



PANEL III

How to use toolboxes and stakeholder participation in policy support? Regional perspective: Poland

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The hotspot: Biebrza Valley

Study area

- Two Natura 2000 sites in Biebrza Valley
- Partly located in Biebrza National Park

Main environmental problem

- Biodiversity and scenery in decline
- Intensification of agricultural land use
- Abandonment of traditional agricultural practices

Analysed solutions

- Agro-environmental schemes
- Awareness raising programs for farmers



Problems

Low interest in participation, due to **geographical remoteness**, **limited availability** and **lack of financial incentives** (we think), but also due to:

- **Low sense of competence** - scientific language ambiguous to local activists, entrepreneurs and authorities.
- **Low sense of efficacy** – policy centrally designed and implemented, no input sought from local stakeholders, no information shared.
- **BUT over 40 people involved** through meetings and surveys and direct communication.

Ensuring input flow

- Initially **engaging a variety of participants**, representing touristic organizations, environmentalists, authorities etc. from around Podlaskie Voivodeship, later **narrowing down** to those **most interested**.
- Applying a **reductionist approach**: discussions were concerned with specific examples of schemes rather than one general governance mechanism; ***jargon avoided*** as much as possible.
- Using **communication methods convenient** for stakeholders (replacing some seminars with surveys).
- **Co-designing** the field study with environmental experts and agricultural advisors **increased** their **commitment** in the next stages of the project.

Benefits

- Identifying the **factors** that are perceived as **the key drivers** of the provision of public goods in the case study region.
- Identifying the **local specificity** of the region **and its needs** in terms of policy.
- Providing the view on the **tension between the environmental goals** (long-term schemes, little flexibility thus high payments) **and farmers' motivations and financial goals** (short-term schemes, high flexibility).
- Identifying the **knowledge** (including gaps) **and interests of local farmers** („the language that speaks to them”).

Needed to facilitate stakeholders' policy influence (1)

Improvement of the information flow between the local stakeholders and the central authorities:

- **Top-down:** on AES coverage and monitoring results, especially on effectiveness.
- **Bottom-up:** on local needs and requirements
 - Rigid implementation of contracts regardless of changing weather and flooding conditions.
 - Need for new AES measures (e.g. for marshes, woodlots) and re-installation of some previously present programs (e.g. protection of reed beds) accounting for habitat uniqueness.
 - Need for payment differentiation because of farms' characteristics.
 - Need for increased state ownership of land in some areas.
- **Bottom-up:** on the uses and abuses of the system
 - Choice of schemes often motivated by financial and not environmental factors.

Needed to facilitate stakeholders' policy influence (2)

Brokering between:

- **the Agency** for Agriculture Modernization and Restructuring **and the farmers** (to improve monitoring and lower system abuse on the one hand, and increase efficacy on the other)
- **Biebrza National Park and the farmers** (hostility of local farmers to the BNP and their activities)

(The Agency for Agriculture Modernization and Restructuring **approached** several times, **not interested** in the project participation.)

- Final PROVIDE publication as a tool to initiate information exchange.

Thank you.