

DOI <https://doi.org/10.51647/kelm.2023.6.20>

## ZAPEWNIENIE DOSTĘPNOŚCI I JAKOŚCI USŁUG SPORTOWYCH: ROLA SAMORZĄDU LOKALNEGO W KRAJACH EUROPEJSKICH

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**Adnotacja.** W proponowanym artykule dokonano analizy kluczowej roli samorządu lokalnego w zapewnieniu dostępności i jakości usług sportowych na przykładzie krajów europejskich i Ukrainy. Zarysowano różne wyzwania stojące przed władzami lokalnymi, takie jak ograniczone zasoby budżetowe i konieczność uwzględnienia zmieniających się zainteresowań sportowych społeczności. W artykule podkreślono potrzebę integracji innowacyjnych podejść, udziału społeczeństwa i partnerstw z sektorem prywatnym w celu stworzenia włączającego środowiska sportowego. W artykule przedstawiono konkretne rekomendacje dla samorządów, aby reagowały na dynamiczne zmiany w zakresie zdrowia publicznego i preferencji sportowych obywateli. Ponadto podkreślono znaczenie integracji nowoczesnych technologii, które mogą przyczynić się do poprawy jakości i dostępności usług sportowych, m.in. poprzez rozwój interaktywnych platform zapewniających wygodny dostęp do wydarzeń sportowych i treningów online. Takie innowacje nie tylko poprawiają wygodę i efektywność usług sportowych, ale także zapewniają elastyczność w zarządzaniu programami sportowymi, zgodnie ze zmieniającymi się potrzebami i interesami społeczności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** samorząd lokalny, usługi sportowe, dostępność, innowacyjne podejścia, zdrowie publiczne, modele europejskie.

## ENSURING THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF SPORTS SERVICES: THE ROLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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**Abstract.** The proposed article analyzes the key role of local self-government in ensuring the availability and quality of sports services on the example of European countries and Ukraine. Various challenges facing local authorities are outlined, such as limited budgetary resources and the need to take into account the changing sporting interests of communities. The article emphasizes the need to integrate innovative approaches, public participation, and partnerships with the private sector to create an inclusive sports environment. The article offers specific recommendations for local governments to respond to dynamic changes in the field of public health and sports preferences of citizens. In addition, the emphasis is on the importance of integrating modern technologies that can contribute to improving the quality and availability of sports services, for example, through the development of interactive platforms for convenient access to sports events and online training. Such innovations not only improve the convenience and efficiency of sports services, but also provide flexibility in the management of sports programs, according to the changing needs and interests of the community.

**Key words:** local self-government, sports services, accessibility, innovative approaches, public health, European models.

## ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ДОСТУПНОСТІ ТА ЯКОСТІ СПОРТИВНИХ ПОСЛУГ: РОЛЬ МІСЦЕВОГО САМОВРЯДУВАННЯ В ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ КРАЇНАХ

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**Анотація.** У запропонованій статті аналізується ключова роль місцевого самоврядування у забезпеченні доступності та якості спортивних послуг на прикладі європейських країн та України. Окреслюються різноманітні

виклики, з якими стикаються місцеві органи влади, такі як обмежені бюджетні ресурси та потреба враховувати змінні спортивні інтереси громад. У статті наголошується на потребі інтеграції інноваційних підходів, громадської участі, та партнерства з приватним сектором для створення інклюзивного спортивного середовища. Стаття пропонує конкретні рекомендації для місцевого самоврядування щодо реагування на динамічні зміни в галузі громадського здоров'я та спортивних переваг громадян. Окрім цього, акцентується на важливості інтеграції сучасних технологій, які можуть сприяти підвищенню якості та доступності спортивних послуг, наприклад, через розвиток інтерактивних платформ для зручного доступу до спортивних заходів та онлайн-тренувань. Такі інновації не тільки покращують зручність та ефективність спортивних послуг, але й забезпечують гнучкість в управлінні спортивними програмами, відповідно до змінюваних потреб і інтересів громади.

**Ключові слова:** місцеве самоврядування, спортивні послуги, доступність, інноваційні підходи, громадське здоров'я, Європейські моделі.

**Introduction.** In the modern world, the health and physical activity of the population increasingly depend on the quality and availability of sports services. These aspects become especially important in the context of local self-government, which has the opportunity to directly influence the creation of favorable conditions for practicing sports and leading an active lifestyle. However, the level of involvement of local authorities and their strategies for managing sports resources varies across European countries. This article aims to theoretically investigate the role of local government in ensuring the availability and quality of sports services. It highlights the various approaches and models used in the European context and analyzes how these methods affect the sports infrastructure and social engagement of citizens. To achieve the goal, the article is based on the analysis of existing literature, in particular on the research of foreign scientists in the field of social policy, management of sports institutions and public health. It also includes a comparative analysis of sports policies that have been implemented in different European cities, which makes it possible to identify the most successful practices and identify potential directions for further reforms.

**Main part.** To date, the spread of healthy lifestyle trends and emphasis on public health have become decisive for local government policies in Europe, especially in the context of physical culture and sports. Meeting the needs of citizens in the sports sector requires local government structures not only to implement adequate infrastructure, but also to develop political strategies aimed at ensuring inclusive access and maintaining high standards of service provision. So, it is appropriate to pay attention to the experience of Germany, which is especially valuable in the field of sports thanks to the systemic approach of local councils. They not only allocate significant amounts of the budget for the construction and repair of sports grounds and complexes, but also develop programs for different age groups, ensuring the accessibility of sports for all segments of the population. This creates a solid foundation for educating young people in the spirit of a healthy lifestyle and promotes the cultivation of future champions (Кропивницька, 2022).

Great Britain, in turn, pays special attention to the early involvement of children in sports. Through municipal programs such as after-school sports sessions, summer sports camps, as well as the integration of physical activity into the educational process, the authorities are trying to stimulate the interest of young people in regular sports. It is emphasized that investment in children's sports education is an investment in the health of the nation in the long term (Сереєв, 2015).

It is also worth paying attention to the fact that in Scandinavian countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, local governments demonstrate an increased return on investment in sports infrastructure and health programs, which is reflected in a significant level of citizen activity in sports life. This became possible thanks to the understanding of the importance of physical activity as a component of a healthy lifestyle and the systematic efforts of local authorities to implement comprehensive programs. A widespread network of pedestrian and bicycle paths, which is integrated into the daily life of communities, facilitates the involvement of residents in regular sports activities. In addition, investments in recreational areas and parks equipped with sports fields and outdoor exercise equipment create an attractive environment for health and recreation of citizens of all age categories. Such initiatives not only improve the general health of the population, but also contribute to social integration and the creation of favorable conditions for the development of local communities (Журба, 2017).

The experience of France, where local governments play an important role in supporting sports activity among the general population, should also be considered interesting. They use a comprehensive approach aimed at the development of mass sports, which includes financing sports clubs and associations, stimulating the establishment of new sports facilities and supporting local sports initiatives. This covers a variety of sports programs, from school and university competitions to the organization of city marathons and festivals, giving every citizen the opportunity to participate in sports life. Such active support is aimed at creating conditions where every person, regardless of social status or physical capabilities, has access to quality sports services. This not only contributes to the physical health of the population, but also stimulates social integration, strengthening social solidarity and creating a sense of community through joint sports activities.

It is also important to draw attention to the fact that in Spain, local authorities actively invest not only in the construction, but also in the support of a wide network of public sports facilities, which become important nodes for social activity and interaction in local communities. These centers, often located in the heart of residential areas, provide access to a wide range of physical activities – from swimming in Olympic-sized pools to yoga classes and fitness classes in state-of-the-art gyms. In addition to sports events, these centers often serve as a venue for social events, such as lectures on proper nutrition and healthy lifestyles, which contribute to a comprehensive increase in public health awareness (Дерека, Туманова, 2017). Such an integrated approach not only increases

the level of physical activity among the population, but also promotes socialization and cultural exchange, making sport a central element in the everyday life of communities.

Thus, it is obvious that local self-government in European countries plays a key role in shaping the sports life of the community, based on the needs and capabilities of each region. From funding sports facilities in Germany to encouraging youth participation in the UK, from developing walking and cycling infrastructure in the Nordic countries to integrating sport into cultural policy, as in France and Spain, local authorities are finding innovative ways to support and develop sports services. These approaches reflect the unique nature of local government, which is the ability to adapt to rapidly changing conditions and respond to specific challenges facing communities, while combining global trends with local initiatives.

At the same time, it should be noted that despite the successes of local self-government in providing sports services, there are numerous challenges that require an urgent response and an innovative approach. Budget constraints are a common problem that requires effective financial management and finding alternative sources of funding. In addition, local authorities must take into account the interests of the various social groups that make up the mosaic of modern European society, while ensuring that sports services are accessible and attractive to all sections of the population (Базенко, 2017).

Rapid changes in public health trends, including the growing popularity of urban sports activities such as street workout or parkour, as well as changes in sports preferences and the introduction of new disciplines require flexibility and innovative thinking from local authorities. These challenges, however, open the way for the development of new forms of partnership, in particular the integration of the private sector and technology, which can provide additional resources and creative solutions for the management of sports services. Active public participation, in turn, can contribute to the creation of an inclusive and responsible sports policy that reflects the needs of all community members.

However, it should be emphasized that in response to a number of challenges facing local self-government, authorities are actively developing and implementing new strategies to improve the effectiveness of sports services. This involves not only the search for innovations and optimizations, but also the expansion of traditional boundaries of management practices, as well as the integration of various methods and approaches, which together allow for more accessible and inclusive sports environments (Моргунюв, 2021).

Such openness to innovation and willingness to share experiences provides a unique opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, adapting successful practices from different parts of Europe. Studying and comparing different management models allows you to identify the most effective solutions that can be integrated into your own management structures in order to achieve strategic goals in the field of sports and health. Such benchmarking is key to understanding how Ukraine can improve its approaches to managing sports services by implementing best European practices.

So, for example, it should be noted that in the context of the development of sports infrastructure, European experience emphasizes the importance of creating modern and accessible sports facilities that would meet the needs of different segments of the population. In EU countries, for example, considerable attention is paid not only to the construction of new football fields and swimming pools, but also to the renovation of old gyms and stadiums, making them safer and more attractive to the public. For Ukraine, following this path involves not only the physical improvement of existing sports grounds, but also the implementation of policies that will promote regular sports among the population. This could mean creating incentives for the private sector to invest in sports facilities and providing financial support from the state for community sports initiatives.

At the same time, the modernization of the sports infrastructure should go hand in hand with the development of programs that include activities aimed at attracting a wide range of citizens – from children to the elderly. Such programs may include outdoor sports events, mass races, fitness classes and health courses that will stimulate a healthy lifestyle and increase social activity of citizens (Цимбалюк, 2020).

With this in mind, Ukraine needs to define strategic priorities in the field of sports development, ensure adequate funding and involve the community in the planning process, which will allow responding to the needs of the population and maintaining a healthier and more active lifestyle.

It is also appropriate to note that European countries have already established a high standard of integration of the latest technologies in the management of sports services. The use of digital solutions such as mobile applications for booking sports venues and interacting with customers is becoming the norm. Such applications not only provide comfort and efficiency for users, but also open new channels for marketing and attracting visitors. Countries such as Germany and the Netherlands use online platforms to organize sports competitions and social initiatives that support healthy lifestyles among different populations.

For Ukraine, this means the need to adopt and implement similar innovative strategies that will increase the level of interaction between sports institutions and their clients, as well as use data analytics to improve the quality of services. It also involves the development and implementation of online systems that will help track the physical progress and health of athletes, providing them with personalized training and recommendations.

Thus, the application of European experience and the integration of modern IT solutions can become a powerful stimulus for the development of the sports industry in Ukraine, opening up new opportunities for growth and development, as well as improving the general level of public health.

It is also important to note that in many European countries, the development of partnership relations in the sports field is an important component of success. Local authorities often work closely with private companies

and non-governmental organizations to implement joint projects. This may include sponsoring major sporting events, creating specialized sports programs or developing innovative sports infrastructure. For example, in Great Britain, a partnership between local authorities and private firms has made it possible to create multifunctional sports complexes accessible to a wide range of citizens (Моргунів, 2019).

For Ukraine, it is recommended to develop strategies that would increase the attractiveness of sports for potential investors and sponsors. This may include creating transparent conditions for investment, providing tax incentives for businesses that invest in sports projects, and active use of international grants and funding programs. In addition, it is important to establish strong communication channels between all stakeholders, including the public, to ensure their participation and support in the implementation of sports initiatives. Attracting additional investments in sports will not only improve the existing infrastructure, but also contribute to the creation of new venues and programs that will meet modern trends and the needs of the population, thus increasing the overall level of a healthy lifestyle in the country.

It is also interesting that in European countries, the active participation of citizens in sports life and in the formation of sports policy is a fundamental principle that allows for the reflection of the interests of various social groups. Public hearings, working groups and citizen surveys are common tools for gathering feedback and ideas that can be translated into sports initiatives and projects. For example, in the Netherlands, local authorities regularly hold consultations with citizens to determine priorities in the development of sports infrastructure.

For Ukraine, increasing the level of public participation can become an important step in the development of democratic and open management of the sports sector. The creation of platforms for dialogue between the authorities and citizens, the introduction of public control mechanisms and the involvement of volunteers in the development and implementation of sports programs can significantly improve the quality and efficiency of sports services. Also, it will contribute to the creation of inclusive projects that would take into account the needs of all categories of the population, including youth, the elderly and people with disabilities, ensuring equal access to sports and responding to the social challenges of today (Борецька, 2018).

Additionally, the European experience highlights the importance of inclusiveness in the sports sector, where special attention is paid to ensuring equal access to sports services for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. In countries such as Sweden and Germany, there are specialized programs and facilities adapted to the needs of people with disabilities, which ensure their full participation in an active sports life.

In order to achieve a similar level of inclusiveness, Ukraine needs to develop comprehensive strategies aimed at improving the physical accessibility of sports facilities, as well as creating adapted sports programs. This includes not only architectural adaptation to ensure barrier-free access, but also training of staff capable of working with persons with special needs. Also, involving these groups in the design and evaluation of sports programs can be an effective step to ensure that their demands and wishes are taken into account. The implementation of these changes requires a systemic approach and support at all levels of government, from local to national, and can have a significant impact on the integration of vulnerable groups into society, increasing their quality of life and social activity through sport.

Thus, taking into account the above, it can be said that the application of these approaches will help Ukraine to improve the state of sports services, make them more accessible and high-quality, as well as strengthen the role of sports as a tool for social integration and improving the nation's health.

**Conclusions.** Analyzing the role of local self-government in European countries and Ukraine, it becomes clear that the availability and quality of sports services are important factors in the formation of a healthy population and an active society. Local authorities play a central role in this process, as they work most closely with communities and can effectively respond to their needs. Innovation and technological development open up new opportunities to improve sports programs and infrastructure, but they also challenge local governments to adapt to changing preferences and public health needs.

Ensuring inclusiveness is also an important aspect, so that sports services are accessible to all segments of the population, including people with disabilities, youth, and senior citizens. Funding remains one of the biggest challenges for local government, but European experience shows that strategic planning and the search for alternative sources of funding, such as partnerships with the private sector and EU grants, can bring significant benefits. Involving citizens in the planning and decision-making processes also contributes to the creation of more responsible and effective sports programs.

Taking into account these factors, Ukraine should adopt the best practices from the European experience, adapt them to its own conditions and peculiarities of local self-government. Investing in sports infrastructure, developing health programs, and ensuring inclusiveness and accessibility of sports services can be important steps towards improving the overall health of the nation and the social activity of citizens.

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