

SHERPA

Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

# Showing the added value of Science- Society-Policy interfaces in Bulgaria



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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.

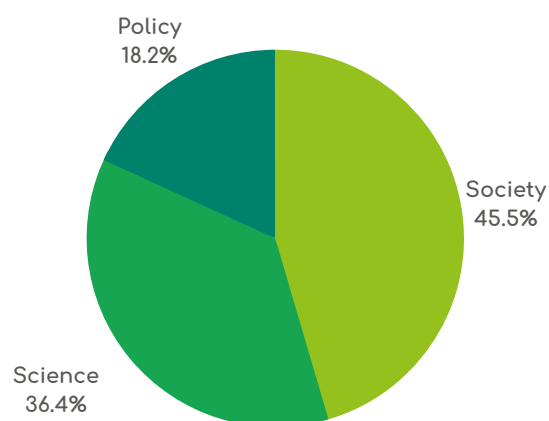
The uniqueness of this approach is that science involved, and it is thought as an unbiased party, which may do much in facilitating and supporting in finding and reaching to some common positions and better understanding of the situation on the explored issues and topics. Popularizing the practices of 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.

<b>MAP Sofia</b>
<p><b>Location</b> Sofia, Bulgaria</p>
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<p><b>More info</b> <a href="#">SHERPA Regional Multi-Actor Platform   Sofia - SHERPA (rural-interfaces.eu)</a></p>



**MAP membership:**



The MAP activities resulted in very practical and valuable knowledge describing recommendations for the creation of a rural policy that is 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 the sustainability of the three parties and the relationship between science, society and policy is very crucial and underlying preposition to hopefully achieve 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, providing the dialogue and communication with more knowledge and synthesising 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.



## ABOUT THE MAP

The MAP Sofia, in Bulgaria, operates at the regional level and has the aim to understand the problems of rural areas at this level and create an environment where a discussion from all sides can be productive and in a manner that helps social dialogue. The MAP was established in 2022 and it is coordinated and maintained by the Institute of Agricultural Economics.

Since 2019, the Institute of Agricultural Economics also coordinates the MAP Bulgaria, which operates at the national level. All of the above helps create a working environment of young, socially oriented individuals who are looking for a change in policy and practices that will result in better rural areas. Both MAPs explored different topics on building new policies, adaptive capacity and transformation of rural communities.



## OBJECTIVES

The MAP Sofia has the following objectives:

- Recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of social infrastructures in rural regions, evaluate the state of the policies that are implemented and solve problems that are current or rising via new policies;
- Identify the changes in the needs related to social infrastructure in order to make rural areas attractive for different generations and people in active and retired age and to draw attention to the model of social services, which may deliver a decent quality of life;

- Set up a new approach for rural development fostered by the best practices and innovative approaches of social development in rural areas;
- Prepare the necessary action plan that might be implemented further by public policies to create better conditions to foster a better social infrastructure and innovative thinking for greener, better and liveable rural areas.

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Overall, the MAP Sofia achieved to build up a network of regional stakeholders constituted of people from different groups. It managed to set up a kind of trust in each other and one more opportunity for their ideas and positions to be highlighted.

As part of this MAP's activities, two large MAP meetings were organised by the Institute of Agricultural Economics to foster a better dialogue and constructive partnership. During the meetings, we used "Six Thinking Hats" method and collected results, which we then verified in individual interviews.

The MAP Sofia also performed a study analysis on the topic prior to initiating the MAP dialogue (including literature review, analysis of statistics, figures and findings), which is a good basis for good information and awareness by other parties.

Through the entire process, the MAP coordinator and monitor facilitated the dialogue between parties, collecting the opinions of involved MAP members and objectively integrated different points of view in synthesizing the results. As a result, the MAP produced a [MAP Position Paper](#) on the social dimension of rural areas and a [MAP Fiche](#) on governance in rural areas.



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