

Nature Deficit Syndrome is a very popular term in the scientific world, especially when it comes to broadly understood ecological education (including forestry education), environmental psychology and sustainable development. It primarily indicates people's distance from nature. This term is not a medical term, but refers to serious changes in the psyche, health and social problems of people of all ages. The main reasons for the nature deficit in scientific and popular science literature are: high urbanization of cities, degradation of natural landscapes, widespread digitalization, limited activity in natural areas, limited amount of free time among families and insufficient ecological education. According to the PBS report commissioned by the State Forests National Forest Holding, in 2017 only 19% of respondents indicated that they visited forest areas once a month. Data regarding informal forest education conducted by the State Forests are also disturbing. Reports from the educational activities of the State Forests (2015-2020) indicate a drastic decline in the number of participants after 2017. Another very important aspect is the fact that, according to the "Forum Against Depression", over 1.5 million Poles (including children) suffer from depression - this is almost the same number of people as live in Warsaw. Unfortunately, the lack of regular contact with nature has a negative impact on our health and social relationships on many levels of life, including the decisions we make, including those regarding the environment.

In Poland, forest issues in connection with mental and physical health or ecological education are not discussed and promoted as often as in other countries. So far, research in forestry has been mainly based on qualitative and quantitative research. There was little research in the field of environmental psychology and they focused on determining the mental state of people in contact with various natural environments. Due to the fact that forest areas in Poland cover almost 30% of the country's area, and numerous scientific studies in the field of ecological education, forestry and environmental psychology indicate the positive impact of forest areas on the development of appropriate ecological attitudes, treatment of mental and physical health and psychological reconstruction, fighting depression, obesity and cardiovascular diseases, through the so-called forest bathing, it is worth considering whether it is currently possible to measure the level of nature deficit in people who have different memories and experiences related to natural areas, including forests. The aim of the project is to create the Forest Nature Deficit Questionnaire (FNDQ). An interdisciplinary scientific team consisting of foresters, a psychologist and educators in the field of social geography and nature education will solve the following research problems: Is there a forest deficit among Poles and what is it (Q1)? What are the psychological factors of forest deficit (Q2)? What are the natural (Q3), sociological (Q4) and health (Q5) factors of the forest deficit and does FND apply only to Poles (Q6)?

For the first part of the research problem, an original psychometric questionnaire will be created, the task of which will be to diagnose whether Polish society has a forest deficit. All stages of creating the questionnaire will be developed in accordance with the standards used in psychology. Determining the second research problem will be possible after conducting four psychometric tests determining neuroticism (nervousness, low resistance to stress) and extraversion (tendency to be an open, sociable person), mental resilience, sense of life satisfaction and subjective sense of happiness. Answers to subsequent research problems will be revealed by quantitative research, which will analyse, among others: frequency of visits to the forest, demographic and health issues, including: physical activity, occurrence of chronic diseases. Additionally, the questionnaire will be adapted to German to test this issue in Austria. All stages of the research will be carried out using the CAWI technique (online survey) by a professional company dealing with public opinion research on a representative group of Poles and residents of Austria. Adults will take part in the study. The activities planned in the project are aimed at better understanding the behaviour and needs of society in the field of sustainable tourism and recreation in forest areas, cultural services, ecological education, public health and social communication. This is extremely important to determine whether a lack of contact with forest nature is the cause of so many problems between forestry and society. The results obtained will also allow the development of educational programs in both ecological education and public health, aimed at better understanding forestry and improving the quality of physical and mental health.