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## RUNNING AS A FORM OF ACTIVE LEISURE - RUNNING PATHS AS A SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENT OF LOCAL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Weronika Stodółka<sup>1</sup>, Damian Filipowski<sup>1</sup>, Kamil Michalik<sup>1</sup>, Krzysztof Palkiewicz<sup>2</sup>,  
Jacek Stodółka<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University School of Physical Education in Wrocław

<sup>2</sup>Graduate University School of Physical Education in Wrocław

### Abstract

The civilizational progress has brought many conveniences that allowed us to choose leisure and recreation as the preferred way of spending our free time. The interest in the advantages of open-air activities keeps growing, together with the number of needs emerging with the constant improvement of the economic status of our society. The more fashionable running becomes, the higher amount of people get interested in it and start running. The dynamic development of tourism related to running is a challenge for the tourism market. The astonishing popularity of this form of sport is especially visible in the number of people taking part in official runs and the growing number of the runs themselves. Promoting the region through active tourism is more than desirable. The goal is to show the right direction in creating the local society development strategies in fields such as health and active leisure for local governments. This direction is the proposition to create more running paths. The way of creating them has been described on the example of Świdnica city in Lower Silesian region of Poland. The project should perfectly match the development strategy of the city and become

helpful for the municipality. Having the area of the city and the number of its inhabitants in mind one could apply the guidelines written above to other cities with similar conditions without hesitation.

Keywords: running, health, recreation, leisure, municipalities

## **Introduction**

For the past few years, one can observe that people have more free time. The civilizational progress has brought many conveniences that allowed us to choose leisure and recreation as the preferred way of spending our free time. The interest in the advantages of open-air activities keeps growing [1], together with the number of needs emerging with the constant improvement of the economic status of our society. Meeting those needs has become the aim of many projects. The society gladly chooses the active forms of leisure such as qualified tourism or doing sport [2]. The trend of running, and the increasing number of people fond of it, are the main reason for the massive growth of the branch of tourism related to it. Together they are found to be quite challenging for the subjects of the tourism market [3]. Promoting the region through the active forms of tourism is more than desirable [4].

Recreation has become very popular nowadays indicating the massive growth of interest we put in our bodies, health and both physical and mental condition. The demand for recreation grows together with the amount of free time and the improvement of the standard of living. The incredibly important aspect of recreation is how it's improving the social links due to the proper way of encouraging the target group to the activities. This fosters the creation of new social links and, as a result, decrease in loneliness and elimination of social isolation. The free time should be used for active recreation around our homes. The local government is responsible to create the right conditions to do so. It should provide its citizens with an access to different forms of free-time activities aiming to improve their physical and mental health and integration.

Physical activities have a huge influence on a healthy lifestyle thanks to being its most important element. Its meaning is visible through the National Health Programme and its strategic goal being to improve health and the quality of life related to it through promoting physical activities [5]. Several epidemiological surveys have indicated that physically active lifestyle brings many health advantages [6, 7, 8, 9].

Definitely the simplest and widely accessible form of physical activity is running. Running recreation can be done by anybody, as it has no limits (such as age, sex or others).

It's also a natural way of working on our endurance. The biggest changes in human organisms have been observed within the systems that are encumbered most by the particular form of physical effort. In case of running, they are: the circulatory system, movement system, respiratory system and the thermoregulatory mechanisms [10, 11, 12, 13, 14]. Running is a simple physical activity that we are able to perform in any atmospheric circumstances. Regardless of the season and location ( park, meadow or street). Running is also one of the simplest and most accessible prophylactics. It's a natural phenomenon that we can observe in the modern society on an everyday basis. The branch of tourism related to running isn't all about the competitive face of it. What's important is the improvement of physical condition, health, giving the people an opportunity to relax after work and preventing many civilisation diseases [15]. It's also worth mentioning that running helps us get to know our environment, therefore can be used for educational purposes [16]. Nowadays it's becoming an alternative form of leisure and after-work relax. It helps to reduce stress and other tensions, what is reflected in our mental condition.

### **Setting the running routes**

There're more and more regular runners, as well as running clubs and associations bringing runners together. The astonishing popularity of this form of sport is especially visible in the number of people taking part in official runs and the growing number of the runs themselves. The devices designed to monitor training units using GPS have also become extremely popular. The most common ones are those offered by the producers of sport-testers - Polar and Garmin, as well as mobile applications - Endomondo and Strava. Runners can compare their results on the running paths where they train. It also creates an extra need to find new running routes, set new training goals and challenges.

The crucial element when it comes to designing running routes is to research the characteristics of the particular terrain. Geographical, demographic and historical factors also have to be taken into consideration. The information about the exact location can provide a lot of knowledge about the terrain. The information about the local climate will allow us to determine the weather conditions and the difficulties that come with them for a potential recreational runner. Determining the structure of the local society marks the needs of the inhabitants of the particular town when it comes to undertaking physical efforts. The historical elements make the route more attractive - doesn't matter if it's a location of an important event in the past or a historical object.

The goal of the following text is to establish the right direction in creating the local society development strategies in fields such as health and active leisure for local

governments. This direction is the proposition to create more running paths. The way of creating them has been described on the example of Świdnica city in Lower Silesian region of Poland. It was assumed that the projects in question should match the development strategy of the city of Świdnica. The routes have been set using Global Positioning System (GPS). The city of Świdnica was chosen due to its size - medium, which is very common in Poland. It was also determined that there aren't many locations designed for physical activities in the city.

The materials used to set the running routes were: the plan of the city [17], a Garmin Forerunner 305 watch, a digital camera and Garmin Training Center computer programme analysing the data collected by the watch. Basing on the available cartographic materials and the author's knowledge of the topography of the city the running routes were mapped up using the watch. The watch uses the GPS system, thanks to which it was possible to determine the horizontal and vertical profiles of the routes. The visualisation was prepared using the digital camera.

### **Świdnica city - characterisation**

Świdnica is located in the centre of the Świdnicka Plain, a part of the Sudetian Foreland, on a vast, flat dip of the terrain. The differences of altitudes within the administrative borders of the city result from its peculiar location on the edge of the proglacial stream valley of Bystrzyca. The lowest point in this region is the north of Bystrzyca (204 m above sea level), while the local allotments in the west part of the city are located on the highest point (266 m above sea level) [18].

Świdnica is located in a moderate, intermediate climate zone with oceanic elements. The effect is a local climate with lack of stability and frequent changes of pressure. The average temperature is 8,2 C°, average summer temperature is 14,1 C°, dropping to 2,7 C° for winter. The average rainfall is around 600 to 700 mm. The temperature is above zero for 285 days of the year, and the snow is present for around 40 to 60 days [19]. Świdnica has around 60 thousand inhabitants (data from GUS, 2016), 31 thousand of which are women, 28 - men. The area of the city is 21,78km<sup>2</sup>. The buildings in Świdnica are peculiar, related to its character connecting urban and industrial features. The centre and the outskirts of the city are surrounded by 11 picturesque parks mostly based on its fortifications from the 18th century [19, 20].

### **Running routes**

The running routes were mapped out with the following recipe: location, length, profile, surface, characteristic features, and extras. Seven running routes were created for the city of Świdnica:

- „Witoszówka Bay 1A”,
- „Witoszówka Bay 1B”,
- „Youth Park 2A”,
- „Youth Park 2B”,
- „The Park of Gen. Sikorski”,
- „Strzelnica Park”,
- „Central Park”.

The process of mapping out the running route is shown on the example of the “Witoszówka Bay 1A” running route.

### „Witoszówka Bay 1A” running route

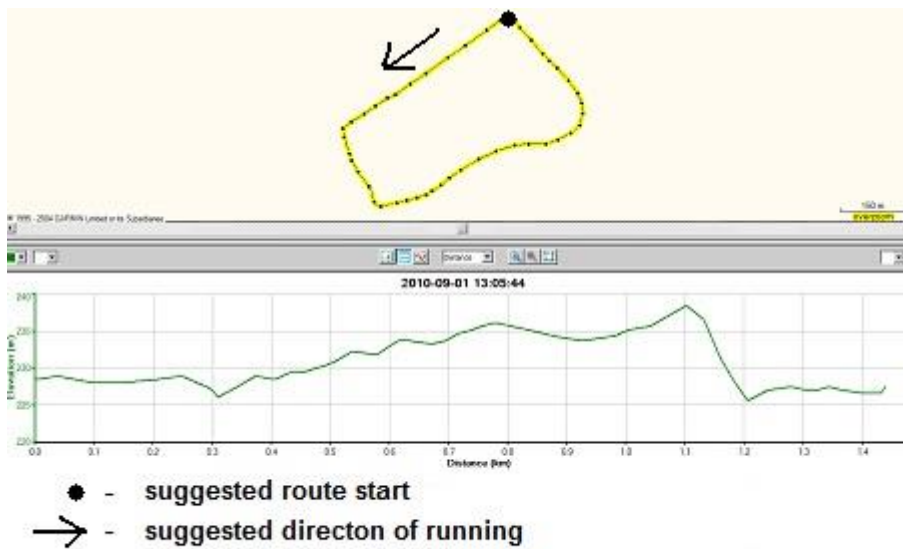
The „Witoszówka Bay 1A” running route is located further from the centre of the city, by the Witoszówka Bay. It runs along the Słowiański settlement. It’s not protected from sun nor wind. There are many cafés nearby, where you can spend a nice time after the training. The suggested beginning of the running route is next to the Lower Silesian Management of Drainage, Irrigation and Infrastructure building.

The characteristics of the route are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the “Witoszówka Bay 1A” running route

1.	Location	- south-west outskirts of the city,
2.	Lenght	- 1400 metres,
3.	Route Profile	- stable, - one steep run-up,
4.	Surface	- asphalt, - crushed stone, - cobblestone,
5.	Characteristic features	- around a water reservoir, - open-air,
6.	Extras	- cafés, - free parking.

The cross-section of the route, its view from the top, length and altitude are shown on picture 1.



Picture 1. A1 route mapped out using the data gathered by the Garmin Forerunner 305 watch

Most of the routes are set up in parks. Their dense woodlot naturally protects runners from disadvantageous weather conditions (such as wind or sun). All the exemplary routes are planned on hard surfaces to ensure that using them is possible even in excessive rainfall. In most of the cases they're also monitored by the municipal services. In the winter the snow will be frequently cleaned and the routes will be secured with sand, what may or may not be considered a plus. One of the disadvantages are the inconveniences for ski runners.

## Conclusions

The social awareness of physical culture is gradually growing among the citizens of our country. Physical activities have a positive influence on our mental health and quality of living [21]. It's also followed with lower financial and social costs than changing other elements of our lifestyle in matters of health, such as nutrition. The advantage of having the option of fitting the programs of physical activities to the possibilities and preferences of the society with different health conditions, endurance, capability and age is also meaningful. [22, 23, 24]

The local society expects more and more possibilities to meet their needs in this part of life from its government. This proposition should live up to the expectations of the development strategy of the city of Świdnica. The set up running routes mean:

- working on the social links of the inhabitants of the city,
- improving the recreational and sport infrastructure of the city,

- a place to practice nordic-walking, currently very popular,
- setting new standards of managing urban spaces,
- following the plans of the city development strategy,
- getting to know the places that are historically important to the city (such as its fortifications).

A big asset of the planned running routes is their length. It's adjusted to people with average physical capabilities. This text has above all a cognitive significance. Nevertheless, formulating tips and recommendations when it comes to planning running routes basing on the example of the Świdnica city serves its promotion and encouraging the society to physical activities. Having the area of the city and the number of its inhabitants in mind one could apply the guidelines written above to other cities with similar conditions without hesitation.

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