

## STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE: A CASE STUDY OF IVANO-FRANKIVSK REGION

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### Abstract

*The purpose of the article is to develop effective measures for setting up a strategy for sustainable development and mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as increasing the level of capacity of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities in the Ivano-Frankivsk region in the process of decentralization in Ukraine. The data on the dynamics of the formation of 62 territorial communities in the region during 2015–2020 is graphically illustrated: of which 24 or 39% belong to the rural type, 23 or 37% to the settlement type and 15 or 24% to the urban type. It was found that the majority of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region are harmoniously formed in cities of regional and district significance and have a capable potential, which was assessed according to the criteria of the level of capability – population, area of the territory, and number of populated areas. It was determined that the large Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush and Kolomyia districts, where 84% of populated areas, 72% areas of the territory and 82% of the population are concentrated, can significantly influence the development of small Verkhovyna, Kosiv, Nadvirna districts and balance the development of Ivano-Frankivsk region as a whole. A number of initiatives for the sustainable development of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region are proposed, which consist in expanding their mutually beneficial cooperation in the direction of exchanging experience and creating joint projects: socio-economic, administrative-legal, educational and cultural, environmental and tourist, transport and infrastructure. The conclusions of the study confirm the importance of joint implementing international projects under the “U-LEAD with Europe” and “USAID DOBRE” programs, which will ensure an improvement in the quality of life of the rural and urban population of the region.*

**Key words:** sustainable development, territorial communities, capacity, decentralization process, administrative-territorial reform, Ivano-Frankivsk region

### INTRODUCTION

An important event for the regions of Ukraine was the successful start of the decentralization reform, when on April 1, 2014, by order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Concept of Reforming Local Self-Government and Territorial Organization of Power in Ukraine was approved [16]. The relevance of its implementation is determined by the formation of effective local self-government to create and support a full-fledged living environment for the rural and urban population of Ukraine, provide them with high-quality and accessible public services, and satisfy their interests in all spheres of life. In this context, cooperation between rural, settlement, and urban territorial communities was initiated in all regions of

Ukraine, which was based on the principles of legality, voluntariness, mutual benefit, transparency and openness, equality of participants, and mutual responsibility for the results of activities [10]. In 2015, Ukraine began regulating relations that arose in the process of voluntary unification of territorial communities of villages, towns and cities of Ukraine [11], and approved a methodology for their formation based on determining capacity [25]. Thus, establishing the capacity of rural, settlements and urban territorial communities, implementing their effective and mutually beneficial cooperation is a key stage in the process of decentralization and development of local self-government in all regions of Ukraine, including Ivano-Frankivsk region. After all, this is an important step to ensure effective

regional management, which will contribute to improving cooperation between rural and urban population for sustainable economic growth.

In order to best meet the needs of society, Ukrainian and foreign scientists in the process of decentralization have explored various ways for sustainable economic growth of rural, town and urban territorial communities. For example, they determined the effectiveness of regulating the financial support of territorial communities in the regions of Ukraine [9], implementing innovative projects based on the rational use of resources [20], and improving administrative services for the population [24]. The prospects for socio-economic growth of territorial communities in Ukraine have been clarified [30], and their patterns and priorities in the cross-border space have been established [31]. Of great importance is the coverage of demographic and economic changes that characterize the rural population of Romania [21], the analysis of the differences between rural and urban areas of Romania in comparison with the European Union [22], and the clarification of the differences in the levels of education of the rural and urban population of the European Union [23]. The important role of rural development strategies is noted: avoiding a decrease in the rural population and ensuring the preservation of the attractiveness of rural areas in Romania [4; 5], expanding investments in agriculture in Turkey [7], obtaining subsidies for the agrarian sector in Bulgaria [8], introducing digital technologies for the development of the agrarian sector in the Republic of Moldova [15]. It is necessary to note the significant contribution of Ukrainian and foreign scientists to highlighting the ways of strategic planning of regional development of Ukraine in the context of decentralization. At the same time, aspects of sustainable development of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities have not been sufficiently disclosed for Ivano-Frankivsk region.

The purpose of the article is to clarify the strategy for sustainable development of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, which is based on the development of effective measures to

increase their capacity and mutually beneficial cooperation in the process of decentralization in Ukraine.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The basis of the research information base is the legislative and regulatory legal acts of Ukraine, information from the official websites of the Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, and the web portal «Decentralization in Ukraine». The article uses a wide range of scientific works by Ukrainian scientists from scientific-research institutions of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and higher education institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as well as foreign scientists who have devoted their research to solving the problems of decentralization and ensuring local development of territorial communities. Information sources of international organizations and programs "U-LEAD with Europe" and "USAID DOBRE", as well as analytical calculations of the authors, were used.

Thanks to retrospective and comparative analysis, as well as the calculation-constructive method, trends of long-term changes in the main indicators of the study were identified: the formation of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities; the presence of populated areas, the area of the territory and the population in various districts and territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region in the process of decentralization in Ukraine. The dynamics of these indicators during 2015–2020, as well as their distribution in 2020, are illustrated using a graphical method. The criteria were analyzed: population, area of the territory and the populated areas in rural, settlement and urban territorial communities of the region and the level of their capacity was established. Using the abstract-logical method, the effective implementation of international projects between rural, settlement, urban territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region and foreign partners was revealed, which ensured their mutually beneficial cooperation. Conclusions are formulated and a

number of measures are proposed to improve the quality of life of the rural and urban population in the region.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before the 2014 decentralization reform, a large number of local government bodies of various levels operated in Ivano-Frankivsk region, as in other regions of Ukraine, which, during the centralization process, had limited opportunities to manage and develop the region [20]. Their unification into larger administrative units, which was part of the all-Ukrainian process of decentralization, contributed to the transfer of most of the powers and resources to the local level and provided territorial communities with a significant strengthening of their powers and financial independence [3]. This ensured more effective management of the development of territorial communities, in particular in rural areas, where previously there was a significant fragmentation of local councils that did not have enough resources for effective activity. In particular, thanks to the pooling of resource potential, budget revenues have increased and the efficiency of solving local infrastructure problems has increased; the provision of transport, social, educational and medical services has improved; the development of the agrarian and tourism, environmental and energy sectors has accelerated [31].

One of the first was the Perspective Plan for the Formation of Community Territories of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, developed in October 2015, according to which 61 united territorial communities (UTCs) were to be created in 14 districts [17]. At the same time, it was improved seven times during 2017–2020 and was finally approved in April 2020 [12; 18]. It should be noted that during 2015–2019, the voluntary formation of UTCs in Ivano-Frankivsk region occurred at a somewhat slow and not entirely uniform pace (Fig. 1).

Already at the end of October 2015, the first three UTCs were created: two rural ones, Stari Bogorodchany and Verkhnia, and one settlement, Pechenizhyn [1]. In the following year, 8 UTCs were organized, of which the largest number was rural – 6, as well as 1

settlement and 1 urban. In 2017, the largest number of UTCs was formed – 12, of which 6 were rural and 6 were settlement. In 2018, this process slowed down somewhat: out of 7 UTCs created, 4 were rural, 2 were settlement and 1 was urban. In 2019, the number of UTCs formed was 10, of which 5 were rural, 2 were settlement and 3 were urban.

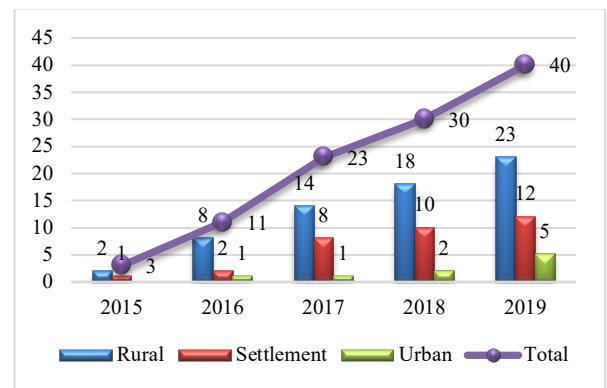


Fig. 1. Dynamics of formation of united territorial communities in Ivano-Frankivsk region by type, 2015–2019

Source: Own design based on data [12; 17; 18].

Thus, at the beginning of the decentralization process in the direction of uniting territorial communities, there was an active creation of rural UTCs, the total number of which at the end of 2019 was the largest – 23. The creation of settlement UTCs was slower, of which at the end of 2019 there were only 12. The smallest total number was urban UTCs, of which at the end of 2019 there were 5. Their administrative centers were formed in the cities of regional significance – Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush and Kolomyia, as well as in the cities of district significance – Dolyna and Tlumach. It is obvious that in the Dolyna, Kalush, Kolomyia and Tysmenytsia districts, where the corresponding administrative centers were located, the decentralization process took place more actively and with the involvement of a larger part of the district's territories.

At the same time, instead of the planned creation of 61 UTCs, only 40 UTCs were actually formed [1; 18]. In addition, only 14 of them were created in accordance with the Perspective plan, and 26 – without adhering to it; some, instead of unification, were formed into separate UTCs, and some – with a smaller number of populated areas and local councils.

In total, out of 14 districts of Ivano-Frankivsk region, only 13 were partially involved in the creation of UTCs. Thus, the five-year process of decentralization in the direction of unification of territorial communities underwent constant transformation but was imperfect and required consistent completion. In order to eliminate these shortcomings and increase the efficiency of the decentralization process, in June 2020, administrative centers were determined and territories of 62 territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region were approved [1; 13; 19]. Of these, the largest number is rural territorial communities – 24 or 39%, a slightly smaller number is settlement territorial communities – 23 or 37%, the smallest number belongs to urban ones – only 15 or 24% (Fig. 2).

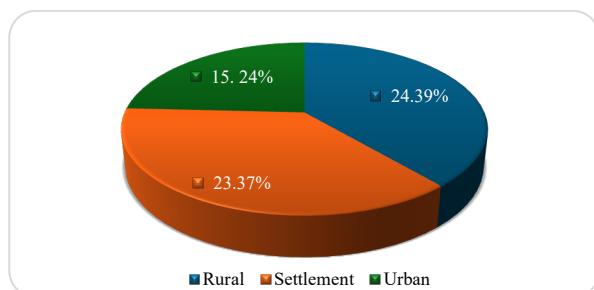


Fig. 2. Structure of territorial communities in Ivano-Frankivsk region by type, 2020

Source: own design based on data [1; 13; 19].

A characteristic feature of urban territorial communities in the region is their harmonious formation in cities of regional significance – Bolekhiv, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush, Kolomyia and Yaremche, as well as in cities of district significance – Dolyna, Halych, Horodenka, Kosiv, Nadvirna Rohatyn, Snyatyn, Tlumach and Tysmenytsia [13; 19]. In addition, urban territorial communities concentrate a small area of the territory and the largest population – 35% and 60%, respectively (Fig. 3). In view of this, urban territorial communities have a developed economy, a high level of infrastructure and can independently cover their expenses from their own profits. It should also be noted the balanced placement of rural and settlement territorial communities, of which there are 76% in the region, located at a relatively short distance from administrative centers, which ensures their capacity. At the same time, rural

and settlement territorial communities occupy a large area of the territory – 65%, but with a low population – 40%, which causes limited financial capacity and requires support from the state and other sources of financing. After all, the development of rural areas plays a particularly important role in accelerating the economic growth of the entire region through the expansion of the agrarian, tourism and energy sectors. Thus, cooperation between rural, settlement and urban territorial communities in the Ivano-Frankivsk region is an important aspect of their development in the process of decentralization in Ukraine. It involves the creation of joint projects, exchange of experience, as well as solving problems that go beyond the boundaries of individual administrative units.

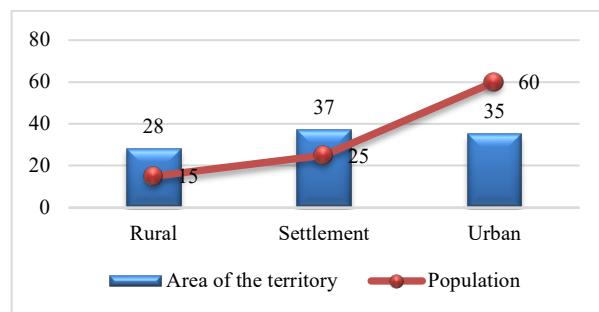


Fig. 3. Distribution of area of the territory and population by type of territorial communities in Ivano-Frankivsk region, %, 2020

Source: own design based on data [13; 19].

In July 2020, a reorganization of districts took place in all regions of Ukraine, including Ivano-Frankivsk region, where six districts were created instead of fourteen. Thanks to this process, 804 populated areas, located on an area of 13.9 thousand square kilometers, with a population of 1 million 361 thousand 241 people, were included in the territorial communities of the region today [13; 26]. Among the large districts, we note Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush and Kolomyia, where 84% of settlements, 72% area of the territory and 82% of the population are concentrated (Fig. 4); which are distributed in 71% rural, 74% settlement and 80% urban territorial communities [13; 19; 26]. The influence of large districts on small ones, including Kosiv, Nadvirna, and Verkhovyna, is ensured by optimizing the distribution of resources and

investments, because large districts have better opportunities for attracting public and private investments, a greater number of projects and initiatives. Therefore, mutually beneficial

cooperation between large and small districts is important for the balanced development of the Ivano-Frankivsk region as a whole.

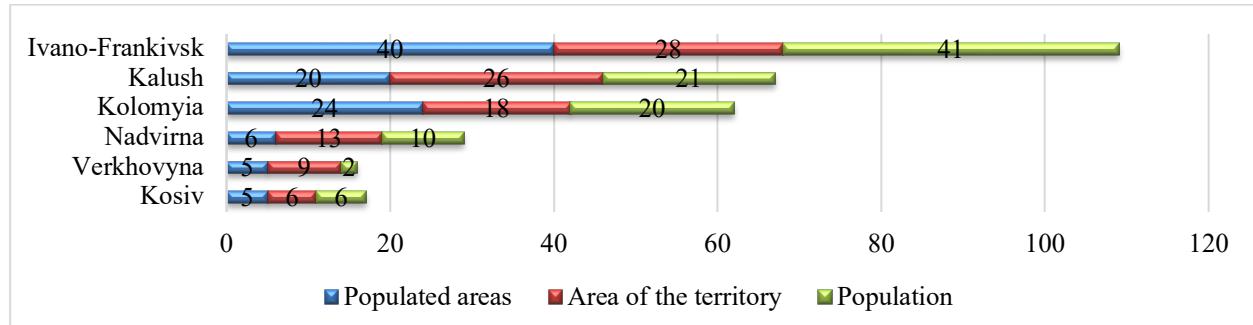


Fig. 4. Presence of populated areas, area of the territory and population in different districts of Ivano-Frankivsk region, %, 2020

Source: own design based on data [13; 26].

It is important to determine the capacity of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities to ensure sustainable development and improve the quality of life of the rural and urban population. Among the criteria for preliminary assessment of the level of capacity of a territorial community, an important indicator is the population size [25]. If this indicator is less than 3 thousand people, then the numerical value of the capacity

criterion will be 0.3; 3–7 – 0.6; more than 7 thousand people – 1. The higher the numerical value of the capacity criterion, the higher the level of capacity of the territorial community. The distribution of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region by population was carried out with an emphasis on four groups: less than 3 thousand people, 3–7, 7–20 and more than 20 thousand people (Fig. 5).

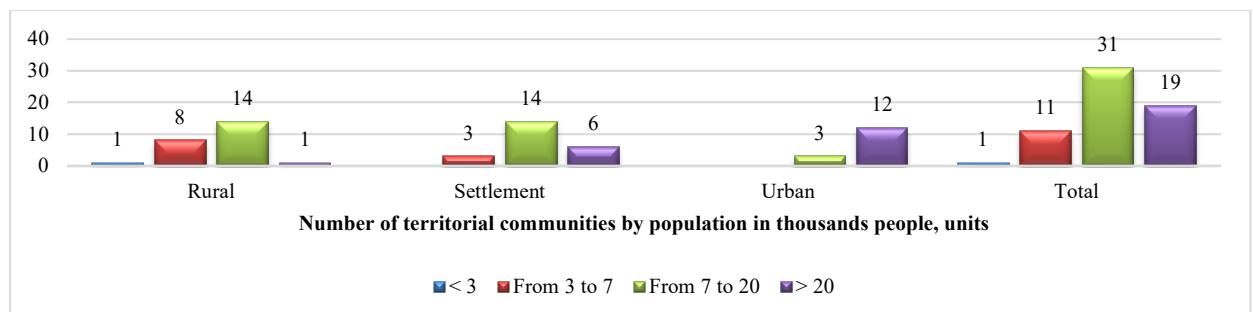


Fig. 5. Distribution of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region by population, 2020

Source: own design based on data [13; 19].

The third group with a population of 7–20 thousand people was noted as the largest [13; 19]. If the third group is combined with the fourth, which includes territorial communities with a population of more than 20 thousand people, then these groups will form the majority among the 62 territorial communities of the Ivano-Frankivsk region – 81%. The largest number of fillings in the third group, which includes territorial communities with a population of 7–20 thousand people, is rural

and settlement territorial communities – 81%. In contrast, in the fourth group, which includes territorial communities with a population of more than 20 thousand people, there are the largest number of urban territorial communities – 63%. At the same time, in the second group, which includes territorial communities with a population of 3–7 thousand people, there is the largest number of rural territorial communities – 73%. In addition, the Zelene rural territorial community

belongs to the first group with a population of less than 3 thousand people, which somewhat reduces the capacity of rural territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region.

Thus, among the 62 territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region by population: one rural territorial community has a numerical value of the capacity criterion of 0.3; 11 territorial communities, of which 8 are rural and 3 are settlement – 0.6; 50 territorial communities, of which 15 are rural, 20 are settlement and 15 are urban – 1. In general, today the list of territorial communities whose population density is half the average population density in Ukraine includes only two: from Nadvirna district – Vorokhta, which belongs to the settlement type; from Verkhovyna district – Zelene, which belongs to the rural type [14]. It can be concluded that the

majority of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region are capable according to the population size criterion, including rural and settlement ones.

An important criterion for the preliminary assessment of the level of capacity of a territorial community is the area of the territory. The area of the territory of less than 200 square kilometers has a numerical value of the capacity criterion of 0.3; 200–400 – 0.6; more than 400 square kilometers – 1 [25]. The higher the level of capacity of the territorial community corresponds to the higher the numerical value of the capacity criterion. Four main groups of territorial communities of the region have been identified by area of the territory: less than 100 square kilometers, 100–200, 200–400 and more than 400 square kilometers (Fig. 6).

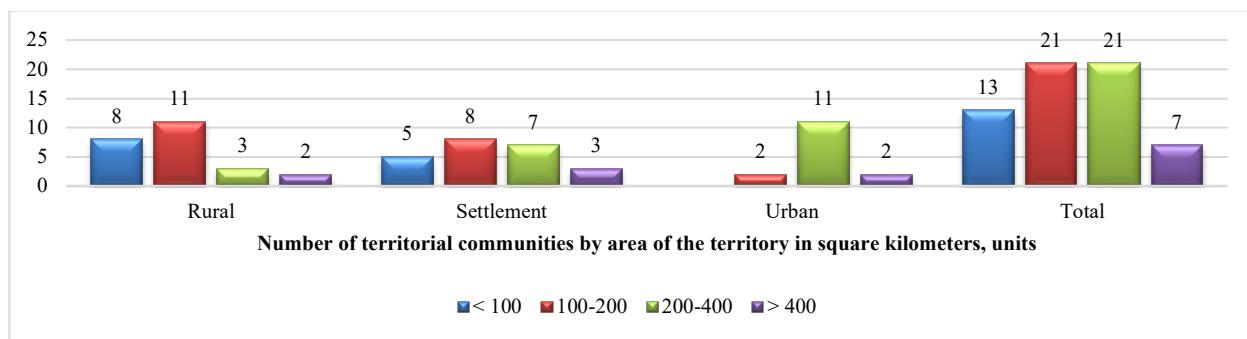


Fig. 6. Rating of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region with different area of the territory, 2020  
Source: own design based on data [13; 19].

The majority of them belong to the first and second groups, which include territorial communities with an area of the territory of less than 200 square kilometers and form the majority among the 62 territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region – 55%, among which a high number are rural [13; 19]. The third group, which includes territorial communities with an area of 200–400 square kilometers, is mostly populated by urban and settlement territorial communities – 86%. In the fourth group, which includes territorial communities with an area of more than 400 square kilometers, there is a high number of settlement territorial communities – 43%.

Thus, among the 62 territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region by area of the territory: 34 territorial communities, including 19 rural, 13 settlement and 2 urban, have a numerical

value of the capacity criterion of 0.3; 21 territorial communities, including 3 rural, 7 settlement and 11 urban – 0.6; 7 territorial communities, including 2 rural, 3 settlement and 2 urban – 1. Therefore, it can be argued that in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, the capacity of rural and settlement territorial communities based on the criterion of the area of the territory is at a slightly lower level compared to urban ones.

An important indicator is the number of populated areas that are part of the territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region, which we also took into account when determining the level of capacity. According to this criterion, territorial communities are divided into four groups, which include: less than 5 populated areas, 5–10, 11–20, and more than 20 populated areas (Fig. 7).

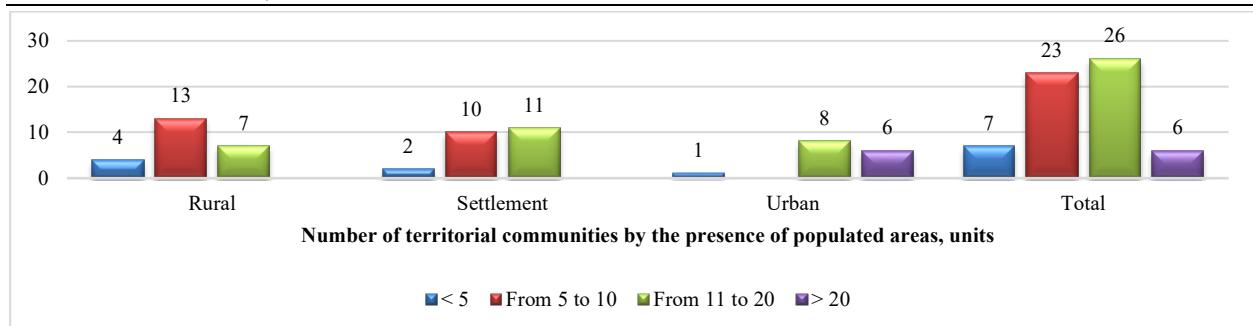


Fig. 7. Rating of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region with different numbers of populated areas, 2020  
Source: own design based on data [13; 19].

Of the 62 territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region, the majority belong to the second and third groups with 5–20 populated areas – 79%, among which a high number are rural and settlement type [13; 19]. The entire content of the fourth group, which includes territorial communities with more than 20 populated areas, is made up of urban territorial communities. However, in the first group, which includes territorial communities with less than 5 populated areas, there is a high number of rural territorial communities – 57%. Thus, it can be argued that, based on the presence of populated areas, the capacity of urban territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region is somewhat higher than that of rural and settlement communities.

Therefore, in the context of decentralization in Ukraine, an important aspect of sustainable development of the Ivano-Frankivsk region is improving the capacity of rural and settlement territorial communities on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation with urban territorial communities, which needs to be expanded. For example, for the implementation of transport-infrastructure projects, economic cooperation based on the joint use of resources is important: natural, labor, material, financial, investment, technological, scientific, informational, etc. The organization of joint economic zones or business forums plays a major role in supporting small and medium-sized businesses in rural and settlement territorial communities or providing jobs for the rural population in the city. Urban territorial communities have larger markets for goods and services, which can stimulate the rural population to develop agrarian business or cooperate with urban

enterprises. Educational and cultural cooperation consists of holding joint cultural and tourist events, festivals and educational programs to exchange experiences and involve young people to providing quality education and resource support. Improving transport infrastructure consists in jointly organizing transport routes between rural, settlement and urban territorial communities for the convenience of moving residents to medical and educational institutions and other infrastructure facilities, as well as developing tourism. Joint solutions to environmental problems, such as waste management, environmental protection, greening and land reclamation, are gaining promising development. Cooperation is an important step in attracting funding from the state budget and international funds, as well as creating joint projects with the involvement of investors. It is important to exchange experience in managing local affairs, as well as to joint participation in the development of regional programs and development strategies.

In Ivano-Frankivsk region, there are many examples of successful projects between rural, settlement and urban territorial communities, which have been organized since 2014. For example, within the framework of the “U-Lead with Europe” projects of the German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ), Bolekhiv, Burshtyn, Dolyna, Halych, Horodenka, Kalush, Kosiv urban; Vytytsia rural; Broshniv-Osadsk, Kuty, Pereghinske, Rozhnyativ settlement territorial communities cooperate [2; 27; 28; 32]. The projects are aimed at ensuring sustainable development of territorial

communities, improving their economic and energy situation and improving the quality of services provided to the population. Its include infrastructure development, improvement of educational, medical and social services, development of tourism and cultural activities. Within the framework of these projects, territorial communities receive support in the form of consultations, training, as well as funding for the development of local initiatives [6]. Their implementation has become an important stage in the reform of public administration in Ukraine through sustainable development of territories based on increasing the ecological and energy capacity of the region.

In the field of education and youth development, joint regional projects are being implemented with the participation of state bodies, local communities, organizations and international partners. In particular, within the framework of the project "Development of Communities and Youth Initiatives", which is initiated with the support of the United States Agency for International Development "USAID Dobre", financing and training for activists, organizations and local leaders is provided [29]. It is participated by the Biloberizka rural, Bogorodchany settlement and Halych, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush, Kolomyia, Nadvirna, Tysmenytsya urban territorial communities. This project is aimed at developing leadership qualities, increasing civic activity and involving rural youth in solving socio-economic problems [33]. It can be concluded that to improve the quality of life of the rural and urban population of Ivano-Frankivsk region, cooperation between rural and settlement territorial communities with urban territorial communities, as well as their joint implementation of international projects with foreign partners, is of great importance.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was found that in 2014, the Ivano-Frankivsk region transferred most of its powers and resources to the local level, which significantly strengthened the rights and financial independence of territorial communities that united in the process of decentralization in

Ukraine. In particular, during 2015–2020, 62 territorial communities were created in the region, of which 24 or 39% belong to the rural type, 23 or 37% to the settlement type, and 15 or 24% to the urban type. At the same time, their formation took place at an uneven pace: in 2015, 3 communities were formed, in 2016 – 8, in 2017 – 12, in 2018 – 7, in 2019 – 10 communities with an annual preference for the creation of rural and settlement communities. It was found that a characteristic feature of 24% of urban territorial communities is their harmonious formation in cities of regional significance – Bolekhiv, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush, Kolomyia and Yaremche, as well as in cities of district significance – Dolyna, Halych, Horodenka, Kosiv, Nadvirna, Rohatyn, Snyatyn, Tlumach, and Tysmenytsia with a concentration of a small area of the territory and the largest population – 35% and 60%, respectively. In view of this, urban territorial communities have a developed economy, a high level of infrastructure and can independently cover their expenses from their own income. The location of rural and settlement territorial communities, which number 76%, is located at a relatively short distance from administrative centers, which ensures their capacity, but with a concentration of a large area of the territory and a low population – 65% and 40%, respectively, which causes limited financial capacity and requires support from the state and other sources of financing. After all, the development of rural areas plays a particularly important role in accelerating the economic growth of the entire region through the expansion of the agrarian, tourist and energy sectors. Thus, the cooperation of rural, settlement and urban territorial communities in the Ivano-Frankivsk region is an important aspect of their development in the process of decentralization in Ukraine.

It has been established that the large Ivano-Frankivsk, Kalush and Kolomyia districts, where 84% of populated areas, 72% areas of the territory and 82% of the population are concentrated, can significantly influence the development of small Verkhovyna, Kosiv, Nadvirna districts and balance the development of Ivano-Frankivsk region as a

whole. For example, through better distribution of resources and investments, because in large districts there are better opportunities for attracting public and private investments, a greater number of projects and initiatives. It can be argued that the majority of territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region are capable according to the criteria for assessing the level of capacity – population, areas of the territory and number of populated areas.

For the sustainable development of the region, effective measures have been proposed, which consist in expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in the direction of exchanging experience and creating joint projects between rural, settlement and urban territorial communities. In particular, socio-economic, administrative-legal, educational and cultural, environmental and tourist, transport and infrastructure. An example of mutually beneficial cooperation of rural, settlements and urban territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region is the implementation of international projects under the programs "U-LEAD with Europe" and "USAID DOBRE". It can be concluded that territorial communities of Ivano-Frankivsk region, thanks to mutually beneficial cooperation, have great potential for sustainable development and within the framework of such initiatives can achieve an improvement in the quality of life of the rural and urban population in the region.

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