



Participatory budgeting in Małopolska. Situation and directions for development

Summary

Małopolska Regional
Development Observatory

Department
of Regional Policy

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING GAINS POPULARITY IN MAŁOPOLSKA

The Małopolska Regional Development Observatory, operating within the structure of the Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region, carried out a survey regarding participatory budgeting within the region. 137 gminas¹ from Małopolska took part in the survey (75.3% of all gminas)².

Many issues were raised within the study of participatory budgeting (PB) related both to the manner in which the participatory budgets are organized in the Małopolska gminas and to the plans for their implementation in the future. The potential demand among the Małopolska self-government units for training support in regard to social participation methods was also reviewed. The study resulted in a report containing – apart from the research – a discussion on other social participation techniques regulated by Polish law, namely village funds and social initiatives.

Based on the analysis, it may be concluded that the participatory budgeting has become an increasingly popular social participation technique in Małopolska. In 2013, the first participatory budgets were implemented in 4 gminas and 4 districts of Cracow. In 2014, 9 gminas organized PB, and in 2015 the participatory budgeting was implemented by 19 gminas. Jointly, between 2013 and 2015, 21 Małopolska gminas allowed its residents to decide about PLN 56.5 million.

The study also suggests that the general interest in the process is on the increase. Among the 118 analysed gminas, which did not implement even a single edition of the participatory budget, 19 gminas (16.1%) plan to launch this process in the future, and almost 80% of them require substantive and training support in the field. Also the gminas, which did not declare any plans to implement the participatory budgeting in the nearest future, expressed their interest in supporting this area (18%).

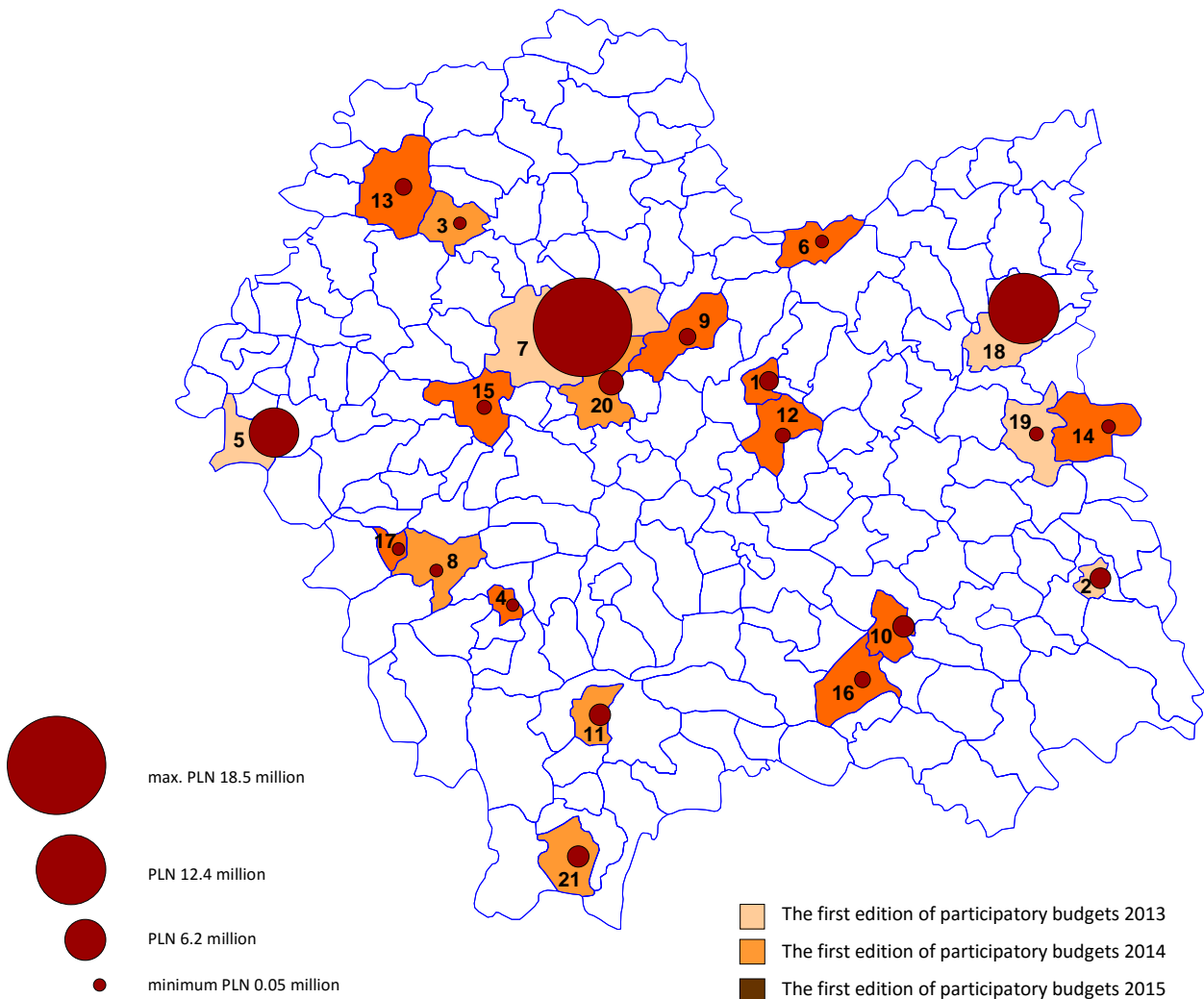
The results of the 3rd edition of the study carried out by the Małopolska Development Policy Observatory regarding the opinions of the Małopolska residents should be mentioned here - most residents (80%) supported joint decisions regarding the designation of public funds, and 42% of them declared their readiness to engage in local projects implemented through the participatory budgeting.

¹ principal unit of administrative division in Poland (NUTS 5)

² Małopolska region consists of 22 counties and 182 municipalities

Map 1.

Gminas in the Małopolska region implementing participatory budgets between 2013 and 2015 and the amounts devoted to participatory budgets



1. Bochnia, 2. Gorlice, 3. Jerzmanowice-Przeginia, 4. Jordanów, 5. Kęty, 6. Koszyce, 7. Kraków, 8. Maków Podhalański, 9. Niepołomice, 10. Nowy Sącz, 11. Nowy Targ, 12. Nowy Wiśnicz, 13. Olkusz, 14. Ryglice, 15. Skawina, 16. Stary Sącz, 17. Sucha Beskidzka, 18. Tarnów, 19. Tuchów, 20. Wieliczka, 21. Zakopane

In the period 2013–2015, the greatest number of gminas implemented one round of voting over the participatory budgeting, while in Małopolska, Tarnów prevailed with 4 such votes that had already been carried out (the first two took place in 2013). In Małopolska, the amounts dedicated for that purpose oscillated from around PLN 50 thousand in Jordanów to about PLN 14 million in Cracow. Most gminas did not allocate more than 1% of their total budget for this purpose and not more than 5% of their expenditure.

Success of the participatory budgeting is shaped by a series of factors – regarding the objectives adopted by its organizers. The basic concept is to involve the residents in deciding the course of budget spending. The study implemented by the Małopolska Regional Development Observatory proved that these are the officers and office workers, who pose the main force engaged in the organization of BP processes. 10 out of 18 gminas which made their statements on the topic, organized the procedure involving only the employees from local governments. In 8 gminas, cooperation was established with: the residents, non-governmental organizations, councillors, and representatives of auxiliary units.

A significant element of the participatory budget is the manner of communication used with the residents. The means of communication adopted most often were: publication of information on the municipality office's website, in local press, social media, brochures, and on posters. Only 4 gminas identified additional financial means for promotional and informational campaigns related to the participatory budgeting (Gorlice, Cracow, Ryglice, and Tuchów).

Meetings with residents were organized in the Małopolska gminas, related to the participatory budgeting. These were most often meetings of a promotional and informative nature (in 15 out of 19 researched gminas) - when the residents were informed about the procedure of the PB and possibilities it provides. In 10 gminas, meetings with the residents were of a strategic nature, where publication of information about the participatory budget was accompanied by a dialogue regarding developmental directions of the gmina, the most important investments, and their financing.

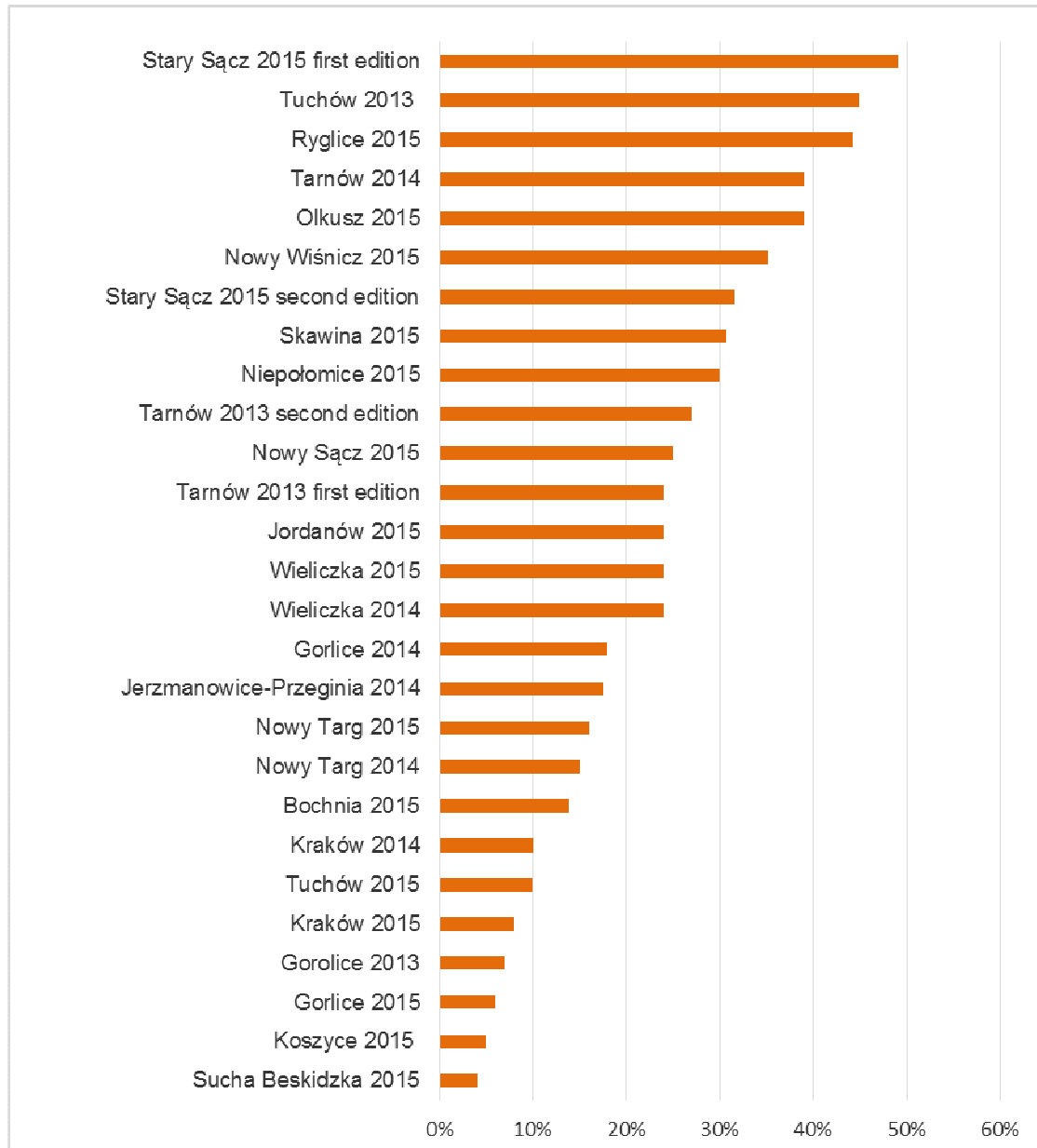
Popularity of the participatory budgeting is also proved by the scale of citizens' involvement in the process, which is suggested by, among others, the number of projects proposed by the residents. A wide array of tasks submitted to the participatory budgeting were observed: from 4 in Sucha Beskidzka (1st edition in 2015), to 656 in Cracow (the 1st general municipal edition in 2014). In the case of cities that organized more than one edition of participatory budgeting, a decreasing number of projects are submitted (with the exception of Tarnów and Gorlice).

The submitted projects were verified based on formal and substantive criteria; those included in the participatory budget terms and conditions. Formally, the projects were verified in terms of their compliance with the financial law, competences of the gmina, and fitting within the determined financial limit. The substantive criteria most often regarded the compliance of the proposed project with the local (gmina) strategic documentation and real benefits of implementation for the residents.

A significant indicator illustrating the success of participatory budgeting is the residents' attendance in votes for the PB projects. The average attendance in the region is estimated at the level of about: 26% in 2013, 21% in 2014, and 23% in 2015. Taking into account the relatively short record of such initiatives, it can be interpreted as a good result, presenting certain interest in the issue of social participation among the citizens.

Diagram no 1

Attendance in the Małopolska editions of the participatory budget



Of the 118 gminas that took part in the research, 99 (83.9%) have not implemented even a single edition of the participatory budget, and do not plan to organise it in the future. The 19 remaining gminas (16.1%) – 11 rural and 8 rural and urban – plan to launch social participation in the nearest future.

The most common reasons for the lack of participatory budgeting were: “absence of financial resources” or “implementation of the village fund”. Other respondents “did not see a reason” for implementing such solutions. The urban gminas pointed at the “absence of financial resources” as the main reason.

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Free copy

Publication cofinanced by the European Union from the European Social Fund
under Technical Assistance Regional Operational Programme for the Małopolska Region 2014-2020



European Union
European Structural
and Investment Funds



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