

# Results of the conference “Active Citizens and Government - Towards Partnership”

April 30, 2020

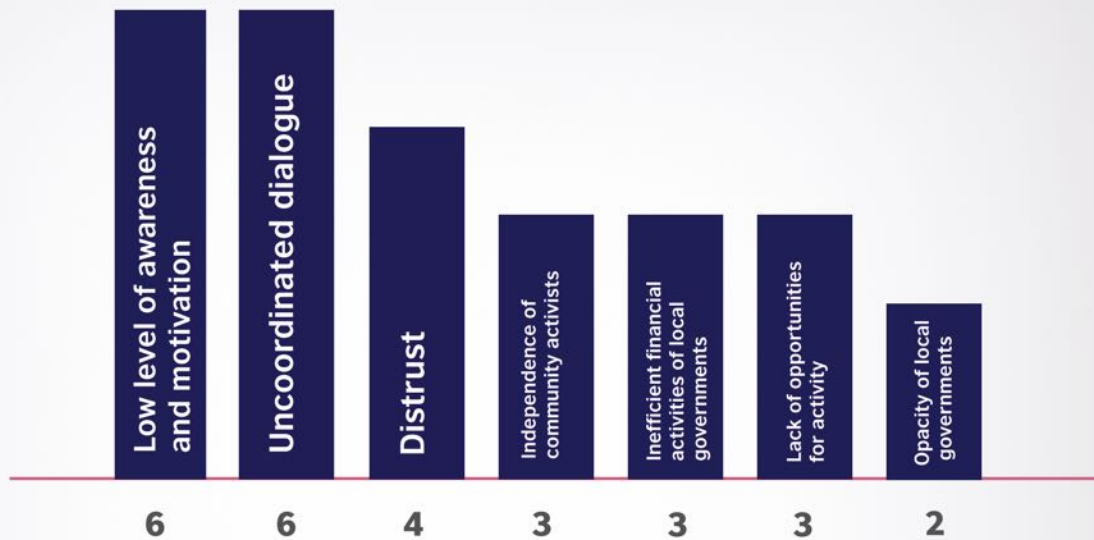
How can active citizens find partners in government to solve community problems? How can the government cooperate more effectively with civil society? And how to overcome the new constraints in establishing partnerships caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions? Such questions were raised by the participants of the online conference "Active Citizens and Government - Towards Partnership" and together they tried to find answers.

During the panel discussion and working groups, the participants of the online conference discussed the challenges, possible reactions to them and real examples of partnership between the government and the public sector. This publication presents the work of 6 working groups and quotes from the participants of the panel discussion.

We hope that the proposed information will be useful for event participants and other interested stakeholders.



## Challenges of active citizens and local government cooperation



\* the number on the graph shows in how many working groups this challenge has been identified

### Low level of awareness and motivation in the public sector

Participants noted that activists do not have enough knowledge about state formation, methods of communication, teamwork, project implementation. They also noted low motivation and difficulties in involving people in activities, especially in small settlements.

**Solution:** Organizing tuitions, trainings, workshops, participation in national and international educational events; self-education is very important; distribution of interests and activities among activists, which will allow them to focus on specific areas; exploring the experience of other communities.

*"There is a project "School of the Future Power" in Slovyansk, where local residents can study the recommendations of previous graduates. Among the topics discussed are the responsibilities of the mayor and deputies, mechanisms for forming and managing the local budget, mechanisms for influencing the government and opportunities to become part of the local government."*



**Maryna Oliynyk**  
Head of the culture  
department of the  
Slovyansk City Council

## Uncoordinated dialogue

What participants meant was the reluctance of the authorities to establish and maintain contact, lack of communication channels, lack of understanding of the need to interact with the community, low constructiveness of such dialogue, even if it takes place.

**Solution:** Initiation of joint meetings (round tables, training events, focus groups to involve an independent third party etc.); organizing and delivering of advocacy campaigns; proposal from the community of specific ideas and ways to implement them.



**Olena Chornobryvenko**  
Chairman of the Board of  
the NGO Harmony

*"A study in Vinnytsia found out that a large number of local deputies are not known to the public, especially a little is known about their activities. And this is a problem. I think that the highlighting of the work of deputies is necessary, first of all, through dialogue with the community. Deputies will understand the community's needs, and the community will know what the deputies think about it."*

## Distrust

between the government and the community is caused by a lack of understanding, cases of dishonest behaviour and misperceptions of each other.

**Solution:** Wide awareness on both sides and diligent behaviour; positive examples of previous cooperation; overcoming stereotypes about government and community.



**Mykola Susko**  
Head of the NGO Youth  
Space, deputy of the  
Uzhhorod City Council

*"Trust between the government and the community can be built through the implementation of joint public projects. A good example is the participatory budget. It is important for the authorities to understand that the community is their partner and to give them their full support."*



## Independence of community activists

Participants discussed issues of politicization in the public sector, changes in government and their impact on independence, previous contacts / arrangements and initiatives, and the use of civic activities only to gain power.

**Solution:** Preliminary discussion of the terms of cooperation and positioning of involved sides; building lasting relationships and partnership mechanisms that will not depend on individuals; open competition in the public sector; taking responsibility for their activities.



**Maryna Popatenko**  
Deputy Minister of Youth  
and Sports of Ukraine

*"It is very important for the government to understand the ability of organizations to implement the initiatives they offer. It is important for a public organization to take responsibility and join the processes, not just teach the government how to work."*

## Lack of opportunities for activity

It was about the lack of premises where activists can gather, the lack of conditions for low-mobility groups. Especially during the quarantine period, there was a problem of lack or low quality of Internet connection.

**Solution:** Appeal to local governments; organizing meeting spaces in libraries or other public areas; Involvement of business in connecting / improving the quality of the Internet; arranging the Internet access at public places; creation of electronic services.



**Serhiy Nadal**  
Mayor of Ternopil

*"We have created a service 'Ternopolyanin's Cabinet', where people (including disabled people) can get information or service without leaving home... On the city council website we created a volunteer declaration, which could be filled out by anyone. Based on the declaration, a single volunteer passport was created, which was agreed with law enforcement agencies. This increases the trust to volunteers among the population."*

## Inefficient financial activities of local governments

Lack of allocated financial resources for public sector activities (especially during quarantine), low attention of the authorities to the projects proposed by activists.

**Solution:** Active reasoning of ideas realization expediency (including advocacy); implementation of the participatory budget; joint searching and attracting of grants and other funds, co-financing (for example, pitching with the British Council).

## Opacity of local governments

Participants noted the lack of information, access to statistics on the activities of local governments and their individual representatives.

**Solution:** Implementation of e-government practices (electronic versions of decision documents, e-petitions, online coverage of local government activities, etc.); broadcast meetings online; public reports on the activities of local authorities.

*"We have organized an electronic survey of citizens and this gives us the opportunity to respond quickly in the process of making important decisions for the city... The more information about the work of local governments in various fields will be available, the stronger will be the interest in the work of the local self-government".*



**Serhiy Nadal**  
Mayor of Ternopil



**Maryna Oliynyk**  
Head of the Culture  
Department of the  
Slovyansk City Council

*"There is a portal "Your Deputy" at the city council website, where information about all deputies is collected: their biography, attending sessions, voting, submitting initiatives, etc. We need to spread the information about such services, because many people do not know about them."*


# Conclusion

These results are not a universal selection of recipes for building an effective partnership and reflect only the opinion of the conference participants. However, exploring good practices and raising awareness, establishing dialogue and building trust, accountability and transparency, understanding the importance of everyone and creating opportunities for everyone are issues that are worth voicing, and solving them will help active citizens and the government to move towards the much-needed partnership for all. In Ukraine, there are many examples of successful cooperation and the use of effective methods and tools to achieve it. Therefore, it is important to create platforms for discussion and exchange of best practices and search for opportunities for their implementation on the ground. Think globally, act locally!

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## Useful tools for establishing cooperation between active citizens and the government

Names and descriptions	Link
Participatory budget - opportunity for each resident to participate in the distribution of the local budget	<a href="https://gb.kyivcity.gov.ua/about">https://gb.kyivcity.gov.ua/about</a>
Electronic petitions - service that allows citizens to apply to the authorities through an official online tool	<a href="https://e-dem.in.ua/">https://e-dem.in.ua/</a>
Pitching - community action projects competition, co-funded by the British Council in Ukraine and local authorities	<a href="https://pitching.in.ua/">https://pitching.in.ua/</a>
Youth Capital - competition aimed at improving cooperation between local authorities and youth representatives in all cities of Ukraine. The organizer is the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine	<a href="http://youthcapital.org.ua/pro-konkurs">http://youthcapital.org.ua/pro-konkurs</a>
Youth council – an advisory body to local governments to advise and develop youth policy	<a href="http://youthcouncil.com.ua/">http://youthcouncil.com.ua/</a>
Your deputy - service for monitoring the activities of local council deputies	<a href="http://e-deputat.slavrada.gov.ua/uk">http://e-deputat.slavrada.gov.ua/uk</a>
A child- and youth-friendly community - UNICEF initiative that helps local authorities implement mechanisms to protect the interests of children and youth	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/child-friendly-municipalities-initiative">https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/child-friendly-municipalities-initiative</a>