

ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN POLAND

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ABSTRACT

The environment and its protection is an issue of the utmost importance, traditionally linked to sustainability, quality and competitiveness. It is fully recognized that the industry, tourists and natural resources are inter – linked and that these elements depend on each other for successful long term sustainable development. While rural tourism provides considerable economic benefits for many regions and communes in Poland, its rapid expansion can also be responsible for adverse environmental (and socio – cultural) impacts. Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation associated with tourism activities are sometimes serious problem in rural tourism – rich regions. The management of natural resources to reverse this trend is thus one of the most difficult challenges for governments at different levels. The main environmental impacts of rural tourism are: pressure on natural resources, pollution and waste generation, and damage to ecosystems. Furthermore, it is now widely recognized that not only uncontrolled tourism expansion is likely to lead to environmental degradation, but also that environmental degradation, in turn, poses a serious threat to rural tourism. Idea of tourism on rural areas in Poland should be realized according to aspects of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism in its purest sense, is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive. Among forms of sustainable tourism one can distinguish: rural tourism, agritourism, agriecotourism and ecotourism. Aspects of environment protection are one of the most important factors in the development of all kinds of sustainable tourism in Poland. In the sphere of authorities' activity, especially on local level these aspects are very significant. Moreover all communes in Poland can make efforts to obtain union funds with a view to investing them into environment protection in its regions. In the National Development Plan (2007-2013) there are activities connected with sustainable development, sustainable tourism and protection of environment.