

Sustainability in tourism developing walking and cycling network in South-western region of North Macedonia

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the leading growth industries in the world. Alongside its economic and socio-cultural significance, tourism also has negative environmental impacts, which are particularly highlighted when environmentally sensitive regions are affected. In biodiversity-rich areas, opening of sensitive and fragile areas through expanded and upgraded transport infrastructure may prove detrimental to the environment of the area. The mountainous area of the South-western region in North Macedonia with its nature, cultural and historical heritage has potential for development of tourism. Already the cycling and walking paths are at the place, with an intention for expansion and continuity of their network. The purpose of the paper is to devise recommendations for development of sustainable tourism through the analysis of the current and proposed transport infrastructure for walking and cycling in this region, that has an inoffensive environmental impacts. Hence, this paper constitutes an important contribution to the further debate on the need to make tourism more environmentally friendly and sound, not just in the South-western region in Macedonia as the most touristic region, but also at the nation level for the whole country.

Key words: sustainability, cycling, walking, infrastructure, tourism