

Project: PREMUM_EU

31 March 2025

Deliverable D6.2

Statement papers from the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs)

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PREMIUM₁

— EU BENEFITS OF MOBILITY

Deliverable 6.2

Summary of key findings from the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs)

Title: *Policy REcommendations to Maximise the beneficial Impact of Unexplored Mobilities in and beyond the European Union*

Project acronym: *PREMIUM_EU*

Grant Agreement number: *101094345*

Revision history:

Revision	Date	Contributor(s)	Description
1.0	31.05.2025	Timothy Heleniak	First draft

Document type: *Report*

Submission date: *31-05-2025*

Lead parties for deliverable: Nordregio

Dissemination level: PU - public

Co-funded by the Horizon Europe of the European Union Research and Innovation Programme



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Acknowledgement

PREMIUM_EU is a Horizon EUROPE project funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement no. 101094345

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1. Key findings

The following are some of the key findings from the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) in the Horizon project SHERPA (Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors).

- Providing services in rural areas is a perennial issue that was mentioned in many of the MAP position papers (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland: Bieszczady, Portugal: Southwest Alentejo).
- The second half of the SHERPA project coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. Several of the MAPs pointed out that the pandemic has encouraged remote work, but fast internet is a prerequisite for this to work effectively. This need was highlighted in several of the MAPs (Estonia, Lithuania).
- Rural areas were cited as a perfect place for remote work for employees of different professions using high speed broadband (Lithuania). Related to this is the potential for strong urban-rural relations. City residents have strong relation with rural areas as previous residents of rural areas (themselves, or their parents used to live there).
- Related to this, rural areas are place for residents of various professions as rurality should not just be seen as equal to farming (Lithuania, Poland: Zielone Sąsiedztwo. Spain: Galacia).
- One finding from the Estonian MAP is that it is cheapest for the society to first "keep" the inhabitants of rural areas in the countryside - this must be taken into account when designing rural and regional policy measures. It is not promising to focus on the age group of 15-25 years old, who are about to finish their education, when it comes to keeping residents in the country and attracting them to the country. Rather, the focus should be on the next age group, i.e. young families with children.
- Retaining young people - creating the conditions for them to stay, so that they want to return after secondary school/study (Poland: Bieszczady).
- Several MAPs cited the need to take seasonality into account - during 'tourist' periods, residents are overloaded with work and do not have much space for social activities (Poland: Bieszczady).
- Some cited the need to realize the potential of older people who are nearing the end of their working lives and have a high level of social capital (Poland: Bieszczady).
- Services or the lack thereof, were cited in several MAPs. Among the solutions were the creation of a mobile office (driving to the residents) - so that official matters can be dealt with in one's own neighbourhood without having to spend a whole day travelling several dozen kilometres to the office one-way (Poland: Bieszczady).
- Related, the lack of or deteriorating social infrastructure, such as health-related services, education and training, social care, security and other judicial infrastructure, public services, entertainment and leisure capacity, were cited as a reason behind depopulation of rural areas (Bulgaria).

- In Bulgaria, it was noted that social infrastructure, which during the communism period was in the core of the social development, was subject to severe decline in the post-communism period due mainly to lack of adequate funding and the large disparities between urban and rural areas developed. This situation could be applicable to other former communist states in Europe.
- Several MAPs cited national or sectoral commissions to examine and take steps to address demographic issues. In Spain, this included The Commissioner for the fight against depopulation and the Sectoral Conference for demographic challenge (Spain: Aragón).
- In Southwest Alentejo in Portugal, there has been an influx of immigrants from Bulgaria, Thailand, and Germany to work in the agricultural sector. This has stabilized population decline but steps are being taken to better socially include these newcomers.

2. Introduction

This deliverable is a summary of the statement papers from the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) in a previous Horizon project, SHERPA (Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors). The aim was to gather knowledge that contributed to the formulation of recommendations for future policies relevant to EU areas, by creating a science-society-policy interface: <https://rural-interfaces.eu>. In the SHERPA project, the 40 MAPs were grouped into four clusters. Most were selected from Cluster 1. Social dimensions in rural areas, as this was most relevant to the aim of Premium_EU. Some of the MAPs covered entire countries, especially small countries such as Estonia and Lithuania, where others focused on one region as was the case in larger countries.

The deliverable emanated from Task 6.2. Formulation of policy recommendations with Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs). During the years 2019-2023, Nordregio has been part of the Horizon 2020-project SHERPA. As part of this project, 40 Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) were established across Europe, bringing together policy makers, researchers and stakeholders from civil society and the business community. The MAPs served as open forums for the exchange of ideas, co-learning and co-creation of knowledge. Participants jointly developed recommendations for the formulation of modern rural policies at European and regional levels. In Premium_EU, the work of ten selected MAPs were extended by one year. Participants were invited to reflect on which policies have worked well and those which have not led to the desired results. Together, the ten MAPs also provided input and recommendations on which policies and approaches could be used to boost regional development in the future and reap the benefits of human mobility.

SHERPA was a four-year project (2019-2023) with 17 partners funded by the Horizon 2020 programme. The project aimed to gather knowledge that contributed to the formulation of recommendations for future policies relevant to EU rural areas, by creating a science-society-policy interface. It has been one of the key achievements of SHERPA to set up 40 so-called Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) throughout Europe. The MAPs acted as open forums for the exchange of ideas and to encourage co-learning and the co-creation of knowledge and policy recommendations. All 40 MAPs have brought together researchers, policy makers from regional and local levels of governance as well as civil society representatives and the business community. The MAPs were the core forum for two-way exchanges of ideas for co-learning and co-creation of knowledge at regional levels among a wide variety of stakeholders. The convenors of the MAPs were retained to the extent as they have experience moderating the policy development sessions and synthesising the findings. SHERPA concluded in May 2023, when Premium_EU began, so there was some overlap between the two projects. SHERPA committed to work with Premium_EU, because it provided them with new data and ideas for a policy problem that is present in all the regions.

Premium_EU built on the achievements of SHERPA. In our project, Premium_EU partners selected 10 MAPs representing different rural regions from across Europe. These 10 MAPs continued their work for one additional year after the end of SHERPA. During this year, the MAPs discussed and provided input to different WPs in Premium_EU. Discussions in the MAPs also revolved around which types of policies have been tried and tested in the different regions to influence mobility patterns, for example to stop outmigration trends, encourage return migration and increase the

attractiveness of the region for newcomers. MAP participants were also encouraged to share views and experiences on how mobility can be harnessed for regional development, for example in terms of business creation, remittances, workforce rejuvenation or increasing the average level of education among the population. Premium_EU researchers encouraged discussions and joint reflections on which policies have worked well in the different regions and could be scaled up or implemented elsewhere; and which measures have not led to desired effects. These discussions provided important input to develop policy recommendations and identify best practice policies and measures for the Policy Module. The findings from the selected MAPs will be integrated into the Regional Policy Dashboard (RPD), the key output of Premium_EU. The representatives of the MAPs are part of the test group offering recommendations of the RPD.

The discussions in the MAPs were summarized in ten position papers (one per MAP). These position papers provided a concise overview of the main arguments, recommendations and best practices that were discussed during the meetings. A final report (D.6.2) synthesised the main conclusions from the position papers. Overall, the engagement of 10 MAPs in the Premium_EU project ensured an in-depth and bottom-up discussion with relevant stakeholders from different rural regions across Europe. The input and feedback from these groups was essential to ensuring that research results and policy recommendations developed in this project are practical, useful, and directly applicable for key target groups of the project, including policy makers at regional and European level. The MAPs and the networks of participants can also be harnessed to spread information on Premium_EU, its research results and policy recommendations to key stakeholder groups and audiences throughout Europe and thereby contribute to the lasting impact of the project in terms of regional policy development.

An invitation was made to the representatives of the MAPs to participate in the Premium_EU project, specifically targeting those who focused on mobility, reversing depopulation, encouraging return migration, and making rural areas more attractive. Of the 40 MAPs, eight responded to the invitation and made presentations of their findings at a Premium_EU consortium meeting in Krakow in October 2023. Some of these were more relevant than others. For this reason, the findings from the position papers of three other MAPs were included, bringing the total to 11 MAPs. In addition, key findings from the Position Paper for the cluster Social Dimension of Rural Areas were also included.

List of SHERPA MAPs included in Premium_EU.

ESTONIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

Kertu Kärk, Estonia

Anne-Liisi Mändmets, Estonia

LITHUANIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė

Rita Lankauskiene

POLAND REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | BIESZCZADY

Katarzyna Gizińska

POLAND REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | ZIELONE SAŚIEDZTWO

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Mariam Ferreira-Golpe

ROMANIA REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | TRANSYLVANIA
Monica Mihaela Tudor, Romania

BULGARIA REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | SOFIA

SLOVENIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

PORTUGAL REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | SOUTHWEST ALENTEJO

SHERPA Position Paper. SOCIAL DIMENSION OF RURAL AREAS

3. Summary of key findings from the Multi-Actor Platforms

ESTONIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

Kertu Kärk and Anne-Liisi Mändmets

Mändmets, A., Kärk, K. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Estonia) - Social dimension of rural areas, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7249600.

Estonian MAP is a newbie in SHERPA project being formed in the autumn of 2021. While looking over the four proposed topics provided by SHERPA we immediately recognised that the social dimension would be the most relevant to Estonian current situation where we currently fight with urbanisation, ageing population and the poor condition with peripheral areas.

During the first Estonian MAP meeting we quickly recognised that active community life, inclusion of young people and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the rural areas are the key sub-topics to discuss while dealing with our main topic. We then moved forward with much more concrete proposals and suggestions while keeping in mind these three focus areas.

Based on consultation with the MAP Estonia members, the thematic focus for the first MAP cycle was set “Social dimension of rural areas”. Members indicated that this theme is relevant because the population in rural areas is both ageing and declining which hinder the development of these regions and the sustainability of Estonian rural life.

After brainstorming with MAP members we decided to concentrate on three subtopics:

- How to involve community members in the development of the region (both long-term residents, newly settlers, migrants and refugees, e.g. Ukrainians)?
- How to promote a smooth generational renewal and young people moving/staying in the rural areas?
- How to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas?

The first two of these were relevant to the aims of Premiun_EU.

An aim of Estonia region policy is in order for Estonia to develop equally everywhere, active and forward looking people are needed. Of the proposals, one was highlighted - how to encourage young people (25+) to stay or move to the countryside. regions. Like other EU countries, half of Estonia's counties experienced population decline greater than 25% since 1991.

Estonian Rural Development Plan (ERDP) for 2014–2020 brought out six priorities which serve as a basis for the programming of rural resources. Only one of them had a socioeconomic dimension: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and rural economic development.

In May 2021 the county development advisor in the Estonian ministry of Finance, Urmas Kase, concluded several activities which could promote the sustainability of rural areas in Estonia:

- It is cheapest for the society to first "keep" the inhabitants of rural areas in the countryside - this must be taken into account when designing rural and regional policy measures.
- Basic needs are important - clean drinking water and sewage, electricity (availability and security of supply), dust-free roads and high-speed internet.
- It is not promising to focus on the age group of 15-25 years old, who are about to finish their education, when it comes to keeping residents in the country and attracting them to the country. Rather, the focus should be on the next age group, i.e. young families with children.
- The most successful are those places and regions where there is close cooperation between different levels such as local government and community members.

Among the identified needs were, Estonian MAP members agreed that in rural areas there is a need for a generational renewal but unfortunately the new generation who would take over is largely missing. Young families who would otherwise be willing to move to the countryside and who would benefit from the quiet and close-to-nature environment are driven away by the lack of appropriate infrastructure, lack of transportation, schools, child care, governmental services and suitable housing possibilities.

Based on the aforementioned needs and challenges Estonian MAP members decided to concentrate on three bigger questions:

- How to involve community members in the development of the region (both long-term residents, and newly settlers)?
- How to promote a smooth generational renewal and young people moving/staying in the rural areas?
- How to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas?

Estonian MAP members acknowledged that in order to make the rural life more socially sustainable and to involve community members in the development of the region, living and working in the countryside must be made more attractive, particularly for the young people who have finished their education and are starting their own family or have already small children.

As the living arrangements are one of the most important topics in one's life the community should create some solutions to offer its members possibilities to buy or rent real estate.

The second factor that was mentioned under this subtopic has also been mentioned before - to provide affordable housing for the young families and other people who would like to live in the countryside.

The most important thing on the national level is conscious infrastructure: well-maintained roads and good transport possibilities (e.g. bicycle and pedestrian tracks), high speed internet, energy security, readily available services (as in the city), schools and kindergartens close to home, etc. Providing services in rural areas is a perennial issue.

At the same time regional differences in development are growing, along with the continued population growth in bigger cities and decrease in rural areas. Thus, the development of regional and rural life, being interrelated and directly dependent on each other, become more and more important.

The Covid pandemic has encouraged remote work, but fast internet is a prerequisite for this. It is important to help people acquire a first home so that they would come to live in the countryside.

LITHUANIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė and Rita Lankauskiene

Zivile Gedminaitė-Raudonė and Rita Vilke (2020), LONG-TERM VISION FOR RURAL AREAS: CONTRIBUTION FROM 20 SCIENCE-SOCIETY-POLICY PLATFORMS. MAP POSITION PAPER. CIRCULAR BIO-ECONOMY, Version 06.10.2020 <https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/lithuania/>

Position paper is aimed to introduce challenges, opportunities and long-term vision until 2040 of rural areas of Lithuania identified by the MAP of Lithuania in 2020. Position paper was prepared using a 6-step Delphi method, combining research, use of quantitative data with expert interviews and surveys.

Key scientific evidence on the key development trends of Lithuanian rural areas has been collected during the SHERPA Desk research (for detailed information see the Discussion Paper "Circular Bio-economy – Lithuania" (CBioLit). Lithuania-specific rural development perspectives are focused on most sensitive changes, undergone by Lithuanian rural areas, namely:

1. demographic shift,
2. climate change and environmental services,
3. change in production and diversification of rural economy,
4. infrastructure and basic services,
5. digitalisation and smart ruralities,

6. inequalities and well-being in rural areas.

Key developments relevant to the PREMIUM_EU project were:

Demographic shift. The decrease in the Lithuanian rural population is the most striking feature, assessing the situation in rural regions of Lithuania. The declining rural population has a direct impact on population density in rural areas. The main factors of population decline are the negative rate of natural population growth and the constant net emigration. As a result of these demographic changes, the structure of the country's population is scarcely changing: the population is aging; the number of young and working-age population is decreasing.

Infrastructure and basic services. The general state of Lithuanian infrastructure has been improved after entering the EU. The main problem in organising the process of service provision in rural areas of Lithuania arose due to the decreased population density - the number of service users also decreased. This led to the rising cost of public services; services provision concentrates in several regional institutions. Rural population's access to public transport, education, health and social services scarcely become limited; this in turn leads to social exclusion and other deepening social problems in Lithuanian rural areas.

Digitalisation and smart ruralities. The key trends related to the rise of digitalisation and smart ruralities in Lithuania are foreseen from the two basic perspectives: first, overall digitalisation of rural areas in terms of access to the internet on a daily basis including the use of e-services, and second, digitalisation of agriculture. Internet access and e-public services are in favourable conditions (broadband coverage in Lithuanian rural areas reached 98%). In Lithuanian agriculture the application of advanced technologies and digitalisation is not yet widespread; it is necessary to encourage the country's farmers to use the opportunities provided by these innovations.

The following opportunities for rural areas in Lithuania were identified at the expert group discussion:

1. Potential of digitalisation. Large network of high-speed broadband services. Digitalisation of activities, access to online services, reducing connectivity gap between remote rural areas and cities.
2. Human resources. Highly motivated, hardworking people. Modern programmes at universities reflecting current needs of rural areas including farming.
3. Strong urban-rural relations. City residents have strong relation with rural areas as previous residents of rural areas (themselves, or their parents used to live there). Purpose of visit to rural areas is related with spending leisure time in nature (various types of tourism: slow, transformative, ecological, and others), visiting families or friends in rural areas, other activities.

4. Covid-19 pandemic situation have opened a need to search for a place outside cities with more space for living, spending time in nature. Rural areas a perfect place for remote work for employees of different professions using high speed broadband.

5. Local food: potential to strengthen local food market; short supply chain of local food; tourism development. Encourage consumption of Lithuanian production.

6. Opportunities by Green deal initiated by the EU. Strategies for development of rural areas in Lithuania should reflect on ecological farming and other ecological initiatives, less pollution, environmental requirements.

Discussion on desirable future for rural areas is a long-lasting process in Lithuania and it will continue in the coming years as large territory of Lithuania is rural areas and cities cover only small part of it. 1/3 of population lives in rural areas of Lithuania. Another part of population that lives in the cities have close relation with rural areas as their parents or grandparents used to live in rural areas or still live there. Many of residents from cities and rural areas still have good skills for growing vegetables, fruits and spending time in the countryside.

Another trend with rural areas in Lithuania is related with moving to suburban areas close to large cities aiming to be close to nature, have more living space and with good distance to all necessary infrastructure.

Epidemic situation with Covid-19 even opened more discussion with increased potential for rural areas. Rural areas are seen as attractive and safe place to live especially for those who can work remotely as high-quality Internet broadband is covered in all territory of Lithuania.

In the light of the above-mentioned circumstances, desirable future of rural areas by the experts was highlighted in the following features:

1. Rural areas are place for residents of various professions as rurality is not equal to farming by finding various roles for economic activities by working in place or remotely. Residents or newcomers can focus on new innovative initiatives using unique natural or cultural resources of this place (slow, transformative tourism, etc.) or create new non-agricultural business (small or medium food processing entities, wood construction, etc.).

2. Creation of desirable infrastructure in the region and locally. Public authorities should assess rules for creation or maintenance of needed infrastructure in the region: by defining how much time is needed to get to the hospital, post, supermarket, school, kindergarten, etc. Infrastructure in villages also should be attractive by finding tools how to solve problems of non-used old living houses or previous farm buildings for many years as this neighbourhood do not attract newcomers to choose their place as new home.

POLAND REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | BIESZCZADY

Katarzyna Gizińska

Citation: Gizińska, K. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Poland, Bieszczady) - Social dimension of rural areas. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7249518

MAP Bieszczady covers the area of two poviats - the poviats of Lesko (Leski) and Bieszczady (Bieszczadzki). These two poviats had been united since 1998 as a result of administrative changes in Poland, but were separated into two separate poviats in 2002 due to strong public opposition and protests by the residents of the Lesko poviat. The two poviats are considered together, because our study covers the broader Bieszczady Mountains. They are marked by the Polish-Ukrainian border on one side, the border with Slovakia on the other, the Beskidy Mountains on the left, and from above - the towns, which are considered the "gates of the Bieszczady" - Lesko and Ustrzyki Dolne, i.e. the capitals of the two poviats.

The Bieszczady MAP area is located in the Podkarpackie Voivodship, in South-Eastern Poland and includes part of the Eastern Carpathians (The Bieszczady Mountains) and The Bieszczady National Park. It covers an area of 2 poviats (Leski, Bieszczadzki). It is a borderland of the European Union (Polish-Ukrainian border) that is why this region is ethnically diverse. The Bieszczady are the most sparsely populated area in Poland, for many years' neglected and far from large urban centres. One of the key problems of this region is the highest unemployment rate in Poland (Leski Poviat - 16.7%, Bieszczadzki Poviat - 14.9% compared to Poland - 6.2% at the end of 2020), the quality of life, negative migration balance, isolation, poverty, low population density.

Among the challenges in the region cited by MAP participants - no electricity, no high-speed internet access, no mobile phone coverage, snow-covered roads, no infrastructure, no paved access roads to their homes, not infrequent lack of access to sewage systems or running water.

It should be noted that the MAP area is recognised as an area at risk of permanent marginalisation, as noted by the authors of the "Podkarpackie Voivodeship Development Strategy 2030". Therefore, measures aimed at reducing marginalisation are very important.

The Position Paper MAP Bieszczady is a position paper from MAP members from the Leski and Bieszczadzki poviats (the Polish administrative level corresponding to districts) within the Podkarpackie voivodship in Poland, bordering Ukraine and Slovakia. The theme of our research was the social dimension of rural areas on the example of Bieszczady region. We asked them about their needs in relation to the "social dimension" of the place where they live and work.

MAP Bieszczady sought answers to the following key questions:

- What are the needs and problems of the Bieszczady MAP area in relation to the theme "Social dimension of rural areas"?
- What are the policy interventions already in place and what are examples of actions taken by local actors to address these needs being implemented in the MAP area?
- What policy interventions (i.e. instruments, measures) are recommended by MAP members for implementation at local, regional and/or national level? How can the EU support these interventions?
- What are the knowledge gaps and what research projects are needed in this area?

The inhabitants of the Bieszczady can be divided into three groups based on the length of time they have lived in the area. This division was outlined on the basis of interviews, and the typology - referred to several times in different places in the study area (both in the High Bieszczady and 'lowlands):

- Pnioki (trunks) / Old inhabitants - indigenous, rooted inhabitants who have lived here for "a long time" (at least 2 generations);
- Krzoki (bushes) - migrant residents who have lived here for some time but have not yet 'put down roots', do not feel like people 'from here', even if they are perceived by the local community as being 'here' and have lived here for several decades.
- Ptoki (birds) / New fry (some arrived during the Covid-19 pandemic) / "Zawołoki" (a term from the Solina area) - new, incoming residents.

MAP Bieszczady members identified many problems and needs that affect the social dimension of this study area. These include:

1. Stopping the flight of young people from rural areas
2. Work: unemployment, job instability, seasonality
3. Lack of inclusive venues
4. Needs of children and parents: range of activities, organised childcare for younger children, play areas, recreation zones
5. Low public participation
6. Adapting transport services to the needs of residents
7. Customised municipal office, closer to residents

8. Issue of availability of grants, funding for residents of peripheral areas

The position paper presented examples of good practice identified by MAP members. Many of these were local, small-scale initiatives.

MAP Bieszczady members identified the following recommendations (not all are cited here):

- Retaining young people - creating the conditions for them to stay, so that they want to return after secondary school/study. Perhaps social economy enterprises, for example, could be the answer.
- Ensuring stable jobs - not just seasonal ones.
- Taking seasonality into account - during 'tourist' periods, residents are overloaded with work and do not have much space for social activities.
- Realising the potential of older people who are nearing the end of their working lives and have a high level of social capital.
- The creation of a mobile office (driving to the residents) - so that official matters can be dealt with in one's own neighbourhood without having to spend a whole day travelling several dozen kilometres to the office one-way.

The main conclusion of the SHERPA research in MAP Bieszczady, which was emphasised by all participants, is: more freedom and liberty should be given to the inhabitants to create social reality.

The driving force behind the social dimension of the Bieszczady MAP is the activists, largely the so-called "birds", i.e. residents who have recently settled in the area.

The studied area is characterised by what other rural areas in Poland are facing: with young people fleeing to bigger centres, with unemployment, with instability of employment, with weakening social participation.

POLAND REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | ZIELONE SAŚIEDZTWO

Barbara Wieliczko and Paweł Chmieliński, ERDN (European Rural Development Network), Poland, Mazowieckie

Citation: Wieliczko, B., Chmieliński, P. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Mazowieckie, Poland) - Towards sustainable and resilient value chains. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7234746

Mazowieckie is the province surrounding the capital of Warsaw. It is the largest and most populous province in Poland with 5.4 million inhabitants. There is

considerable diversity in population change with growth in municipalities near Warsaw and steep decline in more periphery municipalities.

The MAP Zielone Sąsiedztwo chose the topic of entrepreneurship and social economy, just transition, including sustainable value chains was chosen for this MAP cycle as the MAP members to be currently the most relevant for rural areas in Mazowieckie assessed it. Social economy in Mazowieckie is a marginal part of the region's economy.

In 2021, MAP Zielone Sąsiedztwo discussed the topic of diversification of rural economy. The choice for the year 2022 was the topic "Entrepreneurship and social economy, just transition, including sustainable value chains" as the MAP members saw it as the topic that could enable in-depth discussions of the issues that were mentioned in the previous year.

It must be stated that the diversity of the socio-economic situation of the rural areas in Mazowieckie is constantly increasing. It is best visible in the census data on population changes. In the space of a decade, the population of the two municipalities just outside Warsaw has increased by as much as two thirds. On the other hand, there has been a decline in the number of inhabitants on the peripheral areas of the region.

In ten years, 20.4 per cent of the population has been lost. It is the fastest depopulating municipality in the region but 210 of 314 municipalities located in Mazowieckie observed in the last 10 years a population decline (Wojtczuk, 2022).

In 2020, the rural population in Mazowieckie was among the Polish regions with the highest share of active population. It was also the region with one of the lowest share of employed persons in agriculture – only 2%.

The current economic woes caused by the disruption of value chains resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine pose a serious threat to the feasibility of achieving the green transition goals and climate commitments. This may further alienate the most vulnerable rural communities that have already struggled with the high energy and fuel prices. To prevent the increase in the share of rural population feeling left-behind and abandoned by the politicians, immediate action must be taken as the rural communities and rural areas are vital for achieving environmental goals.

POLAND REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | ZACHODNIOPOMORSKIE

Agnieszka Kurdyś-Kujawska and Barbara Wieliczko

Citation: Kurdyś-Kujawska, A., Wieliczko, B. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Zachodniopomorskie, Poland) - Land use and climate change. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7266514

MAP Zachodniopomorskie operates in a region located in northwestern Poland, by the Baltic Sea. Agriculture in the Zachodniopomorskie region is one of the main branches of the economy and its position is steadily strengthening. In this region, as in other regions in Poland and around the world, climate change is increasingly being felt.

The Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship comprises the Territorial Level 2 region (TL2 region), which lies in the northwestern part of Poland along the Baltic Sea coast and borders Germany to the west. It is the fifth-largest region in Poland in terms of size and eleventh in terms of population. Rural areas occupy 94% of the region's area. Clearly lower than in other parts of the country is the share of rural residents in the total population of the region, which is mainly due to the high forest cover and high concentration of rural settlement network.

The area of Zachodniopomorskie, especially in the coastal belt and its immediate vicinity, is characterised by the best wind conditions in Poland. The region is a national leader in green energy production.

MAP Zachodniopomorskie divided the topic into 3 areas and discussed these with researchers, representatives of agricultural institutions, and farmers to identify the needs and challenges encountered in the MAP area.

- 1) Improving the acquisition and use of climate change information
- 2) Institutional support for adaptation to a changing climate
- 3) Reducing constraints on the implementation of adaptation measure

Conclusions

The effects of climate change are already transforming land use. More knowledge and technical, institutional and financial support is needed to effectively implement and use already available adaptation measures in rural areas. Climate change adaptation and related land use modifications are also needed. Citizens requires different types of support to effectively implement adaptation measures. Support is needed both in terms of access to up-to-date and reliable data on future climate change and its potential impacts, financial support to offset the transaction costs of implemented adaptation actions and educational support, in the form of training and courses. Support is also needed for the establishment of focus groups (platforms) through which knowledge and experiences can be shared and new and better solutions tailored to a changing climate can be sought. Importantly, this support should take into account the context of the place and be tailored to the environmental and socio-economic conditions of the region. Insufficient knowledge of climate change, lack of awareness of the risks, or insufficient funding to implement adaptation measures is a major obstacle to building resilient and climate-resilient rural areas. Therefore, more use should be made of scientific knowledge to build scenarios of future climate change and its impacts and to understand the factors that determine the implementation of adaptation actions. The use of scientific knowledge together with the rural

community's experience in perceiving and mitigating the impacts of climate change will enable the development of region-specific adaptation plans (programmes). Involving the rural community (as experts) will result in building mutual trust between different stakeholder groups. Governmental and agricultural NGOs should be more active in promoting land use change so that rural communities better adapt to a changing climate. This should primarily include awareness-raising activities on the benefits (environmental, social, economic) of implementing adaptation measures.

SPAIN REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | ARAGÓN

Bárbara Soriano

Citation: Soriano, B., Bardají, I., Folkeson, C. (2023). Empowering Rural Areas in Multi-Level Governance Processes, MAP Position Note IDRA, Innovación En Desarrollo Rural De Aragón (Spain). 10.5281/zenodo.8240293

The MAP covers the Aragón region in northeastern Spain. Aragón is an autonomous region governed by Aragonese government with its own competences that directly report to the Spanish central government.

Aragón's government counts on three administrative layers across rural areas. The first layer is the province. The Aragonese territory is divided into three provinces, Huesca, Zaragoza and Teruel, and each province has its own Provincial council. In turn, provinces are divided into 33 counties (second administrative layer) that are governed by their corresponding County council: 13 in Zaragoza, 10 in Huesca and 10 in Teruel. Finally, counties group a total of 731 municipalities governed by mayors: 293 in Zaragoza, 202 in Huesca and 236 in Teruel. Each administrative layer has its own competences. Provincial

Discussion with MAP members was focused on two specific governance subtopics: Place-based policy-making and Inclusive and Participatory Governance.

Key question to address: What are examples of existing or emerging governance good practice(s) identified by the MAP that have helped address regional and local needs?

Among the policies already in place taken by local actors are:

The Commissioner for the fight against depopulation: This is an advisory position created in 2018 based on the commitment by the Aragonese Government (as well as other Autonomous Communities in Spain) to reverse the exodus from the countryside to the cities in Aragón. This initiative is framed under the National Strategy against the Demographic Challenge approved in 2017 (Gobierno de España, 2017).

Sectoral Conference for demographic challenge: This is a cooperation body created in 2020 between the Spanish government and the Autonomous

Regions to coordinate and cooperate in policies aimed at tackling demographic challenges in Spain and, in particular, depopulation, progressive ageing, and floating population effects (Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y Reto Demográfico, 2020).

SPAIN REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | GALICIA

Beatriz Guimarey Fernández

Mariam Ferreira-Golpe

Citation: Ferreira Golpe, M., Guimarey Fernández, B., Pérez Fra, M., García Arias, A.I., López Iglesias, E. (2023). Empowering Rural Areas in Multi-Level Governance Processes, MAP Position Note Galician Rural Interfaces (Spain). DOI 10.5281/zenodo.8240277

Galicia is an autonomous community in located in the northwest of Spain. The Spanish Galician Rural Interfaces MAP uses the Galician Association of Local Action Groups as a support and starting point.

Four institutional levels are involved in the design and application of the different policies that affect rural areas in Galicia: European Union, Spanish central government, autonomous community (regional level) and local governments (4 provincial governments and 313 municipalities, 240 of them classified as rural).

The different policies that affect the rural areas, the ones related to regulation and support of economic activities as well as land planning and basic services to population are characterized by a top-down approach and the absence of social participation mechanisms in the design, implementation, and assessment of the measures.

The social reality of the rural areas in Galicia presents constraints that hamper the participation of the population in the design and application of the policies that affect their territories. Among these constraints, the following should be highlighted (López Iglesias, 2019; Ferreira et al, 2022): the strong decrease and aging of the population in most of the rural municipalities, the extreme dispersion of the habitat structure, the accelerated deagrarianization of the rural areas that leads to the decline of the community bonds that characterized the traditional rural society, the increasing diversity of collectives that are part now of the rural population (in relation to their economic activity, degree of linkage to the territory and their interests) and the weakness of the associative network.

Among the sub-themes established for this cycle, the Galician MAP decided to focus on social participation in governance of rural areas.

Among the recommendations for future rural policies, the MAP points out, firstly, the need for measures that create the conditions for greater social participation of the rural population. In this sense, actions that promote the

associative fabric in rural areas (4.2 points out of 5), community revitalization and the provision of public services that facilitate conciliation and mobility (3.9 out of 5) were highlighted as recommendations. On the other hand, actions aimed specifically at disadvantaged groups to promote their participation are not considered to be of such importance (2.8 out of 5).

Among the conclusions, the MAP considers that the local population participates to a very low extent in Galicia in the governance of rural areas. By institutional levels, it perceives that there are more participation mechanisms in the policies promoted by the EU than in those designed by the Spanish Central Administration and the Autonomous Community (Regional Government).

ROMANIA REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | TRANSYLVANIA

Monica Mihaela Tudor, Romania

Citation: Tudor, M., Munteanu, C., Sebastian, B., Dinu Vasiliu, C., Tanasă, L. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Transylvania, Romania) - Towards sustainable and resilient value chains. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7266778

Romania's aggregated MAP includes the Arges county, Iasi county and Transylvania region. The territory of the Transylvania MAP covers the historical region with the same name, located inside the Carpathian arc. The region's total area is about 10 million ha (42.1% of Romania's total area), representing the place of residence for 6.6 million people (about 1/3 of the country's population). Transylvania has diverse landform features, from plains in the west, high plateaus (305m – 404 m) in its central part and mountain areas in the eastern and southern extremities. It also has an important hydrographic network.

Transylvania is a rich region in mineral resources (mainly natural gas, lignite, gold, silver, manganese, lead) and has a diversified industry (IT, electronics, furniture, mining, pharmaceuticals, alcoholic beverages, fertilizers, machinery and subassemblies), located mainly in the big cities. The farming activities have a significant historical continuity and are widespread in the region. Livestock raising (bovines, swine and mainly sheep), vine and fruit farming, vegetable growing and grain cultivation are important farming activities with a long tradition in Transylvania.

Among the key messages was that the diversification of rural economy activities and the farms' vertical integration must be flexible and based on market dynamics. Increasing the value added of agricultural and agri-food activities is a *ceteris paribus* precondition for changing the structure and diversification of rural economy.

The greatest four challenges for the sustainability of integration in the agri-food chains in Transylvania, in the opinion of MAP members, are the following:

- Limited access to information, advisory services, specialty consultancy;
- Low awareness of the importance of consuming local products;
- Low confidence in quality schemes;
- Bureaucracy.

Among the recommendations for future rural policies. The recommended solutions to improve small producers' access to information, advisory services and specialized consultancy can be structured by three hierarchical levels.

Sustainable development implies the increase of sustainability and integration in the agri-food chains. To improve the vertical and horizontal integration in the agri-food value chains, policies should be designed in a way to address vertical and horizontal coordination in a synergic manner. The necessary measures imply the increase of agri-food producers' bargaining power, together with the improvement of their position in the agri-food chain.

BULGARIA REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | SOFIA

Mihaela Mihailova and Bozhidar Ivanov

Citation: Mihailova, M., Ivanov, B. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Bulgaria, Sofia) – Social dimension of rural areas, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7249665

This MAP is focused on assessing the state of the social infrastructure in Bulgaria and how it influences the development of the rural areas and villages. In this paper, when we discuss the social infrastructure, we also consider health-related services, education and training, social care and sponsorship programmes, security and other judicial infrastructure, public services, entertainment and leisure capacity. The key elements that nowadays really matters and determine the rural development are ranked to: health care, education system, social cares and administrative services. It is unambiguously underlined that social infrastructure in rural areas lags behind the same in urban areas and some of the cause for it is the limited public funding.

The social infrastructure, which during the communism period was in the core of the social development, it was subject to severe decline in the post-communism period due mainly to lack of adequate funding. The backward of social services compared to those in urban areas, the weaknesses in the medical facilities, health care, educational system, possibilities for entertainment and amusement do not help the return of the young population to rural areas and do not create conditions for turning the negative trend. areas. The demographic crisis in Bulgaria combined with the decline of the social infrastructure in Bulgaria are fundamental to this trend. Large regional and spatial disparities continue to exist.

Access to broadband Internet access to the Internet in villages is 58%. Increasing the quality of the connection would improve the work and learning of the robotic hand and facilitate the learning process especially in emergency situations like COVID-19 or disaster situations. Bulgaria has high-speed internet, but there is a problem with coverage in some small towns and remote settlements in rural areas. The growing number and share of old people (aged 65+) pose serious challenges to social assistance and social service systems, which are more severe and detrimental in rural areas.

Among the recommendations from the MAP are social infrastructures are a crucial and significant element to achieve a better well-being and welfare in rural areas. The severe disadvantages of rural areas that triggered their depopulation and diminishing of the social vitality. The unsatisfactory and degraded conditions of social infrastructure are more prominent in rural areas in comparison to urban settlements.

Thus, the following social infrastructure services are those in higher and more frequent demand. They are the key factors that influence the decision of where to live:

1. Providing expanded and improved access to health and medical care in rural areas
2. Adaptation of social care services to make them closer to people's needs and demands
3. Development of infrastructure for better access to education and administrative services

SLOVENIA NATIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM

Irena Ule, Goran Šoster, Doris Letina, Peter Tomažič

Citation: Rac, I., Černič Istenič, M., Erjavec, E. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Slovenia) – Social dimension of rural areas, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7249630

The aim of this report was to find out how social networks function in rural areas in Slovenia, using the example of selected social networks, and to check, based on interviews with them, which social issues burden the rural population. Social exclusion in Slovenia is thus more concentrated in rural than in urban areas.

The purpose of this activity was to find out, on the example of selected social networks, how and how successfully they work in rural areas in Slovenia and, based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with them, to check which social issues the rural population faces, how they might be solved, and which are the knowledge gaps in this field.

The presented research indicates that pronounced social issues especially occur in remote areas. They are only partially discovered and solved by the public social policy system due to their specificity and spatial dispersion.

We present some basic research questions and areas where data gaps need to be filled.

- What are the differences in the socio-economic situation between rural areas and cities? How much hidden poverty is there? How to reach those who do not seek help? What is the situation of those who could not pay contributions for pension insurance – how are they provided for?
- What is the position of marginal groups in rural areas? How many are there and what kind of support do they need?
- What is the situation in the field of gender equality in rural areas?
- What are the possibilities of deinstitutionalising social services, especially for the elderly and single mothers?
- How to place the social issues of rural areas into public policies in this area, especially into the mechanisms of measures of the Common Agricultural Policy?

The position paper included a number of examples of actions carried out by local stakeholders aimed at women, youth, elderly, and newcomers.

PORTUGAL REGIONAL MULTI-ACTOR PLATFORM | SOUTHWEST ALENTEJO

Pedro Santos, Pompeu Pais Dias, Marta Mendes

Citation: Santos, P., Pais Dias, P., Mendes, M. (2022) MAP Position Paper (Portugal, Southwest Alentejo) - Social dimension of rural areas. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7501731

In this Position Paper we tried to synthesise the challenges and recommendations that were discussed by the Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) Portugal Southwest (MAP SW), concerning the Social Dimension issues of the Southwest Alentejo territory. This territory has for many years attracted many foreign citizens of various nationalities. Two sub-themes which are regarded as the most relevant for the region: "Improving the well-being of the rural population" and "Promoting social inclusion (migrants)".

Unlike most rural territories in Portugal, in Odemira there has been a stabilisation 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. Regarding the Municipality of Odemira, where the MAP SW is focused, we see that the resident population has remained relatively stable, mainly due to the doubling of the employability of the companies in the municipality.

In 2014, the foreign population living in the municipality already had an important weight in relation to the total number of residents (13.0%), exceeding the national panorama (3.8%), as well as the Alentejo Litoral region (6.4%) and the other municipalities that make up this area. In the following years, 2017 and 2019, the panorama is maintained, being Odemira the municipality with the highest percentage of foreign population with resident status, in 2017, 19.8% and, in 2019, 33.1%, a value well above the values presented in the remaining territories, either at national or regional level. In 2014, the Bulgarian nationality was the most expressive in the municipality, followed by Thai and German.

The presence of migrant communities in the territory has forced, and will force, people, businesses and public services to adapt to a new reality, with distinct challenges and needs, requiring different dynamics and strategies, seeking that local and migrant communities live together peacefully.

The main needs were identified for each of the sub-themes:

Improving the well-being of the rural population which included:

- Reinforcement of public services
- Improvement of the existing transport network
- Improve the situation of housing/accommodation in the region
- Change the urban/rural relationship
- Increase the knowledge about the rural population

Promoting social inclusion (migrants) which included:

- Tackling abuses associated with mafias linked to emigration/exploitation of migrant labour
- Better preparation of the local community
- Improve communication
- Economic diversification
- Territories and services

There are already numerous public interventions related to the Social Dimension in the MAP territory. One of the challenges issued to the MAP members was to identify recommended policy interventions for the SW region, to be implemented at local, regional and/or national level.

In this first cycle of MAP SW it was possible to promote a discussion between actors of the territory with very distinct visions about the concept of well-being of rural areas. However, they were unanimous in agreeing that the current

social dimension within the territory is insufficient for the size of the territory and its present population.

SHERPA POSITION PAPER. SOCIAL DIMENSION OF RURAL AREAS

Majda Černič Istenič (University of Ljubljana), with contributions from Laura Barroso, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid & Bárbara Soriano, CEIGRAM-Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

Citation: Černič Istenič, M. (2023). Social dimension of rural areas. SHERPA Position Paper. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7807982

This Position Paper builds on the contributions of the nine Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) involved in the third cycle of the SHERPA project that chose to reflect on the social dimension of rural areas. The SHERPA process supported the collection of evidence from across Europe on the social dimension of rural areas and proposed four initial sub-themes to be addressed: 1) wellbeing and social relationships in rural areas; 2) public goods provisioning and social networks; 3) bridging the rural-urban gap by promoting cultural activities; and 4) social inclusion of migrant population in rural areas.

However, the MAPs also indicate and highlight challenges their areas are facing. There are general trends highlighted, such as the rural depopulation related to the ageing and dispersion of the population. Thus, the members of the Galician rural interfaces Spain MAP emphasise that rural areas are facing the following trends: sharp decline and severe ageing of the population, extreme dispersion, negative natural growth rates, loss of demographic and economic weight of rural areas, growing volume of daily mobility flows. This current situation is also described by the members of Bieszczady Poland MAP, who point out that the region suffers from low population density, negative net migration (especially outflow of young people), isolation, risk of permanent marginalisation, and high unemployment and poverty rates. Estonia MAP members have also noted population decline in rural areas due to urban sprawl, leading to issues such as lower municipal revenues, ageing, and higher per capita costs for providing services and infrastructure. However, socioeconomic issues arising from processes, such as population ageing and urbanisation, are not among the priorities of Estonia's current Rural Development Plan.

The interventions and actions reported by MAPs members show that there is a wide variety of interventions and actions and that most of them address the needs of rural areas identified by MAPs (presented in the previous section).

Among the identified needs/interventions includes stopping the outflow of young people and social inclusion (migrants and other vulnerable collectives). Several specific initiatives were mentioned.

Under the category stopping the outflow of young people these included:

EE: Show what has been done in the rural areas by young people to inspire other young people (Public research organisation/RDPpublic funds)

EE: Youth participation in defining how to enrich their living conditions (Association/ LEADER)

PL2: Promote social economy (Wańkowa Ski Resort) to encourage entrepreneurship and give young people a reason to stay in their hometowns (LAG /LEADER)

Under social inclusion (migrants and other vulnerable collectives), these included:

BG1: Supplying people in need with food, household goods, furniture, electrical appliances, etc. (NGO / public funds, private donations, charity)

EE: Weekends to develop innovative services to promote life in Võru county with special attention to people with special needs and minorities (Development Centre/publicprivate).

ES1: Social community services and social/cultural revitalization (municipality, NGOs/Private-public funding)

Educational services to children under three years old and self-employment (Association/Private and public funds)

Inclusion of disabled people (municipality, association/Private and public funding)

ES2: A rural ridesharing platform that addresses the lack of transportation in rural areas and Strengthens connectivity between villages. (Other private initiative/Private funds)

PT2: Local Centre for Support to the Integration of Migrants (Association, municipalities, agricultural association, private farm business, church / Private-public funds)

The growth of intercultural interactions through gastronomy, dance, theatre, music,cinema, sport, painting, writing and video (Municipality, companies, Parish Councils /Public-private funds)

Assisting immigrants to integrate or reintegrate into the labour market (Association- cooperative / Public funds).

Personal development of women, promoting the consolidation of a community that promotes intercultural values and integrates human diversity (Association cooperative / Public funds).

Promotion of social, school and community integration of migrant children and young people (Association- cooperative / Public funds).

Promoting good management of labour migration to Portugal (Intergovernmental organization & producer organizations / Public -private funds)

SI: Raising awareness of development issues and their impact on the phenomenon of migration (Association / Public (EU) funds-The DEAR Programme)

Recommendations for future rural policies

Many of the ideas and policy recommendations suggested by MAPs to make rural areas (even) better places to live relate to local, regional-national and EU level.

The local level

To improve the social inclusion of migrants at the local level, who bring "life" to villages, provide labour, and help make social services work, it is recommended that education/training/adult education be strengthened with a gender-sensitive approach and in accordance with local labour needs; transportation (since they do not have private transportation) and access to affordable housing should be improved; and integration promoting activities such as sports and dual-focus intercultural activities should be developed. The management and responsibility for these activities should be clearly assigned to the competent authority, with an appropriate budget ('Innovation in rural development in Aragon Spain MAP').

The national level

The existing social policies also do not take into account the specifics of rural areas, the scattered settlement of the population, the mobility and communication difficulties due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to services and facilities which is particularly the case in remote areas, and last but not least, their specific views and values that affect/limit the quality of life of the rural population. Therefore, a social policy specifically tailored to rural areas is needed.

The EU level

The MAPs believe that the EU's role in future rural social policy should be more active than the current one, which focuses on providing funding and setting general guidelines.

Recommendations for future research agendas.

The research related to the mobility of the population for work and access to different services, especially in rural areas with a very dispersed population is rare. More research is needed on the current reality and mobility needs of the population, and the design of innovative ways of providing these services that are better adapted to reality. (Galician Rural Interfaces Spain MAP)

There are shortcomings in the statistical information available for rural areas, such as an insufficient incorporation of gender perspective in these statistics, which hinders or prevents an adequate understanding of the reality. (Galician Rural Interfaces Spain MAP)

What is the situation in the field of gender equality in rural areas? (Svarun Slovenia MAP)