

SPOTLIGHT

DMYTRO KHUTKYY

Electronic Democracy in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. Patterns and Comparative Perspectives

Abstract. In recent years, numerous e-participation opportunities have emerged. Their scope and impact vary across countries. This contribution reviews the performance of observed e-democracy initiatives in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, based on expert interviews, content analysis of online cases, and related self-reported statistics. The studied countries demonstrate a wide spectrum of e-democracy forms, tools, their usage rates, and influences on policy making. Belarus has the fewest e-participation opportunities, Moldova has more tools but little e-participation, while Ukraine has a more functional version of digital democracy in terms of numbers of available e-participation formats, instruments, their usage rates, and impact on public policy.

Dmytro Khutkyy is the Kone Foundation Fellow in the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Introduction

Digital technologies allow potentially accessible, cheap, and fast means for e-participation in politics. Nevertheless, the scope of their introduction, usage, and role in public policy varies across countries. This contribution examines the state of electronic democracy in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe that invest in digital technologies for electronic governance, but demonstrate different patterns of popular online engagement. To reveal the challenging aspect of e-participation, in this contribution e-democracy is viewed in a narrow sense as participation in public policy using digital means.

There are several international comparative rankings related to e-democracy that collect and present data aggregated at country level.¹ Consequently,

¹ Cf. for example the E-Participation Index: United Nations, United Nations E-Government Survey 2018, New York/NY 2018, http://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2018-Survey/E-Government%20Survey%202018_FINAL_PRINT.pdf; Open Government Partnership, Independent Reporting Mechanism, <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism>; Inter-Parliamentary

such sources do not enable comprehension of the complexity of an actual e-participation. For example, according to the United Nations E-Participation Index (EPI), in 2016 and 2018 all three countries belonged to at least high-EPI groups.² However, the exact rankings and especially their changes over time, at least for Belarus (rising scores) and Ukraine (declining scores), have been heavily debated in professional communities and criticized by some experts, from authorities and civil society alike.³ Therefore, to better understand e-activism in these countries, it is reasonable to detect the available e-participation forms and instruments and clarify their effects on public policy.

The research raises several central questions. What forms and instruments of e-democracy are present? What are their usage rates? What are their influences on policy making? This exploratory qualitative study applies an inductive approach using empirical data to draw conceptual conclusions. It is primarily based on a series of semi-structured expert interviews with civic activists, scholars, IT experts, think-tank analysts, NGO representatives, politicians, and public officials. The fieldwork lasted from 21 March 2017 till 6 June 2017 and resulted in thirty-six interviews. The distribution of interviews among countries is as follows: Belarus (ten); Moldova (twelve); and Ukraine (fourteen). The questions were designed and the respective answers analyzed according to the themes of form, case, and outcome of e-democracy. Content analysis of e-platforms was also conducted and their self-reported statistics were considered. The obtained findings are here presented further.

Belarus

The Belarus government's National Center for Electronic Services (*Natsionalnyi tsentr elektronnyh uslug*) portrays promoting e-government as a national policy since 2003 and sets the goal of entering the top-fifty EPI countries by

Union (IPU), The World E-Parliament Report 2018, Geneva 2018, <http://www.ipu.org/file/5920/download?token=of2nr3Mz>. All internet references were accessed on 21 April 2019.

² United Nations, United Nations E-government Survey 2016, New York/NY 2016, <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN96407.pdf>; United Nations, United Nations E-government Survey 2018, New York/NY 2018, http://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2018-Survey/E-Government%20Survey%202018_FINAL_PRINT.pdf.

³ Cf. discussions in the Facebook groups 'E-Democracy in Ukraine' and 'E-Democracy and E-Governance in the World'. E-Democracy in Ukraine, 20 July 2018, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/edemclubua/permalink/1949464661760110>; E-Democracy and E-Governance in the World, 24 December 2018, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/149421709067895/permalink/266145534062178>.

2022.⁴ Despite this, civil society is rather skeptical of e-participation in this country. On this matter, e-governance experts of the Internet Governance Forum 2017 in Minsk have noted that the government's focus on obtaining higher ratings in international rankings is irrelevant, as it reduces the ambition of e-governance to achieving targets based on formal indicators and thereby substitutes the introduction of a genuine electronic democracy.⁵ Furthermore, Belarusian researchers admit a long-term trend of decline of interest of citizens in public decision making, and falling political trust and satisfaction with government institutions,⁶ which corresponds with survey data. According to a sociological survey conducted in 2015 by Novak, two-thirds of Belarusian internet users have visited government websites at least once, but only one-tenth of users visit these websites frequently.⁷ However, there is some online activism, driven by dedicated civic activists.

In Belarus, the most accessible and popular form of e-participation is an individual e-appeal. For instance, according to My City (*Moŭ Gorad*) e-appeals platform, as of April 2019 there were 203,843 solved issues of 219,490 submitted (over 92.8% solution rate) and of engaging over 90,000 citizens;⁸ however, an expert questioned its popularity, especially outside the capital city.⁹ Another notable case is the e-appeal project Belarusian Pit (*BelYama*), which facilitated collecting photo proofs and coordinates of pot-holes and sending them to authorities;¹⁰ however, even in the capital city Minsk, as of April 2019 the proportion of pot-holes fixed was only about 22.2%. Thus, while official statistics show high solution rates, independent sources give more modest estimations.

Collective e-petition is probably the second most popular e-participation form. Although international e-petition platforms (such as Change.org¹¹) do not have an official status in Belarus, the government does offer feedback opportunities for citizens. The website of the Council of Ministers has an

⁴ National Center of Electronic Services (NCES), Electronic Government, <http://nces.by/e-government>.

⁵ Aleksey Ovchinnikov, *Est' li u elektronnoho pravitelstva v Belarusi draivery?*, *e-Gov.by*, 24 May 2017, <http://e-gov.by/stroitelstvo-e-gov/est-li-u-elektronnoho-pravitelstva-v-belarusi-drajvery>.

⁶ Dmitry Volodin / Andrey Sushko, *E-uchastie kak instrument inklyuzivnogo gosudarstvennogo upravleniya*, Belarusian Institute for Public Administration Reform and Transformation (BIPART), http://sympa-by.eu/sites/default/files/library/brif_issledovaniya_e-uchastie_kak_instrument_inklyuzivnogo_gosupravleniya_bipart_a_sushko.pdf.

⁷ Sergey Glagolev, *Chasto na sayty belorusskih gosorganov zakhodit lish' kazhdyy 10-y internet-polzovatel'*, *ej.by*, 20 September 2015, <http://ej.by/news/it/2015/09/20/chasto-na-sayty-belorusskih-gosorganov-zahodit-lish-kazhdyy-10-y.html>.

⁸ Cf. *Moŭ gorad*, <http://115.бел>.

⁹ The author's interview with Mikhail Doroshevich, 16 April 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰ Cf. *BelYama*, <http://belyama.by/statistics>.

¹¹ Cf. *Change.org*, <http://www.change.org>.

e-form for submitting an e-appeal.¹² If an e-appeal of similar content is submitted by over ten people, the government can publish its answer collectively.¹³ In practice, this allows Belarusians to collect signatures (name, postal address, and email address) and submit to authorities as collective e-appeals—in this respect they are equal to e-petitions. For example, the e-service Zvarot.by is linked to over 600 official e-appeal forms of Belarus authorities and, as of April 2019, reported 96,194 e-appeals (aggregated in e-petition campaigns).¹⁴ Another website, Petitions.by, focusing on municipal issues as of April 2019 listed 555 e-petitions, with statistics of people's satisfaction with authorities on a scale ranging from 0 (low) to 5 (high).¹⁵

The evaluations of the impact of e-petitions on public policy vary, but overall it is petty, relating mostly to minor issues in social policies. In this respect, e-petitions promoter Andrey Strizhak admitted that e-petitions have some informational and ethical power in the public domain, but little legal effect because they are non-binding.¹⁶ A scholar noted that online and offline comments by public officials are sometimes inconsistent, usually ignoring negative feedback and critique.¹⁷ Even when officials do respond, the answers are of questionable usefulness. According to one study of local authorities, the online answers are mostly formal and standardized, imitating real discussion with the public.¹⁸ Nevertheless, some e-petitions have had an effect. When there is confrontation over minor issues, e-petitions can solve issues and resolve conflicts.¹⁹ In one case, activists advocated change in the law on price tags; as a result, vendors were obliged to put price tag per piece and per kilogram.²⁰ Yet, as an e-participation expert admitted, it is much simpler to solve local issues, like fixing a road, so 90% of e-petitions relate to practical issues, while only 10% relate to political issues.²¹ Allegedly, political demands are ignored.²² For instance, the e-petition of introducing the red-and-white flag as official received an official rejection.²³ A survey of internet users in Belarus

¹² Cf. Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, Enquiries of Citizens and Legal Entities, <http://www.government.by/en/feedback>.

¹³ Cf. Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, Elektronnye obrashcheniya (E-appeals), http://www.government.by/ru/feedback_eltreatment.

¹⁴ Cf. Zvarot.by, Ab sêrvîse, <http://zvarot.by/be/about>.

¹⁵ Cf. Petitions.by, Statistika, <http://petitions.by/petitions/stats>.

¹⁶ Liza Kucheryavaya, Kakiye onlain-obrashcheniya vliyaiut na belorusskoe zakonodatel'stvo?, *Euroradio.fm*, 20 November 2015, <http://euroradio.fm/ru/kakie-onlayn-obrashcheniya-vliyayut-na-belorusskoe-zakonodatelstvo>.

¹⁷ The author's interview with Uladzislau Ivanou, 1 April 2017, Vilnius.

¹⁸ The author's interview with Vasily Naumov, 27 April 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁹ The author's interview with Aleksey Kozliuk, 12 April 2017, online via Skype.

²⁰ The author's interview with Uladzimir Kavalkin, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

²¹ The author's interview with Uladzimir Kavalkin, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

²² The author's interview with Andrei Kazakevich, 10 April 2017, online via Skype.

²³ The author's interview with Uladzimir Kavalkin, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

on e-petitions in 2018 demonstrated that 16.6% of respondents saw no impact from e-petitions.²⁴ Nonetheless, according to this survey, 6.8% believed that e-petitions make it possible to influence the list of priorities for authorities, 12.5% viewed e-petitions as an opportunity to solve priority issues, 20.2% saw them as an opportunity for a dialogue between people and authorities, and 19.7% envision e-petitions as an opportunity for a legislative initiative. It should be taken into account that, from an international comparative perspective, these numbers are relatively low.

There is some public open-data analytics in Belarus, although one expert opinion is that there is an overall lack of open data to analyze.²⁵ Indeed, for years the key source of open financial data was *Kosht Urada*.²⁶ This platform displays Belarus budgetary data on expenditure, revenue, and balance disaggregated by central and local authorities, social security fund, and by years—in table and infographics formats. It also reports on national debt, public budget by types of expense, the cost of typical public services per citizen, allowing downloading the data in XLSL open-data format, and presents an interactive ‘tax calculator’ (estimating actual taxes paid by a citizen). As the project leader explained, they obtain information only from open sources and transform it into a clear interface.²⁷ Evidently, due to the original public data, the analyzed data are at a rather aggregated level. Nevertheless, it draws considerable attention. According to e-Governance Academy, in 2017 the platform attracted 150,000 visitors.²⁸ An activist reported²⁹ on a number of positive outcomes from publishing *Kosht Urada*: first, authorities have started to publish more information and analytical articles due to a competition effect; second, a network of journalists has realized that they can access interesting, career-making, material, and they have started writing their own reports on public finance; third, citizens now understand how their taxes are used and have become more aware of public spending. In addition, a recent project, *Opendata.by*, has emerged.³⁰ In addition to multiple unofficial datasets, it contains twenty-two open data-based projects, including Minsk budget monitoring, analytical system of political connections, and machine prediction of court decisions. Apart

²⁴ Dmytro Khutkyy / Mikhail Doroshevich, E-Petitions in Belarus and Ukraine, *e-belarus.org*, 7 March 2018, <http://www.e-belarus.org/article/epetitions-belarus-ukraine.html>.

²⁵ The author’s interview with Mikhail Doroshevich, 16 April 2017, online via Skype.

²⁶ Cf. *Kosht Urada*, <http://www.koshturada.by>.

²⁷ The author’s interview with Uladzimir Kavalkin, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

²⁸ Kristina Reinsalu / Jelizaveta Krenjova, Focus area no. 2. E-Democracy. ICTs for Promoting Civic Participation and Transparency of Government Decision-Making Processes, in: Kristina Reinsalu et al., *Situation Review. Safety and Security in the Cyberspace and E-Democracy in the Eastern Partnership Countries*, Tallinn 2017, 143-203, http://ega.ee/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ega_e-demcyber_FINAL_web.pdf.

²⁹ The author’s interview with Uladzimir Kavalkin, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

³⁰ Cf. *Otkrytye dannye*, <http://opendata.by>.

from this, according to a journalist, there are few journalist investigations of lifestyle of public officials; yet, those published are very sensitive to authorities, who try to resolve this somehow.³¹

Other e-democracy forms are reportedly used much less. As e-participation researchers have noted, online consultations are used only sporadically,³² while online invitations for public hearings seem formal and non-genuine.³³ Belarusian scholars have also noted the right of citizens for a legislative initiative, which is however restrained by bureaucratic complexities and therefore has never been realized.³⁴ Experts mention crowdfunding, but its relation to public policy is unclear.³⁵ For example, the crowdfunding platform *Uley* lists grassroots citizen–citizen projects rather than citizen–authority collaborative initiatives.³⁶ However, in one case, activists launched a crowdfunding campaign in Facebook to support those fined for unemployment, and collected 39,000 USD within few days.³⁷

Apart from conventional e-participation, Belarusians use digital means for protest activities. This was the case in 2006 (the Jeans Revolution), 2011 (the Social Network Revolution), and 2015 (anti-unemployment decree protests). Historically, it started from LiveJournal blog posts,³⁸ then moved to Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki,³⁹ as well as presented in Facebook⁴⁰ and independent online blogs.⁴¹ Social media were used by activists to discuss developments and give information about results (for internal and external communication),⁴² to provide information about time and place (for mobilization for street protests), to live-stream (for transparency), and to speak up (for expressing positions by public opinion leaders).⁴³ As a scholar and activist has reflected, such online communication created a wave of solidarity among protesters.⁴⁴ After the e-mobilized protests, the ‘unemployment’ decree, despite being legally enacted, was in fact stopped.⁴⁵ However, other protests mentioned did not reach their ultimate objectives.

³¹ The author’s interview with Dzmitry Karenka, 21 March 2017, online via Skype.

³² The author’s interview with Andrei Kazakevich, 10 April 2017, online via Skype.

³³ The author’s interview with Mikhail Doroshevich, 16 April 2017, online via Skype.

³⁴ Volodin/Sushko, E-uchastie kak instrument inkluzivnogo gosudarstvennogo upravleniya.

³⁵ The author’s interview with Aleksey Kozliuk, 12 April 2017, online via Skype.

³⁶ Cf. *Uley*, <http://ulej.by>.

³⁷ The author’s interview with Julia Mitskevich, 12 April 2017, online via Skype.

³⁸ The author’s interview with Dzmitry Karenka, 21 March 2017, online via Skype.

³⁹ The author’s interview with Dzmitry Karenka, 21 March 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁰ The author’s interview with Julia Mitskevich, 12 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴¹ The author’s interview with Dmitry Boichenko, 1 April 2017, Vilnius.

⁴² The author’s interview with Andrey Kazakevich, 10 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴³ The author’s interview with Julia Mitskevich, 12 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁴ The author’s interview with Vasily Naumov, 27 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁵ The author’s interview with Andrei Kazakevich, 10 April 2017, online via Skype.

The general assessment is that e-democratic influence on public policy is minor. On one hand, a positive view is that the government makes an effort to demonstrate openness to citizens' feedback.⁴⁶ On the other hand, a skeptical view is that there are very limited possibilities to impact policy making, only on issues of interest to the authorities, such as social (e.g. children, disabled) themes or local (e.g. ecological) initiatives.⁴⁷ An expert has admitted a lack of successful cases, and concluded that in the current political setting, they are not suitable for scaling up.⁴⁸ One scholarly perspective on online activism is rather critical: 'people sign Change.org and think that they have done everything.'⁴⁹ This corresponds with the public opinion, which tends rather toward self-expression than influence. A survey of internet users in Belarus conducted by Human Constanta and Baltic Internet Policy Initiative in January–February 2019 showed that while 61% believed that online activism enables attracting attention to problems and 41% saw it as the possibility of giving voice to under-represented groups, only 35% agreed that it facilitated more responsible decision making.⁵⁰ Therefore, e-activism in Belarus predominantly affects agenda setting.

Moldova

In Moldova, the importance of digitizing governance is reflected in establishing the e-Government Agency (*Agenția de Guvernare Electronică*). However, its focus is on e-services rather than e-participation.⁵¹ From the perspective of a civil-society expert, the government is reluctant to introduce e-democracy instruments, arguing that citizens of Moldova are not active in online policy making.⁵² According to a sociological survey by the Center of Sociological Investigations and Marketing Research (CBS-AXA), in 2015 only 16% of respondents accessed the webpage of the Government of the Republic of Moldova (www.gov.md) at least once.⁵³ Still, civil society activists, especially from

⁴⁶ The author's interview with Vasily Naumov, 27 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁷ The author's interview with Tatsiana Chulitskaya, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁸ The author's interview with Mikhail Doroshevich, 16 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁴⁹ The author's interview with Tatsiana Chulitskaya, 14 April 2017, online via Skype.

⁵⁰ Yana Goncarova, *Issledovanie: onlainovyi aktivizm i tsyfrovye prava*, *Human Constanta*, 13 April 2019, <http://humanconstantaby/issledovanie-onlainovyi-aktivizm>.

⁵¹ E-Governance Agency, About, Government of Moldova, <http://egov.md/en/about>.

⁵² The author's interview with Elena Prohntichi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁵³ Center of Sociological Investigations and Marketing Research (CBS-AXA), *Citizens' Perception, Uptake and Support for the e-Transformation of Governance in the Republic of Moldova*, Chișinău 2016, <http://egov.md/en/file/4048/download?token=S4pGwkCI>.

the capital city, Chişinău,⁵⁴ or from diaspora⁵⁵ utilize digital tools with the aim of influencing policies.

Probably, the most widely used e-participation format in Moldova is e-consultation. The government and the National Participation Council (*Consiliul Național pentru Participare*) (NPC) have developed a public e-consultations platform, [Particip.gov.md](http://particip.gov.md).⁵⁶ It presents texts of draft legal acts of central executive authorities (but not draft laws of the parliament) and allows citizens to comment on them via email. As a civil-society expert explained, the government publishes draft policies for deliberation because, according to the law, an act cannot be legally passed without a public discussion.⁵⁷ As of April 2019, over eleven years, government agencies published a total of 5,932 draft documents, 138 announcements of public consultations, which received 1,022 comments.⁵⁸ This yields an average of less than six comments per draft document. However, according to an activist, too often the government puts a draft decision on the agenda in the morning and adopts it in the afternoon without much discussion.⁵⁹ The lack of public input is corroborated by the fact that many of the draft government documents received zero comments.⁶⁰ A civic activist shared the opinion that this is due to a lack of public-consultation culture, which takes time to develop.⁶¹ After e-consultations the government has to publish a document identifying comments, degrees of acceptance, and respective arguments, but usually it publishes a short form marking 'accept fully', 'accept partially', or 'do not accept'.⁶² Even more, not all authorities provide explanations why they have accepted or rejected public inputs.⁶³ An expert evaluation is that the impact of e-consultations depends on how politically sensitive a draft law is—the bigger the issue, the smaller the public impact.⁶⁴

Parliament also holds e-consultations. It has a webpage, where it announces public hearings and provides an opportunity to send comments by email.⁶⁵ However, according to a civic activist, parliament does not organize consulta-

⁵⁴ The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁵⁵ The author's interview with Stela Cudalb, 9 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁵⁶ Cf. [Particip.gov.md](http://particip.gov.md), <http://particip.gov.md>.

⁵⁷ The author's interview with Arcadie Barbarosie, 17 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁵⁸ [Particip.gov.md](http://particip.gov.md), Statistica, <http://particip.gov.md/statistics.php?l=ro>.

⁵⁹ The author's interview with Arcadie Barbarosie, 17 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁶⁰ [Particip.gov.md](http://particip.gov.md), Statistica.

⁶¹ The author's interview with Olesia Stamate, 19 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁶² The author's interview with Elena Prohniachi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁶³ The author's interview with Olesia Stamate, 19 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁶⁴ The author's interview with Elena Prohniachi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁶⁵ The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. Official Site, Audieri, <http://www.parlament.md/TRANSPAREN%C8%9AADECIZIONAL%C4%82/Audieripublice/Audieri/tabid/231/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

tions for all laws.⁶⁶ From the perspective of another civic expert, when authorities have a choice whether to consult the public or not, they choose not to consult.⁶⁷ Indeed, over three years, only eight public consultations on draft laws have been published there.⁶⁸ A civic activist concluded that the decision making on laws lacks transparency, that parliament adopts sensitive laws very quickly on first reading, and that it organizes public consultations only if civil society insists.⁶⁹

E-consultations are also used in other settings and varieties. The notorious NPC, representing different civil-society stakeholders in dialogue with authorities, sometimes communicates online (via email or Facebook) for sharing information, making recommendations, and monitoring and control.⁷⁰ However, a civil-society expert has voiced an opinion that NPC is working only formally, with no significant influence on politics.⁷¹ Besides, there was a joint civil-society-authorities project, *Școala Modernă* (meaning 'Modern School'), aimed at public e-consultations for educational reform.⁷² The actual inputs and results are still unknown. Finally, the e-Government Agency conducted a survey for mapping the 'Revolution of Data' in Moldova.⁷³ Similarly, its outcomes are unclear.

There is limited space for citizens' e-appeals and e-petitions. Officially, citizens can send e-appeals, but only individually, not collectively.⁷⁴ However, a critical civil-society perspective holds that there is no proof that authorities will respond to an e-appeal.⁷⁵ Apparently, submission and answer rates are unknown. Besides, Moldovans can sign e-petitions on external resources, such as Change.org, which can be forwarded to public institutions. One e-petition, the most popular among Moldova-based-initiated, which demanded a stop to the draft law of converting loan guarantees into an internal debt and punishing corrupt oligarchs, collected over 9,000 signatures in support.⁷⁶ As a scholar of democracy elaborated, a Facebook community of young activists promoted

⁶⁶ The author's interview with Elena Prohnitchi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁶⁷ The author's interview with Olesea Stamate, 19 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁶⁸ The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. Official Site, Audieri.

⁶⁹ The author's interview with Elena Prohnitchi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁷⁰ The author's interview with Veaceslav Berbeca, 16 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁷¹ The author's interview with Petru Macovei, 2 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁷² Cf. MiLab, *Provocarea 'Școala Modernă'*, <http://inovatii.gov.md/?lang=ro>.

⁷³ Government Open Data Portal, *Chestionarul pentru cartografierea 'Revoluției datelor' în Moldova*, <http://date.gov.md/en/sondaj>.

⁷⁴ The author's interview with Elena Prohnitchi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁷⁵ The author's interview with Olesea Stamate, 19 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁷⁶ Change.org, *Întoarceți de la hoți miliardul furat, nu de la noi!*, <http://www.change.org/p/%C3%AEntoarce%C8%9Bi-de-la-ho%C8%9Bi-miliardul-furat-nu-de-la-noi>.

the issue and, as a result, while the politician was not punished, the policy was changed.⁷⁷ But official statistics are missing.

Moldova activists use some crowdsourcing and crowdfunding for policy-related purposes. For instance, they created a crowdsourcing platform, PMAN, which gathers active citizens, civil-society organizations, mass media, public agencies, and international organizations to develop an idea, receive feedback, and collect a team to form a project—primarily in the area of judicial reform.⁷⁸ Yet, it has only twenty-two active and two completed projects⁷⁹ and up to 400 users.⁸⁰ Further, an opposition TV channel, Jurnal TV, and an alternative TV channel, Media Alternativa/TV8, used crowdfunding.⁸¹ Also, a subscription-based, independent website, Privesc.eu, broadcasts topical public events.⁸²

Open-data analytics and feedback have a visible development in Moldova. The official Government Open Data Portal (*Portalul Guvernamental al Datelor Deschise*)⁸³ has an online form enabling users to suggest to government agencies which datasets should be disclosed, and forwarding those suggestions to relevant institutions.⁸⁴ Moreover, according to an employee of the e-Government Agency, by March 2017 the agency had conducted three hackathons, where developers competed in developing twenty-five official applications for e-participation.⁸⁵ As of April 2019, the portal listed twenty-seven such applications.⁸⁶ One of them is the OpenMoney project, which utilizes official open data to display beneficiaries of public contracts.⁸⁷ It allows website visitors to search data by names of people, companies, or institutions, seeking connections and complex relationships among them. Another open-data analytics online platform, Budget Stories, publishes planned budget and actual expenses disaggregated by type and year, presents infographics for different budget spending types, provides links to official statistics on public finance, and has an interactive ‘tax calculator’ (demonstrating how much taxes a cit-

⁷⁷ The author’s interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁷⁸ Cf. PMAN, Platforma, <http://www.pman.md>.

⁷⁹ Cf. PMAN, Idei, <http://www.pman.md>.

⁸⁰ Reinsalu / Krenjova, Focus area no. 2. E-Democracy.

⁸¹ Cf. Jurnal TV, www.jurnaltv.md; TV8, <http://tv8.md>; The author’s interview with Petru Macovei, 2 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁸² Cf. Privesc.eu, <http://www.privesc.eu>.

⁸³ Cf. Government of the Republic of Moldova, Government Open Data Portal, <http://www.date.gov.md/en>.

⁸⁴ Government of the Republic of Moldova, Government Open Data Portal, Get Involved, <http://www.date.gov.md/en/particip%C4%83>.

⁸⁵ The author’s interview with Cornelia Amihalachioae, 21 March 2017, online via Skype.

⁸⁶ Government of the Republic of Moldova, Government Open Data Portal, Aplicații, <http://date.gov.md/ro/aplicatii>.

⁸⁷ Cf. OpenMoney, <http://openmoney.md>.

izen pays for each budget line).⁸⁸ Still, the data is aggregated at the level of budget spending types. As a civic activist admitted, mass media do analyze sectoral differences, but this is not followed by powerful campaigns, and the problems of losing budget money persist.⁸⁹

There are some possibilities to provide online feedback on public services. The project Alerte.md allowed people to report on municipal problems, which were then directed to the Chişinău town hall and discussed in sittings.⁹⁰ As assessed by a civic activist, it was the case of a genuine collaboration between the public and the town hall.⁹¹ As of April 2019, the portal statistics informed of 9,644 reported issues, of which 5,672 issues (58.8%) were solved. Yet, the last news is dated December 2014, signaling that the project has been discontinued. Besides, there was the project *Îmi pasă* (meaning 'I care'), which helped to collect and report violations in providing public services.⁹² Neither its usage rate nor its results are known.

Probably, the most powerful online activism is in the area of anticorruption monitoring and control. The online platform, Anticoruptie.md, is designed to report on cases of corruption and related crimes.⁹³ It works as follows: people report cases of abuse, investigative journalists direct notifications to law enforcement authorities, reporters monitor the evolution of investigations, then journalists publish news and analytics, to which citizens write corruption-related blog posts. According to the leader of the team running the platform, as of May 2017, Anticoruptie.md had 100,000 unique users and 300,000 visits per month.⁹⁴ Regarding the impact on anticorruption-policy implementation, the platform facilitated the identification of clandestine laboratories and transportation routes of anabolic steroids and illegal substances held by 'anabolic mafia,' resulting in criminal investigations and court trials.⁹⁵ Still, the platform team leader admitted that only around 100 people use the platform to report on corruption, the team lacks resources to investigate all reported cases, not all cases are transferred to court, and not all court decisions penalize wrongdoers.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ Cf. Budget Stories, <http://www.budgetstories.md>.

⁸⁹ The author's interview with Elena Prohnitchi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁹⁰ Cf. Alerte.md, <http://alerte.md>; The author's interview with Petru Macovei, 2 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁹¹ The author's interview with Petru Macovei, 2 June 2017, online via Skype.

⁹² Cf. *Îmi pasă*, <http://imipasa.md>.

⁹³ Cf. Anticoruptie.md, About us, <http://anticoruptie.md/en/about-us>.

⁹⁴ The author's interview with Cornelia Cozonac, 31 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁹⁵ Mariana Raţă, Anabolics Mafia. The Clandestine Road of Steroids from Moldova to Foreign Sportspeople, *Anticoruptie.md*, 26 October 2016, <http://anticoruptie.md/en/investigations/integrity/anabolics-mafia-the-clandestine-road-of-steroids-from-moldova-to-foreign-sportspeople>.

⁹⁶ The author's interview with Cornelia Cozonac, 31 May 2017, online via Skype.

Also, anticorruption online monitoring and control employs e-asset declarations data. The public has access to a website containing data on officials' income e-declarations, E-integrity (*E-intergritate*).⁹⁷ In practice, a journalist could register on the website and access datasets. Reportedly, in one case, an investigative journalist compared a person's lifestyle with the income declaration and warned society about his questionable assets.⁹⁸ Such activism rests on the assumption that politicians are usually afraid of negative publicity, and can see whether their electoral rankings are affected.⁹⁹ A more skeptical perspective was that, despite many cases of journalistic investigation of assets, there have been hardly any specific actions by authorities, so people do not believe there will be any results.¹⁰⁰

Another sensitive topic is electoral violations, and civil society has developed a number of techniques to identify and report them. For example, before an election, activists can check the voters registry online.¹⁰¹ Also, during elections, observers use internet-connected tablets to fill in questionnaires, perform parallel counting of votes, and send real-time online reports on violations.¹⁰² Furthermore, some NGOs provide platforms with geolocation functionality to show electoral-campaign violations, but people are not very interested in taking photos or videos.¹⁰³ In addition, the platform Promis was designed to identify all electoral promises and check their fulfillment.¹⁰⁴ Reportedly, it does not have a lot of impact on politics.¹⁰⁵ So, electoral monitoring is hardly influential.

Overall, while some experts think that the government is open to input from the public, most experts have a skeptical view about the opportunities of the public to influence policy. One civic activist said that the government is open to creating participation opportunities.¹⁰⁶ Another analyst assumed that politicians do not want to be open to the public.¹⁰⁷ On the part of the public, there is a lack of trust toward politicians and an unwillingness to participate in public affairs. In the words of a civic activist, 'trust to the authorities is virtually zero'.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, a public official admitted that, due to a low

⁹⁷ Cf. *E-intergritate*, <http://declaratii.cni.md/User/site/login>.

⁹⁸ The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

⁹⁹ The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁰ The author's interview with Elena Prohntichi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰¹ The author's interview with Olesea Stamate, 19 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰² The author's interview with Ion Manole, 31 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰³ The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Promises and recent statements, <http://www.promis.md>; The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁵ The author's interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁶ The author's interview with Stela Cudalb, 9 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁷ The author's interview with Ion Guzun, 29 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁰⁸ The author's interview with Ion Manole, 31 May 2017, online via Skype.

trust in government, e-participation is quite low in Moldova.¹⁰⁹ Another challenge is that citizens do not show interest or desire to continue using e-democracy platforms outside or after a project.¹¹⁰ Although people are interested in political scandals about corruption, such scandals can trigger some instability, but cannot bring any significant change.¹¹¹ A civil-society activist noted that in most cases even journalist investigations do not have much impact on policies, as authorities tend to ignore signals from journalists.¹¹² In extreme cases, dissatisfied people can turn to violent riot. In April 2009, Moldova underwent a revolution, when social-media posts with the hashtag ‘pman’ (meaning ‘Piata Marii Adunari Nationale’, the biggest square in Chişinău) mobilized young people for street protests against flawed elections.¹¹³ Nonetheless, according to a civil-society evaluation, even protests have not changed the situation of government power abuse and corruption.¹¹⁴

Ukraine

Ukraine devotes significant attention to e-governance and e-democracy. Since 2014, it has established the State Agency for e-Governance of Ukraine (*Derzhavne ahentstvo z pytan’elektronnoho uriaduvannia Ukraïny*).¹¹⁵ Moreover, in December 2016 the agency, together with CSOs, co-founded the Coalition for the Advance of E-Democracy.¹¹⁶ This coalition has developed and advocated a roadmap for the development of e-democracy in the country, which was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers as a concept paper and for the action plan in November 2017.¹¹⁷ According to a KIIS sociological survey, in February

¹⁰⁹ The author’s interview with Cornelia Amihalachioae, 21 March 2017, online via Skype.

¹¹⁰ The author’s interview with Maria Stratan, 18 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹¹¹ The author’s interview with Marian Cepoi, 13 May 2017, online via Skype; The author’s interview with Elena Prohntichi, 6 June 2017, online via Skype.

¹¹² The author’s interview with Petru Macovei, 2 June 2017, online via Skype.

¹¹³ Evgeny Morozov, Moldova’s Twitter Revolution, *Foreign Policy*, 7 April 2009, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/07/moldovas-twitter-revolution>.

¹¹⁴ The author’s interview with Veaceslav Berbeca, 16 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Derzhavne ahentstvo z pytan’ elektronnoho uriaduvannia Ukraïny, <http://www.e.gov.ua/ua/about>.

¹¹⁶ The Coalition for the Advance of Electronic Democracy in Ukraine, Memorandum pro vzaiemodiiu ta spivrobotnytstvo u vprovadzhenni elektronnoi demokratii, <http://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4zwwD8RAMnoODZ5QjhaRkd4OFE>.

¹¹⁷ Derzhavne ahentstvo z pytan’elektronnoho uriaduvannia Ukraïny, Uriad shvalyv Kontseptsiiu rozvytku elektronnoi demokratii ta plan zakhodiv z ii realizatsii, 9 November 2017, <https://www.e.gov.ua/ua/news/uryad-shvalyv-koncepciyu-rozvytku-elektronnoyi-demokratiyi-ta-plan-zahodiv-z-yiyi>.

2015, 19% of the adult population of the Ukraine used ICT to interact with the government.¹¹⁸ Actual e-participation depends on specific instruments.

In Ukraine, independent online news outlets gave impetus to regime-change fostered the protests Kuchmagate in 2000 and the Orange Revolution in 2004.¹¹⁹ Viral posts in social media spurred mass mobilization for Euro-maidan in November 2013 and the subsequent Revolution of Dignity in February 2014.¹²⁰ Since then, e-participation has predominantly channeled into routine policy making.

One of the most widespread forms are e-appeals, which can convey suggestions, requests, or complaints. For example, in October 2017, Kyiv municipality reported that within nine months it had processed over 620,000 e-appeals and resolved 72.3% of them; moreover Poltava and Cherkasy municipalities claimed a 100% resolution rate for e-appeals.¹²¹ Within the same period, Kyiv e-appeals platform attracted 120,000 users (5.5% of the adult population of the city) and Zaporizhzhia attracted 60,000 users (9.9% of the adult population of the city).¹²² These represent relatively high participation rates.

After their legislative introduction in 2014, e-petitions (collective e-appeals) became highly popular in Ukraine. They were introduced in the presidential administration, the parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*), the Cabinet of Ministers (*Kabinet Ministriv*), and in over 500 local authorities.¹²³ For instance, as of April 2019, people have submitted as many as 32,676 e-petitions to the president (the most numerous addressee among e-petitions to central authorities) and only forty-seven of them reached the 25,000 review threshold.¹²⁴ On the municipal level, the most massive participation is in Kyiv, where in October 2017 there were over 479,000 active e-petition users, constituting 22.1% of the adult population of the city.¹²⁵ According to statistics from developers, despite sea-

¹¹⁸ E-Governance for Accountability Participation (EGAP), E-uriad ta e-demokratiia. Shcho dumaiut' ukraintsi? Kyiv 2015.

¹¹⁹ Cecily Hilleary, Ukraine's Social Media Revolution Years in the Making, *Voice of America*, 14 March 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/a/ukraines-protest-movement-fueled-by-social-media/1871457.html>.

¹²⁰ Tetyana Bohdanova, Unexpected Revolution. The Role of Social Media in Ukraine's Euromaidan Uprising, *European View* 13, no. 1 (2014), 133-142, DOI: 10.1007/s12290-014-0296-4.

¹²¹ Serhiy Loboyko/Dmytro Khutkyy/Anna Iemelyanova, eds, Indeks mistsevoi elektronnoi demokratii v Ukraïni, Kyiv 2018, <http://cid.center/index.php/987520954>.

¹²² Loboyko/Khutkyy/Iemelyanova, eds, Indeks mistsevoi elektronnoi demokratii v Ukraïni.

¹²³ Dmytro Khutkyy, E-petitions in Ukraine. People's Agenda Setting. Policy Brief, Kyiv 2017, http://www.fulbrightcircle.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Dmytro_Khutkyy_E-petitions-Eng.pdf.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ofitsiine internet-predstanytstvo Presyidenta Ukraïny, Elektronni petytsii, <http://petition.president.gov.ua>.

¹²⁵ Loboyko/Khutkyy/Iemelyanova, eds, Indeks mistsevoi elektronnoi demokratii v Ukraïni.

sonal decrease in summer and on holidays, the number of e-petition users in Kyiv steadily grows, with spikes around popular campaigns.¹²⁶ Still, e-petitions remain familiar to a particular part of the general public. In October 2017, according to a sociological survey by KIIS, 27.5% of the adult population were aware of the e-petition e-service, and among them 65.3% partly or totally supported it.¹²⁷ This survey also demonstrated that 26.6% of the aware public view e-petition as ‘an occasion for a dialogue between the people and authorities about socially important issues’, 24.9% see it as ‘the implementation of direct democracy (the opportunity of legislative initiative),’ and 23.4% regard it as ‘the opportunity to influence the list of priorities for local or national authorities.’ Evaluations of e-petition impact are ambiguous. First, e-petition is a useful instrument, but vulnerable to abuse, hacking, and information warfare for political purposes.¹²⁸ A critical perspective is that e-petition is undermining the ideal of democracy, because it is non-binding.¹²⁹ A more optimistic view is that e-petitions allow a municipality to see what actually bothers people in the huge multi-million city—it is a convenient instrument for monitoring public opinion.¹³⁰ In sum, despite a number of challenges, e-petitions do frame the agenda for the public policy, but they are more efficient when submitted to local authorities than to central authorities.¹³¹

E-consultations remain an optional and rather underused e-engagement format. At the level of central authorities, it is quite indicative that during over two years of the technical possibility of e-commenting on draft laws, the parliament held only twenty-two e-consultations, of which the most popular received 863 reactions (positive or negative).¹³² During 2018–2019, each government agency held its own consultations,¹³³ but they were rather announcements of offline discussions with the option of sending suggestions via email. For instance, in Kyiv, out of 377 e-consultations, only thirty-four were taken into account by the municipality; only about 35,000 used them, constituting

¹²⁶ The author’s interview with Oleksandr Iefremov, 25 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹²⁷ Khutkyy, E-petitions in Ukraine. People’s Agenda Setting.

¹²⁸ The author’s interview with Dmytro Shymkiv, 26 May 2017, Kyiv.

¹²⁹ The author’s interview with Oleh Levchenko, 25 April 2017, by phone.

¹³⁰ The author’s interview with Ihor Khatsevych, 24 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹³¹ Khutkyy, E-petitions in Ukraine. People’s Agenda Setting.

¹³² Cf. Verkhovna Rada Ukraïny, Obhovorennia Zakonoproektiv, Statystyka shchodo obhovorennia zakonoproektiv, <http://itd.rada.gov.ua/services/pubd/?aname=statistics>.

¹³³ Uriadovyi portal. Iedynii veb-portal orhaniv vykonavchoi vlady Ukraïny, Oriientovni plany konsul’tatsii z hromadskosti/gromadyanske-suspilstvo-i-vlada/konsultaciyi-z-gromadskisty/oryentovni-plani-konsultacij-z-gromadskisty-na-sajtah-organiv-vikonavchoyi-vlady.

only 1.6% of the adult city population.¹³⁴ The quality of deliberation, the degree of consideration by authorities, and the depth of reporting on their results are uneven and depend on any particular agency. Researchers of e-consultations in Ukraine conclude that in the majority of cities and ministries of Ukraine there are only elements of non-binding consultations with the same fixed participants.¹³⁵

Some authorities occasionally hold e-voting for policies or e-elections for civic councils. For example, the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers with civil-society partners held open e-voting for open government priorities for Ukraine.¹³⁶ Although the voting was not binding, its results were almost completely taken into account by the government. Furthermore, during 2016–2017, e-elections were conducted for civic councils of several ministries and agencies of Ukraine's government.¹³⁷ Reportedly, as of February 2017, over 40,000 citizens voted.¹³⁸ As evaluated by the e-voting system architect, it was important to create a precedent.¹³⁹ Similarly, the public voted for members of the Kyiv participatory budgeting commission.¹⁴⁰ The results of these e-elections were binding—the public elected the members of these bodies via direct voting, without extra approval by authorities.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is by far the most comprehensive of all citizen engagement formats. For instance, during the 2018 PB cycle in Kyiv, 536 leaders submitted 809 projects worth over 1 billion UAH, over 131,000 users cast over 444,000 votes for 564 projects, of 141 winning projects 115 (81.5%) were implemented as of April 2019.¹⁴¹ In the Kyiv case, the submission of projects, voting for projects, electing members of PB commission, and reporting of project implementation are in digital form. Most importantly, in Kyiv the results of e-voting and e-elections are binding. Reportedly, 120 communities

¹³⁴ Loboyko/Khutkyy/Iemelyanova, eds, Indeks mistsevoi elektronnoi demokratii v Ukraïni.

¹³⁵ Serhiy Loboyko et al., E-konsultatsiï iak element publichnykh konsul'tatsiï. Praktychne doslidzhennia, Center for Innovations Development, 19 December 2018, <http://cid.center/096306376-2>.

¹³⁶ Dmytro Khutkyy, Lessons Learned. Co-Creation Developments in Ukraine, Open Government Partnership, 13 March 2019, <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/lessons-learned-co-creation-developments-ukraine>.

¹³⁷ Cf. Hromads'ka orhanizatsiia Elektronna demokratiia, Elektronne holosuvannia bez obmanu, <http://ed.org.ua/evoting.html>.

¹³⁸ Jordanka Tomkova/Dmytro Khutkyy, Implementing E-democracy. A Spectrum of Instruments and Choices, EGAP Policy Briefs on Good E-Governance no. 2, February 2017, <http://egap.in.ua/biblioteka/analitichni-zapysky-z-efetyvnoho-e-uradiuvannia-vypusk-2>.

¹³⁹ The author's interview with Volodymyr Flonts, 27 May 2017, online.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Hromads'kyi biudzhet Kyïv, Konkurs Hromads'koï Biudzhetnoi Komisii tvoho mista (beta), <http://gb.kyivcity.gov.ua/gbk>.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Hromads'kyi biudzhet Kyïv, Statystyka Kyïv 2018, <http://gb.kyivcity.gov.ua/statistics/2>.

in Ukraine have introduced some form of PB.¹⁴² This instrument has received diverse assessments of its value. One civil-society expert noted that PB is sometimes abused by municipal-council members.¹⁴³ Another civic activist acknowledged that Kyiv is a model case of a citizen–authority dialogue.¹⁴⁴ PB is recognized as genuine direct democracy for local self-government.¹⁴⁵

Ukraine has several online collaborative platforms for citizens and authorities. For instance, the E-Dem electronic-democracy platform combines e-petitions, e-PB, e-appeals, and e-consultations, of which, as of April 2019, at least one e-tool was introduced in 195 communities.¹⁴⁶ Also, E-solutions (*E-rishennia dlia hromad*), an aggregator of over 350 e-services of e-governance and e-democracy as of November 2018 was being introduced in up to fifty communities.¹⁴⁷ Smart City (*Rozumne Misto*) realizes e-governance and e-democracy in local communities.¹⁴⁸ The Civil Society app employs citizen-generated data and augmented reality to define problems, make decisions, raise resources using crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, and implement common solutions for local communities.¹⁴⁹ According to the founder of the platform, its e-voting mechanism employs elements of liquid democracy.¹⁵⁰ A civic activist concluded that e-petition and smart city platforms did facilitate a wide discussion on topical issues and solving community problems.¹⁵¹

Ukraine has a well-developed ecosystem of public-procurement open-data analytics and feedback. To analyze public procurement, there are powerful analytical modules¹⁵² utilizing ProZorro e-procurement-system data.¹⁵³ Further, an independent public-procurement feedback platform, DoZorro,¹⁵⁴ which relies on manual and automatic AI-enabled machine-learning search of procurement violations, by March 2018 had been used by over 300,000 persons.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴² Maksym Bodnar et al., Hromads'ka model' biudzhetu uchasti. Rekomendatsii po vprovadzheniu, 29 October 2018, <http://cid.center/18739172941-2>.

¹⁴³ The author's interview with Oleh Levchenko, 25 April 2017, by phone.

¹⁴⁴ The author's interview with Serhii Karelin, 27 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁴⁵ The author's interview with Serhiy Loboyko, 24 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. E-Dem, <http://e-dem.tools>.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Center for Innovation Development, Nacionalniy bank IT-rishen' (NBIT), <http://cid.center/projects/nbit>; Center for Innovation Development, E-rishennia dlia hromad, <http://cid.center/e-solutions>.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Rozumne Misto, <http://rozumnemisto.org>.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Civil Society App, <http://www.f6s.com/civilsocietyapp>.

¹⁵⁰ The author's interview with Vadym Georgienko, 28 April 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁵¹ The author's interview with Mykhailo Nakhod, 7 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁵² Cf. <http://Bl.prozorro.org>, <http://bi.prozorro.org>; <http://Bipro.prozorro.org>, <http://bipro.prozorro.org>; [http://dozorro.org/medical_contracts](http://Monitornh.tsin.na.medychni.preparaty).

¹⁵³ Cf. ProZorro, <http://prozorro.gov.ua>.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. DoZorro, <http://dozorro.org>.

¹⁵⁵ Transparency International Ukraine, DoZorro Story, Kyiv 2018.

As of March 2018, in less than a year, activists had processed 8,000 procurements with violations, and due to their reporting over 2,500 of them were resolved positively.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, there are independent online monitoring initiatives YouControl and Opendatabot, which analyze public-procurement participants, as well as Prozorrobot, Anticorruption Monitor, Clarity Project, *Zakupivoli* (meaning 'Purchases'), and CEP KSE tools, which monitor purchases themselves.¹⁵⁷ As a civic activist concluded, both business and civil society have the vision that public procurement is transparent.¹⁵⁸

Open data is increasingly disclosed for public budget and public spending. In this area, there is the E-data portal containing Open Budget, which allows analysis of the public budget with the precision up to types of budget programs, and Spending, which facilitates the analysis of public spending with precision up to individual transactions.¹⁵⁹ Reportedly, as of February 2017, the E-data website attracted 30,000 users per day.¹⁶⁰ However, the challenge is that slightly more than a half of government agencies disclose financial data online.¹⁶¹ Besides, the monitoring of financial flows is performed by the search and analytical system .007, and the messenger bot Bot007, while the links between contracting authorities and contractors are analyzed by BI Bot.¹⁶² In addition, there is the Price of the State website, which visualizes state budget by expense types, introduces the index of non-transparency of state enterprises, has interactive calculators allowing estimated taxpayer's amount of taxes, and an interactive computer game, Master of Customs, simulating the corruption challenges of customs officers.¹⁶³ Reportedly, as of February 2017, the Price of the State website was attracting 190,000 users per year.¹⁶⁴ Open Data Challenge hackathon has funded twenty-five open-data-based e-services.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁶ Transparency International Ukraine, DoZorro Story.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. YouControl, <http://youcontrol.com.ua/en>; Opendatabot, <http://opendatabot.com>; Prozorrobot, <http://amicel3.github.io/prozorrobot>; Antikoruptciynyi Monitor, <http://acm-ua.org>; Clarity Project, <http://clarity-project.info/about>; Zakupivli, <http://z.texty.org.ua>; Center for Excellence in Procurement/Kyiv School of Economics, Interaktyvnyi instrument dlia poshuku dodatkovykh uhod v Prozorro, <http://cep.kse.org.ua/dopky.html>; CPV tool, <http://cep.kse.org.ua/article/cpv/index.html>.

¹⁵⁸ The author's interview with Victor Nestulia, 24 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, E-data, <http://www.e-data.gov.ua>; Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, Open Budget, <http://openbudget.gov.ua/?month=2&year=2019&budgetType=NATIONAL>; Ministry of Finance of Ukraine Spending, <http://spending.gov.ua>.

¹⁶⁰ Tomkova/Khutkyy, Implementing E-democracy. A Spectrum of Instruments and Choices.

¹⁶¹ The author's interview with Oleksandr Shchelokov, 27 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁶² Cf. .007, <http://007.org.ua>; The author's interview with Oleksandr Shchelokov, 27 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁶³ Cf. The Price of the State, <http://cost.ua/en>.

¹⁶⁴ Tomkova/Khutkyy, Implementing E-democracy. A Spectrum of Instruments and Choices.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Open Data Challenge, <http://odc.in.ua>.

The abundance of open data induced journalistic investigations. Financial open data led to at least seventy-three journalistic investigations.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, an independent project, *Declarations*, re-publishes official data on income and assets, spending, real estate, and vehicles of public officials, and in its BI module presents the data by government agency, year, and region, performs risk-analysis, and enables downloading open data in CSV format. One more resource is *Texty* (meaning ‘texts’), which publishes and visualizes journalistic investigations. As an open-data expert assessed, due to journalistic investigations, at least the most audacious corrupt schemes were stopped, although many others remained.¹⁶⁷

During the 2019 presidential elections in Ukraine, civic activists launched a monitoring campaign.¹⁶⁸ A network of volunteers took photos of public protocols of election results at local polling stations and uploaded these digital photo copies to an online database, which served as backup evidence of election results. As of April 2019, they uploaded over 11,000 protocols covering both rounds of the 2019 presidential elections. This is designed to prevent the distortion of election results or, in the case of violations, protect the election results in court.

Overall, Ukraine’s e-democracy is rapidly developing, although there are challenges. As a public official acknowledged, since 2014, civil society has become active in developing public policy and monitoring authorities with digital tools.¹⁶⁹ An international expert admitted that in Ukraine people have a desire, and civil society is pushing, for change, but e-democracy requires collaborative effort, so a genuinely collaborative community is developing.¹⁷⁰ A civil-society view is that people demand not only to be heard, but to have their projects implemented.¹⁷¹ As a result, at least some local authorities understand that there cannot be good governance without cooperation with citizens.¹⁷² Municipalities compete with each other over introducing innovations in participatory governance.¹⁷³ According to an online survey of experts held in July–August 2017, the most effective instruments of e-democracy at local level were (in order of mention) electronic receptions of city council deputies (7.5 out of a maximum 10), authority–resident interaction platforms (6.4 out of

¹⁶⁶ Cf. 007, Rezul’taty konkursu, <http://www.007.org.ua/contest/6/view>.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Declarations*, <http://declarations.com.ua>; *Texty*, <http://texty.org.ua>; The author’s interview with Nadiia Babynska, 28 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Hromads’ka orhanizatsiia Elektronna demokratsiia, Vybory 2019, http://e-vybory.org/?fbclid=IwAR1UyTPi92Mqbmfmqu2m-va2_hRfJVGf8UGFXav1uDWQSmtG4EmLYVZu9pbU.

¹⁶⁹ The author’s interview with Dmytro Makovskyi, 25 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁷⁰ The author’s interview with Jordanka Tomkova, 9 May 2017, online via Skype.

¹⁷¹ The author’s interview with Serhiy Loboyko, 24 April 2017, Kyiv.

¹⁷² The author’s interview with Oleh Levchenko, 25 April 2017, by phone.

¹⁷³ The author’s interview with Mykhailo Nakhod, 7 May 2017, online via Skype.

a maximum 10), electronic petitions (6.2 out of a maximum 10), and PB (6 out of a maximum 10).¹⁷⁴ The findings of other research demonstrate that in Ukraine e-democracy initiatives were genuinely grassroots, and in some communities they transformed the political landscape, making citizens co-creators of public policies, while in others, authorities prevented them from impacting governance.¹⁷⁵

Conclusions

In Belarus, the public uses e-appeals and e-petitions, which have minor impact, mostly on social issues at local level. People are also interested in open-data analytics, especially about the state budget, but few journalist investigations are conducted. Besides, they used to employ online media and social media for communication and mobilization for offline protests. Still, almost all protests failed to achieve their policy goals. In general, the number of available e-democracy instruments is small, and the outcomes are non-binding, influencing agenda setting rather than decision making.

The Moldova government has widely announced e-consultations; however, their usage by citizens is not great and public impact is also minor. Parliamentary e-consultations are even rarer, and lacking wide deliberation. There are e-appeals and e-petitions, but official statistics of submission and resolution rates are lacking. Some crowdsourcing and crowdfunding for policy-related purposes is used, but on a small scale. Financial open-data analytics is well-developed, although it is not converted into massive journalist investigations. Anticorruption monitoring has online tools and attracts popular attention, but seldom leads to court trials and law enforcement. Activists perform election monitoring, but it has virtually no effect on politics. The available e-participation tools are underused by citizens and authorities, who are largely unresponsive to public input on policies, even if it leads to protests.

In Ukraine, revolutionary online mobilization has evolved into democratic online participation in governance. E-appeals and e-petitions are widely used by citizens. The aware public believes that e-petitions do implement direct democracy. E-petitions are more successful at local level, where e-appeals are realized better than e-petitions. E-consultations are used less often, with less profound deliberation, and with highly uneven effects on policy drafting.

¹⁷⁴ Jordanka Tomkova/Dmytro Khutkyy/Mykhaylo Nakhod, *Local E-Democracy. Current Developments*, Policy Briefs on Good E-Governance no. 3, Kyiv 2018, <http://egap.in.ua/biblioteka/analitichni-zapysky-z-efetyvnoho-e-uriaduvannia-vypusk-3>.

¹⁷⁵ Dmytro Khutkyy, *Electronic Democracy Boom in Ukraine*, in: Kylie Thomas, ed, *IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences*, vol. 36, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Vienna 2019, <http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxxvi/electronic-democracy-boom-in-ukraine>.

There are cases of binding e-voting for municipal-development projects and binding e-elections for public councils and commissions. Participatory budgeting is the most empowering participation tool, as it engages citizens at all stages, many of whom are digital. Online collaborative platforms help set up dialogue between citizens and authorities. There is a vast and growing field of open-data analytics, especially for public finances and public procurement, which provides formidable feedback to authorities. Some journalist investigations force corruption schemes to close.

Of the three countries, Ukraine has the most e-participation instruments, covering the whole policy-making cycle of agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation, monitoring and control. It also has high participation rates and reasonable implementation rates, higher in non-binding forms and lower in binding forms of e-democracy.

Acknowledgement

This study has been conducted with the support of the Open Society Foundation Eurasia Program. The author expresses appreciation to the interviewees. The author is also grateful to Mihkel Solvak for comments on earlier drafts.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dmytro Khutkyy University of Helsinki, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Fabianinkatu 24, 00014 Helsinki, Finland. E-mail: khutkyy@gmail.com