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Models and functioning of the Civic Budgets in Poland from 2011 to 2021

Kyewords: civic budget, participatory budget, democracy, governance.

Abstract

Civic budget (*pol. Budżet obywatelski*), also known as participatory budget (*pol. Budżet partycypacyjny*), is a political institution or tool that has become one of the most popular forms of participation in Polish local government after 2011. It was implemented for the first time in the City of Sopot, and in the following years, more communes, as well as some poviats and voivodeships, implemented it. Over time, other forms of this tool, such as youth or green participatory budgets, started to appear. In 2018, the civic budget was implemented into the three Acts of the Self Government.

The surveys cover the 2011-2021 period, and the data were collected by email in late 2022 and early 2023 based on the list of the units created by the author. Based on that, the surveys were sent to 520 local government units that implemented such budgets at least once between 2011 and 2021. The doctoral thesis includes responses from: 283 communes, 54 cities with rights of poviat, 8 poviats, and 6 voivodeships (351 units in total). The work also includes a summary of the many answers to open questions (e.g., about the strengths and weaknesses of CB - more than 1,000 in total - and other comments). The survey included a broad scope of topics: implementation, the legal basis of functioning, social consultations, territory division, finance, participation, tasks and projects, voting, cycle and schedule, and other solutions.

The PhD thesis consists of two main parts - theoretical (Chapters 1, 2, 3) and empirical (Chapters 4, 5, 6). In the first part, the author presents crucial information about participatory (civic) budgets: definitions and classifications, the concept of the model of this tool in the literature, a description of conducted research, the context of democratic theory and governance theory as well as the genesis and development of this tool in Poland, in the context of world experience. The second part contains only the results of the author's research, which are presented in three chapters about: 4) Communes, 5) Cities with the rights of poviat, and 6) Poviats and Voivodeships.

The main research question in the PhD was: *How was the functioning of civic budgets in Poland from 2011 to 2021?*

Conducting the research made it possible to gather broad material about the functioning of the civic budgets in Poland at three levels of local government. On this basis, the characteristics of the models of this tool were presented (e.g., *the implementation model, the legal basis model*, and others). However, the details of these models depended on the accuracy of the data obtained in each thematic section in each case. The picture of the civic budget was additionally extended by the fascinating comments placed in the surveys, which were given by officials involved in the realization of this tool in their local governments.