

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF SMÓLDZINO COMMUNE IN THE INHABITANTS OPINION

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### Abstract

In 2012, a survey analysing the local community knowledge of respective components of the natural environment within the borders of Smóldzino Commune was conducted. The survey covered 3% of the commune inhabitants. The chosen administrative unit is a region of a high environmental value – the Slovinski National Park, which is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, covers 60% of its area. However, the local government fails to notice an opportunity of the commune development through its unique environmental features, and considers them to be an impeding factor, as demonstrated by a dispute with the Treasury (over the lost income), and insufficient pro-ecological investments.

The local government attitude contributed to the fact that almost half of the surveyed could not evaluate the condition of the respective environmental components. The surveyed failed to notice a relation between the state of the environment and their comfort, and standard of living. Almost 25% of those questioned believe that they are not affected by the environmental issues. However, approximately one third of the inhabitants of Smóldzino Commune is interested in the local environment condition. The above mentioned group is familiar with the environment characteristics and recognises their impact on the standard of living. About 20% of the surveyed emphasise a good condition of air, water, and nature. The commune development is related to its location and unique environmental features.

**Key words:** Smóldzino Commune, coastal environment, ecological awareness

### INTRODUCTION

Smóldzino Commune is located on the Baltic coast, in north-eastern part of Słupsk County, Pomeranian Voivodeship (Fig. 1). It covers an area of 260 square kilometres, which accounts for 11.3% of the Słupsk County. It is the sparsest-populated administrative unit of the county, with a population of nearly 4,000 people, and density of 13/km<sup>2</sup>. Smóldzino Commune faces many social (poverty, unemployment) and economic (infrastructure, entrepreneurship) issues.



Fig. 1. Location of study county

Source: [www.geoportal.gov.pl](http://www.geoportal.gov.pl)

The Słowiński National Park – listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and a member of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves – is situated in the north of the commune. The SNP occupies 64.7% of the commune area (Aukszol 2010). However, the local government fails to notice an opportunity of the commune development through its unique environmental features, and considers them to be an impeding factor, as demonstrated by a dispute with the Treasury. The local government demands PLN 4,000,000 compensation a year for the income lost due to the SPN operating within Smołdzino Commune borders.

According to the local authorities, the SNP is significantly restricting the commune development opportunities. Small number of investments and environmental projects (compared to other coastal communes), indicates that acquisition of EU funds in the field of environmental protection by Smołdzino Commune is poor.

The local authorities' attitude has a negative impact on the increase of the environmental awareness and the process of shaping pro-ecological attitudes of the inhabitants.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper presents the results of a survey (personal interviews) conducted in May and July 2012 among a probability sample of 3% of Smołdzino Commune population (120 people) in which an interview questionnaire has been used to analyse the environmental awareness of the inhabitants. The paper presents the results regarding the following components of the environment: land forms, air, surface water, groundwater, soil, and flora and fauna.

The respondents were asked to answer 33 questions including close-ended questions, single choice, multiple choice (including multiple choice questions with comments), and open-ended questions. The questionnaire items are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1

## The questionnaire items

No.	The questionnaire items
1.	Demographic questions: gender, age, education
2.	How would you rate general condition of the environment in your commune?
3.	What are your main sources of information about the environment?
4.	Are there any transformed landscape forms related to, e.g. open-pit mining or construction works existing in the commune?
5.	Are the landscape transformations influencing the inhabitants' standard of living?
6.	How would you rate the level of air pollution in the commune?
7.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of air pollution in the commune?
8.	Is air pollution negatively influencing the inhabitants' standard of living?
9.	Are there any inconveniences related to noise emission in the commune?
10.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of noise in the commune?
11.	Are there any inconveniences related to odour emission in the commune? If yes, could you please list them below
12.	Are there any inconveniences related to electromagnetic radiation in the commune?
13.	What is, in your opinion, the state of surface water quality (the sea, rivers, lakes) in the commune?
14.	Have you noticed any negative effects of surface water pollution in the commune? If yes, could you please list them below
15.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of surface water pollution in the commune?
16.	Is surface water pollution affecting the inhabitants' standard of living?
17.	What is, in your opinion, the state of groundwater quality in the commune?
18.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of groundwater degradation in the commune?
19.	Have you noticed the correlation between groundwater quality and the inhabitants' quality of life?
20.	How would you rate the quality of soil in the commune?
21.	How would you rate soil conditions for the agricultural development in the commune?
22.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of soil degradation in the commune?
23.	What are, in your opinion, the signs of soil degradation in the commune?
24.	Is soil degradation affecting the inhabitants' standard of living?
25.	How would you rate the current condition of flora and fauna in the commune?
26.	Are there any signs of flora and fauna degradation in the commune? If yes, could you tell where are they?
27.	What are, in your opinion, the main sources of flora and fauna degradation?
28.	Is flora and fauna degradation affecting the inhabitants' standard of living?
29.	Are there any forms of the environment protection in the commune? If yes, could you please tell what are they?
30.	Are there any other environmentally valuable areas or objects which are not covered with legal protection in the commune?
31.	What are, in your opinion, the main environmental issues in the commune?
32.	How would you rate the local authorities' activity in the field of the environment protection?
33.	Are there, in your opinion, any forms of ecological education in the schools of the commune?

Furthermore, selected literature and source materials, i.e. the Environment Protection Programme, reports on the state of the environment in the Pomeranian Voivodeship by the WIOŚ, and Smołdzino Commune reports have been used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The environment condition profile

The land use pattern of Smołdzino Commune is characterized by specific physiographic features of its natural environment. Those features are determined by neighbouring lakes – Łebsko and Gardno, the Baltic Sea, and extensive wetlands, marshes and peatlands.

As a consequence, permanent pastures constitute almost half of agricultural land in the commune. The rest of the area is occupied by arable soils, forest complexes, wastelands (including ‘moving’ dunes), and urbanized areas.

Arable soils are classified as bad, with a majority of rye soil complexes, and very bad rye soil complexes. Significant restriction of agricultural activity as well as restrictions of the irrigation system maintenance has led to the flora composition changes.

The commune’s groundwater network is located in the Łeba and the Łupawa rivers catchment areas and contains the following lakes: Gardno, Dołgie Duże, Dołgie Małe and Łebsko.

In general, ground waters cover 20% of the commune area. The natural network of waters is complemented by the irrigation system of ditches and canals of various spatial density degree, characterized by a low level of technical efficiency (Flis et al. 2014).

Water demand is supplied by collective rural water distribution systems, individual and institutional dug and/or drilled wells, and water treatment plants. The waterworks network covers almost 88% of the commune. The inhabitants use two intakes of fully suitable drinking water (Table 2).

Table 2

Classification of groundwater used in Smołdzino Commune examined within the operational monitoring in 2011

Intake	Commune	No. ppt	Depth [m]/ groundwater level	Nitrates mgNO/I	Classification	Evaluation of the chemical condition
Żelazo – rural intake	Smołdzino	54	37	0.96	II	Good
Rowy	Ustka	55	8.6	3.88	III	Good

Source: Report on the environment..., 2012

Household generated sewage is mostly gathered in settling basins, discharged into surface waters or soil. Some of the sewage is transferred to a bio-mechanical treatment plant.

In general, the water and sewage management requires regulation. The percentage of sewage disposal systems is inadequate – 18% (the lowest percentage in the Słupsk County).

The main sources of heating are: institutional boiler houses, individual boiler rooms and tile stoves. Coal and coke are dominating within the group of energy resources, liquid fuels are being used on a smaller scale. There is no gas piping system in Smołdzino Commune, however the inhabitants use individual gas sources.

There have been no reports of the air pollution standards exceedances in Smołdzino Commune. There are no large emitters in the area. Furthermore, there are no large-scale industrial plants operating within the commune borders, and the local government has implemented, so-called, efficiency plans. The above mentioned factors contributed to a decrease in dust, SO<sub>2</sub>, CO, and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Table 3).

Table 3

The annual mean concentration of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM10, and benzene in Smołdzino Commune in 2011 and 2012

Site	Annual mean concentration of NO <sub>2</sub> µg/m <sup>3</sup>		Particulate matter PM10		Annual mean concentration of benzene µg/m <sup>3</sup>	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Gać – the SNP	3.1	3.2	15.5	11.0	1.3	1.4

Source: Bereszyńska and Wojtan 2014

Predominant type of rural buildings determines the occurrence of the pollutants generated by the individual heating systems, i.e. particulate matter, including fine particles; persistent organic pollutants; and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, including Benzo(a)pyrene (Bereszyńska and Wojtan 2014).

Emitted substances accumulate around the places of their origin causing high concentrations on the ground level. In addition, the level of pollution is determined by emissions of dust and gases from the neighboring areas, as well as unfavourable meteorological conditions. Values of pollution noted in the Gać Station located in the Slovinski National Park do not exceed the acceptable standards (The Regulation of the Minister of the Environment of 26 January 2010).

The examined commune is agricultural, therefore agriculture is one of the main sources of NH<sub>4</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> emissions.

Part of the generated solid waste is stored in the Smołdziński Las and Gardna Wielka area, where a landfill is operating. The landfill records six types of waste

only. The volume of waste generated in the commune is the lowest in the Słupsk County. Types and volume of waste are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Volume of municipal waste divided accordingly to a waste catalogue classification collected in Smóldzino Commune in 2013 [Mg]

Waste code	Type of waste	Volume of waste
15 01 02	plastic packaging	40.8
15 01 06	mixed packaging	17.3
15 01 07	glass packaging	48.7
20 03 01	mixed municipal waste	439.7
20 03 03	street-cleaning residues	3.5
20 03 07	bulky waste	0.7
<i>Total mount</i>		550.7

Source: Report on the commune waste management in 2013

The fauna of the commune is diverse, with many species comprised with protection. Exceptionally rich avifauna is drawing special attention. There are 13 strictly protected areas within the borders of the Slovinski National Park, with the elements of specific flora and fauna, unique biocenosis or biotopes as well as landscape features (Bieliniak and Popiołek 2010).

Smóldzino Commune is poor in mineral resources, however there is sand and gravel in northern part of the area.

There have been no reports of noise standards exceedances in the commune. There are no large emitters, i.e. railways, national and/or voivodeship lanes.

The majority of roads constitutes of dirt roads, internal access roads, and county roads of the fifth technical class. The main source of noise within the commune borders is road transport. The level of noise depends on heavy vehicles traffic and their speed, the condition of roads surface, and tourist season. Another noise emitters are industry, services, and the entertainment industry (especially in summer).

Voivodeship Inspectorate for Environmental Protection has not recorded any exceedances of electromagnetic radiation standards in Smóldzino Commune. In areas intended for a residential development the components of electromagnetic radiation should not exceed the limit values of 1 kV/m and 60 A/m (Regulation of the Minister of the Environment of 30 October 2003). Overhead power transmission lines (high, medium and low voltage lines) run through the commune area, however their field strength decreases to a value of under 1 kV/m over a distance of 10 to 30 meters measured from transmission lines. As a result, electromagnetic radiation is restricted to the areas adjacent to the transmission lines only.

## THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The surveyed group consisted of the same percentage of men and women (50% respectively). The group of inhabitants in the age bracket 31-50 was the most numer-

ous (40%), followed by the age groups of 51-70 (27%), and 21-30 (23%). In terms of received education, those with secondary education were the most numerous (44%), followed by the respondents with primary (21%), and higher education (19%). Over half of the surveyed rated **general condition of the Smoldzino Commune environment** as average (57%), and 23% as good (Fig. 1).

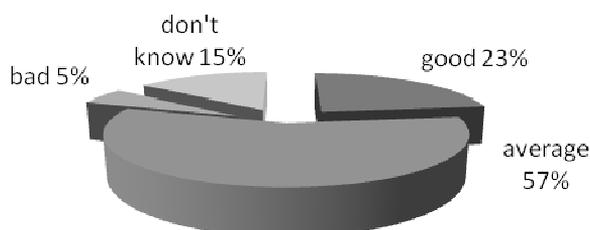


Fig. 1. General condition of the environment according to the surveyed

The surveyed described the level of the environment pollution in their place of living as low (41%) or moderate (32%). Most of the respondents is of an opinion that they live in a qualitatively better environment than the rest of the Poles. The environmental condition of Poland is perceived by the respondents as moderate (41%) or very polluted (20%).

The main sources of the respondents' knowledge about the environment are: television (32%), press (27%), and the Internet (21%) (Fig. 2).

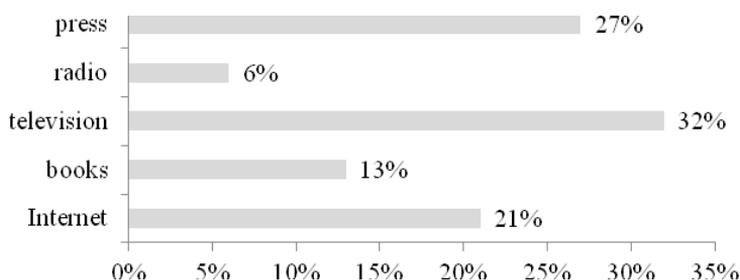


Fig. 2. Sources of information about the environment according to the surveyed

According to the survey, over half of the respondents (53%) did not notice **transformed landscape forms** within the commune area (Fig. 3). It can be explained by

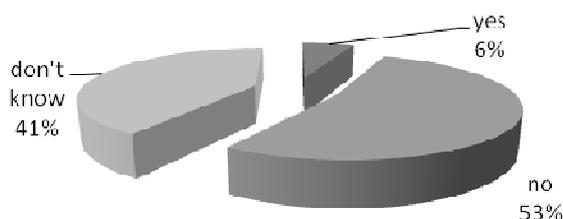


Fig. 3. The presence of landscape forms transformation in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

the lack of mineral resources in the commune, and, as a consequence, no open-pit mining in the area. Construction and engineering works are being carried out on a small scale (detached houses building sites, roadworks, or replacement of the water pipe system). The surveyed did not notice an impact of those activities on their standard of living. Only 6% of the respondents noticed the presence of transformed landscape forms – embankments and ditches. A large group of the surveyed (41%) declared lack of knowledge of the discussed matter. According to the majority of the surveyed, the above mentioned anthropogenic forms of terrain do not have a negative impact on aesthetic qualities and characteristics of the environment.

The surveyed inhabitants evaluated the **condition of air** in the commune considering the problem of pollution, noise and odours. Almost half of the respondents (46%) is of an opinion that the level of air pollution in their commune is low. 30% of the respondents have not noticed air pollution at all. About 30% consider the level of pollution to be average. Only 3% of the surveyed described the level of air pollution as high (Fig. 4). 2/3 of the surveyed noted a deterioration of air quality during a heating season. Identifying the main sources of emissions, the surveyed pointed to local boiler houses, stoves, grass burning and road transport.

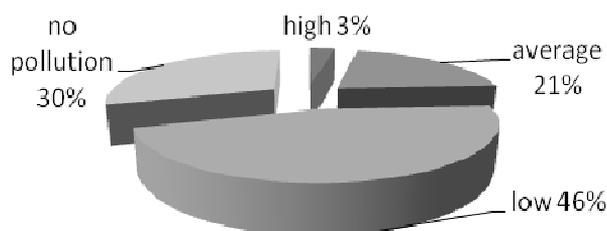


Fig. 4. Air pollution in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

Half of the surveyed is of an opinion that air pollution has a negative impact on their standard of living.

43% of the surveyed claim, that **noise** is not an issue in the commune. About 8% is of the opposite opinion. Mechanical vehicles are considered to be the main source of noise by the majority of the respondents. The respondents note a significant increase of noise level especially in summer (mass events), and in autumn (agriculture). Almost half of the respondents did not express their opinion on the issue due to a declared lack of knowledge.

About 16% of the surveyed acknowledged the occurrence of **odours** in the commune, but emphasized their occasional character. One third of the surveyed did not notice odours in the commune. Half of the surveyed declared lack of knowledge about the discussed matter.

The problem of **electromagnetic radiation** is acknowledged by 16% of the surveyed, with the level of radiation described as low. The majority of the respondents did not express their opinion on that matter, 52% of the surveyed did not notice a connection between the qualitative changes of air and their standard of living.

According to the survey, 44% of the respondents is not able to rate the **surface water** quality (rivers, lakes and the Baltic Sea) (Fig. 5). A quarter of the surveyed indi-

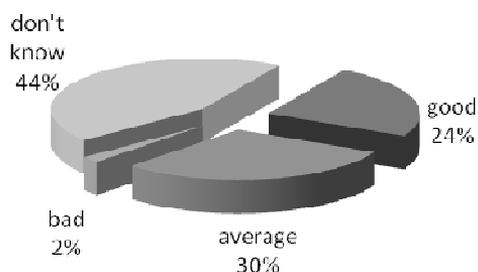


Fig. 5. Surface waters condition in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

ated a good quality of the waters, and one third of them considered the level of surface water quality to be average. The surveyed declared, that the main features taken into consideration in a process of evaluation the quality of water were water turbidity, smell and algal blooms (Fig. 6).

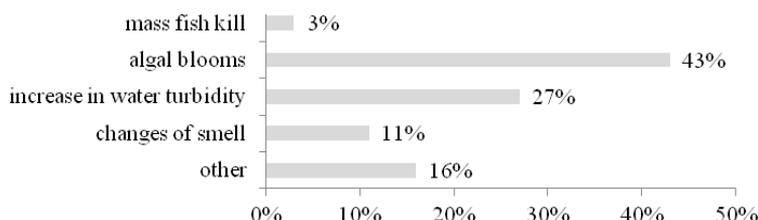


Fig. 6. Consequences of water pollution in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

The main sources of water pollution in the commune, as observed by the respondents, are municipal sewage, communal waste, chemicalization of agriculture and livestock farming (Fig. 7). Most of the surveyed emphasized the negative impact of the polluted waters on the economic growth prospects of Smoldzino Commune in the fields of tourism, angling and sailing. The majority of the surveyed (85%) claimed that the quality of waters does not affect their standard of living.

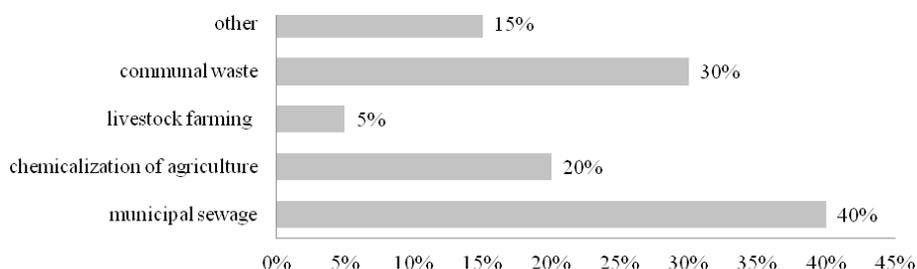


Fig. 7. The main sources of water pollution in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

The quality of **groundwater** should be important for the inhabitants of the commune due to its significant position in the functioning of households. Nonetheless, the

quality and condition of those waters – the main source of water in the process of food production and consumption, was unknown to 58% of the surveyed. Only 16% rated the condition of groundwater as good. 26% of the respondents described the state of groundwater as average (Fig. 8). The quality of water used in households affects the consumers' standard of living.

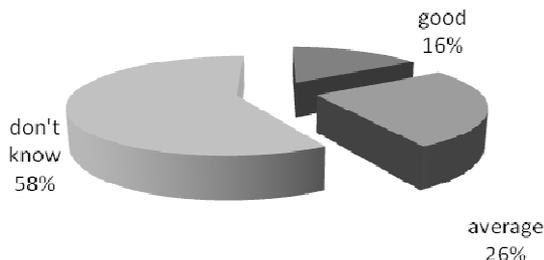


Fig. 8. Ground waters condition in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

However, in the discussed case 85% of the surveyed did not notice such connection. The sources of groundwater degradation was associated mainly with agriculture (fertilization, livestock farming), municipal waste and landfills.

Around 45% of the surveyed could not rate the quality of **soils** in the commune. The soil conditions for the agricultural development were considered to be average by 30% of the respondents, and good by 12% of them. 68% of the surveyed do not know whether the soil degeneration is due to water or wind erosion of soils. Almost 20% of the surveyed described the quality of soils in the commune as bad. For 42% of the respondents soils degradation is caused by an improper fertilization, 32% point to a chemical contamination. 78% do not know whether a bad quality of soils affects their standard of living.

The surveyed noted the evidence of **nature** degradation in the commune. They pointed to a decrease in a diversity of plants and animals species (especially in woodlands), and associated nature degradation with a direct human activity, i.e. deforestation and excessive hunting. The inhabitants noticed a negative impact of tourism (especially in summer) on the fauna and flora condition in the commune. The surveyed mentioned the following processes of the degradation: dunes devastation, trampling of the ground vegetation, devastation of trees and bushes, littering.

The respondents rated the fauna and flora condition within Smoldzino Commune borders as average (45%), or good (31%). Lack of knowledge about the discussed issue was declared by 20% of the surveyed (Fig. 9).

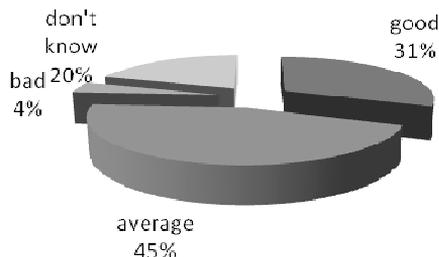


Fig. 9. Nature condition in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

An important component of the environment which emphasizes the value of a given terrain is a presence of **areas and objects covered with protection**, including nature reserves, national parks, nature monuments, ecological sites, and nature-landscape complexes. The conducted survey shows, that 87% of the inhabitants is aware of the presence of some of the above mentioned protected forms in the commune but the vast majority points to the Slovinski National Park only. 83% of the respondents do not know if there are any other, not covered with protection areas of high environmental value in the commune.

According to the surveyed, the most important environmental issues in Smoldzino Commune are: illegal landfills (24%), soils pollution (20%) and deforestation (15%) (Fig. 10). The surveyed identified the following activities which need to be undertaken by the inhabitants in order to improve the condition of the environment in the commune: inspection of compliance with the environmental regulations (33%) and wide ecological education (33%).

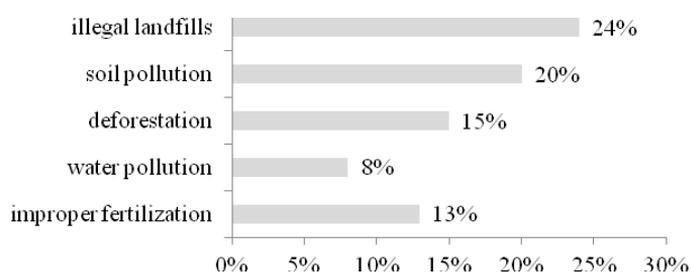


Fig. 10. The most environmental issues in Smoldzino Commune according to the surveyed

**Local authorities activity** in the field of the environment protection, and rational landscape and the environment management is described by 34% of the inhabitants as good, 50% of the surveyed considered the activity to be average (inadequate), and 16% described it as bad (Fig. 11).

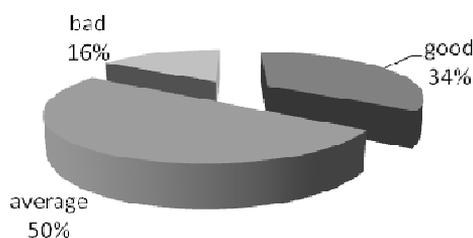


Fig. 11. The local authorities activity according to the surveyed

## CONCLUSIONS

The chosen commune is a region of a high environmental value – the Slovinski National Park covers 60% of its area. However, the local government fails to notice an opportunity of the commune development through its unique environmental features,

and considers them to be an impeding factor, as demonstrated by a dispute with the Treasury (over the lost income), and insufficient pro-ecological investments.

The local government attitude contributed to the fact that approximately half of the surveyed could not evaluate the condition of the respective environmental components: groundwater condition (58%), surface waters condition (44%), noise occurrence (49%), odours occurrence (51%), or transformed landscape forms presence (41%). The surveyed failed to notice a relation between the state of the environment and their comfort, and standard of living. Half of the respondents could not state their opinion on the negative consequences such activities as: waste burning, grass burning or illegal waste dumping. Almost 25% of those questioned believe that they are not affected by the environmental issues.

Approximately one third of the of the surveyed is interested in the local environment condition. The above mentioned group is familiar with the environment characteristics and recognises their impact on the standard of living, moreover, the causes of the negative environmental changes are identified accurately. According to the surveyed, the most important environmental issues in Smołdzino Commune are: illegal landfills (24%), soils pollution (20%) and deforestation (15%). The surveyed identified the following activities which need to be undertaken by the inhabitants in order to improve the condition of the environment in the commune: inspection of compliance with the environmental regulations (33%) and wide ecological education (33%). The local authorities activity in the above mentioned area is considered to be inadequate (insufficient) by 50% of the respondents. One third of the surveyed is of an opinion that the commune development pertains to its location and unique environmental values, and emphasise good condition of air, water and nature.

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## STAN ŚRODOWISKA PRZYRODNICZEGO GMINY SMOŁDZINO W OPINII MIESZKAŃCÓW

### Streszczenie

W 2012 roku na terenie gminy Smołdzino przeprowadzono badania sondażowe na grupie 120 dorosłych mieszkańców (3% populacji). Wyniki badań obrazują świadomość ekologiczną mieszkańców rozumianą wąsko – jako zespół informacji i przekonań na temat środowiska naturalnego oraz postrzeganie związków między jego stanem a warunkami i jakością życia (Burger 1996).

Ogólny stan środowiska postrzegany jest przez ankietowanych jako średni (57%) lub dobry (23%). Blisko 75% badanych kwalifikuje zanieczyszczenie powietrza jako małe lub w ogóle go nie dostrzega. Respondenci zauważyli jednak pogorszenie się stanu tego komponentu środowiska w sezonie grzewczym – powiązali to z tzw. niską emisją, czyli przydomowymi kotłowniami na paliwa stałe. Blisko połowa ankietowanych nie potrafiła wypowiedzieć się na temat negatywnych konsekwencji środowiskowych palenia śmieci czy wypalania traw. Według ankietowanych ani odory, ani hałas nie stanowią problemu na terenie gminy. Sporadyczne odory zauważyło 16% badanych, hałas zaś 8% (wiązało go głównie z pojazdami mechanicznymi). Z analizy opinii wynika, że wody powierzchniowe, tzn. rzek, jezior, morza, dla 24% odznaczają się stanem dobrym i średnim (30%). Oceniają go oni poprzez obserwacje zakwitów glonów oraz mętności wody czy jej zapach. Ankietowani wskazali na źródła zanieczyszczeń, tj.: ścieki bytowo-gospodarcze, chemizację w rolnictwie czy śmieci. Zauważali również negatywne oddziaływanie zanieczyszczonych wód na turystykę, wędkarstwo i żeglugę. Jakość i stan wód podziemnych dla 58% był nieznanym. Blisko 85% badanych nie potrafiło określić stanu jakościowego wody spożywanej w ich gospodarstwach domowych. Przekształcenia środowiska i krajobrazu związane są z przemieszczeniami utworów powierzchniowych zauważyło 6% badanych. Zdaniem większości, przekształcenia te nie wpływają negatywnie na walory estetyczne krajobrazu i właściwości środowiska. Stan przyrody żywej określono jako dobry (31%) i średni (45%). Zaobserwowano przy tym zmniejszenie się różnorodności gatunkowej roślin i zwierząt szczególnie na terenach leśnych. Ankietowani nie potrafili wskazać przykładów form ochrony przyrody na terenie gminy, wyjątkiem był jedynie Słowiński Park Narodowy (87%), jednak nie potrafili wytypować żadnych gatunków objętych ochroną.

Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań ukazują, że niewielka część mieszkańców gminy Smołdzino interesuje się stanem środowiska przyrodniczego, zna jego parametry i zauważa ich wpływ na jakość swojego życia. Ponad połowa badanych tego tak przyrodniczo cennego obszaru nie dostrzega związku pomiędzy stanem środowiska a komfortem i standardem życia. Blisko 25% uważa, że problematyka środowiskowa jest nieistotna.

