

## ASSESSMENT OF THE FUNCTIONING OF COMMUNES IN THE OPINION OF VILLAGE HEADS USING EXAMPLES OF SELECTED COMMUNES: JANÓW PODLASKI AND PRZYWIDZ

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the assessment presented below is to determine the level of functioning of communes in the opinion of village heads on the basis of selected aspects such as commune management, the creation of a vision and strategy for the commune, and the introduction of modern management concepts. This assessment will be used at a later stage to formulate directions for further action for the selected communes and the possibility of making changes in specific areas of their functioning.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research results presented herein are based on surveys conducted in 2021 and 2022 in two rural communes: Janów Podlaski and Przywidz. In addition to the key questions, the survey questionnaire included a summary that included questions related to the length of time a village head has served in this position and the length of time that person has lived in the commune. At present, the results of the surveys are no longer valid in the two communes, but some of the data are included in the paper to show the differences.

**Conclusions:** The results from the surveys provide important information for the local government, which should be used with the aim of improving the functioning of the commune and creating a concept of development in the future of the commune.

**Research limitations/implications:** In the following assessment, the opinions of village heads from two different communes located in different provinces of Poland are contrasted. It is advisable to carry out similar surveys in villages located in one district or province to assess the functioning of the commune from a similar social area.

**Social implications:** The results show a different perspective on the assessment of the functioning of communes from the point of view of village heads, who head villages which constitute communes' auxiliary units. An analysis of their point of view on commune management indicates the need for real change and taking into account the grassroots initiatives of commune residents, rather than top-down local government policies.

**Originality/value:** conducting surveys among village heads to obtain information about the functioning of communes is way to determine an indirect response that comes from the local community. The results of the study should be addressed to the executive and resolution-passing bodies of the commune-level government, which are responsible for the management and functioning of the lowest-level unit of local government.

**Keywords:** village head, rural commune, commune functioning, local government.

## 1. Introduction

The assessment of a commune as a local government unit in the opinion of village heads provides important feedback in the context of the organization and functioning of the commune. Village heads serve as the executive body in villages, which are a commune's auxiliary unit. From the subject's point of view, it is important that village heads are elected by the village meeting formed by the local community, which means that they are residents of the specific village, very often since birth. The research results come from a survey conducted in 2021-2022 on a group of village heads from the Janów Podlaski and Przywidz communes. The comparative analysis allowed the same issues to be presented in the opinion of the village heads of the two communes. The respondents answered questions related to commune management, the introduction of modern management concepts, and the creation of a vision and strategy for the commune, among other things. The survey also included a summary that, in addition to the gender, age and education of the village heads, was intended to indicate the length of time they have been in office and the length of time they have lived in the commune.

The choice of the two municipalities was based on finding similar rural municipalities with similar territory in terms of size, number of villages in the municipality, similar budgets, but located in an extremely different part of Poland. Such a choice made it possible to find, in the course of research and analysis, similarities that would not coincide with belonging to a single county or province. The most important research questions posed in the study were to determine how village heads, as representatives of rural communities, perceive the functioning of their municipalities in terms of governance. To what extent do the village heads perceive potential and possible changes, and which changes should be taken into account by the municipal authorities. It was assumed that village heads, as long-time representatives of rural communities, have a broader understanding of the relevant needs affecting the functioning of individual villages, as well as the municipality as a whole.

In order to introduce the results obtained, an important procedure is to place the elements of management and functioning of a commune in local government units. The first chapter introduces basic issues such as the role, the tasks, and ways in which a commune functions. The second chapter presents key information related to the village head, the functions he or she performs in the local community, as well as his or her role and tasks in a commune as a unit of local government. The last chapter presents the results of the survey, which is an assessment of the functioning of each commune.

An important piece of information is that opinions on the functioning of a commune and its needs come mostly from village heads with many years of experience. The opinions of village heads on the direction of development and any changes in its functioning apply only to the communes in which they live. This study, which focuses on the assessment of the functioning of communes as perceived by village heads, should be continued in the future to monitor and check the opinions not only of village heads, but also of communes' residents.

## 2. Elements of management in local government units

The origins of local government in Poland do not have a uniform history based permanently on the legal and political institutions known today. A clear turning point in Europe was the French Revolution. At that time, the partitioned Poland had local government units that were different for each legislation. On the basis of these, Polish public-law solutions were created (Leoński, 2006).

In the history of the Polish state, it is important to note the predominance of the social factor, i.e. the reliance of the system of government on political freedom, which was also an obstacle to the formation of a strong state organization (Nowacka, 2010). In classical doctrine, the most important feature of local government is its independence based on the exclusion of hierarchical subordination to the central government. The reconstruction of local government was one of the main stages in the creation of the new state (Nowacka, 2010). Eventually, a concept that embraced the idea of local management was restored, with the transformation of the existing elements, i.e., the dualism of local administration, which consisted of two divisions: the governmental one built on the principle of centralism and based on official forms, and the local government one created mainly according to the principle of decentralization and subsidiarity (Marchaj, 2016). The local government division, operating at three levels of the country's administrative division, was intended by design to be a strong pillar of the state. A presentation of the background of the formation of local government administration will show the place and area of functioning of the villages. In the context of the entire local government administration, a village is a single element that forms communes and then districts and provinces. The area in which a modern commune is located results from the role it has been given in public administration. In the simplest terms, a commune is located between, on the one hand, citizens and their needs, which it should, in principle, fulfil (its own tasks), and, on the other hand, tasks mandated top-down, as well as legal or political issues. The functioning of self-government is treated as self-organization of local communities (Bober et al., 2013).

More specifically, at least seven areas can be identified that have a significant impact on the operation and organization of the commune government. In addition to the impact of individual factors on a commune, it should be noted that all of the following areas can affect the local government at the same time. This not only causes disruptions in the operation and management of a commune, but can also lead to long-term threats in its external environment, producing a negative image in the different categories.

The dependence of the local government unit in organizational matters concerns the structures created and the effectiveness of procedures, as well as the planning of work and the timely performance of a commune's tasks. The second area is related to financial issues: debt, loans taken by a commune, and financial liquidity. It determines to a large extent a commune's development opportunities. Another category is human resources, which includes

people's knowledge, competence, ability to handle the tasks at hand and selecting the right people to perform the tasks. This is a critical point in the operation and organization of a commune. The main element of the area related to equipment and information is information as a source of knowledge. The transfer of information and proper communication among employees facilitate the performance of tasks. The next area concerning political issues covers the entire political cycle including elections and the possibility of a change in power. The opposition's actions are real factors that disrupt the decision-making process. Legal matters regulate the work and tasks of a commune, which must act in accordance with the law, thus influencing the regulation of the activities undertaken. The last area that can introduce disruptive factors is stakeholders and citizens, i.e. their negative opinions about the work of an office, dissatisfaction with the service or disagreement with a commune's actions (Kurczewska, Kurzępa-Dedo, 2018).

The established bodies of commune-level local government, i.e., the commune head and the commune council, work for the benefit of the local self-governing community by performing public tasks specified in the Act on commune-level self-government (Act on commune-level self-government). The commune head is the executive body in a commune, who represents it externally and directs its work; consequently, he or she is the superior of the office's employees and the heads of commune's organizational units. His or her tasks include, in particular, preparing draft resolutions, managing the commune's property and, which is important for efficient management, hiring and firing managers of the commune's organizational units (Act on commune-level self-government).

Local government units, as a result of the decentralization of management, have been given certain obligations toward the local community they are required to fulfil. The competence of the local government in matters related to duties includes (Gawkowski, 2017):

- performing the functions of local authority and local administration,
- building community bonds,
- two-level implementation of goals, including the local and supra-local levels,
- stimulating local development and supporting the economy, and
- development based on the functioning of households.

The exclusive competence of the commune council, which is the legislative body, primarily includes the adoption of the commune statute, the adoption and approval of the commune head's activity reports, the adoption and approval of the commune's budget, the adoption of the study and directions for spatial development, and the adoption of development programs. The commune council controls the activities of the commune head and the commune's organizational and auxiliary units. For this purpose, it appoints an audit committee, whose primary task is to perform control activities understood as comparing the actual state (as it is) to the desired state (as it should be) (Act on commune-level self-government).

The interdependence of a commune's bodies determines its work for the benefit of the public. The performance of local tasks is aimed directly at their beneficiaries, i.e. the residents of the community. The efficient performance of tasks by commune bodies boils down to the performance of public tasks.

The residents of a commune form a self-governing community within a defined territory, thus performing public tasks on their behalf and under their own responsibility (Wykretowicz). This task becomes a privilege and an opportunity to do many things in the managed area, which is to serve the general good. It also is a manifestation of a certain management maturity that, in addition to deciding what is to be done, is responsible for the consequences of those acts. The responsibility that results from the performance public tasks becomes the aftermath of the power bestowed by citizens through elections. It unquestionably requires ethical behaviour, guided by morality and the common good. The possession of bestowed power is the result of the phenomenon of power dispersion, or more precisely, the transfer of this power in a democratic system (Ciborowski, 2014).

Managing people requires certain personality traits, specialized knowledge and qualifications. It is a concept that combines issues not only from the fields of organization and management theory, but also from the fields of psychology and sociology (Mroziowski, 2005). In the context of the local government, leadership styles shape to some extent the development and functioning of local government administration and thus determine its shape.

The definition of management that captures its full meaning is the one proposed by Stoner and Wankel. It views management as the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the activities of an organization's members and using all of its other resources to achieve established goals (Stoner, Wankel, 1996). Management is an activity that seeks to influence other people by setting goals and the methods of their achievement, as well as informing and supporting them (Krawczyński, 2012).

The main premise in managing people is for the supervisor to enjoy his or her subordinates' respect. This is achieved when the manager acts in accordance with the rules and regulations of the organization. By setting a personal example, he or she brings order to the organization (Andrzejuk, 2007). The situational factors affecting the effectiveness of management include (Stoner, Wankel, 1996):

- the personality, experience and expectations of the manager,
- the supervisor's expectations and behaviour,
- the requirements and tasks,
- the organizational culture and principles of conduct,
- the characteristics, expectations and behaviour of subordinates,
- the expectations and behaviour of colleagues,
- politeness.

In addition to expert knowledge, emotional intelligence and leadership style, which derives from a person's psychological characteristics and personality, become important. In characterizing the above issue, it is impossible to separate the quality of managers' performance from their competence, skills and the ability not only to handle crises, but also to function among people. Setting high expectations is a result of the scope of duties and responsibilities arising from them.

The human management style reflects human nature, which affects the image of an institution, office or organization. The perspective showing the shaping of the image of the entire office by its representative (commune head, mayor, or president) becomes a huge challenge. By the way he or she acts, a supervisor shows whether he or she is charismatic and has subject-specific knowledge, how he or she behaves in difficult situations, and how he or she reacts to failures and crisis situations. His or her cooperation with employees and entities is also evaluated. The external environment adapts to the style of the supervisor, thus adopting some of his or her behaviour.

The environment of an organization and a commune is shaped in its internal and external areas. This perspective is important because there should be consistency of action and message between the two spheres. The coordination of activities is designed to integrate the activities of various departments in an organization. In many complex situations, it is necessary to obtain information and material support from other units (Thompson, 1967). The effectiveness of a commune's work depends on the level of coordination of activities and the mechanisms developed. It should be presumed that a higher level of coordinated action is conducive to the effective fulfilment of duties, obtaining higher development of the office's work and a certain practice that can be used in difficult situations.

The trends prevailing in the 21st century directing the development of institutions, including local government administration, toward a situation where it is the position occupied that determines a person's behaviour and decisions. The direction of development should be to look for and select people with knowledge, background and a certain vision of goals outlined at the outset. Such a person becomes a driving force for action, a coordinator of the entire institution and a decision maker regarding the direction of development (Dudziuk, 2016).

Regardless of the tasks set for communes, whether arising from their statutory duties or mandated tasks, the general indication is to take care of the development of a commune, as well as of the organization in the environment in which it functions. Organizational, social and human issues will not function properly if the concept of knowledge-based development is not taken into account in local government administration (Bugdol, 2011).

Knowledge management processes improve the overall functioning of administration, as long as they are applied in the long term despite possible problems in its initial implementation. Basic knowledge should be gained through and from people. The executive or resolution-passing bodies of a commune are unable to acquire such knowledge. The unit that plays a very important role is a village head, who improves the process of knowledge transfer from his or her village to the commune.

### 3. Basic information about the village head in local government units

A commune is the smallest unit of local government. Its tasks, the way it functions and the relationships that are formed directly affect citizens, which is not evident in higher-level units of local and regional government. The executive power in a commune is exercised by the commune head, who is elected for a period of 5 years with the possibility of one re-election. His or her tasks and responsibilities include not only matters related to the commune as a defined territory, but also to units that are statutorily subordinate to the commune. In his or her activities, the commune head is not alone. A commune has a commune council, which acts as a resolution-passing body, holds sessions and conducts the socio-economic policy (Act on commune-level self-government).

In a commune, which is made up of villages, an important but almost unnoticeable role is played by the village head. A village is an auxiliary unit of a commune, which is characteristic of rural areas. The resolution-passing body in a village hall is a village meeting, and the executive body is the village head. According to the statute of villages, anyone who enjoys the election right may become a candidate for a village head; specifically, the candidate must:

- be a Polish citizen or a citizen of another member state of the European Union,
- be at least 18 years old on the voting day,
- permanently reside in the specific village,
- the requirement of no criminal record may be introduced in addition.

The village head and the village council are elected by the permanent residents of the respective village in a secret and direct vote at a village meeting. Standing at the head of the village, he or she plays a representative and advisory role to the commune head in the day-to-day affairs of the village. The village head is supported in his or her activities by the village council. The village head enjoys the legal protection afforded to public officials (Act on commune-level self-government).

Auxiliary units also have the right to conduct the financial management of villages, the so-called village funds, which are maintained as part of commune budgets. The specific rules for the operation of villages are defined in local laws passed by the commune council. Within the framework of the principle of subsidiarity, commune-level local governments are also required to delegate certain competencies and tasks to their villages. Thus, the role of the village head in Polish communes is not limited to being a passive representative of the local community, but instead involves managing it.

The tasks and competencies of village heads that result directly from the principle of subsidiarity are included in the statute of the respective village and the duty to implement them rests with the village head (Gołębiowska, 2017b). Its main local government tasks include:

- organizing village meetings and implementing resolutions;
- managing commune and communal property.

In terms of administrative tasks, the village head:

- collects local taxes on the basis of a resolution of the commune council<sup>1</sup> (Gołębiowska, 2017a) - forest, agricultural and real estate taxes from individuals, a percentage of which he or she withholds as a salary;
- delivery of tax orders;
- informing the residents about future plans and decisions made; and
- coordinating intervention work in the village (Gołębiowska, 2017b).

The key role of village heads in organizational matters is to organize and coordinate the work of residents for the benefit of the village; it is not uncommon for the village head to be the initiator of activities, and to act as a liaison between the residents of the village and the higher-level government.

The functions and responsibilities of a village head in the perspective of a 4-year term have primarily local importance. The community of a village elects as its representatives people who are effective organizers and their activities are centred around stimulating local activity. At present village heads in communes are no longer forced to accept the results of their election. Currently, the candidates are people of different ages, with different experience, both men and women. It is not a closed group in which certain requirements must be met. Maturity and the support of a community that pays attention to the future village head seeing him or her as a good steward gives a huge advantage in the elections for the position of a village head. It should be noted that to a large extent the office of the village head is an activity for the benefit of the public, and village heads perform all activities in their spare time from their primary employment. This means that they perform their function all the time regardless of the day of the week. In the conducted study, the length of the terms of elected village heads in both communes is worth noting. The public trust that residents have in their representatives is evident in the fact that they elect them for subsequent terms, which is up to 5 terms. Presumably, this is due to the close relationship that the village head forms with his or her fellow residents, who are his or her neighbours in the same village. Any objections or contentious issues are resolved in an ongoing manner and this promotes an open and developmental atmosphere.

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<sup>1</sup> As Gołębiowska A. explains, 'The statutes of villages often erroneously list tax collection among the tasks of a village head. It should be noted that the so-called "inkaso" (collection) is not among the duties of the village head, according to the judgement of the Supreme Administrative Court of January 11, 2008 (ref. II FSK 1526/06). Collection should be entrusted in a resolution of the commune council specifying the collector by name. Before adopting the resolution, the commune council must obtain the consent of the collector, in this case the village head. According to the cited judgement of the Supreme Administrative Court, a resolution of a commune's resolution-passing body cannot be supplemented with additional civil-law contracts, as they have no legal basis.'



The position of the village head varies depending on the perception of his or her role and function. In the residents' perspective, he or she is their neighbour, who collects taxes from time to time, informs about current issues related to the village, and becomes an intermediary for residents' information directed to the executive and resolution-passing bodies of the commune. He or she is an ordinary person who devotes his or her time to the support and development of small homelands. The reward of a village head is the awareness of work for the benefit of his or her place of residence and a percentage of the taxes he or she collects. It is noteworthy that even in a small villages where the percentage of taxes is small village heads work for years. By merely gaining experience and a better familiarity with working with commune authorities, they are able to more effectively manage organizational matters in the village. More and more of those occupying the position of a village head have completed higher education. After one term, many of them do not run in the next election because the position is not worth it in terms of finance or reputation. It is a socially beneficial activity, but there are no major benefits associated with it. In search of positive things, it is worth adding that under the Act on commune-level local government, a village chief enjoys the legal protection afforded to public officials (Act on commune-level local government).

From the perspective of commune authorities, the role and functions of a village head are seen in a much more formal aspect. A village head cooperates with the commune authorities in carrying out their own tasks and tasks delegated to the commune, and a village head's opinion and comments are the basis for analysing the regulations of the commune authorities concerning the village. The village head has the right to object if he or she sees violations of the vital interests of the residents of his or her village. According to the law, a village head:

- represents the village to the outside world,
- chairs the village council,
- convenes and presides at village meetings,
- participates in sessions of the commune council where he or she speaks on behalf of the village,
- takes executive action together with the village council in matters related to the implementation of resolutions of the village meeting.

It should be noted that a village head additionally:

- exercises direct ordinary management of village communal property and is legally responsible for it,
- submits to the commune head applications, proposals and initiatives in matters related to village property that exceed his and the village's powers of ordinary office.

The activities of a village head are based on interaction with other authorities with the aim ensure the health, protect the health and life of the population, take care of the proper sanitary conditions in the village and co-organize activities that directly prevent natural disasters (Gołębiowska, 2017b).

All the above-mentioned rights and duties of a village head are included in local laws, and the authorities of the auxiliary unit can only act in their scope. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, in the course of performance of the tasks of the village head, he or she has the right to rely on the assistance of the commune authorities, and in activities related to his or her function - on the village council.

The nature and role of a village head in the Polish rural areas has changed over the centuries. It seems unquestionable that his or her function in the local government system as an auxiliary unit of the commune has been preserved. A village head representing the interests of a village identifies with them much more strongly because they also concern him or her as a resident. The bond created between residents based on cultural, social and economic ties contributes to the smooth functioning of a commune as a whole. Village heads naturally shape the reality of their villages, and perhaps because of this, this position has remained unchanged despite the numerous changes of the political system.

The purpose of the study is to show the functioning of a commune in its specific section. The results of the study and the conclusions reached can provide a starting point for implementing changes in the two communes, and also can provide a starting point for analysing the situation in other rural communes in terms of their functioning.

#### **4. Own research – assumptions**

The following research results are from a survey conducted in 2021-2022 on a group of village heads in the following communes: Janów Podlaski and Przywidz. The choice of two communes that are located in different provinces was deliberate. The selection criterion was based, among other things, on such issues as rural communities, the number of villages and the area of the commune. Differences due to, among other things, geographic location, proximity to large urban metropolises and their impact on communes, as well as commune budgets, are factors that affect communes individually.

The Janów Podlaski commune is located in the Biała Podlaska district in the Lubelskie Province. There are 18 villages within its borders. The main city that influences the commune is Biała Podlaska. In addition, the Janów Podlaski commune functions in a border environment, with 8 of the 18 villages directly bordering the Belarusian border on the Bug River.

The other commune presented is the Przywidz commune. It is located in the Pomeranian Province, about 30 km from the Gdańsk urban agglomeration, on the border of the Tri-City Metropolitan Region. Thus, the commune functions in the zone of influence of the city and its tourism. The Przywidz commune consists of 18 villages. The commune is located in an area that is highly attractive to tourists in the Kashubian Lake District.

The questions addressed issues related to management in an organization, the introduction of modern management concepts and the creation of a vision and strategy for the commune. The survey also included a summary that, in addition to the gender, age and education of the village heads, was intended to indicate the length of time they have been in office and the length of time they have lived in the commune. This information was related to an effort to gain knowledge from the person serving as a village head whether he or she comes from the village or is an outsider. The answers obtained seem to be more valuable scientifically because they allow, through a comparative method, to obtain important information that can be used in the future.

The first area that was analysed concerned the nature of the function performed, based on the length of residence in the village and the length of time the person has served as a village head. The questions characterized the profile of village heads in terms of living in the village since birth or as a member of an immigrant population coming from other regions.

In the Janów Podlaski commune, the majority of 66.6% of village heads have lived in their villages since they were born. The percentage of members of an immigrant population who became village heads in the period of 10 to 25 years is 22%. When analysing this question in the Przywidz commune, it should be noted that for the most part these are people who came from other localities. As many as 77.8% of the village heads in the Przywidz commune have not lived in their village since birth. Only 22.2% of those persons serve as village heads in the village where they have lived since birth. Two conclusions can be drawn from the above results. The first is that village heads who have lived in their village since birth and work for its welfare treat these activities naturally. All management activities are focused on ensuring the proper functioning of the village. Another conclusion about the village heads who are members of the immigrant population is that they work for the benefit of their village as a result of their own choice. They had to learn the specific characteristics of the local community, and their knowledge or experience makes it possible for them to make a real impact on the functioning of the commune.

Another element that was clearly different in the two communes was the length of time the village heads served in their positions. In the Janów Podlaski commune, as many as 16.7% of respondents had held the post for 18 years or more, and 22.2% of the respondents had served as village heads for 13 to 17 years. As many as 16.7% of the respondents had been in office for 6 to 12 years. As many as 44.4% of the village heads at the time of completion of this survey had held the position for less than 5 years. The election of people to serve in this capacity in successive elections demonstrates trust, good performance of assigned duties, and constancy. If the respective person performs his or her tasks, the residents of the village do not feel the need to change the village head. In the Przywidz commune, 5.6% of the respondents had served in this position for 13 to 17 years, followed by a group of 16.7% of the respondents who had served in this position for 6 to 12 years. As many as 77.8% of the respondents at the time of the survey had served in this position for less than 5 years. If we assume that in order to perform

the function effectively, one must have knowledge and experience, then in the author's opinion both these qualities are equally important. A person who has served as a village head for 15 years has acquired both knowledge and experience. There are no specific requirements regarding being a candidate for the position of a village head. In this sense, the main context is the trust of local residents, who delegate to that person certain powers, and action on behalf of the community.

The questionnaire from the Janów Podlaski commune shows that 8 women and 10 men served as village heads in that commune. The percentage of the village heads in the age groups of 42 to 53 and 54 and over is 44% each. 11% of those serving as village heads are between 30 and 41 years old. There were no younger village heads. In 2024, after the new local elections, the gender of the village heads changed compared to the previous term of office, and there were 7 women and 11 men among them.

In the Przywidz commune, the position of the village head was held by 8 women and 10 men. The age of village heads in the commune is more diverse. 16.7% of those surveyed were between 18 and 29 years old, while 50% of those surveyed were between 30 and 50 years old. Similarly to the first commune, the percentage of village heads who were 50 or older was 33.3%. When analysing this question in the context of the residence of village heads in a given village, it should be noted that, for the most part, in the Przywidz commune, these are people who came from other localities. The data on the respondents presented herein showed some correlations arising from questions also related to the length of time a village head has been in office. An analysis of the above data from the Janów Podlaski commune shows that 2 people have completed higher education (11.1%), followed by 27.8% of people with vocational education, 9 people with secondary education, which is as much as 50% of the respondents, and 11.1% with elementary education. In the Przywidz commune, the village heads' education level is as follows: 55.6% of the respondents have completed higher education, 11.1% have completed vocational education, and 33.3% have completed secondary education. One can clearly see the differences in the levels of education and, consequently, the knowledge in various fields. It could be assumed that the answers given by the village heads from the Przywidz commune are based solely on general knowledge, and not on experience gained in the position of a village head.

The question regarding the development of a strategy and vision of the commune's goals was an important question in connection with the evaluation of the functioning of the two communes. None of the analysed communes had an up-to-date strategy. The last document in the Janów Podlaski commune was presented for the years 2007-2015. In the Przywidz commune, the development strategy was prepared for the years 2007-2013. From the point of view of the research conducted, obtaining information from representatives of auxiliary units regarding the possession of a commune strategy should be a signal for the authorities to start working on it. In both the Janów Podlaski commune and the Przywidz commune, 100% of the respondents felt that a commune goals strategy was needed.

The question of general changes in the management of local government administration was an attempt to diagnose changes in the overall management of the commune. The above question does not specify what changes would be made or in what areas. 50% of the respondents from the first commune said that such changes should be made. The remaining respondents (22.2%) said there was no such need. Only 3 people did not declare a specific position. In the other commune, the responses were as follows: 50% of the respondents declared that changes should be made in the management of the commune, and only 4 people (22.2%) said there was no need for such changes. 27.8% of the respondents could not say whether such changes were needed or not. In terms of the overall perception of changes, the results for the question indicate that in both communes a half of the village heads see the need for changes.

The question of introduction of modern management techniques in local government administration referred to an analysis and implementation of new management techniques. The question formulated in this way yielded the following responses: in the first commune, 83.3% of the respondents indicated that techniques to improve management in the commune were needed. In the other commune (Przywidz), 78.8% of the respondents felt that the introduction of modern techniques was needed. Importantly from the point of view of the research, only 1 person in the Janów Podlaski commune and 2 persons in the Przywidz commune said that modern management techniques were not needed in the commune administration. In both communes, only 2 people could not say whether it was necessary to implement management techniques.

The question related to the leadership style in local government administration was intended to assess to what extent leadership style affects the functioning of a commune. According to the respondents from the Janów Podlaski commune, leadership style is an important factor affecting the functioning of the commune - 100% of positive responses. In the Przywidz commune, 77.8% of the respondents considered leadership style as an important factor in building security.

The last question in the main part of the survey concerned the use of organizing procedures in local government administration and its impact on the creation of security. In the first commune, 100% of the respondents agreed that organizing procedures are an important element in creating security. In the Przywidz commune, 88.9% of the respondents said that organizing procedures are conducive to the proper functioning of the commune.

To summarize this chapter, the survey data requires assuming a margin of error regarding how the respondents themselves approached filling out the survey, and his or her reliability. All of this influences the final result for the individual questions and the overall perception of the answers. The results of the survey indicated a certain course of action to improve the functioning of the communes, such as working on the creation of commune development strategies or the application of modern management techniques. The village heads from both communes noted the need for factors aimed at improving the communes' work at the management and organizational levels. Some similarities are worth noting in the responses from

both communes regarding the need to introduce modern management techniques into commune administration. As originally assumed, one could expect that a commune, as a part of public administration, should be guided solely by the principles assigned to the state administration. Given the lack of major top-down organizational changes and the presence of ones that are only unofficially entrusted to commune authorities as individual powers and the possibility of adjusting the structure of the commune to its current needs, it should be concluded that commune authorities should exercise this power. In addition to sheer willingness, knowledge and introduction of the entire commune to the changes are important.

In conclusion, the assessment of the functioning of communes in the opinion of village heads is a source of action that the authorities of both communes should take into account. The executive bodies should be obliged to consult more widely with representatives of auxiliary units, which provide a voice concerning the proper and effective management of the commune as a defined territorial area. Experienced village heads, with a desire for local action, are increasingly the strength of villages. For generations, village heads have been the link between citizens and local government authorities. Their activities contribute significantly to the improvement of the management activities of local government units. Higher public awareness means a closer cooperation of the commune with the people and getting reliable feedback.

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