

Public control in the practice of citizen participation in public decision-making: new trends and technologies in local self-government of Serbia and Russia

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Public control is a relatively new area of interaction between the local community and the authorities in the post-Soviet states. This technology enables public participation in public decision-making while monitoring the activities of the authorities and is particularly relevant at the local level. Public control is exercised through participatory government. However, prior to this widespread use and understanding, public control was an integral part of the NPM, especially in privatized industries.

The digitalization has had a significant impact on the practice of social control: new digital possibilities have emerged for carrying out checks, public hearings, drawing public attention to inspections and monitoring. However, digitalization is uneven across regions, which in turn affects the ability of citizens to exercise social control across cities and countries.

The purpose of the article: to study general and specific features of the implementation of public control at the local level as part of participatory governance in Serbia and Russia.

The methodology of the study includes theories of participatory management, theory of civil (social) participation, concept of digital transformation.

Research methods: analysis of normative legal documents of Serbia and Russia regarding public control at the local level, case-analysis and content-analysis of official accounts of subjects of public control and local self-government, expert interviews.

Understanding the specifics of working with local communities, vision of their resources and their own management capabilities, opens up broad prospects for the implementation of policy decisions, aimed at achieving real social results and effects of a specific local government in a certain sphere of activity.

Keywords: public control, digital technologies, social media, local authorities, public participation

1 Introduction

Modern society in the era of industrialization 4.0 is becoming increasingly open and connected, which is manifested in the network effect. Network structures presuppose a special form of coordination of interactions, fundamentally different from hierarchies, therefore power relations in them cannot have the same nature and character of implementation as in political systems of the statist type.

Theoretical understanding of the new conditions of public administration occurs, among other things, within the framework of the concept of participatory management, which involves joint, collective actions and co-productivity of local governments and local communities, based on trust.

Participation as the participation of parties, collective participation in the public administration system, the involvement of citizens in the management of the affairs of the state, society and local communities is gaining importance. The implementation of the principle of participation presupposes the invitation and readiness of citizens (citizens) to participate in public consultations and actually influence political decision-making (Perezolova, 2018, 123). A. Fung (Fung, 2011) introduces the term «accountable autonomy», describing the operation of the principle of participation in public administration. This means a hybridization of management methods: the simultaneous expansion of power at the municipal level while increasing openness and participation on the part of the population.

Citizen participation is often portrayed as a critical element in efforts to strengthen the quality of democracy and public policy in an «era of increasing uncertainty» (Giovanni, Matteo & Greta, 2021). However, implementation practice often shows the limitations of this concept, affecting both citizen activity and institutional limits.

Public governance gives greater potential to citizens and their associations in making public decisions. The main principles of the new type of government are Publicity, Transparency, Openness, Participation - all of them testify to the possibility of bilateral, partnership, dialogue between the population and the government. The other side of this dialogue is various constraints and barriers: Digital cultural inequality, Differences in perception of the goals and objectives of PA, Government/nation interests.

The method of civil or public control is becoming an opportunity to overcome barriers of dialogue with the authorities at the local level. At the same time, the digital communication environment, which has been actively expanding and intensively penetrating people's everyday lives since the end of the twentieth century, erases spatial boundaries and allows the formation of a new type of network interaction between people (Castells, 2009). Thus, the conditions of digitalization, in which a whole generation of young citizens have already grown up, allow us to formulate a number of research questions. What regulatory and socio-cultural conditions influence the practice of public control in Serbia and Russia? Are there differences in the use of new technologies for social control in the countries analysed for economic, political, cultural and historical reasons?

That's why target this articles – to study general and specific features of the implementation of public control at the local level as part of participatory governance in Serbia and Russia

. In this regard, the research questions considered in the article are the following:

- the regulatory and legal aspects of public control in the Russian Federation and Serbia;
- cases of public control practices in the Russian Federation and Serbia.

The theoretical significance lies in the study of the complex phenomenon of public (civil) control as an institution that is at different stages of development in different states, including taking into account digital divides.

The practical significance is in understanding the specifics of working with local communities, vision of their resources and their own management capabilities. It opens up broad prospects for the implementation of policy decisions, aimed at achieving real social results and effects of a specific local government in a certain sphere of activity.

The research hypotheses are:

- Concepts and paradigms of modern public administration have influenced the formation of legislation on public control
- Concept of public control is ambiguous in Serbia and Russia
- Autonomy and diversity of social control practices also differ in Russia and Serbia
- The impact of digitization on social control practices is difficult to assess

Methodology. The study is based on the methodological provisions of the concepts of the participatory management, public administration, good governance , theory of digital society .. As the main methods, the analysis of regulatory legal documents, the analysis of statistical data and data from official reports, the secondary analysis of data from quantitative and qualitative studies on the topic and the results of expert interviews were used.

The subject-semantic limitations of the study include the conditions in which modern systems of public administration evolve and transform. Taking into account the different conditions for the formation and development of legislation (integrative trends in Serbia and the EU, tightening of civil liability in the Russian Federation, etc.), different conditions for the formation of civil society, national identity (mono- and multi-national states), we can assume

different ways of developing the practice of public control in Serbia and Russia. This is in my queue will have influence will affect the theoretical generalization of theoretical and empirical data.

The limitations of the study also include the selection of scientific papers presented in the article, on the basis of which a theoretical study was carried out - these are works posted in the scientometric databases Scopus, Web of science , RSCI, since 1991.

2 Research methodology

Theoretically, the concepts of participatory governance, new public governance, good governance and network governance, digital society influenced the construction of the theoretical basis and logic of the study.

The research methodology involves the analysis of regulatory legal acts of Serbia and Russia regulating relations in the field of public / civil control, the functioning of the non-profit sector and citizens' associations, as well as relations in the field of empowering non-state actors to control the activities of public authorities. Regulatory acts are structured by power, date of adoption, and regulated relations. The selected groups of normative documents made it possible to highlight the focus of state attention of the two states to the phenomenon of public control.

Analysis of the Internet space of the two states made it possible to determine the main digital forms of interaction and participation in relations between the state and the public sector (official websites of government and local government, official websites of NGOs, public associations, etc.).

Analysis of available statistical data helped to focus on assessing the real level of digital interaction in the implementation of public control in the practice of Serbia and Russia.

Expert interviews (specialists in the field of local and regional government, government lawyers) helped identify the main problems in the implementation of the practice of public control. A total of 6 experts (3 each from Russia and Serbia) were interviewed. The results of the survey were as follows.

3 Literature review

For the first time the possibilities of public control were mentioned in the era of new public management. In his book "Nationalized Industries and Social Control: Legal, Constitutional and Political Issues", T.Posser (Posser, 1987), he summarized significant results of this practice.

The modern system of public administration, based on the principles of publicity, transparency, openness and participation in the context of the global trend of digitalization, provides unlimited opportunities for developing "society-government" relations and improving the tools of social-government dialogue. For 2023, the popularization and penetration of network technologies into society: big data and virtual reality, artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain systems is associated with the need for government structures to be adaptive when providing public services to the population, receiving feedback, and implementing basic constitutional principles in its activities (Provan, Lemaire, 2012).

However, the existing risks of network governance: cultural inequality, differences in perception of the goals and objectives of network management, loss of individuality, high costs for coordination, predetermine the need to search for new methodological approaches to the organization of digital public governance (Zotov, Vasilenko, 2021).

Theoretical understanding of the new conditions of public administration occurs, among other things, within the framework of the concept of participatory management, which involves joint, collective actions and co-productivity of local governments and local communities, based on trust.

Participation as the participation of parties, collective participation in the public administration system, the involvement of citizens in the management of the affairs of the state, society and local communities is gaining importance. Public control is a form of participation also, it is a negotiation process that allows reaching consensus at any level of government - both at the federal, regional, local levels, and on a public scale (Evstafieva, 2008, 141).

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Positive public-private partnership (interaction between public administration and private entities) currently acts as a key element of “participatory governance”, positive executive activity, which corresponds to the constitutional model of the rule of law.

We consider state-public management as management that optimally combines the activities of government entities of a state and social nature. Public management is a management activity carried out by structures of civil society - voluntarily formed associations and organizations of citizens pursuing a public educational policy on the basis of democratic procedures of self-government and co-government .

The practice of “participation”, “co-creativity” occurs in a certain socio-cultural environment, where the basis for the production of public goods are cultural values and cultural practices common to interacting organizers and volunteer helpers (Pevnaya, Bannykh & Tarasova, 2022). Modern digital culture, which generates values common to certain social groups and communities, becomes not only a source of new opportunities, but also produces new risks, many of which are determined by technological conditions and the level of social and technological competence of people interacting with each other (Baeva 2020, 300) . One of these factors is the multimodality of digital communication. According to researchers, modern communication is implemented not only in text format, but in the form of constant streams of polycode messages (Panova 2019, 359).

Studies of the interaction between institutions of civil society and government in the West have been carried out for a long time (since the second half of the twentieth century). Let us note the works of F. Schmitter (F. Schmitter , 1996), M. Munro - Clark (M. Munro - Clark , 1992). In World Bank documents, experts highlight the economic and political reasons for the interaction of NGOs and authorities (World Bank , 2005)

Digital technologies of interaction with authorities in the Internet space as digital participation in public decision-making are characterized by an average level of coverage in scientific works and, as a result, do not fully correspond to its significance. There is no comprehensive understanding of the content and stages of implementation of digital participation of the population in the public policy space. There is no separate methodology for assessing both the interaction between authorities and the population, and a separate form of realization of civil rights within the framework of e -democracy - digital participation. Several groups of works can be distinguished regarding modern practices of digital participation as a method of public control.

The first group includes works by A. Giddens (Giddens, 1979), R. Coase (Coase, 1994), which provides the basics of interaction and its components (rules, patterns of relationships between individuals that take place within certain spatial and temporal boundaries). In the works of V.Z. Kogan (Kogan, 1981), T. Parsons (Parsons, 1971), G. Homans (Homans, 1961) revealed separate theories: information and social interaction, defined social systems as systems formed through social interaction between subjects, expressed the opinion that the system is viable only if there is interaction between the individual, culture and social system.

Some authors are devoted to the principle of participation or participation of citizens in public administration (Epinina, 2012; Zakirova, Khusnutdinova & Kasimova, 2016). Other authors in their works reflect the issues of developing models of interaction between the state and society, the relevance of involving citizens in the process of making government decisions (Barber, 1984). The reform of the public administration system is described by such scientists

as Oliver J., Chen Y., Brown A. Fishenden J., Thompson M. (Oliver D. D., Ponyavina, 2020; Chen, 2017; Brown, Fishenden, M. Thompson & Venters, 2017).

In accordance with the systematic approach in the Russian Federation, during the digitalization of public administration, a single digital space has been created, including digital interaction tools, information resources and processes, and services are provided to the population in an online format based on ICT. There is a transition from sporadic government actions and face-to-face interaction formats to a two-way symmetrical dialogue using digital communication technologies (Bannykh & Kostina, 2022).

The development of modern innovative forms of interaction is, first of all, due to the rapid penetration of the Internet into the daily activities of citizens. According to Digital Report for 2023, the Global audience of Internet users is 5,16 billion (64,4% of the global population), the number of social networks users is 4,76 billion users (59,4% of the population)¹.

In Serbia there were 6.40 million internet users at the start of 2024, when internet penetration stood at 90%². At the same time, Russia has 130.4 million internet users in January 2024 with the internet penetration 90.4 % of the total population³. According to this data the penetration rate Russia and Serbia have common conditions for any digital communication and participation.

Serbia was home to 5.00 million social media users, equating to 70.3 % of the total population. While in Russia it's 106.0 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 73.5 % of the total population. This share also allow to compare the conditions for e-participation.

Such indicators are very closely related to the e-government assessment criteria. From 2010 to the present, we can observe similar results in the Russian Federation and Serbia (Fig. 1).

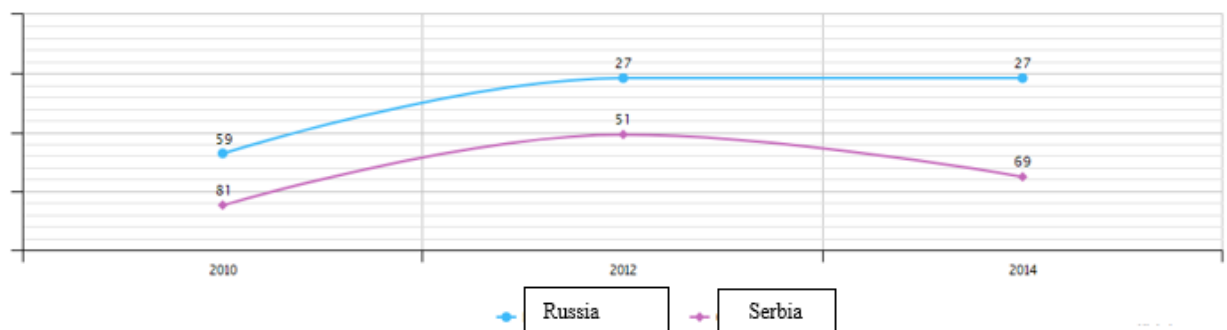


Fig.1 E-Government Development Index, EGDI, Russia and Serbia, 2010-2014

Research of the index for 2022 shows still very close results of e-government development in Russia and Serbia (Fig.2)

¹ Digital 2024: Global Overview Report: website / DataReportal, 2024 – URL: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report> (date access : 04.04.2024)

² Digital 2024: Serbia / DataReportal, 2024 – URL: https://datareportal.com/digital-in-serbia?utm_source=Reports&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=Digital_2023&utm_content=Country_Link_Slide (date access : 04.04.2024)

³ Digital 2024: the Russian Federation / DataReportal, 2024 – URL: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-russian-federation> (date access : 04.04.2024)

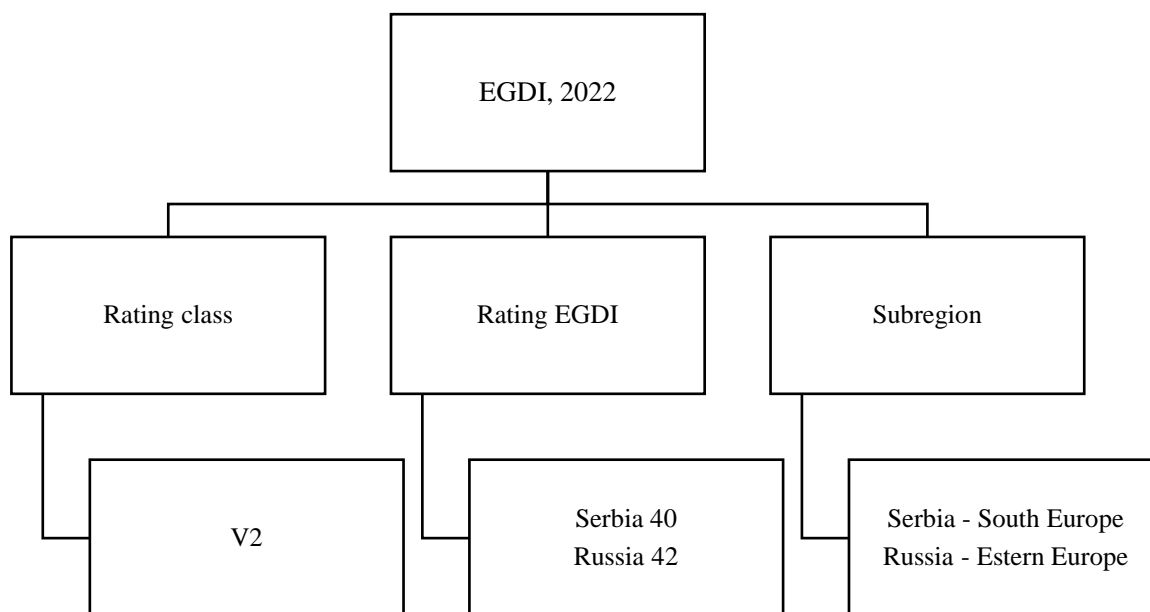


Fig.2 - Rankings EGDI-2022 for Serbia and Russia⁴

4 Implementation of public control in Serbia

According to Article 1 of the 2006 Constitution, the Republic of Serbia is a state based on the rule of law and the principles of civil democracy. The Constitution states that “the source of the sovereignty of the state is the citizens.” Along with this principle, forms of practical implementation of the principle of popular sovereignty have been established. Thus, popular sovereignty is exercised through a referendum, popular initiative, and through its freely elected representatives. Serbia applied for EU membership in 2009. In 2012, it was granted candidate status.

The form of direct democracy in the Republic of Serbia is people's initiative. Its difference from a referendum is that a referendum provides citizens with the opportunity to have a decisive influence on decision-making, while a popular initiative presupposes the right of citizens only to initiate decision-making. The 2006 Constitution provides for such types of popular initiative as: legislative popular initiative - the right of citizens to propose draft laws (Part 1 of Article 107); constitutional popular initiative - the right of citizens to propose amendments or revision of the constitution (Part 1 of Article 203); demand for a referendum - the right of citizens to demand a republican referendum (Part 1 of Article 108).

Serbia being part of the European space, is based on the basic principles of implementing democracy in the country. At the same time, the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia implies the supremacy of international acts and treaties over internal legal documents. A separate law on the implementation of public control has not been adopted in the RS, so we will consider European legislation.

In the European Union there are 4 main forms of direct public participation and control:

1) working with data and requests from citizens (working with data from public opinion polls, working with petitions and proposals from civil associations; studying complaints filed by citizens);

⁴ UN STUDY: E-GOVERNMENT 2022. Official website – URL: <https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2023-02/UN%20E-Government%20Survey%202022%20-%20Russian%20Web%20Version.pdf> (date access: 20.04.2024)

- 2) public consultations (open hearings with the participation of all interested parties; closed hearings with the participation of public representatives; written consultations (electronic focus groups);
- 3) deliberative forums (workshops, conferences, civil juries). Forums serve for joint decision-making on various policy issues by members of the public, members and government experts.
- 4) interactive dialogue through social networks (in existing social networks, on specially created social platforms) (Wilder & Zurn, 2012). This involves bringing together representatives of the private and public sectors to express problems and make decisions to eliminate them

All these forms can be both synchronous and asynchronous and used based on digital technologies. Particular attention should be paid to electronic public control, which means that a citizen has the right to receive information if it affects his rights and freedoms. In this case, any person has the right to make a request to public authorities,

Rigorous and ongoing scrutiny of participatory processes is required. The use of a large number of different types of techniques leads to ambiguity and blurring of social benefits (Geeraert, 2014).

Collaboration between authorities and citizens for the common development of policies and practices. It is these collaborations that are described as a method of adapting the principles of accessibility and transparency to the principles of Web 2.0, allowing for active public participation.

Collaboration of citizens to solve managerial, organizational and practical problems is another way of such public interaction.

Often, public control is built on the basis of active actions of both individual citizens and civil society as a whole. To determine the capabilities and limitations of public and civil organizations in exercising public control in Serbia, we interviewed experts.

In Serbia, the process of establishing civil society institutions began relatively recently, after the democratic changes of 2000. Before this, under the socialist regime, such organizations were either controlled by the state or were completely absent. The Serbian Law "On Non-Profit Organizations" classifies them into three forms: associations, foundations, endowments. Civil partnerships, as associations of citizens without forming a legal entity, are not considered as a non-governmental structure.

Case of public observation in elections. The Institute of Public Observation in the Electoral Process in Serbia was legalized in 2022. In Serbia, the direct participants in the parliamentary and presidential elections are political parties, political coalitions, candidates, including independent candidates nominated by self-nomination. The law shall have the power to appoint national observers. That is, Serbian legislation grants the right to public civil society organizations to carry out public observation during the relevant elections. To participate in public observation of elections, a public organization must register its charter with the relevant provisions on observation included in it no later than one year before the day of the relevant election. Public organizations may appoint public observers no later than 7 days before the day of voting for voters in the relevant elections.

Accreditation of public observers is carried out by the Republican Election Commission of Serbia. Moreover, in the event of a second round of voting in the presidential elections, as well as the appointment of repeat elections, public organizations must again submit documents for accreditation of public observers to the Republican Election Commission of Serbia.

To determine the potential of public organizations in the framework of public control and interaction, we conducted a survey of 3 experts who have experience in such interaction (representative of an NGO, representative of a university, representative of a government agency).

All experts agreed that the processes of democratization and European integration of Serbia in the 2000s played a significant role in the organization of public control. At the same time, an expert from the scientific community drew

attention to the fact that it was international structures that initially provided support, including financial support, to Serbian NGOs: *“The experience of working in international structures from the Red Cross, the UN and others helped draw attention to the problems of civil society, educated civil activists of Serbia”*

Among the restrictions in the activities of NPOs, experts identified insufficiently favorable legal and tax conditions for NPOs, the distrust of citizens in NPOs, and the distrust of government authorities in the activities of NPOs. An expert from the government structure justified this mistrust by saying that *“for the government, such externally funded NPOs are not always desirable, since they do not always correspond to national goals and priorities. And Serbia is, first of all, a national state.”*

Non-governmental organizations, within the framework of public control, conduct their activities in the following areas:

- protection of human rights (civil initiatives, center for Euro-Atlantic education and information, and others);
- civilian control over the army and police (Belgrade Center for Security Policy, Open Society Foundation and others);
- election observation, monitoring of the electoral process and combating violations (Center for Free Elections and Democracy, Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability);
- fight against corruption (Freedom Movement, Transparency Serbia, Serbian Association of Journalists);
- development of local communities (Association of Belgrade Urban Communities, Women's Union of Požarevac).

In general, according to experts, public (civil) control in Serbia is an established institution related to the democratization of the state. However, the Serbian civil sector remains weak in its influence on political decision-making and lacks rootedness in wider society.

5 Implementation of public control in Russia

Public control in the Russian Federation is one of the main tools civil society, designed to ensure transparency and openness of the activities of public authorities. It is the process by which the general public oversees the actions of government institutions, corporations, and other organizations that affect the lives of citizens.

For the full functioning of the institution of public control in the Russian Federation, a significant regulatory framework has been developed. Federal Law No. 212 “On the Fundamentals of Public Control in the Russian Federation,” adopted in 2014, has the status of a fundamental system-forming law on public control. The Law spells out the fundamental principles, goals, forms and methods of implementing public control in Russia.

The specification of the norms of Federal Law No. 212 Federal Law “On Public Control in the Russian Federation” is carried out in special federal laws and laws of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, as well as by-laws on an industry basis, namely:

- legal regulation in the field of housing public control;
- legal regulation in the field of public environmental control;
- legal regulation of public control in the field of education;
- legal regulation of public control in the field of culture;
- legal regulation of public control during elections;
- legal regulation of public control in the field of procurement;
- other types of public control subject to regulation in special legal norms.

Identification of areas of public control is important, since in the legislative system different subjects are named for the implementation of public control. In particular, when it comes to public procurement, the subjects of public control

are “citizens and public associations of legal entities⁵,” i.e. Citizens, groups of citizens and their associations, including those without forming a legal entity, can directly contact public authorities and state and municipal organizations and institutions with questions about the progress of procurement activities . In the housing and communal services sector, subjects of public control include both the non-profit organization “National Center for Public Control” and councils of apartment buildings. Public environmental control “is carried out by public associations and other non-profit organizations in accordance with their charters, as well as by citizens in accordance with the law ⁶. ” In this case, the citizen acquires the status of a public environmental protection inspector , etc.

Public control is defined in the law as the activities of subjects of public control carried out for the purpose of monitoring the activities of state authorities, local governments, state and municipal organizations, other bodies and organizations exercising certain public powers in accordance with federal laws, as well as public inspection, analysis and public assessment of the acts issued by them and the decisions made on the implementation of the public powers entrusted to them *with a view to their compliance with the public interests* ⁷.

Subjects of public control include :

- Public Chamber of the Russian Federation;
- Public chambers in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation;
- public chambers (councils) of municipalities;
- Public councils under the Federal authorities (legislative and executive);
- Public councils under regional executive and legislative authorities.

These organizations operate on the basis of expressing the interests of various professional and social groups, associations and unions and exercise public control in any form. Public chambers operate independently of state authorities and local governments ;

To carry out public control, the above-mentioned subjects of public control may create public inspections and public control groups. The Public Chamber may involve public associations, other non-profit organizations and other associations of citizens of the Russian Federation in its work. Public associations and other non-governmental non-profit organizations can be organizers of such forms of public control as public monitoring, public discussion, and also take part in the implementation of public control in other forms provided for by law.

Citizens of Russia have the right to participate in the exercise of public control both personally and as part of public associations and other non-governmental non-profit organizations.

Citizens participate in the implementation of public control as public inspectors and public experts.

Public control is carried out in the forms of public monitoring, public inspection, public examination, public discussion, public (public) hearings and other forms.

Public monitoring is understood as permanent (systematic) or temporary monitoring of the activities of state authorities and local governments carried out by a subject of public control.

⁵ On the contract system in the field of procurement of goods, works, services to meet state and municipal needs: Federal Law dated 04/05/2013 N 44-FZ (as amended on 08/04/2023, as amended and supplemented, entered into force on August 15, 2023). Legal reference system ConsultantPlus URL : https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_144624/ (date of access 10/1/2023)

⁶ On environmental protection: Federal Law dated January 10, 2002 N 7-FZ (as amended on August 4, 2023, as amended and supplemented, entered into force on October 1, 2023). Legal reference system ConsultantPlus URL : https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_34823/ (date accessed 10/1/2023)

⁷On the fundamentals of public control in the Russian Federation: Federal Law of July 21, 2014 N 212-FZ (as amended on December 27, 2018) // Legal reference system ConsultantPlus URL : https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_165809/ (date of access 10/1/2023)

Public check - a set of actions by a subject of public control to collect and analyze information, verify facts and circumstances relating to the socially significant activities of state authorities and local governments.

About public discussion - public discussion of socially significant issues, as well as draft decisions of state authorities and local governments.

Public examination is understood as the analysis and assessment of acts, draft acts, decisions, draft decisions, documents and other materials, actions (inactions) based on the use of special knowledge and (or) experience of specialists involved by the subject of public control to conduct public examination on a voluntary basis. state authorities, local governments.

The Federal Law of 06.10.2003 N 131-FZ "On the general principles of the organization of local self-government in the Russian Federation" states the following forms of public participation:

- local referendum;
- municipal elections;
- voting on the recall of the deputy of the City Council, the Head of the city, changes in the city boundaries, the transformation of the city;
- territorial public self-government;
- initiative projects;
- applications of citizens to local self-government bodies of the city;
- Citizens' legal initiative;
- Public hearings;
- Citizens' meeting, citizens' conference (delegates' meeting);
- poll.

According to the legislation, the public is informed through official websites, social media accounts, printed materials, information in public places, e-mail and personal reception. The authorities are obliged to have and constantly update an official website, to conduct a dialogue with the population on social networks, digital platforms: public initiative, active citizens, crowdsourcing and crowdsourcing platforms.

An expert survey on the peculiarities of public control in Russia was conducted with three participants: a representative of the government, a researcher, and a representative of the subject of public control.

The main problem of organizing public control in today is its insufficiently high performance, this is the opinion of all experts. *"It is necessary to define the rights of public inspectors and legal consequences of the results obtained by results of its implementation,"* a representative of the subject of public control expressed the idea. *"It is important to specify in detail the mechanism of interaction in in this process of government bodies, public associations and Media"* - a representative of the government authority proposed the idea of improvement.

For example, the implementation of public control in election monitoring. According to the law, elections at any level are accompanied by public observation. At the federal level, the work is organized by the Coordination Council for Public Control over Voting and the Independent Public Monitoring Association. It takes the responsibility of receiving complaints from all participants in the election process from the regions of the Russian Federation, and helps the public chambers of the constituent entities train observers.

Observers are trained in the basics of election legislation, they become familiar with the code of ethics for observers and receive checklists with which to check compliance with all procedures at polling stations during voting. Observers report controversial situations to experts from the regional Public Election Headquarters, who give an opinion on whether there was a violation and, if necessary, forward the information to law enforcement agencies.

Public headquarters publish all information about their work on social networks and work closely with local and federal media.

Appeals from citizens and interaction with them on social networks are not considered in the law as a form of public control, but are an implementation of the principle of information openness, transparency and accountability.

In total, more than 220 thousand public pages (accounts of authorities and government organizations) have been created on social networks; 46 million unique users are subscribed to the official pages of government agencies on social networks. In 2023, the authorities received more than 3 million requests from citizens through these pages. Citizens' appeals on social networks are monitored by a special feedback mechanism – at the end of 2023, the response time to citizens' appeals was on average 2 hours.

ANO "Dialogue Regions" launched the "Secret Citizen" project in 2023, which is aimed at checking how regional authorities respond to citizens' requests on social networks. A total of 523 errors by officials were identified: lack of information - 221 (42%), lack of response - 124 (23.7%), redirection - 72 (13.8%), formal response - 49 (9%), lack of greeting - 30 (5.7%), deletion of comments - 27 (5%).

Public monitoring - an established institution of civil society. Public control is a continuous process that has long gone beyond voting days.

- Ongoing monitoring focuses on the entire period of preparation and conduct of the electoral campaign, the activities of election commissions, political parties, candidates and other participants in the electoral process.

The assessment involves not only experts from civil society organizations, but also legal professionals, academics and the media, international participants

- Public Election Observation Headquarters
- Association "Independent Public Monitoring"
- polling station observers

6 Conclusion

Public control in both countries is exercised by the most active part of society. Public control practices are functioning in both countries, but differently due to some circumstances.

1. Understanding of public control differs significantly (it was the first hypothesis – and it has been confirmed)
2. Regulation of these practices is also different (it was the second hypothesis – it has been confirmed)
3. Forms of public control vary due to ambiguous understandings (the third hypothesis)
4. The study will then focus on the collection of statistical data to compare population and NCB participation in the digital space of interaction with authorities (the 4th hypothesis).

Expert reviews showed that there is a need to further improve public oversight on this phenomena.

Public control in the Russian Federation - an established institution of civil society. Public control is a continuous process that has long gone beyond voting days. Ongoing monitoring at both the federal and regional levels focuses on the entire period of preparation and conduct of the electoral campaign, the activities of election commissions, political parties, candidates and other participants in the electoral process. The assessment involves not only experts from civil society organizations, but also legal professionals, academics and the media. Active feedback from executive authorities to civil society through participation (voluntary participation of the population in government projects and local government events) increases the level of their cooperation and the efficiency of government activities, and improves the quality of its decisions.

Transparency of government actions is one of the main conditions for mutual trust in society and the effectiveness of public policy. Open access to government information is regulated by law. Currently, in most developed and developing democratic countries there is a law on citizens' access to information about the activities of government bodies, including in the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation.

The use of the Internet and modern digital technologies by the state implies not only constant monitoring of public sentiment, but also the organization of joint work between citizens and the state apparatus. Therefore, a number of areas of activity can be considered integral to ensuring the publicity of the state:

- 1) open data - creation of Internet resources containing unified open databases of all public authorities;
- 2) open budget - a system of control over the expenditure of budget funds;
- 3) discussions, voting, petitions;
- 4) electronic services, consultations.

It is these mechanisms that become tools of social control, and not just interaction or one-way communication. However, their application and use differ significantly in Russia and Serbia.

Summarizing the above, we can conclude that public control both in Serbia and in Russia is exercised by the most active part of society. For such activities, the legal framework and social mechanisms are being improved, making it possible not only to monitor the behavior of the state's management system, but also to modernize it. To exercise the rights of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs, they must have appropriate information about the activities of government authorities. The forms of public control exercised by citizens in order to combat corruption are diverse and among them the following can be distinguished: the right to attend meetings of government bodies (open meetings), the right to submit proposals to government bodies on the topics of upcoming regulatory legal acts at various levels, the right to public consultations (for example, exchange of opinions, notification of the population about the subject of consultation); the right to participate in public hearings, public opinion polls, local referendums, the right to file petitions.

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