

REGIONAL TOURISM IN PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP: POLISH EXPERIENCE

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In modern times, the development of tourism constitutes a contribution to the economic growth in many regions. Unfortunately, it is strongly dependent on a number of phenomena occurring both within the region and beyond it. Operating in such uncertain and constantly changing conditions forces, primarily the regional policy-makers, to prepare and develop competitive and developmental strategies of shaping tourism in the next several years. Tourism is of great importance to Podlasie Voivodeship, this being a natural consequence of the richness of the area's nature. Clean air, beautiful forests, lakes, landscapes – this is all at the tourist's grasp. Podlaskie Voivodeship is situated in the north east of Poland [1, p. 978]. It is an agricultural region with well-developed agro-food industries. The production of machinery and equipment, textiles, wood and furniture plays an important role. Particularly, the manufacturing potential is concentrated in the largest cities – Białystok, Suwałki, and Łomża.

The Podlaskie region is a place where you can find picturesque landscapes, primeval forests, and numerous rivers and lakes. The little towns give the entire region a unique charm. The region's location on the border of Poland and its natural environment are factors which shape the province's economic identity. Podlaskie is an agricultural and industrial region where the timber processing industry, light industry and mechanical engineering play an important role in the regional economy.

Podlaskie is a region with an immense tourism potential, much of which is still unused. Small towns, interesting buildings, and religious sites all come together to form a unique atmosphere and charm of Podlaskie. Numerous pure rivers and lakes are an excellent destination for all lovers of water sports and angling. Podlaskie has a very valuable variety of forests and a unique flora and fauna. Particularly local national parks are appealing. Almost 40% of the province's territory is under protection. Podlaskie is most varied from an ethnic and cultural point of view. It has been the home for people of different nationalities and religions already for several centuries [2].

Podlasie is one of the most beautiful corners of Poland, and at the same place that retains many of the traditional, outgoing in other regions of our country in the past, idyllic, familiar landscape. The spectacular natural beauty of the region in Polish and European assemblies and components provide the environment of a protected – in a small area there are four national parks, of which Biebrzański is the largest in Poland and the Białowieża is the best preserved in Europe with the original natural forest character.

The mission of Podlaska Regional Development Foundation, founded in 1994, is to support economic development of the region, including entrepreneurship. The idea of actions is concentrated particularly on inspiring to create and support activity of micro, small and medium enterprises [3].

Within the scope of its activities, the Foundation: 1) promotes development of tourism in Podlaskie Voivodeship; 2) supports economic development and the creation of small and medium enterprises; 3) promotes employment and vocational activity of the unemployed and those in risk of losing jobs; 4)

promotes development of local communities; 5) supports European integration and development of international and inter-regional co-operation; 6) promotes and protects consumers' rights; 7) promotes and protects human and civil rights and freedoms, as well as supports development of democracy; 8) supports science and education; 9) promotes ecology.

International support programs and agreements, financed by the European Union, help galvanize these processes. As indicated by marketing trends, the importance of small regions, which are where internal problems will be actually solved, is increasing hand in hand with the growing significance of tourism as a vehicle that will contribute to solving these problems. Poland's geographic situation, along with its natural wealth – mountains, sea, forests and environmentally clean areas – opens up exciting opportunities that should not be lost. Such opportunities are particularly ample in a region such as Silesia, which boasts a number to historical and cultural relics as well as other sorts of tourist attractions, and whose geographic location makes it relatively easy to create organisms such as Euroregions. In the nearest future, the Euroregional structure is bound to make up a platform for cooperation in a number of areas, both in environmental protection and infrastructural development.

The International Culture and Tourist Information Centre was established in Suwałki in 2006 to provide detailed information on cultural, artistic and tourist events held by members of Euroregion Niemen, i.e. regions from Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast). The Centre is a local administrator of the Internet System of Tourist Information, holds joint transborder cultural and tourist initiatives, promotes Euroregion Niemen.

The aim of an understanding within a given Euroregion is the development of border regions cooperation in the following spheres: 1) comprehensive economic development; 2) spatial management plan; 3) public infrastructure 4) education, health protection, culture, sport and tourism.

The Puszcza Białowieska Euroregion is an international association of self – governed territory units in Poland and Belarus – direct neighbor countries. The area of cooperation within the Polish fraction contains the territory of the Hajnowski District and within the Belarussian fraction the following regions: Kamieniecki, Prużański and Świsłocki regions.

The aim of cooperation within the framework of this Euroregion is the development of common activities, particularly in range of: 1) natural environment protection and reasonable usage of natural resources; 2) nations of both states closer together; 3) preserving the unique natural area of Puszcza Białowieska influencing upon continent's climate to a great extent; 4) Increasing the standard of living of the Euroregion inhabitants way of gaining investments and realizing economic interborder programs; 5) cooperation and exchange of social, scientific, professional, cultural, sport, environment and youth groups. Countries and regions attempt to encourage tourism development with modern planning. An overview of selected planning documents, mostly regional, leads to the conclusion that in spite of a declarative adoption of the new paradigm on the strategic level, the operational level is still dominated by the old approach, based on a number of myths. Within the country, factors related to the general economic development of a specific region play a more and more significant role in differentiating the tourist traffic. In the Podlaskie Voivodeship, however, there are continuously the natural values which are the main attraction for visiting tourists [4, p. 71–72].

Bibliography

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