

Tourism in the Process of Decentralising Political and Economic Authority in Poland between 1989 and 2009

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Abstract

Tourism economy constitutes a part of domestic economy. It is characterised by a local, regional, and trans-regional subjective and objective system. Tourism development depends to a great extent on appropriate political and economic solutions which should be found, as they provide basis for this development in local and regional systems. Decentralisation of the political and economic authority is a fundamental condition for the effective economic development, for tourism as a social and economic phenomenon is characterised by a significant dependence on the sphere of politics and political systems as well as on the way the authority in a state is organised and exercised. The development of tourism in Poland between 1989 and 2009 results from the political changes initiated in economy by the so-called Plan of Balcerowicz in 1990. It also results from the changes in the political and economic sphere, the changes which were expressed by the decentralisation of the political and economic authority in 1990 and 1998.

Key words: tourism economy, decentralisation of political and economic authority.

JEL Classification: E69

1. Introduction

Political and economic solutions are to be found, as they constitute one of the important determinants of tourism development and provide basis for this development in local and regional systems. Since tourism economy has local and regional nature, we can perceive the decentralisation of political and economic authority as a fundamental condition of its development in Poland after 1989. Tourism as a social and economic phenomenon is characterised by a significant dependence on the sphere of politics and political systems as well as on the way the authority in a state is organised and exercised. Tourism economy development depends to a considerable degree on the scope in which the political-economic authority is decentralised and which characterises a given political system.¹

¹ See the author's studies on the matter including also: SZUBERT-ZARZECZNY, U., *Tourism Policy and Its Influence on the Development of Tourist Services in Poland between 1945 and 1979*. Wrocław: University of Economics. PhD Dissertation, 1985. SZUBERT-ZARZECZNY U.: *Tourism in the Process of System Transformations in Poland*. Wrocław: Publishing House of Economics University in Wrocław, 1996. SZUBERT-ZARZECZNY, U., "Economic Circumstances of Tourism in Poland in the 1990s." In: *Selected Issues of Tourism*.

Very positive changes initiated in 1989 occurred in the development of the Polish tourism economy.² It can be claimed that the introduction of the decentralised system of authority and administration in Poland between 1989 and 1990 and in 1998 made the tourism economy stimulate the economic growth in some Polish regions.

This paper is intended to show the changes which occurred in Poland between 1989 and 2009 when the decentralisation of the political and economic authority took place and which also resulted from the integration process between Poland and the European Union. In 2004 Poland and other post-socialist countries joined the EU and that year serves as a turning point, as the period of the system transformation (undertaken in our country after 1989) came to its end. We can now distinguish two stages of the tourism development in Poland after 1989: the first stage was a period of the political and economic system transformation (also in tourism) between 1989 and 2004, whereas the second stage was a time of tourism growth, once Poland had acceded to the EU. This is reflected also in the structure of this paper; its introduction includes the selected theoretical and practical issues of decentralisation related to the political and economic authority; next, the paper provides a description of the regional character of tourism economy and the influence of the European regional policy and regional funds on the growth of tourist regions. Such a structure gives room to discuss changes in the Polish tourism between 1989 and 2009 with attention given to 2004 being the above-mentioned turning point.

2. Nature of Decentralisation of Political and Economic Authority. Selected Theoretical and Practical Issues

Numerous definitions of the political and economic authority decentralisation have been formulated so far³. But they all share one common feature – they indicate the legally (statutorily) secured act of handing over the public authority to local (also self-governmental) governing bodies by the governing bodies of the central authority. This is a type of mega-interventionism by the state, so characteristic for the period of crucial system transformations taking place in this country⁴. Reasons of authority decentralisation differ just like the scope of competences, responsibilities, entitlements, and means undergoing decentralisation as well as the division of authority and public administration into levels. This depends on the general social and political, and especially economic situation of a given country⁵.

One of the most significant reasons for decentralising authority and administrative structures in a state is that some types of business activity and especially services have regional or local nature. This local and regional character of some business activity types requires that the

Wrocław: College of Management “Edukacja”, 1999. Economic Basics of Tourism. Wrocław: Publishing House of Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, 2002. Also other studies.

² This paper overlooks a social issue of the market character of changes in tourism in Poland after 1989.

³ According to the *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, decentralisation is a system in which only fundamental state posts are held by the representatives of the central level governing bodies, whereas the representatives of territorial (local) bodies have a wide scope of other competences. See *DICTIONARY OF FOREIGN WORDS*, Warsaw: State Publishing Institute, 1964: 139.

⁴ See also WOJTYNA, A., *Modern Capitalist Country against Economy. Theory and Practice*. Warsaw: PWN Scientific Publishing House, 1990.

⁵ A very interesting approach to the issue of authority is presented in the study by: JADWIGA STANISZKIS: *About Power and Helplessness*. Cracow: Literary Press, 2006.

public and administrative authorities operate to identify with business micro-entities and thus provide institutional conditions for their development. Managing entities in a sphere of service and maintaining regional economic policy requires singling out relatively independent entities from the general structure of the state authority and administration. Such entities would have a particular scope of freedom and would not be hierarchically subordinate to the central authorities. Tourism economy and services provided within its scope are of such a local and regional character, although we can also distinguish the so-called national (trans-regional and trans-local) tourism economy. This twofold character of tourism economy needs maintaining coordinated economic policy by the bodies of the state authority and territorial self-governments.

In Poland the decentralisation of public authority became one of the most important principles of law introduced after 1989 and specified in art. 163 of the Constitution of the Polish Republic. According to this article, public responsibilities not stipulated in the Constitution and other acts intended for the bodies of the state's public authority are undertaken by the authorities of the territorial self-government. The introduction of a three-level territorial self-government (commune, county, and voivodeship levels) in 1998 was an expression of the authority decentralisation in Poland⁶.

3. Regional Character of Tourism Economy

Tourism regions are established on the basis of particular tourism values which are intrinsically diversified. Tourism is a specific service sector of economy and its development depends on general social and economic solutions underlying the operation of the national economy. Tourism economy contributes to increasing economic profitability of the regions as it facilitates the creation of new workplaces, an inflow of capital (also foreign investments) and of foreign currency as well as it changes the economic structure of the regions having poor soil but still attractive natural values⁷.

Thus, decentralisation of social and economic authority is such a political solution which constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for tourism to develop in the market economy. Economic order including decentralised legal, economic, ecological, and spatial solutions in tourism serves as a stimulating factor for the business cycle both in the macro-economic scope and regional systems. The sector of tourism and leisure can be an important stimulant for the development of towns and regions and what is more – an effective instrument to fight unemployment. Expenditures of foreigners for tourism goods and services influence the balance of payments, whereas the citizens' expenditures allotted to this purpose allow for the redistribution of income within the regional and local scope.

The regional character of some types of business activity including tourism enforces the decentralised economic policy to be coordinated with the governmental general economic policy. As the economic integration has been taking place in Europe in the last decades, the regional economic policy (including tourism policy) maintained by the national bodies of the authority and administration must be coordinated with the trans-national and European regional policy whose principles and assumptions are binding for all the EU member states. The European regional policy is based on the principles of cohesion, solidarity and subsidiarity, whereas its

⁶ See acts on self-governments from 1990 and 1998: of 8 March 1990 on Commune Self-Government (Dz.U., Nr 16, poz. 95), of 5 June 1998 on County Self-Government (Dz.U. Nr 91, poz. 578), of 5 June 1998 on Voivodeship Self-Government (Dz.U., NR 5, poz. 1998).

⁷ KUREK, W. (ed.), *Tourism*, Warsaw: PWN Scientific Publishing House, 2007.

most important aim is to reduce inequalities in development between individual European regions. The principle of subsidiarity is extremely important for the activity of the territorial self-governments, as it allows for more efficient use of the self-governmental entities' own resources. Improving economic and social cohesion within the EU is in turn indispensable to boost competitiveness of this area against other countries of the so-called Triad.

The economic integration of the EU countries is taking place through changing the economic structure of individual states and regions. The regional policy, which is an important instrument used in structural transformations of countries and regions, belongs also to the EU structural policy. Economically backward regions often have natural values which can be used to develop tourism economy within their area. This refers not only to the rural and agricultural regions having poorer soil but also to borderlands characterised by high unemployment.

The targets of the European regional development policy were specified in relation to the Lisbon Strategy – a document approved by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000, in which long-term goals of the social and economic development strategy of the EU countries were established⁸. This ambitious target included in the Lisbon Strategy to improve the economic competitiveness of the EU countries through developing economy having its basis in knowledge was elaborated in the European policy of regional development. The most important aim of this policy is to increase economic attractiveness of the European regions for investors. This aim is to be achieved by applying the solutions which support innovation, business acumen, and development of new technologies. Hence, it is necessary to improve the accessibility to these regions, raise the service level, and protect the environmental potential. However, the aims of the EU regional policy have been formulated differently in different periods. These aims, formulated for the years between 2007 and 2013, include convergence (aim 1), regional competitiveness and employment (aim 2), and the European territorial cooperation (aim 3)⁹.

Different funds used for supporting the economically backward European regions have come into being and their existence directly involves the evolution of the European regional policy. The use of funds supporting the regional development in Europe has its own long-standing tradition. In the 1960s the EEC countries successfully used the European Social Fund (ESF), whereas the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was established in 1975. This resulted from the necessity to finance the Irish economic development by the European Communities (EC), as Ireland was one of the poorer countries of the Western Europe in 1970s; on its accession to the EC, this country boosted its social and economic development. The rules of financing the economically backward European regions changed in the mid-1980s, when the ESF and ERDF joined other instruments, thus to create financial basis for achieving targets of the European regional policy. Also the following two structural funds were in use between 2000 and 2006: the Fishing Orientation Financial Instrument (transformed into the European Fisheries Fund) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (transformed later into the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) are instruments intended for maintaining the shared European agrarian and fishery policy. Also the Cohesion Fund (CF) plays a significant role in the regional policy; the fund is not a typical structural fund, however, since 2007 it has served an important function in the transformation of the European regions' economic structures. CF and

⁸ More about Lisbon Strategy see RADŁO MARIUSZ-JAN (2003) Challenge of Competitiveness. Lisbon Strategy in the Extended European Union, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs, 2003.

⁹ See Working for the Regions – Regional Policy of the European Union for 2007-2013. http://europa.eu/pol/reg/index_pl.htm.

ERDF build the so-called operational programmes. It must be emphasised that the time during which the CF's resources can be used is limited. On 1 January 2000 Spain, Greece, and Portugal lost their right to use the CF's resources, whereas Ireland – on 1 January 2004. On 1 May 2004, however, the countries which joined the EU on this day were granted such a right (the so-called new EU or EU₁₀). Since 1 January 2007 Bulgaria and Romania, further EU₂₇ countries, have been exercising this right.

The European Social Fund (ESF) in turn is intended for financing projects which support the transformations of an occupational structure and education as well as the programs for creating new workplaces. The regional funds provide financing first of all for the so-called innovations, to which ca. 25% of the resources in total is allotted, and also for transport and human resources (20% of the resources in total) as well as for natural environment (19%) and other purposes. However, the use of regional fund resources is significantly restricted. This is conditional on the level of the gross domestic product which in a given region does not exceed 75 % of the average of this measure for the EU. The resources of the Social Fund can be used in those regions in which the GDP does not exceed 90% of the average for the EU.

ERDF and CF are of great importance for tourism economy intrinsically being regional. The resources of ERDF finance infrastructure, innovations, and investments, whereas the CF serves to provide funds for the projects related to the infrastructure of natural environment and transport. Without tourism and para-tourism infrastructure even the most attractive tourism values cannot be economically used and cannot contribute to the growth of the region's economic profitability. Although we could witness a change of character and fast development of tourism economy in Poland already in the first years of the political transformation, only the Polish accession to the EU in 2004 and an opportunity to use the financial resources from the regional funds made our tourism regions increase their competitiveness on the European market of tourism goods and services.

4. Tourism in Poland between 1989 and 2009

The political changes initiated in Poland in 1989 above all consisted in laying political foundations to direct the Polish economy towards economic growth and development organised according to the principles typical for the Western civilisations, i.e. free market, democracy, civil society. These changes should always aim at the economic growth and civilization development of the country which is making effort connected with political reforms. However, major social groups find it hard to accept one of the reform consequences, that is the growing social polarization and impoverishing. In Poland and other post-socialist countries great diversification of the social and economic development manifesting itself also in the regional scope results from the heritage of the past including especially the principles of political and economic centralism being the basis of the command-and-quota system. Tourism economy put under the strict discipline of the centralised tourism policy had no chance to develop to meet social expectations¹⁰.

Nonetheless, the transformation in Poland initiated after 1989 brought also a positive effect – the services became more important in quantitative and qualitative terms; this is termed servicisation. The development momentum of individual service types at particular stages of the

¹⁰ More about the subject See SZUBERT-ZARZECZNY, U., *Tourism Policy and Its Influence on the Development of Tourist Services in Poland between 1945 and 1979*. Wrocław: University of Economics 1985. PhD Dissertation.

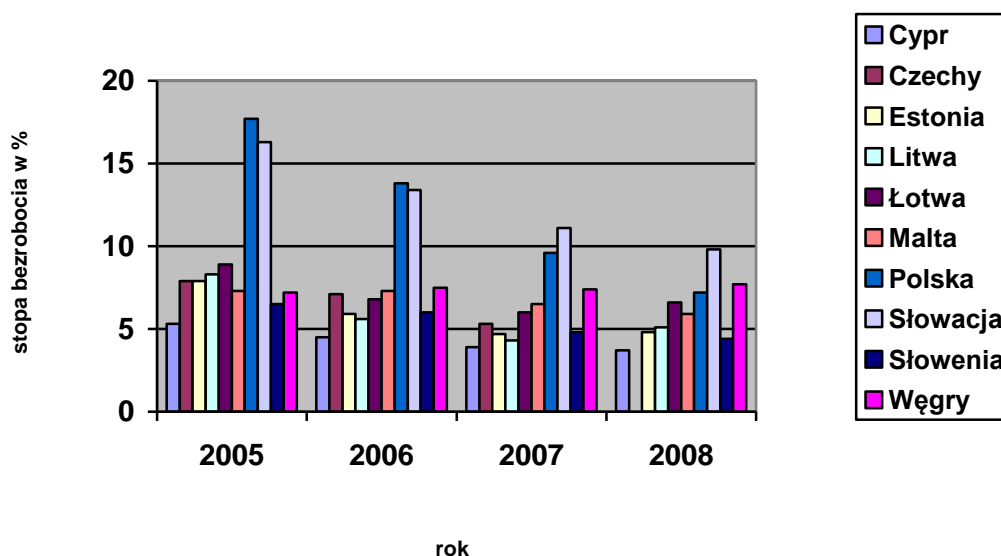
political transformation was different, however tourism services were developing fastest already in the first moments of the political changes in Poland. Tourism became one of the most important fields of economics and was introduced to the local and regional strategies of the economic development in communes, counties, and voivodeships. Whereas the development of farm tourism services enabled to enhance multi-functionality of rural areas and resulted in the significant increase of profitability of farms in many Polish regions.

The economic policy maintained in Poland after 1989 was very liberal, the social and economic consequences of which could be seen already in the first years of political transformations¹¹. This feature of the Polish economic policy was not changed in the following years of the political changes, despite growing polarisation of the society, social discontent and the emergence of a specific variant of Polish capitalism in this period¹². The stage of transformation and adjusting the Polish political and economic system initiated in 1989 was completed in 2004 when Poland and other countries joined the EU. At that moment the process of integrating economic structures of the entire EU acquired a new character and this also referred to tourism, tourism movement and tourism economy in all new EU member states.

We can find clear disproportions in reference to the economic development level between the old EU countries (also termed EU₁₅) and the “new” UE countries (EU₁₀). Taking the regional system of the EU countries’ economy into consideration, we see that these disproportions are growing. And that is why, the European regional policy, its targets, and means play such an important role, as without them it is impossible to reduce such disproportions. Diagrams 1 and 2 below illustrate the situation on the labour market and in the monetary sphere in the EU-10 countries between 2005 and 2008.

¹¹ See Szubert-Zarzewny, U., *Tourism in the Process of System Transformations in Poland*. Wrocław: Publishing House of Economics University in Wrocław, 1996.

¹² See also JADWIGA STANISZKIS: *Postcommunism. An Attempt to Provide Description*. Gdańsk: Publishing House, 2005; JADWIGA STANISZKIS: *Poland’s Chances. Our Possibilities for Development in Today’s World*. Warsaw: Rectus Publishing House, 2005.



Left: Unemployment Rate in %;

Right: Countries from top to bottom – Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary

Bottom: Year

Diagram 1. Unemployment Rate in EU-10 between 2005 and 2008.

Source: own work on the basis of data on <http://www.rynekpracy.pl>.

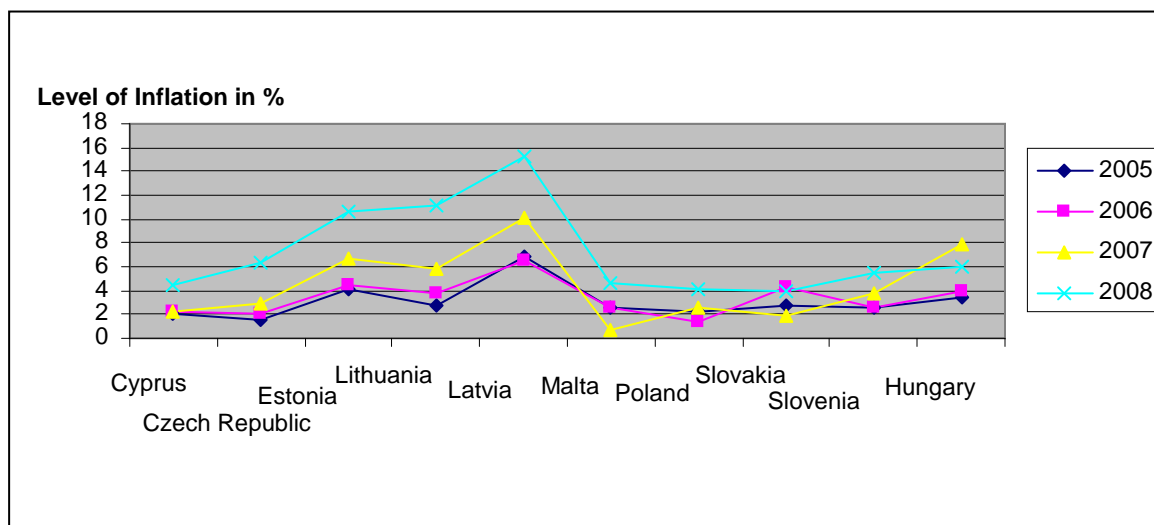


Diagram 2. Inflation Rate in EU-10 between 2005 and 2008

Source: own work on the basis of data on

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46870091&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=TSIEB060

4.1. Polish Tourism Economy in the First Period of Political Transformation

We can say that in the 1990s and later tourism developed in two stages in Poland¹³: 1990-2004 and after the Polish accession to the EU in 2004. The first stage fell on the period between 1990 and 2004. In the first years of the transformation – between 1990 and 1998 – inbound and national tourism developed fast in quantitative terms and the same is true for outbound tourism. It is important to remember about 2004 being a turning point in which Poland met all requirements to access the EU. Also clear qualitative changes took place between 1990 and 1998, whereas after 1998 and especially after 2004 we could see clear quantitative and qualitative changes of the Polish tourism development. This resulted also from the influence the liberal economic policy had at the first stage of the political transformations in Poland. Also tourism was under such influence, although this had a twofold character: on the one hand we saw that the development of some segments of the dynamically forming tourism market was stimulated (this included borderlands, tourism regions in which the so-called tourism communities, farm tourism in the agricultural areas etc. were created); whereas on the other hand, this influence was also negative, as it limited tourism development in Poland. Income disproportions and social and economic inequalities have their regional dimension and are related to the unemployment level in individual regions¹⁴.

The second stage brought downward trends in all types of tourism movement including also inbound tourism in Poland. This is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Foreign Tourists in Poland between 1995 and 2001 (in millions)

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
19.1	19.4	19.5	18.8	17.9	17.4	15.0

Source: <http://www.etc-europe-travel.org>

In the 1990s Poland acquired greater share on the international market with relation to tourism. The most spectacular changes took place in the size and structure of the foreign tourism movement both inbound and outbound. The quantitative increase of foreign tourism was closely related to the introduction of new management rules between 1989 and 1990 (Balcerowicz's Plan), whereas the change of inbound and outbound movement structure proved that tourism as social, economic, and political phenomenon is marked by fast absorption of various negative and positive characteristics of the general social and economic development. But we should remember that the foreigners' arrivals to Poland in the first years of the political changes were related to favourable conditions for frontier trade. However, at the end of the 1990s and later this factor of tourism development in Poland significantly weakened. At the same time we recorded

¹³ More about the subject see: Circumstances of Tourism Development in Poland. Regional Issues (Exemplified by the Silesian Region). Joint authorship: SYLWIA SZCZEPANEK, URSZULA SZUBERT-ZARZECZNY. [In:] *Tourism Economy in the 21st Century. Chances and Barriers of Development in the International Integration*. Ed. by Stefan Bosiacki, Janusz Grell. Poznań: University of Physical Education in Poznań, 2004.

¹⁴ The highest unemployment rate occurs also in the voivodeships such as Warmian-Masurian, Pomerania, Holy Cross (Świętokrzyskie), Lubusz. These are the areas of different tourism values in which recession in tourism occurred.

the decrease of an index of the peoples' tourism activity in relation to national tourism, despite some periods of clear index increase.

To sum up, we can claim that the tourism development in Poland in the first years of political transformations strongly depended on the course of the process itself. Moreover, the direction of transformations was set by the rules of affiliating Poland with the EU structures. On 1 May 2004 Poland became a rightful EU member and the further development of the Polish tourism economy was to a great extent subordinated to the binding rules and regulations in the EU regional policy.

4.2. Development of Tourism Economy after Polish Accession to the EU

The financial crisis the world's economy suffered in the first decade of the 21st century influenced the development of tourism economy in Poland after 2004. That the number of tourists' visits to Poland in 2008 decreased in comparison to 2007 (ca. 13 %), was just one of the crisis consequences. The number of visitors in Poland in 2008 is estimated to be about 13 million¹⁵. For comparison, in 2005 15.2 million foreign tourists came to Poland. This figure constitutes 20% of the foreign tourists' arrivals to France in the same year, the country which won the first place in the ranking of such visits¹⁶.

The fluctuations of currency exchange rate triggered by the financial crisis brought about weakening of the value of the Polish currency and this affected the level and value of tourist expenditures. According to the studies conducted by the Institute of Tourism in 2008, the average expenditures of foreign tourists in Poland equalled ca. USD 410 per person. This means an increase of these expenditures resulting from the change of exchange rates. In 2007 in Poland income generated by tourism amounted to USD 10.6 billion (in the USA: USD 96.7 billion, and in Spain: USD 57.8 billion). In 2008 in Poland the total tourism income increased and amounted to USD 11.4 billion¹⁷. In the same year the level of participation in trips abroad grew to reach 17%, which is comparable to the same level in 1996. The Polish participation in national trips reached the level of 41% in 2008. Our trips abroad show upward tendency and are competitive for leisure in the country¹⁸.

The expenditures for trips abroad for Poland amounted to USD 4.3 billion in 2005. The tourist expenditures of the Polish citizens equalled USD 8.5 billion in 2007. Income from foreign tourism reached USD 6.3 billion in 2005 in Poland, whereas in the USA whose income from foreign tourism was the highest that year amounted to USD 81.7 billion, in Spain – USD 47.9 billion, and in France – USD 42.3 billion. Also the average daily expenditures of the Polish

¹⁵ TOURISM SECTOR – DEFINITIONS, ANALYSES, QUANTITATIVE DATA AND FORECASTS. Warsaw: Tourism Institute, August 2009. Paper completed for the following programme: Polish Public Statistics. Principal: Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Tourism Department.

¹⁶ According to UNWO Tourism Highlights, Edition 2006

¹⁷ We should also remember about methodological deficiency in estimating the amount of tourist expenditures, which results in adding to tourism expenditures also the purchases which are to be sold further and hence are not strictly tourist-like.

¹⁸ According to the Tourism Institute, in 2008 we recorded a great growth of the number of the Polish tourists' trips to Greece, Spain, Egypt, Ireland as well as Lithuania and Czech Republic.

tourists, both long-term and short-term expenditures, increased in 2008 as compared to 2007, by 33% and by 31% respectively.¹⁹

One of clear positive effects of the Polish accession to the EU related to tourism economy was that the transport accessibility of many tourism regions improved, although the condition and quality of the Polish transport infrastructure still remains a problem. Moreover, subsidies obtained from the EU resources for the tourism development allowed for increasing the economic profitability of many tourism regions in Poland. So the conclusion is that the decentralisation of the political and economic system in Poland in reference to tourism economy brought the most important result, that is, a possibility to develop this economy, in particular Polish regions, in a fast and effective way.

5. Conclusion

Introducing the principles of the market economy in Poland resulted in the growth of the macroeconomic importance of tourism. The economic freedom caused an explosion of business acumen and tourism became one of the methods to embody this freedom, despite monetary restrictions limiting the global demand. Tourism has become a field of the local and regional economy, implemented into the strategy of developing communes, towns, counties, and voivodeships. Also a new form of farm tourism services emerged, due to its commercial character. This brought about the growth of economic profitability of many farms. That the implemented reforms allowing for the membership of Poland in the EU enabled the increase of the economic profitability in the tourism regions, was an unquestionable success. For these regions have now a possibility to use the resources of the EU funds for the tourism development.

The international financial crisis which emerged in the first decade of the 21st century in the United States and quickly spread all over the world requires that we undertake coordinated political and economic actions not only at the level of the particular world countries' levels – these actions must also inscribe in the new character of the states' global political and economic interventionism²⁰.

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