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INVESTING IN SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT CIVIL SOCIETY PROJECTS: IMPROVING LEGAL SUPPORT FOR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION PROCESSES

ABSTRACT

Publicly significant investment projects in Ukraine are being implemented in the post-pandemic environment and under active martial law caused by the full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation, which increases the need for stable, transparent, and managed information and communication processes for interaction with civil society. Under such circumstances, the legal support for communication is not static; it is constantly adjusted between security requirements and the need for openness, participation, and accountability, which creates risks of fragmented regulation, unpredictability of procedures, and loss of trust in investment and project results. The object of the study is the investment in socially significant civil society projects and the related system of legal support for information and communication processes between project initiators, public authorities, donors, and the public. Subject of the study: norms, tools, and mechanisms of legal support for information and communication processes during the preparation, financing, and implementation of socially significant civil society projects. The aim of the work is to formally assess the priorities for improving the legal support of the above processes and substantiate practical recommendations for increasing their effectiveness in crisis conditions. The methodological basis of the study is multi-criteria expert assessment using the method of approximation to an ideal solution, which allows ranking alternatives for the development of the legal regime by comparing the distances to the "ideal" and "worst" profiles. Three alternatives are considered, namely, increasing the impact of military actions and worsening legal support, maintaining the system without changes, and weakening legal restrictions. The practical significance of the work is that the developed model and ranking results can be used by public authorities, initiators, and implementers of socially significant investment projects, as well as civil society institutions, to justify changes to regulatory regulation and standardization of communication procedures.

Keywords: legal regulation, legal support, information and communication processes, interaction with civil society, citizen participation, electronic participation, transparency, accountability

JEL Classification: K23, K42, H83

INTRODUCTION

Socially significant projects are almost always associated with the redistribution of resources, changing priorities, and impacting people's daily lives. Consequently, the demand for transparency, accountability, and citizen participation is much higher here than in ordinary economic initiatives. At the same time, the interaction with civil society itself occurs spontaneously or depends on the goodwill of individual officials. These include unequal access to information, agenda manipulation, formal discussion without real influence, conflicts of interest, a decrease in the legitimacy of the project, and, as a result, delays in implementation, litigation, and a decrease in investment attractiveness. That is why legal norms that determine the rules for informing, deadlines, formats of public consultations, procedures for considering proposals, obligations to publish

data, criteria for taking comments into account, as well as liability for concealing information or distorting facts, become an instrument for protecting the public interest and, at the same time, a mechanism for reducing financial and reputational risks for investment.

The importance of the topic is enhanced by the fact that modern interaction is increasingly carried out through digital channels, and therefore requires legal regulation not only of the content of decisions, but also of the methods of communication, recording of messages, availability of materials, the ability to verify and reproduce the course of discussions.

The current legal support for information and communication processes in socially significant investment projects is present, yet it is dispersed across multiple legal and procedural domains and is applied unevenly across institutions and project stages. In practice, the relevant framework is assembled from general rules on access to public information, procedural duties of public authorities to consider requests and complaints, mechanisms of public consultations and hearings, requirements for publication of decisions and reporting, procurement and contracting transparency rules, anti-corruption safeguards, and requirements for record keeping and archiving of documents. In parallel, when interaction increasingly relies on remote channels, additional layers become decisive, including personal data protection rules, cybersecurity obligations for information systems, electronic identification, electronic trust services, and standards for maintaining registries and traceability of decisions. This combination creates a regime that exists *de jure*, yet is not always coherent *de facto*, because the links between these elements are not clearly synchronised, and therefore responsibilities, timelines, and enforceable consequences may remain ambiguous for both project initiators and civil society participants. A first gap concerns access to information and the criteria for security-based restrictions, which becomes particularly visible under crisis constraints. While security exceptions are inevitable, the practical problem is that the grounds, proportionality tests, and duration of restrictions may be insufficiently operationalised for the investment cycle, which encourages ad hoc decisions and inconsistent disclosure practices. The result is a fragmented publication landscape where some project data are released without sufficient context, while other data are withheld without a transparent justification logic or a predictable review mechanism. This also affects the reliability of accountability, because it becomes difficult for stakeholders to distinguish a justified restriction from a discretionary limitation. In addition, publication duties are not always translated into clear minimum datasets for different project stages, which weakens comparability across projects and complicates monitoring of contractors, timelines, and outputs, especially when responsibilities are divided between different authorities and implementers.

This topic also warrants study because information and communication processes in investing in socially significant projects combine several legal areas at once. These include access to public information, protection of personal data, cybersecurity, electronic identification, electronic trust services, rules for maintaining registers, requirements for document storage, and the procedure for working with appeals, petitions, public hearings, and consultations. Each of these elements can become a weak link, for example, when the consultation platform does not guarantee equal access for people with disabilities, when data is published in formats that make analysis impossible, when there are no clear moderation rules and this provokes censorship or, conversely, information attacks, when there are no legal requirements for the completeness of the publication of estimates and contracts, which creates the ground for corrupt practices. An additional challenge is created by new digital tools, including artificial intelligence-based technologies, which can be used to sort applications, predict risks, analyze public opinion, or automatically generate reports, and here the question of legality, non-discrimination, explainability of decisions, and liability for errors arises. All this makes legal support not a technical addition, but the foundation of quality interaction that determines whether citizen participation will be real, whether information will be reliable and timely, whether society will be able to control the use of funds, and whether investments will have predictable rules and stability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of e-participation as a tool for accountability and combating corruption directly raises the question of what legal rules for information, consultation, and feedback should be when investing in socially significant projects. For example, Waheduzzaman and Khandaker (2022) show that e-participation can be associated with better governance indicators. In particular, there is a decrease in the perception of corruption and increased government effectiveness, but the effect on strengthening citizens' voice and accountability is not always automatic, indicating the limitations of current e-participation practices without appropriate institutional and legal guarantees.

Firtin et al. (2025) develop the logic of accountability, emphasizing that the link between e-participation and digital accountability is dependent on the digital divide, i.e., inequality of access to digital technologies and skills, and this directly raises the question of legal mechanisms for non-discrimination and equality of access to participation in projects financed by public or mixed funds.

Heeks (2005) adds a conceptual explanation for why technological solutions for participation and transparency often fail, as digital systems are embedded in a design context that may not coincide with the implementation context, leading to so-called contextual clashes and risks of e-government failures, and therefore legal enforcement should take into account the real practices of citizens, authorities and investors, and not just technical standards.

For example, Reich (2018) offers a simplified model for assessing and designing the governance of public-private partnerships, where transparency and accountability are key categories. He also highlights the gap between the availability of recommendations and actual implementation, which, in the context of our topic, underscores the need to translate the principles of openness into specific legal obligations, control procedures, and responsibilities of the project parties. In more public-private formats, it is particularly important to distinguish between internal transparency, when information is available between partners, and external transparency, when information is available to the public.

Reig et al. (2021), using the example of Barcelona's water supply, show that internal transparency factors influence external transparency, and therefore legal enforcement should cover both contractual standards for data exchange between partners and public standards for disclosure to civil society. The public procurement framework is also critical for investing in socially significant projects, where Cravero (2019) argues for the need to rethink the role of civil society in oversight and participation, i.e., in creating conditions for public control over spending and the quality of decisions. Yehorycheva et al. (2019) analyse the public investment management system in Ukraine and show that the main bottlenecks are institutional and procedural rather than purely financial. They point to fragmented organisational forms of project delivery, imperfect procedures for initiating, appraising, and selecting projects, and weak monitoring and control, which jointly result in low transparency and limited accountability. The authors also emphasise the absence of a single information system and a coherent project pipeline, which in practice makes it difficult for civil society to trace decisions from prioritisation to implementation and to challenge deviations in a timely manner. In applied terms, many socially significant investments are delivered through hybrid delivery models, where public authorities combine budget resources with private capital, managerial capacity, or service delivery under public-private partnership-type arrangements. Such models are attractive under fiscal scarcity because they can smooth upfront public spending, shift specific operational risks to a private partner, and link payments to verified performance outputs rather than to inputs. At the same time, the financial logic of a public-private partnership does not automatically translate into public value. It can create long-term payment obligations and contingent liabilities, and therefore, it requires a governance architecture that makes responsibilities, results, and fiscal risks transparent to both oversight bodies and civil society. Evidence from practical implementation suggests that the effectiveness of public-private partnership delivery depends on concrete procedural practices that are strongly connected to legal support for information and communication processes. These practices include establishing a clear disclosure matrix for the entire project cycle, from project identification and value for money justification to procurement, contract award, amendments, and performance reporting. They also include standardised requirements for public engagement that are feasible under crisis constraints, clear rules for remote participation, accessible publication of key project datasets, and traceable responses to stakeholder comments and grievances.

Soylu et al. (2022) show that even with formal openness of procurement, the quality of data, its fragmentation, and poor reusability become a barrier. In the case of Slovenia, the authors demonstrate data integration and the formation of recommendations for the publication of high-quality data, which is directly related to our subject, since without legal requirements for format, completeness, identifiers, and linking of datasets, communication with the public does not provide the possibility of verification and control. Khorana et al. (2024) develop a public procurement transparency index and show the connection between electronic procurement systems and transparency, as well as the role of institutional conditions, which allows justifying the need for comprehensive legal regulation that combines digital tools, institutional capacity, and accountability mechanisms.

Against this background, Hardy and Williams (2008) demonstrate that e-procurement policies are actually translated into practice through the interaction of many actors and local conditions, so legal norms must be enforceable and accompanied by implementation procedures, rather than being limited to declarations of transparency.

Dolan et al. (2025) analyze stakeholder engagement in large infrastructure projects and emphasize the role of planning law as a framework that determines when and how engagement occurs, what expectations are placed on participatory procedures and outcomes, and how this affects the acceptability of project decisions to society.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the work is to formally assess the priorities for improving legal support for information and communication processes in investing in socially significant civil society projects and to substantiate practical recommendations that increase transparency, participation, accountability, and trust under crisis constraints. To achieve the goal, the following tasks were performed:

1. To determine the scientific and applied grounds for the relevance of improving the legal support of information and communication processes of interaction with civil society during the implementation of socially significant investment projects in the post-pandemic and active hostilities conditions.
2. To form a list of key factors that affect the quality of legal support of the specified processes, and operationalize them as evaluation criteria with the definition of the type of criterion, benefit, or cost.
3. Apply the proposed method of approximation to the ideal solution for multi-criteria evaluation of alternatives and rank legal support alternatives by the integral indicator of proximity to the ideal profile.
4. Present practical recommendations for improving legal support, including a risk-based regime of restrictions, standardization of remote participation, and strengthening accountability and appeal mechanisms relevant to martial law and post-pandemic conditions.

METHODS

For multi-criteria evaluation of alternatives for legal support of information and communication processes, it is appropriate to apply the method of approximation to an ideal solution, the international name of which is Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS). The logic of the method is to choose an alternative that is both closest to the conditionally ideal profile and furthest from the conditionally worst profile according to a set of criteria.

Let a set of alternatives A_i be given, where $i=1, \dots, m$. The alternatives in our study are possible alternatives for legal support for interaction with civil society when implementing investments in socially significant projects, for example, various combinations of consultation procedures, transparency tools, accountability mechanisms, digital channels of participation, and contractual partnership models.

A set of criteria K_j is also given, where $j=1, \dots, n$. The criteria are signs of the quality of legal support, which reflect not only legal correctness, but also the practical ability of the norm to work in conditions of real communication between the state, the investor, and the public. For each criterion, the type is fixed: a benefit criterion, where higher values are preferable, or a cost criterion, where lower values are preferable.

The experts themselves form a matrix of initial estimates. The expert group itself (15 people) was formed through targeted selection according to three profiles to balance legal, managerial, and public experience:

1. The first profile includes specialists in administrative law, public administration, anti-corruption regulation, and access to public information.
2. The second profile includes heads or managers of socially significant investment projects, including infrastructure and social projects.
3. The third profile includes representatives of civil society who have experience in participating in consultations, public control, procurement monitoring, supervisory boards, public budgeting, or similar mechanisms.

Then, normalization is performed to bring the criteria to a comparable scale. Vector normalization by columns is used. After that, the weights of the criteria w_j are taken into account, which are also set by the experts. Then, the ideal solution A^+ and the worst solution A^- are formed. For the benefit criteria and the distances of each alternative to the ideal and worst solutions (S_i^+ / S_i^-) are calculated. The final indicator of proximity to the ideal is calculated as follows (1):

$$C_i = (S_i^- / (S_i^+ + S_i^-)), 0 \leq C_i \leq 1 \quad (1)$$

where S_i^+ is the distance of alternative A_i to the ideal solution A^+ , and S_i^- is the distance to the worst solution A^- . A larger C_i means the alternative is simultaneously closer to the ideal profile and farther from the worst profile, so it receives a higher rank in the final ordering.

The larger C_i , the higher the priority of alternative A_i . The resulting order is the basis for ranking the legal support alternatives and choosing the best solution.

RESULTS

Assessment of factors that affect the legal support of information and communication processes of interaction with civil society during investment in socially significant projects is relevant because in post-pandemic conditions and during active martial law, the rules of communication, transparency, access to information, public participation, and control are changing rapidly. The full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation has caused a situation where security risks are simultaneously increasing, temporary legal restrictions are intensifying, and the need for trust and accountability is increasing. That is why, in our opinion, the list of factors should reflect not only the formal quality of the norms, but also their effectiveness in a dynamic external environment, where regulation is often adjusted to current challenges.

To begin with, let us highlight a number of possible alternatives for further assessment:

- A1. Strengthening the impact of military actions and worsening legal support. The share of temporary restrictions is increasing, transparency is decreasing, public participation is becoming more difficult, and exceptions to procedures are becoming more frequent.
- A2. No changes in the legal framework. The current rules, approaches to consultations, access to information, and control are maintained, without any significant expansion or narrowing of regimes.
- A3. Easing of legal restrictions. The number of exceptions and special regimes is reduced, participation procedures are expanded, wider access to information is restored, and accountability mechanisms are strengthened.
- At the same time, it is necessary to determine the relevant factors influencing the process to be included as criteria:
- K1. Frequency of amendments in legislative acts and subordinate legal procedures, availability of temporary norms, speed of updating of rules in response to hostilities.
- K2. The scope of permitted restrictions on rights and freedoms, additional powers of authorities, and special rules for critical infrastructure and security.
- K3. Established practices of restricting data publication on security grounds, transparent criteria for classifying information as sensitive, and the availability of alternative forms of information.
- K4. Availability of consultations, public hearings, electronic petitions, working groups, as well as the real possibility of conducting them in conditions of shelling and displacement.
- K5. Personnel stability, continuity of work, ability to organize communication, and quality of coordination between levels of government.
- K6. Level of efficiency of electronic services, public access to the Internet, stability of communication, and backup communication channels during outages.
- K7. Protection against cyberattacks, availability of incident response protocols, backup copying, protection of registers, and interaction channels.
- K8. Compliance with data processing rules, balance between transparency and security, risks of leaks, and legal grounds for data transfer between entities.
- K9. Publicity of data on project selection, financing, contractors, deadlines, and results, including what may be hidden for security reasons.
- K10. Effectiveness of declarations, inspections, audits, monitoring of procurement, response to appeals, and taking into account signals from civil society.
- K11. The capacity to submit complaints, appeals, and lawsuits, and to obtain timely responses, including remote forms of work of courts and administrative bodies.
- K12. Trust in institutions, perception of fairness of procedures, willingness of civil society to cooperate, risks of disinformation and manipulation.
- K13. Compliance of national procedures with financing conditions, reporting, control, and sanction restrictions.
- K14. Development of remote forms of participation, digital consultations, and adaptation of procedures to possible restrictions on mass events in response to a worsening epidemic situation.

The alternatives themselves (A1-A3) reflect the idea that during active hostilities, legal frameworks and communication practices change frequently, and changes can both increase restrictions and return the system to greater transparency and participation (Table 1).

Table 1. Evaluation criteria, content, and criterion type. Note: * Benefit means that a higher value is better, because it reflects a stronger quality of legal support for information and communication processes, for example, higher transparency, better cyber resilience, and more effective appeal mechanisms. Cost means that a lower value is better, because the criterion reflects a phenomenon that complicates or worsens legal support and communication.

Code	Factors influencing the legal framework	Type *	How the expert evaluates in essence
K1	Regulatory environment dynamism. Frequency of changes in acts and subordinate procedures, presence of temporary norms, speed of updating rules in response to hostilities	Cost	Higher values mean more frequent and less predictable changes, which complicate stable communication and compliance
K2	Martial law regime and special legal regimes. Scope of permitted restrictions of rights and freedoms, additional powers of public authorities, special rules for critical infrastructure, and security	Cost	Higher values mean a broader restrictive regime and more exceptions that narrow openness and participation
K3	Access to public information and the limits of its restriction. Practice of restricting disclosure on security grounds, transparent criteria for classifying information as sensitive, and availability of alternative forms of informing	Benefit	Higher values mean better balanced access with clear rules and workable alternatives to maintain transparency
K4	Public participation procedures in decision-making. Availability of consultations, public hearings, electronic petitions, working groups, and real feasibility under shelling and displacement	Benefit	Higher values mean participation instruments exist and function in practice, including remote formats
K5	Institutional capacity of public authorities and local self-government. Staff resilience, continuity of work, ability to organize communication, and quality of coordination across levels of government	Benefit	Higher values mean stable institutions and predictable interaction with civil society and project stakeholders
K6	Digital readiness and availability of remote interaction channels. Level of electronic services, public internet access, connection stability, backup communication channels during outages	Benefit	Higher values mean reliable digital channels and continuity of interaction under disruptions
K7	Cybersecurity and resilience of information systems. Protection against cyberattacks, incident response protocols, backups, protection of registers, and interaction channels	Benefit	Higher values mean stronger protection and faster recovery, supporting secure participation and disclosure
K8	Protection of personal data and sensitive information. Compliance with processing rules, balance between transparency and security, leak risks, and legal grounds for data sharing between entities	Benefit	Higher values mean lawful, safe data handling with clear rules for sharing and minimised risks
K9	Transparency of the investment cycle of socially significant projects. Publicity of data on project selection, financing, contractors, timelines, and results, including what may be hidden for security reasons	Benefit	Higher values mean strong disclosure and understandable security-based exclusions
K10	Mechanisms for preventing corruption and public oversight. Effectiveness of declarations, inspections, audits, procurement monitoring, responses to requests, and consideration of signals from civil society	Benefit	Higher values mean functional controls and responsiveness to oversight inputs
K11	Accessibility and effectiveness of appeal procedures and protection of rights. Ability to submit a complaint, request, claim, receive a response in a reasonable time, including remote work of courts and administrative bodies	Benefit	Higher values mean real, timely remedies and enforceable responses
K12	Level of public trust and communication legitimacy. Trust in institutions, perceived fairness of procedures, willingness of civil society to cooperate, risks of disinformation and manipulation	Benefit	Higher values mean higher trust and legitimacy, lower vulnerability to manipulation
K13	Requirements of international partners and donors for transparency and accountability. Consistency of national procedures with financing conditions, reporting, control, sanctions restrictions, and compliance	Benefit	Higher values mean stronger alignment and better access to funding and oversight standards
K14	Post-pandemic practices of organizing interaction. Development of remote participation formats, digital consultations, and adaptation of procedures to possible restrictions on mass events if the epidemiological situation worsens	Benefit	Higher values mean mature remote interaction practices and procedural adaptability

Therefore, Table 1 captures what exactly will be assessed and why these factors are relevant specifically for Ukraine in the post-pandemic period and during an active state of war caused by a full-scale armed invasion by an aggressor country (the Russian Federation). In the context of our research topic, legal support does not exist as a static set of norms. It is actually a regime that is constantly adjusted between two poles, security and openness. That is why the criteria include elements of access, participation, and accountability, as well as elements of system stability, institutional capacity, and

cybersecurity. The key is that most of the criteria are benefit criteria, that is, the higher the indicator, the better the state of legal support for information and communication processes. Within the TOPSIS framework, K1 and K2 are treated as cost-type criteria, meaning that lower scores are preferable because regulatory volatility and the intensity of restrictive regimes increase procedural uncertainty and can weaken participation and transparency. Importantly, the cost–benefit label here reflects the preference direction in ranking rather than monetary costs, because other criteria may also have budgetary implications but are modelled as benefit-type due to their positive contribution to the quality and reliability of legal support for information and communication processes. It is transformed into an applied criterion K6, which reflects the system's ability to work through remote channels and maintain communication in conditions of mobility restrictions, risks for mass events, and problems with physical access.

Next, we will present the criteria themselves based on the results of the expert assessment. Thus, the Scales show which factors the expert group considers most decisive for the quality of legal support for communication with civil society in socially significant investment projects. So, in our case, as can be seen from Table 2, the greatest weight is given to transparency and accountability of the investment cycle, which is criterion K9. This is logical because transparency is the basis for trust and acceptability of investment decisions by society. Next in priority are access to public information, participation of civil society, and anti-corruption safeguards. This forms a group of criteria that are directly related to the legitimacy of processes and reducing conflicts around projects. At the same time, such criteria as cybersecurity and personal data protection also receive high weights. Thus, this reflects the specifics of martial law, where communication often shifts to electronic channels, and attacks on information systems become commonplace. If digital channels are not secured, even the best-written participation procedures can be undermined by technical incidents, leaks, or disinformation operations.

Table 2. Weights of criteria based on expert evaluation results.

Code	Average importance (s_j)	Weight (w_j)
K1	8.6	0.073
K2	8.2	0.070
K3	9.0	0.076
K4	8.8	0.075
K5	8.3	0.071
K6	7.9	0.067
K7	8.7	0.074
K8	8.1	0.069
K9	9.2	0.078
K10	8.9	0.076
K11	8.4	0.071
K12	8.5	0.072
K13	7.7	0.065
K14	7.4	0.063
Sum	117.7	1

In Table 2, the criterion weights w_j were not obtained from a complex computational procedure; they were derived by a simple normalization of the experts' average importance scores. Specifically, each criterion K_j was rated for importance by 15 experts on the same scale, and then the mean score s_j was computed across experts.

Next comes the assessment matrix itself, which, in our opinion, is the key core of the method. In essence, it is a structured expert assessment that allows you to compare scenarios under conditions of high uncertainty. In Ukraine, such uncertainty is natural due to active hostilities, when institutions are sometimes forced to quickly change procedures, introduce exceptions, or temporarily limit the publication of data. Therefore, in our case, alternative A1 is rated low in terms of access to information, civil society participation, and transparency of the investment cycle. Yes, this reflects a typical situation when security considerations, shortage of time and resources, as well as risks of physical danger, narrow communication channels, and shortened participation procedures. At the same time, A1 has relatively higher scores in cybersecurity and personal data protection. Alternative A2 is essentially a baseline scenario, where the system does not deteriorate or improve significantly. Therefore, the scores are concentrated near the middle of the scale. Alternative A3 reflects the easing of

restrictions and the return of broader participation and transparency, and therefore has high values for the criteria of access, participation, accountability, anti-corruption mechanisms, and consistency with partner requirements (Table 3).

Table 3. Matrix of alternative scores by criteria.

Alternative	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10	K11	K12	K13	K14
A1 strengthening of the impact of hostilities and deterioration of the legal framework	8	9	3	2	4	5	7	7	3	4	3	3	4	5
A2 no changes in the legal framework system	5	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
A3 easing of legal restrictions	3	4	7	7	6	6	6	6	7	7	6	7	7	6

Next, the ideal and worst vectors are formed. For the benefit criteria, the maximum value is taken as the ideal, and for the cost criterion, the minimum value is taken as the ideal. The distances and the proximity index in Equation (1) are calculated. In essence, the Indicator C_i is a final assessment that combines all criteria and all weights. The interpretation is simple: the closer the value is to 1, the closer the alternative is to the conditionally ideal profile of legal provision, and the further it is from the conditionally worst profile. In our case, it is A3 that receives the highest value of C_i , which means that the relaxation of legal restrictions on average leads to a better combination of transparency, civil society participation, accountability, anti-corruption control, and consistency with the requirements of partners. Alternative A2 occupies an intermediate position. Its distance to the ideal is significantly less than that of A1, but at the same time, A2 does not move far enough from the worst profile to compete with A3. This well demonstrates the risk of the no-change scenario. During an active state of war, reality changes faster than norms, and therefore, without a systematic adjustment of the rules of interaction with civil society, investment processes may lose legitimacy or effectiveness even when formally the norms have not deteriorated (Table 4).

Table 4. Summary calculations of the TOPSIS method and ranking of alternatives.

Alternative	Distance to the ideal (Si+)	Distance to the worst (Si-)	Closeness (Ci)	Rank
A1	0.097	0.009	0.087	3
A2	0.047	0.053	0.526	2
A3	0.009	0.097	0.913	1

In Table 4, the indicator "Distance to the worst (S_i^-)" means the distance of the alternative A_i to the worst, or anti-ideal profile A^- , which in TOPSIS is not taken from a real object, but is constructed mathematically based on the least desirable values of the criteria after normalization and taking into account the weights. For Benefit-type criteria, the anti-ideal A^- is formed from the minimum values, since less means a worse quality of legal support, and for Cost-type criteria, the anti-ideal A^- is formed from the maximum values, since more means a stronger negative factor that complicates transparency and participation. Thus, the closeness to the ideal profile indicator was constructed, as in the method of approximation to the ideal solution, it is the final integral score that reduces all criteria, weights, and normalised scores into one number for comparing alternatives. It is convenient to show it in percentages, because according to the formula, it always lies in the range from 0 to 1, and the conversion to % is only a scaling that makes the graph more readable and does not change the ranking.

Thus, the model results show that the best profile is provided by the scenario of easing legal restrictions while maintaining security, and the worst is provided by an increase in the impact of hostilities with the degradation of transparency and participation. Based on this, we will highlight three recommendations for improving the legal support of information and communication processes (Figure 2).

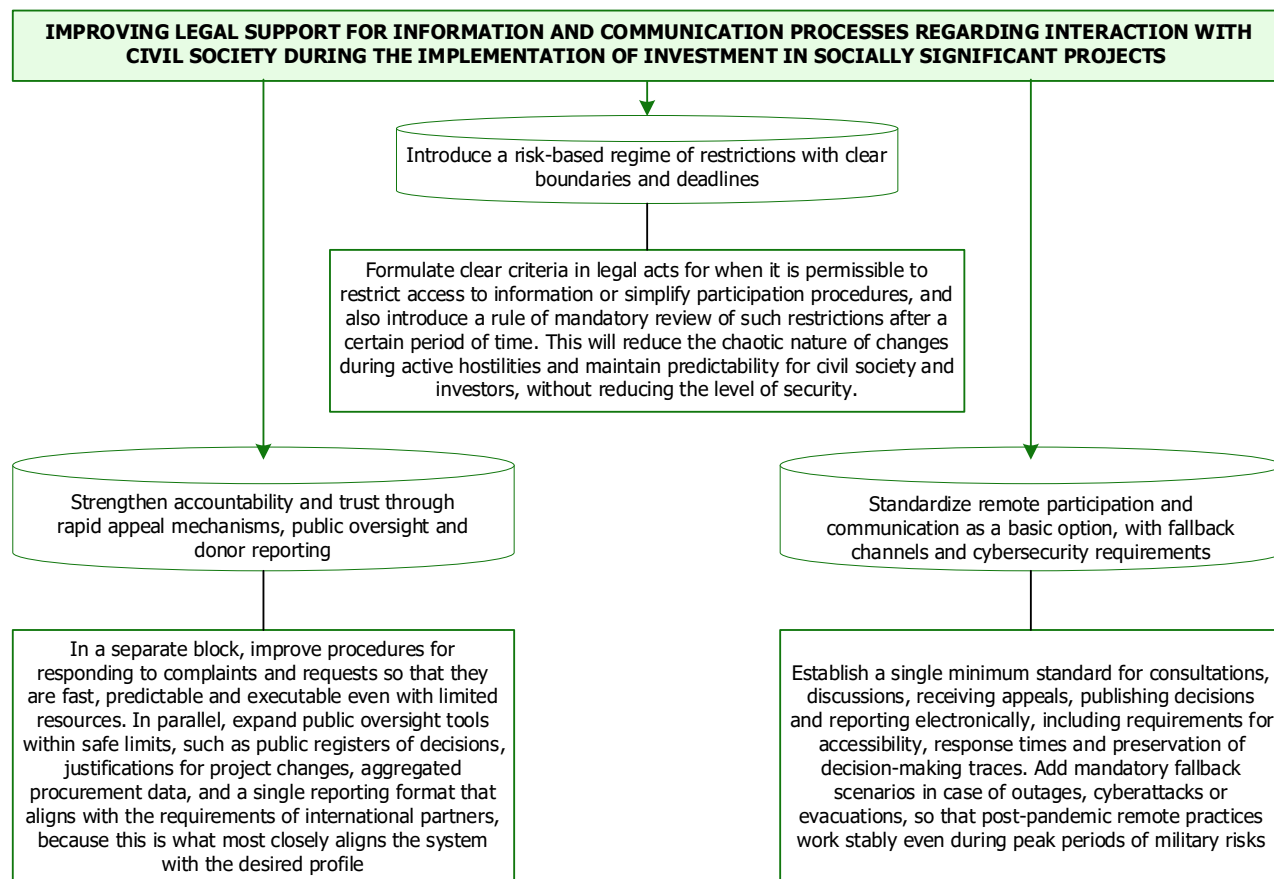


Figure 1. Model for improving legal support for information and communication processes regarding interaction with civil society during the implementation of investment in socially significant projects.

Therefore, our findings indicate that the scenario of easing legal restrictions while maintaining security, cyber resilience, and data protection instruments is closest to the desired profile, whereas the scenario of increasing restrictions and deteriorating legal support poses the greatest risks to transparency, participation, and accountability. The no-change scenario appears to be an intermediate one, highlighting the risk of institutional inertia in the face of rapid renewal of legal regimes and interaction practices.

DISCUSSION

In the post-pandemic conditions and under the active state of war caused by the full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation, the external environment becomes highly volatile, and the balance between security and openness becomes a key practical dilemma. That is why our approach, based on the method of approximation to an ideal solution, made it possible to show that maintaining transparency, participation, and accountability is not a decorative element of democratic politics, but a functional condition for the legitimacy of investment and social acceptability of decisions. In this sense, our findings are consistent with the logic of open government research, where transparency, participation, and accountability are considered as interrelated practices that determine the trust and quality of public administration (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014). At the same time, a significant part of the existing scientific literature focuses on public participation mainly in the context of environmental assessment procedures, environmental impact assessment, and strategic environmental assessment.

This body of work convincingly demonstrates that the formal existence of procedures does not guarantee their real effectiveness, as participation often faces barriers to access to information, resource inequality, conflict, and problems with the quality of engagement in practice (Rega & Baldizzone, 2015; Maphanga et al., 2023; Suškevičs et al., 2023). Additionally, research on participation in the legal field outside the European Union shows that similar problems arise regardless of jurisdiction, which emphasizes the universality of challenges for the legal design of participation procedures (Loh et al., 2023).

Our approach is different in that it moves the discussion from the plane of a separate procedure to the plane of a comprehensive regime of legal support for information and communication processes in the field of socially significant investment, where in addition to participation, it is necessary to simultaneously take into account the accountability of the investment cycle, anti-corruption safeguards, digital resilience, cybersecurity, and personal data protection.

Studies on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention have highlighted the need to ensure both clarity of rules and the real impact of participation, while avoiding a situation where formal participation becomes a procedural imitation (Zhao & Butcher, 2022). Empirical evaluations of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Europe also show that access to information and participation depend on the quality of implementation, institutional capacity, and actual practices of authorities, and not only on declarations in legislation (Osae et al., 2024).

Our study reflects this by including the criterion of the intensity of security restrictions as a cost factor, as well as the criteria of access to public information, real participation, and the effectiveness of appeal.

Approaches that analyze social investment bonds offer a framework for aligning the interests of the parties, describing accountability mechanisms and assessing social impact, while emphasizing the complexity of contract design, the role of intermediaries, and political contexts (Muñoz & Kimmitt, 2019; Williams, 2024).

For our topic, this is important because the legal support of information and communication processes should not only inform, but also create the prerequisites for social trust, accountability, and project effectiveness. Here, the advantage of the model we used is that it translates heterogeneous requirements, including legal, managerial, digital, and anti-corruption, into a common format of multi-criteria assessment. This makes trade-offs visible and allows us to compare scenarios for the development of the legal support regime, rather than just describing them qualitatively.

The contribution of our study to the scientific discussion lies in the combination of three elements that are often presented separately in existing works. The first element, the legal design of participation and access to information, dominates the literature on environmental assessments and the Aarhus Convention (Suškevičs et al., 2023; Osae et al., 2024). The second element is the managerial logic of transparency, participation, and accountability, which is described as a set of interrelated open government practices (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014).

This study has limitations. The TOPSIS ranking is based on a purposive expert panel of 15 participants, therefore both scores and weights may vary with a different stakeholder mix and should be tested via sensitivity analysis and enlarged panels.

CONCLUSIONS

The study substantiates the feasibility of assessing the legal support for information and communication processes of interaction with civil society when implementing investments in socially significant projects in the post-pandemic environment and active martial law caused by the full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation. The relevance of such an assessment is determined by the fact that, under the influence of hostilities and security risks, legal regimes, procedural rules, and actual communication practices change frequently, and therefore, the risk of reduced transparency, narrowing of participation, and loss of trust increases, which directly affects the legitimacy of investment decisions and the sustainability of project implementation. The article considers three alternatives, namely, increasing the impact of hostilities and worsening legal support, maintaining the system unchanged, and weakening legal restrictions. Such a statement reflects the realities of martial law, when the regulatory system can move towards expanding restrictions for security reasons or towards restoring broader transparency and participation, while maintaining the requirements of cybersecurity and data protection. A set of key factors that shape the quality of legal support for information and communication processes has been identified and used as evaluation criteria.

The ranking results show that the scenario of easing legal restrictions while maintaining security, cyber resilience and data protection instruments is closest to the ideal profile, while the scenario of increasing the impact of military actions with worsening legal support forms a profile that is far from desirable due to reduced access to information, narrowing the participation of civil society and falling accountability of the investment cycle. The scenario without changes occupies an intermediate position, demonstrating the risk of institutional inertia, because in conditions of rapid environmental change, "immutability" can actually mean that the rules lag behind the real needs of interaction and control. Based on the evaluation, directions for improving the legal support for information and communication processes have been formulated. For example, one of these is the potential for a transition to a risk-based restrictions regime, in which the grounds, limits, and terms of validity of security exceptions are clearly defined, and their extension requires procedural justification and review.

It is necessary to establish standardized remote forms of participation and communication as a basic option, providing for backup channels in case of disconnections, as well as minimum requirements for cybersecurity and accessibility.

Overall, the study confirmed that the combination of multi-criteria expert assessment with the method of approximation to an ideal solution creates a practically suitable tool for selecting priorities for improving the legal support for interaction with civil society in the field of socially significant investment.

Future research should expand the scenario design to refine it from three aggregated regimes to modular legal policy packages, enabling a more granular roadmap for improving information and communication processes in socially significant civil society investments under crisis constraints.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors have contributed equally.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ІНВЕСТИВАННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНО ЗНАЧУЩИХ ПРОЄКТІВ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА: УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ЮРИДИЧНОЇ ПІДТРИМКИ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНО-КОМУНІКАЦІЙНИХ ПРОЦЕСІВ

Суспільно значущі інвестиційні проекти в Україні реалізують в умовах постпандемічності та активного воєнного стану, спричиненого повномасштабним збройним уторгненням російської федерації, що посилює потребу в стійких, прозорих і керованих інформаційно-комунікаційних процесах взаємодії з громадянським суспільством. За таких обставин правове забезпечення комунікації не є статичним, воно постійно коригується між вимогами безпеки та необхідністю відкритості, участі й підзвітності, що створює ризики фрагментарності регулювання, непередбачуваності процедур і втрати довіри до інвестування й результатів проєктів. Об'єкт дослідження – це інвестування соціально значущих проєктів громадянського суспільства та пов'язана з ним система юридичної підтримки інформаційно-комунікаційних процесів між ініціаторами проєктів, органами публічної влади, донорами та громадськістю. Предмет дослідження: норми, інструменти та механізми юридичної підтримки інформаційно-комунікаційних процесів під час підготовки, фінансування та реалізації соціально значущих проєктів громадянського суспільства. Метою роботи є формалізоване оцінювання пріоритетів удосконалення правового забезпечення зазначених процесів та обґрунтування практичних рекомендацій щодо підвищення їхньої ефективності в кризових умовах. Методологічною основою дослідження є багатокритеріальне експертне оцінювання з використанням методу наближення до ідеального розв'язку, який дозволяє ранжувати альтернативи розвитку правового режиму через порівняння відстаней до «ідеального» й «найгіршого» профілів. Розглянуто три альтернативи, а саме: посилення впливу воєнних дій і погіршення правового забезпечення, збереження системи без змін, а також послаблення правових обмежень. Практичне значення роботи полягає в тому, що сформована модель і результати ранжування можуть бути використані органами публічної влади, ініціаторами та виконавцями суспільно значущих інвестиційних проєктів, а також інститутами громадянського суспільства для обґрунтування змін до нормативного регулювання й стандартизації процедур комунікації.

Ключові слова: правове регулювання, правове забезпечення, інформаційно-комунікаційні процеси, взаємодія з громадянським суспільством, участь громадян, електронна участь, прозорість, підзвітність

JEL Класифікація: K23, K42, H83