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PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH RESORTS

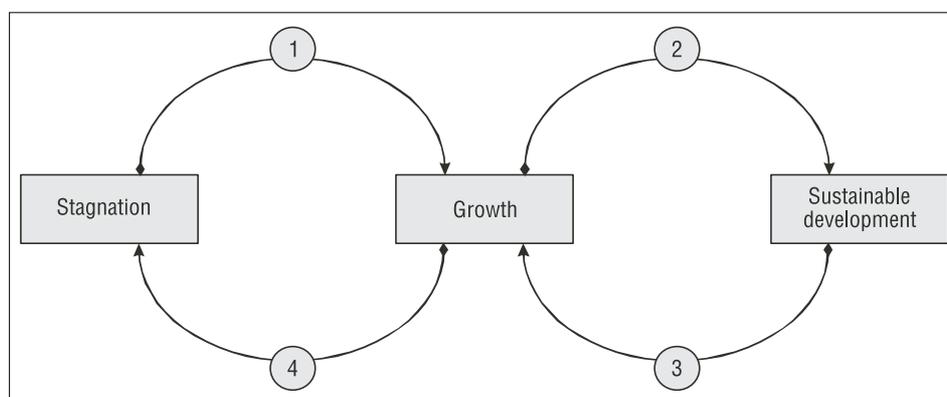
Abstract: the genesis of the idea of sustainable development and its significance in the modern world, as well as the developing concept of sustainable tourism in this respect; a place of health resorts and spa treatment in the tourist business; principles for sustainable development of towns and regions with a tourist and/or health resort function – general, as concerns environmental, social and economic aspects, and in practical application.

Key words: eco-development, sustainable development, health resorts, eco-tourism, sustainable tourism

1. The genesis of the idea of sustainable tourism and its application in the tourist business

The great dynamics of development processes in the period following World War II, caused by the need for restoration and development of modern technologies, resulted in serious threats to the human environment, putting many towns and regions in the face of ecological disaster. In the 1970s, strong tendencies appeared to counteract disharmonious development and search for new ideas and development paths.

According to the definition provided in the Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN (General Encyclopaedia, 1997), development is “a process of directed changes, in the course of which items turn from simpler and less perfect forms or statuses to forms or statuses that are more complex and more perfect in a certain aspect”. However, in the 20th century, development was very often understood as growth, in fact, in a quantitative rather than qualitative aspect. Development understood in this way was opposed to stagnation (decrease and decay) perceived as a highly negative phenomenon (Fig. 1). Such an approach resulted in the significant devastation of the environment, destroyed in the name and as a consequence of economic development perceived as the greatest benefit.



1 – development of selected elements of the structure, 2 – levelling disproportions, 3 – growing disproportions, 4 – vanishing of elements of the structure.

Fig. 1. Possible transformations of elements of the structure in the development process

Source: own study

In response to these tendencies, at the turn of the 1970s, the idea of eco-development was raised. In 1972, at a conference in Stockholm, the term was defined as “running all business activities in harmony with the environment and in such a way so as not to cause irreversible changes in the nature”. The principles of eco-development, in turn, were formulated three years later by UNEP – a UN agenda. Eco-development was also defined as a broadly understood social, economic and technical, as well as cultural, progress that respects the requirements of the natural environment (Zaufal, 1986).

Increasingly more often attention was drawn to the fact that although any problems associated with eco-development were of global character, their solution could be most effective at the regional level, on the basis of the protection of environmental and cultural values, as well as the involvement and invention of the inhabitants of a given region.

On the basis of the concept of eco-development, in the early 1970s, the idea of alternative tourism was born in Alpine countries (eco-tourism, also referred to as mild, green tourism, etc.), which was to counterpart the strongly commercialised mass tourism responsible for destroying the natural environment and, at the same time, isolating tourists from the reception areas visited (Drzewiecki, 1992). In the last two decades, this form of tourism developed intensively. Despite the lack of a universal definition, eco-tourism is characterised by the following features:

- tourists’ main motivation is to learn and appreciate both the local environment, as well as the culture and tradition of native people,
- it is drawn by education and explanation,
- it’s organised for small groups, with the significant participation of small, specialised, local tourist entities (as organisers),
- it minimises negative impact on the natural and socio-economic environment,

- it protects natural areas through: generating profit for entities managing protected areas, creating alternative job opportunities and revenue for local communities, improving awareness of the necessity to protect culture and nature, both among tourists and the host communities (WTO, [www¹](http://www.wto.org)).

Another step of the growing care for both our own quality of life and that of the following generations was the establishment of the idea of sustainable development. This term is no longer limited to the socio-economic progress concerning respect for nature, as in the case of eco-development, but is much broader. Sustainable development reflects the condition of the dynamic balance of the broadly understood environment and harmony of all aspects of human life (from environmental, through social and economic). It is a development that respects all relevant elements to an equal extent (the environment, as well as the economic, spatial and spiritual needs of people). The objective of all social, economic, as well as functional-and-spatial transformation processes should always be mutual balance. Therefore, sustainable development is characterised by a holistic approach, expressed through the integration of needs brought upon by various areas of life. Orłowska (1997) stresses here that the term sustainable development does indeed mean the effects of the course of many unequal transformation processes that contribute to the development of a complex, multi-level system. Thus it seems obvious that the dynamic analysis of the entire (particular system) may point to the need for unequal development of particular elements in time and space.

There are many definitions of sustainable development. The term was first used in a report by International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1980. However, it came into popular use only after the publication in 1987 of the report *Our Common Future* by The World Commission on Environment and Development (established by the UN)², under the supervision of Ms Brundtland. Sustainable development was defined therein as development in the process of which satisfying the needs of the modern generation will not limit the opportunities for satisfying the needs of following generations (Hunter, Green 1995). This very general definition gives rise to many developments – it points out that satisfying human needs and aspirations means equality/justice in accessing sources generating richness and the distribution of costs and benefits (social, political, and environmental), as a result of using such resources (Żabińska 2000). Nevertheless, the most popular definition of sustainable development stresses the holistic approach to the issue. According to this definition, sustainable development is where the preservation of the productivity in the long-term (for future generations) does not endanger the existence of significant natural systems, the conservation of cultural values and preservation of bio-variability.

In 1992, at the UN Conference titled “Environment and Development” in Rio de Janeiro, also referred to as the “Earth Summit”, representatives from over 150 countries (including Poland) signed a declaration on the implementation of principles for sustainable development in their countries (Earth Charter). The methods for

¹ www.world-tourism.org/omt/sustainb/eco2002.htm

² WCED – The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

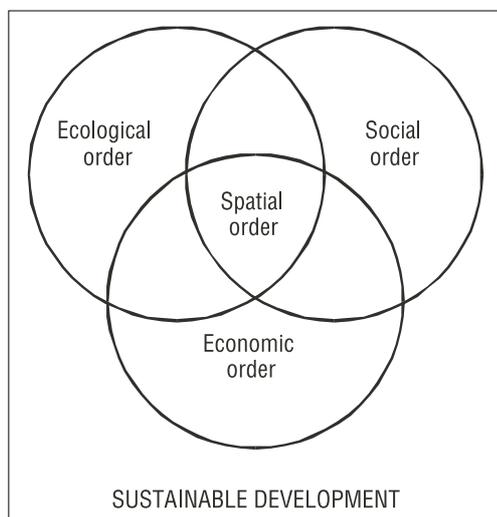


Fig. 2. Achievement of sustainable development through harmony of four orders: ecological, social, economic and spatial

Source: Kistowski M., Staszek W., 1999, *Poradnik do opracowania gminnego i powiatowego programu zrównoważonego rozwoju i ochrony środowiska*, Pomorski UW, Wydz. Ochr. Środ. i Rolnictwa, Gdańsk

changes, as well as *restoration*, or the elimination of damage and restoring distorted balance (Cremer and Eckert 1997, Council of Europe).

In Poland, provisions on the adoption of the sustainable development strategy are contained in many national documents, i.e. the Constitution, Spatial Management Law, and Environment Protection Law. Furthermore, Poland has signed a number of international conventions and declarations on environment protection, including a convention related to Agenda 21, and the Convention of Aarhus (1998) "on access to information, social participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental cases".

Following the adoption in 1992 of Agenda 21, when the objective of sustainable development was widely approved, an important need (presented already at the first meeting of Commission for Sustainable Development³) was to set standards for measuring its progress in the environmental, economic, cultural, as well as many other areas of human activity. What was required was a complex set of indices as measurement tools. According to Borys (2001), what is especially important for the Polish index system of monitoring

the preparation and implementation of national, regional, local and industrial sustainable development programmes were provided in a special programme document, "Agenda 21". Sustainable development was defined therein as an evolutionary process of structural changes, directed at the improvement of the quality of life of all creatures both today and in the future. The aim of such development is, simultaneously, the achievement of four types of order: ecological, social, economic, and spatial (Fig. 2).

Sustainable development should ensure the long-lasting preservation of natural resources (water, air, soil, and biological variety) through integrating environmental protection with other areas of life (economic, social, spatial). Its supreme objective is not to limit the opportunities of economic development for future generations (Stabler 1997). Sustainable development is not just *protection*, it is also *conservation*, caring for what exists and preventing negative

³ Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD)

sustainable development are the sets of rules adopted in: the World Charter of Nature (five rules), the Earth Charter (27 rules), the European Union (seven main principles), the national ecological policy II (12 principles) and the European network of cities with sustainable development (six principles – criteria).

The evolution of the concept of sustainable tourism occurred almost simultaneously with the evolution of the idea of sustainable development. Proposals for the application of the principles of sustainable development in the tourist industry appeared in world literature at the turn of the 1990s, mainly due to American authors (Krippendorf et al. 1988, Inskip 1991, Bramwell and Lane 1993, Goodall and Stabler 1994, Murphy 1994, Hunter and Green 1995). In 1988, the WTO (World Tourism Organization) defined principles for the development of sustainable tourism, clearly dividing them from the assumptions (ideas) of eco-tourism. Sustainable tourism should lead to the “management of all resources in such a way so as to satisfy economic, social and aesthetic needs, with simultaneous observation of cultural integrity, basic ecological processes, as well as biological variability and continuity” (WTO 1988; Tourism Canada 1990; Cremer and Eckert 1997, Council of Europe). While the term eco-tourism only refers to a certain segment of tourism, principles for sustainability should be applied in all forms and types of tourist activity, both conventional and alternative. Therefore, it is a mistake of some authors to identify the term *sustainable tourism* with eco-tourism.

2. Principles for the sustainable development of spas

Principles forming the basis for sustainable development of tourism may also be largely referred to the development of spas. On the one hand, these result from a broader trend of the general concept of sustainable development, referring to all regions and areas of economy, including spas and preventive measures or treatment offered there. On the other hand, spas form one type of tourist location and thus are subject to similar rules, which, however, require a more detailed specification.

C. Hunter (1997), referring to four main concepts in the interpretation of sustainable development, considering its position and characteristic features, enlists four possible approaches to tourism development (Tab. 1).

As for spas, the most appropriate approach seems to be approach No. 3 on the strong position of sustainable development and tourism oriented at the environment. Within this approach, when making decisions that shape the tourism system – the environment and its conditions become the supreme value. This points not only to development of the most appropriate forms of tourism for a particular area and/or division of the area into zones limiting access to certain places, but also harmonious co-operation with other economic sectors significant to the location, instead of competing with them and striving for the elimination thereof.

Another problem is the orientation on tourism development, presently existing in many communes and regions, perceived as a “miraculous” method for the sustainable development of every area and the quick solution of the economic problems of local communities. Tourism may indeed form a driving force for the economy of a particular region, yet it is necessary to observe appropriate proportions between tourism and other

Tab. 1. Concepts of tourism development according to Hunter

Tourism development	Position of sustainable tourism	Concept
Dominating tourism	very weak	anthropocentric and utilitarian, orientated on growth and exploitation of resources
Product orientated tourism	weak	anthropocentric and utilitarian, but resources protecting
Environment orientated tourism	strong	(eco)systems prospect, protection of natural resources
Hardly seen tourism	very strong	bioethical and eco-centric, minimal use of natural resources

Source: own study based on: Hunter C., 1997, Sustainable tourism as an Adaptive Paradigm, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4

forms of economic activity of the inhabitants (Strzembicki 2000), e.g. health resort function. Distorting such balance for the benefit of “mono-culture” of the tourist function, with the simultaneous limitation of specific economic forms for particular regions (often traditional and unique), as a consequence deprives the offer of relaxation in spas of many significant advantages and may, in turn, cause a change in the preferences of many hitherto fans of such tourism. Another dangerous factor is the interpretation of sustainable tourism where eco-tourism or alternative tourism are perceived as the only tools for managing the environment, merely assuming that these form a simple and effective method for solving the problem of tourism development in general (after Żabińska: Hunter and Green 1995, Kamieniecka 1996, Dąbrowski 1999).

In more detail, general principles for sustainable development of locations and regions performing tourist and/or health resort function may be defined as follows:

- securing environmental resources of spas (both environmental and cultural components) that form the basis for tourism development (Pigram 1990, Cater and Goodall 1992, Cater 1993), especially those precious for the development of health resort function (raw materials – mineral waters, gases and peloids, healing topo-climate, flora), against excessive use and destruction – avoidance of the long-term costs of ecological and cultural damage;
- sustainable use of natural, social and cultural resources that give meaning to long-term economic activities;
- allowing changes in the natural landscape of spas to the limits of the natural absorbance of the eco-system, as well as changes in local and regional culture (under the influence of tourism) in the scope enhancing the quality of life of the local community and not endangering its national and cultural identity⁴ (Strzembicki 2000);

⁴ the assumption of no changes to the traditional character of natural and cultural landscapes is unrealistic (Strzembicki 2000).

- sustaining and promoting environmental, social and cultural variability through increasing sensitivity concerning the conservation of such values, both globally and locally;
- encouraging and promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, in harmony with the nature (International Conference on Biodiversity and Tourism, Berlin, 1997), to which spas are specially predisposed.

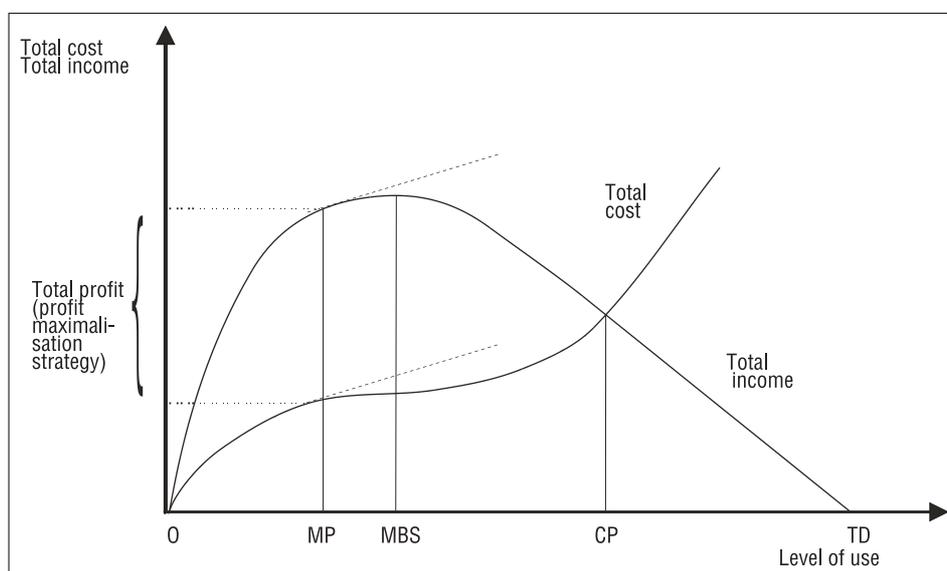
In the environmental aspect, principles of the sustainable development of locations and regions with tourist and/or health resort function are as follows:

- development of these functions achieved with the smaller consumption of non-renewable resources and less stress to the natural environment (Muller 1994);
- monitoring changes in the health resort environment;
 - the complementary, not substitutive, character of tourist and health resort locations as concerns natural resources;
 - respecting limitations resulting from environmental protection, or:– allowing for actions with a significant impact on the natural environment of spas, only in the case of a scientifically confirmed (evidenced) certainty that such activities will not bring negative effects,
 - utilising resources in such a way so as not to decrease the quality of environment to the set limits,
 - correcting any damages and levelling each loss in the environment of spas in line with the PP (“polluter pay”) principle.

Minimising costs of the consumption of environmental resources should be the fundamental criterion for evaluating the quality of decisions referring to the environment and its use. Otherwise, we will be dealing with bio-economic ineffectiveness (Steele 1995). The costs of consumption of environmental resources should also be taken into consideration as concerns economic loss and benefit analysis (Fig. 3). In turn, if there are any social benefits to the inhabitants of spas, not directly related to tourist or health resort services, they should also participate in the costs of the conservation of treatment and tourist values of the natural environment.

In the social aspect, sustainable development principles of locations and regions with tourist and/or health resort function indicate:

- satisfactory fulfilment of the needs of health resort patients and tourists, yet only in the manner leading to improvement of (quality) standards of the host community, both in the short and long terms;
- development of the tourist industry in spas, with the assumption that it will serve to render the stay of patients more attractive and to satisfy the needs of the host community;
- involvement of health resort local communities in the process of sustaining the development of towns;
- solving conflicts caused by conflicting interests through consulting all stakeholders;
- employment of the local community in tourism and health resort treatment, as well as complementary areas of economy, training;



MP – maximum profit, MBS – maximum benefits from sustainability condition, CP – critical point (total cost = total revenue), TD – total degradation of resources

Fig. 3. Bio-economic model of benefits resulting from sustainability condition as applied to tourist use of resources.

Source: Goodall B., Stabler M.J., 1997, Principles Influencing the Determination of Environmental Standards for Sustainable Tourism [in:] Tourism and sustainability, Stabler M. J. (red.), CAB International, Wallingford

- responsible marketing of tourist and health resort services and attractions (full, concrete and reliable information), leading to increased awareness of the community and improvement of economic effects of health resort operation;
- running regular opinion polls (patients, tourists and inhabitants).

In the economic aspect, sustainable development principles of locations and regions with tourist and/or health resort function are as follows:

- ensuring mutual benefits to all systems co-operating in tourist and health resort economy, both economic and social;
- supporting local health resort economy;
- effective use of the capacities of all facilities, including mainly accommodation and the gastronomic base; in practice this may indicate a decrease in reception capacity through discouraging the construction of large facilities for the benefit of small, more profitable ones (Strzembicki 2000);
- profitability of entities operating on a particular market, necessary for the development of the region. What is recommended is the significant support of the state in the implementation phase of sustainable development principles, especially

as regards ecological investments in the infrastructure and training system (Jędrzejczyk 1995);

- promoting sustainable production and consumption models, or establishment and offering such health resort and tourist product (service package) that would stimulates tourists' needs and motivations characteristic of sustainable tourism, i.e. change of the principle of the task (offer) subject to the needs of buyers, or the rule of the market, to the principle of searching for buyers for the product created in line with the concept of sustainable tourism (Strzembicki 2000).

From the economic point of view presented by Prof. Pajda (1997), the implementation of eco-tourism is brought down to the establishment of such economic system, which prefers selected areas of activity within the economic system, assuming operation towards sustainable development. Although such approach is definitely correct as concerns the economic aspect of the sustainable development of spas (and other locations), it seems too narrow and unsatisfactory for the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in general.

In practice, the above-cited principles of sustainable development of locations and regions with tourist and/or health resort function are brought down to the following (cf. Tab. 2):

- reduction in technologies and products that are unfriendly to the environment, as well as avoiding depletion of natural resources consumed by the former,
- limitation of vehicle access to selected areas (in the case of spas to Zone A), as well as activities leading to a decrease in the frequency of vehicle use by patients and tourists at a particular health resort – proposing other means of transport, such as bicycles, horses (carts), electrical-driven vehicles and organised walking tours. Apart from limiting traffic fumes and crowding on local roads, another effect is the opportunity for locals to gain additional profit (renting offices, organisation);
- offering patients and tourists an appropriate programme for spending their free time
 - promoting the concept of relaxation based on sustainable development principles;
- recognition of the limits of the capacity (absorbance) of various resources and health resort areas;
- reduction of the negative impact of tourism on the environment e.g. through controlling the low emission into the atmosphere and waste treatment, as well as encouraging environmentally friendly forms of tourist activity and transport;
- reduction in the quantity of waste and excessive consumption, e.g. through improving the management of potable water resources and recycling glass, metal, paper and plastic;
- integrating the development of tourism and health resort treatment with spatial management in order to evaluate the potential impact of new investments and resources gathered for such development;
- application of such (pro-ecological) management systems and strategies influencing the improvement of current local government activities (e.g. evaluation of benefits and damage to the environment);
- support and involvement of local entrepreneurs and investors in pro-ecological activities;

Tab. 2. Principles of sustainable lifestyle

Features\ Activities	Dwelling	Rest	Education	Mobility
Dematerialization	economical (optimum) use of space and materials *	experiencing and shaping instead of „consuming” *	interdisciplinary thinking	avail oneself of organizational opportunities (car sharing)
Naturalness	use of natural materials in constructions	contact with nature in its direct variability*	deepening ecological knowledge *	promotion of pedestrian (no motor-driven) accessibility*
Rate reduction	use of long-lasting household equipment	satisfaction instead of stress felt due to wasting of time *	education in groups *	spatial proximity not replaced by that of time *
Proximity	proximity of work place, shops schools, recreation areas	rather close to residential area than far of it *	teaching in the regional experience context	preferring close travel aims
Variability	flexible use of rooms *	recreation differentiated according the variable needs*	rather skills teaching than that of profession	promotion of various transport and ways of traffic
Identity	creating individual style and character of place *	self-supplying as the creative rest activity	individually planned education process	moving aims of individual mobility towards residential area
Creativity	establishing parks for active recreation *	safe rest and recreation	shaping consciousness and promoting creativity	developing individual mobility within the collectivity
Safety	planning of the dwelling zones free of noise*	safe rest and recreation	promotion of health consciousness*	safety more important than the speed*

Source: own study based on materials of the National Environment Protection Ministry of Austria, presented on meeting in Madrid, 1998.

- team actions – co-operation with local and regional authorities and institutions;
- establishment of an atmosphere among all participants to the process of co-accountability for the sustainable development of spas.
- limiting the development of another phenomenon of suburb development, apart from motorisation – extensive forms of spatial management consuming vast open areas,
- introducing the monitoring and measurement of the effectiveness of sustaining development using stable assessment criteria and parameters. This requires defining the parameters, which indicate the achievement of predefined tasks, and indices of improvement in the conditions of the environment – in the part dependent on tourist industry – should be applied or are appropriate (Goodall, Stabler 1997).

Unfortunately, present global mega-trends indicate that, apart from dynamically growing motorisation, increasing consumption of energy and raw materials, and the growing production of waste, we can also envisage a dynamic growth in urbanisation by 2010⁵.

All the processes cited above and the related growth of the pace of living, cause an increase in the level of attractiveness of areas that are particularly valuable on an environmental level (i.e. national parks and protected areas, including spas) and thus the growing number of visitors. This brings about uncontrolled changes in the natural environment. Most frequently, these involve damage to bio-variability (both quantitative and qualitative), air and water pollution, noise and crowding, as well as growing competitiveness in taking over decreasing (rare) resources (Stanners and Bourdeau 1995). Therefore, we cannot wait until damage to the environment, caused directly by tourist (health resort or other) activity, breaches the threshold of the irreversible. Tourist companies must change their operating method to a more environmentally friendly version. Those causing damage to the environment must bear not only restoration costs, but also those associated with the monitoring, which facilitates detection of threats and, thus, the earlier prevention of potential damage. The impact tourism has on the environment cannot be ignored. Generally, the PP principle should influence the cost of tourist and health resort services. This means that the value of a health resort product, or tourist product, should reflect the total social and environmental costs, including the costs of pollution elimination, resource usage, and costs of restoring degraded resources. Idealistically, the market price of a health resort (tourist) product should reflect the total costs of its creation and consumption.

Tourism, despite many efforts to improve its ecological image, is still an industry, which causes more problems to the natural environment than it solves. Many tourist activities still have a long way to go before attaining the sustainable level. It is necessary to transform tourism, pointing it in the direction of an industry globally responsible for the environment (Goodall 1996).

At the international scale, since 1991⁶, a growing understanding for sustainable tourism has been observed. In 1997, the UN Commission for Sustainable Development

⁵ UN conference in Istanbul of 1996 (final resolution).

⁶ WTTC - World Travel and Tourism Council.

(CSD) informed of a new international programme concerning sustainable tourism, oriented at practical action. The programme was to be prepared in co-operation with the WTO, UNEP and other institutions (Mirowski 2000). Despite this, there is still a great gap between theory and the resulting principles on the one hand, and practice on the other hand (Goodall, Stabler 1997). Therefore, the answer to the question of how to translate these principles into practice is one of the greater challenges for the modern world.

Conclusions

At the time of growing conflicts between economic development and the protection of the environmental values of a state or region, increasingly more attention is given to the necessity of sustainable development. In the background, an important issue not yet popular in literature involves principles of such sustainable development as regards health resorts. Already nowadays, special climatic and landscape requirements, as well as stress imposed on environmental protection, renders spas potentially the closest locations to the sustainability model. When formulating principles for their sustainable development, even more so than in the case of tourist locations, the protection of environmental values should be stressed, especially as concerns decisive values as concerns the existence of a health resort. Therefore, the principle of protecting natural healing resources and the local bio-climate is an absolute prerequisite, and all other activities should be subject to this fundamental principle. In the case of mountain spas, it is also important to observe the principles of protecting land against unjustified and uncontrolled changes in its configuration. Underestimating this principle when designing and erecting buildings enhances degradation of the natural flow of underground waters, threat to the quality and quantity of mineral waters, shifts in great masses of soil, as well as rapid and dangerous waves of mountain streams.

However, protecting natural resources is not all that needs to be done. Apart from their healing properties, it is also important to ensure harmony between the environment on the one hand, and spatial management and resort operation on the other. Such a principle of adjusting human actions with the requirements of natural resource protection becomes increasingly more important, considering the growing phenomenon of a wish to escape from the side effects of modern civilisation, such as crowding, noise, pollution, aggression, lack of safety. Spas, to a greater extent than other tourist locations, should ensure conditions contradicting these problems. Therefore, another principle for the sustainable development of health resorts is the establishment of conditions for reducing crowds of people and vehicles, noise and pollution, as well as ensuring broadly understood safety.

The principles cited above should be specified in detail in reference to the specific conditions of particular spas, remembering that the environment in which health resorts exist is usually the most valuable and, at the same time, the most prone to degradation.

Spas, increasingly more often enriched with tourist function, may soon become generators of sustainable development in tourism. However, the unskilled connection of treatment and tourist functions may result in conflicts, and even threaten the sustainable development of such locations.

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Zasady zrównoważonego rozwoju uzdrowisk

Streszczenie

Powstała na przełomie lat 60. i 70. idea ekorozwoju dała podstawę do narodzin koncepcji turystyki alternatywnej, w tym ekoturystyki, mającej być przeciwwagą dla silnie skomercjalizowanej turystyki masowej, niszczącej środowisko naturalne i jednocześnie izolującej turystów od odwiedzanych rejonów recepcyjnych. Kolejnym krokiem na drodze rosnącej troski o jakość życia zarówno naszą jak i przyszłych pokoleń było powstanie idei zrównoważonego rozwoju (sustainable development), na której gruncie prawie równolegle ewoluowała koncepcja turystyki zrównoważonej (sustainable tourism). Zasady jej rozwoju zostały wyraźnie oddzielone przez WTO od założeń ekoturystyki, odnoszącej się jedynie do pewnego segmentu w obrębie

turystyki. Uzdrowiska, stanowiące jeden z typów miejscowości turystycznych, podlegają zbliżonym jak one regułom, jednak z racji swojej specyfiki wymagają bardziej szczegółowej specyfikacji. Nawiązując do czterech głównych koncepcji rozwoju turystyki C. Hunter'a (1997), za najważniejsze dla miejscowości uzdrowiskowych uznano podejście o silnej pozycji zrównoważonego rozwoju i turystyce nastawionej na środowisko.

Ogólne zasady zrównoważonego rozwoju uzdrowisk to:

- zabezpieczanie zasobów środowiska (w tym terenów) przed nadmiernym wykorzystaniem i zniszczeniami, w tym:
- komplementarność, a nie substytucyjność obiektów turystycznych i uzdrowiskowych wobec zasobów naturalnych,
- respektowanie ograniczeń wynikających z ochrony środowiska oraz poprawianie każdej szkody i wyrównywanie każdej straty w środowisku;
- rozpoznawania granic pojemności (chłonności) różnych zasobów i terenów uzdrowisk;
- podtrzymywanie i promowanie przyrodniczej, społecznej i kulturowej różnorodności;
- dopuszczanie zmian regionalnej kultury nie zagrażającym jej tożsamości, a służącym poprawie jakości życia miejscowej ludności;
- sprzyjanie i promowanie zdrowego i aktywnego stylu życia;
- komplementarność usług turystycznych w stosunku do uzdrowiskowych;
- odpowiedzialny marketing usług i atrakcji turystycznych i uzdrowiskowych;
- kształtowanie potrzeb kuracjuszy i turystów zgodnych z ideą zrównoważonego rozwoju w miejsce zaspokajania wykreowanego nadmiernego konsumpcjonizmu;
- integrowanie rozwoju turystyki i lecznictwa uzdrowiskowego z gospodarką przestrzenną;
- działania zespołowe – tworzenie klimatu współodpowiedzialności;
- zapewnienie odwiedzającym poczucia bezpieczeństwa;
- tworzenie warunków dla redukcji zatłoczenia ludzi i pojazdów oraz hałasu, m.in. poprzez ograniczenia dostępności samochodem do wybranych obszarów;
- zapewnienie wzajemnych korzyści wszystkim współdziałającym w gospodarce turystycznej i uzdrowiskowej układom, zarówno gospodarczym, jak i społecznym;
- wspieranie lokalnej gospodarki uzdrowisk;
- efektywne wykorzystanie pojemności wszystkich obiektów i urządzeń, w tym głównie bazy noclegowej i gastronomicznej.

Osobnym problemem jest istniejące obecnie w wielu gminach i regionach zorientowanie na rozwój turystyki, postrzeganej jako „cudowny” sposób na zrównoważony rozwój każdego obszaru i szybkie rozwiązanie problemów ekonomicznych lokalnych społeczności.

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