

### 3\_Case-Based Abstracts

## A CASE STUDY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN UCU AND TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES OF THE TERNOPIL REGION: THE “INVEST IN THE COMMUNITY” PROJECT

**Oksana Vasylytsia**<sup>1</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5624-2277>

<sup>1</sup>*Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine*

*Corresponding author: vasylytsya@ucu.edu.ua*

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.36059/978-966-397-609-9-29>

**Keywords:** investment; territorial community; service-learning.

Ukrainian Catholic University has been actively integrating service-learning (SL) projects into its curriculum since 2019. In 2024, fourth-year students of the Ethics-Politics-Economics program participated in the “Invest in the Community” SL project as part of the “Foundations of Investment” course. The project aimed to develop modern, competitive investment passport presentations for territorial communities in the Ternopil region in both Ukrainian and English.

On one hand, it is evident that investing during wartime is highly risky. However, first, all wars eventually end, necessitating proactive preparation for post-war reconstruction. Second, the participating communities are located in western Ukraine, where security risks are lower than in regions closer to the frontline. Consequently, the probability of attracting foreign investment remains significant. The English-language presentations were specifically designed to showcase the communities’ investment passports to international investors. Furthermore, such initiatives may indirectly enhance the communities’ capacity to participate in INTERREG cross-border cooperation projects.

Three communities were selected for the project: the Velyka Berezovytsia territorial community, the Zalishchyky urban community, and the Berezhany territorial community. Three student subgroups were formed, each led by a designated leader who selected their team members. The communities were assigned to the teams by lot.

During the first stage, students conducted desk research, analyzing publicly available materials on the communities' official websites. In the subsequent stage, students prepared proposals to improve website content from an investor's perspective and provided feedback on the user-friendliness and accessibility of the sites for the general public. Key observations included outdated information, a lack of statistical data, and unclear site structures. The next stage involved online meetings with community representatives, which allowed the students to present their initial findings and request additional information.

An essential stage of the project involved fieldwork, during which student teams conducted site visits to all three participating communities. Firstly, it should be noted that these visits provided significant practical value, offering students firsthand experience in communicating with representatives of territorial communities. Each visit commenced with a meeting at the municipal administration, where students received formal presentations regarding the community's governance and strategic profile.

Secondly, students visited various investment sites within the communities. Naturally, the local authorities sought to showcase their most successful investment cases. These included visits to Agroprodservice, the "Keramik" Berezhan Brick Factory, and the "Western Ukrainian Industrial Hub" Industrial Park. These visits allowed students to observe the operations of large-scale industrial facilities and gain insights into technological processes. Students actively engaged with enterprise representatives to discuss the challenges of business development during wartime, including the relocation of enterprises, energy grid instability and export complexities despite protests by European farmers.

The fieldwork also introduced students to the region's cultural heritage, which holds significant investment potential. Key sites visited included the Berezhan State Historical and Cultural Reserve, Chervonohorod Castle, and the Dnister River Valley in Zalishchyky. Representatives of the Zalishchyky community presented a project for the restoration of the Dnister river beach, noting that Zalishchyky was one of Eastern Europe's most renowned resorts during the interwar period of XX century. While this project won a nomination within the participatory budget (Buchko, 2021), its funding was suspended due to the full-scale invasion.

Furthermore, students visited sites with future investment potential, such as the waste-sorting complex in Berezhany. This complex was recently launched thanks to additional funding from the Ukrainian Veteran Fund. An information campaign and the installation of vandal-proof waste collection containers were implemented through the “Partnership for Recovery” program, funded by the Government of Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Future plans include developing facilities to process organic waste into biogas and bioenergy. (Saskiv, M., & Savytska, D 2025).

In addition to their primary objectives, these SL projects yielded several positive “side effects.” Notably, the visits included recruitment-oriented activities. Students visited the Vitaliy Skakun Lyceum in Berezhany, where they met with high school seniors to share their experiences of studying at the Ukrainian Catholic University. While such efforts alone cannot solve the issue of youth migration abroad, they serve as targeted interventions to demonstrate that high-quality education remains accessible in Ukraine despite the war. The visit to the lyceum also illustrated to pupils that learning extends beyond classroom theory.

Another secondary benefit was the establishment of personal networks with local government officials, who were subsequently invited to participate in various university educational programs. Finally, the project significantly enhanced the social cohesion of the student group. Having enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued their studies during the full-scale war, this fieldwork represented one of the few opportunities for the cohort to travel and bond as a community.

The project culminated in the delivery of three English-language presentations at the Ukrainian Catholic University for representatives of the participating communities. Tetiana Chetvertak, a deputy of the Ternopil District Council, commented:

“This project represents the first signs of active cooperation between the communities of the Ternopil region and UCU. We are grateful for your hard work and recommendations, and we intend to implement the corresponding changes. We are committed to developing our communities; therefore, it is vital for us to hear your student perspectives, as the task of rebuilding Ukraine after our victory will fall upon the youth!” (Kyrchiv, 2024).

In conclusion, SL projects prove highly valuable for both students and communities alike. They demonstrate the essential link between theoretical education and the practical application of knowledge, thereby creating significant added value within the curriculum. Furthermore, in the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery and the resulting shortage of qualified personnel, the readiness of students to contribute to this process according to their competencies is of paramount importance.

## References

- Buchko, O. (2021, August 6). Na Ternopilshchyni peremohu otrymav proiekt pro vidnovlennia pliazhu [A beach restoration project won in the Ternopil region]. *Teren*. [https://teren.in.ua/news/na-ternopilshchyni-peremogu-otrymav-projekt-pro-vidnovlennya-plyazhu\\_360328.html](https://teren.in.ua/news/na-ternopilshchyni-peremogu-otrymav-projekt-pro-vidnovlennya-plyazhu_360328.html)
- Saskiv, M., & Savytska, D. (2025, September 11). Na Ternopilshchyni zapustyly u testovomu rezhymi smittiesortuvalnyi kompleks [A waste-sorting complex was launched in test mode in the Ternopil region]. *Suspilne Ternopil*. <https://suspilne.media/ternopil/1112586-na-ternopilsini-zapustili-u-testovomu-rezhimi-smittesortuvalnij-kompleks/>
- Kyrchiv, M.-L. (2024, May 20). Investuj v hromadu: studenty UKU realizuvaly suspilno oriientovanyi proiekt dlia ternopilskykh hromad [Invest in the Community: UCU students implemented a service-learning project for Ternopil communities]. *UCU*. <https://ucu.edu.ua/news/investuj-v-gromadu-studenty-uku-realizuvaly-suspilno-oriientovanyj-projekt-dlya-ternopilskykh-gromad/>