

## Country Profile

March 2014

### Social Tourism in Poland

By the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland

#### Why social tourism?

The development of social tourism in Poland is conditioned by a few factors. These consist, e.g. in the growth of real average income of Polish citizens, but also their structure in the income groups. An important factor for the development of various forms of social tourism is also the change of Polish society's behaviour in the time off. A constant growth of one day, often a few hour trips (e.g. to the shopping malls, eateries, etc.) at the expense of lowering the number of weekend trips is observed. Among the latter, the interest (especially of young people) in trips to "second homes" is growing.

It seems that the factor speaking in favour of the possible increase of interest in social tourism in the future, and especially the increase of interest in activity in non-governmental organisations, is the increase in general activity, especially among young people (after the determined decrease of this activity in the 90s).

#### Non – governmental organisations

A number of non-governmental organisations of long-term traditions that propagate tourism and have substantive and staff experience and material resources are active in Poland. Organisations with established and expanded structures, working on the area of the whole country, represent the dominant potential for the development for social tourism.

While organising the trips (often carried out as a form of statutory activity) a number of non-governmental organisations use financial support from the public administration authorities. In practice, every authority of state administration has in its budget items that enable funding of specified actions of non-governmental organisations.

Among the non-governmental organisations, acting in the field of tourism, it is impossible not to mention: Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK), Polish Youth Hostel

Association (PTSM), Polish Camping and Caravanning Federation (PFCC), Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP), The Scouting Association of The Republic of Poland (ZHR), Association of Recreational and Tourist Facilities Administrators (Polish: *Stowarzyszenie Zarządców Obiektów Rekreacyjno-Turystycznych, SZORT*) or Polish Federation for Rural Tourism "Gospodarstwa Gościnne". These organisations undertake many initiatives supporting the participation in tourism and leisure of social groups with lower material status, taking special care of young and school children. Each year their activity translates into different tourism and leisure events for the economically weakest social groups, mainly for young and school children.

Also tourism entrepreneurs give discounts, even up to 20%, for leisure organised by these organisations in the off-season period.

Many other associations and foundations, which also promote tourism function and are being set up around the social tourism core (non-governmental tourism organisations). For many of them, it is a supplementary activity. The dominant subgroups among them include organisations connected with religious or sport associations, and entities targeted for specified social groups. They try and organise leisure and tourism trips with the lowest possible costs for the selected recipients. Special mention should go to the activity of Caritas Polska and Ogólnopolska Akcja Caritas, which organise trips both in the summer and winter season for young and school children from very poor, pathological or one-parent families.

### **Company's Social Security Fund**

Employers form a significant pillar of the development of the social tourism in Poland as they are obliged to create a Company's Social Security Fund. It is a special Fund created by the employers which is aimed at social financing for persons authorised to use the Fund and co-financing the company's social facilities.

The Fund is established by the employers, hiring at least twenty employees in full-time equivalent, according to the status from 1 January of a given year. The employer hiring at least twenty employees, who does not create the Fund, pays for the leave benefits.

## **Self-governmental level**

On the self-governmental level, not only the effects of social assistance are redistributed, but most of all, there exists a material capital in the form of space and infrastructure, which may be used for the purposes of social tourism development, thereby generating measurable effects for the local community, for example in the form of jobs.

## **Governmental level**

The support on the interdepartmental level is mostly targeted on the development of leisure for young and school children. The tasks from this area are mainly implemented by four ministries: Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland. Also older and disabled people are in the line of sight, especially for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The total amount of resources transferred by those departments, annually exceeds PLN 100 million.

The most universal solution, out of the ones used in the EU, for common usage in Poland seems to be the tourism voucher system, but the introduction of such solution is closely connected with the state of public funds and the possibilities of the state budget.

## **Tourism in the economy**

- The estimated share of Polish tourism economy in GDP amounted to 6% in 2012.
- Total tourism economy was estimated in 2012 at 96.4 bn PLN (ca. 23.06 bn EUR).
- According to date from 2012, 27,9% of all senior citizens over the age of 60 are participating in holiday activities.
- In 2012, 92,1% of youth between 15-19 travelled domestically or abroad.
- In 2012 in accommodation and catering services the average employment was estimated at 173,6 thousands, which was 2% of total average employment in Poland.