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TOURISM WITHIN THE POLISH AND SLOVAK TRANSFRONTIER REGION

Abstract: The paper is based on a report *A target study on the spatial land management along the Polish and Slovak frontier* (2001). The authors depict the entire transfrontier region and tourism in the Polish and Slovak part of this region. Key issues of the tourism development are presented from the point of view of Polish and Slovak needs and demands, and some solution suggestions are given.

Key words: transfrontier region, tourism, management, and tourist traffic

Introduction

In a period from 1999 to 2001, a Polish and Slovak teams co-operated on a joint project called *A target study on the spatial land management along the Polish and Slovak frontier*. The objective of the project was to determine aims and directions of actions to be taken in this region. The study identified and pointed out several important elements and characteristics referring to land management and to functioning of the near-border territory, which were incorporated into the scope of the Polish and Slovak co-operation. Those elements and characteristics are regarded as the specific and essential factors conditioning the development of the entire transfrontier territory.

The following issues were analyzed, assessed and conceptually developed: population, settlement, nature protection, culture's heritage, transportation infrastructure, engineering infrastructure, water resources and water management, and environmental protection. While studying the Polish sector of this territory, the areas under extraordinary threats to the environment and facing risks of natural calamities were also taken into consideration. Tourism health-resort organization was thoroughly studied and investigated. Under the study project, the following was accomplished:

- strong and weak points of the transfrontier land management were pointed out and assessed, chances and risks of the prospective regional development were estimated;

- key problems to be solved were identified,
- suggestions of how to solve indicated problems were formulated; they referred to the issues appearing vital for a compatible and smooth co-operation between the two neighboring countries in the spatial, organizational, and legal domains.

The results of the *Study...* are addressed to the authorities of the three Euro-regions established at the border of Poland and Slovakia (“The Tatra Euro-region”, “The Beskidy Euro-region”, and “The Carpathian Euro-region”), to local government bodies at the provincial (województwo), county (powiat), and community (gmina) levels. Central and provincial authorities of the national government may also be interested in those results, as might be some other institutions, organizations and entities concerned.

Tourism in Slovakia is described more precisely and comprehensively than usual in order to provide Polish readers with more detailed information.

1. The Polish-Slovak transfrontier range

In the *Study...* as mentioned above, the range of the Polish-Slovak transfrontier region is defined. In Slovakia, this region encompasses two provinces (the Slovakian name is “kraje”): Žylyna and Prešov, whereas in Poland, the southern parts of the following provinces (województwo) belong to it: **Silesia** (counties [powiat]: Cieszyn, Bielsko inclusive the city of Bielsko-Biała and Żywiec), **Małopolska** (counties [powiat]: Wadowice, Sucha Beskidzka, Myślenice, Nowy Targ, Tatrzański county, Limanowa, Nowy Sącz inclusive the city of Nowy Sącz, and Gorlice), and, finally, **Podkarpacie** (counties [powiat]: Jasło, Krosno inclusive the town of Krosno, Brzozów, Sanok, and Bieszczady county). The range of the transfrontier region was determined on the basis of diverse interrelations and connections identified between Poland and Slovakia.

The area of the entire region is 31,241 km², and the proportions of the Polish and Slovak areas are almost similar. However, essential dissimilarities refer to the residents of this region: in the Polish part of the region, 2,220,000 people live, whereas in the Slovak part – 1,454,000 people reside. The total population amount is 3,674,000. If compared with the total area of the two countries concerned, the Polish region constitutes only about 5% of the Polish territory, and the Slovak part – as much as over 32% of the total Slovak territory. In the Polish part of the transfrontier region, only about 5.7% of the total Polish population live there. In the Slovak part, more than 27% of all Slovak inhabitants live (*A Study... Synthesis*, 2001).

2. Tourism in the Polish part of the transfrontier region (“A study... 2001)

2.1. Attractiveness and tourist potential

2.1.1. Tourist and health-resort qualities

2.1.1.1. Natural qualities

The following factors constitute natural qualities:

- differentiated hypsometry in the entire region from about 300 m above sea level (the inter-mountain basins and valleys) up to 2,499 m above sea level (the Tatra Mountains);
- mountainous character of the environment with its climatic belts and plant layers;
- high concentration of trees (woodiness) in the region including well preserved forests of a natural character;
- a high density indicator for drainage;
- artificial water reservoirs which include recreational facilities.

The most valuable fragments of this territory are arranged as national parks, landscape parks, and nature reserves as those forms ensure necessary legal protection for the area.

2.1.1.2. Historic and culture qualities

Historic and culture qualities are linked with the occurrence of the following items and phenomena:

- abundant archeological findings, such as: prehistoric/historic sites, burial grounds, and old ramparts;
- artifacts and historical monuments belonging to diverse historical and thematic groups: castles, manor houses, palaces, sacral and country buildings;
- old-municipal historical complexes;
- park and palace complexes;
- urban and rural historical systems being historical monuments.

Many buildings and complexes are more than regional importance. Rustic and folk rites, as well as folk art and accompanying cultural events are of special significance.

2.1.1.3. Landscape qualities

In this region, mountainous landscape dominates. Its natural and anthropogenic cover is vertically and horizontally diverse, and the state of landscape preservation also differs. With regard to the state of landscape preservation, the following landscape types can be distinguished:

- harmonious landscapes that match their natural state. They occur in higher parts of the mountains and are usually legally protected as a national park or a nature reserve;
- harmonious landscapes that display some nature- and culture-derived characteristics. They encompass forest complexes being utilized, and the encompassing green land;

- harmonious culture landscapes that are both agricultural and settlement areas, where former field arrangements and rural systems are still in effect;
- man-transformed landscapes with varying transformation levels and showing some traits of disharmony. They include the majority of regions with scattered settlements and contain architectural elements appearing strange to the local traditions.

2.1.1.4. Health resource quality

The following is deciding on the health resource qualities:

- plentiful mineral water resources often with unique chemical composition. Such mineral waters are suitable for special therapeutic diet types, mineral bath healing, inhalation, etc.;
- thermal waters including hot springs with temperatures about 40°C;
- special therapeutic qualities of the region's climate owing to the strongly diversified local bio-climate that can be either mildly stimulating to health in montane valleys and basins, or moderately stimulating in foothills and low mountains, or powerfully stimulating healing processes within upper climatic belts.

2.1.1.5. Tourist seasons

Climatic conditions here in this region animate the existence of two basic tourist seasons:

- an overall recreational season from mid-April to the end of October. During this season, there is a so called bathing season in the summer (June, July, August);
- a winter season with options to participate in winter sporting activities. The duration of this season depends on stability and thickness of a snow mantle present here during each winter.

2.1.2. Tourist management of the region

2.1.2.1. Lodging facilities and their utilization

Totally, there are approximately 112 thousand lodging sites (Tab. 1) offering accommodation to tourists and visitors in the powiats (counties) within the Polish part of the entire transfrontier region. Almost 72% of them are placed within the near-border powiats (counties) zone. The majority of them is open to the public all year round. The structure of the accommodation system consists of the following facilities:

- holiday centers owned by and/or run by enterprises/factories and institutions (about 50% of all sleeping units), which were established before 1989, and now they are available to all other tourists thanks to the political system transformation in Poland;
- private sleeping and guests houses (are 33% of all night's lodging places);
- holiday houses (about 4% of all night's lodging places);
- youth hostels (approximately 4.8% of all night's lodging places);
- shelter-homes (around 2.5% of all night's lodging places);
- weekend recreation centers (close to 1.3% of all night's lodging places);
- hotels and motels (circa 3% of all night's lodging places);
- boarding houses (nearby 1% of all night's lodging places);
- camping facilities (somewhat 4.2% of all night's lodging places);
- scientific and creative work centers (fairly 0.6% of all night's lodging places).

Tab. 1. Tourist and health resort facilities in powiats of the region under discussion, as per 1999

AREA	Tourist overnight accommodation hostels (as per July 31)				Hospitals and sanatoria in health resorts		
	Total	Hotels	Overnight places	Guests using overnight places ^{a)}	Objects ^{b)}	Beds ^{c)}	Visitors at health resorts ^{d)}
POLAND	12 000	844	757 792	12 438 970	239	30 565	418 960
Near-border territory, consisting of:	2 776	61	111 477	1 607 903	85	8 797	114 147
In the Province of Silesia	496	21	28 291	543 021	4	1 079	15 486
Bielsko-Biała	27	6	1 648	64 106	0	0	0
Powiat of Bielsko-Biała	73	5	4 203	85 097	0	0	0
Powiat of Cieszyn	233	10	14 801	309 719	4	1 079	15 486
Powiat of Żywiec	163	0	7 639	84 099	0	0	0
In the Małopolska Province	2 022	27	68 243	852 444	55	4 822	62 731
Powiat of Gorlice	36	2	2 324	20 695	5	412	5 785
Powiat of Limanowa	66	0	2 595	23 929	0	0	0
Powiat of Myślenice	42	2	2 209	26 096	1	50	950
Nowy Sącz	14	3	992	18 739	0	0	36
Powiat of Nowy Sącz	316	6	17 322	168 667	22	2317	32 133
Powiat of Nowy Targ	346	1	9 425	83 729	27	2043	23 827
Powiat of Sucha	52	1	2 854	43 307	0	0	0
The Tatra Powiat	1 132	9	29 528	445 015	0	0	0
Powiat of Wadowice	18	3	994	22 267	0	0	0
In the Podkarpackie Province	258	13	14 943	212 438	26	2 896	35 930
The Bieszczady Powiat	130	5	10 305	128 173	5	622	6 222
Powiat of Brzozów	3	0	112	1 469	0	0	0
Powiat of Jasło	19	1	697	11 591	0	0	0
Krosno	4	0	138	5 685	0	0	0
Powiat of Krosno	72	5	2 240	34 400	21	2 274	29 708
Powiat of Sanok	30	2	1 451	31 120	0	0	0

^{a)} in the period between January and September; ^{b)} as per December 31; ^{c)} an average number of beds available during a year; ^{d)} stationary treatment

Reference:

Poland and its new territorial division, GUS (Main Statistical Bureau), Warsaw 1999.

The Strategy of development... RCSS – Biuro Rozwoju Regionalnego w Krakowie (Regional Development Office Cracow), July 2000.

In many cases, the standard of the existing tourist facilities are either low or average, and do not meet the standards expected by tourists, especially foreign tourists.

Annually, almost 3.6 million tourists use the tourist facilities available in the near-border provinces (województwa), and there are about 1.8 million people utilizing them in the strict frontier zone. Tourist facilities located in the following powiats: The Tatra Mountains (about. 450 thousand people using night's lodging places), Cieszyn (310 thousand people), and Nowy Sącz (170 thousand tourists) are used most frequently.

2.1.2.2. Tourist facilities

The territory near to the Polish-Slovak border is adequately equipped with miscellaneous tourist equipment. They consists of the following main systems and items:

- trail markers for hiking, skiing, cycling, and horse-riding;
- special routes such as „Icon Route”, „Wooden Architecture Route”;
- water highways, river ports, shops renting water sports equipment (Dunajec River, Poprad River, and water reservoirs: Solina, Klimkówka, Czorsztyn, Rożnów, Czchów, Żywiec),
- cable-cars, ski rope-tow systems and accompanying ski routes;
- natural and didactic walkways (paths).

A so-called “Carpathian Road” goes across this territory. It is regarded a tourist route and offers striking panoramas and other sightseeing values. Yet, it should be improved by providing it with necessary tourist facilities (mainly parking places, properly arranged rest stops and/or resting spots, view points, and fast-food networks).

2.1.2.3. Scheduled tourist routes in the Carpathian Euro-Region

Recently, in the Polish Office of the Carpathian Euro-Region, a conceptual project of Euro-regional thematic tourist routes was developed (*Transfrontier...*). It is a group of culture-linked routes. The majority of them are religious routes designed for the sight-seeing tourism, and another group are recreational routes designed to serve various forms of specialized tourism.

Hitherto, the thematic routes as suggested for the Carpathian Euro-Region incorporate only the eastern part of the Polish-Slovak transfrontier region:

Recreational routes: consisting of: spas routes, hiking routes, cycling and horse riding routes, winter routes, hunting and anglers' routes;

Culture-linked routes: routes of war cemeteries, ethnographic route, Roman-catholic route, Orthodox-Catholic route, Jewish religion and culture-devoted routes;

International culture-devoted routes: Amber Route, Wooden Architecture Route, Gothic Route, Icon Route.

2.1.3. Transportation accessibility

2.1.3.1. Transportation accessibility of the Polish tourist regions for the Poles

Railway is the most important transportation means for Poles within the Polish tourist regions (to Zwardoń, to Zakopane, to Krynica, to Ustrzyki Dolne, and to Nowy Łupków), as is the road transport. There are no express highways in the near-border

zone. This is a very serious and arduous disadvantage of the main road section between Myślenice and Zakopane. Generally, from the interior of Poland, there is the easiest and quickest access to Beskid Żywiecki, then to Beskid Wyspowy, and to The Tatras; the Sądecki district is also well accessible. The most troublesome access is to the region of Beskid Niski and Bieszczady.

2.1.3.2. Transportation accessibility of the Polish tourist regions for the Slovaks

As for the Slovaks accessing Polish tourist regions, motor vehicle transportation is of the basic importance. Besides the three major cross-border inspection stations (Barwinek, Chyżne, Myto) which mainly serve transit traffic, there are several border crossings along the Polish-Slovak border. They are less important and the traffic here is not intense at all. Only Poles and Slovaks use some of them. At present, the network of border crossings is being developed. There are also walking crossings for tourists on foot, and they stimulate walking tourism (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2. Border crossing stations for foot travelers situated along the tourist trails and routes between Poland and Slovakia

Pos.	Border Crossing Station	Community	Poviats
PROVINCE OF SILESIA			
1	Jaworzynka – Černe	Istebna	Cieszyn
2	Górka Gomółka – Skálite Serafinov	Rajcza	Żywiec
3	Wielka Racza – Wielka Raca	Rajcza	Żywiec
4	Przełęcz (pass) Przysłop – Stara Bystrica	Ujsoły	Żywiec
5	Piłsko – Piłsko	Jeleśnia	Żywiec
6	Głuchaczki – Przełęcz Jałowiecka (pass)	Koszarawa	Żywiec
MAŁOPOLSKIE PROVINCE			
7	Zawoja-Czatoza – Oravska Polhora	Zawoja	Sucha
8	Babia Góra – Babia Hora	Lipnica	Nowy Targ
9	Przywarówka – Oravska Polhora	Lipnica	Nowy Targ
10	Rysy – Rysy	Bukowina	The Tatra
11	Kacwin – Velka Frankova	Łapsze Niżne	Nowy Targ
12	Sromowce Wyżne – Červený Klastor	Czorsztyn	Nowy Targ
13	Szczawnica – Lesnica	Szczawnica	Nowy Targ
14	Szlachtowa – Velký Lipník	Szczawnica	Nowy Targ
15	Jaworki – Stranany	Szczawnica	Nowy Targ
16	Jaworki – Litmanova	Szczawnica	Nowy Targ
17	Wysowa Zdrój – Regetowka	Uście Gorlickie	Gorlice
PODKARPACKIE PROVINCE			
18	Czeremcha – Čertižne	Dukla	Krosno
19	Balnica – Osadne	Komańcza	Sanok
20	Roztoki Górne – Ruske Sedc	Cisna	The Bieszczady

Reference:

The Strategy of development..., RCSS – Biuro Rozwoju Regionalnego w Krakowie (Regional Development Bureau Cracow), July 2000.

2.2. Tourist traffic

The tourist traffic is predominantly concentrated in the area of the Tatras and Pieniny Mountains. Here, its volume exceeds the natural tourist capacity in the region. The districts of Podhale and Beskidy, which are less developed for tourists and possess minimal tourist facilities, still have a large reserve with regard to their natural tourist capacity. They also have a real potentiality to expand tourist infrastructure.

The leading forms of tourist traffic are as follows:

- summer vacation and recreational sojourns in holiday centers, boarding houses, shelter-homes, „second homes”, farms (agro-tourism), camping places, etc.;
- winter vacation and recreational sojourns in all of the facilities as indicated above (camping places excluded);
- weekend resting sojourns;
- walking and hiking tourism;
- health resort treatment.

The above named forms of tourist traffic enclose various activities, such as: hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, motor-cycling, horse riding, paragliding, bathing/swimming and water sports, down-hill skiing, and participation in diverse events.

2.3. Zones with predominating tourist and health resort roles

2.3.1. Districts of high tourist traffic

Three regions of concentrated tourism can be distinguished, which inflict potential risks to natural resources, wealth and values of these areas. They are as follows:

- district of the National Park of the Tatra Mountains, its tourist capacity is definitely exceeded;
- district of Czorsztyn–Niedzica–Krościenko–Szczawnica including the Pieniny National Park of the Pieniny Mountains;
- part of the Poprad Landscape Park close to the health resorts of Krynica and Muszyna.

2.3.2. Districts of high health resorts concentration

Within the near-border territory, there are 14 statutory and 5 developing health resorts. Among them, the most important spas are: Ustroń, Wisła, Rabka, Szczawnica, Piwniczna, Muszyna, Krynica, Wysowa, Iwonicz Zdrój, and Rymanów.

The following 4 health resorts enjoy international recognition and importance: Krynica, Szczawnica, Iwonicz Zdrój, and Rabka.

3. Tourism in the Slovak part of the region

(Projekt územného rozvoja... 2001)

3.1. Attractiveness and tourist potential of the region

3.1.1. Natural conditions

With regard to tourist traffic, in the district covered by this transfrontier region, the tourist traffic is the most important and most attractive in all of Slovakia. Here, there

are several natural districts that are protected by law and have key-importance for this region. They are: – national parks of TANAP, PIENAP, Połoniny, Malá Fatra; – a fragment of the NAPANT area; – part of a national park called “The Slovak Paradise”; – districts within the Protected Landscape Territories of Horná Orava, Velká Fatra; – The Eastern Carpathians; –part of the Landscape Protected Territory of Vihorlat, Kysuce, and Strážovské Vrchy is where the recreational areas are situated and intensely utilized.

3.1.2. Historical and culture conditions

The territory under analysis presents rich historical and culture potential. This potential is presently used to make longer stay and wandering tourism more pleasant and inviting. The possibilities for longer stay and wandering forms of tourism within this territory contain large reserves for prospective development and could be used under the Polish-Slovak transfrontier co-operation as suggested by this Study.

3.1.3. Health Resort Treatment Conditions

Within this region, there are prominent natural spas in which healing springs and natural climatic conditions are effectively utilized.

The High Tatra Mountains offer a specific climate to cure respiratory track diseases (tuberculosis and other respiratory track diseases). Natural thermal healing and mineral waters are used to treat diseases of locomotory organs, nervous diseases, women diseases, etc.).

3.1.4. Seasonal variations

Within the entire region, the climate and natural conditions allow for its use all year round, with the high seasons being in winter and summer. And currently, it has been evident that people are more and more interested in the winter season.

3.1.5. Chief ways of utilizing the region

With all the natural amenities in this region, there are excellent conditions to develop, in the first place, mountain tourism and recreation, hiking, and, in the winter, all the diverse winter activities. Recreation and long stays near the water reservoirs are arranged in the area of Orawskie Lake (Oravská priehrada) and Liptovskie Lake (Liptovská Mara), and also in Domaša.

Among very many attractive mountain ski centers people come to enjoy winter sports the following are the most popular and the most frequently visited: Štrbské Pleso, Tatranská Lomnica–Jamy, Smokovce–Hrebienok, Ždiar, Martinské hole, Kubínska Hoľa, Velká Rača, Demänovská dolina–Jasná.

In a renowned health resort of Vysoké Tatry, there are several spas with extraordinary climatic healing conditions: Štrbské Pleso, Vyšné Hágy, Tatranská Polianka, Nová Polianka, Smokovce, and Tatranská kotlina. There are also natural healing and thermal waters extensively applied medically to cure patients in spas located within the following important health resort towns: Bardejovské Kúpele, Vyšné Ružbachy, Lúčky, Rajecké Teplice, Turčianske Teplice, and Korytnica. Some other towns offer suitable conditions

to develop health and spa tourism, for example: Slaná Voda (Oravská Polhora), Svätôjánske kúpele (Liptovský Ján), and Lubochňa. The most notable towns where the thermal baths are used most often are: Oravice, Bešeňová, and Vrbov.

Sightseeing and urban tourism continuously develop in this region. It is possible owing to historical and culture heritage of many towns, cities, communities, and settlements, such as: Prešov, Bardejov, Kežmarok, Levoča, Poprad-Spišská Sobotka, Žilina, Martin, Liptovský Mikuláš, and Dolný Kubín.

As for the international tourism, Čičmany and Vlkolínec are very important; it should be recognized that the latter one has been registered in the World Cultural Heritage List.

A road network in this region promotes the development of motor and bicycle tourism. Within the near-border zone, rural tourism, agro-tourism, and eco-tourism are forms of tourism with real expansion potential.

3.1.6. Tourist infrastructure

With regard to the global Slovak scale, this near-border territory is the best equipped one. According to the statistical data available that refer to the Žilina Province, in 1998, there were 492 lodging sites with overnight facilities. The majority of them were located in the following powiats (counties): Liptovský Mikuláš (186 places) and Žilina (63). All together, there were 19,488 beds offered to tourists in all the lodging sites in the Žilina Province. Moreover, 2,719 sleeping sites were offered for overnight camping spaces for only caravans and tents. The accommodation facilities in private houses covered about 700 beds.

In the Žilina Province, the accommodation facilities for tourists comprise mainly hotels, motels, boarding houses (126), tourist shelter-homes (80), and settlements with summer cottages (28). As for proprietorship type, the largest group of houses offering lodging are state-owned houses, next, there are private houses, and houses owned by communities are in the third place.

In 1998, in the Žilina Province, a total number of 423,131 visitors were given lodging here. The overall number of overnights provided was 1,869,991, which means 4.4 overnights per one visitor. At present, it was stated that more inland tourists than foreign visitors come here for recreation, thus, the proportion of lodgings provided to Slovaks and to foreign visitors tends to change if compared with the past. When statistically grouping visitors appearing here most frequently according to their country of origin, the Slovak tourists are at the most, next come the Czech tourists, Polish guests, German visitors, Russians, and at the end of the category are Hungarians.

Within the area of the Prešov Province, there are 246 lodging facilities offering 20,957 sleeping sites. Among all of them, there are 94 hotels and motels comprising 9,746 beds to overnight. The largest group of lodging sites is available in the powiat of Poprad: 61 sites offering 6,841 sleeping sites, whereas 33 are kind of hotels with 5,110 overnight sites.

As for the remaining powiats (counties), the following numbers apply (the first figure indicates the number of lodging facilities, and the second one the amount of sleeping sites): Bardejov: 17/1,036; Humenné: 11/845; Kežmarok: 26/3,000; Levoča:

12/814; Medzilaborce: 4/442; Prešov: 18/1,167; Sabinov: 6/530; Snina: 2/150; Stará Lubovňa: 34/1,424; Stropkov: 14/870; Svidník: 11/532; Vranov on Topľou: 24/2,549.

In the entire Province (województwo), 4,951 sleeping sites are provided only for visitors wanting specific health treatment in spas. The number as indicated is divided as follows: 3,466 beds in Vysoké Tatry, 1,020 in Bardejovské Kúpele, and 465 in Vyšné Ružbachy. Sometimes, those special spa facilities with lodging are included into the general amount of all lodging facilities available to tourists.

There is also another potential lodging resource in this region consisting of holiday centers and private houses; the first one are owned and run by factories, undertakings, etc.

In the Žilina Province, during the winter tourist seasons, visitors and tourists are offered about 300 trails with ski rope-tow systems and cable cars; the majority of skiing sites/trails are equipped with snow making machines. There are 30 trails with ski rope-tow systems and 6 with cable cars and cable chairs; their overall people transportation yield is 24,300 persons/hr. The total length of the down-hill skiing trails being artificially covered with snow is 14,800 m. The most famous and regularly visited centers are: Jasná, Terchová-Vrátna, Jasenská dolina, Roháče-Spálená, etc. Many tourist centers need to be improved, extended, and quality of their services should be urgently updated and improved. In the Prešov Province, The High Tatra Mountains are a region in which the winter sports facilities infrastructure is the best. There are here 3 trails with cable cars, more than 60 trails with ski rope-tow systems, and 5 centers are able to provide artificial snow when it is needed.

Regarding the anticipated development of tourism in this province, it is urgent to design and set down some bicycle routes and to equip them with needed accouterment because bicycling is regarded as one of the most optimal forms of recreational interaction.

The entire region has a properly developed network of adequately marked foot-hiking trails.

3.2. Districts of high tourist traffic

In the Žilina Province, the district of Nižne Tatry (The Lower Tatra Mountains), namely Liptová, Vrátna Dolina, Orawa receive the highest number of tourists coming during one year. The very specific and ravishing geographical location of this province will allow for and encourage the intensification of international tourism. Poland, and specifically the Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Provinces, is the first country to greatly extend mutual co-operation in order to much better utilize tourist values of this region. As for the Prešov Province, the near-border powiats should enter into close co-operation, i.e. the powiats of: Poprad, Kežmarok, Stará Lubovňa, Bardejov, Svidník, Stropkov, Medzilaborce, and Snina.

The international tourist traffic of the region is characterized by a high rate of visitors and tourists coming from neighboring countries: Poland, The Czech Republic, Hungary, and The Ukraine. Regarding the Czech Republic, at the beginning, it was stated a certain drop in the amount of incoming tourists. Though, recently, the region seems to newly attract more and more Czech tourists, therefore, their total rises. It is noted that they also "return" to the districts where they frequently came to before the political transformation

(in The High Tatra Mountains: Bardejovské Kúpele and Spis). The rate of Ukrainian and Polish tourists tends to continually increase. The group of Polish tourists visiting this area consists mostly of the younger generation with children. For them, the local prices are fitting, and the geographical location attractive and feasible. At the same time, Poles are visitors who most regularly visit these districts.

In The High Tatra Mountains (the former Poprad powiat) is the most important tourist traffic district in the region under discussion. The assortment of tourists visiting it differs a lot if compared with other districts. The list of countries of origin of tourists visiting The High Tatras in 1996 starts with the Czech Republic (32%), next is Germany (24%), Poland (7.8%), Hungary (5.5%), Austria (4.7%), The Netherlands (3.6%), the Ukraine (2.7%), and at the end is Russia (2.5%).

What attracts local and foreign people and makes them coming to this part of the European continent all year round, are: countryside amenities, historical monuments of important historical and culture value, folk architecture and traditions, sporting, recreational and health resort potential. One of the key-destinations for many visitors, merely from abroad, are the very famous caves of Nižne Tatry (The Lower Tatras) (Demänovská jaskyňa Slobody, Demänovská ľadová jaskyňa, etc.). Folklore festivals such as Východná, Jánošíkove Days are evidence of the tradition still alive in this region.

Main areas where tourist and recreational traffic is extremely high, if not too high, are situated mostly in the mountains and forelands; here, conditions for mountain and alpine tourism, long lasting holidays and health treatment sojourns are the best, consequently, they encourage people to come. They include The High Tatra Mountains (first of all), The Western Tatras, Zamagurze and the Pieniny Range, Nižne Tatry, Malá Fatra, Beskidy, Javorniky, and Kubínska Magura. The other mountainous ranges are deemed a reserve for development of tourist traffic.

The most important tourist traffic and recreational centers are:

- in the High Tatras, a belt of intensely utilized and adequately equipped holiday centers and health resorts along the “The Freedom Route” (Podbanské, Štrbské Pleso, Polianky, Smokovce, Tatranská Lomnica, Ždiar); the Zamagurze and Pieniny Range district (Červený Kláštor). The next district is located in the small eastern part of the Nižne Tatry (Liptovská Teplička, Vernár), Levočské Vrchy (Novolubovnianske kúpele, Levočská dolina), Šarišská vrchovina (Lipovce, Dubovica, Renčišov), Čerhovské pohorie (Drienica-Lysá), Slánske vrchy (Sigord), Východné Beskydy (Polianka), Bukovské Vrchy (Daňova). Those recreational centers indicated are generally winter sports-oriented, and, thus, prepared adequately;
- in the Žilina Province, the key-centers of international esteem are: Terejová, Vrátna, Rajecké Teplice, Veľká Rača, Skalité, Martinské hole, Turčianske Teplice, Blatnica, Ružomberok-Skipark, Kubínska Hoľa, Oravský Podzámok, Trstená, Tvrdošín, Námestovo Lake, Slanická osada (settlement), Zuberec-Roháče, Oravice, Demänová-Jasna, Pribylina, Podbanské, Liptovský Trnovec, Liptovský Hrádok, Východná, Nižná, and Vyšná Boca.

4. Tourist exchange between Poland and Slovakia (*Projekt územného rozvoja... 2001, Target Study... 2001*)

4.1. Major destinations of Polish tourists visiting Slovakia

Based on the Slovak data from the year 1998, 5,608,000 Poles crossed the Polish-Slovak border through the border inspection stations. This number is 1,300,000 people greater if compared with 1997.

The tourist trips of Poles crossing the Polish-Slovak border inspection stations could be classified as follows:

- final destination trips heading to holiday-rest and recreational areas in Slovakia, including really short trips with the purpose of inexpensive purchases in Slovakia;
- tourist transit trips from Poland through Slovakia to other countries.

Major tourist trips to Slovakia are carried out through the following border inspection stations: Zwardoń-Myto, Korbielów, Chyżne, Łysa Polana, Piwniczna, Konieczna, and Barwinek.

The above indicated trips take place all year round, their peak times are:

- in the summer: to the High Tatras, Niżne Tatry, Mała Fatra (The Lesser Fatra), The Greater Fatra, Orawskie Lake, The Slovak Paradise, and The Eastern Carpathians;
- in the winter: to the High Tatras, the Lower Tatras (Chopok), The Lesser and the Greater Fatra.

The deciding factors attracting people from Poland to come to Slovakia are: nature, landscape, and culture amenities, excellent health spa values, favorable prices, adequate level of services, lots of tourist facilities, in particular trails with rope-tow systems for down-hill skiers and their relatively high yield (without long discouraging queues).

The tourist transit from Poland through Slovakia goes through the following border inspection stations: Chyżne, Łysa Polana, and Barwinek.

According to the Slovak estimations, the rate of Polish tourists visiting Slovakia places Poland in the third place behind the Czech Republic and Hungary.

4.2. Major destinations of Slovak tourists visiting Poland

The Slovak estimates referring to Slovak tourists visiting Poland indicate that in 1998, 3,109,700 people came as tourists to Poland (in 1997 their number was 50,000 smaller).

The predominating purpose of Slovaks trips to Poland is purchasing products in the market places and country bazaars of Jabłonka, Nowy Targ, etc. Moreover, part of the Slovak visitors to Poland visits their relatives and acquaintances permanently living in our country. Unfortunately, the Slovak sightseeing, recreational or sports tourist traffic in Poland is very small and insubstantial. The two main reason of this status quo are: on the one hand, high prices in Poland and insufficient supply of lodging and tourist facilities, and on the other hand, the fact that Slovakia has so many attractive, competitive tourist areas in its mountainous regions.

5. Tourism development in the entire region and its key problems (*Study.. SYNTHESIS, 2001*)

5.1 Transfrontier problems

The balance of the tourist exchange between Poland and Slovakia is negative, i.e. much more Poles visit Slovakia for tourist reasons if compared with Slovaks visiting Poland. The whole outgoing traffic from Poland to Slovakia also involves transit journeys of Poles to the South and South West of Europe. It is recommended that some actions should be taken in order to change this disadvantageous situation and to increase the number of Slovak people coming to Poland. However, the tourist service proposals in Poland are not at all competitive so far, and the prices charged are substantially too high. Tourism in Poland is hampered, to a high degree, by the inefficiency of present transportation and communication networks leading to border crossings. This statement refers in particular to main highways, which are generally used by heavy-load vehicles; the goods transportation and personal transportation simply conflicts each other in Poland.

Roads running to the main border crossings usually go through towns, cities, and other administrative settlements (communities), which is also regarded as a restriction to tourist travels. Of course, it is also a troublesome obstacle for local residents.

There exists no extended co-operation between neighboring communities (gminy) in the field of joint activities allowing for better tourist utilization of the transfrontier areas. Additionally, there are no appropriate legal regulations and organizational framework that could facilitate and stimulate the development of near-border co-operation between Poland and Slovakia, especially at the level of Euro-regions, powiats (counties), and gminy (communities).

Regional differences in quantitative and qualitative tourist management of the areas in Poland and Slovakia are very clear and distinctive. The Beskid Niski and Bieszczady Mountains regions in Poland and Slovakia are managed the worst from the tourist point of view.

There is a good and reasonable opportunity to connect Slovakia and Poland by recreational routes and by several thematic tourist routes with special nature, culture and historical amenities.

Each country insufficiently promotes and markets their tourist facilities and attractions.

Health resorts and medical treatment offered by Poles and Slovaks of these regions are characterized by the following deficiencies: there exists no co-operation between resorts lying close to the national borders, no exchange of people seeking treatment exists. The last but not least deficiency is to be attributed to the non-co-operation existing in the domain of exploiting transfrontier mineral water resources that are very often shared by resorts lying on both sides of the national border. Yet, the neighboring transfrontier communities endeavor to accomplish several projects and initiatives in order to solve all the problems and issues presented.

5.2. Domestic Polish problems

They comprise the problems indicated above as transfrontier problems. Specifically, there are spatial dissimilarities and disproportion of the tourist management, frequently occurring low standard and poor quality of services rendered, too high prices, and insufficient skills of tourist servicing personnel. Low quality of main roads is another essential problem, as is the fact that too many main roads go through populated areas (settlements, towns, etc.), although some of them are tourist terrain. Furthermore, some tourist localities have no sporting and/or recreational equipment.

5.3. Domestic Slovak problems

In the Slovak part of the transfrontier region studied, there are several regional/local insufficiencies with regard to tourist management, tourist services and engineering/technical infrastructure. Additionally, tourist traffic in winter is very high and reaches its peak times. The state sparsely supports tourism. Legal regulations contain lacunas. There is no law pertaining to or regulating regional development and tourist traffic. Lack of financial means to start investments badly affects to whole situation of tourism in this region.

6. Suggestions on how to solve problems (*Study... SYNTHESIS, 2001*)

Suggestions on how to solve transfrontier problems encountered in both countries and regions, and recommended for implementation at the national, regional, and local levels:

- high tourist, rest, recreational, and health resort values and qualities of the region should be legally protected; over-investing in tourist centers or tourist districts should be avoided because such disproportionate actions may result in decreasing the real values of the districts;
- transportation and communication connections (roads, foot pathways, bicycling ways, etc.) between Poland and Slovakia necessary to upkeep and enhance tourism should be further developed and expanded;
- near-border road systems should be created along the east-west axis, it could be also used for tourist purposes;
- joint Polish and Slovak actions should be initiated and performed in order to stimulate and facilitate tourist exchange, among other things, co-operation between “twin” tourist centers and health resorts should be started and developed;
- inter-community alliances, unions, etc. should be set up to promote and run complex tourist management of urban and rural conglomerates; this suggestion refers mainly to winter activities, facilities and organization of winter tourist sojourns to the districts;
- transfrontier sightseeing and culture-oriented tourist route/trail networks should be designed, established and equipped with necessary accouterment; their subjects and objectives should vary highly, for example: “Amber Route”, “Gothic Route”, “Wooden Architecture Route”, “War Cemeteries Route”;

- appropriate legal rules and organizational regulations should be agreed between the two states concerned, and upon their unification, they should be introduced and become in force; such legal rules and organizational regulations shall facilitate the development of the Polish and Slovak co-operation at the level of Euro-regions, powiaty, and gminy;
- promotional and tourist marketing policies and strategies should be developed and implemented;
- in the vicinity of the national border, several joint Polish-Slovak information and tourist traffic service sites/stations should be established;
- activities and projects indispensable for tourism and its development should be invented and implemented/accomplished in the field of culture heritage (protection and renovation of valuable historical monuments and artifacts), transportation infrastructure (construction of roads, their equipment, building new border crossings, etc.), and environmental protection (successively decreasing air and water contaminants, quantitative protection of water resources, organization of wastes management).

Suggestions on how to solve domestic Polish problems

- an interesting and attention attracting, irresistible tourist proposals for the Slovaks should be thoroughly developed and issued, on the basis of the results of the Slovak tourist market study;
- tourist and vacation spots and localities should be properly equipped with all indispensable and attractive tourist equipment and all kinds of tourist services, including those offering interesting entertainment activities after skiing and when weather is not inviting;
- the principle of separating pedestrian routes from vehicle roads in tourist spots/settlements should be widely followed and made a basic rule to be implemented in such spots; also, bicycle pathways and pedestrian pathways should be designed and constructed in those tourist localities;
- recreational tourist trails/routes as designed and schemed by the Carpathian Euro-Region institutions within this Euro-Region should be set up; they should also be continued outside the Carpathian Euro-Region;
- tourist development should be commenced and carried out in the district of Beskid Niski and Bieszczady Mountains;
- the transportation accessibility of tourist districts should be improved as should be the quality of the access roads to border inspection stations;
- actions should be scheduled and implemented to train personnel for serving tourism, this appears very necessary in the eastern part of the region under study;
- promotion strategies and tourist policies should be developed and distributed;
- tourist service standards and lodging facilities quality should be essentially improved;
- tourist service pricing should be fixed at a comparable level in the tourist districts along the border in both countries.

Suggestions on how to solve domestic Slovak problems

Apart from suggestions on how to solve transfrontier problems that should be transformed into practical actions performed by the two neighboring countries,

the Slovak sections of the *Study...* referred contain a few detailed records and reports appertaining to the transportation infrastructure, culture heritage, and tourist management in several Slovak localities.

Conclusions

For the further development of tourism in the Polish-Slovak transfrontier region, it is fundamental to implement and accomplish a series of joint actions and separate activities in each country. In many cases to conduct such actions and projects, it is necessary to develop and accomplish joint studies, investigations, detailed analyses and reports, and to complement legal rules in force. Monitoring of tourist traffic would be remarkably useful and, thus, much recommended; it should include supply and demand analyses. Data to be obtained would allow for properly adjusting and formulating the tourist offer. Especially, this statement refers to methods aiming at increasing the Slovak incoming tourist traffic in Poland, as well as the traffic services for the Poles in Slovakia. Tourist exchange among the Polish and Slovak health resorts contains high developmental potential, too.

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Turystyka w polsko-słowackim regionie transgranicznym

Streszczenie

W latach 1999-2001 dwa współpracujące ze sobą zespoły – polski i słowacki – opracowały *Studium kierunkowe zagospodarowania przestrzennego obszaru wzdłuż granicy polsko-słowackiej*. Polegało ono na określeniu celów rozwoju i kierunków działania. Prace w ramach *Studium...* skoncentrowano na identyfikacji tych elementów i cech zagospodarowania i funkcjonowania obszarów przygranicznych, które są i powinny być przedmiotem współpracy i stanowić szczególne uwarunkowania rozwoju regionu transgranicznego.

Przedmiotem analiz, ocen i koncepcji były: ludność, osadnictwo, ochrona przyrody, dziedzictwo kulturowe, infrastruktura transportowa, infrastruktura techniczna, zasoby wodne i gospodarka wodna, ochrona środowiska. Istotne miejsce w opracowaniu zajęły problemy turystyki i lecznictwa uzdrowiskowego. W wyniku tych badań określono m.in. zasięg regionu transgranicznego (pkt 1).

W artykule przedstawiono ramową charakterystykę turystyki w polskiej i słowackiej części regionu transgranicznego (pkt 2 i 3). Obszary przygraniczne – polskie i słowackie – są terenami górskimi i odznaczają się cennymi walorami turystyczno-uzdrowiskowymi, w tym przyrodniczymi, kulturowymi i krajobrazowymi. Warunki sprzyjają rozwojowi turystyki zarówno w sezonie letnim jak i zimowym. Region transgraniczny jest zagospodarowany dla turystyki, ale w sposób nierównomierny. Występują wyraźne rejony koncentracji zagospodarowania i ruchu turystycznego. Na granicy istnieją graniczne przejścia drogowe, kolejowe oraz piesze. W ruchu transgranicznym Słowacy przyjeżdżają do Polski głównie w celach handlowych, natomiast Polacy głównie w celach turystycznych, w tym dla wielu z nich Słowacja jest krajem tranzytowym w wyjazdach na południe i zachód Europy (pkt 4).

W ramach *Studium...* zidentyfikowano główne problemy rozwoju turystyki w regionie różnicując je na wspólne problemy transgraniczne oraz problemy wewnętrzne polskie i słowackie (pkt 5) oraz wskazano kierunki rozwiązania tych problemów (pkt 6).

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