

Andrzej Rapacz, Daria E. Jaremen

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Andrzej Rapacz*

Daria E. Jaremen**

Wrocław University of Economics

ABOUT THE ESSENCE OF SOCIAL TOURISM AND ITS FINANCING POSSIBILITIES IN POLAND

Abstract

The objective of the article is an attempt to define the contemporary understanding of social tourism concept at the background of its previous definitions and approaches towards its essence explanation as well as the identification of its financing sources in Poland. The basic method applied in solving the research problem was the review of literature covering the areas of economics, management and the sociology of tourism and also programme documents, statistical data of Eurostat, Central Statistical Office in Poland (GUS) and European Commission and also source materials of entities dealing with social tourism problems.

Keywords: social tourism, financing

Introduction

Extending access to tourism by including these social groups in the sphere of tourist activity which are in any way excluded from it or have limited access to it, brings about diverse advantages. It results not only in equal opportunities and living standards of a given country citizens, but also in the development of tourism economy, in strengthening the supply sphere of the tourist market, activating tour-

* Email address: a.rapacz@ae.jgora.pl.

** Email address: daria.jaremen@ue.wroc.pl.

ist locations and regions and thus creating additional employment opportunities. Therefore, social tourism allows not only to enjoy travelling by people with limited access to tourism (i.e. people with disabilities, in poor health, senior citizens, the poor, etc.), but also facilitates taking better advantage of the tourist potential offered by enterprises, locations and tourist areas. Supporting the realization of the right to take holiday rest, to travel and tourism exerts impact on life quality and mental comfort of a given society members and at the same time the sustainable development postulates are also implemented. The objective of the article is an attempt to define the contemporary understanding of social tourism concept at the background of its previous definitions and approaches towards its essence explanation as well as the identification of its financing sources in Poland. The basic method applied in solving the research problem was the review of literature covering the areas of economics, management and the sociology of tourism and also programme documents, statistical data of Eurostat, Central Statistical Office in Poland (GUS) and European Commission and also source materials of entities dealing with social tourism problems (i.e. UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976, WTO's Manila Declaration on World Tourism 1980, WTO's Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code 1985, WTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and International Social Tourism Organisation Statutes, 2003, 2010).

1. The need for social tourism development

The growing awareness of advantages resulting from social tourism has become the basic reason for the European countries high interest in this subject matter. The inclusion of social groups in tourism, which were not capable, for various reasons, to carry out their tourist needs, plays important functions in a society. It results in reducing social stratification, increases the entire society participation in economic development and the growing life quality level. Therefore, it is an instrument of social cohesion policy, the significance of which is emphasized in the European Union programme documents. There is also evidence that higher demand in tourism, as the result of carrying out different initiatives in the field of social tourism (e.g. the inclusion of people aged 55+ to tourism within the framework of "Europe Senior Tourism" programme) results in positive, also economic, consequences and has a particular significance

for the development of tourist enterprises, locations and regions. On the other hand, the need to support participation in tourism will become intensified due to the occurrence of unfavourable social phenomena (decline in fertility, population aging and the accompanying increase of people suffering poor health and with disabilities, changes in family structure) and economic (unemployment, financial limitations, poverty, etc.).

The above listed phenomena represent crucial factors reducing the participation in tourism. Eurostat data illustrate that in 2012 about 39% of the European Union citizens did not leave for a 7-day holiday even though the situation in this matter was significantly diversified in particular countries.¹ In Norway only slightly above the 6% of population could not afford a one week holiday, whereas in Romania and Bulgaria it was over 2/3 of its citizens who did not participate in longer tourist trips (Tab. 1). Poland is ranked as 19th among the European Community countries and thus the percentages of Poles reporting their lack of financial resources to afford a week vacation outside the place of their residence once a year, amounting to 62%, is relatively high (significantly higher than the average for 15 “old” EU member states – 34.7%, and close to the level recorded for 12² “new” EU members 62.3%).

Table 1

Inability to afford paying for one week annual holiday away from home
(European Union and its chosen members)

Specifications	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
European Union (28 countries)	-	-	-	37.3	38.2	39.6
European Union (27 countries)	36.3	36.6	36.8	36.9	37.7	39.3
European Union (15 “old” countries)	29.1	30.2	30.8	30.6	31.4	33.3
European Union (12 “new” countries)	63.5	60.8	60.2	61.2	61.3	62.3
Norway	6.3	6.5	7.3	6.6	6.9	6.2
Switzerland	-	12.1	13.9	9.3	8.6	7.4
Poland	64.6	63.3	61.2	59.9	60.5	62.0
Bulgaria	80.4	59.1	59.8	62.4	73.3	74.0
Romania	75.7	75.6	75.6	77.1	76.1	75.1

Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do> (access 05.02.2014).

¹ <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do> (access 05.02.2014).

² Excluding Croatia.

The presented data indicate that in many EU countries, including also Poland, there is a large group of citizens suffering exclusion from tourism. Among the reasons responsible for such exclusion the following, among others, are listed: age, health condition, family and personal matters, professional issues, but most of all the reasons result from economic background. In 2012 16.9% of the European Union population was at risk of poverty. This indicates that their income, having taken social transfers into account, was below the level of poverty. In Poland the percentage of population at risk of poverty presented the range between 16% and 17%. In 2010 the highest percentage of poverty threatened citizens was 17.1% (for comparison, the highest rate in the EU was recorded in Greece – 23.1%, while the lowest level was reported in the Czech Republic 9.6%).³ Every sixth Pole lives in a household the expenditure of which does not exceed the level of the so-called relative poverty (for Poland it amounts to 4 924 PPS).⁴ The problem mainly refers to such households as: households with the disabled persons (21.9% people), single parents (47.4%) and families with many children (19.5%).⁵

Poland is affected by the problem of population aging. Every seventh Polish is aged 65 and above, whereas the number of people in the range 0–19 is significantly decreasing. The drop in women fertility rate (falls short the replacement rate amounting to 2.1 children per one woman) and the resulting drop in birth-rate. In relation to the above-mentioned phenomena and the tendency towards an average life duration lengthening (Tab. 2), the burden of main dependent social groups, i.e. children, teenagers and senior citizens is significantly moved towards the latter. *The forecast of Polish population for the period 2008–2035* indicates that the number of senior citizens in Polish society is continuously growing

³ *Europejskie badanie dochodów i warunków życia [The European study of income and living conditions] (EU-SILC) in 2012*, http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_7556_PLK_HTML.htm – access 5.03.2014).

⁴ Common conventional currency which unit takes the form of the Purchasing Power Standard (PPS). The value of one PPS equals the number of a given country currency units corresponding to 1 Euro at the domestic market, having considered price relations of a given country against prices of the remaining countries participating in the comparison. *Ubóstwo w Polsce w świetle badań GUS [Poverty in Poland in the perspective of the Central Statistical Office studies]*, GUS, Warsaw 2013, p. 24.

⁵ *Ubóstwo w Polsce w świetle badań... [Poverty in Poland in the perspective of...]*, op. cit., pp. 18–19.

and in 2035 will reach the level of about 23.2%⁶, which means that almost every fourth Pole will be at least 65 years of age.

Table 2

Life expectancy in EU by age and gender, 2002–2009.

Specification	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Men	69.9	70.0	70.1	70.3	70.4	70.4	70.7	71.0
Women	78.3	78.3	78.7	78.8	79.1	79.2	79.4	79.5

Source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> (access 15.02.2014).

The ratio of years lived in good health, in 2009 presented the average level of 58.1 years in case of men and 62.0 years for women.⁷ Based on such measures as life expectancy and healthy life years it has been assessed that within the population, who are 70 years of age and over, only every fifth person is in good health and the period of senile infirmity may refer to as many as 38% of the average further life expectancy regarding women over 65 years of age and 27% of the average further life expectancy for men in the same age group.⁸ The results of the census carried out in Poland in 2011 have initially indicated that the number of people who declared limited capacity in performing basic activities, typical for their age and/or had valid medical statement to be qualified as the disabled, amounted to 4.7 million, which constituted 12.2% of Polish population.⁹ More than 70% of these people were over 50 years of age.

One of the consequences resulting from the European population aging, including Poland, is manifested not only in the increasing number of senior citizens share in the overall population number, but also in the growing percentage of the disabled and those in poor health, as well as pensioners (usually having at their disposal much lower income level comparing to salaries earned

⁶ *Prognoza ludności Polski na lata 2008–2035 [The forecast of Polish population for the period 2008–2035]*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2009, p. 182.

⁷ *Demography Report 2010. Older, more numerous and diverse Europeans*, European Commission, Luxembourg 2011, p. 38.

⁸ M. Burzyńska, J.T. Marcinkowski, M. Bryła, I. Maniecka-Bryła, *Life Expectancy in Healthy Life Years jako podstawowe miary oceny sytuacji zdrowotnej ludności [Life expectancy in Healthy Life Years as basic measures for the assessment of the population health situation]*, “Problemy Higieniczno-Epidemiologiczne [Hygienic and Epidemiological Problems]” 2010, No. 91(4), pp. 530–536.

⁹ www.niepelnosprawni.gov.pl (access 10.11.2012).

in the course of professional activity). These individuals, due to health, social or economic reasons, may experience certain difficulties in carrying out their tourism oriented needs and, at the same time, it should also be remembered that they can present specific expectations regarding tourist offers targeted at their needs.

Referring to the available sources it can be accepted that basic social tourism segments, i.e. senior citizens and people with disabilities in Poland amount to the total number of about 8.6 mln¹⁰, which constitutes over 22% of Polish population. If this number is enlarged by those at risk of poverty or livingly slightly above this level (not included in the group of senior citizens or the disabled) the share of social tourism segments, in the structure of Polish population, would be much higher.

In the perspective of the above presented data social tourism is observed as a serious problem. It can be referred to as a passing trend, but rather as a problem which should constitute one of the most important research subjects and programmes in the area of social and economic policy in Poland and other EU countries.

2. The concept of social tourism

The concept of social tourism is not new since it has over 60 years long lasting history, even though today it has taken on a new meaning. The first attempt to define social tourism was undertaken by W. Hunziker in the 50s of the 20th century (the review of different definitions is presented in table 3).

¹⁰ Estimations according to J. Berbeka, *Udział w ruchu turystycznym a spójność społeczna w Polsce – wybrane zagadnienia [Participation in tourist traffic vs. social cohesion in Poland – selected problems]*, in: *Wyzwania współczesnej polityki turystycznej. Problemy polityki turystycznej [Challenges of contemporary tourism policy. Problems of tourism policy]*, A. Rapacz (ed.), Research Studies of Wrocław University of Economics No. 259, Wrocław 2012, pp. 43–53.

Table 3

Definitions of social tourism

Author	Definitions
W. Hunziker (1951, 1957)	Social tourism represents the overall relations and phenomena resulting from participation in tourist trips by economically poorer or in any other way disadvantaged social groups (1951). Social tourism as a particular type of tourism characterised by the participation of people with low income, providing them with the special type of services (1957).
Z. Filipowicz (1965)	Social tourism means financial support for units or socially valuable, but economically weak groups. It is e.g.: tourism for trade unions members (poor health condition, large family, low income) – covered by the system of joined costs coverage: worker + company + trade unions (the system of deliberate saving); tourism of the youth – subsidized in the amount complementing the full cost – by schools or companies; tourism of social organization members (discounts).
T. Sajewski (1984)	Social tourism in its broad meaning refers to every tourist enterprise the participation in which is financed from the means of any social funds. This form of tourism is subsidized with social funds.
The European Commission (1993)	Social tourism is organized in some countries by associations, cooperatives and trade unions, the goal of which is to facilitate travelling for the largest possible number of people and especially people included in the least privileged social groups.
R. Łazarek (2005)	Social tourism refers to such form of tourism in which low income social groups participate, whereas such participation is facilitated by social benefits and other facilitating factors referring to both, demand and supply in tourism.
The European Social and Economic Committee (2006)	Social tourism represents all types of activities meeting the below listed conditions: real-life situation which either totally or partially makes taking full advantage of the right to tourism impossible. This maybe due to economic conditions, physical or mental disability, personal or family isolation, reduced mobility, geographical difficulties, and a wide variety of causes which ultimately constitute a real obstacle, particular entities, be it a public or private institution, a company, a trade union, or simply an organised group of people, undertake activities aimed at eliminating or reducing barriers preventing the interested persons to take advantage of tourism, the above-mentioned actions are effective and actually facilitate a group of people to participate in tourism in a manner which respects the values of sustainability, accessibility and solidarity.
L. Minnaert, R. Maitland, G. Miller (2006)	Social tourism is the tourism with an added moral value resulting in advantages for both, the host communities and the visitors as the result of tourism exchange.

Author	Definitions
OITS – ISTO (2003, 2010)	<p>The overall relations and phenomena resulting from low income social groups' participation in tourism. This participation is possible or facilitated by the clearly defined measures of social nature (2003).</p> <p>Social tourism means relations and phenomena referring to the participation of both inhabitants of tourist destinations and holidaymakers from the disadvantaged social groups or those who, for any reason, are not able to participate in tourism and the resulting advantages (2010).</p>
B. Włodarczyk (2010)	<p>Social tourism is the type (form) of tourism totally or partially financed (subsidized) externally or organized based on voluntary activities aimed at exercising the right for common access to tourism and also as the tool for achieving other, important from the perspective of its beneficiaries, objectives of social nature (patriotic, educational, life quality improvement, etc.).</p>

Source: A. Rapacz, P. Gryszel, D.E. Jaremen, *Wybrane aspekty turystyki społecznej w Polsce i Republice Czeskiej. Analiza komparatystyczna [The selected aspects of social tourism in Poland and The Czech Republic. Comparative analysis]*, in: *Współczesne uwarunkowania i problemy rozwoju turystyki [Contemporary determinants and problems of the development of tourism]*, R. Pawlusiński (ed.), Jagiellonian University, Cracow 2013, pp. 93–104.

A single and commonly used definition of social tourism does not exist. H. Zawistowska distinguishes three groups of definitions referring to social tourism:¹¹

- definitions concentrated on the demand side of tourism market based on the assumption that the right to practice tourism represents one of the fundamental human rights (Tourism for all) and its realization requires undertaking and implementing activities which aim at eliminating barriers in accessing tourism (support of social groups which, for various reasons, cannot participate in tourism on their own),
- definitions pointing to both the demand and supply aspect of tourism market and emphasizing not only social (equal social chances), but also economic significance of social tourism (economic advantages for tourism sector),
- definitions focused on financing sources for social tourism participation and indicating the important role of state budget, budgets of enterpri-

¹¹ H. Zawistowska, *Możliwości i kierunki rozwoju turystyki społecznej w Polsce*, in: *Wyzwania współczesnej polityki turystycznej. Problemy polityki turystycznej [Possibilities and directions of social tourism development in Poland, in: Challenges of contemporary tourism policy. Problems of tourism policy]*, A. Rapacz (ed.), Scientific Studies of Wrocław University of Economics 2012, No. 259, Wrocław University of Economics, Wrocław 2012, pp. 109–122.

ses, social associations and foundations in eliminating various barriers, having in mind these social groups participation in tourism which have limited access to it.

After the World War II the term of social tourism was popularized in the block of socialist countries. The problem of its definition appeared in the first decade of the 21st century, along with the European Union bodies and mainly the European Commission becoming interested in positive effects brought about by the development of social tourism. Since then the significance of social tourism for the development of economy and society is broadly discussed at both, the entire European Union level and at the level of its particular Member States.

It is not easy to define the concept of social tourism. From an etymological perspective two terms have to be explained, i.e. tourism and social. Both categories have a complex and multi-meaning nature. Having assumed the broad understanding of the well-known term of tourism (as undertaking temporary trips for various reasons) the word “social” needs a closer look. According to the Dictionary of Polish language it means something that:

- refers to a society or its part,
- was created by a society and constitutes its common property,
- is intended to be used by the public,
- is created selflessly for the benefit of some community,
- refers to attitudes and activities of the majority of the society members,
- was organized by some community independently, without any involvement of the state.

Having taken into consideration the presented semantic scope of the term social it can be assumed that social tourism refers to the entire society or its particular (larger) part. Its fundamental useful advantage is meeting tourist needs presented by the society members. Social tourism also results in a particular dosage of selflessness (which could be explained by the fact that at least partly it is of non-market nature, does not involve the purchasing power of population), is subsidized, financially supported by different entities, including mainly the state). The analysis of the above-mentioned meanings also indicates that this kind of tourism is created by the society for the society (which can be understood as social tourism being the domain of social organizations and social economy entities). Nevertheless, it seems crucial that social tourism represents mainly the result of a broad, and extending outside the rich social elites, provision of gen-

erally understood tourism. Social tourism is focused on disseminating the availability of tourism in society. The process of spreading the access to tourism was initiated at the beginning of the 20th century along with struggling to win basic rights improving the existence of the working class in the developing capitalist countries. Some of these rights, e.g. paid leaves and shorter weekly working time established the foundations for extending the participation in tourism outside the existing social elites (capital and land owners). It was the first step made in the development of social tourism. The following important events (referred to by F. Higgins-Desbiolles as milestones on the path towards establishing the human right to travel and tourism) took place in: 1948 (the establishment of UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights), 1963 (the establishment of International Bureau of Social Tourism, BITS, in Belgium), 1976 (the establishment of UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 1980 (adopting the WTO's Manila Declaration on World Tourism), 1985 (adopting the WTO's Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code in Sofia) and in 1999 (WTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism).¹² The above presented discussion suggests that the fundamental component of the earliest approaches towards understanding the concept of social tourism is exercising the universal right to participate in tourism. Social tourism refers to the form of tourism which everybody can participate in regardless of their age, origin, represented social class or economic status. It should, however, be remembered that adopting codes or signing declarations is not sufficient to make participation in tourism possible for everybody. There occur other (apart from legal and political ones) obstacles which can result in excluding an individual from participating in tourism. In the literature on tourism the following five main groups of barriers encountered while travelling can be identified, i.e.:¹³

- external resources covering the absence of information, knowledge about the range of opportunities available, financial resources and no access to appropriate transport facilities,

¹² F. Higgins-Desbiolles, *More than an "industry": the forgotten power of tourism as a social force*, "Tourism Management" 2006, No. 27(6), pp. 1192–1208.

¹³ S. McCabe, T. Joldersma, Ch. Li, *Understanding the benefits of social tourism: linking participation to subjective well-being and quality of life*, "International Journal of Tourism Research" 2010, No. 12(6), pp. 761–773.

- physical well-being constraints including physical health and disability, as well as age-related factors which account for the significant proportion of non-participation in travelling,
- time related constraints,
- social factors including the absence of a partner or a suitable travelling companion, together with those who have no interest in travelling,
- fifth factors are also important whereby constraints are felt in relation to the impact of decisions on others perceptions.

Due to the existence of numerous and quite diversified barriers of participation in tourism, exercising the right to tourism frequently requires an external intervention. Such interference may come from both, national authorities and local ones, but also other institutions of non-governmental nature and appointed to establish conditions for exercising the above-mentioned right. In this perspective social tourism becomes the component of the state social policy counteracting market imperfections.

The debate, in the world of science and practice, on social tourism was initiated by accepting that the participation in tourism is of key significance for human development and is highly desirable from the perspective of maintaining good physical and mental condition. Therefore, at the beginning access to tourism has to be ensured also for the groups of other background than those economically and socially privileged (as it has already been mentioned it referred mainly to the working class which had limited access to tourism mainly as the result of two factors: long working hours and insufficient financial means at their disposal). The main role in extending this access was played by trade unions, which in the first half of the 20th century were systematically achieving their goals regarding gradual lengthening of time off from work, whereas their largest success was the right for paid holiday. These solutions, supported by the growing income earned and the growing social wealth as the result of economic development, gave grounds for mass (common) taking advantage of tourist services.

For ideological reasons, originating from class struggle, social tourism became of particular significance in the countries characterized by the command-and-distribution economy (among others in Polish People's Republic, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and in Hungarian People's Republic). In these countries social tourism, associated with welfare benefits, represented a particular and dominating method for organizing and managing tourism. The state was its main organizer, constitutionally responsible for establishing conditions to

meet tourism oriented needs of its citizens. In practice tourist trips were mainly organized by companies for their workers, paid from their own means and based on the so-called company tourist (holiday) base, as well as from the means of the so-called Employee Holiday Fund (from the state budget), which also had its own tourist infrastructure at the disposal of workers. Therefore, it took the form of general and common tourism (targeted at all citizens) subsidized from the means of enterprises, trade unions and the state budget, whereas participation in it was distributed outside the market (even though it was usually associated with the population purchasing means). In 1984 T. Sajewski explained that social tourism covers every tourist project participation in which is subsidized from the means of any social funds. In this perspective the financial/economic aspect of social tourism was emphasized considering, however, only the expenditure factors.

The two above described approaches to the understanding of social tourism essence did not refer to the type of its participants (consumers of social tourism offer). W. Hunziker started defining it from the perspective of its segments and his approach is the most popular one in the majority of the discussed term definitions which were created both, at the scientific background and the practical one since mid 20th century (see Tab. 1). Nevertheless, based on numerous discussions and conclusions from the research carried out in the field of social tourism effects the approach to its understanding was changed, which was manifested, among others, in the definition suggested in 2006 by L. Minnaert, R. Maitland and G. Miller and in the new statute of the International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO/OITS, former BITS). New definitions paid attention to the fact that the advantages resulting from social tourism do not refer exclusively to consumers, but also other entities, including entrepreneurs and inhabitants of tourist areas. In this perspective social tourism beneficiaries represent not only the demand entities (as the result of making it possible to exercise the right to tourism and holiday rest), but also supply entities and others (inhabitants of tourist destinations or even social tourism donors and sponsors, including also: the state, social organizations, associations and foundations, local authority units or employers).¹⁴ The abundance of social tourism development

¹⁴ Based on: A. Stasiak, *Cele i zadania turystyki społecznej – kilka uwag o istocie zjawiska [Goals and tasks of social tourism – several remarks about the essence of the phenomenon]*, in: *Turystyka społeczna w regionie łódzkim [Social tourism in Łódź region]*, A. Stasiak (ed.), WSTH [High School of Theology and Humanities], Łódź 2010, pp. 37–56.

beneficiaries results from the positive effects it brings about. The most important ones are as follows:

- counteracting exclusion and social stratification owing to equalizing opportunities and living standards of a given country citizens,
- higher demand for tourist services by exercising the right for common participation in tourism,
- higher income and profitability of enterprises functioning in tourism and outside it,
- counteracting negative effects of seasonality in tourism,
- maintaining or increasing employment in tourism,
- stimulating entrepreneurship in tourism and activating tourism oriented locations and regions,
- higher revenues from tourism for the state budget and local authority units' budgets.

Recently, in the field of social tourism research, new problems have appeared which will definitely result in its definition further evolution. Currently discussed research problems have a more interdisciplinary and complex nature. The increasingly popular research problems are: the relations of social tourism and social economy (economics), interdependencies between social tourism and sustainable development, as well as the influence of social tourism on the quality of life and the subjective well-being.

3. Social tourism – its financing possibilities in Poland

One of the important determinants of social tourism is its co-financing (partial or total subsidizing) or implementing within the framework of non-profit activities as the result of which the offer of services is cheaper and more available for its recipients. Financial aid may refer to both, demand and supply aspect of the market. It can take the direct form (e.g. vouchers or grants to purchase tourist services for large families or holiday benefits for employees, etc.) or an indirect form (e.g. aid in adjusting public transport means to transporting people with disabilities or subsidizing the third age universities, the listeners of which, within the framework of educational programmes, can realize educational trips). The sources can be of both, public nature (the means from the state budget, from local authority units, from the budgets of earmarked funds and also from

the European Union budget as part of aid funds, as well as from the budgets of public benefit organizations) and of private nature (employee benefit funds in enterprises or funds from donors).

The discussed aid is dispersed between different entities (e.g. the Ministries of Labour and Social Policy, National Education, Sport and Tourism or Economy), different programmes and initiatives (e.g. *Social Activity Programme for Senior Citizens 2014–2020*, *Large family Card*, *Social support for people with mental disorders*) and also different European Union aid funds and programmes.

In the new financing perspective 2014–2020 the European Union budget unfortunately does not provide, as it did in its previous edition, a separate line for subsidizing tourism, including social tourism. The opportunities for support should be searched for in different operational programmes (OP), such as e.g.:

- OP Infrastructure and Environment (financial means originate from the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund) within which a pool of means was designated, among others, for: cultural heritage development and protection, as well as culture resources, including culture institutions (here the means for adapting cultural heritage objects to the needs of people with disabilities could be searched for) and extending access to the European transport network, i.e. better accessibility of cities and road infrastructure capacity (financing possible facilities to make travelling for the disabled and senior citizens easier),
- OP Knowledge, Education, Development (means from the European Social Fund), here the financial goal could be considered which refers to social inclusion and fighting poverty, which is to be implemented mainly based on active methods and also cover the support for establishing social enterprises (such entities can offer services for the social tourism market);
- OP Digital Poland (means from the European Regional Development Fund) within which the focus can be put on the line of subsidies for higher information and communication technologies application in services and on applying for the means to support two priorities, i.e.: common access to high-speed Internet and Polish society digitalization.

The absence of direct EU means flow to the development of tourism generates serious problems in applying for them, whereas the need to search for subsidy lines suitable for the possible and planned, by a tourist entity, activities requires high level of creativity from beneficiaries. Thus, it can also be the reason of refraining from applying for the necessary means.

It should also be emphasized, at this point, that a coherent social tourism development programme is still missing in Poland, which definitely does not facilitate distributing and concentrating financial means on activities carried out in this matter. If there is no doubt about social and economic advantages resulting from social tourism, developing such programme should become the priority of the state administration in Poland manifested in its tourism policy.

Conclusion

The review of Polish and foreign literature references allows for indicating the common characteristics regarding the contemporary approach towards defining social tourism. It is a broad perspective which pays attention to the role of social tourism both, in establishing the demand and supply aspects of tourism market. It emphasizes the significance of social tourism for achieving social, economic and environmental goals. A strong relationship between social tourism and the implementation of sustainable development principles is observed, such as: improved efficiency of natural, cultural and infrastructural resources implementation, higher welfare and life quality of citizens, the reduction of social differences, better quality of employment or more equalized access to the right of taking a holiday rest. Unfortunately recently, comparing to the period of the so-called financial perspective 2007–2013, a decreasing interest of the state administration in Poland is observed in the problems of social tourism, which raises serious concerns. There are no clear priorities in terms of tourism development support, including social tourism, from the EU means in the new financial perspective 2014–2020, which puts the valuable initiatives, undertaken in previous years, at risk of discontinuation. Is it correct to give up this tourism form development in the perspective of advantages resulting from this phenomenon, the growing number of people excluded from tourism as well as crisis phenomena having impact on the tourism sector? The answer should be: definitely NOT. The absence of direct reference to tourism in the new financial perspective 2014–2020 put forward quite a challenge before the state administration in Poland and other EU countries. They definitely have to find adequate financing sources to support further development of social tourism.

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O ISTOCIE TURYSTYKI SPOŁECZNEJ I JEJ FINANSOWANIU W POLSCE

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest próba ustalenia współczesnego rozumienia pojęcia turystyki społecznej na tle jej wcześniejszych definicji i podejść do wyjaśniania jej istoty oraz zidentyfikowania źródeł jej finansowania w Polsce. Podstawową metodą zastosowaną w rozwiązywaniu problemu badawczego był przegląd literatury z zakresu ekonomiki, zarządzania i socjologii turystyki, a także materiałów statystycznych Eurostatu, Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego i Komisji Europejskiej oraz dokumentów programowych (statuty, programy, informacje o podmiocie) organizacji zajmujących się problematyką turystyki, w tym turystyki społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka społeczna, finansowanie