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“PODKARPACIE COUNTRY – LIFE QUALITY CLUSTER” AS AN EXAMPLE OF INTEGRATED SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTION ESTABLISHED IN SOUTH-EAST PART OF POLAND

Sustainable development is a progressively significant subject for a wide range of regions and organizations all over the world. The integration of sustainability has improved in the past decade, especially through the extensive varieties of management strategies. This has a vast impact on decisions associated with management process, including strategy, design and improvement. Also regions have integrated social, economic and ecological sustainability in their development strategies.

The example of integrated sustainability solution in the region of south-eastern Poland is The Life Quality Cluster “Podkarpacie Country”. The cluster was established to construct valuable surroundings for development and growth in south-east district. It became an answer for external pressure made by societal concerns about sustainable growth and natural environment. The unique surroundings of Podkarpacie region create an opportunity for growth of sustainable tourism, health recovery sector and green technology industry.

The article proves that the Life Quality Cluster “Podkarpacie Country”, along with its initiatives meets the foundations of the Regional Development Strategy. Projects submitted by the cluster, such as Village Senior, Medical Tourism and Green Buildings, described by the authors, promote the concept of quality of life, which is inextricably linked with sustainable development. The Life Quality Cluster “Podkarpacie Country” undoubtedly contributes to the promotion of sustainable development in south-eastern Poland.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Regional Development Strategy, life quality, Podkarpacie Country Cluster

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability development accompanies the European Union for over three decades. During this time, the strategy has been inextricably linked to the idea of quality of life and its many factors. Correspondingly, the concept of sustainability development was accepted in Poland as a Constitutional Principle, what has opened the

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debate and gave rise to the introduction of a number of solutions to the idea of quality of life in all regions of Poland.

The purpose of this article is to examine the extent to which the objectives set in the Strategy of Sustainable Development have been achieved in the Podkarpackie Province. The main aim is to study the influence of the cluster "Podkarpackie Country" to promote integration of the concept of sustainability and its impact on development of the Life Quality sector in south-eastern Poland.

The first part of the article, describes the theoretical basis for the introduction of Strategy of Sustainable Development and the concept of quality of life in both, The European Union and in Poland. Afterwards, the assumptions of the cluster "Podkarpackie Country" and the analysis of its effective implementation was presented. The article is based on the secondary sources that have been interpreted by the descriptive methods. The Authors have used a qualitative method - a case study and they also conducted interviews with members of the cluster in order to clarify the specific activities of the Association.

2. EVOLUTION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Sustainable development is a fundamental goal of European Union strategy which seeks to continuously progress the quality of life. The definition of sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"³. On the one hand this definition presents sustainability as a large concept which contains the extensive varieties of management strategies that ensure economic growth, environmental protection and social integration. But, on the other hand this description shows also a wider concept of a broad set of quality of life ideas, which should be improved by the local community as well as society at large⁴.

The first document that specified the character of sustainable development strategies in the European Union was Agenda 21, adopted in 1992. This important policy document called on all countries to develop a strategy together with a broad variety of stakeholders and became the beginning of the process of creating National Sustainable Development Strategies which were presented at the Johannesburg World Summit in 2002. In 2006, after enlargement of European Union, The European Council adopted a renewed Sustainable Development Strategy, that names goals for seven key challenges in the field of sustainable development: climate change and clean energy, transport sector, consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, public health, global challenges relating to poverty, social inclusion, demography and migration. Furthermore, the renewed strategy identified the principles and governance challenges that should be addressed by sustainable development strategies such as⁵:

1. Common long-term vision and strategic objectives.

³ Quotation is taken from the document: Our Common Future, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, www.un-documents.net/wced.ocf.htm.

⁴ A. Bettley, S. Burnley, *Towards Sustainable Operations Management. Integrating Sustainability Management into Operations Management. Strategies and Practices*, Springer Link, 2008, p. 875-904, (http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-84800-131-2_53#page-1 accessed 01.08.2013).

⁵ Towards a global partnership for sustainable development, Eurolex-Acess to European Union Law, Brussels 13.2.2002, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52002DC0082:EN:NOT>.

2. High-level political commitment.
3. Horizontal integration of economic, environmental and social issues.
4. Vertical integration at all levels of governments (EU, national/federal, regional, local).
5. Participation of different stakeholder groups.
6. Implementation mechanisms and capacity-building.
7. Monitoring, evaluation and strategy renewal.

Three years later, The European Commission published the review of European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development. On the basis of the report, the European Council confirmed that sustainable development remains a fundamental approach which continues to form under Lisbon Strategy. These two strategies recognize that economic, social and environment objectives can reinforce each other and they should be therefore advance together. Both strategies aim at supporting the structural changes can ensure social equity, healthy environment and innovative entrepreneurship.

The follow-up to the Lisbon Strategy, EU Strategy 2020, was adopted in 2010. This new approach was designed as a European appeal to the global economic and financial crisis that started in 2008. EU Strategy 2020 aims at achieving “smart, sustainable and inclusive” growth, which is driving by knowledge and innovation, a greener and more efficient use of resources and higher employment combined with social and territorial cohesion⁶. According to the principles of the EU Strategy 2020, all regions in the European Union should concentrate financial support on a small number of priorities that are linked with the objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which are known as Smart Specialization Strategies⁷. The idea of this kind of strategy is based on the notion that regions cannot achieve everything in science, technology and innovation and thus it is crucial to concentrate resources in certain domains of expertise based on the needs and available resources of each region⁸.

3. EVOLUTION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN POLAND AND ITS IMPACT ON PODKARPACKIE REGION

In Poland the idea of sustainable development strategy is accepted as a Constitutional Principle. It is defined as a socio-economic development in which process of integrating political, economic and social actions to guarantee the possibility of fulfilling basic needs of society or citizens not only of present generation but for future as well. Article 5 of the Constitution requires the state administration, local governments, businesses, and individual citizens to give the nature of sustainable development of the country⁹. The objective record is the basis for a model of sustainable development at the national, regional and local levels

⁶ L. Jansen, *The Challenge of Sustainable development*, Journal of Cleaner Production, 2003, 11(3), p. 231-245.

⁷ R. Ortega-Argiles, *Economic Transformation Strategies. Smart Specialisation Case Study*, Smart Specialisation Platform, 2012, http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=1f05532a-9ab5-4324-8eeb-4acb7b72e17f&groupId=10157 accessed 10.08.2013).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Act of 2 April 1997, the Polish Constitution, Acts. Laws 1997, No. 78, item. 483.

of governance. According to T. Borys¹⁰ the concept of sustainable development is in Polish legal regulations, relating in particular to:

- environmental order (environment),
- spatial order (planning and zoning).

Originally the Polish legislation concerning the protection and development of environment and spatial planning used the concept of "sustainability". Currently, The Act adopted on 27.04.2001 - Environmental Protection Law – have changed the concept of sustainable development which is defined in Article 3, as "the socio-economic development, in which the process of integrating political, economic and social, with the delicate balance of nature and the sustainability of basic natural processes in order to ensure the possibility of meeting the basic needs of communities or citizens of both the present and future generations¹¹". The consequence of such record is that any action aimed at socio - economic development should be based on the principle of sustainable development. In connection with the strategic documents supporting or stimulating, the development should contain provisions consistent with the Polish Strategy for Sustainable Development.

This approach is described in numerous strategic documents that shows socio-economic aims and directions according to the rule of stable and sustainable development. The most important document is called the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Poland to 2025, which do not replace the strictly specialized policies, strategies or sector programs, however it dictates directions and framework for development of the country. Sustainable Development Strategy adopted by the Polish Ministry of the Environment, is a document which sets out the relationship between economic, social and ecological direction until 2025. The basis for the formulation was adopted in May 10, 1991, by the Polish Parliament. This first strategic document, National Environmental Policy, treats the environment as an important component of integrated governance. In accordance with the assumptions of policy, Poland belongs to the group of countries that do not have to create the basis for sustainable development but should shape the global sustainable development¹². In addition to these documents, the policy of sustainable development of the country should be governed by a multitude of other legislation, strategies and action programs. According to B. Ziolkowski in most of these documents are records that relate directly to sustainability or indirectly, by reference to the environment, economy and society.

The responsibility for creating the conditions for sustainable development lies not only in central government but also in the local government. Records relating to sustainable development are also reflected in the forming of regional policy. The most important document is a provincial government program called Development Strategy. The basic idea of Podkarpackie Region Development Strategy for the period 2000 - 2006 was the rapid development of the region and the improvement of living standards among residents of Podkarpackie region. According to the Strategy, the process of the development of the region should take place with the principle of sustainable development¹³.

Podkarpackie Development Strategy for 2007-2020 has set the goals and activities that were aimed at overcoming structural economic and social problems and to improve the

¹⁰ T. Borys (red.), *Wskaźniki zrównoważonego rozwoju*, Wydawnictwo Ekonomia i Środowisko, Warszawa-Białystok 2005, s. 59.

¹¹ Act of 27 April 2001, the Law on Environmental Protection, 2008 No. 25, item. 150.

¹² *Polish Sustainable Development Strategy 2025*, the Ministry of Environment, Warsaw 1999, p. 3.

¹³ *Carpathian Region Development Strategy for the period 2000 – 2006*, Rzeszów 2000, <http://www.wrota.podkarpackie.pl/pl/bip/wojewodztwo-podkarpackie/strategia/strategia1>.

competitiveness of the region. Podkarpackie Province in the vision of the strategy is defined as "the area of sustainable development that aims to integrate social, environmental and economic feasibility and ensures the needs of society and achieves a high standard of living"¹⁴. In June 2013, taking into account the change in the development policy and the need to adjust the provisions of the national and EU strategic documents, the Carpathian Region Development Strategy for 2007-2020 have been updated¹⁵.

In certain scenarios based on changes as prospective vision of the development of the region, Podkarpackie region is shown as the area of sustainable and smart economic development, which uses internal resources to ensure a high quality of life. The main objective indicates that the way to improve the quality of life is the effective use of internal and external potential for sustainable socio - economic development¹⁶.

The basic tool for local government policy is set out in the Regional Development Strategy is Carpathian's Regional Innovation Strategy (RSI). The RSI Strategy for the years 2005 - 2013 both, the vision, mission as well as primary objective relates to the principles of sustainable development: "The vision of the RSI is ecologically sustainable, innovative and competitive economy of Podkarpackie region, which is a leader in the creation of eco-innovation. The mission of the Strategy is the development of an innovative and competitive economy in the region, aimed at social good. The general goal is to build an effective and efficient regional innovation system in order to achieve the sustainable development of the region"¹⁷. In 2011, this document was updated however, as the authors of the report suggest, the vision, mission and strategic objectives have not changed, only conditions of their implementation have been modified. Currently, the public consultation will be transferred to Regional Innovation Strategy for Podkarpackie 2014 - 2020 for smart specialization (RIS3), which according to the directions of development adopted by the European Union, noted the two leading smart specialization: aerospace and quality of life and a smart supporting specialization: computer science and telecommunications. The aviation industry through the development of low-carbon technologies, helps to minimize the negative impact on the environment, which supports sustainable development. However, the area of quality of life is part of our economy, strengthening sustainable development. According to RIS3 vision of development, Podkarpackie is the region with the highest quality of life, characterized by environmental and social sustainability, and innovative and competitive economy.

¹⁴ Carpathian Region Development Strategy for the period 2007 - 2020, Rzeszów 2006, p. 5, http://www.wrota.podkarpackie.pl/res/bip/um/pp/strategia_rozwoju_woj._podkarpackiego_2007_2020.pdf.

¹⁵ Carpathian Region Development Strategy for the years 2007-2020. Update for the period 2013-2020. The project, Rzeszów, June 2013 <http://www.si.podkarpackie.pl/images/stories/res/um/pp/strategia-po-zarzadzcie-25-06.pdf>.

¹⁶ Carpathian Region Development Strategy for the years 2007-2020. Update for the period 2013-2020. The project, Rzeszów, June 2013, p. 29, <http://www.si.podkarpackie.pl/images/stories/res/um/pp/strategia-po-zarzadzcie-25-06.pdf>.

¹⁷ L. Woźniak, T. Pasterz, M. Cierpiał-Wolan, B. Trala, K. Drozd, S. Dziedzic, M. Woźniak, A. Sobkowiak, *Regionalna Strategia Innowacji Województwa Podkarpackiego na lata 2005-2013*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Rzeszowskiej, Rzeszów 2004, s. 13.

4. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The main objective of sustainable development is the high quality of life. In the literature, the concept of standard of living and quality of life, are often used interchangeably. The difference between these two terms was shown by Finnish sociologist Allardt, who assumed that the standard of living is related to material needs (ownership), and quality of life is coherent with immaterial needs (feeling and existence)¹⁸.

Quality of life is an interdisciplinary term, which is of interest to researchers in the field of psychology, medicine, sociology, philosophy and the social economy. The literature offers plurality of definitions of quality of life. According to Kane "(...) for some it is a very broad term, meaning almost everything except the information about the death of individuals, for others it is only certain elements of life, and some emphasize the social and psychological aspects of quality of life"¹⁹.

The concept of quality of life has gradually evolved. Originally it meant a good life for the purposes of consumer - "have", then covered the area "to be". The effect of these changes was to assess the need for new criteria of quality of life like health, education, etc.²⁰. In the first half of the twentieth century, economic considerations focused on growth, development and prosperity of society. Quality of life was understood as a sociological category. The concept of quality of life began to be used in many areas in the 50s of the twentieth century. In the following decades, this term was used in the research of the level of satisfaction of basic needs. The 70s of the twentieth century initiated the process to determine the quality of life for the sociological, psychological and medical measurements. In that time the interrelationships occurring between quality of life and way of life, a sense of well-being, satisfaction of the conditions and capabilities to meet the needs were analyzed²¹. In 1972, Dalkey and Rourke formulated one of the first definition, which assumed that the quality of life consists of two elements: life satisfaction and happiness²². Thus quality of life concept is a complex category, which consists of many elements²³:

- the environment,
- wealth understood as access to education, culture and possessions,
- health,
- safety,
- sense of belonging to the community.

¹⁸ M. Dąbrowa, *Study in standard of living-methodology of structure of selected indicators*, The Małopolska School of Economics in Tarnów Research Papers Collection, 2011, ISSUE 1/2011, p.69.

¹⁹ R. A. Kane, *Quality of life* [in:] L. Breslow (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Public Health* vol. 3, New York 2002, Macmillan Reference USA, p. 1003.

²⁰ SR. Cohen, *Existential Well-Being is an Important Determinant of Quality of Life*, *Cancer* 1996, 77(3), p. 1, cyt. Za D. Kochman, *Jakość życia. Analiza teoretyczna, Praca Poglądowa*, *Zdrowie publiczne* 2001, 117(2) s. 242.

²¹ D. Rybczyńska, *Jakość życia pokolenia wstępującego*, Wydawnictwo WSP, Zielona Góra 1995, s. 16.

²² N. C. Dalkey, D. L. Rourke, *The Delphi procedure and rating quality of life factors*, Univ. California LA 1972.

²³ J. Kusterka, *Jakość życia w aspekcie wybranych wskaźników ekorozwoju*, [w:] J. Tomczyk-Tółkarz (red.), *Jakość życia w perspektywie nauk humanistycznych, ekonomicznych i ekologii*, Akademia Ekonomiczna we Wrocławiu, Jelenia Góra 1990, s. 190.

According to Slaby²⁴ quality of life "contains all the elements of human life that are associated with the fact of human existence, and feeling different emotional states, arising from the fact of having a family, colleagues, friends". Miluska describes the quality of life as a concept of focusing on the different perceptions of the phenomenon, presenting them as an important objective conditions of life, crucial for the people's needs, and subjective states that show the degree of fulfillment of these needs²⁵.

An interesting approach presents Borys which describes the seven typologies of quality of life²⁶:

1. Evaluating and unevaluating quality of life.

Evaluating quality of life, answers the question "what is the assessment of life", and unevaluating quality focuses on the question "what is life".

2. Global and reduced quality of life.

Global refers to all areas of quality of life (physical, mental and spiritual). Reduced quality of life or partial, limited to a sphere of life.

3. Objective and subjective quality of life.

Objective quality of life issues with economic activity, the amount of income, housing conditions, children's education, insurance, etc. Subjective quality of life is the satisfaction of needs and includes the assessment of the material living standards, mental and physical health, happiness, empathy, unconditional love, etc.

4. Individual and collective quality of life.

The concept of individual quality of life concerns in the various spheres of human life. The collective quality of life is understood as a generalized effect of all surveys made on quality of life.

5. Direct and indirect quality of life.

Direct quality of life is determined on the basis of test. Indirect quality of life is defined mainly on the basis of observation of data statistics.

6. Sustainable and unsustainable quality of life.

Sustainable quality of life is described as a balance between "have", "be" or "have", "be" and "love". Unsustainable is a result of the change of sign of correlation from positive to negative, between objective and subjective quality.

7. Axiological quality of life.

The method of assessing the quality of life is determined by the value system.

The primary goal of the modern concept of socio-economic development is to improve the quality of life, and to reduce the large differences in material and social circumstances of different groups of the society. In the report, "Social Diagnosis. Conditions and Quality of Life of Poles"²⁷ the authors presented the results of the quality of life research of different socio-demographic groups. The measurement of quality of life has been made by a general indicators of quality of life, which take into account:

- Social capital, understood as an activity for the local community,
- Physical, mental and social development,

²⁴ T. Slaby, *Poziom życia, jakość życia*, Wiadomości statystyczne, 1990, no. 6, s. 8.

²⁵ J. Miluska, *Stereotypy i uprzedzenia jako determinanty jakości życia kobiet*, Ruch Prawny, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny, 1993, no. 4, s. 145.

²⁶ T. Borys, *Propozycje siedmiu typologii jakości życia*, Prace naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu, Gospodarka a Środowisko, Nr 22, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2008, s. 126-133.

²⁷ J. Czapiński, T. Panek (red.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2011, Warunki i jakość życia Polaków, Raport*, Rada Monitoringu społecznego, Warszawa 2011, s. 356.

- The level of civilization,
- Material well-being,
- Life stress,
- Pathology.

The results of research show that, since the Polish access to the European Union in 2004, there was an increase in quality of life of people living in the largest cities in the age 25 - 34 years. However, quality of life undergo deterioration of the oldest and the least educated. Improving the quality of life of Poles occurs not at the expense of others but with others. The results also indicate that the quality of life index was higher for men than for women. Differences in quality of life for both sexes is conditioned by age. Another factor influencing the quality of life is education. Higher education weakens the effect of age on quality of life. The study also highlighted the relationship existing between the quality of life, education and socio-professional status. In the examined group of pensioners and the unemployed, life is better among those with higher education. Another element which determine the quality of life is sex. Among the unemployed, economically inactive and pensioners, the quality of life of women is much higher than of men. The opposite trend prevails among a group of public sector employees and pensioners. According to the authors, the quality of life understood as the good life, not only concerns objective standards (wealth, health, respect), but also the happiness of life²⁸.

Results of the research made by the Central Statistical Office conducted in 2013, where the object of the study was subjective side of quality of life, shows that the most important aspects of life that is shaping the overall level of satisfaction is the family situation and health status²⁹. Important for the quality of life was also the intensity of contacts with other people, with people outside their own household. No or limited number of contacts was indicated as an important factor that may lead to social isolation, and thus affect the growth of the degree of dissatisfaction with life. The basic measure of the subjective (perceived) quality of life was assumed as a rate of satisfaction with life in general. This survey shows that 74% of people in age of 16 years and more are satisfied with their lives.

Among the important factors affecting life satisfaction, mental health, being with someone in a relationship and frequency of contact with other people were included. According to the respondents who had satisfied the basic needs, little impact on quality of life (in comparison with other factors) had financial situation. From among three relevant aspects of financial situation such as income, living conditions and the budgetary situation of the household, the most important influence on the level of satisfaction had life conditions, and the least important current financial situation³⁰.

Another element that shapes the quality of life is the ability to cope with life, so-called resourcefulness in life. The main factors affecting the resourcefulness in life may include³¹:

- Relational capital - relationships with the environment.
- Experimental capital - "baggage" of all life experiences relating to the ability to learn.

²⁸ J. Czapieński, T. Panek (red.), *Diagnoza społeczna 2011, Warunki i jakość życia Polaków, Raport*, Rada Monitoringu społecznego, Warszawa 2011, s. 373.

²⁹ *Jakość życia, kapitał społeczny, ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne w Polsce*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Departament Badań Społecznych i Warunków Życia, Urząd Statystyczny w Łodzi, Warszawa 2013, s. 33.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

³¹ M. Nowicki (red.), A. Hildebrandt, P. Susmarski, M. Tarkowski, W. Woźniak, *Atlas jakości życia w województwie pomorskim II edycja*, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, Gdańsk 2012, s. 24.

- Knowledge capital - everything that man has learned, and what will help him in the process of coping with life.

In the era of globalization the impact of the classical factors of production: land, labor and capital to create economic development has decreased. In times of "knowledge economy" the importance of social capital is growing (knowledge, creativity, interpersonal relationships), and the determinant of success is the quality of life and its components like education, health, the environment, culture, recreation and security³².

Another area which has strongly affected the quality of life is the economy. The most important elements of the quality of life in the economy are work and satisfaction in the work, income and unemployment. Jobs indirectly affect both the community development and economic growth. The increase in the number of people working in the region has a positive effect on the overall quality of life and the attractiveness of the settlement of the area³³. The income allows to realize the needs, especially those related to the sense of security and self-realization.

Economic development enriched with qualitative factors such as social, natural and health is crucial to improve the quality of life. High impact on the assessment of life satisfaction and happiness has the state of human health. A common phenomenon is that negative impact on the quality of life have serious and chronic diseases. Diseases can affect the quality of life simultaneously for many levels. People suffering from a serious disease, often during treatment have to deal with the side effects such as physical, psychological, and sociological³⁴. However, there are cases where long-term illness can have a positive impact on the current quality of life. It is noticeable, especially when the sick person shall reevaluate the accepted system of values, which can help to find the meaning of life. The health status shapes the quality of life in a direct way, affecting the achievement of satisfaction with life, relationships and education. Factors which influence health status can be classified into four groups³⁵:

- biology and genetics;
- the health care system;
- behavior and lifestyles;
- environment (housing conditions, working conditions, spatial order, the attractiveness of the landscape, the availability of recreation areas, cleanliness of the components of the environment).

With increasing age of people, the effect of biological factors on the formation of health also increase. The importance of the economic environment for health is mainly related to the availability and security of work, salary levels, the balance between free time and work time, adjustment the type of work to person's competence and aspiration.

Fundamental importance to quality of life, now and in the future, has the local surroundings including the environment, technical infrastructure, availability of

³² *Ibidem*, s. 15.

³³ M. Nowicki (red.), A. Hildebrandt, P. Susmarski, M. Tarkowski, W. Woźniak, *Atrakcyjność inwestycyjna województw i podregionów Polski*, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, Gdańsk 2012, s. 41.

³⁴ J. Trzebiatowski, *Jakość życia w perspektywie nauk społecznych i medycznych-systematyzacja ujęć definicyjnych*, Hygeia Public Health, 2011, 46(1), s. 6.

³⁵ M. Nowicki (red.), A. Hildebrandt, P. Susmarski, M. Tarkowski, W. Woźniak, *Atlas jakości życia w województwie pomorskim II edycja*, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, Gdańsk 2012, s. 40.

transportation, housing, culture and recreation³⁶. Local governments can promote local development through the proper management of space (preparation of spatial plans), tax and investment policy (stable optimal use of fiscal policy) and infrastructure. European Union policy on the environment is to provide the same level of protection in all EU countries, while taking into account local conditions and the need to strike a balance between protecting the environment and preserving the competitiveness of companies in the global market.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN PODKARPACIE PROVINCE

An interesting example of the connection between sustainable development strategy and the concept of quality of life in Poland is the Cluster Quality of Life "Podkarpace Country", established in June 2012. The idea of this cluster has been born 2 years ago after Innovations Forum, where representatives of the world of science, members of local governments and businessmen discussed about the main factor that distinguished Podkarpackie region among other regions in Poland. It was concluded that this factor is undoubtedly the high quality of life. This was the first step followed by the establishment of the association called The Life Quality Cluster "Podkarpace Country" and the recognition of this sector as smart specialization in the region, next to the Aviation Valley.

Podkarpackie Province was created on 1 January 1999, from the merger of the former provinces of Rzeszów, Przemyśl and Krosno, and the inclusion of the area of Tarnobrzeg and Tarnów. The region is located in the south-east part of Poland, covering an area of 17,900 sq m, which is 5 % of total country area, bordering with two countries: Ukraine from the east and Slovakia from the south. The province has an agricultural, industrial and touristic character and it is inhabited by 2 131 368 people which is about 5.5% of the total Polish population³⁷. The rural population consists of 1 259 466 people (59% of the total region population), while urban 871 902 people or 41% of the total population (the national rate shapes at the level of 61.8%).

The Region is considered in the country as the one of the poorest in the Poland. As the last research command, made by the Central Statistical Office, Podkarpackie province is distinguished by low wealth and a difficult financial situation of inhabitants. It occupies the last place among all the provinces in terms of GDP per capita, urbanization rate and unemployment. Additionally, it occupies one of the last place in terms of the amount of remuneration.

However, despite the difficult economic situation, many accepted indicators of quality of life, especially healthy, environmental and social, place him in a very high position. First of all, according to the research made by Central Statistical Office in 2012, here people live longest. The average age of residents is the highest in the country and amounts to 82.1 years for women and 74.3 years for men. Average for Polish is respectively 81 and 72.7 years, while the lowest rate is in Łódzkie Province, where the figures are 79.8 years for women and 70.6 years for men. Significant impact on life expectancy has the environmental and climatic conditions as well as social relations (there has been a very low divorce rate, compared to the national average). Secondly, the crime rate is the lowest in the country and it is maintained at the level of 1700 crimes per year, while the average for the

³⁶ European Environment Agency Report, *Ensuring quality of life Europe's cities and towns, Tackling the environmental challenges driven by European and global change*, Brussels 2009, no. 5, p. 13.

³⁷ Statistical Yearbook of Poland, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2013.

country is twice superior. Thirdly, the region has one of the highest birth rate on the level of 1.4, while the eight from sixteen provinces in Poland has a negative birth rate, and the average for Poland is 0.3. It is proper to note that in Mazowieckie Province, where the GDP per capita is the highest in Poland, birth rate is merely on the level of 0.8. Moreover, it is worth to underline that Podkarpackie Region has the highest number of students in relation to the population – they constitute 30% of the whole local population. This classified Podkarpackie Region in the first place in the whole European Union.

The most important asset of Podkarpackie Region is the concentration of industrial companies that have invested in innovation – this rate is higher than 36% and puts the region in the first place in the whole country. Podkarpackie Region has the strongest concentration of modern aerospace industry in Central Europe, scientific research centers and educational and training facilities - it is the location for the most advanced industrial cluster in Poland "Aviation Valley", which develops and fulfills aerospace projects. Although the Aviation Valley is growing rapidly contributing to thousands of high-tech job posts, the traditional values of inhabitants still have a vast impact. High work ethics, good education system, focusing on tradition and the use of owned resources make the region more and more competitive.

A very large impact on the character of the region has also the environment. Undoubtedly, this is due to the nature untouched by human hand, and vast expanses of protected areas. Almost 45% of the region's area is protected. Among them, there are two national parks: Magurski and Bieszczadzki, 94 nature reserves, 7 landscape parks and many more protected landscape areas. In addition to the nature, the region can boast of a variety of historic monuments, both religious and secular. Touristic routes cut across the length and breadth of the region, presenting temples, palaces and mansions. These unique qualities make it one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the country. Furthermore, according to data from the Central Statistical Office 2011, in terms of air pollution emitted by industrial sources, Podkarpackie region takes annually one of the last places in the country³⁸. Undoubtedly, this is one of the key factors by which the region is considered as the ecologically cleanest in Poland. Moreover, because of the great importance of the environment in the region, local authorities support the initiatives of residents and private companies to contribute environmental protection to their investments. Podkarpackie community is keen to take part in projects creating alternative energy sources such as wind and solar. The proportion of renewable energy sources increases year by year, which results in a vast number of investments in this area. However, even the latest technical solutions for energy acquiring from renewable sources, and excellent water treatment will not bring results if these activities do not connect to the environmental education of residents. Therefore, it is appreciated the role of local authorities to make an effort to educate the inhabitants in order to raise awareness on environmental issues and help them to take advantage of the proposed solutions concerning the environmental protection.

Podkarpackie Region is also a bastion of healthy food, produced in accordance with organic certification. It occupies currently the second place in Poland in terms of the area of all organic farms and third place in terms of the number of these farms. The region belongs to the Organic Food Valley Cluster, which promotes and develops organic food production in Eastern Poland, and it is the first association of this kind in the country.

³⁸ Report on the State of the Environment in Subcarpathian Province, The Provincial Inspectorate for Environmental Protection in Rzeszów,
http://www.wios.rzeszow.pl/pl/1,60,170,475/2/1046//raport_zarok_2011.html

These examples are the major factors that place Podkarpackie Region in such high position due to quality of life. This unique surroundings have created an opportunity for growth of sustainable tourism, health recovery sector and green technology industry, which are the main goals of Life Quality Cluster "Podkarpackie Country".

6. LIFE QUALITY CLUSTER "PODKARPACIE COUNTRY" AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Life Quality Cluster „Podkarpackie Country” relies on beautiful nature with the multicultural tradition of the region and next to the Aviation Valley, it is becoming an important element of regional sustainable development. According to the Statute of the association, the cluster includes the following areas which affect the quality of life in the region³⁹:

- Medicine - this area includes both basic health care as well as specialized, dentistry, aesthetic medicine and rehabilitation, including the elderly.
- Tourism - this area consists of the services offered by the hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and open-air museums, architectural and historical objects and travel agencies.
- Agrotourism and organic food -this area consists of Agrotouristic farms, that offers the opportunity to spend leisure time with nature, and the organic food producers offering their products in direct sales, as well as through retail chains.
- Culture and entertainment - this area includes cinemas, theaters, music clubs, museums, and different kinds of school (like dance school, music school, acting school etc.)
- Sports and fitness – this area consists of sports clubs, swimming pools and centers providing services in the field of wellness – beauty spa, massage therapists, hairdressing, fitness clubs.

The main goal of The Life Quality Cluster is to build the brand of the region in a modern, scientific, organized and developed way using the experience, contacts and owned resources. This is the strategic purpose of the association, which is supposed to be achieved through the following activities⁴⁰:

- Supporting for businesses, especially SMEs, in the health and leisure sectors.
- Attracting domestic and foreign investors to build their presence in the Podkarpackie Region.
- Developing of cooperation between business and universities in the field of quality of life.
- Promoting quality of life sector as a smart specialization in the region, next to the aerospace industry and IT sector.
- Encouraging and supporting businesses in implementing new technologies and solutions which are environmentally friendly.
- Improving the qualifications of personnel necessary for the development of the region.

³⁹ Statute of Association Life Quality Cluster Podkarpackie Country (in Polish), <http://www.krainapodkarpackie.pl/en/about-us/statute>

⁴⁰ Statute of Association Life Quality Cluster Podkarpackie Country (in Polish), <http://www.krainapodkarpackie.pl/en/about-us/statute>

- Adapting the education system to the needs of entrepreneurs and investors in the sector of quality life.

Despite the fact that the cluster "Podkarpacie Country" exists only for one year, we can already indicate some initiatives taken by the association which affect sustainable development of the region. Undoubtedly they are compatible with the main aims of the association, which are sustainable tourism, health recovery and green technology. Below we present three major projects by which the Cluster shows its impact on development of the Life Quality sector in south-eastern Poland.

Senior Village

The aging of the population is widespread, both in Poland and other EU countries. Resources of population in the pre-working age are reduced, which over the next few years could lead to a reduction of potential labor resources and population growth in the retirement age. The effect of these changes is the need for continuous development of the social infrastructure (hospitals, rest homes, nursing homes) for the elderly⁴¹.

To meet the problem of aging population, the first joint project of the Life Quality Cluster "Podkarpacie Country" refers to the plan of building the village for people who will want to live in an active way on the retirement. The idea of the so-called "Senior Village" is famous in the world, including Germany, the Great Britain and the United States, but this is the first project of this kind in Poland. The village will be located in the vicinity of Głogów Małopolski, which is characterized by high natural and landscape values.

Taking into account the results of studies showing that aging is largely dependent on the way and living conditions, the project of "Senior Village" includes, in addition to the residential complex, also recreational complex. The members of the cluster in the IT area, to increase the sense of psychological safety of people living in the village, will design in houses the special electronic monitoring systems. In the construction of buildings in the village, the cluster will use the potential of members gathered in the technology group. All facilities will be designed for older people, often with mobility problems, vision, hearing and memory. The houses will be built using modern sustainable solutions, both technological and material. Such solutions, through the use of alternative energy sources and green building materials will affect not only on decrease of operating costs but the buildings will contribute to the comfort of older people.

Another issue that occurs with aging are diseases, and the limitation of mobility. The solution to this problem will be in the consideration of the members focused in the medical group. Entities associated with medicine will take care of the patient – the villager, in an interdisciplinary way assuring prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and various therapies.

The biggest problem of the elderly is loneliness and lack of meaning in life. Those who decide to live in the "Senior Village" will be staying in an environment of pensioners, making it much easier to establish contacts and relationships. More and more older people, maintain intellectual and physical capabilities. Activity has a positive effect on improving the quality of life and mental as well as physical condition. Support for activities will be provided by the members of the Cluster associated in touristic area, by offering services in the field of recreation, health improvement and wellness. Additional, they will guarantee the ability to make use of existing sports facilities including tennis courts and golf fields.

The village is designed in such way that people do not feel alone and to ensure the maximum flexibility, convenience and a wide range of recreational activities at the same

⁴¹ D. Celińska-Janowicz, A. Miszczuk, A. Płoszaj, M. Smętkowski, *Raporty i analizy EUROREG 5/2010*, Centrum Europejskich Studiów Regionalnych i Lokalnych EUOREG, Warszawa 2010, s. 5.

time. The village is an alternative to the currently existing nursing homes, where pensioners will be able to begin a new phase in their life, focusing on the health and better adaptation to the changes associated with aging.

Medical Tourism

Another project proposed by the Life Quality Cluster "Podkarpackie Country" is sustainable tourism and classified in the health sector - medical tourism. An opportunity for the development of medical tourism is the freedom to receive healthcare in the European Union guaranteed by the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council 2011/24/EU of 9 March 2011⁴².

The European tourism industry is faced with the need of adaptation to social changes and restrictions that result from the current structure of the sector, its nature and the socio-economic development. One of the major social change is a continuous increase of the group of people over 65 years. In 2020 the group will constitute 20% of the total population⁴³. People included to this social group are characterized by both the free time and purchasing power, but due to their specific requirements, they need some adjustment from the part of the sector.

Due to increase of life expectancy and health consciousness of society, there is a high probability that the choice of purpose of journey, where people are going to spend their leisure time, will be considered for the health aspects. This results in the growth of popularity of tour packages to offering active recreation, wellness and the possibility of using high quality medical services.

Podkarpackie Region due to the tourist attractions and the natural environment is seen as a region attractive to this kind of visitors. Observing the emerging new trends in tourism related to the development of medical tourism, Cluster "Podkarpackie Country" in cooperation with the National Center for Research and Development is developing the project, which purpose is to identify the strengths, interest, necessary investments, changes and improvements in infrastructure and tourism development strategy for individual provinces and the whole region. According to the Coordinator of the Life Quality Cluster⁴⁴, the first strategy (pilot project) will be developed for the communities included in the Dynowskie Foothills. This model strategy can be duplicated in other lands of Podkarpackie Region. The next step which the cluster intends to establish is the cooperation with Austria, Germany and Scandinavia, where medical tourism is very popular. Activities taken by the cluster, seek to develop an attractive and professional tourist offer that will encourage foreign tourists to benefit from medical services and activities offered by the Podkarpackie Province. The structures of the Cluster "Podkarpackie Country" include representatives from sectors forming quality of life: travel, sports, medical, cultural, hotel industry and catering. Cluster members of the medical sector, will be offering medical services on a global level, including ophthalmology, aesthetic medicine, dentistry and orthopedics.

Members of the cluster focusing on the basic business activity, often do not have time for their promotional activities. Promotion activities on the tourism market, require both a large number of fixed-stakeholder cooperation and good communication system. Another

⁴² Dyrektywa 2011/24/UE Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady z dnia 9 marca 2011 r. w sprawie stosowania praw pacjentów w trans granicznej opiece zdrowotnej, Dz. U. L 88 z 4.4.2011, s. 45-65.

⁴³ B. Walas (red.), A. Cichońska, T. Buczek, D. Zientarska, M. Nalazek, K. Celuch, *Marketingowa Strategia Polski w Sektorze Turystyki na lata 2012-2020. Aktualizacja dokumentu z 2008 r.*, Polska Organizacja Turystyczna, 2011, s. 18-19.

⁴⁴ Po 'Dolinie Lotniczej' czas na „Kraję Podkarpackie”, VIP B&S, wrzesień-październik 2012, s. 73.

action taken by the Cluster "Podkarpacie Country" will be conducting joint marketing activities, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the medical tourism compatible with the principles of sustainable development. Considering that one of the key issues discussed in the public forum, facing the medical tourism industry, is the lack of reliable information about the quality of medical services in another country, marketing activities undertaken by the cluster should be considered as significant.

Green building

In the era of the maximum usage of energy from non-renewable sources, humanity became aware of the possibility of exhaustion of fossil fuels in the coming decades. That is why more and more stringent emissions standards were the reason for the emergence of new technologies acquiring renewable energy. In addition to generating energy from the sun, the most common source of power are wind turbines. However, there is also a possibility to use of geothermal waterways and biomass.

Polish temperate climate and geographical location of the Podkarpackie Region promotes the use of modern energy – efficient technology in the single and multi-family construction. Sunlight and the high number of sunny days in the region (the biggest in country) ensure the acquisition and processing of renewable energy in the form of solar radiation for heating and electricity generation (photovoltaic).

Growing popularity of energy-efficient construction is a perfect example of how technology can be combine with environmental protection⁴⁵. This is especially important for the Podkarpackie Region, which not only has more and more strongly developing industrial sector, but also a large extent of areas that are the basis for ecosystems. Therefore, sustainable development and human interaction with nature is the embodiment of the philosophy of the Life Quality Cluster.

The dynamic development of the surroundings of Podkarpackie Region and the creation of new housing construction is a great testing ground for new technologies. Therefore, due to the current economy situation, the cluster, for the correct development of the region, brings together the most important companies in the construction industry dealing with green technology to develop the appropriate public space and equip it with high-quality energy-saving solutions.

The aim of the cluster is not only to build energy-efficient buildings. Building objects should also refer to the tradition and culture of the region. Due to the nature of the region, their architecture cannot be accidental. The rich past of the region, which struggled with powerful history cannot be forgotten.

Podkarpackie Region is always referring to natural building materials as exemplified by wooden churches included in the list of UNESCO monuments. A passion for natural materials can result from the turbulent history of the region (poor financial situation over the years), however, the usage of natural materials can become a symbol of modern and green building.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The article demonstrates that Life Quality Cluster "Podkarpacie Country" takes deliberate actions which fit within the concept of sustainable development. Implemented cluster projects effect on the economic development of the Carpathian region. The use of

⁴⁵ S. Wall, *Potrzeba zrównoważonego budownictwa w Polsce i w Europie*, Instytut Techniki Budowlanej, Warszawa 2011, www.zb.itb.pl/publikacje/budownictwo-zrownowazone-harmonizacja-wymagan-i-metody-oceny accessed 22.08.2013.

innovative but green solutions, is consistent with the model of care for the environment. The concern for human health and future of older people improves the quality of life for residents in south-eastern Poland. The goals pursued by the cluster are part of the foundation of the EU, national and regional development policies.

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KLASTER JAKOŚCI ŻYCIA “DOLINA PODKARPACIA” JAKO PRZYKŁAD WDRAŻANIA STRATEGII ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU W POLSCE POŁUDNIOWO-WSCHODNIEJ

Koncepcja Zrównoważonego Rozwoju staje się ważnym zagadnieniem dla wielu regionów i organizacji na całym świecie. Idea ta, najsilniej rozwinęła się w ciągu ostatniej dekady przede wszystkim dzięki rozwojowi i popularyzacji zarządzania strategicznego mającego istotny wpływ na decyzje podejmowane w procesie zarządzania. Również regiony poszczególnych państw czerpią z tej idei po to aby uwzględnić w swojej - regionalnej strategii tak ważny w dzisiejszych czasach, proces zmian społecznych, gospodarczych czy ekologicznych, zapewniając równowagę między zyskami i kosztami rozwoju w perspektywie przyszłych pokoleń.

Doskonałym przykładem wdrożenia koncepcji Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce Południowo- Wschodniej jest Klaster Jakości Życia „Dolina Podkarpacia”. U podstaw działania klastra, początkowo zakładano przede wszystkim, stworzenie odpowiednich warunków dla rozwoju i wzrostu tej części kraju, jednak szybko okazało się, że stał się on doskonałym rozwiązaniem i odpowiedzią na naciski oraz obawy płynące ze strony społeczeństwa dotyczące zrównoważonego wzrostu i ochrony środowiska naturalnego. Wyjątkowe otoczenie Województwa Podkarpackiego oraz jego walory przyrodnicze stworzyły odpowiednie warunki i szanse dla rozwoju m. in. zrównoważonej turystyki, sektora ochrony zdrowia oraz budownictwa energooszczędnego.

Artykuł dowodzi, że Klaster Jakości Życia "Dolina Podkarpacia", wraz ze swoimi inicjatywami spełnia założenia Strategii Rozwoju Regionalnego. Projekty wdrażane przez klaster, takie jak Wioska Seniora, Turystyka Medyczna czy Budownictwo Pasywne, opisane przez autorów, przyczyniają się do promowania koncepcji jakości życia, która nierozzerwalnie łączy się z zasadą zrównoważonego rozwoju. Klaster Jakości Życia "Dolina Podkarpacia" bez

wątpienia przyczynia się do promowania zrównoważonego rozwoju w Polsce Południowo-Wschodniej.

Słowa kluczowe: Zrównoważony rozwój, Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego, jakość życia, Klaster Dolina Podkarpacia.

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