

Change management in rural areas in light of programming and reporting documents as well as research findings

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Abstract

Change management, as a key scientific category, in this article refers to the theory of regional development and the multi-level implementation of regional development policy. The process of change management in rural areas in Poland produces results, the identification and evaluation of which are divergent. In the public discussion, programme documents, reports and literature there are both very positive assessments and extremely negative diagnoses of the situation in rural areas and in Polish agriculture.

The aim of the article is to analyse opinions on changes taking place in Polish rural areas and to assess the effects of these changes expressed in various programme documents, reports, statistical studies and literature on the subject. The problem to be solved on the cognitive ground is the lack of unified criteria for assessing changes taking place in rural areas, a set of which would reflect a more objectivised picture of rural areas and would more faithfully reflect the mechanism of management of changes.

The study used the desk research method. Information already collected and processed by other researchers and authors of documents, including those produced for regional development policy, was used.

The analysis carried out provided an answer to the fundamental question of similarities and differences in the assessment of change in rural areas and in the effects of these changes.

Based on the results of the analysis, there is no single set of characteristics of an objective image of the Polish countryside. As the review of evaluations shows, this image evolves from an idyllic rurality, through over-optimistic forecasts of an increased affluence thanks to the support of European Union funds, to a picture of rural areas threatened by permanent marginalisation and serious indebtedness of rural and urban-rural municipalities in Poland.

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Some rural areas, or even the greater part of them, classified as being at risk of marginalisation or permanently at risk of marginalisation, also decrease their development potential and increase their development gap with other areas as a result of the loss of their functions.

It is legitimate to continue research on the basis of further sources of available information and to polemicise the assessments contained therein.

Keywords: image of the Polish countryside, assessment of the effects of change, regional development theory, change management.

Introduction

Development processes in rural areas occur in multiple directions, influenced by a variety of factors that merit identification to understand their orientation, intensity and dynamics.

State agricultural and regional policies both aim to correct market processes, including reducing excessive developmental disparities, counteracting the decline of rural areas' potential, and preventing the loss of their socio-economic and environmental functions. The role of financial instruments implemented by the European Union for Polish villages and rural areas has been, and remains, to support changes that foster improvements in cohesion and convergence across various dimensions.

Change management¹ in rural areas produces effects that are sometimes identified and evaluated in divergent ways. Public discourse, programming documents, reports and academic literature feature assessments ranging from highly positive to starkly negative diagnoses of rural and agricultural conditions.

The aim of this article is to explore opinions on the changes occurring in Polish rural areas and to evaluate the outcomes of these changes, as presented in various programming documents, reports, statistical studies and academic literature.

1. As a key scientific category in this article, change management refers to the theory of regional development and the multi-level implementation of regional development policy. Change management in rural areas, from the EU level down to the municipal level, in no way pertains to the currently popular concept of the "change management process". All models developed within this concept pertain to change management in organisations (e.g. the ADKAR model, Kotter's 8-step model, Kurt Lewin's model, and others). For the purpose of this article, these models are entirely irrelevant. However, the phrase "change management", as a scientific category known since antiquity, cannot be exclusively appropriated by the theory of "change management" or, even less so, by the highly controversial critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The phrase "managing change" has long been used in relation to rural areas within the theory of regional development, and is employed by world-renowned scholars, such as Andrew W. Gilg (*Policies and Planning Mechanism: Managing Change in Rural Areas*, 2014, p. 189).

A cognitive challenge arises from the absence of unified criteria for evaluating changes in rural areas that could offer a more objective picture of the countryside and more accurately reflect the mechanisms of change management in these areas.

To achieve this aim, the desk research method² was employed, using pre-existing data that does not require collection through primary research tools such as surveys or interviews. Instead, this method uses information already gathered and processed by other researchers and authors of documents, including those prepared for the purposes of regional development.

This study seeks to answer a fundamental research question: What are the similarities and differences in the evaluation of changes in rural areas and in the assessment of their outcomes?

In this article, as well as in a series of forthcoming ones planned by the author, the following hypothesis is tested using the desk research method:

Based on evaluations expressed in academic literature, programming and reporting documents analysed in the study, as well as other works, the following trends and a corresponding image of rural areas emerge:

- villages, like cities, are undergoing transformations;
- changes involve the character of buildings, residents' sources of livelihood, and their lifestyles, indicating the urbanisation of rural areas;
- transformations in rural areas are accompanied by shifts in the functions performed by settlements located in rural and peri-urban areas;
- some rural areas, through the loss of their functions, consequently reduce their development potential and increase their distance from other areas;
- the primary transformation is the diminishing importance of agricultural land use and food production;
- rural areas at risk of marginalisation first strive to restore their environmental-creative, cultural and tourism functions, only later addressing agricultural and food-related roles.

The author aims to continue analysing rural transformations based on additional domestic sources of information, including published research results commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and other public institutions. This article, therefore, constitutes the first part of a larger study.

2. "Desk research" is a method widely known and extensively described in Polish academic literature (e.g. K. Błoński, E. Putek-Szeląg, *Wykorzystanie metody Propensity Score Matching w badaniach typu Desk Research*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu" 2018, No 525, p. 167–175) or recommended for use in evaluation procedures, including in EU programming documents from 2014 and 2021.

Villages and rural areas as a theoretical and cognitive category

Villages are generally regarded as a settlement unit, whereas rural areas are perceived as spaces formed by villages and their surroundings³.

Among the various approaches to defining and classifying rural areas, only statistical approaches allow for the adoption of numerical criteria, which enable comparisons between different countries.

Table 1 presents the maximum population criterion for rural areas based on census assumptions in selected countries.

Table 1. Maximum population criterion for areas classified as rural, updated for the National Censuses of 2011 and 2021

Country	up to 1,000	1,000–1,500	1,500–2,500	2,500–10,000	30,000
Ireland	X				
France		X			
USA			X		
United Kingdom				X	
Poland				X	
Japan					X

Source: Own study based on: GUS (Statistics Poland), *Spis Powszechny – metodologia: maksymalna liczba ludności obszarów wiejskich wg założeń spisów powszechnych w wybranych krajach 2011* and GUS, *Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2021*, <https://spis.gov.pl>, access 12.11.2024; and Druk sejmowy nr 3670 o Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym Ludności i Mieszkań 2021 – Explanatory Memorandum, <https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Druki8ka.nsf/0/C3F575CEDD48D004C125843A0032CAAE/%24File/3670.pdf>, access 12.11.2024.

The view that rural areas should encompass any space that does not meet urban space criteria has a long history. As J. Bański⁴ notes, in 1874, during work on the first census in the United States, rural areas were defined as those remaining after excluding localities with 8,000 or more residents.

In the 1980 census, the threshold was set at 2,500 inhabitants and distinguished urbanised areas and settlements outside those areas with a population exceeding 2,500, while other areas were classified as rural.

3. J. Bański, *Przemiany polskiej wsi*, Warszawa, PAN IGiPZ, 2010, p. 7.

4. Ibidem, p. 9.

The American Farmers Home Administration defines rural areas differently: as administrative units with up to 20,000 inhabitants in non-metropolitan areas, and towns with up to 10,000 residents possessing rural characteristics within metropolitan areas.

For the Rural Highway Public Transportation Administration, rural areas are territorial units with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants.

A. Gilg⁵ states that the physical characteristics of rural areas are key to their proper identification, positing that the most satisfactory and comprehensive definition of rural areas should be based on landscape character and the intensity of land use.

Based on this criterion, rural spaces are defined as areas with low population density and infrastructure levels, where surface-based economic activities dominate over point-based and linear activities.

Later definitions incorporate additional elements, such as residents' lifestyles shaped by belonging to small population groups, their identity and cultural characteristics steeped in rural traditions, and a sense of affiliation with the countryside (most residents emphasise that they live in a village). Andrew W. Gilg, a renowned expert in spatial planning and land-use management, continues to uphold these classification criteria for rural areas in his subsequent publications⁶.

Survey research conducted by K. Halfacree⁷ indicates that the largest group of respondents accepts traditional definitions of rural areas, focusing on physiognomic and morphological characteristics. Specifically, the concept of a 'rural area' is associated with:

- 68% of respondents: an open and undeveloped landscape;
- 46% of respondents: the name confirming the area's association with the village;
- 38% of respondents: a small population and low population density;
- 31% of respondents: typical elements of a natural environment;
- 27% of respondents: an employment structure dominated by agriculture;
- 25% of respondents: a location far from the city;
- 21% of respondents: a low share of service functions;
- 15% of respondents: specific social behaviours (e.g. family orientation, small population groups, friendly neighbourly ties, etc.).

A very similar characterisation emerges from subsequent studies by the same author, whose results confirm that the defining features of rurality include:

- low population density,
- agriculture and forestry as primary land uses,

5. A.W. Gilg (ed.), *Countryside Planning Yearbook 1985*, Geo Books, 1.08.1985.

6. A.W. Gilg, *Countryside Planning: The First Half Century*, Taylor & Francis Ltd (14 January 1997), 1997.

7. K. Halfacree, *Talking about Rurality: social representation of the rural as expressed by residents of six English parishes*, "Journal of Rural Studies" 1995, Vol. 11(1), Elsevier Science, p. 6–7.

- sparse and dispersed settlements,
- peripherality,
- lifestyle,
- open landscapes.

Thus, based on the above-mentioned surveys, rural areas in the 1980s and 1990s can be described by the following features:

- a specific open landscape,
- relatively low population density,
- a predominance of people engaged in agricultural and forestry-related economies,
- a traditional lifestyle (close to nature),
- extensive land use,
- sparse and dispersed settlements,
- most residents emphasise their rural identity and connection to the countryside.

K. Halfacree takes a critical approach to the concept of villages as heterotopic space⁸ in many of his other works⁹.

The intentionally constructed, idealised image of an idyllic village is also the subject of numerous disputes, discussions and debates – not only within the academic community¹⁰, with critics arguing that this pastoral vision of rural life is often designed to obscure the real and serious existential challenges faced by its residents.

When examining the Polish countryside, it is worth noting that, as in other countries, socio-economic development in Poland has led to changes not only in cities but also in villages, which is reflected in the assessments of numerous authors¹¹ and in many reporting documents¹². The doctrine of a multifunctional countryside, implemented in practice, has resulted in a shift away from agriculture as the dominant function of rural areas. Increasingly, agriculture has become merely one of several

8. K. Halfacree writes: "However, this (implicitly) critical edge of the rural as a heterotopic space must be credited, cultivated and corralled much more explicitly politically", K. Halfacree, *Of castles, bolt-holes and rafts: "antiglobal" affordances of "rurality"*, "Culture Unbound" 2010, Vol. 2, p. 241–263; see also S. Tuulentie, *Settled tourists: second homes as a part of tourist life stories*, "Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism" 2007, Vol. 7, p. 282–301.

9. K. Halfacree, *Heterolocal Identities? Counter-Urbanisation, Second Homes and Rural Consumption in the Era of Mobilities*, "Population, Space and Place" 2012, Vol. 18, p. 221, online: 14 March 2011 in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com), DOI: 10.1002/psp.665.

10. "An idealized, romanticized construct that presents rural areas as happier, healthier, and with fewer problems than urban areas. The rural is cast as an idyllic place to live, portrayed as having beautiful landscapes, more neighbourly communities (...)", A. Rogers, N. Castree, R. Kitch, *A Dictionary of Human Geography*, Publisher Oxford University Press, 2013, current online version.

11. M. Kłodziński, *Główne funkcje polskich obszarów wiejskich z uwzględnieniem dezagryzacji wsi i pozarolniczej działalności gospodarczej* [in:] *Rozwój obszarów wiejskich w Polsce*, ed. B. Kłos and D. Stankiewicz, "Studia BAS" 2010, nr 4(24), p. 9–29.

12. For example: GUS, *Rural areas in Poland 2022*, Warszawa, Olsztyn, 2024.

functions, such as residential or tourism and recreational roles. Technological advancements, including the use of efficient machinery, modern plant protection measures and the industrialisation of animal husbandry have reduced the demand for agricultural labour. Favourable legal and financial solutions have improved farmers' incomes, supplemented either through their own sources or via EU programmes and funds, as well as directly from public budgets (state and/or municipal).

The settlement structure of cities and villages has undergone dynamic changes. Rural areas located near major transport routes with modern infrastructure are increasingly accommodating urban populations, becoming so-called "commuter villages", particularly for large cities and their employed residents. The separation of the workplace and residence has been facilitated by reduced commuting times thanks to modern means of transport, which is true even when the physical distance remains the same – or greater – extending beyond the suburban isochrone. The critical factor has shifted to commuting time rather than distance. Consequently, there is a growing number of rural residents who relocated from cities but continue to work there.

According to the aforementioned assessments, streams of people employed in large cities and settling in rural areas without changing their workplace contribute to increased housing density and other processes of rural urbanisation in Poland.

Opinions on rural areas in Poland should be compared with the formal and organisational identification of these areas, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Areas considered rural by their share of total population and total area of Poland in the perspective of 2021–2027

Areas considered rural and their share	Population (%)	Area (%)
Based on administrative division (urban-rural) (GUS)	38.1	93.4
Based on population density ≤ 150 persons/km ² (OECD)	35.0	91.7
Based on population density ≤ 100 persons/km ² (EU)	32.8	83.0

Source: Based on: GUS, *Spis Powszechny – metodologia: maksymalna liczba ludności obszarów wiejskich wg założeń spisów powszechnych w wybranych krajach 2011* and GUS, *Obszary wiejskie w 2022 roku*, Warszawa, Olsztyn 2024.

Opinions suggest that rural and urban areas are converging, with rural spaces increasingly resembling urban ones in terms of architectural styles. Developers are moving into rural areas, parcelling land for future projects, both residential and infrastructural. Fewer farmers now live in rural spaces, and there are fewer agricultural buildings, while farming machinery and livestock are increasingly concentrated in large, specialised farms. Larger and taller residential buildings are being constructed

in rural areas, often using modern materials, and include multi-family housing, resembling urban housing estates. Alongside these developments, new service providers are emerging to cater to the needs of rural residents, such as car repair workshops, renovation services, restaurants, florists, hairdressers, health and rehabilitation centres, schools, and financial intermediary outlets, etc.

According to various evaluations, these changes significantly affect the natural environment. New investments encroach on farmland, destroying soil ecosystems and altering water conditions, with public perception and some scientific studies suggesting that increasing rural affluence contributes to greater consumption, resulting in higher volumes of solid waste and sewage. Frequent commuting from rural areas to cities for work and the transportation of goods increases noise pollution and emissions into the atmosphere. New buildings, mobile phone towers, visible wind farms on the horizon, as well as other anthropogenic elements alter the landscape.

To attract new residents or tourists, villages often leverage the natural environment as a key element of their appeal. Old trees, meadows, forests, rivers and lakes are valuable assets considered part of the local attractions. Efforts to protect cultural and material heritage from harmful emissions include building sewage treatment plants and waste disposal facilities, and promoting renewable energy sources, while initiatives highlight natural attractions and restore water bodies and waterways. However, there are noted risks associated with these rural transformations, such as: eutrophication of water bodies, impoverishment of rural landscapes, loss of sensitive plant and animal species, soil and habitat degradation.

The romanticised vision of idyllic rural life is tempered by more realistic evaluations, which highlight the negative aspects of developmental processes in rural areas.

The idyllic image of rural life as a place of residence is affirmed by excerpts from opinions expressed on social media:

A rural cottage has its charm: peace, quiet, your own garden, no annoying neighbours, and the freedom to play loud music at any time of day or night. So idyllic. For all these reasons, more and more people are choosing to settle in villages and small towns, away from the urban hustle and bustle. After all, the idea of a clean, eco-friendly life in a rural homestead makes sense for health reasons and equally benefits both physical and mental well-being. At least until winter comes and snow needs to be cleared to leave the house, living in the countryside is a wonderful change from the concrete jungle of the city.

Opinions shared on social media confirm that weather and seasons significantly influence how rural life is perceived. When imagining a country cottage, the vision

often involves a house bathed in the May sunshine, with its residents and guests enjoying freshly baked homemade bread spread with natural honey and drinking milk from their own cow under a wooden gazebo or sunshade. This vision can be realistic – provided the timeframe is limited to the spring and summer months. When considering moving to the countryside, various guides recommend exercising common sense and acknowledging that rural life lacks many urban conveniences throughout the year. Here are the most frequently mentioned inconveniences surprising newcomers from the city, as highlighted on social media:

- a snow-covered driveway;
- a long distance to the nearest grocery, shopping centre or pharmacy;
- limited or no access to cultural and entertainment facilities (cinemas, theatres, swimming pools, museums);
- no internet access or slow internet speeds;
- lack of or limited suburban public transport;
- weaker mobile signal reception (GSM disturbances).

The correction of the idyllic image of rural life through scientific assessments begins with pointing out the increasing pace of change and the rapid acceleration that leaves residents with little time to adapt or adjust to new conditions.

This acceleration is most intensely felt in rural areas with populations below 10,000, with the challenges faced by these areas including population changes (both growth and decline), rising house prices, diversification and deprivation. The growth and/or decline of rural areas are the results of both social and economic changes.

Evaluations indicate that despite significant progress, disparities in access to services between rural and urban residents remain noticeable, with access to services in rural areas continuing to be inadequate and challenging¹³. Limited access to public goods and services, as well as their insufficient quality, contributes to increasing depopulation in rural areas, the emergence of social problems, and the marginalisation of rural regions¹⁴.

13. Studies identifying areas with limited access to basic social services, including healthcare, social assistance, education, culture and digitalisation. This research was conducted as part of Task 3 titled “Developing the concept of Small Villages of Mazovia” (Polish: *Opracowanie idei Smart Villages Mazowsza*) under the project titled “Implementation of the Smart Villages concept implemented in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship” (Polish: *Wdrażanie koncepcji Smart Villages na terenie województwa mazowieckiego*); B. Chmielewska, *Zmiany infrastruktury społecznej w województwie mazowieckim w latach 2005–2020*, Instytut Ekonomiki Rolnictwa i Gospodarki Żywnościowej – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, “Mazowsze Studia Regionalne” 2022, nr 42, p. 61–80.

14. W. Klimczak, G. Kubiński, E. Sikora-Wiśniewska, *Wykluczenie społeczne w Polsce. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Wrocław, Exante, 2017.

The European Union's cohesion policy, which has given territorial dimensions of development policies greater prominence at the level of Member State actions¹⁵, aims to reduce disparities between areas with varying levels of development. One of its key tools is the identification of specific areas requiring a tailored approach¹⁶.

The classification of areas as functional areas, areas of strategic intervention (ASI), and problem areas contributes to the territorialisation and integration of national development policies¹⁷. According to research conducted by M. Wolański's team, support for such areas should be diversified based on their unique problems and potentials¹⁸.

Rural areas at risk of marginalisation according to national and regional documents

For the first time, areas at risk of permanent marginalisation, both rural and urban, were identified in the Strategy for Responsible Development adopted in 2017, which served as the medium-term national development strategy for some time. Later, a broader planning framework was incorporated into a subsequent strategic document, namely the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP).

Areas at risk of permanent marginalisation, as a target of State policy, were interpreted as requiring special attention from regional policy due to their loss of developmental capacity. These areas necessitate additional, targeted interventions by the government and regional authorities, in collaboration with local governments, entrepreneurs and residents.

The 2017 document "Delimitation of Areas of Strategic Intervention of the State: Growth Areas and Problem Areas" introduced the delimitation of Areas of Strategic Intervention, including problem areas and growth areas in Poland. In 2019, this delimitation was updated to reflect the requirements of the new EU financial framework for 2021–2027. The 2021–2027 Partnership Agreement stipulates that areas at

15. W. Dziemianowicz, K. Gano, J. Tarnacki, *Obszary strategicznej interwencji – w kierunku modyfikacji i usprawnienia terytorialnego wymiaru polityki regionalnej*, "Biuletyn KPZK PAN" 2017, nr 268, Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju Polskiej Akademii Nauk, p. 101–117.

16. P. Śleszyński, J. Bański, M. Degórski et al., *Delimitacja obszarów strategicznej interwencji państwa: obszarów wzrostu i obszarów problemowych*, "Prace Geograficzne" 2017, nr 260, Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania im. Stanisława Leszczyckiego, Polska Akademia Nauk, Warszawa.

17. P. Śleszyński, D. Mazurek, *Obszary strategicznej interwencji, problemowe i funkcjonalne w dokumentach strategicznych szczebla krajowego i wojewódzkiego*, "Studia Regionalne i Lokalne" 2020, nr 1(79), p. 30–59.

18. M. Wolański, *Ewaluacja wsparcia Obszarów Strategicznej Interwencji w latach 2014–2021*, Warszawa, Wolański Sp. z o.o., 2023.

risk of permanent marginalisation should receive funding from all available sources, including EU funds.

The National Strategy of Regional Development 2030 (NSRD 2030) is another document incorporating new results of planning work, particularly detailing the aforementioned areas of strategic intervention. These areas, as stipulated in the Act of 6 December 2006 on the principles of development policy, designate regions – characterised by identified or potential functional connections, or by specific social, economic or spatial conditions that determine the existence of development barriers or sustainable, activatable development potential – as targets for public intervention. This intervention combines investments, particularly in economic activities, infrastructure or human resources, funded from various sources, or includes regulatory solutions.

Among the various types of ASI are municipalities at risk of persistent marginalisation, forming groups of rural municipalities and small towns functionally associated with them, marked by cumulative adverse social and economic phenomena. These phenomena include:

- the unfavourable land area structure of agricultural holdings;
- limited availability of jobs in non-agricultural sectors and restricted access to public services;
- adverse demographic conditions.

Primary types of ASI are identified, categorised based on the causes of marginalisation, which include historical circumstances, socio-economic transformations, as well as administrative and territorial changes.

Table 3. Voivodeships and poviats with municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation in the 2021–2027 perspective

Voivodeship	Number of poviats with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation	Total number of poviats	Total number of municipalities	Share of poviats with municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation (%)	Share of at-risk municipalities in the total number of municipalities (%)
1	2	3	4	5	2:4	3:5
Dolnośląskie	13	30	26	169	50	17.75
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	17	51	23	144	73.91	35.42
Lubelskie	18	140	24	213	75	65.73
Lubuskie	7	15	14	82	50	18.29
Łódzkie	13	18	21	177	61.9	10.17

Continued on the next page.

Table 3. Voivodeships and poviats with municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation in the 2021–2027 perspective (cont.)

Voivodeship	Number of poviats with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation	Total number of poviats	Total number of municipalities	Share of poviats with municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation (%)	Share of at-risk municipalities in the total number of municipalities (%)
Małopolskie	8	29	22	182	36.36	15.93
Mazowieckie	23	101	42	314	54.76	32.17
Opolskie	7	15	12	71	58.33	21.13
Podkarpackie	18	65	25	159	72	40.88
Podlaskie	14	69	17	118	82.35	58.47
Pomorskie	11	33	20	123	55	26.83
Śląskie	3	4	36	167	8.33	2.39
Świętokrzyskie	12	40	14	102	85.71	39.21
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	19	66	21	116	90.48	56.90
Wielkopolskie	9	19	35	226	25.71	8.41
Zachodniopomorskie	17	60	21	113	80.95	53.1
Total	209	755	373	2489	–	–
Arithmetic mean	–	–	–	–	56.03	30.33

Source: Own study based on GUS, Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego do 2030 roku, zaktualizowana lista gmin zagrożonych trwałą marginalizacją, file:///C:/Users/48516/Downloads/Zaktualizowana_lista_gmin_zagro%C5%BConych_trwa%C5%82%C4%85_marginalizacji%C4%85_programowanie_2021–2027–1.pdf, access 12.11.2024.

The typology of localities with lost functions or widening developmental gaps can be dynamically interpreted as progressive processes extending over time, involving the gradual restoration of lost functions and/or the development of new ones in at-risk localities, thereby reducing developmental disparities. It can also be interpreted as processes of increasing developmental gaps and the loss of further functions over time.

Within this typology, the following types of localities or areas can be distinguished:

- crisis-prone (C): defined by rapid growth in developmental disparities and unfavourable socio-economic conditions;
- declining potential (P): defined by rapid growth in developmental disparities and moderately unfavourable socio-economic conditions;

- stagnating (S): defined by moderate growth in developmental disparities and unfavourable socio-economic conditions;
- at risk of permanent marginalisation (M): defined by moderate growth in developmental disparities and moderately unfavourable socio-economic conditions.

This typology enables an analysis of changes and their directions for each locality listed in the expanded Table 4 (Appendix). In particular, further observations of administrative units and analysis of their developmental indicators, functions and potential can address the following questions:

1. Has there been a change compared to the previous period?
2. What was the nature of the change?
 - favourable: for example, a reclassification from a crisis-prone locality (C) to a stagnating locality (S) due to functional and condition improvements, particularly since some rural areas regained their tourism-related functions, for example as holiday destinations, during the post-pandemic period;
 - unfavourable: for example, a shift from a locality at risk of marginalisation (M) to one with declining potential (P), or even to a crisis-prone locality (K).
3. How significant was the change? Did it improve or deteriorate by only one level, or was it a substantial shift by as much as three levels?

Without the results of such observations, the following conclusions can only be drawn based on considerations regarding marginalisation:

- 1) all sixteen voivodeships have rural and urban-rural poviats and municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation;
- 2) at national level, marginalisation affects municipalities in over half of the poviats (56.03%);
- 3) a poviat marginalisation rate exceeding the national average is observed in nine voivodeships, with the top five being:
 - Warmińsko-Mazurskie (90.48%);
 - Świętokrzyskie (85.71%);
 - Podlaskie (82.35%);
 - Zachodniopomorskie (80.95%);
 - Lubelskie (75 %);
- 4) at national level, marginalisation affects over 30% of all municipalities; according to the named list in Table 4, these are primarily rural and urban-rural municipalities;
- 5) a municipal marginalisation rate higher than the national average occurs in eight voivodeships, with the top five being:
 - Lubelskie (65.93 %);

- Podlaskie (58.47%);
- Warmińsko-Mazurskie (56.90%);
- Zachodniopomorskie (53.1%);
- Podkarpackie (40.88%).

6) the voivodeships with the highest share of poviats and municipalities affected by marginalisation include:

- Warmińsko-Mazurskie (90.48% and 56.90%, respectively);
- Lubelskie (75% and 65.93%, respectively);
- Podlaskie (82.35% and 58.47%, respectively);
- Zachodniopomorskie (80.95% and 53.1%, respectively).

The territorial dimension of areas at risk of permanent marginalisation is detailed in a document titled *Stan negocjacji WRF i pakietu legislacyjnego Polityki Spójności 2021–2027*¹⁹.

Support for rural areas and their populations has been significant when measured by the level of payments made, yet there is no clear answer as to whether it has been sufficient to offset identified disparities, particularly in rural areas at risk of marginalisation. Between 2015 and 2022, the total amount of funding allocated for financing and co-financing EU programmes and projects in rural municipalities amounted to PLN 18.2 billion, with PLN 1.7 billion allocated in 2022, representing 44.9% of the total value of such funds nationwide in 2022, up by 5.2% compared to 2015. Under direct support schemes, the payments per capita in rural areas in Poland amounted to PLN 740.2, with the lowest value recorded in the Małopolskie Voivodeship (PLN 223.2) and the highest in the Podlaskie Voivodeship (PLN 2,070.3). The Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship also had a high value for this indicator (PLN 1,301.1)²⁰.

19. Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej, Policy, *Stan negocjacji WRF i pakietu legislacyjnego Polityki Spójności 2021–2027*, Warszawa, 13.11.2020, p. 14.

20. GUS, *Obszary wiejskie w Polsce w 2022 roku*, Warszawa, Olsztyn, 2024, p. 154, 158, 160 et seq.

Drawing 1. Level of funding in less developed, transition and more developed regions for the 2021–2027 period



Source: Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej, GUS Stan negocjacji WRF i pakietu legislacyjnego Polityki Spójności 2021–2027, Warszawa, 13 November 2020, p. 10.

Under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014–2020, from its inception to 31 December 2022, 1.3 million various beneficiaries submitted 7.8 million applications for financial assistance (including 1 million in 2022), with a total of 6.9 million agreements signed/decisions issued (including 709,400 in 2022), and payments amounting to PLN 53.7 billion (PLN 49.3 billion for RDP 2014–2020 commitments, PLN 3.3 billion for RDP 2007–2013, and PLN 1 billion for RDP 2004–2006). In 2022 alone, PLN 10 billion was disbursed to 851,900 different beneficiaries, including: PLN 9,956.3 million for RDP 2014–2020 commitments, PLN 38.3 million for RDP 2007–2013, and PLN 40.8 million for RDP 2004–2006.

The highest total amounts of payments made were allocated to the Mazowieckie Voivodeship – PLN 7.2 billion (13.5% of the total payments under RDP 2014–2020), Wielkopolskie Voivodeship – PLN 5.8 billion (10.9%), and Lubelskie

Voivodeship – PLN 5.3 billion (10.0%). The lowest amounts were allocated to the Opolskie Voivodeship – PLN 1.1 billion (2.0%) and the Śląskie Voivodeship – PLN 1.3 billion (2.4%)²¹.

In summary, since joining the European Union, rural Poland has benefited from support under the Common Agricultural Policy, the European Cohesion Policy, and the Common Fisheries Policy. Activities related to the Common Agricultural Policy are funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (rural development programmes) and the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (market regulation interventions, export refunds for agricultural products to third countries, and direct payments), as well as national funds, while under the European Cohesion Policy, rural residents can access support from the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and the Cohesion Fund.

Comparative analysis of selected effects of change in rural areas between 2015 and 2022 in light of statistical data

Every two years, Statistics Poland (GUS) publishes a report titled “Rural Areas in Poland” (Polish: *Obszary wiejskie w Polsce*). The most recent report, published in March 2024, provides an assessment of the state of Poland’s rural areas in 2015 and 2022, offering highly insightful evaluations based on statistical data.

The GUS report titled “Rural Areas in Poland 2022” presents an analysis of the scope of demographic potential, the economic situation of the population, social and technical infrastructure, non-agricultural activity and agriculture, the environment and the sources of rural areas financing.

The process of defining rural areas was based on characteristics derived from the identifiers of the National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country (TERYT), Classification of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) as well as Eurostat and OECD territorial typologies.

The report also incorporates results from the 2021 National Population and Housing Census concerning rural areas, including data on population size and structure, households and persons with disabilities.

The study “Rural Areas in Poland” presents the results of analysis in various dimensions, including the arrangement of the country’s administrative units. An additional convenience is the inclusion of results based on the new delimitation of

21. Ibidem.

rural areas. According to the Delimitation of Rural Areas (DOW), statistical research results distinguish four groups of rural areas:

- high-density agglomeration rural areas with a population density higher than the national average for Poland;
- low-density agglomeration rural areas with a population density equal to or lower than the national average for Poland;
- high-density non-agglomeration rural areas with a population density greater than one-third of the national average;
- low-density non-agglomeration rural areas with a population density equal to or less than one-third of the national average.

The average population density in Poland in 2022 (Statistics Poland Local Data Bank; GUS) was 121 persons/km², while the 1/3 threshold of the average population density was assumed at 40 persons/km², and these values were adopted for the analysis.

Unfavourable demographic trends persist, with 2023 marking the third consecutive year of declining average population density, falling to 120 persons/km², while from 2012 to 2020, population density remained stable at 123 persons/km².

The Delimitation of Rural Areas was developed based on Regulation (EU) 2017/2391 of the European Parliament and the Council of 12 December 2017 amending Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 as regards the territorial typologies (Tercet)²², which governs the principles of typology for localities and their commuting zones.

A detailed analysis of the GUS report and the scientific assessment of its results, seeking indicators and features that portray the condition of rural areas in various dimensions and relative to urban areas, is particularly significant in the context of data on waste production and wastewater discharge.

Although changes in the volume of waste generated in individual territorial units are influenced by numerous socio-economic and technical factors, the literature identifies the wealth level of residents and the quality of the buildings they inhabit as the most significant determinants of the amount and composition of waste produced. Research and analyses of factors influencing waste generation have been conducted in countries such as the Netherlands²³, Denmark²⁴ and Austria²⁵, and the factors shaping waste production were also identified as part of the EU's 5th Framework Programme

22. Dz. Urz. UE L 350, 29.12.2017.

23. M.P. Hekkert, L.A.J. Joosten, E. Worrell, *Analysis of the paper and wood flow in the Netherlands. Resources, "Conservation and Recycling"* 2000, Vol. 30, p. 29–48.

24. K.M. Christiansen, C. Fischer, *Baseline projections of selected waste streams: Development of methodology*. European Environmental Agency, Technical Report No. 28, Copenhagen 1999.

25. S. Salhofer, M. Graggaber, *Erhebung des kommunalen Abfallaufkommens und Untersuchung ausgewählter Sammelsysteme im Bundesland Salzburg*, Project Report, Vienna 1999.

titled “Applying Life Cycle Assessment in the Development of Integrated Waste Management Strategies”, conducted across 32 European countries.

Using indicators of waste volume and composition²⁶, which are interpreted as measures of wealth (and consumption levels), their values and interpretations concerning different types of rural areas in Poland are presented below, based on an analysis by Statistics Poland in the report “Rural areas in Poland 2022”. Similarly, the analysis extends to the wastewater discharge indicator, which indirectly reflects water usage²⁷.

In 2022, rural populations generated 2.5 million tonnes of municipal waste, 84.0% of which came from households, amounting to 162 kg per capita (compared to 248 kg in urban areas and 213 kg nationwide). Compared to 2015, the volume of waste produced by rural residents increased by 13.8%, up by 20 kg per capita, while in urban areas, the volume of waste decreased by 6.7% over the same period, with the per capita average dropping by 17 kg, with the highest per capita waste generation in rural areas recorded in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (231 kg per person), and the lowest in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (88 kg per person).

Per capita waste generation by rural area type (based on the Delimitation of Rural Areas – DOW) was as follows:

- 1) agglomeration high density – 188 kg,
- 2) agglomeration low density – 177 kg,
- 3) non-agglomeration high density – 154 kg,
- 4) non-agglomeration low density – 152 kg.

This indicator varied from as low as 0.4 kg per person in Komarówka Podlaska (Lubelskie Voivodeship, a low-density non-agglomeration rural area) to 2,547 kg per person in Władysławowo (Pomorskie Voivodeship, a high-density non-agglomeration rural area).

As already discussed, the report also refers (for comparative purposes) to national areas of strategic intervention (ASI), defined in the National Strategy for Regional Development 2030 as municipalities at risk of marginalisation.

In 2022, municipal waste generated in municipalities at risk of marginalisation accounted for 7.3% of the total municipal waste produced nationwide, and the average amount of municipal waste generated per resident in these municipalities was 136 kg, and among these municipalities, 286 (38%) exceeded the national average. Among the marginalised municipalities, this indicator spanned from 430 kg per person in

26. P. Beigl, S. Salhafer, G. Wasserman et al., *Prognostowanie zmian ilości i składu odpadów komunalnych*, Materials of the 6th International Waste Management Forum “Efficiency of Waste Management”, Poznań 2001.

27. GUS, *Obszary wiejskie w Polsce w 2022 roku*, Warszawa, Olsztyn, 2024, p. 168, 170.

Świeradów-Zdrój (Dolnośląskie Voivodeship) to 0.4 kg per person in Komarówka Podlaska (Lubelskie Voivodeship).

It is worth noting that municipalities such as Władysławowo and Świeradów-Zdrój, which are popular tourist or spa destinations, have higher waste generation rates due to the impact of tourists, as they are not permanent residents of these areas.

In 2022, rural residents generated 35.2 dam³ of wastewater requiring treatment per capita (compared to 71.4 dam³ in urban areas and a national average of 56.8 dam³), which represented an increase of 3.6 dam³ compared to seven years earlier (0.7 dam³ in urban areas and 1.6 dam³ nationwide). In the territorial breakdown of rural areas, the highest wastewater generation per capita was recorded in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (66.9 dam³), and the lowest in the Podlaskie Voivodeship (12.6 dam³).

For comparison, in 2022, municipalities at risk of marginalisation generated 102.2 hm³ of wastewater requiring treatment, equivalent to 23.6 dam³ per capita, while wastewater treatment plants served 48.2% of the population in these municipalities. Among the 755 municipalities at risk of marginalisation, 682 achieved 100% treatment of all wastewater. In eight municipalities: Aleksandrów (Lubelskie Voivodeship), Darłowo, Grzmiąca, Rymań and Sławoborze (Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship), Górowo Iławieckie and Tokmicko (Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship) and Stary Dzików (Podkarpackie Voivodeship) waste treatment plants were used by 100% of the population.

The effects of managing change in rural areas are not only reflected in consumption levels (measured indirectly by waste volume and composition and media usage, including water, as indicated by the wastewater volume) but also in the financial condition of rural and urban-rural municipalities.

Based on the document "Report on the activities of Regional Audit Chambers and the budget execution by local government units in 2023" (Polish: *Sprawozdanie z działalności regionalnych izb obrachunkowych i wykonania budżetu przez jednostki samorządu terytorialnego w 2023 roku*)²⁸, it can be concluded that in 2022, the budget outcome for rural municipalities was negative, amounting to minus PLN 0.8 billion and resulting from an expenditure surplus over revenues. Out of 66 subregions encompassing rural municipalities, 22 reported a positive financial result, accounting for 33% of all rural municipalities, which means that two-thirds of rural municipalities ended the year under review with a deficit. For comparison, in 2015, positive budget outcomes for rural municipalities were recorded in 58 subregions. Comparing 2022 to 2015

28. Krajowa Rada Regionalnych Izb Obrachunkowych, *Sprawozdanie z działalności regionalnych izb obrachunkowych i wykonania budżetu przez jednostki samorządu terytorialnego w 2023 roku*, Warszawa 2024, <https://samorząd.pap.pl/kategoria/finanse/dlug-przecietnej-gminy-juz-srednio-15-tys-zl-na-mieszkanca>, access 5.12.2024.

shows that the financial situation of rural areas has significantly worsened, as more municipalities fell into debt or deepened their existing financial difficulties.

In 2022, the largest budget surpluses were recorded in the Koszalin subregion (PLN +58.7 million) and the Szczecinek-Pyrzyce subregion (PLN +46.1 million) within the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship. Conversely, the largest budget deficit occurred in the Eastern Warsaw subregion in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (PLN -76.4 million) and the Bydgoszcz-Toruń subregion in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (PLN -67.5 million).

Municipal debt typically arises from the accumulation of annual budget deficits over an extended period, less often from a sudden, one-off event such as a flood. According to the previously mentioned document, "Report on the activities of Regional Audit Chambers and the budget execution by local government units in 2023", the number of debt-free municipalities in Poland reached 146 in 2023, representing only 5.9% of all municipalities, compared to 133 debt-free municipalities in 2022 (5.34%), which indicates a slight, albeit measurable, improvement.

In 2023, the average municipal debt per capita nationwide amounted to PLN 1,531, an increase of PLN 190 compared to the previous year. The highest per capita debt levels were observed in municipalities of the following voivodeships: Dolnośląskie Voivodeship – PLN 2,181, Pomorskie Voivodeship – PLN 1,834, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship – PLN 1,748, Mazowieckie Voivodeship – PLN 1,646, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship – PLN 1,627, and Małopolskie Voivodeship – PLN 1,580. In contrast, the lowest per capita debt levels, nearly half of the highest, were found in municipalities of the Podlaskie Voivodeship – PLN 1,127.

According to a report by the Regional Audit Chamber, in 2023, per capita debt of up to PLN 500 was recorded in 455 municipalities, representing 18.9% of all such local government units (compared to 490 municipalities, or 20.3%, in the previous year). Meanwhile, in 2023, 483 municipalities (20%) had per capita debts ranging from PLN 500 to PLN 1,000 (in 2022 – 560 municipalities, or 23.2%), and another 432 municipalities (17.9%) had debts between PLN 1,000 and PLN 1,500 (compared to 451, or 18.7%, in the previous year).

In 310 municipalities (12.9%), the debt level was within the range of PLN 1,500–2,000 (compared to 328 municipalities, or 13.6%, in 2022), while debt levels between PLN 2,000 and PLN 3,000 were present in 369 municipalities, or 15.3% of the total (compared to 324, or 13.4%, in the previous year). Debt exceeding PLN 3,000 per capita was reported in 216 municipalities (9%, up from 125 the year before), including 67 municipalities with debt exceeding PLN 4,000 (compared to 43 in 2022).

Regarding the settlement network of rural areas, there were 52,400 rural localities in Poland on 31 December 2022, which, due to administrative changes between 2015

and 2022, presents a decrease by 166. In 2022, the average rural locality had a population of 292, one more than in 2015, and the largest average population in rural localities was found in the Małopolskie Voivodeship (917 people) and Śląskie Voivodeship (816), while the smallest was in the Podlaskie Voivodeship (119), Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (145), Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (174), and Łódzkie Voivodeship (182). At the subregional level, the highest average population per rural locality was observed in the Tychy subregion of the Śląskie Voivodeship (2,408) and the lowest in the Suwałki subregion of the Podlaskie Voivodeship (107), and the Ełk subregion of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (113). Between 2015 and 2022, an increase in this indicator was observed in seven voivodeships: Dolnośląskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Pomorskie, Śląskie and Wielkopolskie.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis conducted in this article confirm the main hypothesis that assessments of change management in rural areas and evaluations of the multidirectional effects of these changes are significantly divergent. A review of various publicly available information sources, along with reflections on the evaluations they contain, facilitated the achievement of the initial objective. Selected changes occurring in Polish rural areas were identified based on opinions, and some of the effects of these changes were assessed, as expressed in various programming documents, reporting materials, statistical studies and academic literature.

The problem identified at the outset underscores a significant challenge faced by any process of standardisation and universalisation, particularly in efforts to unify the criteria for evaluating rural areas, their transformations, and the impacts of these changes. A unified set of characteristics for an objective image of rural areas has yet to be developed, but a review of assessments indicates that this image continues to evolve – from an idyllic vision of rural life, through an overly optimistic perspective of increasing wealth driven by EU funds, to a depiction of rural areas at risk of permanent marginalisation and severe indebtedness among rural and urban-rural municipalities in Poland.

A significant portion of rural areas (as highlighted in Tables 3 and 4) has been classified as at risk of marginalisation or at risk of permanent marginalisation. Due to the loss of their functions, these areas are reducing their developmental potential, thus widening the developmental gap compared to other regions. It is therefore crucial to continue analysing additional available information sources, beyond those

utilised in this article, and to engage in critical discussions regarding the evaluations they contain.

So far, no model has been developed to reflect the mechanism of changes that would make the effects easier to identify and the evaluations more standardised, although gathering as many assessments of these changes as possible may lay the foundation for creating such a model.

Further research is necessary, since questions such as the following remain unanswered:

1. How profound is the transformation in the nature of housing, sources of livelihood and residents' lifestyles towards the urbanisation of rural areas?
2. What challenges are associated with, and will arise from, the need to modernise residential buildings, taking into account environmental and climate requirements as well as the energy transition?
3. How will the decreasing significance of agricultural land use and food production affect the condition of rural areas, particularly in the context of the Green Deal Policy and new trade agreements?
4. What efforts are rural areas, especially those at risk of marginalisation, undertaking to restore their environmental-creative, cultural and tourism-related functions?
5. At the regional, subregional and municipal levels, are there updated development strategy documents or at least revitalisation programmes adapted to the new environmental conditions?

The research questions outlined above give rise to research tasks that are challenging not only due to methodological reasons.

Based on the findings of the analysis conducted in this article, several important cognitive and practical conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) assessments of change management in rural areas are divergent, and evaluations of the effects of these changes range from highly optimistic to extremely pessimistic, with the latter often based on statistical and reporting data;
- 2) in light of statistical and reporting data, the depiction of rural areas highlights significant risks;
- 3) the following factors point to threats facing rural areas:
 - all sixteen voivodeships have rural and urban-rural poviats and municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation;
 - at the national level, marginalisation affects municipalities in over half of the poviats (56.03%);
 - nine voivodeships have a poviat marginalisation rate higher than the national average;

- at the national level, marginalisation affects over 30% of all municipalities; according to the named list in Table 4, these are primarily rural and urban-rural municipalities;
- eight voivodeships have a municipal marginalisation rate exceeding the national average.

Reports such as “Rural Areas in Poland” by Statistics Poland (2024) and “Report on the activities of Regional Audit Chambers and the budget execution by local government units in 2023” (Polish: *Sprawozdanie z działalności regionalnych izb obrachunkowych i wykonania budżetu przez jednostki samorządu terytorialnego w 2023 roku*) prepared by the National Council of Regional Audit Chambers indicate an increase in debt levels per capita year by year. Conversely, the expected increase in rural residents’ consumption, which would stem from improved material conditions, is contradicted by low per capita municipal waste generation indicators. There are, of course, interpretations that view this phenomenon as a positive outcome of growing ecological awareness among rural residents rather than evidence of low consumption and poverty, manifesting in minimal waste production. However, to resolve this interpretative dispute, further research is essential.

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Appendix 1

Table 4. Municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation according to the updated list

Voivodeships	Number of poviats, including those with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipalities, including at-risk ones	Municipalities
Dolnośląskie	13	30	Gromadka, Pęcław, Jemielno, Góra, Niechlów, Kowary, Duszniki-Zdrój, Nowa Ruda, Bystrzyca Kłodzka, Łądek-Zdrój, Lewin Kłodzki, Międzyzlesie, Radków, Stronie Śląskie, Świeradów-Zdrój, Leśna, Mirsk, Przemków, Przeworno, Boguszów-Gorce, Bardo, Kamieniec Ząbkowicki, Stoszowice, Ziębice, Złoty Stok, Zawidów, Pieńsk, Węglińiec, Wojcieszów, Świerzawa
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	17	51	Koneck, Jabłonowo Pomorskie, Osiek, Świdziebnia, Bobrowo, Brzozie, Papowo Biskupie, Radomin, Zbójno, Łasin, Gruta, Radzyń Chełmiński, Rogóźno, Świecie nad Osą, Dąbrowa Biskupia, Bobrowniki, Chrostkowo, Dobrzyń nad Wisłą, Kikół, Lipno, Tłuchowo, Wielgie, Dąbrowa, Jeziora Wielkie, Kcynia, Mrocza, Bytów, Dobrze, Osieć, Piotrków Kujawski, Topólka, Rypin (41201), Brzuze, Rogowo, Rypin (41204), Skrwilno, Wąpielsk, Sośno, Więcbork, Nowe, Gostycyn, Kęsowo, Dębowa Łąka, Książki, Płużnica, Boniewo, Chodecz, Izbica Kujawska, Lubień Kujawski, Lubraniec, Janowiec Wielkopolski
Lubelskie	18	140	Drelów, Janów Podlaski, Kodeń, Konstantynów, Leśna Podlaska, Łomazy, Międzyrzec Podlaski, Piszczac, Rokitno, Rossosz, Sławatycze, Sosnowka, Terespol, Tucznia, Wisznice, Zalesie, Aleksandrów, Biłgoraj, Biszczka, Frampol, Goraj, Józefów, Księżpol, Łukowa, Obsza, Potok Górny, Terespol, Turobin, Białopole, Dorohusk, Dubienka, Kamień, Leśniowice, Rejowiec Fabryczny, Ruda-Huta, Sawin, Siedliszcze, Wierzbica, Wojsławice, Żmudź, Rejowiec, Dołhobyczów, Horodło, Hrubieszów, Mircze, Trzeszczany, Uchanie, Werbkowice, Batorz, Chrzanów, Dzwola, Godziszów, Modliborzyce, Potok Wielki, Fajslawice, Gorzków, Izbica, Krasnystaw, Kraśniczyn, Łopiennik Górny, Rudnik, Siennica Różana, Żółkiewka, Annopol, Dzierzkowice, Gościeradów, Kraśnik, Szastarka, Trzydnik Duży, Urzędów, Wilkołaz, Zakrzówek, Abramów, Jeziorany, Kock, Michów, Ostrówek, Uścimów, Wysokie, Zakrzew, Adamów, Krzywda, Serokomla, Stanin, Stoczek Łukowski, Trzebieszów, Wojcieszków, Wola Mysłowska, Chodel, Józefów nad Wisłą, Karczmiska, Łaziska, Wilków, Dębowa Kłoda, Jabłoń, Milanów, Podedwórze, Siemień, Sosnowica, Żyrzyn, Borki, Czemierniki, Kąkolewnica, Komarówka Podlaska, Ulan-Majorat, Wołyn, Kłoczew, Nowodwór, Ułęż, Bełzec, Jarczów, Krynica, Lubycza Królewska, Łaszczów, Rachanie, Susiec, Tarnawatka, Telatyn, Tomaszów Lubelski, Tyszowce, Ulhówek, Hanna, Hańsk, Stary Brus, Wola Uhruska, Wyryki, Adamów, Grabowiec, Komarów-Osada, Krasnobród, Łabunie, Miączyn, Nielisz, Radecznica, Sitno, Skierbieszów, Stary Zamość, Sułów, Szczepieszyn, Zwierzyniec

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Voivodeships	Number of poviats, including those with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipalities, including at-risk ones	Municipalities
Lubuskie	7	15	Bytnica, Gubin, Przytoczna, Skwierzyna, Kolsko, Dobiegniew, Łagów, Gozdnicza, Małomice, Niegosławice, Szprotawa, Wymiarki, Brody, Lubsko, Tuplice
Łódzkie	13	18	Dąbrowice, Krośniewice, Łanięta, Nowe Ostrowy, Oporów, Żychlin, Daszyna, Grabów, Uniejów, Masłowice, Przedbórz, Wielgomłyny, Żytno, Sadkowiec, Błaszki, Burzenin, Goszczanów, Klonowa
Małopolskie	8	29	Bolesław, Olesno, Gręboszów, Mędrzechów, Radgoszcz, Szczucin, Lipinki, Łużna, Dobra, Kamienica, Łukowica, Mszana Dolna, Niedźwiedź, Grybów, Korzenna, Łabowa, Łącko, Piwniczna-Zdrój, Podegrodzie, Ryto, Czarny Dunajec, Czorsztyn, Ochotnica Dolna, Szaflary, Koszyce, Ciężkowice, Wietrzychowice, Szerzyny, Biały Dunajec
Mazowieckie	23	101	Radzanów, Głinojeck, Gołymín-Ośrodek, Grudusk, Ojrzeń, Trojanów, Sanniki, Szczawin Kościelny, Gniewosów, Chotcza, Ciepeliów, Rzecznów, Sienno, Solec nad Wisłą, Huszlew, Olszanka, Platerów, Sarnaki, Stara Kornica, Karniewo, Krasnosielc, Płoniawy-Bramura, Rzewnie, Sypniewo, Szelków, Dzierzgowo, Lipowiec Kościelny, Strzegowo, Stupsk, Szeńsk, Baranowo, Czarnia, Goworowo, Kadzidło, Lelis, Łyse, Myszyniec, Troszyn, Andrzejewo, Boguty-Pianki, Nur, Stary Lubotyń, Szulborze Wielkie, Wąsewo, Zaręby Kościelne, Bulkowo, Drobin, Wyszogród, Czerwińsk nad Wisłą, Dzierżążnia, Naruszewo, Raciąż, Chorzele, Czernice Borowe, Jednorożec, Krasne, Krzynowłoga Mała, Przasnysz, Borkowice, Gielniów, Klwów, Odrzywół, Potworów, Rusinów, Wieniawa, Gzy, Iłża, Pionki, Korczew, Mordy, Paprotnia, Przesmyki, Wodynie, Gozdowo, Rościszewo, Szczutowo, Zawidz, Bielany, Ceranów, Jabłonna Lacka, Kosów Lacki, Repki, Sabnie, Sterdyń, Chlewiska, Mirów, Grębków, Korytnica, Miedzna, Sadowne, Stoczek, Starachówka, Kazanów, Policzna, Przylęk, Tczów, Biezuń, Kluczbork-Osada, Lubowidz, Lutocin, Siemiątkowo,
Opolskie	7	15	Baborów, Branice, Cisek, Pawłowiczki, Wołczyn, Domaszowice, Świerczów, Wilków, Kamiennik, Otmuchów, Paczków, Pakosławice, Gorzów Śląski, Radłów, Murów,

Continued on the next page.

Table 4. Municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation according to the updated list (cont.)

Voivodeships	Number of poviats, including those with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipalities, including at-risk ones	Municipalities
Podkarpackie	18	65	Czarna, Lutowska, Domaradz, Dydnia, Haczów, Jasienica Rosielska, Nozdrzec, Jodłowa, Chłopice, Laszki, Pruchnik, Radymno, Rokietnica, Rożwienica, Wiązownica, Brzyska, Dębowiec, Kołaczyce, Krempna, Nowy Żmigród, Osiek Jasielski, Skołyszyn, Tarnowiec, Dzikowiec, Majdan Królewski, Chorkówka, Dukla, Jaśliska, Baligród, Olszanica, Kuryłówka, Cieszanów, Horyniec-Zdrój, Lubaczów, Narol, Oleszyce, Stary Dzików, Wielkie Oczy, Gawłuszowice, Harasiuki, Jarocin, Jeżowe, Krzeszów, Ulanów, Bircza, Dubiecko, Fredropol, Krzywca, Stubno, Adamówka, Gać, Jawornik Polski, Kańczuga, Przeworsk, Zarzecze, Wielopole Skrzyńskie, Dynów, Kamień, Bukowsko, Komańcza, Tyrawa Wołoska, Bojanów, Radomyśl nad Sanem, Zaklików, Niebylec
Podlaskie	14	69	Augustów, Bargłów Kościelny, Lipsk, Sztabin, Michałowo, Poświętne, Bielsk Podlaski, Boćki, Brańsk, Orla, Rudka, Wyszki, Grajewo, Radziłów, Rajgród, Szczuczyn, Wąsosz, Hajnówka, Białowieża, Czeremcha, Czyże, Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele, Narew, Grabowo, Kolno, Mały Płock, Stawiski, Turośl, Jedwabne, Miastkowo, Przytuły, Wizna, Zbójna, Goniądz, Jasionówka, Jaświły, Knyszyn, Krypno, Trzcianne, Giby, Krasnopol, Puńsk, Sejny, Drohiczyn, Dziadkowice, Grodzisk, Mielnik, Milejczyce, Nurzec-Stacja, Perlejewo, Siemiatycze, Dąbrowa Białostocka, Janów, Krynki, Kuźnica, Korycin, Nowy Dwór, Sidra, Suchowola, Szudziałowo, Filipów, Przerośl, Rutka-Tartak, Szypliszki, Wiżajny, Klukowo, Kobylin-Borzmy, Rutki
Pomorskie	11	33	Czarna Dąbrówka, Kołczygłowy, Miastko, Trzebielino, Tuchomie, Konarzyny, Czarne, Człuchów, Debrzno, Koczała, Rzeczenica, Karsin, Liniewo, Stara Kiszewa, Gardeja, Prabuty, Ryjewo, Lichnowy, Damnica, Dębica Kaszubska, Głowczyce, Kępice, Potęgowo, Smołdzino, Osieczna, Skórcz, Gniew, Morzeszczyn, Łęczyce, Dzierzgoń, Mikołajki Pomorskie, Stary Dzierzgoń, Stary Targ
Śląskie	3	4	Koniecpol, Irządze, Rajcza, Ujszoły
Świętokrzyskie	12	40	Gnojno, Imielno, Nagłowice, Oksa, Słupia, Bejsce, Czarnocin, Opatowiec, Skalbierz, Bieliny, Bodzentyn, Łagów, Łopuszno, Mniów, Nowa Słupia, Raków, Fałków, Ruda Maleniecka, Baćkowice, Iwaniska, Lipnik, Sadowie, Tarłów, Wojciechowice, Bałtów, Waśniów, Działoszyce, Dwikozy, Klimontów, Koprzywnica, Obrazów, Samborzec, Wilczyce, Zawichost, Mirzec, Łubnice, Oleśnica, Moskorzew, Radków, Secemin

Voivodeships	Number of poviats, including those with at-risk municipalities	Number of municipi- palities, including at-risk ones	Municipalities
Warmińsko- Mazurskie	19	66	Górowo Iławeckie (280102), Bartoszyce, Bisztynek, Górowo Iławeckie (280105), Sępólno, Braniewo, Lelkowo, Płoskinia, Pieniężno, Wilczęta, Działdowo, Lidzbark, Płościna, Rybno, Godkowo, Markusy, Młynary, Rychliki, Tolkmicko, Kalinowo, Prostki, Stare Juchy, Miłki, Ryn, Wydminy, Kisielice, Lubawa, Susz, Zalewo, Barciany, Kętrzyn, Korsze, Reszel, Srokowo, Kiwity, Lubomino, Orneta, Mikołajki, Piecki, Sorkwity, Janowiec Kościelny, Janowo, Kozłowo, Biskupiec, Grodziczno, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Kowale Oleckie, Świętajno, Wieliczki, Jeziorany, Kolno, Świętki, Dąbrówno, Grunwald, Małdyty, Miłakowo, Biała Piska, Orzysz, Ruciane-Nida, Dźwierzuty, Rozogi, Wielbark, Banie Mazurskie, Dubeninki, Budry, Pozezdrze,
Wielkopolskie	9	19	Drawsko, Wielen, Rychtal, Babiak, Chodów, Olszówka, Przedecz, Wierzbiniek, Wilczyn, Chrzypsko Wielkie, Czajków, Białosłowie, Łobżenica, Damasławek, Wapno, Jastrowie, Lipka, Okonek, Tarnówka
Zachodnio- pomorskie	17	60	Białogard, Karlino, Tychowo, Bierzwnik, Drawno, Krzęcin, Pelczyce, Recz, Czaplinek, Drawsko Pomorskie, Kalisz Pomorski, Wierchow, Złocieniec, Brojce, Karnice, Ploty, Trzebiatów, Banie, Cedynia, Moryń, Trzcińsko-Zdrój, Widuchowa, Świerżno, Wolin, Rymań, Bobolice, Polanów, Boleszkowice, Nowogródek Pomorski, Nowe Warpno, Kozielice, Przelewice, Warnice, Darłowo (321301), Darłowo (321303), Malechowo, Postomino, Sławno, Dobrzany, Dolice, Ińsko, Marianowo, Barwice, Biały Bór, Grzmiąca, Szczecinek, Bieżno, Połczyn-Zdrój, Rąbino, Sławoborze, Świdwin, Człopa, Mirosławiec, Tuczno, Wałcz, Dobra, Łobez, Radowo Małe, Resko, Węgorzyno

Source: Own study based on the updated list of municipalities at risk of permanent marginalisation, file:///C:/Users/48516/Downloads/Zaktualizowana_lista_gmin_zagro%C5%BConych_trwa%C5%82%C4%85_marginalizacji%C4%85_programowanie_2021-2027-1.pdf, access 12.11.2024.