

CROSS-BORDER TOURISM IN THE NISA EUROREGION – THE CZECH REPUBLIC TERRITORY

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Abstract

The article deals with the issue of cross-border tourism in the Nisa Euroregion with a special focus on the part of the Nisa Euroregion situated in the Liberec region. It covers SWOT analysis of cross-border tourism in the Liberec region. It refers to strategic documents governing the tourism in the Czech Republic and the Liberec region in the period 2007 – 2013. The article points to the importance of the destination management for individual areas of tourism and the necessity of uniform promotion, marketing, joint product packages and the establishment of tourism networks in the Czech-Polish-German border zone region. The article further states numbers of visitors in the Liberec region during 2011 especially from Poland and Germany.

Introduction

The impact of tourism on economy significantly differs in various countries and is reflected in multiple areas. To estimate this impact, various perspectives are used. For instance we recognize the impact on the country balance of payments, on the gross domestic product (GDP) or on the rate of employment.

Tourism is not an economically and statistically closed sector captured by a set of predicative economic indicators, but rather a complex of various functions and activities of people interfering and penetrating into multiple economical branches in varying degrees.

With regard to cross-border cooperation the tourism in the border zone is classified based on several criteria. This kind of tourism is mainly based on the social-psychological aspects with prevailing motivation to participate, for example, in recreational tourism, cultural-educational tours, travelling aimed at exploration of the beauties of nature, etc. Tourism in border zones is also diversified by the age of people involved to tourism, of children and youth, tourism of the economically active population and tourism of senior citizens. Based on the number of participants, it is further divided into individual and group tourism. With regard to aspects of stay, tourism may be classified as urban, rural and spa tourism. Considering the duration of stay, tourism can be short-term or long-term. With regard to the organization of travelling and stay itself, we have organized and unorganized tourism. Based on the method of financing, we recognize commercial (free) and social (bound) tourism. But tourism may be also diversified on the basis of season, type of accommodation, and transport means used. We also have tourism focused on non-public places. From the balance point of view, we recognize tourism by place of realization – domestic, foreign and international tourism, tourism realized in the border zone or in the Euroregion.

1 Czech-Polish-German border zone region

The Liberec region is adjacent to the territory of the Republic of Poland and also to the Free State of Saxony, all together representing a border zone region.

A significant tool for the development of the Czech-Polish-German cross-border cooperation was the creation of Euroregions. In our region we have the Nisa – NYSA Euroregion established in 1991 as the Euroregion of Czech-Polish-German cooperation. Since the nineties of the last century, continuous support had been provided to the Czech-Polish-German cross-border cooperation through the CREDO program and the pre-entry programme called Phare (OBC - cross-border cooperation programme). As soon as the Czech Republic joined the EU, this programme was transformed to the initiative of the Association INTERREG IIIA Czech Republic - Poland 2004 – 2006 and the Association INTERREG IIIA Czech Republic - Free State of Saxony 2004 – 2006. In the current programme period, the support is provided through the Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007 – 2013 and the Operational Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Free State of Saxony - Czech Republic 2007 – 2013.

The Nisa Euroregion is the initiator of the cooperation amongst regions in the border zone. It is a voluntary partnership of towns and municipalities. In the Czech part, it covers the area of three regions. Most of the towns and municipalities involved are situated in the Liberec region. In particular, there are 32 municipalities from the district of Česká Lípa, 26 municipalities from the district of Jablonec nad Nisou, 52 from the district of Liberec and 16 from the district of Semily.

The Nisa Euroregion provides a wide range of activities both for mountain and rural tourism. As one of the first Euroregions, it supports the development of “sustainable tourism”. It makes the best of the joint presentation, “Tourism in the Euroregion”, which is a website offering information on castles, chateaux, bike trails and interesting events. In the Euroregion, we also have a programme called “Joint Holiday Region” with a wide range of links to cultural enjoyment (museums, popular architecture, gardens and parks, religious and secular relics, cyclotourism, festivities and also the famous product of tourism called Severní Hřebenovka (a multifunctional tourism artery of the Nisa Euroregion; the main advantage of that is the establishment of three parallel tracks for pedestrians, bikers and skiers).

2 Strategic planning of tourism development

The development of tourism associated with border zone cooperation is affected by a wide range of strategic and operational documents developed at the level of municipalities, regions and governments. These strategic documents have been prepared for the period 2007 – 2013. According to these documents, the Czech Republic tourism should be aimed at the cultural tourism, natural recreation and sports, spa tourism, congress and incentive tourism. The main goal is to extend the average duration of stay of foreign visitors, to increase the number of domestic visitors and to boost the tourism out of the main season.

The development of tourism in the Czech Republic is also impacted by various conceptual documents, such as the Conception of the Czech Republic Tourism Policy for the period 2007 – 2013; the Consolidated Plan for Support of Tourism for the period 2010 – 2011; the State Programme for the Protection of the Czech Republic’s Nature and Landscape; the State Environmental Policy and Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic.

3 Strategic planning of tourism development in the Liberec region and the management of tourism

In the Liberec region, the development of tourism is managed by the Regional Authority, the Department of Culture and Monument Preservation and the Section of Tourism.

In the Liberec region, the key organization for the area of tourism is the Association for the Development of Tourism in the Liberec Region. At the lower regional level, there are four organizations aimed at tourism, representing the natural tourism regions – the Czech Paradise, the Krkonoše (Giant) Mountains, the Jizera Mountains and the Česká Lípa region. The network of tourist information centers (TIC) in the Liberec region covers 53 centers. The support of the local TIC activities is, however, still very low. Financial means provided for their financing are insufficient.

In the Liberec Region Development Programme for 2007 – 2013, several measures were adopted in order to improve the situation in the organizational structure of tourism and human resources. The goals and measures include the extension, interconnection and improvement of quality of services provided by the network of tourism organizations at local, regional and supra-regional levels; improvement of quality, coordination and realization of tourism products, programmes and projects at local, regional and supra-regional levels; improvement of qualification and education of human resources in the field of tourism; improvement of navigation and information systems in the field of tourism, including interconnection with the national and international network; improvement of coordination for drafting of strategic documents.

The problem of further development of tourism in the area of the Liberec region is dealt with in the Liberec Region Development Programme for 2007 - 2013, being regularly updated. Currently, the update for the period 2014 - 2020 is in the process of preparation.

Other strategic and conceptual documents aimed at tourism cover the Programme for the Development of Cycling in the Liberec Region for 2008 – 2013 and the Tourism Marketing Conception.

4 Tourism projects in the Liberec region

The Regional Authority of the Liberec region is involved in multiple operational programmes. Especially in the Regional Operational Programme, the CR Integrated Project, the Tourism Marketing Project and the Objective 3 for Support of Cross-Border Cooperation 2007 - 2013 between the Free State of Saxony and the Czech Republic (covering also the project of Severní Hřebenovka).

4.1 Small Projects Fund of the Nisa Euroregion

From the Small Projects Fund of the Nisa Euroregion, two projects were realized in 2012 – View towers in the Nisa Euroregion and Euroregiontour 2012. Recently the Regional Authority submitted another project called “Aristocracy as the project of ERN tourism”. If approved, the project will be implemented in 2013.

4.1.1 View towers in the Nisa Euroregion

Within the scope of this project, information about 44 accessible view towers in the Czech and German part of the Nisa Euroregion were compiled, all situated in the territory of the Liberec region and the district of Žhořelec. For each view tower, the services available were listed as well as the accessories/furnishing. A guide was issued for this purpose showing these data in the form of schematic pictograms.

4.1.2 Euroregion Tour 2012

From March 22nd to 24th, 2012 the 12th year of the largest tourism fair in Northern Bohemia and the selling exhibition of regional products was held on the premises of the Eurocenter in Jablonec nad Nisou. The fair was organized by the Liberec region in cooperation with statutory towns Jablonec nad Nisou and Liberec, the District Economy Chamber and the Eurocenter in Jablonec nad Nisou.

5 Destination management

The development of tourism in border zone regions has its specifics. In general the term destination means a territory having all presumptions for the development in the field of tourism. It has an adequately developed infrastructure, enough attractive places, services and interconnecting links. Destinations may be natural resorts, areas with specific products of tourism as well as towns with historical monuments or technical attractions. Destination may also be a target area in the particular region with a significant offer of attractions and tourism infrastructure. In larger sense, destinations may be countries, regions, settlements and other areas made typical by a large concentration of attractions for tourists, developed services and good infrastructure, resulting in an extensive and long-term concentration of visitors. Destination management represents a strategic approach to the development of destinations. It represents a group of methods and tools used for planning and directing the tourism activities to the relevant destination. A main presumption for destination management success is the sharing of a joint vision amongst the key parties involved.

5.1 Destination management SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis aimed at the destination management revealed the following strengths: attractiveness of natural and cultural-historical sights/monuments; weaknesses: insufficient supply of products, low quality of services provided, weakly developed tourist infrastructure in some places, concentration of tourism in few centers; opportunities: development of regional cooperation including cross-border relations, use of financial means from structural funds, development of rural tourism and the related branches; threats: conflict between the effort to protect the sights and their economization, preference of other development goals by state authority bodies, existence of external risks.

5.2 SWOT analysis of tourism in the border zone region

The author of the article prepared the SWOT analysis of the Liberec region tourism with a special focus on the border zone region.

The key strengths of the tourism cover: advantageous position of the region at the boundary of three countries; attractive tourist environment (mountains, nature, sights, folklore); no language barrier with the immediate neighbor - Poland; close distance between the Czech and Polish markets; technical attractions, historical sights in Poland and Germany, existence of tourist information centers; possibility of recreation both in the summer and winter season; system of clear identification of tourist tracks all over the Liberec region; traditional social and cultural events; organizing of some traditional cultural and sporting events across the borders; already existing projects of cross-border (border zone) cooperation.

Tourism weaknesses are: non-existing joint promotion of destinations (Poland, Czech Republic, Germany); no interconnection of information through information centers in all areas of joint territory; non-uniform promotion of joint destinations; absence of complex products of tourism; lack of supporting services in the tourism centers.

The tourism opportunities mentioned are: development of winter and summer tourism with regard to the natural potential; good preconditions for the development of rural tourism - accommodation facilities in rural areas; extension of the supply of regional products, traditional crafts and folk arts; use of financial means from EU funds; improvement of tourists' awareness of attractive places and tourism infrastructure; improvement of joint destination promotion; interest of domestic and foreign investors to participate in the tourism; increase of job opportunities, more extensive cooperation within border zone regions (Poland, Czech Republic, Germany).

The main threats in tourism are: efflux of educated young and qualified people to address offers by other regions; efflux of demand due to insufficient quality of services; non-existence of coordinated (uniform) approach to organization and cooperation aimed at the support of tourism in the joint destination; often individual interests of municipalities in the field of tourism development; prevailing interests in other branches of industry.

6 Education

Education of people engaged in the tourism must be assured already within the framework of studies at secondary schools, higher vocational schools and especially at universities. In the Liberec region there are 7 secondary schools preparing students for tourism and hotel management (the Business Academy, the Hotel School and Secondary Vocational School in Turnov; the Secondary Vocational School and Training College in Česká Lípa; the Secondary School of Crafts and Services in Jablonec nad Nisou; the Secondary School of Gastronomy and Services in Liberec; the Secondary school in Lomnice nad Popelkou; the Secondary School of Farming and Forestry in Frýdlant; the Secondary Vocational School in Liberec. In the Liberec region there is also the Higher Vocational School of International Trade and the Business Academy with a special programme aimed at tourism. In the Technical University of Liberec, Faculty of Economics, lectures aimed at tourism may also be attended (studying field of tourism economics).

7 Development of tourism services

Border zone areas are clearly affected by rather short-term cross-border tourism, such as business trips, commuting to employment, visits of relatives or friends, participation in cultural and social events, transit transport, use of transport means across the borders, etc. On the Czech side, we can still see some forms of quasi-tourism, such as shopping tourism.

Information centers in border zones should provide information in multiple languages, especially in German and Polish languages. Integrated information systems should be shared by key entities in the relevant destination and should offer a wide range of on-line and free information on attractive places/sights in the area, accommodation/boarding capacities/facilities, cultural, social and sports events etc. They should also allow for booking of the services.

The border zone regions should proceed hand in hand with regard to marketing campaigns. They should create joint promotion materials to support the tourism and have shared presentation displays at tourism fairs.

7.1 Development of services in the Liberec region

The professional level of human resources engaged in the field of tourism in the Liberec region is often lower than average. This is reflected in the insufficient level of services provided, in mutual cooperation, sharing of information and experiences. Also, the skilled and qualified tourism managers are missing (especially at the regional and local level) those who

would take care of conceptual activities in the field of public administration - towns and tourist centers.

8 Tourism infrastructure in the Liberec region

The basic infrastructure especially consists of accommodation facilities (there were 756 of them in the Liberec region as of 1.1.2012). There are 417 hotels and guest houses at the moment. Visitors may use 36,553 beds, 12,232 rooms, 2,936 places for caravans and tents.

As shown in the following Tab. 1, the number of accommodation facilities decreased by 161 from 2006 to 2011. Also, the number of beds decreased accordingly (by 4,115). The number of domestic guests decreased by 146,267 in the period from 2006 to 2011 and the number of foreign visitors decreased by 97,337. The number of overnight stays decreased by 660,017 compared to the situation in 2006.

Tab. 1: Attendance of the Liberec region in the period 2006 – 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Hotels	917	895	890	835	777	756
Beds	40 668	39 927	42 155	41 503	37 976	36 553
Guests	802 499	709 225	703 787	652 987	632 568	656 232
Non-residents	243 166	211 999	200 664	165 482	148 269	145 829
Overnight stays	2 809 907	2 530 537	2 433 746	2 344 293	2 206 479	2 149 890

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistic Office) 2006 - 2011

The vast majority of foreign visitors in 2011 came from Germany (75,031), Poland (17,961), the Netherlands (10,113), Slovakia (6,158), Denmark (4,668) and Russia (3,341).

8.1 Development of tourism-related infrastructure in the Liberec region

The demand for actively spent holidays has been growing constantly. This calls for a wide offer of special equipment and gear required (rental places, special communication etc.). Therefore, pedestrian and tourist tracks, biking trails, educative tracks, hippo-tracks as well as cross-country skiing tracks are developed together with relaxation stations, picnic places, shelters, benches, information and map boards.

In the border zone, the development of the tourism-related infrastructure is quite on the agenda. Facilities for active spending of leisure time, such as skiing complexes with social facilities, premises for keeping skis, production of technical snow, night lighting, etc. have been developed or modernized. There are also adrenaline centers aimed at water sports, bowling and squash halls, minigolf courses and tennis courts, wellness centers, new view towers, but also facilities for hippo-tourism.

The Liberec region covers tracks for pedestrians (2,868 km), cycling trails (2,226 km), cycling tracks (50 km), hippo-tracks (7 km), in-line trails (20 km) and tracks for some non-traditional types of tourism (18 km).

9 Development of tourism products

While developing new products of tourism, several criteria must be taken into consideration. Firstly, we must consider how the product will contribute to sustainability of tourism in the region - whether it is not in conflict with the protection of the natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, such products should be developed that support the attendance out of the main season, help to develop ecotourism, etc.

Every year the Regional Authority of the Liberec region announces the core topic. In 2012, it was “Fragile Beauty, Brilliant Taste - Glass, Jewelry and Beer”. For 2013, there will be two topics: French nobility and Ještěd, castles, castle ruins and technical attractions.

9.1 Fragile beauty, brilliant taste – glass, jewelry and beer

For the year 2012, the Liberec region selected the following motto for the presentation of tourism: “Liberec Region – Fragile Beauty, Brilliant Taste”, proving that the traditions such as the glass-making industry, the manufacture of jewelry or brewing of beer are still alive. The great finale of this theme was the exhibition entitled “Fragile Beauty, Brilliant Taste” in the period from August 24th to 26th, 2012 in the Eurocenter, Jablonec nad Nisou.

9.2 French nobility

In the past, the territory of the Liberec region was the home of representatives of prominent noble families coming from France. In 2013, the Regional Authority of the Liberec region will focus on multiple events in various parts of the region, especially castles and chateaux, where the French nobility lived.

9.3 Ještěd – castles, chateaux, castle ruins and technical sights

For the year 2013, the Liberec region is preparing a new brochure to introduce castles, chateaux and castle ruins in the territory of the Liberec region and the related areas of tourism, such as the Jizera mountains, the Česká Lípa region, the Czech Paradise, and the Krkonoše (Giant) Mountains.

10 Establishment of cross-border networks in tourism

Networks represent a special form of spatial organization of tourism. They especially cover so called business networks, such as networks of accommodation or boarding facilities. Entrepreneurs involved in the network access the market in a coordinated manner. With their joint proceeding, they may get better conditions for their businesses. In tourism, we also have networks of public entities, such as municipalities, micro-regions, operators and administrators of attractive places for tourism - national parks, cultural sights, etc.

Conclusion

Tourism represents a branch where the most job opportunities are created, especially in the area of small and medium-sized undertakings. Tourism contributes to the generation of gross domestic product in border zone regions, stimulates private and public investments and affects the revenues of municipal and regional budgets.

The existing amount of tourism could be, however, much bigger if the quality of services provided were improved and the facilities for tourism were used evenly throughout the year.

The Liberec region, as a border zone, is closely linked to the border zone in the Republic of Poland and the Free State of Saxony. Despite the fact that the Nisa Euroregion, established in 1999, has been developed quite significantly in the area of joint tourism, there is still much to be done and plenty of things to improve with regard to shared promotion, marketing, tourism products, networks, etc.

Literature

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PŘESHraničNÍ CESTOVNÍ RUCH V EUROREGIONU NISA – NA ÚZEMÍ ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY

Příspěvek se zabývá problematikou příhraničního cestovního ruchu v Euroregionu Nisa se zaměřením na tu část, která se nachází v Libereckém kraji. Obsahuje SWOT analýzu příhraničního cestovního ruchu v Libereckém kraji. Poukazuje na strategické dokumenty, kterými se řídí cestovní ruch v České republice a v Libereckém kraji v letech 2007 – 2013. Upozorňuje na důležitost destinačního managementu pro jednotlivé oblasti cestovního ruchu a na potřebu vytvářet jednotnou propagaci, marketing, společné balíky produktů v rámci cestovního ruchu a tvorbu sítí v cestovním ruchu v Česko-polsko-německém příhraničním regionu. Uvádí počty návštěvníků Libereckého regionu v průběhu roku 2011 především z Polska a Německa.

GRENZÜBERGREIFENDER REISEVERKEHR IN DER EUROREGION NEISSE – AUF DEM GEBIET DER TSCHECHISCHEN REPUBLIK

Dieser Beitrag befasst sich mit der Problematik des grenznahen Reiseverkehrs in der Euroregion Neiße unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Teils, der im Reichenberger Bezirk (Liberecký kraj) liegt. Er enthält eine SWOT-Analyse des grenznahen Reiseverkehrs im Reichenberger Bezirk und weist auf strategische Dokumente hin, nach welchen sich der Reiseverkehr im Liberecký kraj in den Jahren von 2007 bis 2013 richtet. Er macht aufmerksam auf die Wichtigkeit eines Destinationsmanagements für die einzelnen Bereiche des Reiseverkehrs sowie auf die Notwendigkeit der Ausbildung einer einheitlichen Werbung, eines gemeinsamen Marketings, gemeinsamer Produktpakete im Rahmen des Reiseverkehrs und auf die Schaffung eines Netzes im Reiseverkehr im tschechisch-deutsch-polnischen Grenzgebiet. Der Artikel nennt die Anzahl der Besucher der Reichenberger Region im Laufe des Jahres 2011 vor allem aus Polen und Deutschland.

TRANSGRANICZNY RUCH TURYSTYCZNY W EUROREGIONIE NYSZA – NA TERENIE REPUBLIKI CZESKIEJ

Artykuł poświęcony jest tematyce transgranicznego ruchu turystycznego w Euroregionie Nysa, koncentrując się na tej części, która znajduje się w Kraju Libereckim. Zawiera analizę SWOT przygranicznego ruchu turystycznego w Kraju Libereckim. Ponadto wymieniono dokumenty strategiczne, które dotyczą turystyki w Republice Czeskiej oraz w Kraju Libereckim w latach 2007 – 2013. Wskazano znaczenie zarządzania destynacją turystyczną w poszczególnych obszarach turystyki oraz podkreślono potrzebę stworzenia jednolitej promocji, marketingu, wspólnych pakietów produktów turystycznych a także tworzenia sieci w ruchu turystycznym w czesko-polsko-niemieckim regionie przygranicznym. Przedstawiono statystykę turystów, przede wszystkim polskich i niemieckich, w Kraju Libereckim za 2011 rok.