Tourism Development Programme until 2020

On 18 August 2015, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution approving the Tourism Development Programme until 2020.

Tourism is an important sector of the Polish economy. The contribution of the tourism economy to Poland’s GDP remains at the level of 5-6%. The sector employs approximately 760 thousand people (4.7% of the total workforce), of which approximately 170-200 thousand are employed in the accommodation and catering services. Annual receipts from international arrivals to Poland amount to EUR 8-9 billion, of which approx. 50% are receipts from inbound tourism.

The tourism economy may significantly contribute to improving the economic, territorial and social cohesion of Poland. Sustainable development of high-quality tourism is among the European Union’s priority development directions. This raises the challenge of strengthening the economic and social potential conducive to the growth of the tourism sector, as an element of increasing economic competitiveness of European regions. Tourism is a factor that contributes to economic diversification and generates demand for highly-skilled human resources, innovative services, modern management tools (including Information and Communication Technologies - ICT) and research and analysis projects supporting sustainable economic development through tourism. All this creates new possibilities of approaching tourism development as a part of regional policy, indispensable for strengthening the competitiveness of individual territories.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to develop a proactive and comprehensive programme of tourism development, constituting a part of the overall development policy and coordinated by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The programme will make it possible to reduce the fragmentation of the tourism market by adopting an integrated approach to supporting the tourism economy. This will be achieved through focusing on specific tourism products and services, both in urban and rural areas. The programme will enhance innovativeness and creativity of the tourism sector by stronger involvement of representatives of the industry (in particular, SMEs), local government units, and tourist sector associations and organisations. In this modern approach, priority will be given to tourism policy instruments and solutions that foster employment growth and facilitate cooperation between businesses and their environment based on a network model of sharing economic resources and strengthening regional growth potentials. Such measures should build on uniform principles of cross-cutting support to tourism, based on modern qualitative and strategic criteria. The programme will set
a new framework for the development and support of tourism as a part of Poland’s modern national economy.

The objectives of the new tourism development framework until 2020 take into account the following aspects:

1. The *Europe 2020* strategy changes the European Union’s approach to tourism, considering it to be an area of competitiveness of EU enterprises;

2. The perception of tourism as a competitive and innovative sector of the European Union economy means that tourism development is regarded to be a cross-cutting area related to other EU policy areas such as free movement of people, goods and services, small and medium-sized enterprises, consumer protection, environmental protection and counteracting climate change, as well as regional policy;

3. Thanks to the new approach, tourism is perceived as a factor increasing territorial cohesion and boosting regional development. The European Union provides a framework conducive to economic development and, through the exchange of good practices, facilitates cooperation between Member States in this field;

4. Within the European Union structures, tourism is coordinated by Directorate General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission. This is related to the fact that European policy closely associates the support for tourism with the development of entrepreneurship. This approach should also be reflected in relevant Polish strategic documents and in Poland’s cohesion policy programming documents for the period 2014-2020;

5. The process of tourism development needs to rely on the region’s potentials and resources as the basis for economic revival of individual territories through the use of modern tools providing support to entities, enterprises and institutions from various sectors (economic recovery and regional product specialisation of individual areas);

6. Tourism and tourism policy need to be more closely related to the processes of revitalization of cities and urban space development;

7. The use of natural resources and landscape values, resulting from increased activity of rural areas will, to a large extent, provide a basis for the development of sustainable tourism (agritourism and new forms of activity in rural areas);

8. Strengthening the economic significance of tourism should be achieved also through the promotion of tourism as part of the European economy;

9. Tourism is an area generating regional specialisations based on regional resources and infrastructure, regional products, cooperation and innovation networks, and product and technology chains;
10. The new tourism policy requires also the strengthening of human resources for tourism and the increase of management competences and skills of the sector’s leaders, organisers and service providers, inter alia through providing access for entrepreneurs and tour operators to knowledge and tourist service certification and standardisation systems. The activities in this area should be developed through modern ICT tools and platforms and through access to programmes improving the skills and competences of tour operators.

11. The main pillars of the new approach to the development of tourism should be as follows:

- strengthening the competences and quality in the tourism sector,
- improved cooperation in the promotion of Polish tourism’s priority product areas and the exchange of good practices,
- development and use of modern ICT tools for tourism businesses, and the implementation of modern e-service initiatives and projects in tourism,
- development of integrated tourism development networks covering different actors involved in improving the competitiveness of the tourism economy (entrepreneurs, business environment organisations, research entities, financial institutions); this will entail the establishment of stronger inter-sectoral connections of tourism and increase its economic impact.