



SHERPA
Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



MAP BIESZCZADY, POLAND

The local MAP of Bieszczady covers two poviats in southeastern Poland and includes the Bieszczady Mountains and the National Park. The group consists of local citizens, businesses, science representatives, and regional authorities.

In the MAP area, women are underrepresented in formal political roles (mayors), but are active in municipal and village councils, NGOs and in Rural Housewives' Circles. Participatory budgeting is practiced in all municipalities through a "Village Fund" and online broadcasting of council sessions have provided greater opportunities for participation, although the timing of these sessions can be exclusive.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Future rural policy

- Support NGOs and grassroots activities with transparent rules for cooperation, joint projects, funding, and professionalisation.
- Disseminate good practices through study tours and training for local government officials, NGOs, and community members.
- Involve residents in decision-making processes from the beginning and provide civic education activities.
- Improve communication and create better conditions for dialogues and cooperation.
- Take into account local specificities of the region for the implementation of EU policies.

Future rural research

- Conduct a comprehensive needs survey at both poviat and municipality levels to gather detailed information about the local social sector, their expectations, problems, and social burnout.
- Ensure transparent public consultations and gather feedback from residents.
- Establish a database of local information on good practices and a wider platform for exchanging experiences and knowledge among NGOs to promote successful community projects and avoid failures.

KEY STRENGTHS

- Village Fund is an important tool to involve residents in decision making on spending municipal funds.
- Village Meetings to discuss important issues with village officials.
- Municipal Council Sessions as a relatively accessible way to stay informed.
- Genuine cooperation between municipalities and NGOs, allowing NGOs to have a greater impact on the community.
- Social capital from, for example, new enthusiastic residents who want to improve their community.
- Grassroots actions that mobilise residents, officials, and NGOs in challenging times, such as after the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

KEY NEEDS

- Good leaders who see residents and NGOs as a support and promote dialogue and cooperation.
- Transparent communication at all levels, with easy access to clear information.
- Civic education to inform residents how to get involved in municipal affairs and how local government works.
- Increased resident involvement and greater sense of community unity.
- More support for NGOs for counselling, legal/financial assistance, training.
- Separation of local politics from national politics, to focus on local needs.



EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Youth Council of the Municipality

The Youth Council in Ustrzyki Dolne represents secondary school students and is a consultative body consisting of 15 councillors with three-year mandate. The council's objectives include promoting self-governance, supporting youth activities, and encouraging participation in decision-making. The council also represents young people's views and coordinates initiatives. This approach to involving young people in governance is becoming increasingly popular.

