



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT MONITORING

The Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development by the Polish Academy of Sciences (IRWiR PAN) and the Foundation *European Fund for Polish Rural Development* have jointly been conducting in-depth studies of spatial differentiation of rural areas in Poland from the point of view of socio-economic development. Subsequent stages of analyses are conducted under a programme entitled *Rural Development Monitoring*<sup>1</sup>. The principle objectives of the studies are to diagnose current differentiations, analyse the dynamics of changes under way, as well as shed light on differing development scenarios depending on local conditions. The authors of the studies draw on their firm belief that rural areas are not only the areas dominated by agriculture, but they are also a highly variable socio-economic environment which is inhabited by approx. 40% of the total population, the majority of which does not have any interest in agriculture whatsoever. Socio-economic development of rural areas must take account of the establishment of economic structures capable of ensuring maintenance to rural inhabitants, satisfying their variable aspirations and providing access to public services. By fulfillment of those conditions, both economic and social ones, rural environment becomes inhabitant friendly. The degree of their fulfillment reflects the level of socio-economic development.

In order to develop a scale for measuring socio-economic development level, eleven components thereof have been established, each of them was then assigned a few empirical indicators. For the purposes of the study, socio-economic level was defined as a variable which is composed of: (1) community spatial accessibility, (2) degree of economy

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<sup>1</sup> Main publications concerning the studies: 1/ Rosner A., Stanny M., 2014, Monitoring rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. Etap I. Przestrzenne zróżnicowanie poziomu rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego obszarów wiejskich w 2010 roku, [***Rural Development Monitoring. Stage I. Spatial variability of socio-economic development level of rural areas in 2010***] Foundation European Fund for Rural Development, IRWIR PAN, Warsaw; 2/ Report of the Forum of Development Initiatives, 2014, Monitoring rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. Etap I. Synteza, [***Rural Development Monitoring. Stage I. Synthesis***] (red.) Drygas M, Nurzyńska I., Rosner A., Stanny M., Zagórski M., 2014, Foundation European Fund for Rural Development, IRWIR PAN, Warsaw.

deagrarianization (e.i. its transition from agrarian to industrial one), (3) characteristics of agricultural sector and (4) characteristics of non-agricultural sector, (5) labor market balance degree, (6) ability to create local public finance, (7) demographic problems, (8) social cohesion (wealth and competences) of local community, (9) level of qualifications and level of education system development, (10) societal activity, (11) living conditions elements.

Spatial distribution of the synthetic socio-economic level measure based on the developed scale has been shown in Figure 1. One can notice a mingling of two tendencies: firstly – geographical location - the arrangement according to the mainland – peripheral areas *continuum*; secondly - historical conditions – the arrangement along the east-west axis, which arrangements are reminiscent of the partition of the current territory of Poland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century among three different countries pursuing three different economic regimes (Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary) and also related with shifting the Polish borders after WWII. Currently the mainland – peripheral areas arrangement is a stronger tendency than historical criteria.

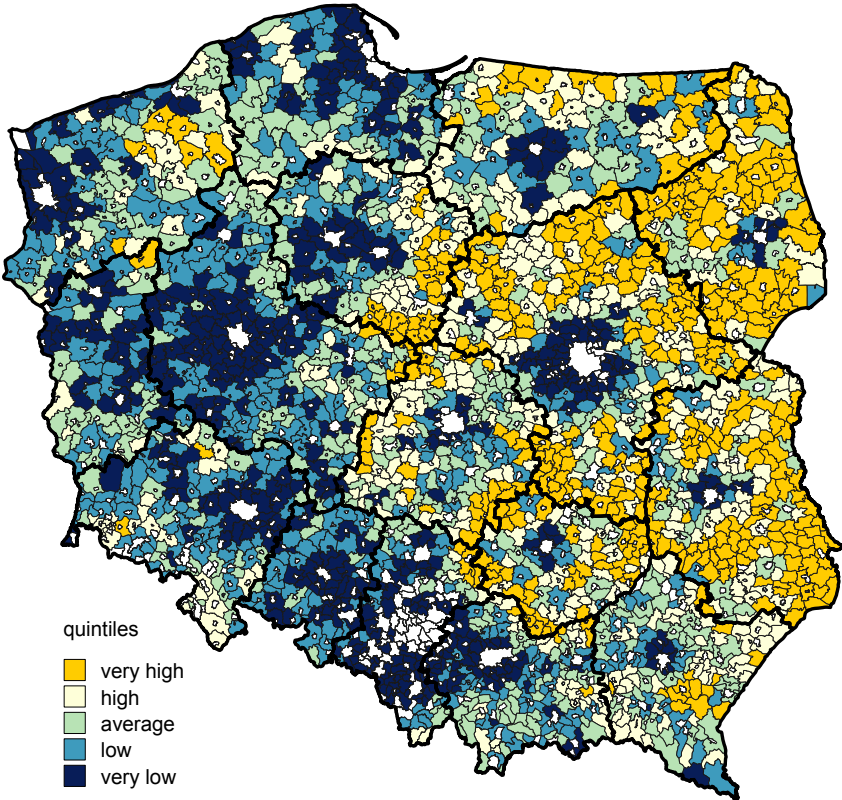


Figure 1. Spatial distribution of the synthetic measure of the level of socio-economic development

A complex statistical procedure made it possible to distinguish seven types of rural areas where combinations of socio-economic development components are similar within a given type and different among the types. Those types correspond to various conditions of development and describe various models of social and economic structures, as a result of which they determine different strategies of achieving the same objective, namely increase in the development level.

In simplified terms, those types include (1) areas dominated by traditional family farms, (2) areas dominated by huge farms with hired workforce (and prior to restructuring – featuring a big share of state agriculture), (3) areas dominated by agriculture based on family farms, but at the same time demonstrating certain features characteristic of multi-functional rural areas, (4) areas featuring greatly fragmented agrarian structure where farmers work mainly outside their farms and farm income they generate is only supplementary to their off-farm income, (5) multi-functional areas, (6) urbanized rural areas with reduced agricultural function and (7) strongly urbanized areas.

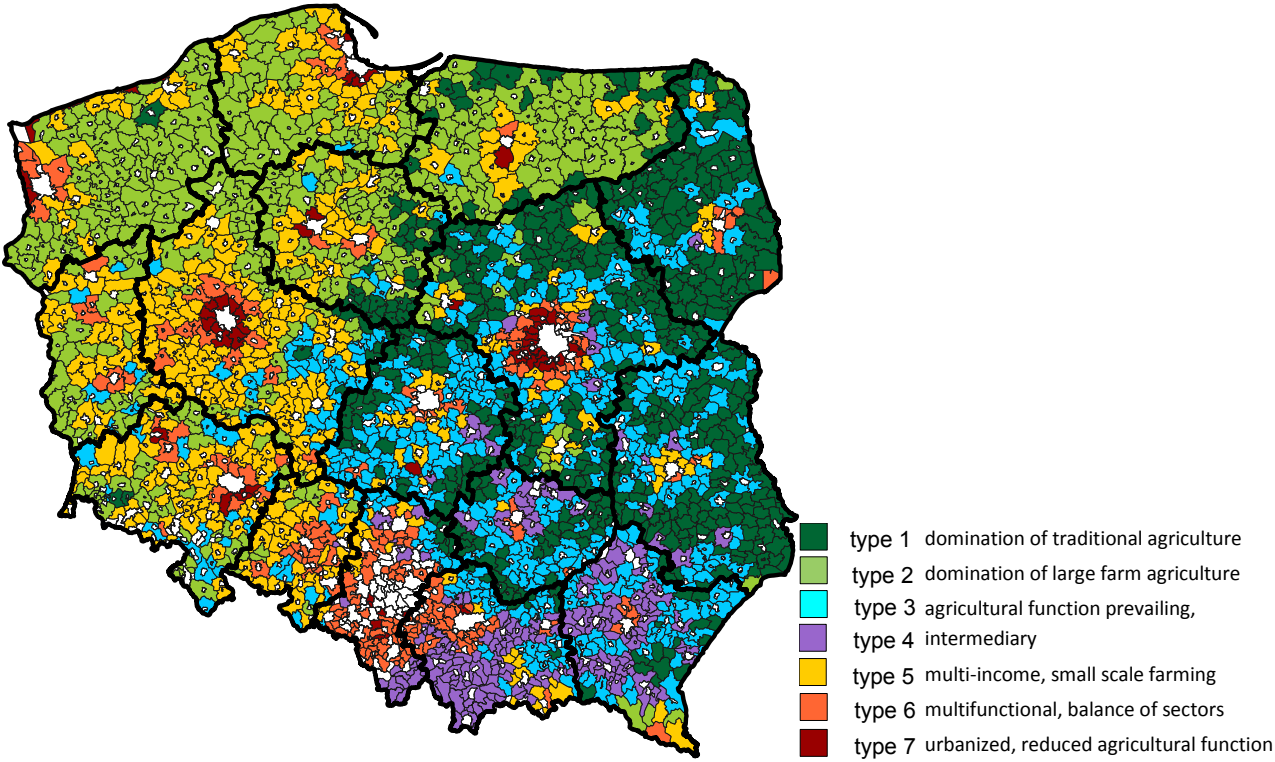


Figure 2. Spatial distribution of types of municipalities against the structure of socio-economic development components

The current phase of studies focuses on the analysis of change dynamics in particular types of rural areas and on determination which municipalities, featuring which characteristics, demonstrate more than average dynamics of development, and which one demonstrate less than average development dynamics. This phase is also to answer a question whether the process of socio-economic development results in approximating the development level or rather in increasing inequalities.

Conclusions which can be formulated to date are as follows:

- Both the attempt at measuring the level of socio-economic development as well as typological analysis confirm the importance of the neighbourhood of urban markets and historical borders for contemporary spatial differentiation of rural areas in Poland.
- High level of socio-economic development is fostered very much by the location in the proximity of big cities and their markets, including job market.
- In the majority of regions, especially in central and eastern Poland, regional borders are marked by peripheral areas which stand out *in minus* in terms of the level of socio-economic development. This enables a hypothesis to be made, namely that the implemented territorial cohesion policy leads to closing development gaps between regions; however, this happens at a cost of increasing intra-regional differences.