics, and technology levels. However, negative trends were noted in indicators such as human capital, business environment conditions, and creative components (Kucher *et al.*, 2023).

This underscores the need to activate the role of educational institutions and research centres in promoting the development of rural local communities, by improving their human capital in particular. Notably, the implementation of joint projects with foreign partners under international technical assistance programmes involving qualified specialists from EU member states should have long-term effects and improve both human and social capital in rural communities. This, in turn, should positively impact management quality, reduce conflicts and tensions among various social groups, develop entrepreneurial skills among young people, establish cooperation with foreign investors, enhance intersectoral partnership efficiency, solve environmental problems, and stimulate sustainable development.

Sustainable development of rural local communities, based on the mutual complementarity of their main economic, social, and environmental functions, in the context of European integration should be accompanied by balanced development in the respective spheres of the rural economy. The challenge also lies in maintaining the balance of economic, social, and environmental functions without creating or exacerbating constraints on the efficient use of existing human and natural resource potential for the development of rural local communities (Niedzielski, 2015).

From the perspective of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), sustainable development of rural areas should also involve supporting the income levels of rural community residents by strengthening their social, environmental, and economic resilience. This is achieved through measures which aim to promote and support the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry; to encourage sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; and to achieve balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities, while creating and maintaining employment within them (Korinets, 2023). Moreover, fully leveraging the development potential of rural local communities in Ukraine, in the context of their adaptation to EU institutional standards, depends on the effectiveness of coopera-

tion between local residents and entrepreneurs within these communities. One tool for forming a reliable foundation for the future development of rural areas in Ukraine based on shared decisions and procedures is participatory governance. This approach encourages local political representatives, the business community, and residents to take joint responsibility for fulfilling various management functions to develop their communities (Becker, 2022).

To ensure the diversified development of the rural economy, it is also advisable to outline such important priorities as: increasing agricultural production by expanding the range of products; promoting organic and niche production; activating industrial cooperatives, folk crafts, and rural and green tourism; and producing specific localised products. Simultaneously, it is necessary to increase the number and capacity of funding sources for local economic projects (state and local budgets should be supplemented by investments from Ukrainian and foreign companies, individuals, and grant resources). Another direction for diversifying the rural economy is encouraging various forms of farming in villages, particularly through promoting agricultural cooperation and clustering of agribusiness and related industries (Pavlikha and Khomiuk, 2020).

Attention should also be paid to the socio-psychological modernisation of rural areas in Ukraine in the context of the Euro-integration transformations of their economy. Rural residents are often prone to opportunistic behaviour, manifested in their reluctance to change their traditional way of life, maintain usual behavioural stereotypes, or prioritise economic activities. This situation is often complicated by the predominance of older age groups in rural communities and significant youth outflow to large cities and abroad (Chitea and Dona, 2018).

One of the primary Euro-integration priorities for local authorities should be ensuring the coordinated and efficient use of the available natural-resource and socio-economic potentials of Ukrainian villages to achieve sustainable development of rural local communities in Ukraine (Herasymchuk, 2022). One of the main problems accompanying the evolution of Ukrainian agricultural production over the past decades is the constant reduction in the rural population. The decrease in its productive segment occurs historically, and these changes to a certain extent represent an objective socio-economic phenomenon (Rossokha and Plotnikova, 2018).

This perspective echoes the conclusions of A. Tkachuk: “Against the backdrop of quite dynamic GDP growth in Ukrainian agriculture and its products conquering foreign markets, we have a completely different situation in rural areas: accelerated depopulation of rural settlements, degradation of rural education, healthcare, social services, pollution and dehydration of territories... The concentration of agricultural production among large and very large producers and the total dominance of grain farming in the production structure have led to a sharp reduction in jobs in the traditional agricultural sector of rural areas” (Tkachuk, 2016, p20.). Moreover, the global trend towards implementing knowledge economy elements means that employment opportunities in the agricultural sector for rural communities in Ukraine are becoming increasingly limited. At the same time, the development level of non-agricultural

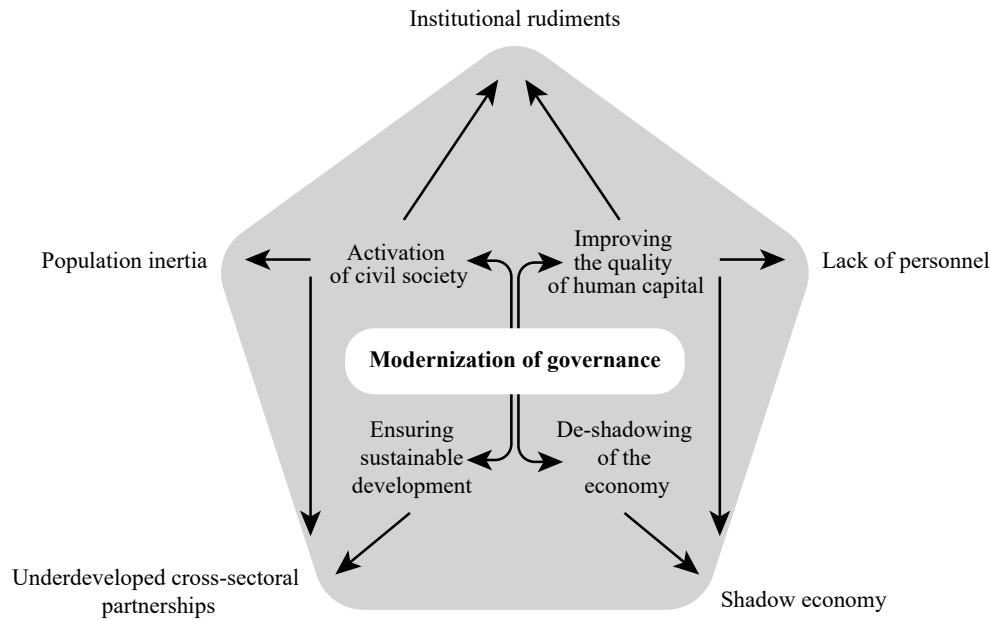


Figure 2: Modernisation of rural local community governance to overcome the existing problems of their development in the context of European integration.

Source: authors' composition

sectors leaves much to be desired. For young people, rural areas with a high amount of traditional agricultural production appear quite unattractive (Klonowska-Matynia, 2022).

Given all this, it is necessary to substantially modernise the management of rural local communities in Ukraine. The application of project management principles and mechanisms should play a priority role in this context. On the one hand, this will significantly expand the range of community funding sources by increasing grant and investment inflows (since traditional community management methods will be supplemented by project management practices familiar to most donors and investors). On the other hand, it will help overcome development problems (including mitigating their spread), such as institutional remnants, management stereotypes, gaps in cooperation culture, and inertia in leaders' thinking (Figure 2).

The primary areas of application for project management in rural local communities in Ukraine should include:

- Developing well-substantiated plans of action that are financially and humanly resource-supported for implementing current community development strategies;
- Attracting grant resources into the community economy;
- Enhancing the quality of human and social capital and increasing their entrepreneurial potential;
- Addressing existing environmental issues;
- Increasing the volume of investment resources attracted to the community economy;
- Solving social problems of rural residents, reducing unemployment, and ensuring the full integration of internally displaced persons into the economic and social environment of host communities.

Each of the outlined areas of project management is important not only in terms of changing the principles and approaches to governance of rural local communities in the

context of overcoming existing management problems and implementing EU institutional standards but also encompasses a wide range of tasks aimed at significantly increasing their financial and economic capacity in light of the prospects for post-war economic development.

Another important issue that rural local communities in Ukraine will have to address in the context of implementing Euro-integration prospects at the post-war stage of development is the implementation of the "Green Deal" (Heffner, 2012). The implementation of the principles of the "green" economy is a crucial tool in achieving sustainable development, which is a priority for the EU. However, under war-time conditions, such a transition may be accompanied by significant risks (Iakymchuk *et al.*, 2019).

An important area to note regarding Ukraine's Euro-integration prospects is attracting investment for the recovery of the rural economy. Unfortunately, this area is currently not given adequate attention. However, in the context of accelerating European integration at the post-war stage of development, such projects will gain primary importance. This situation compels rural leaders and community activists to actively seek opportunities to develop high-quality and relevant investment proposals to attract sufficient investment resources into the local economy, both in the present and with an eye to the post-war development of Ukraine.

For instance, considering the current challenges for Ukraine's energy sector, an essential direction for investment attraction is the development of energy generation from alternative sources. Analysis shows that Ukraine has significant potential for agricultural biogas production from manure. However, the potential utilisation is significantly limited by the structure of agriculture, as more than half of the available manure is produced on small livestock farms, which are too small to independently invest in biogas plants (Wąs *et al.*, 2020).

Experts also note that obtaining candidate status for EU membership and the consequent socio-economic reforms will allow Ukraine to attract more investment resources during the post-war reconstruction phase. This will also spur the deepening of several transformations initiated in previous years, including real decentralisation of power, energy modernisation, and increasing the real financial capacity of local communities (Erman, 2022). Unlike the issues of local budget revenue, where communities largely remain hostages to legislative gaps and contradictions, there are currently a whole range of opportunities to attract additional resources for financing development projects, primarily through funds from foreign partners. Moreover, after the war, these opportunities will only increase, and each community must be ready to demonstrate its advantages to potential investors, creditors, or donors. Therefore, the pre-war situation, where many community leaders and local deputies could not formulate relevant ideas even for themselves, must become a thing of the past (Dzhus, 2024).

Finally, another important aspect of adapting project management tools to the needs of rural local communities in Ukraine should be the educational component, namely raising the general informational and educational level of rural residents and acquiring new knowledge and skills in entrepreneurial and organisational-management areas. This will improve conditions for self-employment of the rural population, expand development prospects for small businesses in new niches and sectors of the rural economy, stimulate public activity among rural residents, etc. The primary support should be directed towards developing non-agricultural types of business, reviving traditional crafts, creating small light industry enterprises, encouraging entrepreneurship in woodworking, services, tourism, IT, transport, logistics, etc (Naherniuk and Nepochatenko, 2021).

Researching the aspects of financial self-sufficiency of rural local communities in Ukraine in the context of their European integration, it is also worth noting that the current system of horizontal budget equalisation leads to increased withdrawal of funds from the budgets of more financially self-sufficient communities, while a significant number of communities with low tax revenues per capita and high levels of basic subsidies exist, negatively affecting their economic development. This highlights the need for improved budget equalisation among communities of different types (Vozniak *et al.*, 2022).

Simultaneously, attention should be given to such important directions of Euro-integrative evolution of Ukrainian rural communities as: de-agrarianisation of rural areas; economic diversification; de-peasantisation or changing the traditional rural way of life; suburbanisation (increasing population in rural communities adjacent to large cities); and gentrification (the phenomenon opposite to suburbanisation, where previously neglected buildings and adjacent areas in rural areas, mainly in peripheral and unattractive settlements, are reconstructed and renewed due to the relocation of wealthy residents from cities) (Czapiewska, 2021).

Special attention should also be paid to preserving the social functions of the rural economy, particularly through the proliferation of non-agricultural enterprises, whose role in improving the living standards of rural community

residents in the EU is constantly growing. The multifunctional development of these communities' economies should become one of the basic goals of both agricultural and regional policies of the state. An important prerequisite for implementing this concept is adherence to the principles underlying the EU's common agricultural policy, particularly the principle of prioritising innovation during the economic diversification of rural communities (Adamowicz and Zwolińska-Ligaj, 2009).

Moreover, it is worth noting that the deepening of European integration will mean inevitable intensification of competition for investments for Ukrainian rural communities, and their development will increasingly depend not so much on available natural and human resources, but on the ability of local authorities to use and promote them effectively. As a result, the proper positioning of communities and the ability of their governance institutions to successfully apply marketing tools for attracting internal and external investments will gain increasing importance.

There is significant positive experience in applying territorial marketing for rural communities in European countries. This concept has been in use for a considerable time, especially in enhancing the economic potential of rural areas. For example, in Bavaria, Germany, local and regional marketing initiatives are combined into a single regional marketing strategy, thereby strengthening local projects with regional and federal support (Budnikévych *et al.*, 2018). Numerous local communities in France actively use an approach that can be called "targeted marketing". Its essence lies in identifying the main economic priority of the community (e.g., tourism, winemaking, or agriculture) and focusing all marketing means on promoting it in the eyes of potential investors, from visual advertising (billboards, posters, announcements, etc.) to creating promotional offices in each settlement (Perepeliuka, 2020). In Polish rural communities, branding the territory, based on historical development milestones, is often used to attract potential investors. Therefore, investment-successful communities frequently achieve popularity among investors by positioning themselves as continuers of long-standing local traditions, adorning their logos with characteristic patterns. Thus, there are communities of hereditary "beekeepers", "knights", "farmers", "foresters", "brewers", "miners" and others. Investors know in advance which businesses are worth investing in each community and which to avoid (Iurkiv, 2021).

Given the features and development prospects of Ukrainian rural communities in the context of post-war recovery and European integration, part of the described approaches can be applied as effectively as in EU countries. For example, one of the most effective ways to attract investors to rural communities in modern Ukraine could be the use of internet marketing. Its application can attract attention not only from businesses but also from grant givers. Internet resources are also quite effective information channels for establishing feedback with grant givers and investors. Their proper use allows highlighting the community's advantages and development prospects, which is very important for local residents and potential tourists.

Ensuring a constant presence at various exhibition and fair events held in Ukraine and EU countries is also significant for the economy of rural communities. These events can not



Figure 3: Priorities of territorial marketing for rural communities in Ukraine at the post-war stage of European integration

Source: authors' composition

only present the economic potential of communities but also gather information from investors about their primary needs and expectations. Moreover, modern exhibitions and fairs are excellent platforms for developing international cooperation among communities and establishing their partnerships with analytical centres, consulting companies, educational and scientific institutions, financial institutions, and others.

It is also important to note that the activation of exhibition and fair activities in Ukrainian regions today is inextricably linked with the formation and implementation of regional investment policies, which gain increasing importance in the context of deepening European integration. In the EU, the necessary condition for the development of national economies of member countries is, first and foremost, the implementation of regional investment activities. Furthermore, within the EU's plans to create a single European innovative economy, an integrated model of local and national investing is being implemented (Serednytska and Heha, 2017).

A sufficiently important marketing tool that can significantly contribute to the economic development of rural communities in our country at the post-war stage of European integration is the publication of high-quality (and at the same time not too costly) presentation materials, and their subsequent distribution among target audiences. For this purpose, it is advisable to primarily use such effective information channels as business representations of foreign companies in Ukraine and Ukrainian firms abroad, chambers of commerce and industry, business associations, diplomatic representations of our state in EU countries, etc.

Thus, the post-war economic development of rural local communities in Ukraine should rely on the formation of a modern marketing ecosystem of spatial development, capable of combining into one whole: promoting the economic inter-

ests of local communities, achieving their Euro-integrative goals, and stimulating the effective use of available human and natural resources (Figure 3).

The successful use of marketing tools by rural local communities in Ukraine largely depends on their adaptability to the specific economic development of each community and its spatial location. For example, traditional agricultural communities typically prioritise the development of their agricultural sector and the encouragement of food processing based on it. Communities located in mountainous areas are more inclined to promote rural and green tourism, engage in craft livestock farming (such as cheese-making and the production of craft meat products), or develop winemaking or the recreational and leisure industry. Border communities tend to focus more on transport logistics.

It is also worth noting that for Ukraine's border rural communities, especially those bordering EU member states, the main marketing efforts should be directed towards activities within the framework of cross-border cooperation. This primarily involves cross-border business and educational forums, the implementation of projects related to the transfer of innovative agro-technologies, and the formation of networks of cross-border clusters and agro-industrial parks.

Furthermore, the effective application of territorial marketing can help many rural local communities in Ukraine avoid some of the problems encountered by neighbouring countries in the process of European integration. For example, in Poland, the diversification and development of agriculture were significantly limited by the size of farms. Empirical survey results indicate that small farms, owning from 1 to 5 hectares of land (which make up nearly 50% of the country's farms), tend to further divide, gradually turning into reserve plots that serve as insurance policies or dowries (Sikora, 2012).

In summary, it is worth highlighting several marketing tools that are relevant for all rural local communities, regardless of their type, such as: creating brands for producers of organic agricultural products, rural areas with high potential for developing innovative processing industries, or environmentally clean areas with unique natural features combined with distinctive farming traditions.

Conclusions

In the context of war, the economy of Ukraine's rural local communities has faced a number of new challenges and threats, necessitating the search for solutions to their development issues. This primarily concerns the need to increase the efficiency of the natural-resource and human potential of these communities by improving their management systems, enhancing the investment climate, and identifying priority areas and methods for attracting investment resources for the development of Ukrainian rural areas during the post-war recovery phase. Additionally, it involves addressing the urgent problems that need immediate resolution. These include abandoning the remnants of post-Soviet management practices, eliminating existing institutional barriers and dysfunctions, improving the quality of human and social capital in rural areas, overcoming negative behavioural and psychological stereotypes of the residents, and implementing a range of innovative management tools for rural local communities.

In particular, it is important to complete reforms aimed at enhancing the real financial and institutional capacity of Ukraine's rural local communities and their local self-governing bodies. Equally significant is establishing a continuous process of training and skill development for local managers and community activists, alongside implementing a series of educational programmes for rural residents. These programmes should cover topics such as entrepreneurship development, the application of modern agricultural technologies, cooperation, and environmentally friendly natural resource management.

Furthermore, as Ukraine deepens its European integration, the role of innovative community management tools will continue to grow. Therefore, leaders and employees of local self-government bodies should start mastering modern digital technologies, project management skills, and effective municipal marketing tools. All this emphasises the importance of such crucial factors for the socio-economic development of Ukraine's rural local communities as open data resources, democratic public management practices, continuous online presence, and the activation of inter-municipal cooperation and cross-sectoral partnerships.

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