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**Management of economic processes in context of sustainable development**

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**DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE EASTERN PART OF POLAND ON THE EXAMPLE OF BICYCLE GREEN VELO TRAIL**

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*Sustainable tourism's aim is to lower negative influence of tourism on environment. Development of such a tourism influences on local employment. Advantages of the development are aimed at local societies, tourism agencies and tour operators and also tourists themselves. Apart from that sustainable tourism does not disturb the natural environment and is environmentally friendly. The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as a tourism that satisfies the needs of both tourists and tourist destinations, while protecting and promoting their future development. The main goal of sustainable tourism is to preserve the economic and social benefits of tourism while minimizing or mitigating adverse environmental, historical, cultural or social impacts. This goal is achieved by balancing the needs of tourists with the needs of tourist destinations. The most important documents defining the basis for sustainable tourism are: Agenda 21 and principles for sustainable development, UNCED, Rio de Janeiro Declaration, 1992, Global Code of Ethics in Tourism, WTO, 1999 and Cape Town Declaration. Responsible Tourism in Destinations, World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. (<http://zb.eco.pl/publication/koncepcja-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-w-turystyce-p133811>)*

*Sustainable tourism goes side by side with ecotourism and heritage tourism. Many voivodeships in Poland have started to apply activities connected with sustainable tourism. The example of sustainable tourism is Green Velo Trail completed in Eastern Poland.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable consumption, sustainable tourism, cycling tourism.*

### **Introduction.**

In the consumer decision-making process, environmental care is becoming ever more important. In the future, the environmental factor can play a dominant role in buying. Changes in contemporary consumption are seen on many levels. An example is the concept of sustainable consumption that combines a range of social, economic and political practices at the level of individuals, households, communities, business communities and governments. Changes in consumer behaviour based on sustainable development are also present in the contemporary tourism market. Tourists note that their actions can affect other areas of social and economic life. Environmental concern has become important in the decision-making process, which has directly influenced the change in the nature of the tourist products offered. Tourist service providers have started to shape the offer in line with environmental requirements. The demand for a clean, ecological tourist product has increased in the context of sustainable tourism (Hendel, 2016, p.14).

Today, in Poland sustainable tourism is gradually developing and many local governments look for alternative forms of the area promotion because promotion of sustainable tourism has a positive impact on the environment locally and globally, and shows the advantages of economic, environmental, cultural, including human health, and social areas. One form of sustainable tourism which has been introduced in the Eastern part of Poland is the Green Velo Trail. In the following paper the concept of sustainable consumption and especially sustainable tourism on the example of Green Velo Trail have been presented.

The Eastern Bicycle Route – the Green Velo is the most spectacular bicycle project that has so far been completed in Poland.

#### **1. Sustainable development**

According to scientific estimates, the world population in 2025 will exceed 8.5 billion people. Such an enormous number of people may cause an additional food crisis, and thus enormous pressure on Earth's resources. However, the consumption account estimates that 20% of the population consumes 80% of the resources. So the biggest problem should not be seen in the number of people but in the uneven distribution of resources. For example, in the United States to meet the needs of 1 man need more than 12 acres, meanwhile, the needs of the Indian population are less than 1 acre. (Stuart L. Hart, 1997, pp. 67).

Nowadays a distinctive feature is the emergence of global threats such as global pollution (greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion), acid rain, acid rain and floods, excessive toxic substances, soil degradation. (Waloszcyk, 1997 r.)

Today's development contributes to the degradation of the environment: social, cultural and economic. Crime and pathology are increasing year by year, despite increasing efforts to combat them. Tradition, social and family values lose

importance and disappear. Uneven allocation of resources often results in one country getting rich at the expense of others, which is causing international unrest.

As far as these problems are concerned it seems impossible to save the future of the Earth by the current methods. The answer to this state of affairs is the concept of sustainable development, whose primary purpose is to conserve basic natural capital, in the form of biodiversity, ozone, etc. This theory assumes that today's economic growth cannot achieve the goal of global prosperity. Artificially fuelled demand and a consumer approach to life mean that technical and economic development is needed to meet the needs of wealthy societies. This progress will at some point lead to the completion of natural resources and environmental degradation.

Consequently, it will be impossible to make better use of misuse of raw materials by future generations and, possibly, irreversible and catastrophic changes in the environment and climate of the globe. The time needed to transition from traditional to sustainable is getting closer. If this moment, which is to occur within a dozen to several dozen years, will be missed, then the Earth will be threatening catastrophic consequences. Integration and overall planning are needed, both at the technological, economic and political levels. It is assumed that if the goal is to be the well-being of the Earth's inhabitants, then there is no other alternative. However, there are many problems arising from today's rapid economic boom, with which sustainable development will have to face.

Defined in 1972 in the Declaration of the UN Convention on Sustainable Development, it has found its application in many areas such as architecture, economy, construction, management, industry. Since then, many alternatives have emerged for sustainable development, so it can be called eco-development, eco-friendly development, sustainable development, or mild development. The importance of this concept cannot be underestimated given the fact that almost all countries of the world at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development signed a declaration that obliges them to implement the principles of sustainable development. (<http://zb.eco.pl/publication/koncepcja-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-w-turystyce-p133811>)

Changing the nature of the relationship between the environment and the economy is a significant contemporary development challenge. The table 1 below shows the areas of impact of sustainable consumption.

Implementing the principles of sustainable development in the area of consumption goes far beyond its classical approach as a biological and psychic act. Including Meaning, "Consumption means a direct act of satisfying the human need by using a particular material good or service". Today consumption is to be seen more broadly as "a complex process of action and the foundation of the sphere of consumer behaviour". The scope should also cover issues related not only to the consumption of goods, but also to the use of the management of all goods produced

in the process of work. It is the saving of the management of goods and the limitation of the consumption of goods that consume too much of the natural resources that allows consumption to be determined in a conscious and sustainable way. Sustainable consumption can be determined as "the consumption of goods and services sufficiently to meet basic needs and achieve a higher quality of life, minimizing the use of natural resources, environmentally harmful materials produced at all stages of production, At the same time the rights of the next generations to such consumption ". Sustainable consumption therefore "leads to reflection on issues that go beyond the interests of the individual while purchasing goods and services and consuming them, including not only environmental issues but also equality, human rights and political aspects of sustainable development in the production and consumption processes. A wide range of spheres for sustainable consumption impacts is presented in table 1. Changing the nature of consumption, with changes in lifestyle and needs, is emerging among the key challenges of sustainable development Contemporary consumption perceived as perishable consumption (unbalanced) constantly generates social and environmental problems, which deepening can lead to a violent crisis of modern society and economy. Changing the existing patterns of consumption and production is therefore the main goal towards sustainable development. (Hendel, 2016, p. 14-15).

**Table 1. Areas of impact of sustainable consumption**

Area	Aspect of impact
Economic	Effective ratio between current consumption and future consumption. Consumption processes do not contribute to significant imbalances.
Ecology	Maximum usability of consumption while maintaining usability and quality of natural resources and the natural environment, enabling direct consumption of environmental goods. Adjustment of material consumption to functional requirements of circular economy - the imperative of preferring the forms of consumption as possibly the least burdensome for environment.
Social	Relatively equal distribution of consumption, accessibility for all people, regardless of time and space, at least in terms of socially desirable goods. Social sustainability of consumption as an imperative of preference for forms of consumption that cause the least possible problems or contribute to social problems, such as generating new places of work, contributing to cultural diversity.
Psychological	Consumption processes contribute to the improvement of the quality of life, i.e. the optimum balance between material consumption and the satisfaction of intangible needs.
Demographic	Demographic determinants are not a permanent barrier to consumption growth. Life expectancy improves, consumer health improves, and demographic or socio-occupational membership is not a significant barrier to consumption of socially desirable goods.
Spatial	Ways of satisfying needs do not interfere with spatial order.
Intertemporal	Dimensions of sustainability of consumption are achievable in an indefinite time.

Source: on the base of D. Kielczewski (2012). Różnorodność stylów życia jako czynnik rozwoju zrównoważonego. *Ekonomia i Środowisko*, 43 (3), s. 78–79.

## **2. Development of sustainable tourism**

The rapid growth of tourism in the world (and thus the increased demand for tourist services reported by consumers) has led to a discussion on the negative impact of tourism development for the environment. Universal recognition of tourism as a form environmentally friendly business has led to years of irresponsible management of natural resources for its development and consequently many irreversible changes. The negative impact of multi-level tourism has become particularly evident when the constant development of tourism has taken on a mass character. This degrading environmental impact has become a key feature of mass tourism, considered to be the main determinant of modern tourism. The attempt to limit its negative impact, due to the rise of social awareness as well as changes in lifestyle and leisure patterns, was the emergence of alternative tourism, followed by sustainable tourism. (Hendel, 2016, p. 15). It is necessary to lead the development and search for such forms which would make it possible to realize tourism in the best possible way. In this sense, the role of sustainable tourism is of particular importance as an idea derived from the principles of sustainable development which takes them into account in a comprehensive way in the tourism economy. (Hendel, 2016, p. 15).

Sustainable tourism is the nature of activities undertaken by tourists in order to meet the needs. These activities should not affect the environment i.e. they cannot cause loss or difficult to reverse changes. These activities should also benefit not only the tourists themselves, but also the communities inhabited by the sites visited by them and those who provide tourist services. (Butler, 1999).

The concept of sustainable tourism also poses for the purpose of shaping new attitudes and behaviours of tourists who will benefit ethically and socially for the local population (Gołembski, 2002). This goal is achievable by following a number of general principles related to sustainable development listed as it follows (Kachniewska, Niezgoda, Pawlicz, 2012):

- promoting a healthy lifestyle that goes in harmony with the environment,
- protection and conservation of natural resources,
- protection of indigenous culture,
- maintenance of natural and cultural diversity,
- limiting the amount of waste generated,
- economical management of electricity and water,
- encouraging employees, consumers and the local community to behave organically,
- integration of people of different nationalities and cultures.

These rules refer mostly to the decisions made by tourists which later translate into tourist behaviour.

It follows that sustainable tourism can be successfully implemented in the form of cycling tourism. It is promoting for example healthy life, goes in harmony with environment, does not give pollution, encourages local government to invest money in bicycle trails and encourages local inhabitants.

### **3. Application of sustainable tourism in the Eastern part of Poland on the example of bicycle touring**

The implementation of the principles of sustainable development and consumption is realized in the case of cycling tourism. An example of such activity is the Green Velo Cycle Route.

The project "Bicycle Routes in Eastern Poland" is an innovative, supraregional linear product, which consists in the construction of the basic infrastructure connected with cycling. It encompasses not only the construction but also the marking of paved cycling paths as well as the designation and marking of cycling routes in the outskirts, the construction and assembly of the basic accompanying infrastructure. The project is implemented under the Operational Program Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013, Priority axis V: Sustainable development of tourism potential based on natural conditions, Measure V.2 Cycle routes - component of promotion of cycling routes. (<https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o-szlaku/geneza-pomyslu-0>)

The construction of the Eastern Bicycle Route of Green Velo was realized within the scope of the project "Bicycle Routes in Eastern Poland", co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Operational Program Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013, Priority axis V: Sustainable development of tourism potential based on natural conditions, Action V.2 Cycle routes. The total value of the project amounted to approximately PLN 274,000,000.00. This amount included expenses related to documentation preparation, project management, fees, supervision, land purchase and construction and assembly works.

Sources of funding:

- Subsidy from the European Regional Development Fund - 85%,
- State budget - 10%,
- Beneficiary own contribution - 5%.

(<https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o-szlaku/finansowanie-budowy-szlaku-0>)

The Eastern Bicycle Route – the Green Velo is the most spectacular bicycle project that has so far been completed in Poland. It is over 2000 km of a specially designed route, which was prepared from the beginning to the end for joy to travel and explore. The following figure 1 shows logo of the trail.



Fig. 1 Green Velo Trail – logo  
Source: <https://greenvelo.pl>

The route leads through five voivodeships of Eastern Poland: Warmińsko-Mazurskie (397 km), Podlaskie (598 km), Lubelskie (414 km), Podkarpackie (459 km) and Świętokrzyskie (210 km). Getting to know each one individually is an extraordinary experience. The trail runs mainly on asphalt low-traffic public roads, through the area of the five voivodships. Nearly 580 km (29% of the length of the route) are sections leading through the woodland, and 180 km (9% of the length of the route) falls on river valleys. The uniqueness and diversity of the regions through which the trail is based highlights the tourist attractions, both those directly on the route and those within the 20 km "corridor" on both sides of the route. Among them there are numerous monuments, which are an important part of the Polish cultural heritage. The following fig. 2 shows the location of the trail in Poland.



Fig. 2. Green Velo Trail  
Source: <http://portretymiastr.blog.polityka.pl/2015/08/03/via-archipelag/>

One of the distinguishing features of the Eastern Green Bicycle Trail is the recreational infrastructure along the entire route. These places, like the ones on the motorways, were named MOR (Bicycling Service Places). From Elbląg to Końskie there are about 230 places like this on the route and they are located every 8-10 km, usually at tourist attractions and interesting places. (<https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o->

szlaku/zagospodarowanie-szlaku)



Fig 3. Example of MOR

Source: <https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o-szlaku/zagospodarowanie-szlaku>

Blow the information board is presented.



Fig 4. Information sign on the way

Source: <http://www.znajkraj.pl/szlakiem-green-velo-z-kielc-do-sandomierza>

Creating a secure infrastructure for cycling is part of the development of sustainable transport. It also stimulates the development and promotion of cycling tourism. The whole of the supported activities will contribute to social activation and will open up new opportunities for spending free time.

Implementing a comprehensive roadmap for cycling routes contributes to the protection of valuable natural sites from uncoordinated tourist traffic. Supported activities will significantly improve the accessibility of tourist attractions, while ensuring safe access. Bicycle routes led by valuable natural and cultural sites in the macro region will create opportunities for the development of specialist tourism. This is a stimulating factor for adjusting and expanding the local tourist base and for rural occupational restructuring. The implemented actions have a positive influence on the development of small entrepreneurship with special regard to agritourism. Residents of Eastern Poland cities create the possibility of active and attractive recreation



within the boundaries of the macro region. (<https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o-szlaku/realizatorzy-0>)

The trail is dedicated to both domestic and foreign customers. The trail is dedicated to the following main group, differing in their way of cycling tourism:

- segment of bike enthusiasts, lovers of riding long distances by bike (these are long-haul tourists, the product dedicated to them offers a cycle of several days in a single region or several regions);
- segment of people interested in active cycling holidays (this is a collection of people who plan their vacation by dedicating the dominant part of time to exploring the area on a bike in the form of one-day cycling tours);
- segment of "occasional bikers" (tourists resting in the area of product development and inhabitants of the region mainly from larger towns through which or in which the area runs the route).

Based on an estimated projection assuming that a one-day tourist on the trip will spend about 25 PLN and a domestic multi-day tourist spending 79 PLN a day on short-term travel and 108 PLN on long journeys (data from the Institute of Tourism, 2011), the built route will generate respectively:

- 8.3 million PLN for the expenditure of 332,000 one-day hikers a year,
- weekend tourism - about 43,000 overnight stays and a revenue of PLN 3.4 million for weekend travellers (assuming 50% of weekend trips are weekend trips - compared to 30% of trips in Germany).
- Long-term tourism - about 217,000 overnight stays and 28.1m PLN of revenue (assuming that the remaining 50% of trips are long journeys, equivalent to Germany, on average 6 days).

This amounts to approximately PLN 40 million in revenues and 260,000 overnight stays.

(<https://greenvelo.pl/portal/pl/o-szlaku/realizatorzy-0>)

For the purpose of the article the research has been carried out. The method of the research was questionnaire and the respondents were people with the age range from 20 to 50 living in the area of Czestochowa. The aim of the survey was estimation if people are aware of sustainable tourism development and if they choose such kind of tourism. The article is complemented by examples of sustainable tourism in Eastern part of Poland. Respondents have been asked general questions about cycling and it appeared that they often ride a bike in Spring, Summer and Autumn. Some of them but not many indicated that they use a bike also in Winter. In general respondents use bike occasionally a few times a month during weekends and some of them also use bike as a mean of transport to work. Most of the respondents go by bike around Czestochowa and ¼ of them take bikes to the other parts of Poland and ride a bike there using local trails. Most of the respondents are aware of ecology and try to purchase ecological products. Moreover respondents have been

asked about the knowledge of forms of sustainable tourism, approach to it and particular knowledge emphasised on the Green Velo trail. Respondents heard about sustainable tourism but they didn't know that the forms they use is connected with sustainable consumption and especially tourism. Respondents who cycle a lot heard about Green Velo Trail but only a few of them visited this trail. Most of respondents are willing to go to the Eastern part of Poland and try this trail.

In conclusion the research showed that the respondents are interested in sustainable tourism. They present eco approach towards the environment and are interested in the Polish heritage. In future they will go to visit Green Velo Trail.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it must be emphasized that the development of sustainable tourism in the Eastern part of Poland within sustainable tourism is a significant factor for local development using existing potential, among others large natural sightseeing tours and other places of interest. The fact that the respondents were interested in such kind of eco approach to tourism and especially bicycle tourism. The research confirmed that tourists are interested to go to Eastern part of Poland to visit the area and use Green Velo Trail.

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