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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH POLICY: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS

The article examines the strategic foundations of the digital transformation of youth policy within the public administration system. It substantiates the distinction between digitalisation and digital transformation of youth policy: while digitalisation entails the introduction of digital tools into existing management processes, digital transformation encompasses changes in the approaches to formulating, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating youth policy. Five strategic priorities for digital transformation are identified: the development of digital services and their accessibility; data-driven management; digital participation and engagement with youth; the development of digital competencies and inclusivity; and digital coordination and governance. The article systematises the key management mechanisms for implementing these priorities –specifically strategic, organisational, information-analytical, communication, resource-related, and monitoring-and-evaluation mechanisms. A conceptual model for the strategic management of digital transformation in youth policy is proposed, outlining the interconnections among strategic goals, priorities, management mechanisms, and outcomes, and incorporating the use of data and feedback from young people. The multi-level nature of digital transformation suggests the need to develop an indicator system to evaluate its implementation at the national, regional, and local levels.

Keywords: digital transformation; digitalization; youth policy; strategic management; public administration; digital governance; digital participation; digital services; data-driven management.

The digital transformation of public administration is gradually reshaping approaches to formulating and implementing state and local policies, the ways public institutions interact with citizens, and the mechanisms for delivering public services. In this context, the digitalisation of youth policy is particularly important, as young people are among the most active users of digital environments and key agents of social development. The use of digital platforms, e-services, communication tools, open data, and digital participation mechanisms creates new opportunities to enhance the accessibility, targeting, and effectiveness of youth policy.

However, the digitalisation of specific processes does not in itself constitute a digital transformation of youth policy. While shifting information resources, consultations, administrative procedures, or communications to digital formats may improve the speed of interaction, it does not automatically lead to revisions to management approaches, coordination mechanisms, strategic planning, or the evaluation of youth policy outcomes. We need to move beyond seeing digital technologies as tools and recognise them as integral to the strategic transformation of the youth policy management system.

Both European and Ukrainian approaches to youth policy development are increasingly focused on youth participation in the formulation and implementation of public decisions, the development of digital competencies, the accessibility of public services, and the use of modern interaction mechanisms. In this context, digital technologies can serve not only a service-delivery function but also a management function: facilitating data collection and utilisation, enabling communication with young people and their involvement in decision-making, coordinating the activities of various youth policy stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluating policy outcomes. Strategic management of digital transformation involves defining priorities, institutional mechanisms, and expected outcomes for the digital development of youth policy.

This issue is of particular importance in Ukraine, where the digital transformation of the public sector, the renewal of approaches to youth policy, and the adaptation of the public administration system to societal transformations are occurring simultaneously. The Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles of Youth Policy,” the National Youth Strategy until 2030, and the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine” for 2026–2030 establish the regulatory framework for developing a youth policy focused

on active youth participation and on improving implementation mechanisms. At the same time, the practical implementation of these provisions requires a systematic alignment of the youth policy's strategic goals with the opportunities offered by the digital environment.

The research problem lies in insufficient conceptual clarity regarding the strategic priorities for the digital transformation of youth policy and the mechanisms for implementing them across various levels of public administration. We need to clarify which areas of digitalisation are strategic, how they align with youth policy goals, and which management mechanisms ensure their practical implementation.

Today, the issue of digital transformation in public administration is viewed much more broadly than merely the implementation of specific electronic services. OECD documents link digital transformation to changes in how the public sector is organised and how it utilises data, delivers services, interacts with citizens, and makes management decisions [9; 10]. A key aspect is moving from fragmented digitalisation to a systemic approach that integrates digital technologies into strategic, organisational, and managerial processes. The further evolution of this approach is linked to digital innovations in the public sector and GovTech [12], as well as to the development of digital public infrastructure as a foundation for interconnected digital services and processes [13].

For youth policy, digital transformation holds particular significance, as the digital environment serves simultaneously as a space for young people's everyday communication and as a setting for implementing public policy. Research by D. Moxon, A. M. Şerban, D. Potočnik, et al. [14] highlights the interrelationship between digitalisation, social inclusion, and youth policy, particularly the need to address digital inequality and the accessibility of the digital environment. Documents from the Council of Europe and the European Commission view digital opportunities within the broader context of young people's political and civic participation [15]. At the same time, this allows digital tools to be seen not merely as means of communication or service delivery, but also as a potential mechanism for engaging young people in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

The Ukrainian regulatory and strategic landscape also reflects a gradual integration of youth policy and digital development. The Law of Ukraine "On the Basic Principles of Youth Policy" [4] enshrines the principles of youth participation and the mechanisms for youth interaction

with public institutions. The National Youth Strategy until 2030 [5] sets out long-term guidelines for developing youth policy, while the Concept for the Development of Digital Competencies [6] lays the foundation for developing digital skills and literacy. The Strategy for the Development of the Electronic Communications Sector of Ukraine until 2030 [7] expands the infrastructural basis for digital transformation, and the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine” for 2026–2030 [8] updates the mechanisms for implementing youth policy.

A distinct area of research concerns the development of youth human capital and the improvement of public policy. In her work, M. V. Voichuk [1] examines the development of youth human capital in the context of European integration and avenues for enhancing public policy. N. V. Kovalchuk, M. V. Voichuk, and I. O. Abramova [2] highlight research methods for assessing youth human capital development that are relevant to establishing a system for monitoring and evaluating youth policy outcomes. Research by M. V. Voichuk and M. O. Mishchuk [3] focuses on European standards for civil society participation in youth policy implementation, thereby complementing the digital dimension with aspects of interaction and engagement. Thus, existing literature covers the digital transformation of the public sector, the digitalisation of the youth environment, the strategic foundations of youth policy, and youth participation quite extensively. However, these areas are predominantly studied in parallel. There is a lack of systematisation regarding which specific digital changes are strategically important for youth policy and which management mechanisms should be employed to facilitate them. This creates a research gap that the present study aims to address.

This study is conceptual and analytical, aiming to identify strategic priorities and management mechanisms for the digital transformation of youth policy. The information base comprises academic publications on digital governance, youth policy, and youth participation; documents from the OECD, the Council of Europe, and the European Union; and Ukrainian legal and strategic documents that regulate the development of youth policy and digital transformation [1–17].

Analysis and synthesis were identified as the primary research methods for isolating the key characteristics of the digital transformation of public administration and adapting them to the sphere of youth policy. Terminological analysis was employed to distinguish between the concepts of “digitalisation” and “digital transformation” and to define their

roles within the field under study. A comparative method enabled the juxtaposition of international approaches – specifically those of the OECD, the European Union, and the Council of Europe – with Ukrainian regulatory and strategic practices.

A systems approach was used to systematise strategic directions, viewing youth policy as a set of interconnected goals, stakeholders, management processes, tools, and outcomes. This approach allowed digital transformation to be viewed not merely as a discrete technological component, but as a process of transforming the methods used to formulate, implement, coordinate, and evaluate youth policy.

In the final stage, we used a conceptual modelling method to align the strategic priorities of digital transformation with the corresponding management mechanisms. The analysis followed these steps: defining the essence of digital transformation; analysing its specific nature within the youth policy sector; identifying strategic priorities; systematising management mechanisms; and determining their links to youth participation and policy implementation outcomes. This sequence ensures a logical progression from the theoretical conceptualisation of digital transformation to the development of an applied conceptual model for its management.

The article aims to substantiate the strategic priorities for the digital transformation of youth policy and to identify the key mechanisms for their implementation within the public administration system.

To achieve the stated goal, the following tasks are envisaged: clarifying the relationship between the concepts of digitalization and the digital transformation of youth policy; identifying the key strategic priorities for digital transformation; systematizing the management mechanisms for their implementation; determining the role of digital tools in ensuring participation, interaction, and accessibility within youth policy; and outlining directions for the further development of the digital transformation of youth policy at the national, regional, and local levels.

An analysis of academic sources, international approaches, and the Ukrainian regulatory and strategic framework allows us to view the digital transformation of youth policy as a process of systemic change in how it is formulated, implemented, coordinated, and evaluated – driven by digital technologies, data, and new models of interaction between young people and public institutions, unlike digitalisation, which primarily entails converting specific processes, information, or services into digital formats,

digital transformation also encompasses organisational, institutional, and managerial changes.

In this context, it is useful to distinguish between three interconnected concepts. The digitalisation of youth policy involves integrating digital technologies and tools into existing management processes. The digital transformation of youth policy involves changing the approaches to its formulation and implementation, driven by digital capabilities. Digital governance of youth policy refers to the organisation of relevant management processes, interactions, data usage, and decision-making within a digital environment.

Thus, digital transformation should not be reduced to creating a website, a mobile app, an online consultation form, or a standalone digital service. Its strategic significance is that digital technologies can reshape how youth needs are identified, policy is formulated, communication and decision-making take place, stakeholders are coordinated, and results are evaluated.

Based on a synthesis of OECD approaches [9–13], documents from the European Union and the Council of Europe [14–16], and Ukrainian strategic documents [4–8], five interconnected strategic priorities for the digital transformation of youth policy are proposed (table 1):

Table 1

Strategic priorities for the digital transformation of youth policy

Strategic priority	Key components	Expected management outcome
Digital services and accessibility	development of electronic services and digital channels for accessing information and services	increased accessibility and convenience of youth policy
Data and evidence-based approach	systematic collection, integration, and analysis of data on youth needs and activity	evidence-based management decisions
Digital participation and engagement	online consultations, digital platforms, e-participation, and communication	expanded opportunities for youth to influence public decisions
Digital skills and inclusion	development of digital skills, access to digital infrastructure, and bridging the digital divide	equal opportunities for participation by diverse youth groups

Continuation of Table 1

Digital coordination and governance	integration of information systems; cooperation among state and local authorities, youth organizations, and other stakeholders	coherence and effectiveness in youth policy implementation
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The first priority is the shift from traditional interaction channels to accessible digital services tailored to young people's needs. However, the digital format should not be viewed as an end in itself; its effectiveness is determined by the extent to which it simplifies young people's access to opportunities in youth policy and reduces administrative barriers.

The second priority – data and evidence-based approaches – is of strategic importance for transitioning from one-size-fits-all management decisions to a more targeted approach in youth policy. Using data on young people's demographics, social, educational, economic, and behavioural characteristics helps us identify their needs, forecast changes, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented measures. In this context, digital transformation is directly linked to enhancing the analytical capacity of public institutions.

The third priority focuses on digital participation and interaction. Digital tools can expand opportunities for young people to engage in consultations, discuss management decisions, formulate proposals, and evaluate public programs. At the same time, the mere existence of a digital channel does not guarantee genuine participation. Therefore, it is important to assess not only the number of digital platforms or consultations but also the extent to which the information gathered is utilised in the decision-making process. This approach aligns with the understanding of youth participation as an active element in the implementation of youth policy [3; 15; 17].

The fourth priority – digital competencies and inclusion – defines the conditions under which digital transformation does not create new barriers. The availability of a digital service does not equate to its actual accessibility for all groups of young people. Therefore, strategic management must take into account digital skills, access to the internet and devices, and the specific needs of young people with disabilities, those from remote areas, and other groups for whom the digital environment may remain less accessible.

The fifth priority concerns digital coordination and management.

Youth policy is implemented by a wide range of actors – including state authorities, local self-government bodies, youth councils, youth and civil society organisations, educational institutions, and other entities. Consequently, digital transformation should facilitate not only communication between individual institutions and young people but also the coordination of activities among policy actors, the exchange of information, and the alignment of management decisions.

The established priorities require appropriate management mechanisms. A synthesis of the approaches examined enables the identification of strategic, organisational, information-analytical, communication, resource, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (table 2).

Table 2

Management mechanisms for implementing the digital transformation of youth policy

Mechanism	Key instruments	Functional purpose
Strategic	strategies, programs, digital roadmaps, goals and indicators	defining directions and priorities for transformation
Organizational	allocation of responsibilities, stakeholder coordination, digital teams	ensuring institutional capacity
Information-analytical	databases, digital registers, analytical systems, dashboards	establishing an evidence base for management decisions
Communication	digital platforms, e-consultations, social media	engaging and collaborating with youth
Resource	funding, digital infrastructure, competencies, partnerships	ensuring the implementation of digital changes
Monitoring and evaluation	indicators, digital monitoring, results evaluation	assessing effectiveness and adjusting policy

A distinctive feature of the proposed approach is that these mechanisms should not operate in isolation. The strategic mechanism sets the direction; the organisational mechanism ensures the assignment of responsible entities and coordination; the information-analytical mechanism establishes an evidence base; the communication mechanism facilitates interaction with young people; the resource mechanism creates

the necessary conditions; and the monitoring and evaluation mechanism ensures feedback.

In such a system, digital technologies serve not merely as a separate element but as the infrastructural foundation for interaction among all components of youth policy management.

We should manage the digital transformation of youth policy strategically, taking into account the distribution of functional roles across different levels of public administration.

At the national level, general strategic guidelines, regulatory requirements, digital service standards, data management approaches, and national digital infrastructures are defined.

At the regional level, strategic priorities are adapted to regional specifics, territorial communities are coordinated, and regional information and communication mechanisms are developed.

At the territorial community level, digital transformation is directly linked to the needs of young people, the operation of youth councils and youth spaces, local programs, consultations, and specific services.

At the level of youth work, digital tools are used for direct communication, information dissemination, engagement, event organisation, consultations, and the collaborative implementation of youth initiatives. Such differentiation enables the avoidance of duplication of functions while creating conditions for the vertical and horizontal integration of digital youth policy.

Synthesising the research findings allows us to view the strategic management of the digital transformation of youth policy as a system of interconnected management components aimed at aligning youth policy's strategic goals with the capabilities of the digital environment. Central to this proposed approach is not any single digital tool, but rather the interrelationship among policy goals, strategic priorities for digital transformation, management mechanisms, and expected outcomes.

The first component consists of strategic goals that define the desired state of youth policy and its development trajectory. These goals should reflect the actual needs of young people, the socio-economic environment, digital capabilities, and the existing institutional capacity of public bodies.

The second component outlines the strategic priorities of digital transformation, specifying where digital technologies can drive qualitative changes in how youth policy is formulated and implemented. These include

the development of digital services and accessibility, data-driven decision-making, digital participation and interaction, the development of digital competencies, the promotion of inclusion, and the digital coordination of youth policy stakeholders.

The third component encompasses the management mechanisms through which strategic priorities are translated into practical management decisions. These include strategic planning, organisational coordination, information and analytical support, digital communication, resource provision, and the monitoring and evaluation of results. The fourth component comprises the results of digital transformation; these should be evaluated not merely by the number of digital services created or technologies implemented, but rather by changes in the accessibility of youth policy, the quality of management decisions, opportunities for youth participation, the effectiveness of inter-institutional cooperation, and the capacity of public institutions to respond to evolving youth needs.

Notably, these components do not form a linear sequence. Strategic goals define the general direction of transformation; priorities specify the areas of digital change; management mechanisms ensure their implementation; and outcomes provide a basis for subsequent adjustments to goals and priorities. Thus, the model is cyclical, involving a continuous feedback loop between management decisions and their outcomes.

Feedback from young people holds particular significance within this model. Use data on digital service usage, consultation outcomes, youth participation, service accessibility, and other interactions to inform management decisions. This approach transforms the digital environment from a mere channel for implementing youth policy into a source of information for its continuous improvement.

Consequently, the strategic management of digital transformation in youth policy is best understood as a cyclical process of aligning strategic goals, digital priorities, management mechanisms, and outcomes, underpinned by the continuous use of data and feedback from young people. This approach makes it possible to distinguish between the digitalisation of specific management operations and the systemic transformation of how youth policy is formulated and implemented.

Furthermore, the study defines the digital transformation of youth policy as a systemic shift in the approaches to its formulation, implementation, coordination, and evaluation – one that extends beyond

the mere adoption of digital technologies. We have five strategic priorities for this transformation: developing accessible digital services; data-driven management; engaging and interacting with young people digitally; building digital competencies and inclusivity; and coordinating and governing digitally.

The key mechanisms for implementing these priorities – strategic, organisational, information-analytical, communication, resource-related, and monitoring and evaluation – have been systematised. Their combination establishes the management framework for digital transformation and ensures its integration into the public administration system for youth policy.

The proposed conceptual model for the strategic management of digital transformation is based on the interrelationship between strategic goals, defined priorities, management mechanisms, and outcomes. A crucial feature of the model is the incorporation of data and feedback from young people when adjusting management decisions.

Thus, the digital transformation of youth policy should be viewed as a continuous, multi-level process that integrates digital tools with institutional mechanisms, data, and youth engagement. A promising avenue for future research is the development of a system of indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the digital transformation of youth policy at the national, regional, and local levels.

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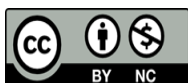
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ЦИФРОВА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ МОЛОДІЖНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ: СТРАТЕГІЧНІ ПРІОРИТЕТИ ТА МЕХАНІЗМИ УПРАВЛІННЯ

У статті досліджено стратегічні засади цифрової трансформації молодіжної політики в системі публічного управління. Обґрунтовано відмінність між цифровізацією та цифровою трансформацією молодіжної політики: якщо цифровізація передбачає впровадження цифрових інструментів у наявні управлінські процеси, то цифрова трансформація охоплює зміни у підходах до формування, реалізації, координації та оцінювання молодіжної політики. Визначено п'ять стратегічних пріоритетів цифрової трансформації: розвиток цифрових послуг та їх доступності; управління на основі даних; цифрова участь і взаємодія з молоддю; розвиток цифрових компетентностей та інклюзивності; цифрова координація та врядування. Систематизовано основні управлінські механізми реалізації визначених пріоритетів, зокрема стратегічні, організаційні, інформаційно-аналітичні, комунікаційні, ресурсні та моніторингово-оцінювальні. Запропоновано концептуальну модель стратегічного управління цифровою трансформацією молодіжної політики, що передбачає взаємозв'язок стратегічних цілей, пріоритетів, управлінських механізмів і результатів із використанням даних та зворотного зв'язку від молоді. Обґрунтовано багаторівневий характер цифрової трансформації та визначено перспективи подальшого розроблення системи показників для оцінювання результативності її реалізації на державному, регіональному та місцевому рівнях.

Ключові слова: цифрова трансформація; цифровізація; молодіжна політика; стратегічне управління; публічне управління; цифрове врядування; цифрова участь; цифрові послуги; управління на основі даних.

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