

# **Spatial Planning – Social and Environmental Opportunities and Threats**

Edited by:  
Anna Haładyj,  
Paulina Legutko-Kobus

Lublin 2007

Language editorship – Anna Haładyj  
Cover design – Anna Kowalczyk  
Technical editorship – Tomasz Piech

Publishing within the project  
“Cooperation of Universities supporting the development of the Lublin and Lviv regions”  
of the Neighbourhood Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine Interreg IIIA/ Tacis 2004-2006  
Project finance agreement: Nr. IG-2004/PL-UB/2.06/2.1/U-16/06 from 26 June 2006



Project Part-financed by the European Fund of Regional  
Development within the Neighbourhood Programme  
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine  
INTERREG IIIA/TACIS CBC

*neighbourhood*  
**PROGRAMME**  
PL-BY-UA

© Publishing House of Catholic University of Lublin 2007  
ISBN: 978-83-7363-487-9

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin (Poland)  
e-mail: [oinfo@kul.lublin.pl](mailto:oinfo@kul.lublin.pl)  
<http://www.kul.lublin.pl>

Co-publisher:  
Lublin Business School  
Ltd. of the KUL Development Foundation  
Konstantynów Str. 1H  
20-708 Lublin (Poland)  
e-mail: [wydawnictwo@lsb.lublin.pl](mailto:wydawnictwo@lsb.lublin.pl)  
<http://www.lbs.pl>

## **Potential Threats to the Environmental and Social Space Resulting from the Implementation of the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013**

### **1. Presumptions and study methods**

The task of programming the social and economic development becomes increasingly complex on account of the growing globalisation level in economy and social behaviours as well as due to tighter addition and dependence of Poland upon the processes within the European Union and outside it. The financing of social and economic development of the country by having recourse to EU funds (mainly structural) is becoming all the time more important, therefore the manner of distribution of these funds will in the years to come decide the directions of Poland's progress. These directions are established by the policies of the legislative and executive authority at the central and regional level; these policies have been fundamentally outlined in the document entitled, National Strategic Reference Framework (in the late term of the Sejm referred to as the National Development Plan), and a number of detailed elaborations: sectoral and regional operational programmes covering the years 2007-2013, i.e. the consecutive years of the EU financial period. The documents will basically underlie the expenditure of the Community funds and domestic resources, complementary for the EU aid. One of them being the subject of the analysis presented in this paper is the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013 prepared in the Ministry of Regional Development in 2006<sup>1</sup>. Compared with other operational programmes, this one is moderately detailed as a result of the combining of sectoral approach (focus on small number of selected sectors, mainly transportation, science and higher education as well as international relationships) and regional approach (the actions will cover five provinces of eastern Poland which, up to 1 January 2007, i.e. the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, has the Community lowest GNP per inhabitant).

---

\* Prof., Gdańsk University, Institute of Geography, geomk@univ.gda.pl.

<sup>1</sup> Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, Ministry of Regional Development. Project no. 4 approved by the Cabinet in Warsaw, 25 July 2006, p. 120.

The abovementioned documents belong to the so called strategy papers (policies, strategies, programmes) which are required, under the Environmental Protection Law Act, to undergo the impact assessment procedure. Article 41 of this act states the scope of impact assessment within the strategy paper. It focuses on the potential influence of actions which are going to be realized under this document over natural and cultural environment. However, in practice the forecasts prepared for these documents should not only include the impact on particular environmental components but should also take account of the influence on the conditions and opportunities of the implementation of sustainable social and economic development as it was defined in the Environmental Protection Law Act. Such an approach is more and more adopted in the forecasting and the theoretical and practical guidelines concerning its application were elaborated upon in some of the previous papers of the author of this article<sup>2</sup>.

The official forecast of the impact assessment in the project, Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013 (hereafter, OPDEP), was prepared in November 2006 in the Institute of Environmental Protection and the Institute for Sustainable Development in Warsaw<sup>3</sup>. It represents the above-discussed broad approach to the impact forecasts and contains both the analysis of the potential impact of programmes over the environment and the influence over the conditions for sustainable development. This study was drawn up by a team of experienced specialists in the field and takes into consideration almost all aspects necessitated by the impact assessment forecast of a strategy paper. The author of this article was the co-speaker and reviewer of this forecast and most of the conclusions discussed hereunder emerged during the work of the review<sup>4</sup>. They went beyond the findings of the forecast. It follows from the fact that giving opinions on the environmental impact forecast documents is strictly connected with the occurrence of specific problems and trouble areas which overlap with the problems resulting from the character of strategy papers – they

<sup>2</sup> KISTOWSKI M.: *Regionalny model zrównoważonego rozwoju i ochrony środowiska Polski a strategię rozwoju województw*. Gdańsk – Poznań, Uniwersytet Gdański, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2003, p.392; KISTOWSKI M.: *Propozycja metodyczna opracowania prognozy oddziaływania na środowisko projektu planu zagospodarowania przestrzennego województwa. Part I and Part II*. "Problemy Ocen Środowiskowych" 2005, Issue 2(29), pp. 37-47, Issue 3(30), pp. 41-55; KISTOWSKI M.: *Wpływ programów ochrony na środowisko przyrodnicze. Ocena jakości i ekoinnowacyjności programów ochrony środowiska województw opracowanych w latach 2001-2005*. "Studia nad Zrównoważonym Rozwojem" Vol. III, Gdańsk – Warszawa, Komitet „Człowiek i Środowisko” przy Prezydium PAN, Fundacja Rozwoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006, p.218.

<sup>3</sup> HAJTO M., KACPRZYK K., KAMIENIECKA J., KARACZUN Z., KASSENBERG A., KĘDRA A., RĄKOWSKI G., RZESZOT U., WÓJCIK B.: *Prognoza oddziaływania na środowisko projektu Programu Operacyjnego Rozwój Polski Wschodniej na lata 2007-2013*. Warszawa, IOŚ, InRE, 2006, p.108 [computer printout].

<sup>4</sup> KISTOWSKI M.: Review (co-paper): *Prognoza oddziaływania na środowisko projektu Programu Operacyjnego Rozwój Polski Wschodniej na lata 2007-2013 opracowanej przez konsorcjum Instytutu Ochrony Środowiska i Instytutu na Rzecz Ekorozwoju*. Gdańsk, p.11 [computer printout].

frequently cover the issues superficially and in a “blurred” manner – as well as from the way the forecasts are elaborated for the strategic documents which have highly specialist character and little degree of formalisation of the assessment procedure. In order to give more credit to the quality of the performed forecast, it is necessary to not only get familiar with its content but also with the details of the document for which the forecast is developed, and the reviewer, de facto, faces the need to carry out their own simplified assessment of the document’s impact on environment, at least in its written or intellectual sphere. The more thorough the “own” forecast is, the more integrity of the performed assessment.

## **2. The assessed programme as an example of disregarding the principles of sustainable development**

In the last ten or more years, and in particular since 2005, there has been gradual decline in the quality of strategy papers – especially those prepared for the whole country by the central administration. Likewise, the degree of these documents’ consideration for environmental conditions and principles of sustainable development has been diminishing. To corroborate this opinion, it is worth reminding of the comparative study, National Spatial Development Policy Concept, developed in mid-1990’s by a team headed by Prof. J. Kołodziejski and compare it with the newest versions of this policy, e.g. Revised National Spatial Development Concept, launched in 2005<sup>5</sup>. The former is the effect of work of a large cross-disciplinary team and, although some of its theses are disputable<sup>6</sup>, it provided solid ground for a discussion on the future shape of Polish spatial issues taking also account of environmental factors and ecodevelopment. The revised concept of 2005 is not that thorough and was developed by smaller group of experts; it does not attach much attention to sustainable development, thus ecological aspects. The prevailing ones are economic factors and social facets of spatial development of the country. In any case, this concept undergoes further modification and to the end of 2006 had not been formally approved at a governmental level.

Of similar character is the operational programme discussed in this article. Broadly speaking, this document does not adequately take into consideration, in any of its parts, the conditions resulting from the environmental features typical of eastern

<sup>5</sup> *Zaktualizowana koncepcja zagospodarowania przestrzennego kraju*. Warszawa, Rządowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych, October 2005, p.139.

<sup>6</sup> KASSENBERG A.: Ocena ekoinnowacyjności w wybranych dokumentach strategicznych. Polityka przestrzennego zagospodarowania kraju. [In:] *Ekoinnowacyjność dokumentów strategicznych. Próba oceny, Raport 1*. Warszawa, Instytut na Rzecz Ekorozwoju, 2001, pp.25-34; KISTOWSKI M.: *Czy polski system planowania przestrzennego zapewnia skuteczną ochronę przyrody?* “Przegląd Przyrodniczy” XIV, Issue 3-4, 2003, pp.19-40.

Poland, and its content at times violates the constitutional principle of sustainable development, it especially overlooks its ecological mainstay. The authors of the abovesaid forecast of the environmental impact of the operational programme point out that the implementation of the majority of project's plans may have adverse influence on the environment and sustainable development. This conclusion is fully justified. One can even conclude that the degree of focusing on the environment and its conservation in the OPDEP is relatively low and is a manifestation of utmost negligence of this issue in the process of strategic planning of the financing of plans and projects from the EU funds, as well as of the lack of knowledge on natural environment and its protection of the people involved in the development of the programme project.

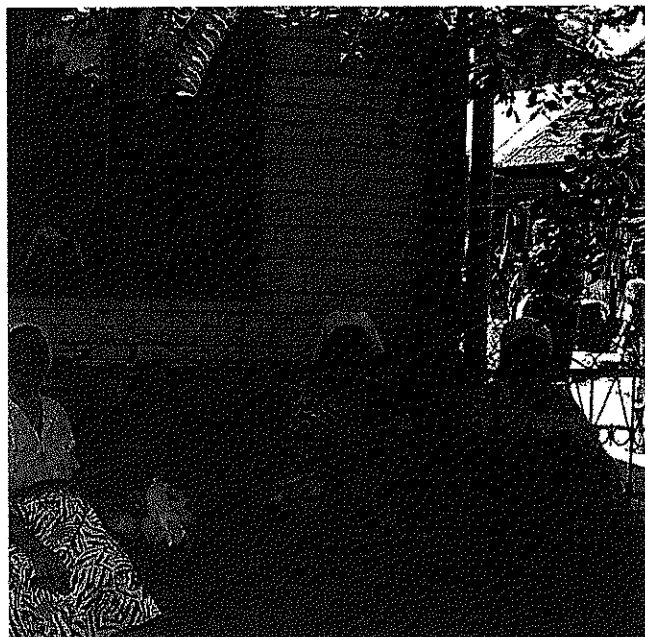
It is characteristic that at the outset the authors of the OPDEP project apply the term, "balanced development", thus avoiding the expression, "sustainable development", without clarifying what "balanced" – which it is not defined in the domestic law – means for them. The analysis of the overall of the document testifies however to the fact that the term "balanced development" has little to do with the commonly understood concept of sustainable development. The main goal of the implementation of the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013 was "the restrain the stagnation tendencies" and "stimulation of economic growth" of this part of Poland. It displays strong "economicization" of the programme with less stress on ecological criteria. Environmental protection, in particular the nature conservation (in terms of area and species) are not taken as a chance, quite the contrary, as an obstruction of economic development, chiefly industrial development. Such an approach reflects the mounting stream of economicization of strategic planning – social and economic – represented in many experts' studies<sup>7</sup>. It is difficult, however, to acknowledge that the stagnation of eastern Poland, which underlay the production of the operational programme under discussion, is true in every sphere. It may refer to economy but to a lesser degree covers the ecological field which is totally neglected.

Likewise, the references to the social sphere arouse doubts. In the document, eastern Poland is named "socially depressed". While this statement can be understood in the economic context, it is hard to be in agreement that greater poverty and lower educational level determines their depression. The sole fact that the region has not been yet harnessed in the treadmill of global economy and overwhelming standardization according to European and American patterns does not mean the eastern Poles are less happy and satisfied with their lives than, for instance, big city dwellers who more and more suffer from the numerous factors diminishing the standard of living. The evaluation criteria for the quality of life cannot only be of financial character but should also

---

<sup>7</sup> E.g. *Atrakcyjność inwestycyjna województw i podregionów Polski 2005*. Kalinowski T. (ed.), Gdańsk, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, 2005, p. 77.

have regard to the categories of “satisfaction”, honesty and personal fulfilment. Such an attitude has been totally overlooked in the programme. Let me quote the opinion of Andrzej Stasiuk expressed in one of this essays<sup>8</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** “Social stagnation” according to the Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013, or “total désintéressement of life” as in Andrzej Stasiuk? (Podlasie)

He claims that, on the one hand, “is old Europe is under the spell of itself and its virtues? But can you be endlessly virtuous? Can you perfect what seems already perfected with impunity? Can you develop what is already developed without the risk of hypertrophy?” This old Europe intends to totally impose its civilisation model. Stasiuk says that, “what comes to his mind is rather the loss than profit account”. And he goes on to say, “What are we going to replace the désintéressement of life with? This hanging out and waiting through days and hours convinced that life goes on regardless of our acts and efforts. This is nothing more than noble faith that there are things which are greater and more important than we are. What do we substitute this daydreaming with, this unique gift of giving priority to dreams before reason”. Consequently, the GNP per head indicator used in the programme cannot underlie the conclusions and the claim of social retardation of eastern Poland.

<sup>8</sup> STASIUK A.: *Fado*. Wołowiec, Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2006 (essay: *Parodia jako sposób przetrwania kontynentu*, pp. 68-81).

### 3. Incomplete and partly erroneous diagnosis as the cause of non-sustainable presumptions of the programme

The diagnosis of the situation of eastern Poland – as reads Chapter One of the programme project – in principle concerns only the economic and social issues and some other remarks, e.g. on environment, are formed incorrectly. For example, it is not consistent to claim that the natural values of a region are based on “natural and tourist complexes” (is one of many examples of the programme’s newspeak) and national parks, while the cause-and-effect relationship is quite the opposite. It is the unique natural values that allow eastern Poland boast attractive tourist areas and create national parks. With such a high degree of misunderstanding of the programme authors of the interdependence of natural conditions and socio-economic development, one cannot expect “sustainable” proposal of action. Elsewhere, it speaks of “conflicts at the borderline of economy and ecology” instead of the conflicts between social groups about the use of the natural values and resources. It is not the economy or natural environments (wrongly called ecology!) that underlie these disputes but the people who have diverse visions of living in the environment. Natural environment is only (or maybe as much) the subject of the differences. Only thorough insight into the causes of the conflicts and their mechanisms allow their effective neutralization and reduction of the relevant inconvenience for the communities and nature. The document conclusions do not give a faint of a chance to do so as they do not offer any proposal of instruments that might help it. The environment-oriented conflicts may be but one of the main reasons for the lack of sustainability during the planning and implementation phase of spatial development.

These are but a handful of doubts raised by the diagnosis and resulting from the inclusion of certain decisions which – after transformed into action – may produce adverse effects in the spatial development of eastern Poland.

Largely disputable is the opinion the eastern Poland has in recent years developed less dynamically due to the liquidation of state-owned farms (mainly in Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province). It is hard to agree that state-owned farms have ever been the stimuli for the development of rural areas. In spite of their liquidation, in eastern Poland about 30% of the employed work in agriculture and forestry, and in some branches of farming and breeding this area leads the way in the whole country. Farming and forestry has been traditional branches of economy that provided income to the eastern Poland dwellers. Why should this be changed? Certainly, there are necessary structural changes in these branches, in particular in farming, yet the operational programme offers no plans or undertakings that may creatively serve this purpose.

From the viewpoint of environmental protection, maintenance of spatial order and supporting sustainable development processes, it seems risky to hold up a claim of “large reserve in tourist development of eastern Poland and the opportunities of its



use..." Such a stance threatens future excessive investment and destruction of natural values of the region, which can be observed in a number of coastal or mountainous areas of Poland, but also in the area under discussion, the Great Masurian Lakes or parts of Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Lake District.

The fact that none of the eastern Poland provincial cities has "developed into agglomeration" is considered a fault of the growth processes. As a consequence, further actions are planned to be undertaken in order to facilitate the formation of the agglomerations. Yet, a question arises – whether the facilitation of such growth processes is advantageous? While analyzing the rise of Polish metropolitan areas, one can arrive at a conclusion that their negative features begin to prevail over the positive ones. The most detrimental manifestation thereto is the so called urban sprawl with its all negative consequences (ineffectiveness of transportation systems, shortage of services, deteriorating quality of life, lack of access to leisure facilities). The urban and suburban dwellers have in the last years responded to this phenomenon by moving out to the communes at the outskirts or outside the urban areas, which translates onto city budgets gaps. So, is it worth turning into an agglomeration? Perhaps, instead, it is more advisable to support the development of even networks of medium and small towns – traditional for this part of Poland.

On the other hand, the diagnosis has proven that under certain conditions – not only environmental but also economic – the situation of eastern Poland against the backdrop of the rest of the country does not appear that bad. For instance, the spending on research and development (per capita) in the eastern borderland provinces constitute the country average (besides the Świętokrzyskie Province), and exceeds the indicators in the Lubuskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Opolskie Provinces. Then again, the percentage of innovative enterprises in the analyzed provinces reached in 2003 between 39 and 44%, with the country average of 39.3%, thus it was higher than the Polish standard. Perhaps, it is not the selected regions that require the most profound structural assistance, and if it is going to be addressed there, possibly it could be used differently than already planned.

Not to elaborate upon a greater number of remarks that could be brought forth in relation to the diagnosis included in the programme project, it is only worth mentioning a set of indicators used for synthetic analysis of the difference among the Polish provinces which concludes this part of the programme. From among 26 indicators, only few have to do with sustainable development. Their significance for the spatial order of the region is very limited. In the social context, they pertain to the population growth and unemployment rate, and as for economy the density of utilized railway lines. The environmental indicators concern either so called "pipe end" undertakings (emission of dust and gaseous pollution per unit of area and percentage of treated sewage), or the size of physical protected areas (this indicator was wrongly called the percentage of province area of specific physical values) which are taken as a whole (e.g.

national parks and areas of protected landscape); this, on account of differentiated values and protective regimes for these areas, questions the logic behind the interpretation of this indicator. Hence, the proposed criteria are of little use both for the diagnosis of the advancement status of sustainable development processes – in particular in the spatial aspect – and for the monitoring of any progress in this regard. This is evident through the doubtful conclusions that follow the analysis of these indicators which says that “the eastern Polish provinces vary in terms of the natural conditions”, while these differences are in fact less significant than if compared with other parts of the country<sup>9</sup>.

The diagnosis closes with the proposal of diminishing the degradation of eastern Poland. But when it comes to the natural environment it is one of the least destroyed areas of Europe. Isn't the inhibition of socio-economic degradation going to facilitate the ecological ruin of the region? Such questions being the very essence of the concept of sustainable development are not proposed by the project authors. Likewise, the SWOT analysis being the introduction to establishing the programme objectives almost absolutely lacks the references to natural environment and its conservation, besides quoting “clean natural environment and physical values” among the strengths. The term “natural environment” is used incorrectly – it should be “physical environment”. Alternatively, from the viewpoint of potential threat for the regional space, it may be of concern to list among the strong points “considerable number of free areas and post-industrial facilities that can be used for investment”.

#### **4. Potential influence of the programme actions on the environmental and social space**

The economy and infrastructure-oriented character of the project, Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007 – 2013, is largely manifested in its operational part, e.g. by its detailed objectives such as:

- increase in investment attractiveness of eastern Poland;
- development of selected metropolitan functions of the provincial capitals;
- improvement in the accessibility and quality of transportation network in the region.

These features of the project are much more transparent in the context of priorities and actions of the operational programme. The leading ones are listed in figure 2.

<sup>9</sup> KISTOWSKI M.: *Regionalny model zrównoważonego rozwoju i ochrony środowiska Polski a strategię rozwoju województw*. Gdańsk – Poznań, Uniwersytet Gdański, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2003, p. 392 (table 4-2 on page 215).

The proposed actions and priorities can have varied influence over the quality of natural and social space of eastern Poland. Some of them may have favourable or neutral impact on environment but this is not the effect of the adopted presumptions but rather of an accident resulting from the character of sets of actions planned for financing. More intentional seem the beneficial effects for the social environment; however, they do not always remain unambiguously positive.

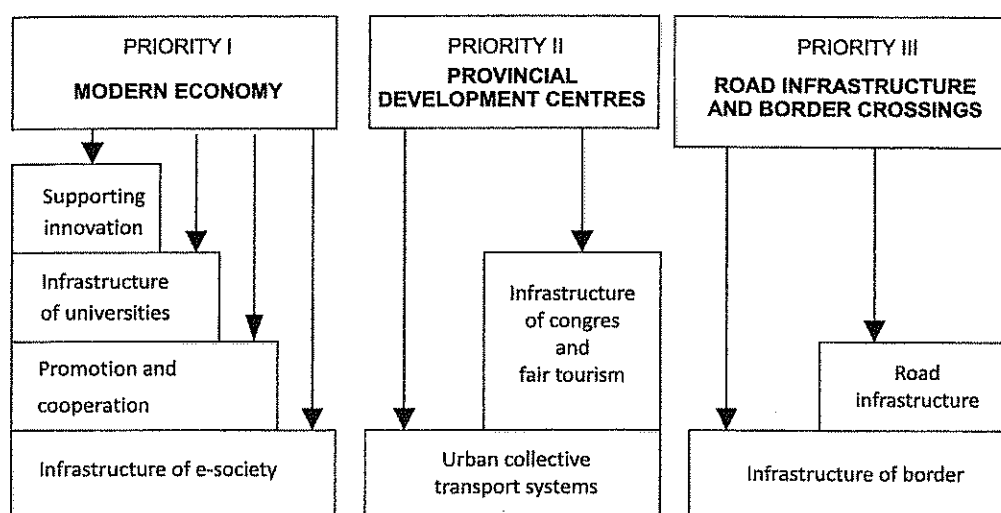


Fig. 2. Main priorities and actions of the Operational Programme for the Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013.

From the array of proposed undertakings, Priority One seems to be relatively advantageous owing to its potential influence over spatial issues; it concerns modern economy and promotion of IT infrastructure, growth in scientific and research potential and implementation of innovative economy branches that may also employ the eco-innovative instruments<sup>10</sup>. Yet, due to the fact that under the aforesaid priority investment should be given precedence, it can bring unfavourable effects to natural and social space. For instance, the construction of facilities for schools of higher education – if undertaken in the suburbs, as it is the case with many university campuses (example of Kraków and Poznań) – may stimulate the processes of urban “sprawling” and intensify its negative outcome<sup>11</sup>. This may be remedied by the location of such an infrastructure near the city centres by, for example, using old post-industrial (as in

<sup>10</sup> KAMIENIECKI M.: Ekoinnowacyjność a ekorozwój. [In:] *Ekoinnowacyjność dokumentów strategicznych. Próba oceny. Raport 1*, Warsaw, Instytut na Rzecz Ekorozwoju, 2001, pp.11-22

<sup>11</sup> *Miasto za miastem. Raport 3*, Kamieniecki M. (ed.), Warsaw, Instytut na Rzecz Ekorozwoju, 2002, pp. 98.

Łódź) or post-military areas (as in Lublin or Gdańsk), however, such initiatives are often hindered by the rocketing land prices in the hearts of agglomerations. Similar threats can emerge while implementing innovation-supportive programmes, as in the case of establishing technology and industrial parks, technology transfer centres and similar facilities; such facilities, by definition, are supposed to strictly cooperate with universities and research centres – this can be optimized by the close vicinity of these objects of scientific interest. Thus, some positive examples can be given (Gdynia, Szczecin) of locating such facilities in city centres as well as less positive (Poznań) of suburban locations that generate extra transportation needs, mostly satisfied by using private cars. The actions related to the development of IT infrastructure (also accessibility of the Internet) only seemingly bring positive upshot for the environment. In the second half of the 1990's it was believed that this would contribute to the decrease in travelling and movement of labour force (telework) or the use of paper (data created and stored electronically and transferred by networks). Unfortunately, the ubiquity of the Internet threatens not only the society (addiction to the web) but also ecology<sup>12</sup>. The impressive progress in the accessibility of information about the world and ever-growing offer of travel agencies have boosted the demand for travelling, particularly to distant locations by air, thus affecting the environment. Besides, it became apparent that the loads of information sent via the Internet is later printed which further translates onto extensive consumption of paper and consequently onto larger amount of waste. These previously unpredicted effects of globalisation and computerization may be neutralized only in highly educated and ecologically aware societies and our society is not yet listed among them. The implementation of the discussed priority is aimed to attract more investors and business tourists to eastern Poland. However, the question is: what are the verification criteria for the proposed investments. Are the economic criteria going to prove superior to the ecological ones – as it often happens? Why the funds of the operational programme are to be used for sponsoring "experts' assessments and publications concerning the touristic and cultural potential of eastern Poland", and not natural potential which seems the greatest asset. The general character of the programme project leaves these questions unanswered for the time being. Regrettably, after the programme has been submitted for implementation, it will be too late to clarify some of these doubts.

Priority Two concerning the provincial centres of development encompasses two groups of actions which may affect the environment and the society in quite an opposite way. Of definitely positive character seems the introduction of urban collective transportation systems which plan to implement various undertakings. Regrettably, these funds will be available only to the largest, provincial centres of the region, thus stimulating agglomerative processes, simultaneously levelling the negative effects of

---

<sup>12</sup> BROWN L.R.: *Gospodarka ekologiczna na miarę Ziemi*. Warsaw, Książka i Wiedza, 2003, p.323

urban sprawling. Other relatively big municipalities do not have the chance to obtain such funds (Elbląg, Przemyśl or Tarnobrzeg and Sandomierz). On the other hand, the collection of negative spatial consequences – similar to those of Priority One – may be caused by the realization of the other groups of actions under the so called business tourism, i.e. congress tourism and fair facilities. Again their potential impact depends upon the location. Less convenient are the sites in the outskirts of the cities and outside, yet we need to bear in mind that such constructions generate transportation needs (e.g. delivery of fair exhibits) and their situation in city centres may be inconvenient for the inhabitants (worsened air quality, noise, traffic congestion). Therefore, their location should be planned very carefully and should take account of all the criteria: social, ecological, economic and spatial – since the adverse effects of the operation of such facilities will concentrate on the provincial capitals.

From the three included priorities, the implementation of Priority Three focusing on road infrastructure and border crossings may bring most unfavourable and immediately tangible spatial consequences. It anticipates the construction of linear transport infrastructure (roads) and point transport infrastructure (border crossings) as well as numerous accompanying investments. These plans result from the diagnosis that “the existing road system of eastern Poland does not entirely meet the needs of the industry and does not guarantee high standard of passenger carriage”. The fact is the quality of roads is not satisfactory in the whole country and as for the industry – comparing to other regions of Poland it is less developed, hence the conclusion that the planned road infrastructure is aimed mainly to support the transit between western and eastern Europe, and the environmental and social damage will be greater than predictable economic gains. Bearing this in mind, the programme’s opinion seems ironic saying that the construction of the roads “is to be conducive to the strengthening of eastern provinces and guarantee stable, sustainable and harmonious development” (!). Not to be sceptical about the need for product exchange with eastern European countries (e.g. Lithuania and Ukraine), a question may be asked of whether the main obstacle to this exchange is the insufficient development of border crossings. For instance, the crossing with Ukraine in Krościenko near Ustrzyki Dolne was less congested before modernization than it was in 2006 when new border terminal was completed. Perhaps the reason for low “patency” of border crossings is wrong organization of customs clearance, or disparities in officers’ equipment, or again the differences in the economies of neighbouring countries which result in increased “trade tourism” in the borderland areas. As long as the differences are there, the construction of new crossing points and enlargement of the existing ones will be a Sisyphean work. The capacity of every new terminal will be quickly filled up by more and more travellers. Therefore, it would be reasonable to direct the EU funds to the levelling of economic differences in the neighbouring states considering that the proposed road and border investment collide with the conservation of precious natural heritage and may affect also the areas covered by

the Natura 2000 network. Furthermore, the potential unfavourable effects following from the construction of the planned infrastructure under the discussed programme may be reinforced by the investment supported by the EU structural funds under the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment and regional (provincial) operational programmes.

The predominant economy-oriented approach of the operational programme project and the focus on “hard” investments as the prime mover of the development is particularly obtrusive in the proposed programme success indicators which should serve the monitoring of its progress. No environmental factor has been listed there and only two out of sixteen indicators – which can be perceived as sustainable development indicators – concern transportation and are supposed to monitor the number of commuters and “time savings in passenger and goods transportation on reconstructed roads in millions of Euro.” Their introduction, however, was not the idea of the project originators but followed the requirements of the EU contained in the document of 1 June 2006<sup>13</sup>. The remaining indicators concern only the economic, social and infrastructure issues whilst the threat of their application results from the fact that the interpretation of their variable trends – beneficial from the programme sponsors’ viewpoint – may be simultaneously detrimental to the principles of sustainable development. For instance, it seems reasonable that the upward tendency in GNP per inhabitant<sup>14</sup> and the growing number of domestic and foreign tourists are constructive and in line with the programme philosophy whilst they create new forms of environmental pressure (waste, water ecosystems pressure). Nevertheless, these indicators do not allow for the specific character of the region which should entail the development of ecotourism centres, and other serving the qualified and rural tourism, and the significance of tourism should be perceived not through the prism of the number of tourists but against the backdrop of the quality and profits they bring to the locals.

## 5. Conclusions

The project, Operational Programme Development of Eastern Poland 2007-2013, assessed in this article belongs to the group of strategic documents which in recent years have deteriorated in terms of quality, in particular with regard to the policies, strategies and programmes developed at the central level of administration. The document has inadequately and in a limited way approached the issues of the conditions

<sup>13</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION: *Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation. A guide*. Brussels 2006.

<sup>14</sup> This indicator has long been criticized as the sustainable development indicator for society and economy.

and environmental protection as well as the sustainable development principles. The realization of the four programme priorities may to a degree cause the economy and social life of the five eastern Polish provinces gain momentum, yet in many instances this acceleration will generate social disputes between the area users and will produce irreversible changes in the resources and features of the natural environment which, in this part of Poland, constitutes a matchless European natural heritage (the Podlasie, Polesie, Roztocze, the Carpathians).

From among the planned actions, the unambiguously positive effect should be the growth of the transportation systems in the first leading cities of the region. Yet, the implementation of other initiatives may bring about both desirable and undesirable consequences for the environment and society. The undertakings on the development of the infrastructure of educational centres, information technologies and innovative economy sectors should predominantly bring positive outcome; conversely, in some cases – especially if the facilities are located in the urban and suburban areas – they will negatively impact the environment by the risk of producing the so called urban sprawl. It may become apparent that new industrial plants localized in the vicinity of the major cities of the region (in particular of high-technology, whose employees will come from all over Poland), as well as fair and conference centres will in the first place serve the owners of the invested capital and less the region's people. The concentration of financial aid in the largest, provincial cities of the region may add to extra disparities in the conditions and level of life in eastern Poland. The material status of the inhabitants will improve and level with other Polish towns, yet the gap between largest and smallest towns and villages in this part of Poland will further deepen. One should not forget that the main source of income in the region has been, is and probably will be for some generations, the agriculture.

In the light of the unbiased analysis of the strong points of eastern Poland, which underlines that the complementary direction of its economic development may appear to be – besides agriculture, forestry and specialized pro-ecological industries – tourism based on wealthy resources and natural and cultural values of the region (fig. 3), the conservation leading to the preservation and enrichment of these resources and values should become a fundamental direction of human activity in this area. The so called "green" work places<sup>15</sup> (the services of qualified tourism, natural and rural, conservation of nature and forests, sustainable agriculture and transport, production of renewable energy, production of environmental protection installations, and organization of social actions) may largely contribute to the increased employment of its inhabitants.

---

<sup>15</sup> ABC „zielonego miejsca pracy”. Warsaw, Instytut na Rzecz Ekorozwoju przy współpracy European Environmental Bureau, 2003, p.46.



**Fig. 3.** *17th century wooden Greek Catholic church in Ulucz in the Przemyskie Plateau.*

The above-cited study of the Gdańsk Institute of Market Economics concludes that, "eastern Poland has low investment attractiveness, and western Poland high one" (p. 18). There is much doubt whether the instruments and investment proposed in the analyzed operational programme will be able to improve it. There are grounds to fear that they may lead to the destruction of the unique natural and cultural values of this area and deplete it of the basis for the progress of most convenient forms of development. Therefore, all the investment should be planned and undertaken here with utmost care and thoughtfulness.