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**Citizens initiative in local law-making  
in the context of the condition of Polish self-government at the ‘gmina’ level**

**Summary**

The article aims to show the interdisciplinary character of citizens initiative. In the introductory part a definition of citizens initiative is given. The subsequent parts of the article prove its multi-aspect character. First, a citizen is defined as a subject authorised by law as well as the society to initiate local laws. Next a sociological and legal analysis of the mechanisms of citizens participation at the *gmina* (county) level is made. Participation is seen as a practical expression of the subjectivity of a citizen. The following are then analysed: social consultations, participatory budget, local referendum and a local budget which is also regarded as a form of participation. The next part describes citizens legislative initiative as a form of participation. It shows its position, reasons for its emergence and its consequences at the local level. After that there is an attempt to present in a model way the extent to which local communities have developed in Poland. It pinpoints the current problems and shows how they can be solved. In the next part mechanisms of local bodies are presented. Problems related to, among other things, local elections turnout, reducing supervision and control function, and the formation of local interest groups exercising continuous and concealed pressure on local bodies, thus influencing local laws. The conclusion of the article is that the condition of Polish democracy at a local level is not an easy research topic and the *gminas* have failed to develop communities of inhabitants that would pursue common interests. Individual citizens alienate themselves and care of own interests only, and this has an impact on local bodies and local law as well.

**Keywords:** participation – initiative – community – citizen – democracy