

## EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES OF UKRAINIAN TOURISM AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*Despite having significant tourist and recreation resource potential, Ukraine, however, belongs to European countries with one of the least developed recreation and tourist industry. That is, it has a huge reserve of possible development, which is primarily available in the Western region: the Carpathians, Podolia, West Polesie. It is here where the most diverse resource provision of this industry, characterized by a worldwide level, is situated. Unique combination of terrain with the presence of indigenous and absolutely indigenous plant communities, lakes, the world's most famous cave systems, cultural and historical monuments, unique folk crafts are the basis for the possible recreation and tourist activities development. Thus, Ukraine is able to maintain and even foster significant tourist industries development in bordering countries as well as to provide their recreation and tourism industries with appropriate diversity.*

**Keywords:** tourist and recreation resources, recreation and tourist industry, Carpathian Euroregion

### Introduction

Today tourist and recreation industry development is one of the main objectives in many European countries and Ukraine. Ukraine, which is located at the crossroads of European transport routes, and has favorable nature and climate conditions for the recreational sphere sustainable development, considerable landscape and natural as well as historical and cultural potential, necessary human and material resources, lags far behind most European countries in terms of its tourist and recreation services. On the one hand, this situation allows to stimulate such services at a fast pace, on the other hand, it requires processes activation for the creation of a strong recreational industry in our country, which is able to meet the diverse recreational demands of both Ukrainian residents and foreign tourists. Note that nowadays recreational activities serve not only as an urban, social and economic task, but also as structural and geographical one, that must be addressed to on the national and regional levels.

The most significant tourist and recreation resources are concentrated in the Europe border zone (corresponding Eurozone) where there are all prerequisites for the intensive domestic and foreign tourism development: geographic position and terrain characteristics, favorable climate, rich natural, historical and cultural, tourist

and recreation potential in the form of unique mountain ranges, lakes, absolutely indigenous plant communities, one of the world's largest gypsum caves. However, today the development of this important economy sector in Ukraine, which, according to specialists, only in the form of taxes could bring into the state treasury up to \$ 4 billion each year, is insufficient. The underlying reasons are complex socio-economic situation in the state, lack of proper mechanisms for the tourist industry stimulation, absence of an effective development strategy for this sphere on the national and regional levels.

### **Recreation and tourist industry in Ukraine**

Despite the fact that according to its tourist and recreation potential Ukraine and especially its Western region is well placed to become a world-class tourist state, today there are significant barriers against this. However, the expansion of international connections opens up new ways to promote national tourist product on the world market, to be attracted to global information space, tourist activity best practices.

Thus, Ukraine is a member of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) since 1997. Nevertheless, as reported by this organization, in terms of tourism revenue Ukraine is not among leaders, getting about 3 billion USD, as compared with such leading countries in this field as America (more than 70 billion USD), Italy, France, Spain, United Kingdom (about 20-30 billion USD) (On Tourism: The Law of Ukraine).

According to statistics in bulletin "Tourism in Ukraine", a steady growth in the number of foreign tourists has been observed in recent years, and Ukraine holds 22nd place in the world's best tourist countries rating (Russia - 12<sup>th</sup>, Czech Republic - 13th, Turkey - 19th) (Tourism Charter, Tourist Code, 2000). In Ukraine tourist industry comes fifth in the budget components list after industry, transport, equipment repair, communication and minerals extraction. The situation could change dramatically after the introduction of necessary measures to support tourist and recreation industry in Ukraine.

### **European integration tourist and recreation opportunities in Ukraine**

Today there is some background for a sharp rise in tourist and recreation industry in Ukraine. Thus, the tourism and resorts development strategy (approved in 2008) is designed to ensure increase in domestic tourism and resorts competitiveness on the basis of rational use of Ukraine's tourist resources. The document is intended to increase the state's role in the tourism and resort industry by forming an effective model for cooperation between the state, business and society (Tourism Charter, Tourist Code, 2000).

Modern research methodology for the tourism potential of the country or its separate regions among other methods is based on cluster analysis, one of the principal methods. Tourism cluster is a group of geographically localized enterprises formed on the basis of regional tourist assets and related to tourists servicing, such as tour operators, hotels, foodservice industry, souvenir producers, transport companies, etc. (Zikeyeva, 2012).

The main goal of tourism cluster is to develop competitive advantages in the region by promoting all types of tourism, which involves solving the following priority objectives:

- Creation of a real tourist infrastructure register so that investors know where to invest;
- Advertising, creation of the region's tourist image;
- Creation of region's information base containing possible travel routes, holiday destinations, transport systems, etc. through Internet sites development, publications and tourist information offices, bureaus, information;
- Tourist industry employees' expertise and intellectual capacity upgrade;
- Entertainment industry development taking into account local peculiarities;
- Running events dedicated to the conservation and reconstruction of important historical architecture monuments;
- Obtaining more financing from local and state budgets as well as international funds for the development of all tourism types (Sokolenko, 2008).

In the course of tourism clusters shaping similar and interrelated companies and organizations complement each other and cooperate in order to create a relationship of mutual trust, mutual exchange of ideas and information, joint coordination. This high trust level enables to reduce the cost of operations carried out between partners.

Generally, tourist and recreation industry development in Ukraine corresponds to the dynamics of economic processes taking place in the country. However, global political and economic processes of recent years also have a significant impact on the amount, direction and structure of tourist flows. Therefore, the creation of globally competitive tourist product, able to meet all travel demands of population, provision on this basis of an integrated development of territories and their social and economic interests and at the same time maintaining the ecological balance together with the historical and cultural environment, development of an appropriate tourism regulatory framework can be considered as the strategic goals of tourist industry in Ukraine. Tourist enterprises pace acceleration and efficiency increase, establishment of the tourist industry as one of the leading sectors in domestic economy is constrained by a number of unsettled issues the solution of which requires government regulation and support from executive authorities.

Thus, in order for Ukraine's tourist industry as a whole in the state, and in separate regions in particular, to take a leading role in economic growth, it is necessary to address a number of primary tasks on the national level:

- to create tourist resources cadastre and protection (to map tourist resources in each area, assess them in points, determine their reclamation priorities, develop measures for the natural resources protection and cultural monuments restoration);
- to create demand forecast and tourist services advertising agency (peculiarities of geographical location and natural environment, unique cultural heritage, etc., cause the necessity to forecast demand and advertising in each particular region);
- to develop a program for the tourist industry development in each area and plans for capital construction and investment; to resolve the issue of tourist staff training (courses, schools, colleges, institutes, universities), hotel and restaurant business management;
- to coordinate the work of tourist organizations and transport agencies, cultural institutions; to justify the order in which tourist industry enterprises have to deduct a slice of profits to local budgets for infrastructure and district improvement;
- to assess recreational areas and tourism economic efficiency, to determine areas favorable for tourism and treatment;
- to develop vacation spots classification according to the degree of their significance, natural conditions, functional features, and justification methods for norms of simultaneous load on different natural systems.

While developing tourist and recreation industry, it should be noted that the development of this activity can have a negative impact which can be grouped according to three criteria:

1) on the environment; 2) on the socio-cultural environment; 3) on the economic environment.

In view of the first criterion several areas of impact can be identified:

- Taking into account natural mosaic structure of the area (landscape diversity);
- Ecosystem aspect (tourism infrastructure development has a direct impact on the ecosystem);
- Negative impact on soil cover (soil ablation and erosion due to the hotels and vacation spots construction);
- Negative impact on vegetation (littered areas and loss of their aesthetic value, decrease in biodiversity);
- Negative impact on natural waters (sewage pollution);
- Negative impact on the atmospheric component of territorial systems (exploitation of a large number of vehicles);
- Negative impact on wildlife (anxiety factor).

Impact on the socio-cultural environment is characterized by the deterioration of cultural and historical monuments, sites and areas due to their intensive use for tourist purposes, negative influence on local people, their traditions and habits, increase in crimes among locals.

The Carpathians, Subcarpathia and Transcarpathia, as well as Western region of Ukraine, Podolia and Polesie, are characterized by unique tourist and recreation resources. In addition, there are sources of mineral waters with valuable and diverse, in some cases even unique chemical composition and medicinal properties, large tracts of forest, lakes and caves. Waters with high organic substances content are found only in Subcarpathia. These are two deposits of "Naftusia" type - Truskavets and Skhidnytsia. The last one is notable for bright prospects as a spa resort. Skhidnytsia has great, but not fully used opportunities for spa industry development. This is due to the relatively poor transport access to the recreation facility and lack of holiday centers, hostels, health resorts (Sokolenko, 2008).

Investments in existing mineral therapeutic waters deposits reconstruction, and resorts facilities improvement, along with bringing them in line with international standards, should be prolonged.

Unique mountain lakes (Synevyr, Nesamovyte, Brebeneskul, etc.) are distinguished by primary purity. Located next to unique plant communities, they attract a considerable tourist interest today. In mountain ranges Chornohora and Gorgany unique and absolutely indigenous phytocenoses (especially Carpathian spruce), which were never cut down throughout mankind's history, can be found. To some extent, their conservation status restricts the opportunities for tourist and recreation activity. However, their visits are possible as long as routes are appropriately processed. Carpathian region as a whole is characterized by unique natural and recreation resources that are used totally irrationally. Therefore, there is an urgent necessity for national register of region's cultural property, their research, conservation and use for the development of Subcarpathia as a tourist and recreation zone. In this case, recreational areas, as the fundamental basis for gene pool preservation of flora and fauna in the corresponding landscape, territorial and climate zone, are of utmost importance, since state of nature that was created throughout millions of years remained here intact.

Tourist and recreation complex planning can be based on the idea of natural historical-ethnographic recreation, which is grounded on the recreational environment creation, the most rational use of combinations of local environmental conditions, resources, historical and architectural monuments. In the future natural historical-ethnographic tourist and recreation complexes "Hutsulshchyna", "Boikivshchyna" and others can be founded.

International tourism development will serve as one of the most effective means to overcome economic crisis in Ukraine as a whole and in its individual regions through the active involvement of foreign tourists and increase in foreign

currency earnings to the local budget. For this purpose ski lifts with appropriate infrastructure (swimming pools, tennis courts) will be built, a network of travel routes for foreign firms will be developed. Routes for mountain biking or horseback travel lovers are in prospect. Tourist complex "Dovbush" construction in Bubnyshche village, Dolinskyi district, and Carpathian narrow gauges reconstruction ("Carpathian tram" project) are planned too. In terms of health resorts activity a project on conferring a status of resort on such oblast locations as Mizun, Myslivka, Tatariv, Sheshory and Yablynytsia is under development.

Shatski lakes complex is a developed recreation and tourist area. Volyn oblast is generally rich in surface waters. There are more than 230 large and small lakes with a total area of 150.9 square km. The biggest lake among them is Ukrainian pearl - Svitiaz, Pulemetske, Luky, Liutsymer, no less attractive - PISOCHNE. Thanks to these beautiful natural landscapes, large vegetation mosaic structure, forest tracts, and moderately warm and mild climate typical of this land, this area is characterized by huge recreation potential.

Rural (green) tourism that develops in intensive recreation area of lakes Svitiaz, PISOCHNE is the most common. On the whole, tourists are mainly served by villagers. Private travel agency "Svitiaz-Tour" is founded in the district. Measures to attract private sector participation in recreation and tourist business are taken. Travel routes that will include the objects of cultural heritage are under development.

The overwhelming majority of tourists spend their vacation on the lake shores, but during blueberries ripening and mushrooms picking most prefer to visit forests. Winter sports and amateur ice fishing is very popular on park's lakes.

Podolia and its surrounding areas, where the world's largest gypsum caves are located, offer not only future, but also present opportunities for qualitative recreation potential rise. However, the use of this task has a number of problems, primarily due to the lack of scientific justification for the potential capacity as well as the attractiveness of certain cave systems, their aesthetic, scientific and educational, historical and cognitive value, security and so on.

It is important to study not only the location, geophysical characteristics, psychophysiological indices of individual cave systems, but also opportunities for their potential use.

Despite the fact that the world has similar regions (Red Caves, Mammoth Cave, etc.), many unsolved problems still remain in the study on cave tourism development of a certain tourist activity. First of all, they are connected with significant differences between cave systems making them specific tourist resources. In addition, they are examined in different ways, have different quality of service.

Thus, the study on tourist and recreation activities in the Podolian cave region will contribute to the improvement of general methodological and methodical principles of this activity learning and optimizing. In addition, the activity of economic nature, able to secure an increase in the number of jobs in the region and significant financial revenues is very promising.

The provided examples of the general tourism potential components in the Western region of Ukraine are only the brightest among numerous others. However, today there is a very pressing problem of scientific justification for recreation and tourist exploitation of these components and the region as a whole.

For this purpose, it is necessary to focus attention and resources on the following activities:

- creation of a single methodological and methodical basis for determination of recreation and tourist potential and its components;
- determination of recreation and tourist potential resource basis of each region and its components;
- evaluation of the recreation and tourist potential components concentrating on cognitive and aesthetic value of objects;
- creation of cartographic basis in the form of existing landscape diversity relying on a single methodology;
- development of scientifically justified measures for biological and landscape diversity conservation;
- measures to ensure environmental sustainability of the exploited areas.

For Western Ukraine it is advisable to plan tourist and recreation activities using large integral territorial units, e.g. such as Euroregion – organizational, legally fixed form of cross-border regional cooperation between local communities and/or public authorities in the border regions of several countries sharing a common border. The establishment of the Euroregion is a means of cross-border dialogue encouragement between neighbors, a form of search for effective ways of cooperation between self-governing units on opposite sides of the border. The first Euroregion "Gronau" was created in 1958 on the German-Dutch border. Legal basis for Euroregions development is fixed in the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities and their Authorities (Madrid, 1980). Ukraine joined this Convention in 1993. Cross-border cooperation is regulated by the 1985 European Charter of Local Self-Government (ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1997).

In the European priorities system Euroregion is considered as a tool of states integration through regions integration. Their work is aimed at accelerating regions' socio-economic development and export specialization, infrastructure preparation for enhancing cooperation with the European Union, inter-regional relations development in tourism, recreation and environmental protection. Euroregions enable to solve the problems of national minorities, can be a means of resolving territorial claims. More than 30 states that have created more than 70 Euroregions are involved in cross-border co-operation (History of Ukraine Encyclopedia).

Euroregion structuring to fulfill tourist and recreational needs requires a combination of regional and local approaches, where local features help to specify the regional ones. Thus, the Carpathian Euroregion consists of five combined

regions, characterized by their own resource and functional peculiarities, which is largely dependent on the degree of tourist and recreation industry development in these countries. The variety of recreation and tourist industry development amongst countries generates diversity in the Euroregion structural organization. Thus, existing and possible links between the Euroregion structural components should come to the fore.

## Conclusion

To conclude, today Ukraine is not only able to provide the qualitative recreation industry development (especially in the Western region), but also give an impetus for its proper development in other European countries, which are not only geographically connected with it, but also focused on the joint development of this promising economy field.

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