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Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

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Authors	Carla Lostrangio (AEIDL), Merveille Ntabuhashe (AEIDL), Serafin Pazos Vidal (AEIDL), Jorieke Potters (Wageningen University), Brigit Zomer (Ecorys)
Work Package Leader	AEIDL
Project Coordinator	ECORYS

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Introduction

SHERPA Practice Abstracts (PA) aim at synthesising and communicating easy to access information to practitioners relevant to the project, such as rural organisations, Local Action Groups, researchers, policymakers, NGOs, etc.

In September 2021, the SHERPA project produced 20 PAs based on the experience and knowledge gathered in the first phase of running 21 [SHERPA Multi-Actor Platforms](#) (MAPs). The PAs were produced by the Facilitators and Monitors of the 20 SHERPA MAPs established at the beginning of the project. This first batch of PAs is accessible on a dedicated page on the [SHERPA website](#).

In September 2023, this second batch of 20 PAs was produced based on the experience and knowledge gathered during the second phase of running 41 SHERPA MAPs. The PAs were produced by the Facilitators and Monitors of the 20 SHERPA MAPs that were established during the second phase of SHERPA in addition to the 21 MAPs established in the first phase. The Facilitators and Monitors have outlined their learnings and recommendations on the process of setting up the MAPs, engaging actors and running activities in a science-society-policy interface.

The Practice Abstracts focus on the following topics:

- Why should researchers join a Multi-Actor Platform?
- The role of evidence-based science in the functioning of the Multi-Actor (2)
- The role of policy actors in a Multi-Actor Platform
- The role of society actors on a Multi-Actor Platform
- Involving civil society in the rural Science-Society-Policy interface
- Creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue (3)
- Influence of Multi-Actor Platform on policy design
- Creating a joint vision to influence policy-making
- Showing the added value of science-society-policy interfaces (2)
- Sustaining Science-Society-Policy interfaces (2)
- Identifying and sustaining the channels to influence policy and research (2)
- Social dimension in the (most) Southwestern Region of Europe
- More resilient agricultural landscape

Each Practice Abstract is individually laid out as a stand-alone document and published on the [SHERPA website](#). Subsequently, each document is communicated and disseminated through SHERPA channels, including social media, website, newsletter, and blog.

All Practice Abstracts developed by SHERPA will be available on the EIP-AGRI database and published on the SHERPA website in a dedicated section.

→ <https://rural-interfaces.eu/practice-abstracts/>



1. Why should researchers join a Multi-actor Platform?

Sustainability concerns have challenged the role of researchers and led them to increasingly go beyond their traditional role as researchers in a particular discipline to engage in experiments in Living Labs and Multi-Actor Platforms (MAP), such as [SHERPA MAPs](#). The SHERPA MAPs bring together different types of actors – from society, policy, and science – for co-learning and co-creating knowledge on specific issues, often seeking for innovative solutions (and, in the case of SHERPA, for developing policy recommendations).

In the last years, for instance, several scientific actors linked to rural-related research have been involved in the [MAP Tuscany \(Italy\)](#). Involving scientific actors into MAP discussions was not difficult: the MAP relied on networks already in place, which in turn revolved around rural development and food-related topics. As a result, it was possible to make synergies between the topics selected for SHERPA discussions and local interests and policy cycles, avoiding the multiplication of events and participation fatigue.

For instance, sustainable value chains – how to foster, promote and assess them and their performance – have both been investigated by researchers active in the local Tuscany context (and beyond) and encouraged by policy and societal actors.

One major public initiative regarding the creation of a regional Centre for Training and Competences on traditional local products (discover more in our [MAP Position Paper/ MAP Fiche](#)) has given ground for a participatory discussion, where researchers have been:

- Sharing their evidence-based knowledge (often);
- Facilitating the discussion in certain groups (sometimes); and
- Learning (often) directly from practitioners, whether they are farmers, processors, retailers, caterers, or local administrators, what their difficulties and needs were, if these products were to make a real contribution to sustainable territorial development and in particular to the revitalisation of rural areas.

The search for an explicit link with policy cycles and scientific expertise at the local level can potentially help make the engagement last beyond the MAP cycle and make the MAP contribution more significant.

<p>MAP Name MAP Tuscany</p>
<p>Location Tuscany, Italy</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Sabrina Arcuri • Monitor: Sabrina Tomasi
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 5 • Policy: 7
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-tuscany/</p>



2. The role of evidence-based science in the functioning of the Multi-Actor Platform (1)

Evidence-based science have been important for the work in [SHERPA MAP Norrbotten](#), Sweden. The SHERPA Discussion paper was sent out before meetings and presented in Swedish by the Facilitator and Monitor at the beginning of meetings and workshops. Produced by SHERPA partners and based on scientific evidence, this document worked as a background for the follow-up discussions. In addition to the Discussion paper, material produced or collected by the MAP members was also utilised. The Discussion paper was foremost important to find a common ground in the discussions and to start the conversation.

In addition, the MAP members from the research sector presented their work and gave suggestions on articles and other studies. Simultaneously, members from regional and national authorities provided the MAP members with statistics and information from reports and studies.

It is worth noting that the Norrbotten region differs from several other European regions represented in SHERPA because of its location in the north, its large size and sparsely populated areas. Therefore, some aspects highlighted in the Discussion paper did not apply to Norrbotten, whereas some important issues that are important for the MAP members were not mentioned in the Discussion paper. However, the Discussion paper provided an opportunity to compare Norrbotten to other European regions and standards, hence also contributing to a deeper understanding of the local circumstances. Most participants in MAP Norrbotten are active on the local or regional level and the MAP members appreciated the inclusion of the national and European perspectives.

In the instance of the [SHERPA project](#), where several actors with different backgrounds and thematic focuses come together, evidence-based science is central to establishing common ground and a benchmark from where the discussion starts. This becomes even more important given the limited time and number of meetings involved in this process.

<p>MAP Name MAP Norrbotten</p>
<p>Location Norrbotten, Sweden</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Linnea Löfving • Monitor: Leneisja Jungsborg
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 3 • Policy: 4
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/sweden-norrbotten/</p>



3. The role of evidence-based science in the functioning of the Multi-Actor Platform (2)

Addressing the accelerated environmental change caused by climate change requires better communication between scientists, managers, decision-makers, media and the public to find the most effective solutions to environmental issues as soon as possible. For farmers, responses to environmental and climate challenges often involve costs and changes in land use practices. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that policy proposes and promotes solutions that are applicable and effective based on scientific evidence.

The setting up and implementation of Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) has confirmed this expectation, speeding up and improving communication between policy, science and society actors.

The [SHERPA Discussion Paper](#) provided local MAP members with short and systematic summaries of relevant international and European research scientific results, providing an opportunity to learn more about scientific evidence in the specific topic. Such summaries of the state of the art saved considerable time, accelerated the flow of information and enabled MAP members to focus on local specificities.

In addition to the focus on research, there has been a progressive increase in attention on developments and innovations to improve management practices. The involvement of society can also play a catalytic role in this process, as civil society can contribute to the identification of good practices developed by farmers. Supporting these local innovations with scientific evidence can accelerate the identification of best practices that can be easily and quickly applied in practice.

The MAPs could also be effective in identifying knowledge gaps that need to be demonstrated by scientists and researchers. In this sense, the existence of MAPs enables scientific actors to focus on the production of high-quality knowledge that can be applied to solve practical problems as they arise.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Land-use planning for climate neutrality</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Hungary</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Katalin Mozsgai • Monitor: Csaba Bálint
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 3 • Science: 4 • Policy: 2
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/hungary-land-use-planning-for-climate-neutrality/</p>



4. The role of policy actors in a Multi-Actor Platform

Engagement in a Multi-Actor-Platform (MAP) contributes to creating a policy setting that does justice to the rural reality and creates a flourishing rural life. The experiences of the [Network of Large Rural Municipalities \(P10\)](#) in the Netherlands shed light on the different forms MAPs can take to shape policy processes.

It is worth noticing that for policy actors, engaging in a Science-Society-Policy interface means contributing to policy making in the widest sense of the word. Policy actors do not expect the MAP dialogue to create progress in any specific policy arena. The work of the policy maker consists of communicating in multiple arenas, platforms, tables and meeting rooms, streets and kitchen tables. This is the basis for policy preparation, formulation and implementation. In this context what the MAP does provide is a non-politicised space for dialogue and for exchange. This is valuable in itself. The process in the [SHERPA MAP P10](#) predominantly created a space to exchange with other regions and the opportunity to join forces with other countries.

The linkages to other levels of policy making are also valuable and being part of an international project gives some importance to rural areas. It provides opportunities to make yourself heard and increases the chance to be listened to. The true policy actor as public actor that is in it for the public good. Their contribution is providing insight in the nuanced policy dialogue and the status of the ongoing policy process, but most importantly listening how the dialogue unfolds. This allows them to share experiences and learn from other areas.

Especially in these polarised times, it is important to create non-politicised spaces for dialogue as they can play an important role in moving forward. European projects and policy labs can be used as vehicles for creating non-politicised spaces. For sustaining these spaces, it would be important to also develop the [Rural Pact](#) as a non-politicised space for rural dialogue. It is important to avoid being hijacked by any specific lobby. Public actors should play an unbiased role in safeguarding this space.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>Climate-proof Ruralities</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>The Netherlands</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Winny Scheeringa • Monitor: Jorieke Potters
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: ~ 5 • Science: ~ 3 • Policy: ~ 20
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/netherlands-climate-proof-ruralities/</p>



5. The role of society actors in a Multi-Actor Platform

The benefits for society actors who participate in a multi-actor dialogue include exchanging experiences, networking with other actors and voicing their perspective and being heard.

In the [SHERPA MAP Southeast Drenthe](#) participants were personally invited to join the dialogue through well-known contacts. Some participants joined out of curiosity or a desire to share their experiences and vision, while others joined due to their specific interest. The citizens who took part in the MAP dialogue in Southeast Drenthe were all actively involved in citizen initiatives for the natural environment. For them, participation had the potential to contribute to the improvement of their initiative or their living conditions. The dialogue provided a platform for discussing and interacting with other societal actors, as well as with actors from policy and research.

The benefit and the role of society actor were nicely aligned in this MAP. Society actors shared a diverse range of experiences related to their local initiatives for managing natural areas, including both their successes and the challenges they encountered. One notable challenge was establishing new relationships and finding effective ways of collaborating with the municipal services, which have the overall responsibility for managing the natural resources in the environment.

The key lesson for engaging society actors in policy processes is to dedicate time and effort to establish strong connections between the dialogue topic and the everyday reality of the society actors. It is meaningful to elucidate to citizens and other actors how policy at various levels influence the local context and the issues at hand. This deserves due attention before and during the multi-actor dialogue.

It is important to recognise that citizen involvement in nature and land use planning should not be solely viewed as nature management. Instead, it should be valued as a comprehensive social intervention that makes significant contributions to social cohesion and broad prosperity.

MAP Name MAP Southeast Drenthe
Location Southeast Drenthe, the Netherlands
MAP contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Hiska Ubels – Hanze Hogeschool • Monitor: Jorieke Potters - WR
MAP Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 2 • Policy: 4
More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/netherlands-south-east-drenthe/



6. Involving civil society in a rural Science-Society-Policy interface

The [SHERPA MAP Montagna Toscana](#), launched in 2022, focuses on the chestnut flour value chain and corresponds to the MAP from the Northern Apennines of the [HORIZON 2020 MOVING](#) project. The area is characterised by several fragilities in terms of land abandonment, climate change, lack of essential services and infrastructure for inhabitants.

The activities carried out in the context of the [MOVING](#) and [SHERPA](#) projects pointed out the willingness of local stakeholders to preserve and re-activate the chestnut flour value chain. At the moment, this value chain is at risk of disappearance, and it cannot represent a full-time occupation for the farmers involved. Nevertheless, a strong socio-cultural value is associated with the chestnut flour value chain, which represents a way to strengthen social ties and establish a collaborative environment among farmers, based on trust (e.g.: reciprocal help), to pursue environmental and biodiversity preservation, to preserve and enliven intangible cultural heritage, to recovery and re-use abandoned assets.

In this context, the participation in SHERPA project enabled civil society representatives to widen their network by getting in direct contact with researchers and regional-level policy makers. Moreover, the project's appointments established a continuative dialogue among local stakeholders, which could reflect on the future of the mountain area and of the value chain. Workshops and meetings were the occasion to share visions and positions about potential innovations and sustainable practices that can be implemented at the local level, also in collaboration with the university, through project planning and co-creation. An example could be increasing chestnut producers' market power through their participation in complementary and alternative supply chain models, including ecosystem services, honey, tourism, etc.

Such elements have been condensed and presented in the [MAP Position Paper](#). This Position Paper provides several recommendations to the MAP actors, especially in terms of access to funding; long-term planning and support to local entrepreneurs; enhancing opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange and collaborative learning; research opportunities and data collection; mapping, activating, and managing local resources.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Montagna Toscana</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Alta Versilia (Tuscany, Italy)</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Sabrina Tomasi • Monitor: Sabrina Arcuri
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 7 • Science: 4+2 innovation brokers • Policy: 5
<p>More info: www.rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-montagna-toscana/</p>



7. Creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue (1)

Creating meaningful engagement and dialogue has been one of the main objectives of the [SHERPA MAP Iași](#) in Romania.

The diverse composition of MAP Iași members contributed to the development of a responsible community for the acquisition and consumption of agrifood products and supporting the connection between small local producers and final consumers. This diversity enabled a constructive dialogue between local public authorities, producers, researchers and civil society representatives. In particular, members of this MAP included actors already involved in developing a responsible community regarding the acquisition and consumption of agrifood products and supporting the connection between small local producers and final consumers.

The identification of common problems, finding the solutions and implementing them, contributed to the development of a long-term dialogue between stakeholders involved in the MAP Iași that, based on the results, will most likely continue overtime and evolve in new forms of collaboration.

The public events organised with the participation of actors involved in MAP Iași highlighted some recommendations regarding the creation of an active involvement and support for a constructive dialogue:

- Bringing together the quadruple helix representatives (authorities, business environment, research and NGOs);
- Identifying common problems and solutions for the development of sustainable short supply chains;
- Enhancing the interests of relevant actors involved in short supply chains in order to achieve a long-term cohesion between participants;
- Involving members of MAP Iași as stakeholders in other projects with local, national or European funding in order to extend the engagement and constructive dialogue process.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Iași</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Iași county, Romania</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Lucian Tanasă • Monitor: Codrin Dinu Vasiliu, Ioan Sebastian Brumă, Mihai Alexandru Chitea
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 7 • Science: 4 • Policy: 3
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/romania-iasi/</p>



8. Creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue (2)

The participative processes undertaken in the [SHERPA MAP Nienburg](#) (Germany) provided opportunities to engage a set of local actors across policy, science and society in sharing information and views on sustainable and resilient value chains.

The results emphasise the importance of networking and capacity building activities to strengthen the shared appreciation, trust and cooperation between actors as a basis for developing concrete practical solutions to a jointly identified key need of the rural area.

The main lessons and key uptakes on facilitating engagement of a diverse set of local actors are:

- To establish trust in a Multi-Actor Platforms takes time. In particular, developing a practical solution to a jointly identified key need of the rural area might require time that goes beyond a single project cycle;
- To design platforms in a structured way, aiming to create and strengthen long-term relationships;
- To allow flexibility in composition of participants at workshops and to enable a plurality of perspectives, providing an open space for sharing practical experiences and lessons learnt in developing or engaging in more sustainable value chains;
- To account for sufficient time on reflecting on local needs and potentials;
- To involve a trusted local actor as intermediary facilitates identification and recruitment of different actors;
- To utilise a mix of methods of engagement adapting to the preferences, motivation, connectedness and remote access of local actors;
- To integrate evidence from examples of past or current local value chain initiatives, as well as to ensure local embeddedness of the results act as levers to highlight the relevance for a particular context.

MAP Name MAP Nienburg
Location Nienburg, Germany
MAP contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerald Schwarz
MAP Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 3 • Policy: 3
More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/germany-nienburg/



9. Creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue (3)

Creating inclusive and meaningful dialogue was the key to success for the [Estonian MAP](#) in the SHERPA project. This MAP achieved the trust and cooperation of MAP members quite quickly and was able to investigate the selected topics thoroughly.

As both the facilitator and the monitor had previous work experience in the Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs - therefore a comprehensive overview of the field - and some former contact with people involved, it was easier to gain members' trust and encourage dialogue.

The facilitator had an active role in the MAP discussions. In her role of facilitating the discussions, she served quite like the journalist asking for comments for strong or controversial opinions and promoting healthy debate. This provided objective and reliable information, encouraged different perspectives, and offered new insights.

It was crucial to keep the MAP members up to date with all the information – what has happened meanwhile (meeting memos, news from SHERPA), what is our end goal, and why do we need to do this. At the beginning of each meeting, it was also necessary to create a clear working plan to ensure MAP members would know what is expected from them. In addition, it was important to praise them after every successful meeting and emphasize the value of their input.

The best way to have inclusive and meaningful discussions were through physical meetings. Indeed, online meetings enabled MAP members to deal with different tasks at the same time and their attention span was limited. During physical meetings, the discussions continued also at the lunch table - which contributed to an inclusive and meaningful dialogue as the MAP members felt comfortable while talking to each other.

In conclusion, the key to creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue is via face-to-face meetings, skilful discussion management, and timely and comprehensive communication.

<p>MAP Name MAP Estonia</p>
<p>Location Estonia</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Anne-Liisi Mändmets • Monitor: Kertu Kärk
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 4 • Policy: 5
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/estonia/</p>



10. Sustainably connecting local interest with EU policies

Ensuring meaningful dialogue between various governance levels involved is fundamental to the proper functioning of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MAPs). This is particularly relevant for rural actors (including those in the Wallonia region), that often remain detached from EU political context, possibly missing out on opportunities and latest developments. On the other hand, local interests often remain overlooked by EU-level decision makers.

The unique design of SHERPA, with local MAPs, an EU-level MAP and a central team (the SHERPA “think tank”) allows a constant dialogue between policy actors at EU and local level.

Moreover, for the [Wallonia MAP](#), the platform was facilitated by Ecorys, an EU-focused consultancy company, ensuring a strong link with the EU policy arena, whereas the involvement of the local network *Ruralité, Environnement, Développement* (R.E.D) helped to “root” it in the Belgian reality.

The link with EU policy has been an important tool to stimulate MAP members to get involved in SHERPA activities. This has been achieved by showcasing the concrete contributions of SHERPA to EU rural policy throughout the different MAP activities. As the Wallonia MAP was established in the second phase of SHERPA, it was possible to show how the recommendations formulated by the MAPs in previous cycles have been discussed in the [EU MAP](#), existing out of high-level stakeholders from EU institutions, and integrated in the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) staff working document. This allowed MAP members to acknowledge the added value of SHERPA activities as a flywheel to make their voices heard and engage in EU-level debates.

The daily activities and management of the MAP also provided occasions to keep the members updated on latest EU policy development, such as new developments related to the LTVRA, the CAP, etc. This was achieved via regular email updates, containing links to SHERPA deliverables of relevance for MAP members, information about upcoming events, etc. Moreover, at the beginning of each meeting, a short recap on the ongoing EU level activities was foreseen.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Wallonia</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Wallonia, Belgium</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Elodie Salle • Monitor: Olivier Chartier
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 6 • Science: 6 • Policy: 3
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/belgium-wallonia/</p>



11. Influence of Multi-Actor Platforms on policy design

In the context of the design and implementation of the 2023-2027 LEADER program, the work of the [SHERPA MAP South Region](#) in France has contributed to fuelling the debate on the future of rural areas in the South region by 2040. In particular, the MAP Position Papers have contributed to bringing forward specific proposals on rural governance of ecological transition and responses to climate change under the LEADER program.

Thus, a special report adopted by the Region in December 2020 entitled "[Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, a Region focused on rurality](#)" incorporated the main analyses and proposals released by the SHERPA MAP.

The [SHERPA Discussion Paper on climate change](#) released in 2021 also contributed to the reflections carried out within the framework of the revision of the regional spatial planning strategy (SRADDET), in particular during a workshop entitled "[What regional rural model in the light of climate change and land sobriety?](#)" organised by the regional council with regional counsellors in the fall 2022. Finally, thanks to the various SHERPA MAP Positions Papers, the MAP facilitator attended a working group on socio-economic and demographic changes at regional level, under the coordination of the regional office of public statistics (INSEE). Subsequently, a [briefing note](#) on rurality in South Region was issued.

Prior to these results, an intense preparatory work by the facilitation team enabled to mobilize, gather and aggregate existing data and knowledge on rural areas at regional level on ruralities (INSEE, GREC-SUD, Chamber of Agriculture, Southern Region, Universities, etc.). This preparatory work has made it possible to share a common vision and understanding of the current context of rural areas in the South region and to identify major challenges, as well as the main threats and opportunities by 2040.

The constant support of the animation unit of the Regional Rural Network was key for facilitating exchanges between rural actors and ensuring the capitalization, promotion and dissemination of the work of the MAP. This has been essential both to keep the involvement of key actors on rurality issues and to disseminate the results of the MAP.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur, France</p>
<p>Contacts MAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Jean-Pierre Rolland • Monitor: Samuel Féret
<p>MAP members 2020-2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society: 11 • Science: 7 • Policy: 16
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/france-paca-sud/</p>

12. Creating a joint vision to influence policy making

The meetings of the [SHERPA MAP in Central Greece](#) were organised physically and virtually. Increased interest was showcased from stakeholders and many opinions were brought to discussion regarding regional and national policies. During these meetings, the MAP members stressed the need of the region to move towards sustainable value chains. The preparatory work helped the smooth implementation of the meetings, providing insights regarding the overall results of the Central Greece MAP.

The main points that have been raised in the MAP discussions with respect to the needs of stakeholders were: i) the enhancement of trade for agri-food products at local level, ii) the adoption of innovative, technology-supported methods and solutions, iii) and the empowerment of the role of cooperatives.

Sustainable value chains could bring together various stakeholders sharing a common vision based on commonly accepted ethical, social and environmental priorities. As a final point, the need to bridge the gap between producers and modern digital tools was mentioned.

The recommendations of MAP members were highlighted. First of all, members emphasised the policy measures should help to promote the consumption of locally produced agri-food products. As it was mentioned, the establishment of collaboration schemes between primary production and consumption and retail by taking measures for the effective and efficient information of consumers would be important. According to the MAP's vision, the education and training of entities involved in the agri-food value chain would play a major role. The MAP members commended that the minimisation of bureaucracy and relief from heavy taxation for the local actors would be helpful for establishing entrepreneurial activity within the local value chains. As a final recommendation from the members of the MAP, incentives should be given to producers for adopting more environmentally friendly practices moving towards the establishment and sustainability of short value chains.

<p>MAP Name MAP Central Greece</p>
<p>Location Central Greece</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Olga Kriezi • Monitor: Nicoleta Darra
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 3 • Science: 2 • Policy: 4
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/greece-central/</p>



13. Showing the added value of Science-Society-Policy interfaces (1)

The [SHERPA MAP Zachodniopomorskie](#) operates at the regional level and covers the area of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship in Poland. This region is diverse in terms of its level of socio-economic development, and most of it is typically devoted to agricultural production.

The MAP consists of members representing different groups of the local community: people with different educational backgrounds, fulfilling different functions in institutions and organisations, living and/or operating in functionally different rural areas of the region. In addition, the MAP was joined by a group of scientists conducting research and analysis related to rural issues in the Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship.

The diversity of SHERPA MAP members provides the opportunities to consider the experience, perspectives and knowledge of representatives of different backgrounds. This provides scientific knowledge and "tacit" knowledge, i.e., often personal knowledge based on experience.

The chance to speak freely, unhindered, on a given topic meant that it was easier to come to final conclusions together. The idea was to fully involve all meeting participants as co-authors of recommendations and guidelines. In their own words, *"it was an interesting experience for them"*, while at the same time wondering *"how to create such forums for the exchange of ideas and discussions in their small communities, how to create a community of people, thinking together, identifying with the place"*.

The MAP activities resulted in very practical and valuable knowledge pointing out recommendations for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). An added value was the active participation of people from different age groups and different areas to ensure their needs and priorities could be considered. These people also felt that they were listened to. From the researchers' point of view, the MAP meetings provided an opportunity to look at rural problems in a broader perspective, not only that a problem exists, but also what its important consequences are for the community and how it can be solved considering the needs of the local community.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Zachodniopomorskie</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship, Poland</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Agnieszka Kurdyś-Kujawska • Monitor: Barbara Wieliczko
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 12 • Science: 7 • Policy: 1
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/poland-zachodniopomorskie/</p>

14. Showing the added value of Science-Society-Policy interfaces (2)

In the [SHERPA MAP Bulgaria](#), we have found that the creation of MAP is a good instrument to set up social dialogue. In fact, social dialogue needs a champion to facilitate and drive the communication, synthesize the results based on the opinion and visions of MAP members. Dialogue also presumes having a purpose and a common issue that may get those members together. In this MAP, the Science-Society-Policy architecture helped to connect stakeholders from the field of science, public sector and the social communities (private sector and non-governmental entities). These stakeholders participated to look for ideas and proposals that could improve the situation in rural areas.

The uniqueness of this approach is that science is involved, and it is thought as an unbiased party, which may do much in facilitating and supporting in finding and reaching to some common positions and better understanding of the situation on the explored issues and topics. Popularizing the practices of MAP could be a strong opportunity to enhance future cooperation and develop a system of work between different stakeholders, including scientific actors in the role of moderation and facilitation.

While creating the MAP Bulgaria on social infrastructure, we found that the civil society has a special place in helping rural areas. Establishing MAPs that foster more dialogue on policy change to support vulnerable groups can help facilitate the connection between society and policy. The chance to speak in a group format and have an in-depth conversation on a given topic allowed more fruitful and constructive dialogue which would benefit all stakeholders. From the researchers' point of view, the MAP meetings provided an opportunity to look at rural problems in a broader perspective, not only with data and cabinet research, but also with shareholders sharing the impact and consequences for the community and possible practical solutions, considering the needs of the local communities.

The MAP activities resulted in very practical and valuable knowledge describing recommendations for the creation of a rural policy that are tailor-made for our problems. The added value was the active participation of people from different age groups, and different areas so that their needs and priorities could be taken into account, and they felt that they were listened to and included in the dialogue.

The issue of maintaining sustainability of the three parties and the relationship between science, society and policy is very crucial and underlying preposition to hopefully achieve a better involvement, transparency and decision-making. In the experience so far, the sustainability of this MAP is built on:

- Structural approach, where this multi-actor approach is recognized, recommended and provisioned;
- The role of each party and the representativeness of the process is clearly defined and the science is dedicated to facilitating the process, provide the dialogue and communication with more knowledge and synthesize the results;
- The voice, opinion and position of each party is respected and reflected in the conclusion and it is delivered to the policy-makers, whereas in the MAP dialogue the policy part is represented by public technocrats.

<p>MAP name MAP Sofia</p>
<p>Location Sofia, Bulgaria</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Mihaela Mihailova • Monitor: Bozhidar Ivanov
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 5 • Science: 4 • Policy: 2
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/bulgaria-sofia/</p>



15. Sustaining Science-Society-Policy interfaces (1)

In the territory of the SHERPA [MAP Bieszczady \(Poland\)](#), there are examples of platforms that bring together stakeholders from science, local government and the local community. However - it is worth noting - these are specialised groups, not necessarily known to the general public. It is worth popularising on a larger scale these types of platforms, as their operation can bring benefits.

One example is the [Scientific Council of the Bieszczady National Park](#). The Scientific Councils of the national parks in Poland operate under a regulation of the Minister of the Environment. Their role is to advise and support the park authorities. They have five-year terms of office. In the case of this type of interface, sustenance is provided systemically - through legislation.

Another example of such an interface is the [Podkarpackie Federation of Civic Organizations "PARASOL"](#), which aims to provide comprehensive assistance to Podkarpackie organizations that request it. With the beginning of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the Federation established the PARASOL Group, which consisted of scientists, social activists, officials, journalists, and worked together to help refugees. Maintaining this interface will depend on external funding, as PARASOL was funded by the National Freedom Institute - Centre for Civil Society Development within the framework of the Government Program NEW FIO Civic Initiatives Fund for 2018-2030.

Third example are the cooperation established in the framework of specific projects. One such example is the cooperation of the Municipality of Olszanica (where the deputy mayor is a Doctor of Political Science), with the Local Action Group, residents and entrepreneurs. With joint efforts was established a social economy enterprise which was set up as a part of a revitalisation programme entitled "[Bieszczad-ski](#) - a revitalisation flywheel for the development of the Olszanica Gmina". The value of the project was PLN 18,751,024.46, including EU funding of PLN 9,946,447.99 from the European Regional Development Fund. From a "gmina" (i.e. municipality) that offered no prospects for young people, it has become a tourist destination with potential for investment. The opening of a social economy enterprise in the form of the Wańkowa Ski Resort has been a positive stimulus, providing dozens of jobs, but also developing the entrepreneurial spirit of local residents and giving young people a reason to stay in their hometowns. The example of Olszanica shows that once established, cooperation between different players results in further cooperative projects.

These diverse examples illustrate how science-society-policy interface can build on the experiences in SHERPA and continue to support rural development.

MAP name
MAP Bieszczady
Location
Leski and Bieszczadzki powiats, Podkarpackie voivodeship, Poland
MAP contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Katarzyna Gizińska • Monitor: Barbara Wieliczko
MAP Membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 10 • Science: 2 • Policy: 6
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/poland-bieszczady</p>



16. Sustaining Science-Society-Policy interfaces (2)

In the region of Peloponnese (Greece), members of the [SHERPA MAP Peloponnese](#) discussed about the strengths and needs of their territory through physical and virtual meetings. Their aim was to clarify the contribution of science and society to sustainable value chains.

The MAP members agreed that a more strategic approach to the food production process and the incorporation of sustainable practices would be key. A new generation of farmers could play a major role towards the establishment of sustainable value chains, as they are more eager to engage with and adopt sustainable practices. Their knowledge of digital technologies is a critical enabler of the shift towards sustainable practices. The importance of primary sector was highlighted, and farmers stressed the need to actively involving local cooperatives. Strengthening their role could enable the establishment of a common rule set for their operation. Focus should be given not only on individual actions, but also on collaborations between stakeholders.

The participants noticed that measures and policies should be taken both at local and national level. They mentioned that the European Union has already started considering policies that contribute to these issues. Additionally, EU-funded R&D programs could play a crucial role in furthering the adoption of sustainable value chains by the Member States, proposing interventions where needed. EU rules advancing green transition and helping towards taking steps promoting transparency are important considerations for consumers, investors, and producers.

From their point of view, emphasis could be given to letting citizens know the importance of cooperatives and their potential contribution towards the transition to sustainable agri-food value chains.

MAP Name MAP Peloponnese
Location Peloponnese, Greece
MAP contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Nicoleta Darra • Monitor: Stathis Stathopoulos
MAP Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 4 • Science: 1
More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/greece-peloponnese/



17. Identifying and sustaining the channels to influence policy and research (1)

The issue of sustainable and resilient value chains, that was the topic discussed by the [SHERPA MAP Hungarian Rural Prosperity](#) in the 2022, requires a highly complex approach. The backbone of this MAP was the Science-Society-Policy interface. These actors shared their knowledge and experience and reflected on their demands and self-imposed tasks in formulating policy and research proposals.

The involvement of policy actors included officials from sectoral ministries and agricultural advocacy bodies, experts who are themselves actively involved in agricultural policy planning, implementation, and evaluation, and in the operation of information and advisory systems. The academic sector was represented by universities and research institutes with a background in agriculture, agro-economics and rural development.

The activities of this MAP opened new perspectives for both policy and research. First of all, the MAP drew attention to the importance of rural and agri-food value chain issues. Secondly, it created a chance for dialogue between actors with different backgrounds and interests. And thirdly, it provided an opportunity for individual and collective policy and research proposals to be made, on a reciprocal basis. This means that policy actors in the MAP could point out their needs in terms of knowledge and information that science should address for better programme design and implementation. At the same time, researcher members could share their findings and experiences with policy makers and translate them into concrete policy recommendations. Of course, the society subset was equally empowered and involved in this joint reflection and proposal process.

The experience of the MAP showed that a sincere dialogue can develop between the actors of the different groups, identifying and focusing on common objectives, accepting and discussing differences of opinion and bringing together many points of view. The Position Paper of this MAP "[Towards sustainable and resilient value chains](#)" combines the results of AKI's research, the views of MAP members and their policy and research proposals. This Position Paper is part of the knowledge base that can shape future policy and research. By attending SHERPA conferences, MAP members (especially policy actors) took advantage of the opportunity to network internationally.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>MAP Rural Prosperity</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Hungary</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Csaba Bálint • Monitor: Katalin Mozsgai
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 4 • Science: 4 • Policy: 4
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/hungary-rural-prosperity/</p>

18. Identifying and sustaining the channels to influence policy and research (2)

The [SHERPA MAP Arges](#) was set-up at the level of Arges county (Romania) as a local support group for sustainable and resilient rural development.

To achieve this, the MAP Arges advocated the horizontal and vertical integration level of local actors in the agri-food supply chain.

The meetings organized with the MAP members highlighted the importance of increasing the connections between research, policy and production/farmers as an essential condition for solving agricultural producers' specific problems, but also for validating the research' results.

From their perspective, constructive dialogue with representatives of different policy, research and agricultural organisations, active cooperation with other SHERPA MAPs in Romania, and open debates regarding the MAP's Position Paper have the potential to influence policy.

Based on several discussions, MAP Arges members outlined the following recommendations to support the main channels that can influence policy and research:

- Extend the MAP network at local and regional platform level through a sustained involvement of Local Action Groups, that can empower people to actively participate in the local governance process, including the elaboration of studies that can support a commune local strategy;
- Include, in the local governance process, universities, research centres and institutes from the area;
- Promote constant and active dialogue between representatives of different institutions participating in the local governance process;
- Identify local, national and European funding scheme to support the activities of MAPs, and (hence sustain their influence on policy and research).

MAP Name MAP Arges
Location Arges county, Romania
MAP contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Cristian Popescu • Monitor : Mihai Alexandru Chitea, Monica Mihaela Tudor, Lorena Florentina Chitea
MAP Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 8 • Science: 7 • Policy: 5
More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/romania-arges/



19. Social dimension in the (most) Southwestern Region of Europe

The territory of [SHERPA MAP Southwest Alentejo](#), Portugal, has for many years attracted many foreign citizens of various nationalities. The extension of land near the coast, the microclimate, and the existing irrigation system, have favoured the establishment of agricultural companies. These companies have found in this territory the ideal requirements to produce quality and high added value, making agriculture, particularly horticulture and small fruit production, one of the main economic activities of the municipality. Southwest Alentejo also attracts migrant labour considering the local workforce is not appropriate to meet the needs of the companies based in the municipality, due to the amount of labour required and the demanding nature of the work.

Since the 1980s, this territory has been welcoming foreign citizens. In this decade, it was mainly sought after by citizens from Northern Europe, who settled there. The good reception by the local population, the climate and the nature were the main factors for this community to settle, seeking a quality of life that they did not have in their countries of origin.

Unlike most rural areas in Portugal, which have seen a huge loss of population, in Odemira there has been a stabilization of the resident population, mainly due to the flow of migrant citizens who arrive in the territory, essentially through economic migration, as labour for the large agricultural companies dedicated, essentially, to the production of vegetables and red fruits, which distinguish the Odemira municipality as an exporting production pole to Europe. However, as this migration is concentrated in some areas of the territory, there is a high asymmetry within the municipality itself.

The agricultural compatibility of the companies implemented in the Mira Irrigation Perimeter and, simultaneously, in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park poses challenges at environmental, housing and social levels. This framework makes the Southwest Alentejo region an excellent territory to analyse issues related to the social dimension of rural areas and thus contribute to influence future European policies.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>Southwest Alentejo</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Odemira, Portugal</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Pedro Santos • Monitor: Pompeu Dias
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 8 • Science: 7 • Policy: 8
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/portugal-southwest-alentejo/</p>

20. More resilient agricultural landscape

In the [SHERPA MAP Climate-Friendly Village](#) (Czechia), participants discussed the preparation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan 2021+ and its opportunity to influence the impacts of climate change. Municipalities, and more precisely the LAGs, are willing to participate in these activities through the CLLD programme.

There are still concerns about the willingness and confidence to create a meaningful connection among policy, scientific knowledge and practice in order to deliver effective activities. Based on the experience of this MAP, it was agreed that:

- The scope and impact of CAP does not sufficiently mitigate the impact of climate change. Climate change is becoming more and more pronounced, and it is not possible to increase carbon storage, nor to reduce the loss and degradation of soils, biodiversity and increase water retention by the landscape.
- Land consolidation is a long-term tool that can introduce a rich mosaic of structures into the agricultural landscape and help to improve the water regime of the landscape, increase the number of landscape elements and thus limit the adverse degradation effects, especially water and wind erosion of the soil. The problem is that some municipalities still refuse it. There is a need for education and rejection of the influence of developers who promote personal profits at the expense of residents.
- Agroforestry systems represent a high potential for the diversification of landscape structures, which are more resistant to climate change and bring significant ecosystem services to the landscape - water, soil and biodiversity. Agroforestry systems are one of the ways to realise the sustainability of our farming in the countryside. The lack of greenery in the landscape and the loss of biodiversity, which is often irreversible, are obvious.

Unfortunately, political decisions take more time than physical phenomena such as climate change. There is a need to increase the area representation of agroforestry systems as an adaptation to climate change to at least 25% of the share of agricultural areas. If MAPs dealing with the goal "More resilient rural areas that foster well-being: focus on climate change and land use" are to continue even after the end of the SHERPA project, we suggest agroforest systems as an important topic.

<p>MAP Name</p> <p>Climate-friendly village</p>
<p>Location</p> <p>Czechia</p>
<p>MAP contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator: Vít Hrdoušek • Monitor: Marek Hartych
<p>MAP Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society: 10 • Science: 5 • Policy: 6
<p>More info: https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/czechia-climate-friendly-village/</p>





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