

SOCIAL ASPECT OF MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

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Purpose: The primary objective of this article is to conduct an in-depth analysis of sustainable development within the framework of local government management in Poland. The concept of sustainable development is examined across three fundamental dimensions: social, economic, and environmental. This study specifically addresses the social dimension, providing a focused analysis of its implementation.

Design/methodology/approach: Drawing upon a comprehensive literature review, the research posits the following hypothesis: Which areas of local government management are instrumental in the implementation of the social dimension of sustainable development?

Findings: Sustainability is an important element of management in local government units.

Research limitations/implications: It is limited to discussing only the main social aspects of management in local government.

Practical implications: The social aspects of management in local government are playing an increasingly important role in local government in Poland.

Social implications: Social and environmental education.

Originality/value: The article systematizes the concepts of management and sustainability in local government in Poland.

Keywords: Local government unit. Municipality. Management. Sustainability.

Category of the paper: Theoretical article.

1. Introduction

Local government units make rational decisions that require an analysis of the interrelationships and interdependencies that occur in these business entities. As special subjects of management, these units have: decision-making independence, their own administration, municipal property and funds. They operate not for profit, but instead perform public service activities for the benefit of the residents of the local government community. The need for management arises when performing collective activities in a given community. The ability to coordinate these activities and direct them properly significantly affects the achievement of the set goal. Management is a process that occurs in any organized collective.

Management has always accompanied human activities. It is the process of influencing the organization's resources to achieve its goals.

2. Sustainability in Local Government

Sustainability was first defined in 1987 in the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development under the title "Our Common Future" as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/PL/legal-content/glossary/sustainable-development.html>, 22.10.2024).

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) defined a model for sustainability in Agenda 2030, which was adopted by 193 countries. The concept of sustainability according to Agenda 2030 is "the modern modernization effort should focus on the eradication of poverty in all its forms, while achieving a range of economic, social and environmental goals" (http://www.un.org.pl/files/170/Agenda2030PL_pl-5.pdf, 22.10.2024).

The 2030 Agenda contains 17 Sustainability Goals and 169 tasks in the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The document is based on the 5 P's principle (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership). (http://www.un.org.pl/files/170/Agenda2030PL_pl-5.pdf, 22.10.2024).

The sustainability goals included in Agenda 2030 are:

- end poverty in all its forms everywhere,
- eliminate hunger, achieve food security and better nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture,
- ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,
- provide quality education for all and promote lifelong learning,
- achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,
- ensure access to water and sanitation for all through sustainable management of water resources,
- ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy,
- promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all,
- build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation,
- reduce inequality within and among countries,
- make cities and human settlements safe, stable, sustainable and inclusive,
- ensure consumption and production patterns,

- take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts,
- conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources,
- protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss,
- promote peaceful and inclusive societies, ensure access to justice for all, and build effective and accountable, inclusive institutions at all levels,
- revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (<https://kampania17celow.pl/cel-17-partnerstwa-na-rzecz-celow/>)

In Poland, the provision on sustainability was included in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, and it reads: “The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and inviolability of its territory, ensure the freedoms and rights of people and citizens and the security of citizens, guard the national heritage and ensure the protection of the environment, guided by the principle of sustainability” (art. 5 Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2.04.1997 z późniejszymi zmianami, Dz.U. nr 78 z 1997, poz. 483). One of the objectives of the European Union is sustainability, contained in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/PL/legal-content/glossary/sustainable-development-goals.html>, 22.10.2024).

The municipality's own tasks and the sustainability goals from Agenda 2030 overlap at the level of local government units. In June 2023, a report on the implementation of the Sustainability Goals in Poland was adopted by the Council of Ministers. Conclusions and challenges for the future according to the goals from Agenda 2030 on local government were selected (<https://www.gov.pl/web/rozwoj-technologia/monitoring-realizacji-agendy-2030>, 22.10.2024).

- Goal 1 – end poverty – continuing to implement social services for those in need of support in daily functioning (the sick, the disabled), providing care in family or family-like conditions to children and youth deprived of parental care.
- Goal 2 – zero hunger – adapting to climate change, diversifying food sources, expanding stockpiles, excessively exploiting natural sources, reducing food waste (mainly in households - community refrigerators and other local activities to prevent food waste).
- Goal 3 – good health and well-being – promoting proper lifestyle habits (reducing exposure to lifestyle risk factors), preventive measures, encouraging research, reducing disparities in access to medical services.
- Goal 4 – quality education – supporting lifelong learning (upskilling and re-skilling for all, including entrepreneurial skills and digital competencies), developing inclusive education as support for psychological and pedagogical clinics.
- Goal 5 – gender equality – introducing solutions to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life, including facilitating access to institutional forms of child care of

satisfactory quality and at an affordable price (nurseries, children's clubs, day care providers), supporting equality of women in social and public spaces and increasing women's awareness of potential areas of exclusion, institutional measures to support women's entrepreneurship.

- Goal 6 – clean water and sanitation – improving the ecological and chemical status of surface water, preventing environmental disasters, improving access to water for human consumption, especially for marginalized groups.
- Goal 7 – affordable and clean energy – developing low-carbon generation capacity, ensuring security of electricity supply, developing the electricity grid, supporting the development of renewable distributed energy and large-scale RES projects.
- Goal 8 – decent work and economic growth – improving business conditions, effectively stimulating development activity of companies, especially innovative activity, disseminating corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles, supporting employment support for people with different degrees of disability, promoting employment of people aged 50+.
- Goal 9 – industries, innovation and infrastructure – difficult situation of entrepreneurs in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic and inflation caused by the war in Ukraine (suspension or liquidation of SMEs).
- Goal 10 – reduced inequalities – using digital transformation to increase job opportunities that are not tied to location in different regions of the country, local development policies.
- Goal 11 – sustainable cities and communities – adapting all buildings to the requirements of energy efficiency, through thermal efficiency improvement, eliminating transport exclusion of non-urban areas, ensuring consistency of public transport schedules, integrating public transport in cities and their functional areas and ensuring that public transport is cheaper and as much as possible powered by renewable energy, improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, ensuring and supporting access to political and economic participation for disadvantaged groups, the exodus of people to the suburbs and chaotic suburbanization are a challenge for large cities in Poland, spatial planning as the basis for sustainability, urban planning, housing needs of large families, adapting to climate change, increasing the living comfort of city residents and their safety, smart transportation systems to improve commuter safety, reducing travel time, using the transportation network more efficiently.
- Goal 12 – responsible consumption and production – reducing consumption of natural resources and use of plastics, reducing the weight of waste sent to landfills, promoting wise use of resources and sustainability of communities in emergency situations by expanding sharing economy and closed-loop economy models.

- Goal 13 – climate action – raising public awareness of emission reduction and adaptation measures and increasing the involvement of residents in implemented local activities for environmental and climate protection, improving cooperation of local and regional authorities with the scientific community to improve the transfer of knowledge and technology, and increasing the participation of residents in activities for the benefit of local communities, increasing public confidence and sense of empowerment in activities for environmental and climate protection, improving access to financial resources for adaptation measures in an amount adequate to the specific needs of regions and municipalities, preserving and successively increasing the area of green areas in cities that fulfill important climatic, thermoregulatory, ventilation or hydrological functions.
- Goal 14 – life below water – managing the marine area sustainably, reducing nitrogen, phosphorus and pesticide emissions from agriculture as part of marine conservation, more effectively targeting agricultural subsidies for measures to prevent eutrophication of watercourses, changing eating habits to more sustainable ones.
- Goal 15 – life on land – improving the state of nature, reducing the increase in the scale of negative phenomena such as: urban heat islands, amplification of heat waves and flash floods or local flooding, by supporting local government units in the correct and reliable implementation of tasks for preserving and expanding green areas in cities, air quality monitoring, natural retention in cities.
- Goal 16 – peace, justice and strong institutions – ensuring an effective process of public consultation and involvement of social partners in the policy-making process in particular through the development of modern mechanisms of public participation, improvement of communication, social dialogue and civil dialogue and development of cooperation between public administration and NGOs requires continuous improvement, digitalization of public services.
- Goal 17 – partnerships for the goals – undertaking activities in areas that have priority for Polish development assistance – i.e. environment/climate and equal opportunities for women and men (<https://www.gov.pl/web/rozwoj-technologie/monitoring-realizacji-agendy-2030>, 22.10.2024).

The new goals outlined above were formulated on the basis of conclusions from the implemented and unrealized sustainability activities in local government in Poland to date.

3. Management in Local Government Units

Management concepts are embedded in a multi-layered social system, and thus are integrated “into a global network of socio-cultural, political, economic and other relationships” (Krzyżanowski 1994). In the developed management concept, the most important elements are the instruments, procedures and rules of management.

Management is the formulation of the purpose of action, planning, organizing, acquiring and deploying needed resources, organizing structures and verifying objectives (Zieleniewski, 1976)

J.A.F Stoner and Ch. Wankel define management as the process of planning, organizing, leading and inspecting the work of members of an organization and using all the available resources of the organization to achieve its goals (Stoner, 2011).

Ricky W. Griffin believes that management is a set of activities (including planning and decision-making, organizing, leading, i.e., managing people, and controlling) directed at the organization's resources (human, financial, material, and informational) and performed with the intention of achieving the organization's intended goals efficiently and effectively (Griffin, 1998). Various definitions of the concept of management emphasize different components of this notion.

According to Stanisław Sudoł, the term "management" can be defined in various ways depending on what is considered the most important aspect of management (the definition should not be too lengthy) while meeting the following conditions:

- management is a professional managerial activity where the source of authority of the manager over the managed individuals is ownership of resources or the right to represent this ownership on behalf of the manager,
- it is a process taking place within an organization (institution) regardless of its legal form, size, spatial structure, or type of activity, which is bound together by a common goal,
- the managed organization possesses the necessary human, material, and non-material resources, which are utilized to achieve the organization's goals,
- the governing body of the organization (the authority) influences its functioning and development by performing managerial functions (Sudoł, 2019).

The residents of the municipality form a self-governing community by law and reside in the relevant territory. The municipality performs public tasks in its own name and on its own responsibility, and has legal personality (art. 1, 2 ustawa o samorządzie gminnym z dnia 8 marca 1990r. z późniejszymi zmianami, Dz.U. nr 721 z 2020, poz. 1465).

The three-tier division of local government in Poland was introduced in 1999. This division distinguishes three units of local government: provinces, counties and municipalities (Polish: *województwa*, *powiaty* and *gminy*). The model of local self-government in Poland is dualistic

(it performs its own tasks and those delegated by the government administration). The municipality performs public tasks in its own name and on its own responsibility (art. 2 ustawa o samorządzie gminnym z dnia 8 marca 1990r. z późniejszymi zmianami, Dz.U. nr 721 z 2024, poz. 1465).

The municipality's own tasks (meeting the collective needs of the community) include:

- spatial order, real estate management, environmental and nature protection, and water management,
- municipal roads, streets, bridges, squares and organization of traffic, waterworks and water supply, sewerage, removal and treatment of municipal sewage, maintenance of cleanliness, order and sanitation, landfills and disposal of municipal waste, supply of electricity, heat and gas,
- transportation activity,
- local public transportation,
- health care,
- social assistance, including centers and care facilities,
- support for families and the foster care system,
- municipal housing construction,
- public education,
- culture, including municipal libraries and other cultural institutions, as well as the protection of and care for historical monuments,
- physical culture and tourism, including recreational areas and sports facilities,
- marketplaces and market halls,
- municipal greenery and tree plantings,
- municipal cemeteries,
- public order and safety of citizens, as well as fire and flood protection, including equipment and maintenance of the municipal flood storage facility,
- maintenance of public municipal facilities and equipment and administrative facilities,
- family-friendly policies (including the provision of social, medical and legal care for pregnant women),
- senior policy,
- support and dissemination of the idea of self-government, including the creation of conditions for the operation and development of auxiliary units and the implementation of programs to stimulate civic activity,
- promotion of the municipality,
- cooperation and activities for NGOs and volunteerism,
- cooperation with the local and regional communities of other countries (art. 7, ustawa o samorządzie gminnym z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. z późniejszymi zmianami, Dz.U. nr 721 z 2024, poz. 1465).

The municipality's own tasks are linked to the sustainability goals contained in Agenda 2030. In the local government units of counties and municipalities, there is an apparent preponderance of men among those in power (Table 1).

For the purposes of further analysis, Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda, which pertains to gender equality, was selected. In the political domain, regulations mandate that 35% of candidates on electoral lists must be women, without imposing additional requirements. Nevertheless, the so-called "top spots" on electoral lists for local government councils, as well as parliamentary and senatorial elections, are predominantly occupied by men. In municipal council elections within municipalities exceeding 20,000 inhabitants, women secured 32.5% of the mandates. In the elections for mayors, city presidents, and village leaders, women obtained 14.7% of the mandates in the first round. Similarly, 32% of women were elected to provincial assembly councils. Although the percentage of women participating in local elections across various levels of governance demonstrates a gradual upward trend, it still falls short of achieving parity. Consequently, it can be concluded that the governance of Polish local government remains male-dominated.

The issue of gender parity is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in social governance. Noteworthy examples from recent developments include a directive issued by the Mayor of Warsaw, which implements a gender equality plan for municipal employees (<https://um.warszawa.pl/-/warszawa-wprowadza-plan-rownosci-plci>), and a proposal by the Minister of Sport and Tourism in the amended legislation aimed at introducing gender parity requirements in sports associations.

Table 1.

Women and men among chief administrators of groups of villages (wójt), (town and city) mayors, village administrators (sołtys) in 2010-2022

| Specification | Years/persons | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Chief administrators of groups of villages, town and city mayors in total | 2478 | 2478 | 2477 | 2477 | 2479 | 2476 | 2478 | 2475 | 2477 | 2476 | 2477 | 2477 | 2476 |
| Women | 234 | 234 | 238 | 237 | 269 | 270 | 266 | 269 | 298 | 299 | 300 | 304 | 302 |
| Men | 2244 | 2244 | 2239 | 2240 | 2210 | 2206 | 2212 | 2206 | 2179 | 2177 | 2177 | 2173 | 2174 |
| Village administrators – in total | 40317 | 40389 | 40402 | 40382 | 40365 | 40553 | 40573 | 40549 | 40447 | 40607 | 40514 | 40520 | 40543 |
| Women | 12376 | 14009 | 14192 | 14322 | 14491 | 15812 | 16023 | 16104 | 16196 | 17542 | 17723 | 17867 | 18003 |
| Men | 27941 | 26380 | 26210 | 26060 | 25874 | 24741 | 24550 | 24445 | 24251 | 23065 | 22791 | 22653 | 22540 |

Source: <https://stat.gov.pl>

In 2010-2013, the share of women in the group of chief administrators of groups of villages, town and city mayors was fewer than 250 out of nearly two and a half thousand people. In the following six years, fewer than 300 women held key positions in local government. And, in the last three years (2020-2022), there were 300 or a little more than 300 women in the study group. Among village administrators, the increase in the number of women in 2010-2022

is more pronounced. In 2010, there were 12376 women among them, while in the last year of the 2022 survey - there were already more than 18,000 (an increase of about 1.5 times).

Table 2.

Women and men among chief administrators of groups of villages, (town and city) mayors, village administrators in percentage terms in 2010-2022

| Specification | Years/percentages (%) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Chief administrators of groups of villages, town and city mayors in total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Women | 9,4 | 9,4 | 9,6 | 9,6 | 10,9 | 10,9 | 10,7 | 10,9 | 12 | 12,1 | 12,1 | 12,3 | 12,2 |
| Men | 90,6 | 90,6 | 90,4 | 90,4 | 89,1 | 89,1 | 89,3 | 89,1 | 88 | 87,9 | 87,9 | 87,7 | 87,8 |
| Village administrators – in total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Women | 30,7 | 34,7 | 35,1 | 35,5 | 35,9 | 39 | 39,5 | 39,7 | 40 | 43,2 | 43,7 | 44,1 | 44,4 |
| Men | 69,3 | 65,3 | 64,9 | 64,5 | 64,1 | 61 | 60,5 | 60,3 | 60 | 56,8 | 56,3 | 55,9 | 55,6 |

Source: <https://stat.gov.pl>

In the first group analyzed, the increase in the share of women among those in power between 2010 and 2022 is slight, from 9.4% to 12.3%. In the second group, the increase is significant - from 30.7% to 44.4%. At lower levels of local government, women are more likely to be involved in management. That group is nearing gender parity.

The analysis of other goals (beyond Goal 5) can be approached through the lens of financial resource allocation across various sectors within local government units in Poland. This can involve a comparative review of planned versus actual expenditures in the budgets of local government entities. From the perspective of social economics, it is possible to assess the community's specific demands and expectations for various public services. There are significant disparities between local government units (e.g., municipalities) and across geographic regions in Poland regarding the scope and type of social services tailored to local needs.

A comprehensive analysis of a single municipality in the context of all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda constitutes a complex, time-intensive, and multidimensional task. Beyond financial analysis, qualitative assessments of the implementation and outcomes of other 2030 Agenda goals can be undertaken. In the context of financial analysis, particular attention should be directed toward identifying the root causes of significant discrepancies between planned and actual expenditures. This could provide insights into inefficiencies and areas for improvement in the allocation and utilization of resources.

4. Conclusions

Management in local government units is heavily influenced by the ever-changing and dynamic environment, which poses new challenges to local government, such as the Covid pandemic or the war in Ukraine. Local government is responding to these changes with some delay due to the complexity of public administration mechanisms. The goals of the local government community are realized in many areas. The needs of different social groups and the changing demographic structure of the society are major challenges for local government units, especially for municipalities (which are closest to service recipients). The 17 sustainability goals are a new challenge for local government and the state. The goals in Agenda 2030 are a response to increasingly advanced technological, social and environmental and economic needs. On the one hand, the society is getting richer, while on the other, Poland is one of the fastest aging countries in Europe. All these aspects pose challenges for local government units.

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