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Local politics remains usually in the shadow of national politics. Nonetheless, local political leaders are these who decide on various important issues, directly influencing every-day life of citizens. We elect them, but our systematic knowledge on their leadership is surprisingly low. In our project, we study opinions, attitudes and biographies of local leaders in more than twenty European countries. International research team, composed of local government scholars, will analyze the survey results, describing how local political leaders are differentiated, what type of leadership they represent, with whom they cooperate and what are the reasons for cooperation, how they deal with contemporary economic and social challenges. The last similar research project was conducted more than a decade ago, in 2003 (Polish team was also involved).

The researchers will also attempt to answer the question how the differences between the institutions of local governments are related to the attitudes of local leaders in various countries? Yet, European countries have municipalities of different size, local authorities of different prerogatives, selected in different procedures. Not everywhere mayors are directly elected by the citizens, in some countries municipal self-government plays only a marginal role. Average Polish municipality, counting 16 thousands inhabitants, seems to be huge in comparison to small Slovak or French municipalities, and simultaneously, quite small in comparison to English or Lithuanian municipalities.

In Poland, the survey questions were addressed to all mayors elected in 2014 local elections. The answers of our respondents, collected in 2015, will be merged with databases from other countries and analyzed by the international team of researchers, working on the book which would summarize the results. The researchers from Polish team will contribute to the chapters on: the impact of municipalities' size on the leadership and the quality of local democracy, the role of political parties in local politics, the local leaders' attitudes towards the inter-municipal cooperation. The project will terminate at the end of two years.