

Vistula Bicycle Path

Niepolomice, Poland

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Background

MAIN CHALLENGES:

- Investment pressure around the Vistula embankment
- Fear of interrupting the ecological corridor between Natura 2000 areas and valuable buffer habitats
- Excessive pressure on the Natura 2000 area caused by car traffic
- Lack of legal regulations regarding the location of bicycle paths on embankments

CITY PROFILE:

- **Population:** 32 781 / 96,3 km²
- **Location:** Małopolska region, Wielicki district – Kraków Metropolitan Area (25 km to Kraków city centre)
- Niepolomice Town and 12 villages
- The largest industrial zone in Małopolska
- The largest forest complex (The Natura 2000 protected area)



Approach



What is being done?

- Vistula Bicycle Path is part of a nationwide project that connects eight voivodeships. It runs through the most valuable places of the Vistula Valley and its tributaries (through the entire Niepolomice commune)
- The newly developed bicycle path along the Vistula Valley connects the urban and industrial zones of Niepolomice municipality with the rural areas and the protected Natura 2000 area
- Revitalization of the Vistula embankment while maintaining ecological functions and biodiversity

What was your starting point?

- Provisions in the local development plans towards preserving green areas along watercourses in order to maintain migration corridors and use for bicycle infrastructure



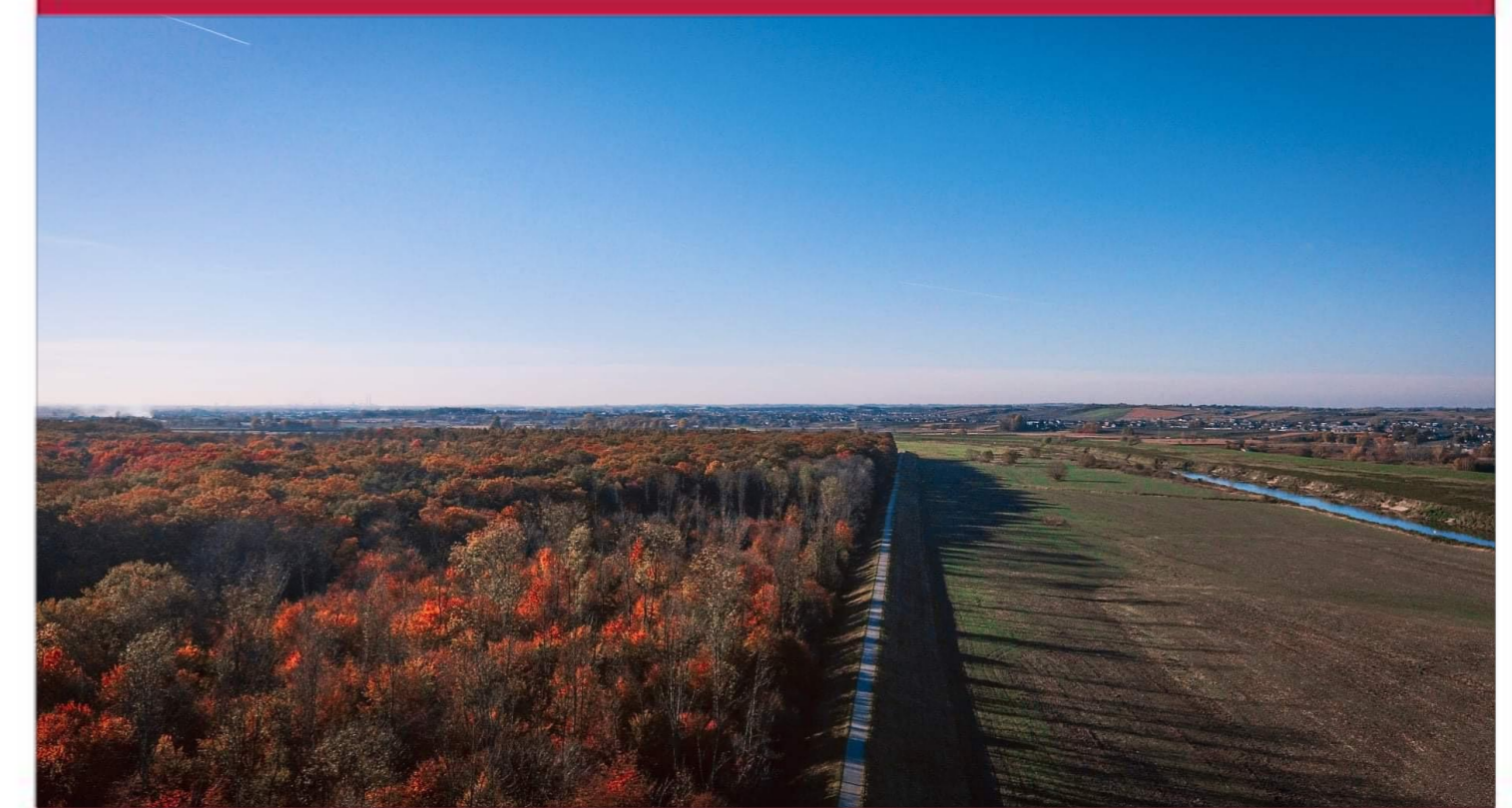
Methodology



- Regular meetings and consultations among stakeholders (multisectoral collaboration):
 - administration of provincial roads
 - Polish Water Survey
 - National Forests
 - Niepolomice municipality
- Financing of a bicycle path along the embankments (on a distance of 19.5 km) by the administration of the provincial roads – € 1.2 million
- Investments in plots by the Polish Water Survey
- Parking lot provided by the municipality (permeable surface)
- Acquisition of the missing plots by the municipality



Outcome



What was achieved?

- Reduced car traffic on weekends in the city center and near Natura 2000 areas
- Increased bicycle traffic thanks to the possibility of leaving the car in the newly created parking lot near the Vistula embankment
- Removal of invasive species and abandoned waste

Next steps

- The next section of the bicycle path will connect the Niepolomice municipality with Krakow city, which will have a positive impact on air quality and encourage citizens to spend their free time actively, connecting with nature.

Lessons learned

Key elements:

- an amendment to the act allowing for the construction of the path on the embankment
- close cooperation with the funding body and owner of the embankment
- providing the necessary infrastructure for drivers (parking lots)
- acquisition of required land from the residents of the municipality (consultations and dialog with citizens)

What can be improved?

- more focus on cooperation with the National Forests managing the Natura 2000 area

Inspiration...

- good practice with the potential to be replicated in other municipalities