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Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0429-0327>

Natalia Łukasik**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0100-720X>

Equestrian Clubs in Poland – Present State and Future Conditions of Development (on the Example of Warsaw and Mazovia Region)

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Ośrodki jazdy konnej w Polsce – stan obecny i uwarunkowania rozwoju w przyszłości (na przykładzie Warszawy i regionu Mazowsze)

Streszczenie

Tematem artykułu jest prezentacja stanu obecnego oraz uwarunkowań dalszego rozwoju jeździectwa w regionie Mazowsza, potencjałów i najistotniejszych barier uczestnictwa, a także możliwości znoszenia ograniczeń oraz działań na rzecz upowszechnienia sportu i rekreacji jeździeckiej. Jest to jeden z wątków tematycznych wieloletnich i wieloetapowych badań przeprowadzonych w wybranych ośrodkach jeździeckich w Warszawie i gminach sąsiednich (w latach 2008–2019). Badania teoretyczne i terenowe (empiryczne) na temat oferty ośrodków jeździeckich w warunkach miejskich (Warszawa) i podmiejskich (gminy sąsiednie) były podjęte w ramach wieloletnich i wieloetapowych projektów statutowych ds.-144, ds.-300 oraz ds.-316, realizowanych na Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego Józefa Piłsudskiego w Warszawie, finansowanych przez Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego. Dorobkiem wątku tematycznego badań na temat sportowej i rekreacyjnej jazdy konnej była rozprawa doktorska autorstwa dr Natalii Łukasik ‘Społeczne i kulturowe

** dr, Faculty of Tourism and Recreation, the Josef Pilsudski Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw

uwarunkowania rozwoju jeździectwa w Warszawie i gminach sąsiednich' (promotor prof. Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka), obroniona na Wydziale Wychowania Fizycznego AWF w Warszawie. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje zarys założeń badań, uzyskane rezultaty na podstawie analizy uporządkowanego materiału badań oraz wysunięte syntetyczne wnioski końcowe.

Słowa kluczowe: sport, rekreacja, ośrodki jazdy konnej.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is the presentation of present state and conditions for the future development of equestrianism in the Mazovia Region (Poland). Considered are potentials and the most important barriers, as well as the possibilities of lifting restrictions and objectives for the dissemination of sport and recreational equestrian. This is one of the thematic threads of research conducted by authors in the selected equestrian clubs in Warsaw and neighbouring communes (in 2008–2019). Theoretical and field (empirical) research on the present offer of equestrian clubs in urban (Warsaw) and suburban (neighbouring) communes was undertaken as part of the long-term and multi-staged statutory projects ds-144, ds-300, ds-316 financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and carried out at the Joseph Pilsudski Academy of Physical Education. Some of the outcomes focused on the sports and recreational horse riding were subjects of the doctoral dissertation, successfully presented by Dr Natalia Łukasik: "Social and cultural conditions for the development of equestrianism in Warsaw and neighbouring communes" (supervisor: Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka). This article presents an outline of research assumptions, results based on the analysis of the research material and advanced synthetic conclusions.

Keywords: sports, recreation, equestrian clubs.

Introduction

In comparison to the other sports disciplines, horse riding is a unique form of recreation and sport. Horse riding is a particularly attractive form of active pastime because it combines physical activity with direct contact with the natural world, and requires good cooperation with the animal. Another important advantage of horse riding is the rich social and emotional dimension of this form of recreation. The rider must reckon with the horse's reactions, gain its trust, communicate and look after the horse. It is not possible to practice horse riding without the above-mentioned conditions [1, 14]. On the other hand, participation in club activities, joint exercises, riding in the field, participation in tourist horse rallies – help to strengthen and enrich the bonds in the student group, between family members or friends, to build better connections with people with whom he or she rides a horse. In addition, club activities related to the cultivation of Polish medieval knights' and 20 cavalry traditions are particularly attractive for the youth and strengthen the formation of patriotic attitudes and true, emotional interest in our history [8]. When considering these implications one should also pay attention to an important health aspect, which is the therapeutic value of horse riding.

The beneficial effects of the hippotherapy has been already proved. It is well known for its successful fight against a number of ailments and limitations; mental and physical handicaps of children's development are also well-known and scientifically documented [5, 6, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25].

In addition, the wide universality of this form of sport and recreation is its advantage as – for riding, there is no obstacle of age, physical condition, low skills or weather vagaries – because apart from the field and sports training there are relatively easy and safe exercises in a restricted area or in a riding school building [10, 16, 31].

There is growing awareness that the living conditions in the environment of modern, big cities are deteriorating rapidly. This also applies to Warsaw, where unfavourable civilization changes are more and more noticeable [33]. Residents are not only exposed to significant pollution of atmospheric air, water, soil, annoying noise, unfavourable microclimate changes to health, but also to stress and diseases associated with decreasing physical activity. One of the well-known effective ways of combating the negative effects of urbanization is active and systematic everyday rest, and one of its forms can be horse riding.

In the last three decades in Warsaw and its vicinity (within a radius of 40 km from the Centre), about 60 certified horse riding clubs registered in the Polish Equestrian Association (PZJ) have been founded [34]¹. Moreover, there are no accurate statistics on numerous agro tourist farms, hotels and guest houses offering horseback riding without Polish Equestrian Association (PZJ) certificate – but one can assume that there are more than one hundred only in the immediate vicinity of Warsaw. This tendency has been observed all over the country since 1990, when horse riding, and recreational sports became more popular in Poland. It is a consequence of social and economic changes. On the one hand, the market economy has created a group of people with quite high incomes, on the other it has made possible to fulfil their dreams and ambitions on the level of luxury lifestyle and favourite forms of pastime, to practice yachting, skiing, tennis, golf, polo, and horse riding. The demand is so big that over the last quarter of a century, hundreds of new horse riding clubs have been created in our country, offering numerous sport and recreation training, courses at various levels.

The number of organized equestrian competitions has grown steadily, and the number of instructors and coaches has increased. Currently, in many Polish suburban 'communities there are sports centres where you can practice recreational and sports riding, earn different kind of badges and certificates issued by the Polish Equestrian Association (PZJ) [34]. Unfortunately, an equestrian sport in Poland, after years of breaks and neglect, still requires time, patience and commitment, also very high financial support to rebuild the internationally renowned

¹ PZJ – Polski Związek Jeździecki (Polish Equestrian Association), was founded in 1928, and is focused on various forms of equestrian activities: sport, tourism and recreation; PZJ is recognised both by International Olympic Committee and International Equestrian Federation.

staff of trained horses and riders. Despite many efforts, high ambitions and strong commitment - we have not yet regained the position of Polish sporting equestrianism we had before World War II [2]. Despite the constantly growing interest in horse riding in Poland, this sport and this form of recreation are still ten times less popular in Poland than for example in Great Britain [Table 1].

The purpose of our long term and multi-staged research was to recognize the present conditions and chances for the future development of horse riding clubs, to identify the most important barriers and to reflect on the possibilities of abolishing them. The theme of our research area was selected on the base of the assumption that sport tourism in Poland is so far an insufficiently well-explored area of science [15]. The field part of our research was carried out in the selected equestrian clubs in Warsaw and neighbouring communes (in 2008–2019).

This article presents an outline of our project assumptions; the results obtained on the base of the analysis of the research material and advanced synthetic final conclusions.

General assumptions of the research project

Research questions

The research problem addressed, the diagnosis of present conditions and future implications of development the horse riding clubs in the Mazovia Region, was multi-layered. The undertaken method was to seek answers for formulated research questions, it encompassed diligent insight into the management policy and current offers of clubs, the expectations of their members, distinguishing social and cultural factors affecting positively and negatively the practice of horse riding, considering how to strengthen positive factors and how to eliminate negative factors. The importance of such an approach and selection of criteria for conditions of participation in sport and recreation are noticed by other researchers [4, 15, 22, 27, 28, 30].

Material and research method

The main research material included the insight into equestrian clubs located in Warsaw and the Mazovia Region (Warsaw's neighbouring communities). Field research was carried out in the selected 20 equestrian clubs. The same procedures were applied to all the horse riding clubs selected for our research study. Structured interviews were conducted using unified questionnaires (formulas A, B, and C), in unified conditions (in situ, face to face method was applied). The scope and content of the questions were aimed at collecting descriptive, qualitative and quantitative data, such as examining the club's traditions and characteristics, club offer and number of staff (coaches), their qualifications and profes-

sional certificates, clubbers' characteristic, motives for horse riding, interest in particular forms of the equestrian sport and/or recreation, as well as opportunities for the pursuit of their sport passion.

Empirical studies included also surveys in the form of semi-structured interviews, conducted face to face, in situ. The club members were interviewed with the use of the questionnaires 'B' and 'B1', while the club managers were interviewed with the use of the 'A' and 'A1' questionnaires. These surveys were supplemented with the field notes based on observations of the participants and reports of non-participants in the surveyed clubs (primary descriptive, qualitative and quantitative data were obtained). It was carried out in the structured, unified form, with the use of the 'C' and 'C1' questionnaires. The reports were enriched with semi – structured notes and illustrations: drawings and photos made in the surveyed horse riding clubs. These research methods, techniques and instruments were shaped in accordance with the recommendations of theoreticians, experts of research methods in this area [3, 7, 13, 21, 22, 27, 28].

The second phase of our research (2010–2016) and field studies in the equestrian clubs was preceded by a stage of pilot studies (2008–2010), undertaken in three selected horse riding clubs in Warsaw [20, 34]. The next stage of our field research was the case study covering as much as 20 riding clubs in Warsaw and Mazovia Region. There were three equestrian clubs known from the preliminary stage of our survey and 17 equestrian clubs selected for the more specific survey carried out in the second phase of our project.

The selection of the surveyed group of equestrian clubs was not accidental; it was built according to the adopted system and criteria. In order to obtain similar characteristics, the following criteria were applied for selecting clubs (selection of similarity features) and all surveyed horse riding clubs had to meet these, below listed, criteria:

- a) Equestrian clubs located in Warsaw and neighbouring municipalities,
- b) Horse riding facilities and coaches licensed by the Polish Equestrian Association (PKJ – Polish Equestrian Society)
- c) Horse riding clubs offering both recreational and sporting training and rides.
- d) Horse riding clubs located within the distance of 40 km from the Warsaw Centre (Pałac Kultury i Nauki – Palace of Culture and Science), which means isochrones of access not longer than 40 minutes by car or 120 minutes by public transport.

The choice of equestrian clubs located in Warsaw and the Mazovia Region was dictated not only by pragmatism due to proximity of a permanent place of residence, low costs of travel, but also due to the knowledge of the surveyed area. The selection of the research material (sport clubs for case study) was also influenced by the distinctive activity, ambitions and visible involvement of managers of equestrian clubs, visible for example in the promotion of equestrian sport, and in organization of subsequent editions of Regional Equestrian Competitions. It

should be emphasized that the main premise of these events is active recreation, fun, and sports competition of all family members, and different age groups. When selecting the horse riding clubs to our survey we also took into account the needs of people with various levels of disability and hippo therapy offer.

On the base of the above listed premises, the following horse riding clubs located in Warsaw and the communes surrounding the capital were selected for our research: the Aldragho Equestrian Club in Józefosław near Piaseczno; the Aromer Horse Riding Club in Józefin near Zakręt, the Bałagufa Horse Riding Club in Dąbrowa Leśna near Łomianki; Horse Riding Club of PGR Brodno in Warsaw; the Cavallo Equestrian Club in the Royal Łazienki Park in Warsaw; Dworek Horse Riding Club in Okuniewo near Warsaw; Eko-Farm Horse Riding Club in Milanówek; the TKKF Hubertus Horse Riding Club in Warsaw²; Equestrian Club Legia Kozielska in Warsaw; the Kuclandia Horse Riding Club in Książenice near Warsaw; the Patataj Horse Riding School in Kanie near Warsaw; the Pepeland Horse Riding Club in Dziekanów Nowy, Łomianki near Warsaw; the TKKF Podkowa Horse Riding Club in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw; the Agmaja Horse Riding Club in Warsaw; the Chojnów Equestrian Club in Baniocha near Warsaw; the Pociecha Horse Riding Club in Skaryszewski Park in Warsaw; Horse Riding Club at the State Horse Racing Track Służewiec in Warsaw; the Szumawa Horse Riding Club, in Piaseczno; the LKS Wolta Horse Riding Club in Żółwin near Brwinów; the SKJ Trawers Horse Riding Club in Wolica (Paszków) near Nadarzyn³.

As the collected research material contained data from a number of years (2008–2018), after that time, potentially many significant changes could have taken place in the examined horse riding clubs. For example, clubs could have changed their names, ended their activity, changed the club address or the profile of their offer, lost the license, changed their training focus. For the verification and updating of data, all the surveyed equestrian clubs were re-visited in 2016–2018 and their condition was checked with the ‘C 1’ questionnaire in situ (the final stage of our research project).

The most important research results

Based on the analysis of the material collected during fieldworks in 2008–2018, answers to the research questions were found, regarding the current condi-

² TKKF – Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Fizycznej (the Society for Promotion of Physical Culture), TKKF was founded in 1957 to promote ‘sport for all’ ideas in many sport fields, including equestrian sports. It was managed by government bodies supporting sport and recreation clubs mainly in urban areas.

³ LKS – Ludowy Klub Sportowy (People’s Sports Club), the LKS organization was founded in 1946 to promote popular sports activities in many disciplines, including equestrian sports, and managed by Polish government supporting sport clubs in rural villages and small towns.

tions for equestrian sport and recreation in Warsaw and the Mazovia Region, clubs management policy, the offer of riding lessons, equestrian sport training and development conditions for the future.

Location and size of equestrian clubs

Only a few (7) of the surveyed horse riding clubs were located within the administrative boundaries of Warsaw and the remaining 13 were situated in the communes surrounding the capital. According to the riding clubs location criteria – the distance from the examined equestrian clubs to the City Centre (the regular reference point was Pałac Kultury i Nauki) did not exceeded 40 km. When travelling, isochrones did not exceeded 40 minutes by car or 120 minutes by public transport.

The Warsaw clubs were situated much closer to the centre of Warsaw, on the average up to 10 km. Therefore, access by public transport from the Centre did not exceeded 33 minutes, and access by car was about 18 minutes. The most distant horse riding clubs (over 30 km) were the EkoFarm Club in Milanówek and the Kuclandia Club in Książnice, requiring access by car respectively 32 minutes and 40 minutes, and by public transport 43 minutes and 85 minutes. These data show that not always the road distance and the travel isochrones change linearly [Table 2]. On the average, one had to spent more than 60 minutes travelling by public transport to most of the horse riding clubs located outside Warsaw administrative boundaries. In addition, it was often necessary to use the mixed means of transport: underground trains, buses, trams and/or suburban trains or buses. Moreover, it was sometimes necessary also to walk, ride a bike or a scooter from the public transport stop to reach the remotely located club [Table 2].

The area occupied by the equestrian clubs varied from just over one hectare (LKS Wolta Club in Brwinów, TKKF Club in Podkowa Leśna) to several dozen hectares (Chojnów Club in Baniocha). On the average, some non-Warsaw clubs occupied the area of even a dozen or so hectares. The most modest in plot size was SKJ Club in Wolica – 1.3 ha, and the largest area was occupied by the Chojnów Club in Baniocha – over 60 ha. On the average, equestrian clubs located in Warsaw occupied more limited plots, around one hectare (for example TKKF Hubert Club – 1.8 ha). The exception was the Legia Kozielska Horse Riding Club, occupying an extremely large area of 8 hectares.

Characteristics of the surveyed clubs

Measuring the size of the surveyed clubs with the number of horses, the largest equestrian club was the Aromer Club in Józefin near Zakręt (174 horses and ponies), and the smallest was the Cavallo Club in the Royal Łazienki Park (12 horses and ponies). Stables with 30-70 horses (club own animals and horses accepted as guests into the club hotel) dominated in most of the studied clubs. It

should be noted that the total number of animals (horses in the club hotels and clubs own horses) was taken into account, because usually horses from the guest-house were used in club activities. In the majority of clubs, the number of guest horses was higher than the number of club horses, which indicates a growing interest in this type of offer. It should be emphasized that apart from a few exceptions (the Pepeland Club in Łomianki, the Pocięcha Club in Skaryszewski Park in Warsaw, the Aldragho Club in Piaseczno), the surveyed clubs offered a pension for horses. Moreover the Aromer Horse Riding Club in Józefin near Piaseczno offered also a veterinary clinic and full veterinary care [Table 3].

The basic infrastructure of the surveyed clubs was made up of similar outdoor facilities: the training ground, competition quads, paddocks, carousels, car parks for guests, playgrounds for children and adult leisure area, car parks and buildings: indoor riding halls, roofed carousels, covered lunches, stables, club and farm buildings. Inside the stables, there were cleaning rooms and saddles. There were also food storehouses and warehouses located nearby. In terms of infrastructure, the studied horse riding clubs had a rather similar program of outdoor facilities and buildings. In all the examined clubs, the whole area was fenced, guarded and illuminated after dark, including training grounds, paddocks, car parks for guests. Larger clubs, with the ambition of organizing sports competitions, have additionally quadrilaterals and crossbows; sometimes a separate square for show jumping training, fenced strips for the exercise of gallop and stands for spectators. At present, even small equestrian clubs (as for example the Cavallo Club in Warsaw) have indoor riding grounds allowing the horse riding lessons during all seasons of the year, in all weather conditions.

Among the studied horse riding clubs, the Pepeland Club in Łomianki had an extremely developed segment of additional sports and recreation equipment: tennis courts, a sports hall, a trampoline park, a playground for children with a rich program, a rope park, a mini zoo, a place designated to picnic and barbecue. One of the clubs had an indoor swimming pool and SPA (the Szumawa Club in Piaseczno), another one - apart from the club bar, also had a restaurant (the Chojnów Club in Baniocha). The interviews showed that for the sake of enriching the social atmosphere of equestrian clubs, the owners were trying more and more energetically to diversify their offer, not only in terms of the infrastructure directly related to equestrianism, but also complementary facilities, as attractively designed recreation areas and sports activities for children and adults.

As we noticed, many, especially non-urban clubs had ambitious plans to develop their club infrastructure – intending to build training areas, paddocks, merry-go-rounds, and indoor riding schools in the near future. Due to the recognition of the great importance of sport and social club events (sports competitions, joint social events, festivals, barbecues, tourist and recreation rides), as well as educational offers for school children – the main club buildings become an important element of the clubs, with a fireplace room, cafe, restaurant, toilets and

cloakrooms, administration rooms, technical facilities, seminar rooms, and a shop with equestrian accessories.

Moreover some horse-riding clubs offered accommodation and had several, up to a dozen, guest rooms (or had plans to build them). Near the main clubhouse, in a tidy garden, a playground for children was very often set up, surrounded by umbrellas, long chairs, sun beds and other lounge furniture.

In addition, high-class restaurants were created at equestrian clubs, with the ambition of a top-class culinary offer, meant not only for the club members, but also focused on people arriving especially for lunch or dinner (for example the Chojnów Club in Baniocha near Warsaw).

Horse riding clubs offer, staff qualifications

The offers of the surveyed equestrian clubs usually included horse-riding and recreational sports lessons conducted at various levels, horse riding for children and adults, carriage rides (in winter season – sleighs). In nine of the surveyed clubs, courses for the equestrian badge (Polish Equestrian Association certificate exams) were organized (Aldragho, Aromer, PGR Bródno, Eko-Farm, TKKF Hubertus, Legia Kozielska, Kuclandia, Patataj, TKKF Podkowa)⁴. The offer for club members included: sports camps for children (Dworek, Eco-Farm, TKKF Hubertus, Patataj), camps and horse rallies for adult members (Aldragho, Aromer, Patataj, TKKF Podkowa, Agmaja, LKS Wolta). It is to be noticed that the Chojnów Club in Baniocha had an unusual offer of ‘holidays in the saddle’ organized abroad (for example in Argentina). In all the examined clubs, horse-drawn carriage rides and sleighs, pony rides, integration events, festivities, bonfires and horse-riding picnics were offered. Some clubs organized sports competitions (on the club, regional and nationwide level): Aldragho, Aromer, Bałagula, PGR Bródno, Dworek in Okuniew, Eko-Farm Milanówek, TKKF Hubertus in Warsaw, Legia Kozielska in Warsaw, LKJ Kuclandia in Książnice, Patataj, TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna, Agmaja in Warsaw, Chojnów in Baniocha, Szumawa in Piaseczno, LKS Wolta in Brwinów). Among the examined clubs, only six conducted hippotherapy classes; they were: Pocięcha in Warsaw, PGR Bródno in Warsaw, Eko-Farm in Milanówek, TKKF Hubertus in Warszawa, Patataj in Kanie, TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna. It should be emphasised that the Bałagula Club in Dąbrowa Leśna near Łomianki had a quite special offer, namely training and renting horses for film productions (special cast offer).

In the surveyed clubs, the most frequently employed were horse riding instructors, equestrian sport instructors and horse riding coaches. The more varied

⁴ PGR – Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne (State Agricultural Farm), PGR farms were founded in 1949 focused on different types of farming, including horse studs and stud farms; PGR farms were mostly closed after 1990 (except stud farms, especially such internationally recognised horse studs as Michałowice, Książ or Janów Podlaski).

was the offer of a given sports club - the higher requirements had to be set for the employed staff. When small and medium-size horse riding clubs were considered, depending on the individual needs and number of hours of classes, usually there were two instructors/coaches employed (Aldragho Club) plus several certified instructors and trainers (Aromer, Dworek, Agmaja). Large equestrian clubs, which had many hours of varied activities at various levels in their offer, generally employed over 10 people. These included: the TKKF Hubertus in Warsaw – employing 2 horse riding instructors and 10 recreation instructors; Legia Kozielska in Warsaw – employing 9 equestrian trainers, 3 sport instructors and 1 recreation instructor; the Patataj in Kanie – employing 2 equestrian trainers, 4 sport instructors and 11 horse riding instructors; the TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna – employing 10 horse riding instructors. In several horse riding clubs, coaches and instructors were qualified to conduct classes with foreigners (for example Bałagula Club in Dąbrowa Leśna near Łomianki offered classes in English, German and Russian), which their managers emphasized in the club offer (website advertisements). The price of the ride was in such a case 10% to 20% higher (the TKKF Hubertus in Warsaw, the Bałagula in Dąbrowa Leśna). Apart from that the clubs usually employed, depending on their individual needs, from a few to a dozen of workers needed for office work, catering service; to work on farms, as shop assistants in their shops selling riding accessories; employees needed for maintenance of facilities and, depending on the number of animals, a team of stable and manual workers were needed.

Horse riding clubs development plans

The owners of Dworek Club in Okuniew would see many opportunities to invest in the club, but they had not enough space on their plot or financial means. Similarly, a leaseholder of the Trawers in Wolica, who saw the need for new investments, such as a clubhouse and a guest house, indoor riding hall, carousel – mentioned to us that his suggestions were rejected by the real estate owner and only minor renovations of existing buildings and outdoor facilities were accepted. The owners of the Szumawa Club in Piaseczno planned to expand the existing hotel offer, and the managers of the Agmaja in Warsaw were planning a clubhouse with such service facilities as toilets, changing rooms, technical rooms, a restaurant, a common room. The managers of the TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna planned an indoor riding school, carousels for horses, plus renovation of the existing facilities. The owner the Pepeland in Łomianki planned to extend the offer of sports training and further develop the range of recreational riding sessions. Managers of the Patataj Club in Kanie planned to expand the stable and build a permanent indoor riding arena. In the Kuclandia Club, an external washer was planned and pony riding for children was set up. In the Legia Kozielska Club, such repairs of buildings were planned as rebuilding of the tin container stables for solid and masonry, reconstruction of the carousel for the indoor facilities, re-

placement of the hippodrome surface. At the TKKF Hubertus Club in Warsaw, the management planned to expand the infrastructure, which due to the problems of approving investments and financial restrictions is not very likely in the near future). In the Eko-Farm Club in Milanówek, there were repairs of buildings planned, such as an extension of the pension for horses, and extending the offer of sports training. At the PGR Bródno Club, further development of riding courses, exchange of horses, and organization of more events were planned. The owners of the Aromer Club were planning to build a hotel segment for their guests (25 rooms with bathrooms). The managers of the Aldragho Club in Józefosław planned to build a solarium for horses, carousels, a covered washcloth, an indoor lung, as well as to repair the existing facilities and raise their standard.

It is to be underlined that only one of the surveyed horse riding clubs (Szumawa Club near Piaseczno) successfully applied for the EU funds for the development of the club. They obtained the grant and the construction of an indoor swimming pool and the arrangement of recreation areas around it were financed from this source. It seems, therefore, that this source of raising funds is still not sufficiently used.

The reactions and statements of other interviewed managers about their future development plans were surprising – they simply refused to answer this question. Even in the sports clubs definitely in need of improvement, it was argued that no investment plans were necessary in the near future because – in their opinion – the present status of the club was satisfactory.

Information about clubs and promotion policy

It should be emphasized that almost all of the managers of the surveyed clubs considered the promotion of clubs and reliable information about their activities to be very important. During the first stage of our research in 2008–2010, only the Cavallo Equestrian Club in Warsaw had its website, while during the second stage of the research in 2010–2014 only two clubs did not have their websites on the Internet. During the final stage of research (2016–2019), all riding clubs selected for research had their websites, the majority also promoted themselves on the social platforms (for example on Facebook).

Membership and other services costs policy

Despite the efforts repeated during the three consecutive stages of our field research, we had significant difficulties in obtaining some quantitative data (including statistical data) from several clubs. It was, among other information, reliable data on the number of club members and the price list of offers. Some managers refused to reply to the questions, arguing that the prices of services were individually negotiated with clients. Refusing to answer the question about the number of members of the club, they argued most often that in this case, their trade secrets about customer data were in force.

Despite the lack of full quantitative information on the price list of offers, we decided to take this factor into account, believing that even incomplete information sheds light on the conditions of practising equestrianism. In the surveyed clubs, the price variation of horse-riding classes reaches 50%. Individual horse riding session with an instructor (1 hour, weekend) costs 100 PLN on average. The cheapest offers came from the EkoFarm Club in Milanówek and the TKKF Club in Podkowa Leśna (70 PLN), the most expensive were the Legia Kozielska Club in Warsaw and the Chojna Club in Baniocha (120 PLN). It should be added that the majority of the studied clubs offered to their club members different types of group tickets or riding lessons in a group - and then the prices were lower. Diversified prices of rides depended on the level of advancement and form of riding. A good example of such a very detailed price list was submitted by the Patataj Club in Kanie. The lowest costs of recreational horse riding in a group up to 30 minutes were 35 PLN, while the specialist individual sports training (especially show-jumping classes) were the most expensive (110 PLN). Club members in some equestrian clubs could rent a horse for their own, exclusive riding (an average cost was about PLN 1500 / per month) [Table 3].

Significant differences in the prices of services, exceeding 50%, were also found on the price list of the pension for horses. In the surveyed clubs, the price of a horse guesthouse ranged from 900 PLN (the Agmaja Club in Warsaw, the Dworek Club in Okuniew) to 1,900 PLN (the Chojnów Club in Baniocha) for one-month stay. Clearly, in contrast to the horse riding price list, the prices of the horse guesthouse did not depend on the location of a club or its distance from the town centre. Such significant price differences resulted primarily from various benefits offered: the price of the cheapest guesthouse was renting a box for a horse, basic care, feeding (the Agmaja Club in Warsaw). In other clubs, the offer included additional services such as veterinary care and care products. In comparison to other studied resorts, the Chojnów Club in Baniocha had an exceptionally rich offer of a guesthouse. The price of the guesthouse offers, besides renting a horsebox, feeding, basic care and training of the horse, also horse health care, veterinary medicines and blacksmith. In many horse-riding clubs, if the owners agree to rent their horses for recreational riding sessions, the price of the guesthouse can be significantly reduced (for example, in the Patataj Club in Kanie even by 50%) [Table 3].

Final conclusions and discussion

On the basis of the presented analysis of the collected and ordered research material and after drawing generalized conclusions, it is possible to identify these socio-cultural factors that have a positive (indirect or direct) impact on the present and future development of the horse riding clubs in Warsaw and the Region of Mazovia.

The most important factors that have a positive impact are:

- Understanding and respecting the history and traditions of horse riding in Poland, as evidenced by a large percentage of answers to questions about the collection of horse riding publications, collecting souvenirs and works of art on the subject;
- Fascination with horse riding art, horses as very special animals, their intelligence and beauty, love for animals and the need for their closeness, as evidenced by the answers to the questions about the attitude to animals;
- Coming from a family (and, more broadly, the social environment), in which horse riding is popular and is an important way of recreation and pastime; still strong identification with the Polish equestrian tradition, e.g. the family tradition, stories and anecdotes, family photo album documenting;
- Fashion and media, promoted lifestyle of celebrities and the higher middle class (horse riding is an attribute of the image of this group alongside with polo and golf); aspirations to a lifestyle typical of affluent classes and the desire to impress one's friends;
- Caring for a nice, cultural and social atmosphere in the club, participation in sports and social events organized there; membership in the club meets the needs of social contacts, gives the satisfaction of contact with people with similar passions, interests, lifestyle;
- Doing horsemanship with family or friends (membership in the club strengthens existing family and social ties), which is confirmed by positive answers about the way of spending free time, a favourite form of vacation leave;
- Higher education and higher than average income (there was no such direct question, but indirectly we can infer the financial situation from the responses given on the request for longer holidays, including those spent abroad);
- The importance of a healthy lifestyle, observing the diet and regularly practising other sports, participation in forms of recreation other than horse-riding, which is confirmed by the positive answers of the majority of respondents;
- Knowledge of facts confirming the positive effect of horse riding on health and well being, on the quality of life (including the fight against stress, improvement of physical and mental condition);
- Passion for sports and willing participation in competitions, also in disciplines other than equestrianism, as evidenced by the respondents' answers;
- The desire to learn and improve your technique and riding style through regular exercises, participation in courses and riding with an instructor;
- Love of animals (horse-riders often breed a horse, a dog or other animals); getting pleasure and satisfaction from the possibility of contact with horses.

Factors that have a negative effect (direct or indirect) are:

- Financial costs and time-consuming nature this form of sport and recreation;
- Problems with the communication access to equestrian clubs;
- Lack of family traditions (social environment in which the researched person stays) horse riding as a way of spending free time;
- No interest in sport and active lifestyle;
- Fear of horses;
- Justified medical contraindications (allergy to the odour and fur of a horse);
- Low self-efficacy assessment, unjustified fears that health and physical fitness preclude this form of recreation;
- The reason for taking sports and recreational activities due to their appearance and/or age;
- Disrupted disability and lack of access to the equestrian club offering therapy, or riding lessons adapted to the needs of this group;
- A bit of a bustling atmosphere, snobbery and elitism of the club, fear of disapproval and being rejected by other members of the club.

Barriers of participation in the rides and the possibility of their abolition

Considering the identified factors hampering the development of horse riding clubs, the following proposals can be outlined to remove barriers and objectives:

1. Poor and limited offers of horse riding clubs.

Although horse riding is theoretically possible throughout the year, the summer offers and attendance at classes in the surveyed clubs significantly outweighs the winter, especially that during the summer holidays it is easier to interest club members in sports camps and horse rallies. For this reason, in the winter season horse riding clubs should offer some attractions that go beyond horseback rides, such as horse-drawn carriage rides, sleigh rides, indoor tennis and squash courts, indoor and outdoor team-playing areas, mini-golf, skate rings, well-kept playgrounds for children, indoor pools, etc. Such a richer club offer should be focused all year round on those family members who do not ride horses but want to spend weekends and/or holidays together. In addition to the horse-riding lessons for beginners, they should be offered carriage rides (and in the case of a travelling camp - the possibility of travelling by cart or carriage, or by bicycle).

It seems that when competing for customers, the horse riding clubs located in the suburban areas, should also provide a range of physical activities, such as: bicycle trips, fitness classes, jogging / Nordic walking, swimming, fishing ponds, playing fields for team games (volleyball and football), table tennis, mini golf, badminton, boule, archery, the possibility of organizing paintball games, canoeing, sailing trip sightseeing of nearby monuments, shooting training with firearms. Of course, only clubs having appropriate facilities, numerous well-qualified staff and appropriate surface reserves can provide such an offer. Based on the

feedback of the club members, it turns out that the annual events organized for members and friends are always welcome (for example club competitions open to everyone). The annual 'Hubertus' festivals, which take place in autumn, combined with club ceremonies or regular competitions, will certainly help build the club's traditions and strengthen the social connections of club members, as well as become an effective promotion. As Poland has great traditions in the fine art focused on beautiful equestrian themes, it seems that publishing albums dedicated to this topic, exhibitions of sculptures, paintings and graphics - works of contemporary creators dealing with equestrian issues, organized by horse riding clubs would not only be a nice diversification of the offer but could also play an important promotional and educational role.

2. High costs of participation in recreation and equestrian sports.

On the ground of our field studies, formal interviews and informal conversations with club members, participant observations - it is clear that the high cost and time-consuming nature of this form of sport and recreation is an extremely important barrier to horse riding (especially equestrian sports training). Of course, we are not able to answer the question to what level clubs can reduce the costs of horse riding and how high is the profit margin of the owners, from which they would be willing to give up. However, observing trends in the offer and the ever-growing rich and varied luxury clubs, focused primarily on very wealthy clubbers, it should be emphasized that the lack of modest clubs with a price reduced offer addressed to less affluent clients is noticeable. It seems that the opportunity to work out for a club to pay horse-riding hours would be extremely especially desirable for such clubs (as we noticed, only the TKKF 'Hubertus' had such proposals). Based on our research, we believe that there are no equestrian clubs providing lessons and riding equestrian equipment rentals on prices shaped for middle and low - income people (high school students, school children, large families). It is hard to imagine a different way to popularize this form of sport and recreation than to lower the prices. Naturally, prices cannot be reduced below a certain level, determined by the value of the horses and their maintenance (basic board and vet care). However, given the social role and the potential, multiple benefits of this form of activity – we are sure that there is also another solution worth considering: it is co-financing equestrian clubs, especially those operating in poorer municipalities, from external sources (EU funds, self – government bodies, government, non – government organizations) [19, 28, 31]. The scope of free riding lessons for school children and students, as well as for elder citizens should be much broader than it is at present, organized as part of PE classes, summer camps, the 3rd Age University PE classes. As it seems, it is also possible, in cooperation with the city and commune office, to introduce a system of discounts and concessions for residents paying taxes in the area (a similar policy to the one developed by the TKKF Podkowa Club in Podkowa Leśna), and at the

same time introduce tax breaks for sports clubs that provide useful activities for the benefit of the local community.

3. Time consumption of horse riding.

An important factor that significantly limits the availability of horse riding is free time resources. Equestrian clubs are generally located in the suburban zones, on the grounds of former farms. Fast and non-exhausting access to them requires your car, access by public transport means more than an hour of troublesome journey, usually mixed means of public transport. As one needs to be on the site about one hour before the ride, only weekends and holidays can be considered. That is why the equestrian clubs located within the administrative boundaries of cities, having good access by bicycle or public transport are so popular.

4. Barriers of participation in sports and equestrian recreation of the disabled (hippotherapy).

Apart from the economic, educational, ecological and recreational functions of horse riding, health therapy is extremely important. As we have noticed, the obstacles to participation in hippotherapy are primarily financial barriers. Unfortunately, at present, neither the NFZ nor charitable foundations can provide this type of therapy to all those in need of rehabilitation in the required scope. It should be emphasized that, for example, the TKKF Hubertus Club in Warsaw offers hippotherapy classes in exchange for services provided by the caregivers of sick children. It is the policy of the club to offer a few hours of therapy in exchange for physical or office work for the club. Surprisingly, the interest in such an offer, as we were informed in 2016, is minimal. The same problem applies to a limited number of people who practice para-equestrianism. This is the consequence of financial barriers as well as the lack of qualified staff and well-prepared horses.

5. Education and promotion of horse riding as a 'sport for all' idea.

We are sure that there is still a need to build a more convincing image of equestrianism as a sport suitable for everyone, a democratic sport, not elitism and snobbery. It requires emphasizing of the beneficial effects of horse riding on the physical fitness and mental condition of people of all ages. For example, educational workshops in the clubs (in form of school lessons) could be focused on the history of horse riding in the context of Polish history, or the advantages of riding in the context of physical and mental health. Because horse riding teaches respect for the natural world, empathy for animals, helps shape pro-ecological attitudes, it seems that this is another important reason for establishing the strong cooperation with schools in the neighbourhood of a given club. The activities in the form of trips to the club, horse riding classes and workshops can be extended for the period of holidays in the form of summer camps, day camps or hiking camps for older children. It is worth noting that the majority of the surveyed clubs offered such classes, but they were moderately popular and generally lacked interest of the local self-government bodies and departments of education. This is probably

another argument for direct cooperation with schools, teachers and parents. Perhaps an effective cooperation would start after appropriate agreements are signed between the Polish Equestrian Association and the Ministry of Education introducing the horse riding classes and workshops on equestrianism to the school syllabuses.

Conclusions and discussion

Based on the collected research material, it seems that the emergence of new horse riding clubs with diversified offers and enriching the offer of existing equestrian clubs is rational. It makes sense economically, ecologically, culturally and socially. It is also necessary to underline that there is a need to educate and popularize equestrian skills, indicating that horse riding is a form of recreation suitable for various social and age groups, despite many prejudices and disinformation.

First and foremost, there should be more small size, modest clubs, with lower price offers, located in suburban areas, but within good public transport access. It would be a mistake to assume that contemporary sport and equestrian recreation have – as it used to be years ago – an exclusively elitist colouring combined with a specific social class. Active sports and horse riding are indeed associated with financial outlays, but firstly, the wealth of the inhabitants of large Polish cities (especially the municipality of Warsaw) is constantly growing and secondly – thanks to numerous horse riding clubs – the offer could be diverse and increasingly available for various social groups [17, 33, 34]. The misunderstanding we would like to highlight – is the exaggeration of horse riding costs. Based on our research, we know that there are many small, modest sports clubs (admittedly with a poorer communication access from the centre of Warsaw), where you can learn horse riding in winter and autumn for 50% of the offered price. Riding accessories (including shoes and a toque) can be rented there for relatively small amounts. Therefore, this form of sport and recreation has a chance of further development in the future on condition that diversified offers are provided.

All in all, the multiple possibilities offered by equestrian sport and recreation build their potential in the social dimension – these are, first and foremost, the lack of sharp restrictions on the rider's ability (gender, age, skills, physical condition). Like other outdoor forms of activities, such as water sports, winter sports, hiking and cycling, horse riding provides opportunities to preserve and improve the physical and mental well-being of various social groups: women and men, children and adolescents, adults and the elderly, more and less physically fit people, experienced riders and beginners. As a result, just like other forms of physical activity, practising both sports and recreational horse riding provides a higher quality of life: greater efficiency, independence, good psychophysical fitness, physical, mental and social well being.

Naturally, due to the numerous barriers, horse riding will probably never be able to compete with the popularity of other forms of active recreation in the city: walking, Nordic walking, jogging, swimming, gardening, cycling, rollerblading or scooter, and in winter – running and ski walks. Nevertheless, providing Poles with equestrianism as an everyday opportunity to have an outdoor physical activity, especially when horse riding could be practised near their place of residence is of great importance for the rational use of leisure time, promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Because regardless of whether it is a sport passion or one of the forms of family recreation – horse riding should be considered, just like other forms of active rest, to be an integral element of the program promoting healthy behaviours of residents of large cities [17, 18].

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Table 1. Equestrianism in the context of other popular forms of recreation and sport (studies of adult preferences in Poland and the UK)

	Favourite forms of sport and recreation	UK	Poland
1	Walking	68%	89%
2	Gardening	56%	69%
3	Swimming	43%	39.9%
4	Cycling	29.1%	66%
5	Yoga/ aerobics/ other forms	21.4%	19%
6	Golf	11.9%	0.001%
7	Horse riding	9%	1%
8	Jogging	8.8%	14.9%
9	Table tennis	5.3%	1.9%
10	Tennis	4.9%	1.1%
11	Squash	4.8%	1% (below)
12	Basketball, volleyball	2%	10%
13	Hockey, skating	1.9%	1%
14	Sailing/ windsurfing	1.1%	1% (below)

Source: Mogiła-Lisowska J. 2011 and GUS 2018 (data for Poland), Torkildsen G., 2002 and Williams S., Busswell J., 2003 (data for Great Britain); [17, 27, 30, 33, 34]

Table 2. Accessibility (isochronal) of selected horse riding clubs in Warsaw and neighbouring municipalities (reference point: PKIN), estimated time of access by car and travel time by public transport

	Name of the horse riding club	Distance (km)	Access by car (minutes)	Access by public transport
1	the Cavallo Horse Riding Club, the Royal Łazienki Park in Warsaw	3.8	8	24
2	Pociecha Horse Riding Club Park Skaryszewski in Warsaw	5.1	13	19
3	Horse Riding Club Tory Służewieckie in Warsaw	8.6	16	37
4	Horse Riding Club Aldragho in Józefosław near Piaseczno	17.8	33	77
5	Equestrian Club Aromer in Józefin near Zakręt	24	30	73
6	Horse Riding Club Bałagula in Dąbrowa Leśna near Łomianki	18.3	23	56
7	Horse Riding Club PGR Brodno in Warsaw (BW, WD) 9.2 km 18 minutes 28 minutes	9.2	18	28
8	Horse Riding Club Dworek in Okuniewo near Warsaw	24.1	31	64
9	Horse Riding Club Eko-Farm in Milanówek	38.9	32	43
10	Horse Riding Club LKS Wolta in near Brwinów	29	38	93
11	Horse Riding Club Szumawa in Piaseczno	26.8	35	64
12	Horse Riding Club Chojnów in Baniocha near Warsaw	25.2	43	120
13	Horse Riding Club Agmaja in Warsaw	7.6	25	31
14	Horse Riding Club TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw	28.6	38	94
15	Horse Riding Club Pepeland in Dziekanów Nowy near Łomianki	23.5	25	60
16	Horse Riding Club Patataj in Kanie near Pruszków	26.4	34	110
17	Horse Riding Club Kuclandia in Książenice near Warsaw	35	40	85
18	Horse Riding Club Legia Kozielska in Warsaw	6.3	15	34
19	Horse Riding Club TKKF Hubertus in Warsaw	7.7	17	33
20	Horse Riding Club SKJ Trawers in Wolica (Paszków) near Nadarzyn	21.8	27	76

Source: a) Field studies carried out by authors in the selected equestrian clubs of Warsaw and neighbouring municipalities (2008–2018); b) the GoogleMaps.pl computer application (www.google-maps.pl) used to obtain the presented data; [ds-144, ds-300 and ds-316 AWF Warszawa]

Table 3. Sample prices of services in the surveyed horse riding clubs in Warsaw and neighbouring municipalities

	Name of the horse riding club	The price of individual horse riding session with an instructor, one hour during the weekend (in PLN)	The price of a hotel for a horse: one month stay with board, no vet care (in PLN)
1	Horse Riding Club Cavallo in Łazienki Królewskie Park, Warsaw	100	1800
2	Horse Riding Club Pocięcha in Skaryszewski Park, Warsaw	100	No offer
3	Horse Riding Club Tory Służewieckie in Warsaw	80	No offer
4	Horse Riding Club Aldragho in Józefostaw near, Piaseczno	Negotiable	Negotiable
5	Equestrian Club Aromer in Józefin near Zakręt	Negotiable	1400
6	Horse Riding Club Bałagula in Dąbrowa Leśna near Łomianki	Negotiable	Negotiable
7	Horse Riding Club PGR Brodno in Warsaw	90	Negotiable
8	Horse Riding Club Dworek in Okuniewo near Warsaw	90	900
9	Horse Riding Club Eko-Farm in Milanówek	70	Negotiable
10	Horse Riding Club Chojnów in Baniocha near Warsaw	120	1900
11	Horse Riding Club Agmaja in Warsaw	100	900
12	Horse Riding Club TKKF Podkowa in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw	70	No offer
13	Horse Riding Club Pepeland in Dziekanów Nowy near Łomianki	110	No offer
14	Horse Riding Club Kuclandia, Książenice near Warsaw	100	Negotiable
15	Horse Riding Club Legia Kozielska in Warsaw	120	1500
16	Horse Riding Club Patataj in Kanie near Pruszków	75–115	1000
17	Horse Riding Club TKKF Hubertus in Warsaw	80–100	No offers
18	Horse Riding Club Szumawa in Piaseczno	110	1500
19	Horse Riding Club LKS Wolta, Żółwin near Brwinow	Negotiable	Negotiable
20	Horse Riding Club SKJ Trawers in Wolica (Paszków) near Nadarzyn	Negotiable	No offer

Source: Field studies carried out by authors in the selected horse riding clubs in Warsaw and neighbouring municipalities (2008–2018) [ds-144, ds-300 and ds-316 AWF Warsaw]

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