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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT **INVOLVING TERRITORIAL PARTNERSHIPS**

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ABSTRACT

Motives: Local authorities are seeking new approaches to development, with a strong emphasis on multifunctional development. Taking into account the state of the natural environment, they need to implement various activities that effectively reduce anthropogenic pressure. Poland's membership in the EU requires the implementation of the European Green Deal. The neighbouring Polish and Ukrainian regions of Lublin and Lviv, which share similar environmental conditions and a common cultural heritage, were chosen for this study. The Polish border regions have the potential to serve as an important model for Ukrainian border regions as they strive to integrate into the European Union. This paper provides an overview of development and environmental support policies, as well as in-depth case studies, to establish a basis for assessing the sustainable functioning of rural municipalities and territorial partnerships.

Aim: This study examined supra-local strategic documents concerning environmental protection and rural development in Polish and Ukrainian municipalities. Their socio-economic situation was characterised, and the goals and activities proposed under their environmental protection programmes and local development strategies were identified.

Results: Based on the research findings, a proposal was formulated for implementing systemic solutions in the development of strategic plans to ensure that local strategies become fundamental tools for implementing measures that support environmental protection and sustainable development.

Keywords: environmental protection, strategic planning, Local Action Groups, municipality (gmina/ hromada), Poland, Ukraine

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is facing the catastrophic effects of global climate change and environmental degradation. One approach to addressing these issues

is the Green Deal Concept which aims to achieve climate neutrality in Europe by 2050 at the latest. The Paris Agreement of 2015 has reaffirmed the obligations of developed countries to strengthen climate policy. These developments directly impact



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partner countries, particularly Ukraine, and the European Union Member States, where an updated common climate policy is currently taking shape. The UN General Assembly's post-2015 Development Agenda – Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an equally important document which sets out 17 sustainable development goals. These goals are embedded in the fundamental principles of environmental policy in Poland and Ukraine.

Currently, Ukraine faces a significantly higher anthropogenic burden on the environment than developed countries worldwide, and this burden is constantly increasing. In the past year, Ukraine's overall situation has been compounded by the war which has considerably worsened the state of the environment. In this challenging situation, implementing the state's environmental policy and addressing local environmental issues is a crucial and complex aspect of domestic and foreign policy. The activities implemented as part of this framework focus on restoring natural resources, ensuring the stability of the nature conservation system, securing the livelihoods of the population, and implementing effective environmental policy mechanisms at different levels of the country's territorial division (Burdak & Makar, 2020).

In Poland, despite a long history of environmental protection measures, many negative impacts have not been adequately reduced, which is largely due to ineffective environmental policy instruments. Poland has significantly reduced its atmospheric emissions, increased the levels of wastewater treatment, and improved waste management since the political and economic transformations of 1989. However, smog continues to pose a threat during the heating season due to the dominance of traditional energy sources. Little progress has been made in development of the nature conservation system, and the decline in biodiversity has not been halted (Karaczun, 2020).

International obligations, as well as the need to improve the citizens' lives compel both countries to develop a system that effectively links economic development programming with environmental

protection requirements. A formal basis and the appropriate instruments have to be developed for the effective implementation of environmental policy and environmental management at different levels of territorial division in the country. At the same time, "the Union's priorities for rural development should be pursued within the framework of sustainable development and the Union's promotion of the goal of protecting and improving the environment" (European Union 2013, Article 5).

Intersectoral partnership is a voluntary cooperation of actors in three sectors (state, economic, social) in the process of identifying and solving social problems in joint effort. Local associations play an important role in the rural development process. The European Union has introduced LEADER, an innovative local development tool that is being implemented by local action groups (LAGs) (Lengerer et al., 2023; Ray, 2000). This instrument has been in place since the 1990s (Bocher, 2008; Bruckmeier, 2002; Pollemann et al., 2020; Thusen, 2011). Initially (between 1991 and 1990), LEADER was a pilot initiative. The last programming period (2014–2020) had been included in the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (European Union 2013, Articles 29, 31–33, 42–44, 59 and 65). The programme's scope was increased upon the enlargement of the EU (Dax et al., 2016; Navarro et al., 2016; Konečný, 2019). The activities implemented under LEADER contribute not only to innovation and economic improvement (Bosworth et al., 2016; Navarro et al., 2018), but also to strengthening local communities and raising living standards (Convery et al., 2018; Shucksmith et al., 2020). The LEADER programme has a special place in post-socialist countries (Chevalier & Maurel, 2010; Konečný et al., 2020; Macken-Walsh, 2010; Marquardt et al., 2012).

Local action groups are an example of effective associations in Poland (Falkowski, 2010; Furmankiewicz et al., 2010; Furmankiewicz, 2012; Hochleitner, 2011; Psyk-Piotrowska & Zajda, 2013; Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2017). Their contribution to various areas of local development has been discussed extensively in the literature (Brańka, 2015; Brańka

et al., 2015; Furmankiewicz et al., 2016; Kołomycew & Pawłowska, 2013; Szamrowski & Pawlewicz, 2015; Turek, 2013). Musiał-Malago' and Marcisz (2019) and Wiza (2021) pointed out that local associations organically complement the activities of local government agencies by integrating and activating municipal inhabitants, which confirms their importance. The role of local partnerships and grassroots initiatives is particularly emphasised (Brodziński, 2009; Gulc, 2013; Kalisiak-Mędelska, 2013; Nycz, 2013). However, some researchers have argued that LAGs insufficiently stimulate the multifunctional development of rural areas (Guzal-Dec & Zwolińska-Ligaj, 2017).

Territorial partnership is a new concept in Ukraine, and the Polish example is only beginning to make inroads into the scientific literature. Korinets (2023) discussed the importance and advantages of local partnerships. Therefore, Polish experiences in improving environmental policy should be examined in the context of territorial partnerships for Ukraine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the study was to assess environmental policies and strategic programmes, to define their spatial dimensions, and to identify factors that determine the choice of development directions. The specific objective was to present the role of environmental policy and programming in strategic documents, and to assess the extent to which Polish experiences can be implemented in Ukraine.

The research sample was selected based on an analysis of legal acts, strategic documents and materials available on the official websites of territorial units. The documents prepared for selected municipalities (*gminas*) in Lublin Voivodeship in Poland and the municipalities (*hromadas*) in Lviv Oblast in Ukraine were subjected to a detailed analysis. Territorial units were selected for the study based on the following criteria:

 the Polish region and the Ukrainian region must be directly adjacent to each other;

- one LAG is selected in Lublin Voivodeship, and all participating municipalities should have an up-todate local strategy;
- one of the priority objectives in the local strategy should relate to environmental policy;
- three adjacent municipalities are selected in a district (*raion*) of Lviv Oblast (to propose a local partnership and a joint strategy);
- all three Ukrainian municipalities should have an up-to-date strategy, where the development of an environmental policy is one of the priorities.

Various information sources, methods, research tools and techniques were considered in the study. The literature and legal acts were reviewed, and the existing development strategies and environmental protection programmes were assessed at different levels of territorial division in both countries. A comparative analysis of strategic planning systems and environmental protection programmes in Poland and Ukraine was carried out.

Several research methods were used in the study, in particular:

- critical analysis (review and evaluation of the literature);
- statistical methods (collection and analysis of statistical data concerning the studied territorial units and their documents);
- comparative analysis (comparison of activities in rural areas in Poland and Ukraine);
- monographic method (analysis of Local Development Strategies (LDS) and rural clusters in Ukraine),
- case study (characterisation of LDS and their effectiveness in Poland, and the strategies of rural communities in Ukraine),
- abstract-logical method (formulation of concepts, conclusions and recommendations).

The environmental protection objectives in the analysed documents were collated in the following stage of the study. Case studies were also discussed based on the experiences of local government agencies and their associations. The study was undertaken to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the existing systems in both countries, and to formulate conclusions and recommendations.

SELECTED INSTRUMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

In Poland, development management is based on a system of strategic documents which are the basic instruments for guiding the country's development policy (Gawroński, 2010). Strategic documents define the country's development goals and the manner of their implementation. The Development Policy Act of 6 December 2006 (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2023, item 225) constitutes the legal basis for environmental management. The 2020 amendment to the above Act (Journal of Laws 2020, item 1378) introduced a number of changes with the aim of integrating socio-economic and spatial development programming in strategic documents. The most important changes include provisions aiming to strengthen the role of regional and municipal development strategies and to introduce supra-local development strategies. The Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with an outlook until 2030) (M. P. 2017, item 260) is the medium-term strategy which defines the objectives and directions of social, economic and spatial development in a medium-term perspective. Nine integrated strategies are the main strategic documents in the development management system, including the National Strategy for Regional Development 2030 (M. P. 2019, item 1060) and the State Environmental Policy 2030 – Development Strategy for Environment and Water Management (M. P. 2019, item 794). These strategies combine social, economic and spatial planning based on the existing links between different areas, and they provide

a basis for coordinating these activities at lower levels of territorial division. The National Development Concept 2050 is currently under development, and it will define development trends and provide a basis for the preparation of development strategies.

At present, the State Environmental Policy 2030 – Development Strategy for Environment and Water Management (M. P. 2019 item 794) constitutes the basis for all environmental activities. This document also takes into account the objectives and commitments at the international level, including the objectives of the European Union's climate and energy policy until 2030, and the sustainable development objectives formulated in Agenda 2030. The adopted objectives are also determined by the legislative requirements defining environmental quality standards in intervention areas.

The environmental protection programme is an instrument for implementing the environmental protection policy at all levels of territorial division (voivodeship, county, municipality) (Fig. 1). Local authorities are legally obliged to develop an environmental protection programme pursuant to Article 17(1) of the Environmental Protection Act of 27 April 2001 (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2022, item 2556). Such a programme should take into account the hierarchy of environmental objectives formulated in the strategies, programmes, and programming documents of higher-level territorial units as regards the area covered by the analysis and the documents adopted at the municipal level. The aim of the programme is to improve the condition of the natural environment in municipalities, to minimise the negative impact of pollution on the components

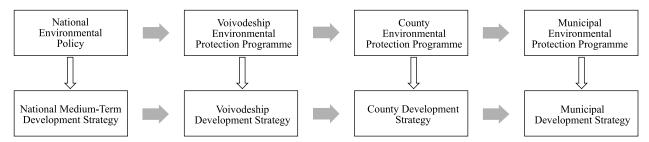


Fig. 1. Strategic planning and environmental management system in Poland *Source*: own elaboration.

of the environment and the environment as a whole, to manage environmental resources rationally, and to protect environmental values. The programme should constitute the basis for the environmental management system by combine all activities and documents on environmental protection and nature conservation at the level of a given territorial unit.

Ukraine has a similar strategic planning system to Poland. On 7 September 2022, Ukraine adopted a law amending selected legislative acts on the foundations of the State Regional Policy and the Policy of Reconstruction of Regions and Territories (No. 2389-IX). This law outlines the main legal, economic, social, environmental and organisational principles of regional state policy as a component of Ukraine's domestic policy. It specifies the main goals in the reconstruction of regions and territories affected by armed aggression against Ukraine. The law formulates a clear mechanism for planning, development and reconstruction of Ukrainian regions and municipalities. It also introduces a three-tier system of strategic planning at the national, regional, and municipal level.

The following legal acts set the formal basis for Ukraine's environmental policy: Decree No. 722/2019 of the President of Ukraine of 30 September 2019 on sustainable development goals in Ukraine until 2030, Regulation of 28 February 2019 on the basic principles (strategy) of Ukraine's national environmental policy until 2030 (No. 16, Article 70), and Decree No. 443 of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers of 21 April 2021 approving the National Environmental Action Plan until 2025.

The Strategy of the National Environmental Policy of Ukraine and the National Action Plan play the key role in the process of developing a consistent vision for the implementation of these founding documents in the area of environmental protection, in particular the development of national and local policies. At the regional level, the Environmental Protection Programme for 2021–2025 was adopted pursuant to Decision No. 72 of the Lviv Regional Council of 23 February 2021. The development of environmental programmes is chaotic at the municipal level.

Not all municipalities have departments responsible for environmental issues, and environmental problems are often resolved by general economic departments. In addition, the developed programmes do not always correspond with the development strategies of municipalities as autonomous bodies.

In municipalities, environmental programmes are developed by Departments of Land Resources and the Environment. In many cases, these programmes are created without reference to the municipal strategy. However, according to the adopted law, strategic documents should be aligned. Programme activities that are not included in the strategy are not entitled to funding from regional or state budgets. Therefore, strategies and programmes are being amended in many municipalities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic documents at the regional level were analysed in the first stage of the study. The objectives related to environmental protection are formulated in the Development Strategy of Lublin Voivodeship and the Development Strategy of Lviv Oblast. These objectives are directly related to countering threats and improving the state of the natural environment (Table 1). The Environmental Protection Programme of Lublin Voivodeship is not directly aligned with the Development Strategy of Lublin Voivodeship, despite the fact that environmental priorities should be consistent with strategic and programme documents. However, in accordance with formal requirements, the environmental protection program takes into account the intervention areas and the objectives resulting from the National Environmental Policy.

The goals, directions, and objectives of the Ukrainian Programme align with Strategic Objective 4 "Clean Environment" of the Lviv Region Development Strategy 2021–2027 and the operational objectives (Table 1). They are also consistent with the Waste Management Strategy of Lviv Oblast until 2030 and the Development Strategy of Mountain Areas in Lviv Oblast for 2018–2022. The environmental situation in Lviv Oblast is influenced by both long-standing

Table 1. Environmental priorities in the strategic documents of Lublin Voivodeship and Lviv Oblast

Lublin Regional Deve	elopment Strategy until 2030	Lviv Regional Development Strategy 2021–2027		
	ic objective 2:	Strategic objective 4 Clean environment		
	ks and functional systems nal objective 4.1	Prevention of water and air pollution		
Operational Objective 2.4.	Protection of environmental assets	Operational Objective 4.2.	Promotion of environmental awareness and development of a comprehensive waste management system	
		Operational Objective 4.3.	Preservation of biodiversity and establishment of protected areas	
Environmental Prote	ction Programme of Lublin	Environmental protection programme 2021–2025		
	2023 with an outlook to 2027 ention and objectives)	(main dir	ections and goals)	
while ensuring energy so change. 2) Noise pollution: Improv Voivodeship. 3) Electromagnetic fields: I fields. 4) Water management: I. A and groundwater bodies related extreme events. 5) Water and wastewater m water and wastewater m water and wastewater m sesources. 7) Soils: Protecting soils from impacts, erosion, and ad 8) Waste management and management according on the sustainable develop) Natural resources: I. Pro	om negative anthropogenic verse climate change. waste prevention: Waste to the waste hierarchy based opment of Lublin Voivodeship. tection of biodiversity and e management of forests; er. Reducing the risk of major	 Establishment of a nature reserve fund, preservation of biodiversity and landscape diversity. Promotion of environmental awareness. Creation of an environmental monitoring system. Minimising the disposal of untreated and insufficiently treated wastewater to water bodies and improving the quality of surface water in the basins of rivers Dniester, Western Bug, San, and Dnipro. Addressing the main problems associated with the safe collection, storage, disposal, treatment and disposal of municipal, industrial and hazardous solid waste. Land conservation and rational use of land. Protection of ambient air. Promotion of international cooperation in environmenta protection. Restoration of environmental balance in areas affected by the operations of mining and chemical companies in Lviv region. Supporting the activities of regional landscape parks. 		

Source: own elaboration based on online documents: https://strategia.lubelskie.pl/srwl/2030/srwl.2030.synteza.pdf, https://loda.gov.ua/documents/49999

and current problems. Agricultural practices, forestry and mining, chemical industry, machine engineering, and municipal infrastructure in urban areas have significant impacts on the environment. Under the Development Strategy of Lviv Region until 2027, the main environmental problems that require urgent action include surface water pollution from untreated or inadequately treated wastewater, low levels of environmental awareness, inadequate waste

management infrastructure that leads to pollution with industrial and domestic waste, and non-sustainable use of biological resources that contribute to the loss of biodiversity.

In Poland, the investigated region was Lublin Voivodeship, where 22 LAGs have been established. These groups are required to formulate and adopt LDS. An analysis of 62 strategic objectives specified (Table 2) in the LDS revealed that they focus on

 Table 2. Strategic objectives of environmental policies in selected Polish and Ukrainian municipalities

0	`	1	Poland		1			Ukraine	
		Municipa	Municipal development strategy	strategy			Municip	Municipal development strategy	rategy
Chodel	Józefów nad Wisłą	Karczmiska	Łaziska	Opole Lubelskie	Poniatowa	Wilków	Velyki Mosty	Sokal	Radekhiv
Development Strategy of Chodel Municipality for 2015–2023	Development Strategy of Józefów nad Wisłą Municipality for 2016–2023	Development Programme of Karczmiska Municipality for 2015–2022	Development Strategy of Łaziska Municipality for 2016–2020	Development Strategy of Opole Lubelskie Municipality for 2016–2025	Development Strategy of Poniatowa Municipality for 2015–2025	Development Strategy of Wilków Municipality for 2017–2027	Development Strategy of Velyki Mosty Municipality for 2020–2027	Development Strategy of Sokal Municipality until 2027	Development Strategy of Radekhiv Municipality until 2027
CS 3. Improving the standard of living in the municipality	CS 2. Development of technical infrastructure, improved access to housing, and preservation of natural resources	CS 4 Envi- ronment and environmental protection	CS 2. Improving municipal infrastructure	CS 4. Low-emission and environmentally-friendly municipality	CS III. Safe and healthy society	I. Improving CS 1. living conditions of life through the development of basic technical and social infrastructure	CS I. Quality of life	CS 2. Improving CS 3. Sustain living conditions able development of the municipality	CS 3. Sustainable development of the municipality
CO 3.6. Preservation and enhancement of natural resources	CO 3.6. CO 2.6. Preservation and Implementation enhancement of high-standard of natural environmental resources protection measures		CO 2.2 Expansion of sanitation infrastructure	CO 4.2 Adequate protection of valuable natural areas in the vicinity of nature reserves and the Chodelka Valley [].	3.7 Effective protection and restoration of environmental resources	1.3 Improving CO 1.2 Clean the quality of the environment environment	CO 1.2 Clean environment	CS 2.1. Improving engineering, road, environmental infrastructure and landscape	CS 3.3. Comfortable and safe envi- ronment
- Valorisation of natural resources - Construction, modernisation, renovation and provision of infrastructure for the conservation of natural resources	- Development and implementation of an environmental programme - Implementation of environmentally- friendly solutions - Implementation of an environmental education programme for residents	- Investments in renewable energy sources energy sources abatement energy of environmental awareness energy construction of domestic wastewater treatment plants		- Development and implementation of a comprehensive programme for the revitalisation of river valleys and nature reserves - Landfill rehabilitation and development	- Creation of a <system -="" at="" awareness="" collection="" environmental="" for="" issues<="" of="" public="" raising="" sorted="" source="" td="" the="" waste=""><td></td><td>- Improvements in wastewater management, water supply and drainage networks - Improvements in the solid waste management system - Implementation of hydrological measures, sanitary status of rivers and lakes</td><td>- Protecting the municipal environment</td><td>- Environ- mental safety</td></system>		- Improvements in wastewater management, water supply and drainage networks - Improvements in the solid waste management system - Implementation of hydrological measures, sanitary status of rivers and lakes	- Protecting the municipal environment	- Environ- mental safety

Source: own elaboration based on: https://chodel.gmina.pl/, https://gminajozefow.pl/, http://www.karczmiska.pl, https://gminalaziska.pl/, https://opolelubelskie.pl/, https://sokal-rada.gov.ua/, https://radekhiv-miskrada.gov.ua/, https://um.poniatowa.pl/, https://wilkow.e-biuletyn.pl/, https://sokal-rada.gov.ua/, https://radekhiv-miskrada.gov.ua/, https://opolelubelskie.pl/ CO - operational objective, CS - strategic objective

8 main topics (Fig. 2). Under the Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020, the strategies of LAGs in Lublin Voivodeship focused on the development of tourism and entrepreneurship (entrepreneurship – 90%; tourism, recreation – 50%). Environmental protection was the general objective in the LDS of only three LAGs.

Based on the established criteria, seven Polish municipalities belonging to a single LAG under the LEADER Programme in Lublin Voivodeship, and three Ukrainian municipalities belonging to a territorial partnership were selected for detailed analysis (Table 2). The analysis of LDS revealed that none of the strategic objectives were solely dedicated to environment. However, the environmental component is present in each document at the level of operational objectives, with clearly defined tasks for their implementation.

Local Action Groups serve as an additional tool for the development of Polish municipalities (Kołodziejczak & Szczepańska, 2021). Based on the adopted criteria, the "Fruit Trail" LAG in Lublin Voivodeship was selected for detailed analysis (Table 3).

According to the Guidelines for the development of environmental protection programmes in voivodeships, counties, and municipalities (2015), environmental impact assessments encompass 10 areas of future intervention. The operational section formulates the directions and tasks for each intervention

area. The relevant documents have been developed by only two municipalities selected for the study. Four programmes developed at voivodeship to municipal level were analysed.

In the analysed documents, most tasks are related to climate protection and air quality (reducing air pollutant emissions and modernizing transport infrastructure). The second significant group of tasks pertains to water management and protection, in particular water and wastewater management, and the expansion and modernisation of infrastructure. Many tasks are related to waste management and waste prevention, mainly rational waste management practices and the expansion of infrastructure for selective waste collection. At the regional level, a notable proportion of the tasks address the management of natural resources within the overall structure of the programmes (Table 4).

An analysis of LDS in Poland and Ukraine revealed that little attention has been given to objectives related to environmental policy. Some strategies lack such objectives, despite the fact that the LDS are the fundamental documents for the development of territorial units (Wiatrak, 2011). However, two objectives in LAG strategies were dedicated to environmental issues. This highlights the importance and effectiveness of LAGs in promoting and implementing environmental policies in municipalities. It should be noted that LAGs are local grassroots movements with a shared potential.

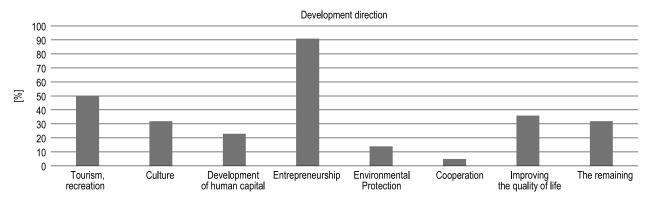


Fig. 2. Development directions in the local strategies of Local Action Groups in Lublin Voivodeship *Source*: Kostetska (2022).

Kostetska, I., Baran-Zgłobicka, B. (2024). Environmental policy in rural development management involving territorial partnerships. Acta Sci. Pol. Administratio Locorum 23(2), 227–241.

Table 3. Analysis of the strategic objectives of the "Fruit Trail" Local Action Group

	Objectives	Projects
General objective 1	Competitive and innovative fishing and aquaculture	
Specific objectives	1.1 Support for the adaptation and remediation of aquatic environments affected by natural disasters, harmful human and animal activities, and adverse consequences of climate change	1.1.1. Supporting activities to prevent and counteract damage 1.1.2. Supporting measures to reduce emissions of substances that cause climate change 1.1.3. Protection and restoration of the aquatic environment
General objective 4	Raising public awareness about environmental issues, local culture and heritage	
Specific objectives	4.1 Development of social capital and enhancement of local communities' self-organisation capacity in matters relating to culture, the natural environment, and local heritage	4.1.1. Community support for the use of local resources
Specific c	4.4 Preservation and sustainable use of cultural, historical, natural, and fishery resources	4.4.2. Creation and adaptation of fisheries heritage sites and education 4.4.3. Support for NGOs and other organisations in the field of education and promotion of fisheries heritage

Source: own elaboration based on (Strategy..., 2015).

Table 4. Areas of intervention in environmental programmes

_		Environmenta	al programme			
Areas of intervention	Lublin Voivodeship 2019	Opole county 2021	Karczmiska 2018	Poniatowa municipality 2019		
_		Number	of tasks			
1. Protection of the climate and air quality	23	10	5	5		
2. Noise pollution	9	4	4	4		
3. Electromagnetic fields	2	2	4	2		
4. Water management	14	8	4	1		
5. Water and wastewater management	8	7	7	4		
7. Soils	10	4	3	6		
8. Waste management and waste prevention	15	5	6	4		
9. Natural resources	27	7	5	4		
10. Major accident hazards	5	2	3	2		
Reducing the risk of	Reducing the risk of major accidents and minimising their consequences					

 $\it Source:$ own elaboration based on the analysed environmental programmes.

Research has demonstrated that LAGs play a significant role as catalysts for rural development (Hadyński & Borucka, 2015; Kołodziejczak, 2011; Wiza, 2021; Zajda et al., 2016), and their strategies can serve as the basis for the future implementation of supra-local development strategies (Koliński & Kołodziejczak, 2021). Projects related to environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources play a significant role in the strategies of LAGs established in different Polish regions (Czapiewska, 2012; Furmankiewicz & Janc, 2011; Guzal-Dec, 2014; Musiał-Malago' & Marcisz, 2019; Pałka, 2014; Pawłowska et al., 2014). A supra-local development strategy was formally introduced by the amendment to the Development Policy Act (Journal of Laws 2020, item 1378). In Ukraine, a similar system of strategic planning and programming has been introduced after decentralisation (Kostetska, 2021). However, the goals of rural development policy that had been implemented at the beginning of decentralisation and entrenched in the current legislation have not been achieved to date (Davydenko et al., 2022).

Environmental protection programmes should serve as a key instrument in environmental management to coordinate the activities undertaken at the level of voivodeships, counties, and municipalities. These programmes interpret the progress made in the implementation of environmental policies at the regional and local level. Unfortunately, the practical aspects of these programmes and their actual impact on spatial planning and development have not been adequately anchored in legislation. Moreover, the methodological indications and the substantive content of these mandatory documents have been modified over the years (Baran-Zgłobicka, 2017). The analysis demonstrated that the environmental programs introduced at different levels lack consistency. Furthermore, the formal objectives and tasks indicated in these programmes are not directly linked with LDS. Although all documents, including strategies and programmes, contain tasks for implementing investments related to environmental protection, these tasks are not implemented as part of long-term plans, but according to current needs. Most investments

receive external support, which establishes a clear connection to the availability of funding. The system for controlling and enforcing the development of local environmental programmes is ineffective, which poses an enormous challenge. Therefore, efforts should be made to strengthen the role of environmental activities in strategic planning.

A supra-local development strategy offers a certain solution to this problem. The analysis of LAGs' development strategies revealed that this is an effective approach, especially when initiated at the grassroots level, because it actively involves members of the local community. Environmental projects are also more effectively implemented by associations of municipalities than individual municipalities. The effectiveness of environmental protection measures can also be increased by incorporating the objectives of the European Green Deal at the supra-local level.

CONCLUSIONS

Ukraine can benefit from Poland's experiences in implementing environmental policies. Some Polish municipalities have been developing documents for consecutive programming periods before the obligation to prepare environmental programmes had been introduced. Polish experiences in aligning local development plans with environmental management may not be flawless, but they provide an opportunity to highlight the system's advantages and disadvantages and propose a new framework that can be implemented in Ukraine to enhance the protection of its natural environment and avoid the mistakes made by the neighbouring countries (Fig. 3).

The proposed recommendations for establishing LAGs in the analysed Ukrainian municipalities aim to harness the local communities' entrepreneurial potential, create jobs, increase revenues for the local budget, and preserve the local culture and lifestyle. Additionally, these recommendations will build a positive image of Ukrainian municipalities and strengthen international cooperation, including as part of cross-border projects.

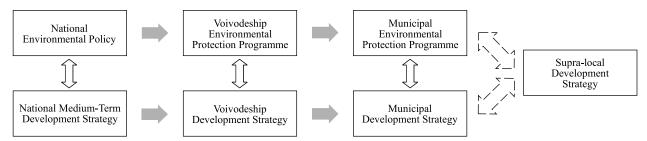


Fig. 3. Proposed planning system in Poland using Local Action Groups as an additional instrument *Source*: own elaboration.

Polish LAGs are very active. The inclusion of local communities in the process of creating LDS promotes civic engagement in the implementation of activities and fosters cooperation with local authorities. Ukraine has implemented decentralisation reforms which led to the creation of territorial units. The creation of territorial associations can be a good step towards effective management of rural development and environmental protection policies.

Ukraine became an EU candidate in 2022, and the proposed activities and strategic plans have to meet EU standards. In this context, international cooperation among Polish and Ukrainian LAGs can play a crucial role because these associations can form consortia to exchange experiences at the local level. The study also demonstrated that the Polish LAG model can serve as an additional tool for each community and a valuable opportunity to adopt a similar model in Ukraine.

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