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**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC  
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## **INITIAL WORK ON THE SCOPE OF RURAL AREAS STATISTICS IN POLAND**

Supporting paper submitted by the Central Statistical Office of Poland\*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The rural areas in Poland covers about 90% of the territory. Most of the natural resources as well as the cultural monuments are situated in these areas. In this context the development of rural areas is at the centre of attention of the stakeholders, however, not so far ago the opinion that issues connected with the countryside exclusively pertain to farmer issues was very common.

2. According to the administrative criterion, rural areas in Poland cover 93% of the total area of the country. Apart from the agricultural land, which covers about 58% of the area, the rural areas also include most of the forest areas, inland waters and the mountain areas.

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3. The second basic criterion is the population density per square kilometre. According to the OECD definition it should cover all areas where the density of population is below 150 inhabitants per square kilometre (at the commune level). Pursuant to the OECD definition, 91,7% of the total area of Poland consists of rural areas. Following Eurostat's classification of rurality based upon a population density of 100 inhabitants per square km lowers the percentage to 83% of Poland's territory.

4. In the rural areas development is conceived as a more interdisciplinary issue beyond agriculture-related issues in a more narrow sense. People living there are not only farmers, but they also live in villages and work in towns and cities. The cultural monuments and the historical places, as well as the rural infrastructure are used not only by farmers and people living in villages, but also by people living in towns and cities.

5. A lot of criteria are possible to define rural areas. The truth is, that every country has its own tradition and history and it will be very difficult to agree on a universal definition that fit every country.

## **II. POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS COMBINED WITH AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 2002**

6. After completing the population census and the agricultural census (conducted together in 2002), the Central Statistical Office decided to carry out an in-depth analysis and use the census results to a wider extent. About 40 publications have been produced at the country level and many at "voivodship" level, presenting statistical data gathered during the exercise.

7. The idea to combine the two censuses was a great challenge for Poland, and gave a unique opportunity to provide a deeper analysis of the situation in the urban and rural areas. This is also useful for the work on the National Development Plan as well as to develop the Strategic Programme for the Development of Rural Areas.

8. One of these publications based on the two above-mentioned agricultural censuses entitled "Characteristics of rural areas," was prepared by the Centre of Agro-Economic Research and Infrastructure of Rural Areas in Olsztyn. This publication contains a number of tables and graphs describing the situation in the Polish villages and rural areas in general.

9. In 2002 according to the results achieved in the two censuses; 14,6 million people live in the rural areas, which constitute about 38,2% of the total inhabitants of the country. People living in the households connected with the farm holder constitute 58,2% of the rural population. The density of population in rural areas was 50 inhabitants per square km.

10. Rural areas are characterised by the following features, which distinguish them from urban areas:

- higher share of population in the pre-working age (26,5% against 21,1% in the urban areas) and post-working age 15,6% against 14,7% in urban areas) and lower share of people in the working age (57,6% against 64,3% in urban areas);

- lower education degree in the age of 15 and more. 55,9% of population had a secondary school degree against 73,4% in urban areas;
- 67,3% of rural population did not change the place of living since the birth, and only 54,2% in urban areas;
- higher share of people economically active (55,0% against 52,8% in urban areas) and working (44,1% against 41,2% in urban areas), lower share of unemployment (10,9% against 11,7% in urban areas);
- unemployed living in rural areas were younger (61,5% of the total of unemployed was under 35 years old in rural areas) than unemployed population in urban areas (52,8% of total unemployed in urban areas);
- lower unemployment rate – 19,8% (in urban areas 22,1%);
- a slightly higher average apartment area per person (21,9 square meter (m2) against 20,6 m2 in urban areas) and a higher average number of people living in an apartment (3,87 against 2,95 in urban areas);
- worse equipment for water pipe supply, canalisation and gas system, central heating, but better equipment for local water supply and local canalisation;
- lower share of households having their own apartment - 73,5% (77,4 in urban areas).

11. These and other results presented in the publication could be only possible due to the fact that both censuses were combined. Consequently, the publication has been of great interest to many different users –from policy makers, scientists and researchers to students etc..

### **III. STATISTICAL ANALYSES OF RURAL AREAS IN POLAND**

12. In 2004, an exhaustive study was done within the National Phare 2001 Project PL010.01 Statistical Information System. The basis for in-depth analyses were the results of the two previously mentioned censuses carried out in 2002, other statistical surveys, and the available data sources. The aim of the study was to describe the development of rural areas in Poland and to analyse it in comparison with the definition of the OECD. One of the tasks was to check how the OECD definition fits to the Poland's conditions. The project expert team consisting of Mr. Zbigniew Brodzinski, Ms. Elzbieta Bielecka and Ms. Pilar Martin Guzman, chose 6 spheres. The selected spheres of analysis were: population and migration; employment and human resources; local economy differentiation level; the situation of agricultural sector; rural inhabitants' standard and quality of life, and the environment and landscape.

13. After analysing the definitions which are presently used both in the OECD and in the EU countries, the subsequent realisation steps were presented, which enabled the researchers to work out the definitions of rural areas in Poland and set the criteria of delimitation of them.

1) It was assumed that if any region and all the lower-level administrative units included in the region met the OECD criteria of population density for rural areas (up to 150 inhabitants per sq. km), then the region was considered rural. The proposed criterion seems reasonable as it is widely used in statistics of many countries. According to the presented criterion, rural areas in Poland cover as much as 91,2% of the total area and are inhabited by 35.15% of population of Poland.

2) The population and migration were chosen as the important sphere of rural areas development level analysis.

3) Taking into account the factors of employment and human resources it was found that the indicators, which significantly differentiate spatially, are: the education level, the percentage of mobile people in a population, the unemployment rate as well as the employment in the agricultural sector.

4) Another criterion was the local economy differentiation level; for this criteria the percentage of individual farms which carry out non-agricultural economic activities as well as the number and structure of economic entities per 1,000 inhabitants, and the changes of the factor in time were taken into account.

5) As for the fifth criterion the impact of agriculture on the rural areas development level was taken into account. The data source on features characterising of the spatial differentiation of agriculture enabled the experts to select a few indicators (natural conditions, average agricultural land in a farm (ha), % share of farms of different area in the total number of farms).

6) The last criterion of rural area identification was the rural inhabitants' standard and quality of life. For this criterion the following measures were chosen: water-supplied households (% in a municipality), households connected to sewage system (% in a municipality), agricultural land (in ha per inhabitant) as well as the share of forests in the total area of a municipality.

14. The presented above criteria of rural area identification are the original criteria and represent a contribution to the discussion on identification and delimitation of rural areas in Poland, and, as it was already mentioned, the study was financed by the European Commission. As the scientific study – a pilot one in Poland – it will be used for further analysis and proper presentation of rural areas. The Final Report of the experts group apart from in- depth analysis of the situation in rural areas, consist of 138 analytical maps developed, 104 analytical maps, 9 figures and 24 tables.

#### **IV. STATISTICAL SURVEY PROGRAMME 2006 - STATISTICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON RURAL AREAS**

15. In the Statistical Survey Programme the information system on rural areas is included as a secondary survey to visualise dynamics of changes in this areas. All available information (statistical data) will be integrated and used to describe rural areas in 2005 and in 2006. There will be mostly information on demographic phenomena, unemployment in municipalities,

land use and selected production characteristics in agriculture, technical and social infrastructure, the current state and works towards environment protection, tourism and leisure time as well as investments. For the purpose of making analysis and publication, ideas of the experts group and proposed indicators will also be taken into account and used in the most possible extent.

16. The Central Statistical Office is constantly following the ideas concerning rural development itself and rural development statistics and makes analysis of all proposed indices. Development of rural areas is also an issue of discussion of the inter-ministerial group, where representatives of different ministries and local government representatives from the Central Statistical Office are present to discuss the strategy and available measures.

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