

Implementation of public policy in Polish rural municipalities managed by women local leaders

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Abstract

The paper will present the main directions of women local leaders' activities aimed at implementing public services in rural municipalities. Due to the process of socialization and the issues stereotypically assigned to the female gender, women perceive the implementation of public tasks differently, not only those related to education policy, senior policy, cultural policy, but also horizontally to rural development policy. The following theories will be important in the discussion: the theory of the institutional framework of rational choice (Ostrom, 2007), the functioning of network structures (Zybała, 2015), and the stage model created on the basis of the decision-making process by H. Lasswell (Ronit, Porter, 2015). Women local leaders in rural areas in Poland are mainly *sołtyski* (village heads), and the percentage of women is over 43% among village heads, about 30% among councillors and only 12% among municipality heads.

The methods applied to achieve the goals of the paper include: institutional and legal method to show the constitutional aspect of the analysed functions, and the comparative one to show the direction of changes in the political activity of women. The analysis embraced the outcomes of the local elections of 1990-2018 posted on the website of the National Election Commission and the Central Statistical Office. The article uses the results of empirical research (postal questionnaires and in-depth interviews).

Women in municipal authorities constitute a small group and the higher the position there is less of them. Consequently, their participation in the exercise of power is valuable as it complements the male perspective of governing with a female approach. In rural communes, this approach is characterized by the fact that woman leaders attach greater importance to culture, education, and social security and health compared to leaders, without neglecting technical infrastructure.