

ENHANCING SOCIAL COHESION: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH THE PARTICIPATORY MODEL

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Abstract. The *purpose* of the article is to formulate a strategic framework that emphasises the interdependence between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship as a tool for reintegrating servicemen, veterans and their families based on an assessment of the level of social cohesion in the local hromada (territorial community) affected by the conflict and the identification of levers that will facilitate the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives driven by the level of social cohesion in the hromada. *Methodology.* The survey instrument was structured around five conceptual blocks, each probing distinct aspects of social cohesion: sense of belonging and hromada identity, shared challenges and collective problem-solving, interaction and communication patterns, common social and cultural practices, mutual assistance and support networks. The study sample included 150 residents of Chernihiv hromada. The study used a purposive sampling strategy to ensure representation of different segments of the Chernihiv hromada, with a particular focus on groups relevant to social cohesion and reintegration efforts. The survey *results* are broken down by components of social cohesion. A significant number of respondents rated their sense of belonging to the hromada as "very important", emphasising the strong collective identity based on the hromada's rich historical heritage. Heritage not only promotes social cohesion, but also creates opportunities for social entrepreneurship, and initiatives such as heritage tourism and traditional crafts bring economic benefits. Collective resilience, especially in the context of post-insurgency recovery, has become a powerful unifying force, reinforcing the social values of collective support. Respondents identified local economic development as a crucial factor, emphasising their commitment to supporting small businesses. The survey also showed that responsible governance plays a vital role in hromada engagement: 80% of participants recognised successful co-operation between citizens and local authorities. Civic engagement and hromada involvement were identified as key pillars of belonging to the hromada (67% of respondents value active participation in hromada affairs). The commitment to inclusive social integration of internally displaced persons and veterans further illustrates the hromada's commitment to social cohesion. Priorities include economic development, infrastructure restoration and security, reflecting the hromada's focus on recovery. Communication patterns indicate a satisfactory level of interaction between residents, and shared cultural practices and mutual support networks are considered vital to strengthening social cohesion. *Practical implications.* The results of the study can be used for further research and practical application to develop a strategy for the development of social entrepreneurship at all taxonomic levels. *Value/Originality.* The original approach to developing a strategic framework, which emphasises the interdependence between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship as a tool for reintegrating military personnel, veterans and their families, is based on the study of the components of social cohesion from the perspective of residents, and contributes to the conceptualisation of a social entrepreneurship development strategy.

Keywords: social cohesion, social entrepreneurship, veterans' reintegration, hromada development, participatory models.

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1. Introduction

Social cohesion serves as a fundamental precondition and outcome of effective social entrepreneurship, creating symbiotic relationships that stimulate socio-economic development and promote reintegration, especially for marginalised groups such as veterans and refugees.

The European social enterprise ecosystem is an example of how strong social cohesion fosters an inclusive model of participation. In this ecosystem, hromada (territorial community) engagement is not just a secondary but a primary driver, working in tandem with educational institutions, governments, social investors, donors, business associations, incubators, accelerators, and social enterprises (Borzaga et al., 2020). This cohesion-based model transforms communities from passive beneficiaries to active co-creators, ensuring that innovations are deeply rooted in local needs and contexts.

Ukraine's nascent social enterprise ecosystem, while currently limited in scale, has significant potential to harness social cohesion as a catalyst for growth. By fostering stronger ties between hromadas and encouraging greater participation, especially from educational institutions, Ukraine can accelerate the development of its social enterprise sector (Revko et al., 2023).

Strategically cultivating social cohesion through participatory social enterprise models offers a powerful approach to addressing complex social challenges, especially in post-conflict societies and among displaced populations. Strengthening social cohesion allows social enterprises to more effectively improve local living conditions and meet hromada needs through adapted social infrastructure services, thus creating an environment conducive to reintegration.

In the context of hromada resilience, social cohesion amplifies the impact of social enterprise, playing a vital role in rebuilding and strengthening hromadas affected by conflict or displacement. For veterans facing reintegration challenges, a cohesive hromada facilitated by social enterprises can provide more effective support, meaningful employment opportunities and a new sense of purpose.

In line with this, the paper is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the key factors that foster pride and a sense of belonging among members of the Chernihiv hromada, and how do these factors affect social cohesion in a post-conflict environment?

RQ2. How to develop a strategic framework that leverages the interdependence between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship to promote hromada development and resilience?

Therefore, this paper offers a comprehensive analysis of two interrelated areas: (1) social cohesion,

with a particular focus on the factors that contribute to hromada pride and belonging, and (2) social entrepreneurship, exploring its potential to strengthen social cohesion and its impact on it. Using the case study of the Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, the authors aim to assess the level of social cohesion in the local hromada affected by the conflict and explore how this cohesion can be used to develop social entrepreneurship initiatives. By analysing these elements through the lens of a specific city, the authors aim to combine theoretical concepts with practical applications, providing insights into the dynamic relationship between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship in post-conflict hromada development. Ultimately, this study aims to propose a strategic framework that hromadas can adapt to strengthen social cohesion and promote social entrepreneurship, thus transforming themselves from passive beneficiaries to active co-creators of their social and economic future.

2. Unlocking the Potential of Social Entrepreneurship for Social Cohesion and Hromada Reintegration

The concept of social entrepreneurship has evolved considerably over the past two decades, becoming increasingly fluid and dynamic in response to rapid innovation and complex systemic challenges. Despite its growing popularity, a commonly accepted definition remains elusive, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. This definitional ambiguity is not only a theoretical problem, but also a reflection of the diverse contexts in which social entrepreneurs operate. Definitions of social entrepreneurship vary widely around the world, shaped by different legal systems, regional histories, and unique financial and political conditions (Dutta et al., 2024).

J. Gregory Dees (2018) has made one of the seminal academic contributions to the definition of social entrepreneurship, conceptualising it as combining passion for a social mission with business discipline, innovation and determination. This definition emphasises the hybrid nature of social entrepreneurship, which Besharov (2022) describes as balancing the dual goals of social impact and financial sustainability.

Innovation is a key element that distinguishes social entrepreneurship from other forms of entrepreneurship. G. M. Cardella et al. (2021) emphasise that the social component of entrepreneurship includes the ability to find innovative solutions to specific social problems. Such an innovative approach allows social entrepreneurship to function as a catalyst for improving the quality of life by meeting the needs of the hromada, operating under market constraints.

Social enterprises play a fundamental role in strengthening social cohesion and promoting

reintegration, especially in local hromadas where they are often a lifeline for economic survival and social integration. They address new social needs by providing important support to vulnerable and marginalised groups, including veterans, refugees and people affected by conflict or displacement, as well as those facing reintegration challenges. At the same time, strong social cohesion serves as a favourable basis for the development and success of these enterprises, creating a symbiotic relationship. Existing hromada ties not only facilitate the creation and growth of social enterprises, but also provide a favourable environment for reintegration, helping people rebuild their lives and reconnect with society.

Social entrepreneurship is related to the reintegration of military personnel, ATO/UFO veterans and their families, and meets specific reintegration principles, including participation (social entrepreneurship involves inclusion and engagement of all actors) (Nahorna & Maksom, 2022).

The complexity of this relationship is further highlighted by the cognitive model presented in Figure 1, which visualises key concepts in research on social cohesion and reintegration. This visual representation synthesises key concepts from current research, offering a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted nature of the field. The model highlights the interconnectedness of the various elements that are crucial to understanding and addressing social cohesion and reintegration in different contexts.

The scientific literature in this area reveals the nuances of focusing on several important areas. Researchers emphasise the importance of mental health, especially when exploring therapeutic approaches that support people during the reintegration process. Hromada cohesion is another central theme, reflecting the importance of creating an inclusive social environment. The model also highlights the specific challenges faced by marginalised groups, such as veterans and refugees, on the path to reintegration.

In addition, the cognitive map draws attention to wider societal issues that affect social cohesion, including stigma, substance use and recidivism. These elements highlight the complex barriers that individuals and hromadas have to overcome. It should be noted that there is considerable interest in exploring these issues in a global context, especially in post-conflict societies, which demonstrates the universal relevance of these challenges.

Based on a detailed analysis of Fig. 1, it is possible to identify several key aspects that dominate the current scientific discourse on social cohesion and reintegration:

1. *Mental health and well-being.* Central nodes such as "human", "mental health" and "psychology" emphasise the importance of individual well-being for

social cohesion and reintegration. This is consistent with the role of social enterprises in providing support services and creating an environment conducive to mental health recovery (Macassa, 2021).

2. *Community dynamics.* The popularity of terms such as "social cohesion", "community cohesion" and "social participation" reflects the academic interest in understanding how people, especially those from marginalised groups, reintegrate into communities. This is directly related to the ability of social enterprises to strengthen community ties and create inclusive economic opportunities (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

3. *Post-conflict reintegration.* The cluster highlighting "reintegration", "DDR" (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration) and "recovery" indicates a strong focus on the reintegration of conflict-affected people. This area is particularly relevant for social enterprises operating in post-conflict societies, where they can play a crucial role in facilitating the transition to civilian life. This includes the psychological, social and political dimensions of reintegration (Kuckertz et al., 2023).

4. *Therapeutic interventions.* The use of terms such as "therapy", "adaptive behaviour" and "treatment outcome" indicates a focus on therapeutic approaches to reintegration. Social enterprises can make a significant contribution in this area by providing or supporting innovative therapeutic services, especially for those recovering from trauma or displacement (Kuckertz et al., 2023).

5. *Psychosocial challenges.* Terms such as "social stigma" and "mental illness" highlight the psychosocial barriers faced during reintegration. Social enterprises are uniquely positioned to address these challenges by creating a supportive work environment and developing community-based solutions that combat stigma and promote inclusivity (Godinho et al., 2023).

6. *Global context.* The inclusion of terms such as "veterans", "refugees" and "war" reflects the global relevance of reintegration and social cohesion, especially in post-conflict regions or among displaced populations. This global perspective is consistent with the potential of social entrepreneurship to address complex societal issues in different contexts (Bansal, 2023).

A cohesive society requires at least a minimum level of commitment to society and a willingness to subordinate personal needs to the welfare of the social environment (Sivers, 2023). This foundational principle is closely aligned with the concept of social entrepreneurship, which, as asserted by V. Dolacis et al. (2022), plays an instrumental role in stabilising human life by fostering community connections to address shared challenges. The interplay between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship creates a virtuous cycle where each element strengthens

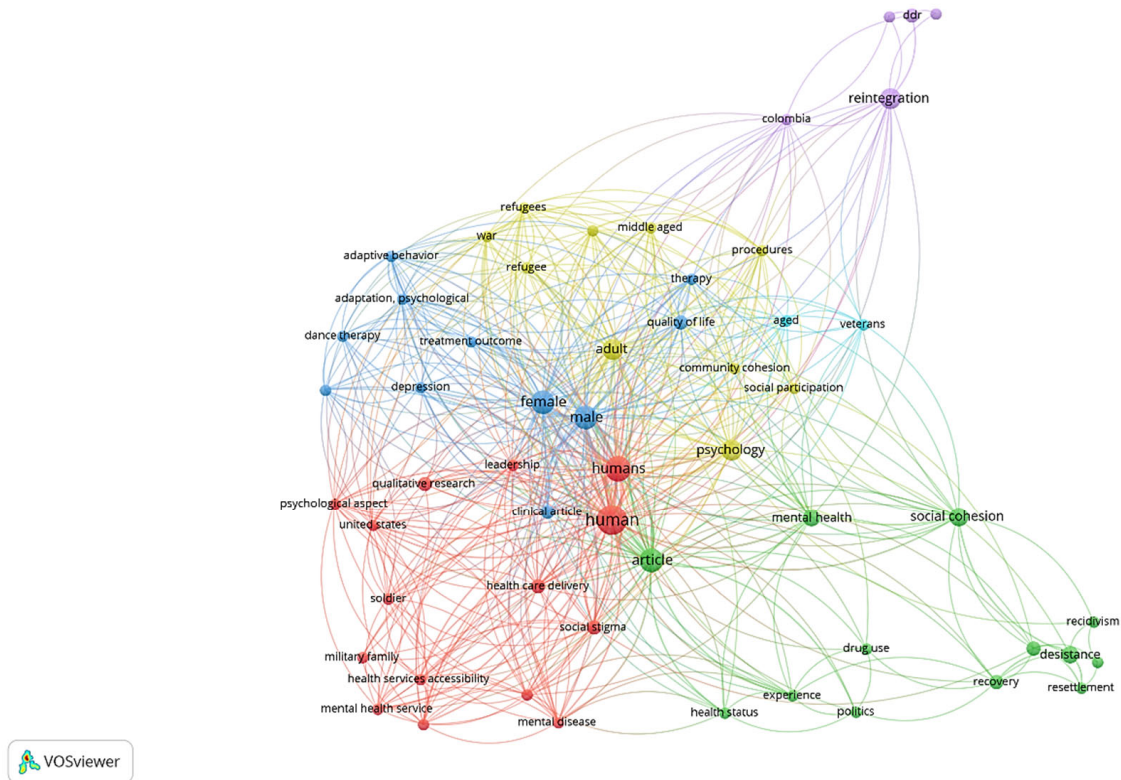


Figure 1. Visual map of key concepts in social cohesion and reintegration research

Source: developed by the authors using the VOS viewer tool based on the analysis of the Scopus database

the other, leading to more resilient and sustainable hromada (community) development.

In the context of hromadas' resilience in wartime, D. Palatna and T. Semyhina (2024) note that the key aspects to achieving transformation are building social justice, ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, as well as the integration of internally displaced persons and the reintegration of veterans. This requires deeper structural changes in the hromada to create a more just and safe environment. N. Seiko and T. Zakharina (2023) also emphasise the need to engage civil society in shaping the reintegration system for veterans, highlighting the critical role of hromada involvement in these processes.

The potential for social entrepreneurship to address these complex issues is enormous, especially in conflict zones. However, an enabling ecosystem is needed to unlock its full potential. As S. Dutta et al. (2024) posit, it is imperative that the government, the private sector, and civil society work in concert to create bespoke enabling environments. Such frameworks should encompass regulatory, legal, and measurement structures, in addition to financing mechanisms, networks, and training programmes that acknowledge and bolster the endeavours of social entrepreneurs.

The participatory model of social entrepreneurship development as a tool for the reintegration of military

personnel, veterans and their families is based on active co-operation between the state, civil society institutions, business and higher education institutions as a key to the formation of an effective system for the reintegration of military personnel, veterans and their families (Verbytska, et al., 2024).

This comprehensive review of research trends highlights the vital role that social entrepreneurship can play in strengthening social cohesion and promoting reintegration. The hromada ties that social enterprises create provide the necessary support network, trust and shared values that allow these enterprises to thrive and innovate. In turn, this strengthens the social fabric, creating more resilient hromadas that are better able to meet the challenges of post-conflict transformation and reintegration.

3. Research Methodology

The research was carried out in the framework of the project "Participatory Model of Social Entrepreneurship Development as a Determinant of Reintegration of Veterans and Their Family Members". The authors' approach to assessing the level of hromada cohesion combines theoretical foundations with empirical research, using mixed methods, including surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups and network analysis of communication patterns in the hromada.

The research, conducted in June-July 2024, focused on the hromada of Chernihiv in Ukraine, examining social cohesion as a fundamental element for creating an effective environment for reintegration and social entrepreneurship. The authors used an electronic survey methodology, collecting data from a diversified sample of 150 residents of the Chernihiv hromada. The study employed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure representation of different segments of the Chernihiv hromada, with a particular focus on groups relevant to social cohesion and reintegration efforts. The selection criteria were as follows:

Residence. All respondents had to be permanent residents of the Chernihiv hromada (territorial community).

Age. Adult residents (18 years and older) were allowed to participate.

Gender. Although the sample was open to all genders, there was a significant representation of women (93% of respondents), which allowed for a focus on women's perspectives on hromada cohesion.

Displacement status. The study actively involved internally displaced persons (IDPs), who made up 14% of the sample, to capture the experiences of those who have been forced to relocate.

Disability status. Persons with disabilities were specifically included (7% of respondents) to ensure representation of this often-marginalised group.

Veteran status. Veterans and their family members were actively recruited (7% of the sample) due to their central role in reintegration processes.

Diversity of experiences. The selection process aimed to include people with different levels of hromada involvement and socio-economic backgrounds to ensure a broad range of perspectives on social cohesion.

Willingness to participate. All respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the electronic survey.

This purposive approach to selecting respondents, while not representative of the entire population of Chernihiv, was designed to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives important to understanding social cohesion and its role in creating an effective environment for reintegration. The over-representation of certain groups (e.g., women, IDPs) was intentional to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of population groups that are often crucial to community cohesion and reintegration efforts in post-conflict or transitional contexts.

The research tool was structured around five conceptual blocks, each of which explored different aspects of social cohesion:

Block 1. *Sense of belonging and community identity.* This block explored the psychological and emotional connections between residents and their community (hromada), and the factors that contribute to pride, participation and a sense of belonging.

Block 2. *Shared challenges and collective problem-solving.* The authors studied residents' perceptions of community (hromada) problems and their participation in solving these problems, which reflects the community's ability to act collectively.

Block 3. *Interaction and communication patterns.* This block assessed the channels and quality of internal communication in the hromada, which is vital for understanding information flows and social network structures.

Block 4. *Common social and cultural practices.* By studying participation in and appreciation of hromada traditions and events, the authors sought to understand the role of shared cultural experiences in strengthening cohesion.

Block 5. *Mutual assistance and support networks.* The last block assessed perceptions of hromada support systems and overall social cohesion, providing insight into hromada social capital.

This multidimensional approach allows for a deeper understanding of social cohesion, going beyond simple indicators and exploring the complex interplay of factors that contribute to hromada resilience and social integration. By examining these elements in the context of a hromada with a significant number of veterans and IDPs, this paper aims to shed light on the potential of social cohesion as a basis for effective reintegration strategies.

The diverse demographic composition of the sample, including a significant representation of potentially marginalised groups, allows for a comprehensive assessment of social cohesion across different segments of the hromada. This approach is crucial for developing holistic strategies that address the needs of all community (hromada) members, especially in post-conflict or transitional settings. This understanding is important for social entrepreneurs who seek to create effective and sustainable solutions that meet the diverse needs of the community.

With this study, the authors aim to contribute to the growing body of literature on social cohesion and reintegration, and to provide practical advice to policy makers and hromada leaders working to build inclusive, resilient communities that can support the reintegration of veterans and displaced persons.

4. Research Findings

Sense of Belonging and Community Identity

Figure 2 presents the key factors that contribute to pride and a sense of belonging among members of the Chernihiv hromada, revealing a multifaceted sense of connection. The majority of respondents expressed pride in the hromada's rich historical heritage, which provides a strong foundation for community cohesion, bridging generations and experiences. This shared historical narrative serves

as a powerful catalyst for social cohesion, creating a common ground on which different community (hromada) members can build relationships and understanding.

Moreover, a hromada's historical heritage offers unique opportunities for social enterprise initiatives. By tapping into this cultural capital, social entrepreneurs can develop ventures that not only preserve and celebrate local history, but also create economic opportunities and social impact. For example, heritage tourism, the revival of traditional crafts, or historical education programmes can simultaneously honour a hromada's past, strengthen social ties, and generate sustainable livelihoods, demonstrating how historical pride can be transformed into tangible social and economic benefits through innovative social entrepreneurship.

Equally important is the collective resilience of the hromada (community), especially in the context of post-invasion recovery. Interviewees frequently mentioned the hard work and indomitable spirit of community members, symbolising not just survival but a determination to thrive in the face of adversity. This collective resilience, characterised by hard work and unwavering determination, becomes a powerful unifying force. It not only reflects the motivation of the population to recover from recent challenges, but also serves to strengthen social ties and mutual support networks in the hromada. The shared experience of overcoming hardship has created a deeper sense of unity and purpose among residents, strengthening social cohesion and creating a fertile ground for social enterprise initiatives that harness this collective spirit to address community needs and ensure sustainable development.

Importantly, 60% of respondents rated the *sense of belonging* to the community as "very important" and the remaining 40% as "important". This general

recognition of belonging to the community is indicative of a strong collective identity.

Local economic solidarity has proven to be an important factor in fostering pride and a sense of belonging among members of the Chernihiv hromada. Respondents consistently emphasised the joint efforts of the hromada to support and develop small businesses, reflecting a shared desire for economic sustainability and interdependence. This mutual support goes beyond simple financial transactions, embodying a collective spirit of "caring for each other" that not only strengthens community (hromada) ties, but also creates a favourable ecosystem for social entrepreneurship to flourish, inspiring and supporting businesses that combine economic activity with social impact. The widespread desire among participants to continue to live and work in the hromada despite adversity underscores this economic solidarity and provides a loyal customer base and workforce for businesses.

Responsible governance has become a key factor in promoting hromada pride and engagement, and is characterised by the openness of local authorities and state structures to hromada proposals and initiatives. This receptivity to the ideas of the public sector not only contributes to the formation of a culture of shared decision-making, but also fosters a sense of civic engagement and participatory democracy. Respondents noted that such a response is an important factor in building a strong hromada identity, as it allows citizens to feel heard and valued as participants in the governance process.

The importance of such civic participation is further underlined by the fact that 80% of respondents are aware of successful examples of co-operation between citizens and local authorities, which indicates that this approach to co-operation is widely recognised. Such a high level of awareness is a positive

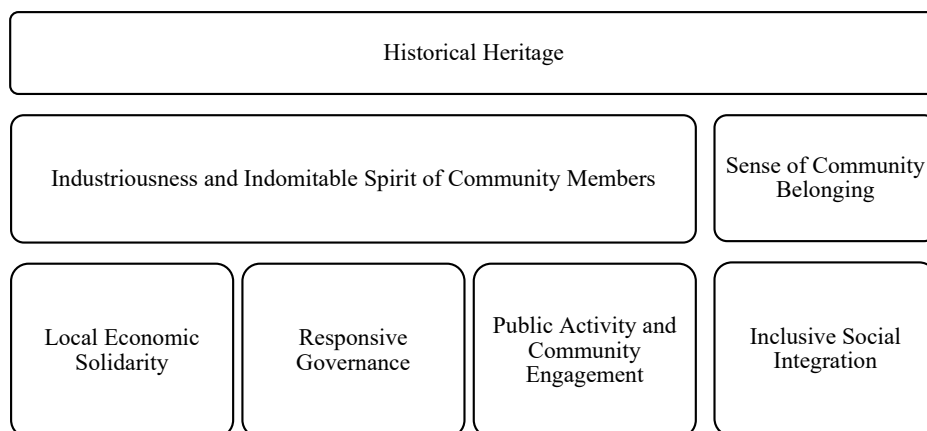


Figure 2. The key factors contributing to pride and sense of belonging among Chernihiv hromada members

Source: developed by the authors based on data collected through electronic surveys in Chernihiv, Ukraine (June-July 2024)

precondition for residents' engagement in shaping the reintegration environment. Respondents provided numerous concrete examples of such co-operation, including participatory budgeting, partnerships with NGOs, environmental initiatives, cultural and educational events, assistance to citizens affected by military operations, support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and veterans, and various social initiatives. These examples, drawn from the respondents' own experiences and areas of activity, illustrate the diverse ways in which good governance manifests itself in practical, community-oriented actions that further strengthen the sense of civic engagement and community identity.

The data shows that a sense of belonging is formed through the ability to influence processes and decisions. The general trend is that in order to feel part of a hromada, an event should involve participants in expressing their opinions. This insight is particularly valuable for designing effective social enterprise initiatives that not only meet hromada (community) needs, but also strengthen social cohesion by engaging hromada members as active participants and decision makers.

Civic engagement and community involvement were found to be cornerstones of belonging to a community, closely linked to good governance. The overwhelming majority (67%) of respondents indicated that active participation in community affairs is "very important" to them, and another 33% rated it as "important". This high level of engagement is reflected in a variety of civic activities that respondents say help them stay connected to the hromada, including cultural events, public hearings, city council sessions, forums, participatory budgeting and civic initiatives. This perception creates a virtuous cycle of participation, where citizens see tangible results of their participation, which encourages them to continue to engage. A variety of opportunities for engagement, including events for veterans, contributes to a strong civic culture in which different segments of the hromada can participate fully. It is worth noting that this synergy between public engagement and good governance not only strengthens hromada identity and social cohesion, but also creates a favourable basis for social entrepreneurship initiatives.

The community's (hromada's) commitment to inclusive social inclusion, especially for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and veterans, has become a key priority in Chernihiv's hromada building. By prioritising the integration of IDPs and veterans, Chernihiv demonstrates a collective commitment to social cohesion that goes beyond mere acceptance, actively promoting a sense of belonging and common purpose among all hromada members.

Shared Challenges and Collective Problem-Solving

When asked about the main challenges or problems facing their hromada today, respondents identified a clear set of priorities (Figure 3). Economic development emerged as the most pressing issue, underscoring the hromada's focus on rebuilding its financial foundation. Infrastructure development and security were equally ranked as the second most important issues. This is particularly understandable given the hromada's location in a border region that has suffered significant damage due to the hostilities. Education and training came in third place, reflecting the hromada's recognition of human capital development as a crucial factor for long-term prosperity.

Youth participation in hromada life ranked fourth, reflecting a growing awareness of the need to engage younger generations in civic processes. Healthcare and social services, while still important, ranked fifth, indicating that pressing economic and security concerns prevail. The social integration of IDPs (internally displaced persons) and the reintegration of veterans, although rounding out the top six, were considered relatively less urgent, possibly due to general economic and infrastructural problems. This prioritisation reflects both the immediate needs and the long-term aspirations of a community (hromada) that is trying to rebuild and strengthen itself. It is worth noting that issues such as environmental protection, cultural preservation and technological development, although not a priority, were also mentioned by some respondents, which indicates a holistic approach to community development in the face of significant challenges when prioritised.

These identified priorities are closely linked to areas where hromada members are actively involved in solving social problems. Respondents reported engagement in a variety of areas that address the main challenges: humanitarian aid and support to the affected population addresses immediate needs related to security and social services; youth engagement programmes address the priority of increasing youth participation; work with veterans directly addresses reintegration; and efforts to engage international partners in reconstruction address the main priorities of economic and infrastructure development. This correlation between the identified problems and areas of active community participation demonstrates a cohesive and responsive approach to hromada development, where citizens are actively working to address the most pressing problems they have identified.

Interaction and Communication Patterns

Among the channels of communication with other residents, respondents primarily use personal meetings (33% of responses), joint groups and chats in messengers (25%), public events (22%), and social media (20%). Thus, this shows that meetings of

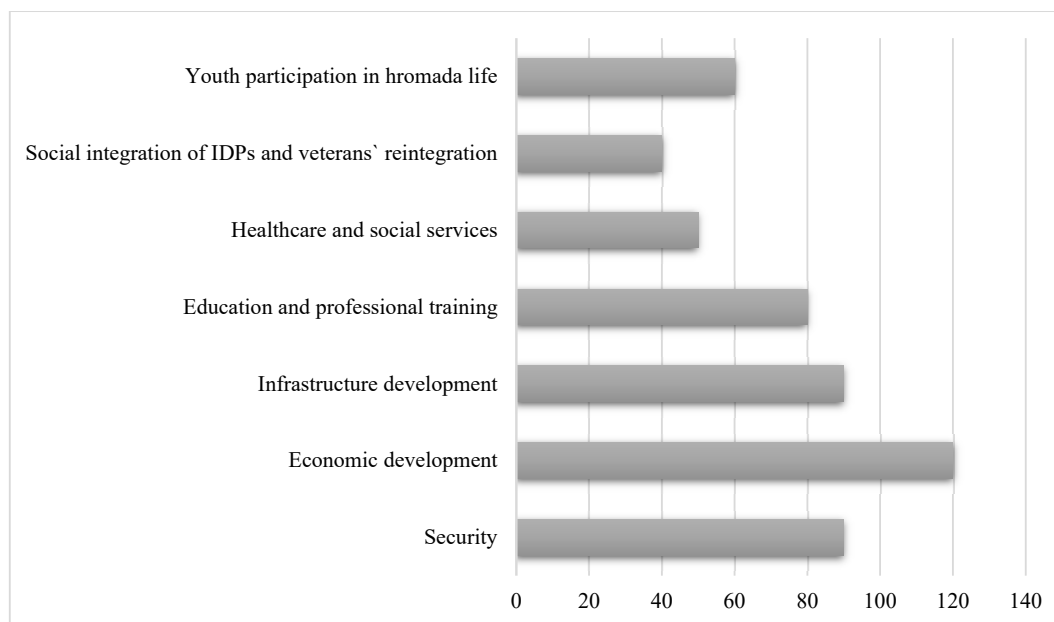


Figure 3. Priority challenges faced by Chernihiv hromada: thematic analysis of respondents' perspective

Source: developed by the authors based on data collected through electronic surveys in Chernihiv, Ukraine (June-July 2024)

collegial bodies in the hromada can be an effective platform for communication.

In general, the respondents assessed the level of communication in the hromada as "satisfactory" (53% of responses), and 27% considered such communication to be easy. This gives grounds to believe that it is advisable to focus on establishing communication in the hromada to increase its cohesion.

Common Social and Cultural Practices

Among the most important traditions or cultural events for the community, respondents highlighted the traditions of celebrating religious holidays, national holidays, city day (the most common responses), city tours (mentioning the activities of the Chernihiv Tourist Information Centre and well-known city guides), educational and awareness-raising events, local government performances, fairs, organisation of meetings for the elderly, workshops for children, and cultural and artistic gatherings, preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Chernihiv region. It is clear from the responses that national identity, fascination with the history of their hromada, and care for cultural heritage are very important to residents, reinforcing the previously identified role of historical heritage as a key factor in fostering pride and a sense of belonging amongst the members of the Chernihiv hromada. This strong connection to local history and traditions not only contributes to the formation of a common cultural identity, but also serves as a basis for hromada cohesion and collective pride in Chernihiv's rich historical heritage.

Among the public events dedicated to cultural or social traditions, the most popular among respondents were joint celebrations and fairs, with 31% and 23% of respondents participating respectively. A minority of respondents, 15%, indicated that they do not participate in such events. These results indicate that fairs, in particular, can serve as an effective tool for engaging citizens in joint activities and promoting community (hromada) cohesion.

Mutual Assistance and Support Networks

Residents are generally positive about mutual assistance and support in the hromada. The assessment of the level of support from the hromada is very positive: half of the surveyed residents consider it significant: 40% describe it as noticeable, and 13% – as very noticeable. The other half of respondents (47%) consider the level of support to be moderate.

When it comes to social cohesion in the hromada, the majority (60%) assesses it as average. These results, while encouraging, indicate that there is still considerable potential for strengthening social cohesion. The results indicate opportunities for targeted initiatives and interventions aimed at strengthening hromada ties and increasing overall social cohesion.

5. Conclusions

The findings of the Chernihiv hromada survey show a strong foundation of social cohesion that can serve as a solid basis for the development of social entrepreneurship. In general, the interviewed residents are proud of the historical heritage of the hromada (community), show a high interest in participating in

hromada affairs and are aware of successful practices of interaction between the authorities and the hromada. The study identifies key factors contributing to social cohesion, including local economic solidarity, responsible governance and inclusive social inclusion efforts. The challenges of the war have further strengthened community (hromada) cohesion, especially around humanitarian aid and recovery efforts.

Based on these findings, the authors propose a strategic framework that emphasises the interdependence between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship and consists of several interrelated components:

1. Inclusive community engagement. This component is aimed at developing active participation of citizens in hromada life. This involves organising open public meetings, launching new social initiatives, using grant programmes and partnering with non-governmental organisations. This approach allows different voices to be heard and promotes a sense of shared responsibility for community (hromada) development. It also provides for the creation of platforms for the exchange of experience and ideas between different NGOs, which can potentially contribute to the development of social entrepreneurship.

2. Educational empowerment and integration. This component includes educational activities, including lectures, trainings and seminars for different age groups. It focuses on three interrelated areas: integration support for veterans and IDPs, social entrepreneurship training, and hromada outreach initiatives. By combining skills development, entrepreneurship training and practical work with the hromada, this element contributes to a smoother transition for vulnerable groups and the nurturing of a new generation of social entrepreneurs. Participants learn to identify hromada needs, develop sustainable business models and implement social innovation projects. This multifaceted approach not only promotes the integration of marginalised groups, but also builds a skilled, cohesive hromada capable of driving sustainable development through innovative social entrepreneurship solutions. Ultimately, it creates a dynamic learning ecosystem where integration efforts and entrepreneurship education reinforce each other, strengthening the overall capacity of the hromada for resilience and social innovation.

3. Social entrepreneurship for recovery and resilience. This component aims to support post-conflict recovery by organising mental health support programmes and initiating charitable collections and actions, possibly through social enterprise models. It encourages the development of social enterprises that address post-conflict issues, including psychological support, economic recovery and hromada reconstruction. This approach not only helps with recovery, but also builds the long-term resilience of communities (hromadas) through sustainable, impact-oriented business models.

4. Adaptive governance and continuous learning. This last element focuses on establishing flexible governance structures that can adapt to the changing needs of a post-conflict hromada. It involves establishing mechanisms for ongoing community feedback, regular assessment of social cohesion, and evaluation of social entrepreneurship initiatives. This component ensures that strategies remain relevant and effective by promoting a culture of continuous improvement and learning in hromada development activities.

These revised components integrate the specific recommendations made in the report, while maintaining a strategic, overarching framework for strengthening social cohesion and social entrepreneurship in post-conflict hromadas (communities). The way forward for Ukraine is to recognise and build on the interdependence between social cohesion and social entrepreneurship. By developing an ecosystem that prioritises and builds on social cohesion, Ukraine can better harness the potential of social entrepreneurship to create an enabling environment for reintegration and address immediate social needs. Such an approach not only builds long-term resilience and hromada cohesion, but is also in line with global interests in promoting reintegration and social cohesion in post-conflict areas and among displaced populations.

The strong social cohesion observed in Chernihiv is an excellent starting point for this approach. By harnessing this community strength, Chernihiv can serve as an example of how social entrepreneurship can be developed in a post-conflict context, addressing local needs and creating sustainable community-based solutions.

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