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Public Management of Regional Development Based on the Concept of Smart Specialization in Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

In the current context of intensifying global competition, structural economic transformations and growing regional disparities, there is a pressing need to introduce new approaches to public management of regional development that can ensure innovative growth and long-term competitiveness of territories. In this context, the concept of smart specialisation is of particular importance as a place-based policy tool that focuses on identifying the unique competitive advantages of regions, activating entrepreneurial potential and concentrating resources on priority areas of development. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the theoretical foundations and practical mechanisms of public management of regional development based on the concept of smart specialisation in Ukraine, taking into account European integration processes and the challenges of post-war recovery. The study uses institutional, systemic and strategic approaches, as well as documentary and comparative analysis methods. The regulatory and legal framework, management practices and results of the implementation of smart specialisation strategies in the regions of Ukraine are analysed. An actor–process–outcome management model is proposed, which allows for the systematisation of the interaction between public administration actors, management processes and the results of the implementation of relevant policies. Key institutional barriers have been identified, in particular the fragmentation of legal regulation, the limited institutional capacity of regional authorities and the formalised nature of the entrepreneurial start-up process. It is concluded that the effectiveness of smart specialisation in Ukraine largely depends on the quality of public administration, the level of inter-level coordination and the development of institutional capacity in the regions. The need to institutionalise smart specialisation at the legislative level, strengthen analytical and management mechanisms, and integrate this approach into the policy of post-war regional recovery is substantiated.

KEYWORDS

public administration, regional development, smart specialisation, innovation policy, multilevel governance.



Публічне управління регіональним розвитком на основі концепції смарт-спеціалізації в Україні

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СТАТТЯ

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У сучасних умовах посилення глобальної конкуренції, структурних трансформацій економіки та зростання регіональних диспропорцій актуалізується потреба у впровадженні нових підходів до публічного управління регіональним розвитком, здатних забезпечити інноваційне зростання та довгострокову конкурентоспроможність територій. У цьому контексті концепція смарт-спеціалізації набуває особливого значення як інструмент place-based policy, що орієнтується на ідентифікацію унікальних конкурентних переваг регіонів, активізацію підприємницького потенціалу та концентрацію ресурсів на пріоритетних напрямках розвитку. Метою статті є обґрунтування теоретичних засад і практичних механізмів публічного управління регіональним розвитком на основі концепції смарт-спеціалізації в Україні з урахуванням євроінтеграційних процесів та викликів післявоєнного відновлення. У дослідженні використано інституційний, системний і стратегічний підходи, методи документального та порівняльного аналізу. Проаналізовано нормативно-правове забезпечення, управлінські практики та результати впровадження стратегій смарт-спеціалізації в регіонах України. Запропоновано управлінську модель actor-process-outcome, яка дозволяє систематизувати взаємодію суб'єктів публічного управління, управлінських процесів і результатів реалізації відповідної політики. Виявлено ключові інституційні бар'єри, зокрема фрагментарність правового регулювання, обмежену інституційну спроможність регіональних органів влади та формалізований характер підприємницького процесу відкриття. Зроблено висновок, що ефективність смарт-спеціалізації в Україні значною мірою залежить від якості публічного управління, рівня міжрівневої координації та розвитку інституційної спроможності регіонів. Обґрунтовано необхідність інституціоналізації смарт-спеціалізації на законодавчому рівні, посилення аналітичних і управлінських механізмів та інтеграції цього підходу в політику післявоєнного відновлення регіонів.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

публічне управління, регіональний розвиток, смарт-спеціалізація, інноваційна політика, багаторівневе врядування.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions of increased global competition, structural transformations of the economy and deepening of regional disparities, the search for new approaches to public management of regional development is of relevance. Traditional instruments of state regional policy, focused mainly on the redistribution of resources and equalization of socio-economic indicators, are increasingly insufficiently effective to ensure the long-term competitiveness of regions and stimulate innovative growth.

In this context, the concept of Smart Specialization has become widespread as an innovative-oriented approach to regional development, based on the identification of unique competitive advantages of territories, activation of entrepreneurial potential and concentration of public and private resources on priority areas of development.

For Ukraine, the introduction of the concept of smart specialization is of particular importance given the European integration vector of development, the need for structural modernization of regional economies, as well as the tasks of post-war recovery and increasing the resilience of territorial communities. The formation of an effective system of public management of regional development based on smart specialization can ensure a more rational use of regional potential, intensification of innovation activity and strengthening of competitive positions of regions in the national and European economic space.

At the same time, the process of adaptation and implementation of the concept of smart specialization in Ukraine is accompanied by several institutional, organizational and methodological problems, which necessitates a scientific understanding of the role of public administration in the formation and implementation of relevant regional development strategies. This determines the relevance of the study of the theoretical foundations and practical mechanisms of public management of regional development based on the concept of smart specialization in the context of modern transformations.

2. Literature Review

The formation of theoretical and methodological foundations of public management of regional development based on the concept of smart specialization is based on interdisciplinary research in the field of regional economy, innovation policy and public governance. Basic approaches to smart specialization as a place-based policy tool are developed in the works of D. Foray et al. [10] and D. Foray [8], which substantiate the role of concentrating resources on a limited number of priorities and the importance of the entrepreneurial discovery process for the innovative development of regions. Further development of these ideas is carried out in the works of P. McCann and R. Ortega-Argilés [16], which focus on the institutional capacity of regions and the quality of public administration as key prerequisites for the effectiveness of smart specialization.

In the works of M. Grillitsch and M. Tripl [11], smart specialization is considered as a dynamic management process that depends on the ability of public institutions to ensure coordination between the state, business and the scientific sector. The researchers emphasize that the formal nature of the implementation of RIS3 strategies without proper management support does not lead to structural shifts in the economies of the regions.

A separate area of literature is focused on assessing the effectiveness of smart specialization and its impact on innovation activity and structural transformations. In particular, in the works of A. Rodríguez-Pose and R. Crescenzi [20], it is proved that the effectiveness of smart specialization is largely determined by the quality of public administration, the level of institutional trust and the ability of regions to strategic learning. At the same time, the authors warn against mechanical transfer European practices without taking into account the national institutional context.

Also, the issues of strategizing processes in smart specialization are discussed in the works of D. Iacobucci [13], R. Capello and H. Kroll [4], D. Foray [9], A. Pūraitė et al. [19].

The analysis of scientific publications shows that despite significant achievements in the study of smart specialization, insufficient attention is paid to its consideration as a tool of public administration in the context of transformative economies. This necessitates further research aimed at adapting the concept of smart specialization to the institutional realities of Ukraine and substantiating management models for its implementation.

3. Problem Statement

Despite the spread of the concept of smart specialization in the European practice of regional development, in Ukraine its implementation takes place in conditions of institutional incompleteness, fragmented regulatory and legal support and limited management capacity of regions. In scientific research, smart specialization is mainly considered as an instrument of innovation or regional policy, while the managerial dimension of its implementation, in particular the role of public administration in the coordination of subjects, processes and results, remains insufficiently disclosed.

In this regard, the article sets the task of analyzing smart specialization as a tool of public management of regional development, assessing the regulatory and institutional conditions and managerial practices of its implementation in Ukraine, identifying key managerial barriers and positive changes, as well as substantiating the management model for the implementation of smart specialization based on the actor–process–outcome approach to increase the effectiveness of regional policy in the context of innovative transformations and post-war recovery.

The article is aimed at substantiating the theoretical foundations and developing practical approaches to public management of regional development based on the concept of smart specialization in Ukraine, taking into account modern socio-economic transformations, European integration processes and tasks of increasing the innovative capacity of regions.

4. Methods and Materials

The methodological basis of the study is a combination of institutional, systemic and strategic approaches, which made it possible to consider smart specialization as a tool for public management of regional development within a multi-level governance system. The theoretical basis of the study is the concept of place-based policy and the smart specialization approach (RIS3), which interpret the region as an active subject of the formation of an innovative development trajectory based on its own economic and institutional potential.

The study is based on qualitative and analytical design and is focused on evaluating institutional mechanisms, management practices and the results of the implementation of smart specialization strategies in Ukraine. In the process of the study, institutional and documentary analysis is used to study regulatory legal acts, state and regional development strategies, program documents and methodological recommendations in the field of regional and innovation policy. The comparative analysis is used to compare the Ukrainian practice of public management of smart specialization with the approaches implemented in the countries of the European Union, in order to identify common features and structural differences.

The system analysis made it possible to identify the relationships between management decisions, the institutional capacity of public authorities and the level of innovation activity of the regions, as well as to assess the impact of smart specialization on structural changes in regional economies. Generalization and abstraction are used to form scientifically grounded conclusions and develop proposals for improving public management of regional development based on the concept of smart specialization.

The information and empirical base of the study is made up of official documents of the state authorities of Ukraine, in particular state and regional development strategies, regulations in the field of regional and innovation policy, as well as analytical materials of the European Commission, the Joint Research Centre and the OECD. In addition, the results of scientific research of domestic and foreign scientists devoted to the problems of public administration, regional development and smart specialization are used.

The use of this methodological toolkit ensured the comprehensiveness of the analysis, the logical consistency of the results obtained and the possibility of forming practically oriented implications for the system of public management of regional development in Ukraine.

5. Results and Discussion

The concept of Smart Specialization is one of the key approaches to the modern regional development policy, based on the orientation of scientific and innovative efforts and resources to priority areas where the region has competitive advantages and potential for growth. The approach

itself was formulated by the European Commission within the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy as a basis for Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) – a mechanism for improving the efficiency of regional investments in research and innovation by focusing on the unique strengths of each territory [6].

Smart specialization involves not only the choice of technological or industry directions, but also the process of entrepreneurial discovery, which involves various groups of stakeholders – business, academia, authorities and the public – in identifying promising areas of innovative development of the region. Such a multi-level approach provides individual regions with the opportunity to form their own strategies, coordinated with national and European policies [12].

In the context of public administration, smart specialization acts as a multi-level governance tool that combines the actions of national, regional and local levels of government to achieve agreed strategic goals. This approach aims not only to stimulate innovation, but also to ensure policy coordination, open access to information, and effective participation of various actors in development planning and implementation processes.

The practical application of smart specialization in the EU demonstrates the importance of concentrating resources in identified priorities, which contributes to innovative growth, job creation, strengthening the competitiveness of regions and reducing interregional disparities. For example, during the programming period of 2014–2020, the implementation of RIS3 became an ex-ante condition to receive funding from EU funds, which stimulated countries and regions to develop strategies based on an in-depth analysis of potential and needs [17].

Unlike traditional sectoral or programmatic approaches, which often focus on direct subsidies to individual sectors without an in-depth analysis of the region's potential, smart specialization focuses on the systemic synergy of knowledge, innovation, and stakeholder participation. It integrates elements of innovation ecosystems and involves continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of strategies in response to changes in the external environment [15].

The European experience of smart specialization includes numerous practical examples of successful implementation of strategies in different countries and regions, such as Spain, Poland, Belgium and France. In these cases, the regions used the S3 approach to identify their competitive advantages, stimulate cooperation between universities, research institutions and industry, and attract investment in priority areas [1].

As for Ukraine, the concept of smart specialization is considered as a promising mechanism for increasing the efficiency of regional development and integration into the European innovation space. For example, scientific research and analytical materials emphasize the need to adapt the European RIS3 principles to national conditions, in particular by determining the suitability of regions for smart specialization and developing their regional strategies in accordance with EU requirements (Table 1).

Therefore, it can be argued that the theoretical foundations of smart specialization combine elements of strategic sectoral planning, innovation policy and public administration, creating a framework for a targeted, adaptive and integrated approach to regional development in the face of modern globalization challenges.

Institutional support for the implementation of smart specialization in Ukraine is formed in the context of the need to harmonize national legislation with European approaches, which is provided for by the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union and relevant EU policy initiatives to support the innovative development of regions. Smart specialization in Ukraine is considered as an approach that supports the development of unique industries or types of economic activity that will be the subject of specialization of regions within the national economic system.

The analysis of regulatory and legal support shows that there is no specialized legislative act in Ukraine that would directly regulate the introduction of smart specialization as a tool for public management of regional development. The main existing legislative acts – such as the Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Regional Policy” [26] – do not provide for the implementation of the principles of smart specialization in their provisions, and the priorities of state policy are not combined with the priorities of innovation activity at the regional level.

The first regulatory steps on the implementation of smart specialization elements in Ukraine were made at the level of by-laws [29], which regulate the inclusion of smart specialization principles in the process of developing regional development strategies and mechanisms for their monitoring and evaluation. However, the lack of a systemic legal framework at the level of laws limits the opportunities for large-scale and coordinated implementation of S3 in all regions.

Table 1. Concepts of smart specialization (smart specialization S3) CC in Ukraine and the European Union (EU)

Criterion	European Union (EU)	Ukraine
Structural basis of policy	RIS3 as part of the EU’s cohesion policy, where smart specialisation strategies are a condition for access to EU structural funds for regions with a focus on innovation	It is initiated in the context of European integration and adaptation of national policies to EU standards; Ukraine is implementing S3 with the support of the EU, but is at the stage of adaptation.
Stages and methodology	S3 has well-defined phases: context analysis, governance, shared vision, priority identification, policy mixes, monitoring/evaluation.	In Ukraine, the JRC (Joint Research Center) methodology is used, but the implementation is uneven; there are difficulties with data and stakeholder participation
Institutional support	The Smart Specialisation Platform (S3 Platform) supports coordination, exchange of experience and access to EU Innovation Policy tools.	Ukrainian regions have started registering for the RIS3 Platform, but institutional and analytical support remains fragmented; a national coordination mechanism is needed [21].
The role of stakeholders	EU: entrepreneurial discovery process requirement – active involvement of business, science and government in setting priorities.	In Ukraine, this process is sometimes formal or incomplete; at the regional level, it is necessary to strengthen the participation of all participants in the innovation ecosystem [29]
Securing funding	RIS3 is an ex-ante condition for access to EU Structural and Investment Funds	In Ukraine, there is no similar mandatory linkage to national funds; there is a need to adapt funding mechanisms to support S3 priorities [18].
Monitoring and evaluation	EU: RIS3 systemic monitoring/evaluation, integrated indicators to measure implementation and impact.	In Ukraine, the monitoring process is just being formed and requires harmonization of indicators with EU standards [14]
Approaches to priorities	Focus on the competitive advantages of regions, promote innovation activity and overcome regional disparities.	Ukrainian regional strategies have begun to include priorities, but the process of justifying them based on potentials and data is still ongoing.
Practical results	In the EU regions – improvement of innovation systems, growth of innovation activity, better coordination of public and private initiatives	There is limited practical experience in Ukraine, some regions (pilots) are implementing RIS3 projects; the growth potential is great in the context of post-war recovery

Source: Compiled by authors based on [14; 18; 21; 29].

Regulatory and legal support also includes methodological documents on the procedure for developing and monitoring strategies, but they are in the nature of internal recommendations and do not create full-fledged legal obligations for the authorities, which complicates the effective coordination of managerial actions (Table 2).

Institutional barriers to the introduction of smart specialization in Ukraine are primarily related to the non-systematic nature of legislative regulation, which does not provide an effective combination of innovation policy with regional development. The lack of a single legislative definition and mechanism of legal implementation creates risks of uneven implementation of strategies at the regional level and failure to achieve agreed results.

Another significant risk is the low level of institutional capacity of many regional authorities, which is manifested in the lack of sufficient analytical resources, qualified personnel for high-quality assessment of the potential of regions and monitoring the implementation of the strategy. This limits the ability to effectively adapt smart specialization approaches to local conditions and needs.

In addition, insufficient participation of stakeholders in the strategizing process – in particular business and academia – is a significant management risk, as it hinders the formation of realistic and long-term priorities. In the absence of proper mechanisms for involving these groups, situations are possible when priorities are determined formally or based on political, rather than economic factors.

Table 2. Regulatory and legal support of smart specialization in Ukraine: problems and directions of reform

Regulatory legal act	Role in the implementation of smart specialization	Directions for the necessary reform	Key disadvantages	Responsible subjects of public administration
Law of Ukraine “On the Principles of State Regional Policy” [26]	Basic Law in the Field of Regional Development [5]	There is no direct consolidation of the concept of smart specialization; The innovation component is declarative in nature	Institutionalization of smart specialization as a mandatory approach to regional development; Alignment with innovation policy	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027 [6]	State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine for 2021–2027 [6]	Smart specialization is mentioned in fragments; there are no clear mechanisms for implementation and financing	Clear operationalization of S3 principles; introduction of an indicator and monitoring system	Ministry of Communities and Territories Development; CMU
Methodological Recommendations for the Development of Regional Development Strategies [23]	A practical tool for strategizing at the regional level	Advisory nature; weak EDP integration (entrepreneurial discovery process))	Consolidation of the mandatory procedures of entrepreneurial opening; Increasing analytical requirements	Ministry of Communities and Territories Development; Regional State Administrations
The Law of Ukraine “On Innovation Activity” [25]	Regulates innovation processes in the economy	Not aligned with regional policy; there is no regional dimension of innovation	Integration with regional policy; support for regional innovation ecosystems	Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; Ministry of Economy
Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Monitoring and Evaluation of Regional Strategies [3]	Form a system for evaluating the implementation of strategies	Formal indicators; lack of innovative S3 indicators	Introduction of indicators of smart specialization and innovation capacity of regions [7]	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine; Ministry of Economy
EU-Ukraine Association Agreement [24]	Strategic Framework for European Integration	There is no direct mechanism for implementing S3 into national law	Development of a special framework act for the adaptation of S3	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine; Relevant ministries

Source: compiled by authors based on [3; 5; 6; 7; 23–26].

Thus, institutional mechanisms for the implementation of smart specialization in Ukraine are at the stage of formation, which requires strengthening the regulatory framework, developing the competencies of governing bodies and creating effective procedures for interaction between central, regional and public administration entities.

From the standpoint of public administration, the implementation of smart specialization (S3) strategies in the regions of Ukraine can be characterized as a transition from administrative and program management to a strategically oriented, multi-level model of regional development management, based on the principles of partnership, selectivity and innovation. The inclusion of the principles of smart specialization in the system of strategic planning of regional development indicates the gradual formation of a new management paradigm, within which regions are considered not as objects of redistribution of resources, but as active subjects of formation of their own development trajectories.

The management practice of implementing smart specialization in Ukraine shows that the main result at this stage was the institutional consolidation of the innovative logic of regional development in strategic documents. Public authorities at the regional level began to apply tools for strategic analysis of the potential of territories, form development priorities taking into account available resources, and initiate a dialogue with key stakeholders from policy management to the coordination and facilitation role of public authorities, which is in line with European approaches to multi-level governance.

At the same time, the practice of implementing S3 strategies has revealed several systemic management problems that hinder the effectiveness of public management of regional innovation development. First, we are talking about the limited institutional capacity of regional government bodies to perform analytical, coordination and monitoring functions. In many cases, the process of determining priorities is formal, and the mechanisms of entrepreneurial opening do not turn into permanent managerial tools for the interaction of government, business and science.

As of now, the formation of regional strategies with elements of smart specialization is taking place in Ukraine, but not all regions have clearly developed and fully integrated RIS3 documents. Some of the regional strategies already contain priorities formed on the basis of potential analysis, which is a step forward compared to previous planning cycles [22].

At the same time, empirical studies show that the application of the European Commission (JRC) methodology to identify priorities within smart specialization has significant limitations in Ukrainian conditions due to the lack of data on innovation activity, knowledge creation processes, and other economic indicators. This complicates the accurate identification of priority areas and reduces the analytical quality of strategic decisions [27].

From the point of view of public administration, fragmentation of responsibility between management entities and insufficient coherence of regional, innovation and industrial policies remain a significant barrier. The lack of clearly defined coordination procedures between central executive authorities and regions reduces the manageability of the process of implementing smart specialization strategies and complicates the transformation of strategic priorities into specific management decisions and development projects.

Despite these difficulties, there are also positive trends. Firstly, cooperation and regular dialogue between central and regional authorities, business and academia have been launched on the development and implementation of a smart specialization strategy. This is an important step towards building an inclusive entrepreneurial discovery process.

Secondly, the regional strategies include priorities related to sectors with high growth potential, such as IT technologies, medical and health tourism, agricultural technologies, which can create prerequisites for structural changes in these economic areas in the future.

It is also worth noting that the innovation activity of the regions is closely related to the implementation of smart specialization strategies. The approach itself is aimed at activating the innovation ecosystem, stimulating entrepreneurial initiative and cooperation between science, business and government, which can lead to structural changes in the regional economy. local level [28].

The inclusion of innovative indicators in regional strategies creates prerequisites for changing the structure of economic activity, the transition from traditional sectors to those based on knowledge, technologies and high added value. This contributes not only to economic growth, but also to increasing the competitiveness of the regions in the long term.

In the study, to explain the mechanisms for the implementation of smart specialization in the system of public management of regional development, the actor–process–outcome management model is proposed, which allows to reflect in a structured way the logic of interaction between public administration entities, management procedures and the results of the implementation of the relevant policy. This model is based on the provisions of the theory of public governance and innovation policy and is adapted to the conditions of multi-level management systems in Ukraine (Table 3).

The proposed management model “subject-process-result” allows systematizing public management of smart specialization as an integral management cycle, within which management entities (actors) form measurable outcomes through formalized management processes. A feature of the model is the focus not only on economic results, but also on institutional and managerial effects, which corresponds to modern approaches to evaluating regional development policies.

The use of the proposed indicators allows public authorities of Ukraine to monitor and evaluate the implementation of smart specialization, considering national conditions, institutional capacity constraints, and post-crisis and post-war recovery tasks.

Table 3. Actor–process–outcome model on the example of Ukraine

Component model	Component content	Key elements	Evaluation indicators
Public Administration Entities and Stakeholders “actor”	A set of participants who form and implement a smart specialization policy within multi-level governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Central executive bodies (formation of framework policy). – Regional authorities and local self-government bodies (strategizing and coordination). – Business structures. Scientific and educational institutions. Civil Society Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Availability of regional teams/units from S3 – Share of stakeholders involved in the strategic process – Number of public-private partnerships within S3 – Regularity of interagency and inter-level coordination
Management processes and mechanisms “process”	A set of management procedures through which smart specialization is implemented as a political and managerial tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strategic analysis of regional potential – Prioritizing Smart Specialization – Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) – Programming support tools – Monitoring and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Availability of a formalized EDP procedure – Proportion of priorities confirmed by data and consultation – Number of projects aligned with the S3 strategy – Availability of a monitoring indicator system – Regularity of updating strategies
Results and effects of public administration “outcome”	Economic, Innovative and Institutional Results of Smart Specialization Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intensification of innovation activity – Formation of regional innovation ecosystems – Structural shifts in the economy – Improving the quality of management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Share of innovatively active enterprises in the region – Number of joint business-science projects – Growth of High Value-Added Sectors – Improving the quality of strategic planning – Level of transparency and accountability of management decisions

Source: Compiled by authors

Thus, in the context of public administration, smart specialization is an important tool for intensifying innovation activity through management mechanisms, and not only through financial support. It creates institutional conditions for structural changes in regional economies, stimulates intersectoral interaction and contributes to the formation of innovative ecosystems. Thus, the effectiveness of smart specialization in Ukraine largely depends on the ability of public administration to move from formal strategizing to effective implementation management, which includes monitoring, evaluation and adaptation of managerial decisions in a dynamic socio-economic environment.

6. Conclusions

The study showed that the implementation of the concept of smart specialization in Ukraine reflects the transition to a strategically oriented, innovation-oriented and multi-level model of public management of regional development. The integration of smart specialization principles into national and regional strategic documents indicates the gradual formation of place-based policy approaches and selective concentration of resources on priority areas of development.

At the same time, it has been established that the practical implementation of smart specialization strategies in the regions of Ukraine remains uneven and limited by institutional factors. Fragmentation of regulatory and legal support, insufficient coherence of regional and innovation policies, as well as limited institutional and analytical capacity of public authorities reduce the effectiveness of this tool. In many cases, the entrepreneurial process of opening is formal, which limits the transformation of strategic priorities into real innovative projects.

At the same time, positive managerial changes have been identified the strengthening of the role of strategic planning, the gradual transition to partnership models of governance and the intensification of interaction between authorities, business and academia. Smart specialization forms institutional prerequisites for the development of regional innovation ecosystems and support for structural changes in the regional economy.

From the standpoint of public administration, it is advisable to consider smart specialization not only as a tool for strategic planning, but as a mechanism for coordinating policies that combines regional development, innovation and industrial policy. The effectiveness of this approach is determined primarily by the quality of managerial decisions, the level of inter-level coordination and the ability of institutions to adapt.

Considering the results obtained, the following implications for public policy are substantiated: the need for institutionalization of smart specialization at the legislative level; strengthening coordination between public administration entities; development of analytical and managerial capacity of regions; transformation of the entrepreneurial process of opening into a permanent governance tool. The implementation of these measures will contribute to increasing the innovation capacity of the regions, supporting the post-crisis recovery and the long-term competitiveness of the Ukrainian economy in the European innovation space.

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