

RURAL AREAS AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

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a) Introduction

Changes representing results of the public administration reforms carried out in the European continent since the 1970s were and are reflected positively in different conceptions of the regional development activities working out and implementation.

The Ministry of regional development of the Czech Republic underlined in its „Strategy of Czech Republic Regional Development for years 2007 – 2013“ in this sense, for example, the importance of indicated conceptions by stressing the significance of of such factors like the creation of new employment opportunities, new transport and accomodation constructions, support of different business activities (including those in the tourism industry) and primarily the decrease of disparities between individual regions.

b) Material and Methods

If we concentrate our attention exclusively to the rural areas development the mentioned strategic orientation is characterized from time to time, for example by the OECD in „*The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and governance*“, as the new rural paradigma [*The New Rural Paradigm*, Paris, Redex, 2006].

The mentioned document calls for the shift of subsidies distributed less to individual subjects in concrete regions and areas and more to the support of strategic development projects in the principle of the Public - Private - Partnership.

Conceptions of rural areas development are characterized from time to time by the underlining of following factors:

- *economic values* (represented by the efficient agriculture, forestry and tourism);

- *social values* (demography, education, social structure, lifestyle, cultural traditions);

- *science and technology* (biotechnology, information communication technologies including internet);

- *environmental values* (biodiversity, land use, landscape fragmentation, soil degradation and contamination of the environment);

- *political values* (food safety, grocery, lobbying etc.)

D. Jakubíková adds in this connection that *"tourism industry... participates in the country GDP growth, it helps to create new labour opportunities, enables to increase of households incomes, has a clear multiplication effect."* [Jakubíková D., 2009, p. 11].

The sophisticated regional tourism industry contributes now effectively to the development of the whole regions thanks to the generation of incomes from products and services sold to tourists by the local population and to the creation of new labour places.

Tourism industry:

- *creates new labour opportunities,***
- *supports traditional hand - made manufacturing,***
- *strengthens local cultural traditions,***
- *protects the original landscape character***
- *revitalizes local gastronomic traditions.***

There is the common position among many specialists in the conclusion that the this sector of business activities includes different services and professions and it is connected with a greater number of various forms of tourism. The most important of them are:

- *recreation tourism;***
 - *culturally cognitive tourism;***
 - *tourism with the religion orientation;***
 - *tourism with educational motives;***
 - *tourism with the medical motivation;***
 - *tourism with the sport motivation;***
- as well as***
- *specifically oriented tourism.***

MULTIPLICATION EFFECT OF TOURISM SERVICES

Thanks to their multiplication effect tourism services influence predominantly such sectors of the economy like transport, building industry, retail trade and banking. Indirectly they have the positive impact also on the visitors interest in local and regional cultural and sports activities.

The regional dimension of tourism activities is underlined by the fact that they are developing in concrete regions, microregions as well as in the territory of municipalites. Those territories, of course, differ in the framework of the state territory from the point of view of their attractivities. In general there are regions very suitable for tourism and other which are visited by tourists only in a relatively limited moments. Nevertheless tourism activities in general represent in such a way important challenges for regions with prevailing agrarian economy.

Taking this fact into account strategies worked out for tourism are formulated nowadays very often as the component parts of their broadly formulated strategies in many regions.

Authors of those strategies have to take into account carefully general trends typical for the tourism industry development in the second decade of the 21st century and to involve them into their regions marketing activities. The most significant of them are the following ones:

1.Changing age structure of the population predominantly in the whole European continent: represented mainly by the fact that the number of elderly people as tourists is growing relatively rapidly (for example today they represent about 30 per cent of all tourism agencies customers in France).

2. The structure of households is changing in Europe and in the Northern America (first of all the number of single living people is increasing).

3. Tourists requirements concerning the quality of services providing are growing and more and more customers are ready to pay higher price for them.

4. The number of tourists preferring activities connected with their orientation to the health improvement and with the more rational leisure time utilization is increasing.

All above mentioned facts confirm the necessity to analyze and to assess carefully contemporary trends really existing in the market.

RESULTS

The experience of tourism destinations with the longer history indicates that main tourism activities in regions, including the rural areas, could be concentrated predominantly to:

1. Investments into the construction of hotels, the purchase of modern transport means and in the construction of highways and other types of communications.

2. The strengthening of cooperation among entrepreneurs, local government and the public administration authorities and offices based on the principles of partnership and networking implementation. The mentioned orientation is reflected positively - among others - in the creation of sophisticated tourism industry strategies in concrete destinations.

3. The new labour places creation in the tourism industry facilities.

4. The improvement of cultural monuments protection situated in regions and simultaneously the general educational level of the local inhabitants increasing.

The effectiveness of indicated the strategies and their contribution to the regional development was and is confirmed first of all by results achieved tourism destinations of Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and in the Ireland.

Investments into the tourism industry represent undoubtedly the important contribution to the economic and social development of the rural areas. That is why the European Union and its member states support different projects contributing, among other, to the diminishing of disparities among more and less developed regions by the support of areas with the lower economic strenght.

The mentioned orientation:

a) allows to generate money in regions that have a lower economic potential;

b) it represents one of ways leading not only to the economic but also to the social stabilization of those areas.

The Czech Republic has especially very good preconditions for the tourism industry development in territories which monuments are recorded in the *UNESCO Register of World locat Cultural Heritage*. Some of them are located in the rural areas.

The EU strategy is based on the real fact that the European rural regions are occured in a relatively complicated stage of their development for the longer time. There are two urgent problems which must be solved by them. The first one is connected with the restriction of agricultural production in localities where it represented even relatively recently the main or extremely significant sphere of economic activities.

The second problem - connected immediately with the first one - is the fact that the number of people living in the villages is somewhere (from different reasons) relatively dramatically reducing.

The weakness of the most typical rural areas is represented generally by:

- *their insufficient infrastructure;***
- *the low level of capital;***
- *the worse access of entrepreneurs to credits;***
- *the relatively long geographical distance of classical rural areas from main regional economic centres;***
- *the relatively high costs of transport connected with the purchase and sale of products.***

These and other problems are motivating inhabitants of villages to their migration to towns with much higher quality of conditions for the everyday life.

On the other hand the fact that smaller number of inhabitants - in comparison with previous decades - live nowadays in rural areas is often negatively reflected also in the worse quality of the soil cultivation mainly due to the fact that a part of local fields which soil is not of the highest quality was transferred into forests or it was grassed down.

Nevertheless such changes had also several positive effects because it enabled the development of *agrotourism, ecotourism* and *eco-agrotourism* in rural areas.

The attractiveness of the indicated forms of tourism in rural areas are caused by:

- *limited (therefore more intimate) accomodation capacities;***
- *offer of pleasant environment of farms and small boarding houses;***

- additional services provision (like for example horse riding, hunting, fishing) by the local population to visitors;

- the possibility of local traditions, handicrafts, ways of soil cultivation recognition.

In other words tourism activities in rural areas:

- provide the possibility of recreation in the healthy and nontraditional environment;

- assure additional incomes for farmers and the assistance to villages stabilization;

- enable the folk architecture conservation together with folk traditions preservation;

- stimulate villages development and protect the traditions of the villages style of life.