

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

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### Abstract

Citizen participation topic became actual in various European Union (EU) projects since 6-7<sup>th</sup> decade of the XX century, when in many countries it had been started to transfer authority power from centre to regional and local government authorities with intention to make closer decision-making and implementation to the people. It is considered that decentralization can assure management, which would be more public, participatory, cooperative with community, reactive and accountable. Regional level is very suitable for promotion of citizen participation ideas, because regional and local management is closest to the people. Therefore EU regional policy is inseparable from enhancement and development of democracy, in order to achieve social welfare of population, economy strengthening and to reduce the differences between the EU regions.

Nowadays tendencies in public administration indicate that a good management is definable by categories of wider citizen participation, pluralism, subsidiarity, transparency, accountability, accessibility, cooperation and efficiency. "Old democracy" states try to consolidate values of democracy and at the same time to adjust effective methods of new public management, new public administration or new civil service into the management of public organisations. The main scientific problem in respect of looking for effective management model is to find a suitable form, how to apply effective management principles from private organisations in the management of public organisations and to secure democratic principles at once. The success and effectiveness of new management systems much depends on the legal basis and the specific management and administration traditions of concrete state.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the opportunities of citizen participation in regional management, considering the EU guidelines in respect of regional policy. The article analyses citizen participation tendencies in management of public organizations, EU position with regard to regional policy and citizen participation and the regional self-government possibilities in Lithuania. The results of research show that citizen participation is really actual theme in nowadays management systems where the importance to achieve balance between democratic management principles and more effective administration is increasing. EU regional policy is based on subsidiarity principle, which underlines understanding to closer ties of decisions to the society. EU supports democratization of regional development, specifically stressing conveyance and transparency. Citizen participation opportunities are limited in management of Lithuanian regions, because of lack of legal basis, which could establish the principles of self-government and the forms how citizens could be involved into management process. In consideration of public management decentralisation tendencies, it is important to discuss and assure the real modes how citizen would be able to impact the development processes and to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of public services.

### Keywords:

**Citizen participation, management, regional policy, regional self-government, decentralization.**

### Introduction

Public management faced tendencies of democratization, establishment of democratic values at the end of last century, when citizen groups became more influential in the process of public projects

preparation, deliberation and implementation. Therefore public organizations started to involve citizens and support the possibilities to encourage individual initiatives, citizen associations and structures. The question of interaction between

citizens and government is especially important in Lithuania focusing analysis on central, regional and local level management changes, consolidating public participation principles. Integration into EU gave an impact to reevaluate the application of the democratic norms in state management institutions and highlighted the problem of inadequate citizen incorporation in the management processes.

Democratic management process analysis is not forgotten in scientific literature, but there is a shortage of researches, where the democratic values are discussed in relation with public management, the variation of citizen and government interaction implementing the new public management ideas (new public management, new civil service etc.) or the place of citizens and possibilities to participate in the central level and the regional and local level also, when citizens are involved into the solution of public problems and they become the members of management, not only the recipients of services. The problem of citizen participation is analysed in the papers of J.S. Thomas (1995), B.G. Peters (2003), C.S. King, K.M. Feltey, B. Susel O'Neill (1998), L. Terry (1998), L. DeLeon and R. B. Denhardt (2000), N. Font (1998), J.V. Denhardt and R.B. Denhardt (2003), D. Chandler (2001), S. J. Pharr, R. D. Putnam, R. J. Dalton (2000) etc. Authors discuss the importance of participation for management, possible problems and results, the alternatives of participation forms and the government institutions position stimulating the activity of community. In the researches of L. Duff (1997) and D. Osborne, T. Gaebler (1992) new public management tendencies and their impact on democratic management principles are studied. Lithuanian scientists also are interested in democratic management and new public management combination possibilities, consequences and possible alternatives (R. Civinskas (2007), J. Palidaukaitė (2007), G. Žilinskas (2007)). Meanwhile V. Čaplikas (2006), G. Mačys (2006), J. Mačiulytė, P. Ragauskas (2007), E. Petukienė, R. Tījūnaitienė (2007), R. Petrauskienė, A. Raipa (2007) analyse the regional policy guidelines, EU role stimulating development of regions, the alternatives of regional management and problems in Lithuania.

**The novelty of the article** is based on a little regional management practice in Lithuania and still formulated citizen participation tradition. The interest on regional policy increased only during the integration process to EU, seeking to use EU support. It means that regional policy in Lithuania was started to formulate because of external impact, not because of internal social and economical reasons. Despite faulty practice making reforms of management structures, region as a medium level between centre

and local level creates background for analysis of regional management democratization possibilities.

**The object of the article-** citizen participation in public management.

**The aim of the article-** to analyse the opportunities of citizen participation in regional management, considering the EU position in respect of regional policy.

**The main tasks of the article-** to review the concept of citizen participation and its reflection tendencies in management; to present EU position in respect of regional policy and citizen participation; to discuss regional self-government situation in Lithuania.

**The methods of research-** systemic analysis of scientific literature and conclusion findings, case study and theoretical prognosis.

### **Citizen participation tendencies in public management**

Nowadays many of politics and public administration scholars are talking about declining confidence in political institutions and government (Pharr, Putnam, Dalton, 2000; Kaase, 1999). Post-communist societies are no exception in this case (Mishler, Rose, 2001). That situation leads to citizens' apathy. One possible decision to avoid citizens' apathy is "a more participatory style of democratic government" (Dalton, Burklin, Drummond, 2001). That means expansion of citizen participation in decision making and implementation process: from election of public officials and referendum opportunities (Scarrow, 2001) till citizens' panels and citizens' juries (Lowndes, Pratchett, Stoker, 2001).

In the recent years development of public administration is going in cohesion atmosphere of traditional public administration and new public management ideas. It is predicted that in this century the development of public administration systems based on new management concepts will speed up. But using the new public administration principles in developing "young democracy" countries, not always is positive. Furthermore, in the publications of recent years some authors as L. Terry (1998), R. Denhardt and L. DeLeon (2000), B. G. Peters (2003) express concern that new public management is especially problematic in respect of democratic values in public administration. Narrow and selfish interests of concrete groups could change society interests. On the other side, should be marked that new public management involves citizens to the management processes. In 1992 D. Osborn and T. Gaebler published the book "*Reinventing Government*", where the main new public management principles were presented and explained. One of them- the

government of community: delegation, but not serving. Government is responsible for better services provided to the citizen, but also it has to stimulate community to solve problems by itself, supporting citizen participation in deliberation of actual matters. The new public management agrees with idea of decentralised government, underlining the transition from hierarchy to participation and teamwork. Thus the new public management ideas are favourable for citizen participation stimulation; only the question of participation forms is outstanding. In the states of “young democracy” could be recommended do not follow the “ideal” new public management model, but to introduce only those forms of practice whose are applicable to specific conditions and do not impact negative results for management and society.

In post communist countries the development of democracy is impeded by weak participation tradition; the practice of participation is only created and without it to form active, self-government civil society impossible. Post communist societies face the challenge “to engage the citizenry in meaningful participation after years of ritualized engagement of actual prohibitions on participation” (Dalton, 2000). Citizen participation in management- is not only the instrument to regulate political and public matters; it also gives possibility to outline advantages and disadvantages of various management aspects, different preferences of social groups and seeks to formulate the real goals. Management of citizen-government interaction is essential applying the partnership principle. Application of new public management ideas in management of public sector means more than optimization of economical efficiency; democratic management has to seek the goals, including citizen’s preferences as well. Consequently despite of contradictory citizen preferences, management system has to guarantee conditions and concrete methods, how to receive and to use purposefully information necessary for formulation and realization of management goals.

As a reaction to the new public management shortage of democracy, the new civil service ideology formulated. It was argued that in public administration have to dominate such concepts as democracy, self-respect and citizen, but not the market, competition or client. New civil service ideas are coming from theories of public spirit, community and civil society, organisational humanism and new public administration. The main ideas are clearly listed in the book of J. V. Denhardt and R. B. Denhardt “*The New Public Service: Serving not Steering*”. New public service underlines that citizen participation is the essential assumption for democratic management, because public spirit means not a selfish interests, but

social values as well. Consequently the better citizen incorporation into the management is preferred. Hereby civil servants and citizens would be able to work together, discussing and working out various problems in the manner acceptable for both parts. Management is not a business- it has to follow principles of democracy (Denhardt, Denhardt, 2003).

J. Paliduskaitė says that new public management practice showed that professional public administration values (publicity, impartiality, avoidance of interest conflict, etc.) have to be coordinated with democratic values (justice, equality, etc.), whose more emphasize public interests. When citizens act as consumers and as citizens, their position is different. In the centre of consumers view point their wishes and satisfaction possibilities dominate. Citizens take care more about long-term consequences for community (Paliduskaitė, 2007, p.85). On the other hand, conception of citizen as consumer or client is dominated in quality models and helps to solve the legitimacy problem (Civinskas, 2007, p. 218). In consequence, if democracy and entrepreneurial activity are combined, economical and private management values cannot overrun legal or democratic ones in management reforms, because such is the particularity of public sector.

The process of democratic management has to be accountable and transparent, when information submission standards, which are used in management processes, are foolproof for citizens. Decentralization of management could root for citizen participation in development processes. Decentralization can mean different things (Hutchcroft, 2001). Scholars find arguments in favor and against decentralization (de Vries, 2000), but decentralization is a way to enhance citizen participation. Decentralised management with adequate political and financial power together with active community groups may ensure better possibilities to fulfil requirements. Decentralization relieves the creation of civil society organizations and their nets to manage local problems. Thus the effectiveness and accessibility of public services is improved and democratic citizen participation activated. New public participation or citizen participation differs from traditional citizen participation in two aspects. *Firstly*, traditional citizen participation was more interpreted as participation in policy arrangement, therefore new participation underlines implementation of policy, i.e. assumes more management elements, needed to guarantee effective implementation process. Separate segments of society, associated citizen structures are included into prepared and confirmed policy realization. Jointly citizens are incorporated not only to strategic policy planning, but to strategic management of public programs and projects as well. *Secondly*, the concept of participation expanded in

meaning. Traditional public participation was often interpreted as consultative (adviser committees, various commissions etc.). Meanwhile new public participation expanded the traditional understanding of participation, including into participation wider groups of community: consumers, clients, control prosecutors, nongovernmental organisations and other citizen institutions (Thomas, 1995, p.3-4). Citizen participation is not a costless process. Nevertheless “with citizen participation, formulated policies might be more realistically founded in citizen preferences, the public might become sympathetic evaluators of tough decisions that government administrators have to make, and the improved support from the public might create a less divisive, combative populace to govern and regulate” (Irvin, Stansbury, 2004, p.55).

Expanding the democratic management tendencies “new public management” paradigm is trying to solve quite traditional, but nowadays especially actual problem- coordination of possible democratic management development processes and public institutions activity. It should be mentioned that in the past, unfortunately state institutions made and implemented decisions, without looking for partnership with public representatives or whole community i.e. without democratic methods and procedures. Temporary development phase of society raises new requirements for organization of democratic management, coordination and creation of various forms of accountability and responsibility also the demand to search new methods of communities, citizen associations and structures activity especially at the local and regional level. Two questions are important, why it is necessary to participate and where to participate. Stimulation of participation *per se* cannot be understood as matter-of- course, if it is not clear, what result is expected (Chandler, 2001) and how to use it effectively in the management of public organizations. As K.Yang and K.Callahan notes, “meaningful, authentic participation is rarely found, as many public officials are reluctant to include citizens in decision making, or if they do, they typically involve citizens after the issues have been framed and decisions have been made” (2007, p.249). Citizens participate, if participation means real decisions (Lowndes, Pratchett, Stoker, 2001, 2006).

In summary, the newest discussions in scientific literature indicate, that more authorities have to be delivered for citizens in management processes, but the scope of participation depends on the features of discussed problem. There is still interesting and important consideration of participation term itself and interpretation of it in different contexts: does participation is a process, program, method or

methodology. Participation as a tool differs from participation as a goal or result. New management systems do not suggest unambiguous answer in respect of participation term, but acknowledgement of citizen participation necessity in management creates possibility to apply participation concept and to interpret it according the needs of concrete situation.

### **EU position in respect of regional policy and citizen participation**

Support for regional development is essential for stability and growth in the European Union. In an increasingly globalise world, local areas and activities must compete on a much larger scale, but not all regions have the same economic, social and geographic conditions. This is even truer in the context of the enlarged Union. Regional policy is thus aimed at promoting a high level of competitiveness and employment, helping less prosperous regions or those with structural difficulties to generate sustainable development by adapting to the new conditions of the labour market and world competition. In that sense, cohesion policy is a policy of solidarity through targeted intervention with EU funds aimed at helping the local areas overcome their disadvantages more easily. It is, however, also a concrete policy because it is visible to European citizens who live better in their own regions as a result.

Community regionalism arises from the desire to ensure that in implementing the principle of subsidiarity, the various responsibilities of the European Union, Member States and regions are complementary. The latter have in fact become a powerful factor in enforcing and enhancing European integration. Recognition of regional importance came in 1991 with the Maastricht Treaty’s creation of a Committee of Regions (CoR), the youngest of the European Union’s institutions. It was created to guarantee a direct, concrete tie between the European institutions and regional or local bodies (regions or Länder, provinces, and municipalities) in defining those community policies that affect them directly. The creation of the CoR made it legally binding to consult the representatives of local and regional bodies in their sectors of competence. This guarantees a greater participation of the citizens in the growth of the EU.

Democracy enhancement and development is an important feature of the EU regional policy. It key and irreplaceable form- regional self-government enables to achieve involvement of more citizens in the common policy, management of state and public affairs. Through regional democracy, its self-government authorities a significant field of

management between the lowest level- local self-government and state authorities arises. Thus more possibilities to involve citizens to management of various public affairs appear. Therefore, the EU supports establishment and development of in particular democratic regional bodies, what is reflected in its legal documents- treaties (Čaplikas, 2006, p.63). Regional self-government institutions and independence of the macroeconomic-territorial units allows achieving the goals of the regional policy related to preservation of cultural identity, economic development, administration improvement.

Democratization of the EU regional policy is linked with the subsidiarity principle. This is a mode of decision making, according to which decisions must be adopted at that administrative level, at which their implementation will be most efficient. This principle ensures closer ties of decisions to the society, as they are made at the levels, for which they are intended: local, regional or state community. Application of subsidiarity is reflected with decentralisation, the process of management functions division and closer relations with community.

Despite the EU institutions supportive position in respect of citizen participation, it cannot be confirmed, that citizens of Europe actively participate in various initiatives. In order to strengthen consultations with society and to encourage participation in the European initiatives, European Commission included commitment to increase opportunities for interested parts to participate actively in management of problems into the strategic goals of 2005-2009. Therefore European transparency initiative was established, where Committee of Regions actively participated (Naujoji skaidri Europos sanglaudos politika, 2006, p.3-4). Three dimensions are outlined, whose have to be taken into account during consultations with society:

- objective to create better structures system of interest groups (lobbyists) and rules, also to increase participation of civil society organizations and other related parts;
- establish the minimum standards of applying consultations by Commission and to ensure transparent interaction between economic interest groups and Commission;
- discuss the possibility to declare information about the EU support receivers.

European transparency initiative stipulated to formulate communicate “D plan (democracy, dialog and discussions)”, which was published in 2005, inciting citizens actively to participate in discussions and to spill out their position. “D plan”- is the first stage of long-term process, which should make stronger democratic background of EU and to link them with

citizen values and expectations. Naturally the briefing and transparency are not the new terms related with management of structural funds, but practice shows, that citizens often feel the lack of information about the programs, whose are created to increase economic competitiveness, to establish new work places and to strengthen internal cohesion in the regions.

347 milliard euros are referred to the new Cohesion policy in 2007-2013 and it makes more than a third of whole EU budget (Naujoji skaidri Europos sanglaudos politika, 2006, p.8). The European Commission handling such scope budget cannot ignore briefing of citizen’s aspect. EU institution initiatives to improve briefing and publicity means in member states implementing regional policy are desirable and necessary, because it helps to motivate democratic management of regions and to stimulate citizen participation.

However the main responsibility goes to the state, which is implementing regional policy and its position in respect of citizen incorporation to the management processes, is crucial. It is true to say, that EU position in respect of regional policy and citizen participation is compatible with the efficiency provision of public management- possibility for citizens to participate and clearly express their preferences. But citizen participation in regional management could be efficient only when the modes of cooperation between citizens and government are consistently modified together with attitude how participation is treated itself. None the less is to ensure the real opportunities to express public initiative and to get needed information quickly and by easy accessible channels. The stimulation of citizen participation and stimulating position of management institutions in the local and regional level for democratic management are two sides of the same coin.

### **Regional self-government possibilities in Lithuania**

Transition to the democratic society is becoming speedy in Central and Easter Europe. Although the progress is treated differently, the signs of democracy assessment are significant in the new member states. EU integration process gave a chance to recall citizen participation question in management and the researches of participation returned to the lists of popular topics. At present public participation and management are treated as not dissociated. True, the participation in democratic society is often narrowed to the participation in the elections, but the new computer and telecommunications technologies, internet system greatly expanded citizen participation possibilities in public administration using services of government institutions, introducing suggestions

or acting as partners in administration of services. Hereby citizens become more critical to management system and actively participate in management process as partners directly or through various citizen organisations.

On principle there are two standpoints to integration of participation ideas in the management of regional level. One- "top-down" or "centre-down", another- "bottom-up". Long time the standpoint "top-down" dominated in regional development theories, projects and strategies. To subject to it, in separate regions differences between people living standards, social society sectors or geographical zones did not decreased. As a consequence to it, the new alternative appeared with standpoint "bottom-up", which emphasises necessity to consult with society making decisions (Petukienė, Tijūnaitienė, 2007, p. 241). When the principle of partnership was started to use, the background was created for incorporation of society into the processes of decision-making and implementation, sharing responsibility, experience and ideas. Authors M. Smith and M. Beazley analysed the aspects of community participation in the partnership development. The matter of participation could be interpreted through three conceptions: government, participation and partnership. All three conceptions help to formulate "involvement circle" model, which could be used seeking to evaluate participation of actual community in partnership practice. It is important to guarantee that all member interests will be taken into consideration, creating and strengthening the structure of partnership- each one has to present its goals on equal speaking rights. Thus the mutual confidence and equivalent participation is achieved (Petrauskienė, Raipa, 2007, p. 254-256). The conception of partnership principle in the community level or regional development programs is applicable relatively a little while ago, but it could be treated as one of the possible alternatives implementing democratic principles of management and looking for collaboration ways between citizens and government.

Currently regional management problems are very relevant in whole Europe. The traditional regional government survives the crisis because of non-effective "top-down" management methods and incapability to cover increasingly differentiated requirements of many interest groups. In a number of cases regions and regional institutions act only as "extended arms of the state" in regional level (Mačys, 2006, p. 153). Regional development problem suggests changing government term to management conception. Management enables regions themselves to organise social and political integration. In Lithuania also more and more is discussed about the

creation of second level (counties) self-government institutions reforming the state management model in general.

Regional policy in the democratic state is applied on the legal basis, which usually consists of three main documents: self-government regulation of separate region, statute of region association and the states regional self-government or policy basics act. The sequence is not so important, because the democratic regional self-government may develop from bottom-separate regions, or from a top- at first working out and enacting state regional self-government basics act. In the opinion of V. Čaplikas (2006, p. 119), in Lithuania none of the mentioned documents, whose are essential for democratic regional policy, are enacted. In such case, legal basis of Lithuanian regional policy does not meet the recommendations of EU and other countries regional organisations.

After the restoration of independence Lithuania started to reform the administrative division of territory and established the new territorial self-government institutions. Unlike other Central European countries (i.e. Poland, Check Republic or Hungary), Lithuania gave the priority for regional reform, but not for establishment of local territorial units. Foundation of counties (apskritis) was linked with decentralization of management, but without delegation of essential functions and refusing to establish regional self-government institutions, management was only deconcentrated. Regional reform was limited to creation of regions administrative structure (Mačiulytė, Ragauskas, 2007, p. 70). In 2000, when the Act of the Regional development was enacted, counties (apskritis) became the territories where the national regional policy has to be implemented. However till now counties (apskritis) and their regional councils do not play significant role in the regional development process. Counties (apskritis) do not have instruments to carry out regional development function without control of financial resources and without power to allocate EU structural funds. In consequence Lithuanian administrative regions (apskritis) are not territorial self-government institutions. Nowadays regional policy is a centralised public policy in essence, because it applies states interventional instruments (Duff, 1997). Meanwhile regional self-government may stimulate the local community to participate in the projects and to expand citizen influence on the decisions of regional development, also to control application of EU support.

Regional institutions can influence citizen involvement on the regional level in several forms (Mačys, 2006, p. 157):

- to prepare for citizens the newsletters about regional policy and its benefits;
- to organise meetings or public discussions, during which the needed information would be introduced also the comments and suggestions of citizens would be heard;
- to ensure the possibility for citizens to participate in sessions;
- to establish citizen representatives groups (committees), whose would bring and discuss the main public problems with recommendations how to manage them;
- to look for active partnership and cooperation forms with community organisations.

In the opinion of N. Font (1998), traditional ways of citizen involvement into the management, as referendum, public meetings or access to information, are limited, that's increases the necessity to formulate new instruments to support citizen participation as consensus conferences, discussion forums, consultative citizen committees etc. For instance, various groups of problems deliberation or special projects groups, whose take care about product and services substitution, development and quality improvement matters, or consider the questions of supplied services rejection or devolution for other suppliers of services could be a good example of citizen participation (Žilinskas, 2007, p. 275). Authors C.S. King, K.M. Feltey and B. Susel O'Neill (1998) agree with this opinion and append that very often administrators of public institutions are linked to block the participation, providing only the limited information. It is important to change the attitude to the citizen participation in administrative management structures. Citizens should be learned how to participate in seminars or practical groups, especially on the local and regional level. Administrators have to choose the instruments of citizen's participation together with citizens.

Development or regional policy in Lithuania raises not only the question of management reform, but also the aspect of citizen interaction with public institutions. Citizen participation engagement in the regional level should follow with the intention of regional institutions to assure the well-oriented environment through submission of information, taking into account suggestions of community and strengthening of real possibilities to participate in the management. Naturally at first legal basis has to be consolidated, when for citizens would be guaranteed instruments to participate and control methods indicated to verify the public institutions treat citizen opinion as important and decisive or not. And otherwise the government would be constricted and noncommittal to stimulate citizen initiative; the

citizens also would not be keen to participate, if their actions will not have impact on the management results.

### Conclusions

Citizen participation in the management processes is the essential part of the democratic government. Nowadays modern states face the dilemma how to increase effectiveness of administration managing in democratic principles. The importance of today's management institutions to reform their government in time and properly is evident; also the capacity to introduce innovative theoretical models applicable to management practice influencing the activity results of organization, culture and attitude to citizen involvement meaning. State management reforms and applicable new management and administration forms as new public management, new public administration or new civil service are pressing to evaluate, what meaning in these processes is given for citizen interaction in the management, i.e. what the goal should be achieved, by what instruments and how this impact government and citizen interaction also management results.

EU regional policy is based on the democracy development and subsidiarity principle, but there are no concrete indications in which forms community should be introduced into the realization of regional development. There is understanding that regional management should be closer to the citizens in order to evaluate community demands and to guarantee possibility to present their position about problematic issues. EU does not push up to satisfy the unanimous European regional model, which basically is non-existent- each country can formulate regional management according the states demands and may freely to choose what instruments to use for achievement of the best democratic regional management results.

Regional level in between of local and central levels- is especially suitable for integration of citizen participation ideas. On purpose to influence regional policy from "bottom-up", the regions need real powers, based on democratic structures. Citizen participation in regional management processes is important, because it creates situation to apply experience of different community groups and to convince the society that citizen opinion is treated seriously and public institutions seeks to meet citizen expectations. Stimulating the citizen participation the regional government responsibility to society would increase, also the efficiency of implemented regional policy.

Decentralization of government in Lithuania allows approaching regional development management

to community towards the creation of possibilities for citizens to participate in consideration of regional projects and implementation also to guarantee effective control using EU support. Discussing the question of regional self-government in Lithuania, it is necessary to take into consideration regionalisation level and regional self-sufficiency formulating and implementing regional development. Also the practice of other states could be useful in decision-making which regional management model is most suitable for Lithuania. It should be expected that such model would stimulate civic initiative "bottom-up" taking into account the principle of subsidiarity and it would be opportunity to introduce the new management instruments on purpose to increase accountability and inter-sectoral cooperation.

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