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## A PROPOSAL FOR A TOURISM REGIONALIZATION OF POLAND BASED ON THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF TOURISM IN A REGION

**Abstract:** The paper presents a brief review of twenty proposals for tourism regionalization of either a part of or the whole of Poland (or attempts to delimit the most attractive areas in terms of leisure), formulated between 1938 and 2012. It also analyses selected definitions of tourism regions and discusses the indicators which are proposed for the delimitation of tourism regions. Moreover, the paper attempts to indicate areas with the highest levels of tourism, in part modelled on Maria Mileska (1908-1988). It includes academic (precise) criteria for the designation of tourism regions. Some researchers' comment that Mileska's work is (partially) outmoded not so much from the methods employed as in the number of tourism regions and the areas covered. This should be regarded as understandable given that this regionalization was formulated at the beginning of the 1960s. Another important issue raised is the most recent tourism regionalization of Poland as prepared by Durydiwka.

**Key words:** tourism regions, tourism regionalization, criteria for the designation of tourism regions, tourism function indicators

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Delimitation of tourism regions is an important issue in contemporary tourism geography. The issue, although relatively demanding, is of great theoretical and practical importance, however no single and valid definition of a tourism region has been offered. This is confirmed by J. POTOCKI (2009) who states that even though the term 'tourism region' is indeed often used, it raises numerous doubts as to its nature and characteristics.

As regards the source literature, the vast majority of authors consider a tourism region to be an objectively existing category: M. ORŁOWICZ (1938), M.I. MILESKA (1963), A. BAJCAR (1969), Z. FILIPOWICZ (1970), J. WARSZYŃSKA & A. JACKOWSKI (1978), W. DEJA (1982), Z. KRUCZEK (2002), S. LISZEWSKI (2009).

### 2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

A tourism region may be considered within three contexts (MAZURSKI 2009):

- a region of tourism development (investment),
- a region of tourism activity,
- a region of tourism attractiveness.

Numerous (more or less precise) definitions of a tourism region have been formulated. M.I. MILESKA (1963) defines a tourism region as an area of high tourism value, within which tourism is concentrated. In turn, according to K. MAZURSKI (2009), a tourism region is a part of space where tourism occurs, or is likely to. The most comprehensive definitions of a tourism region are offered by the following authors: J. WARSZYŃSKA & A. JACKOWSKI (1978), A. KORNAK & A. RAPACZ (2001) and S. LISZEWSKI (2002).

J. WARSZYŃSKA & A. JACKOWSKI (1978) conclude that a tourism region is an area with tourism functions on the basis of certain uniformity of features of the geographical environment and internal service links. It comprises areas of high tourism value with a well-developed tourism infrastructure and transport accessibility. A. KORNAK & A. RAPACZ (2001) mention tourism value, transport network and tourism development.

In turn, S. LISZEWSKI (2002) states that a tourism region is an area attractive to tourism, particularly natural, with appropriate management within which tourism activities are undertaken. Other important features are internal consistency and relation, the level of which delimits a region's boundaries.

Another important (and controversial) issue is whether a tourism region should be considered within geographical areas or administrative units.

M. Durydiwka reports that regions using local administrative boundaries is consistent with an analytical concept of a region. Regionalization is a method of classification in spatial terms, and an analytical region is spatially generalized, not an actual system existing in reality (CHOJNICKI 1996).

Another element is which characteristics should be taken into account when describing the characteristic features of a tourism region. In the source literature, the following are predominant:

- available accommodation (WYSOCKA 1975, DRZEWIECKI 1980, BIDERMAN 1981, JACKOWSKI 1981, MATCZAK & SULIBORSKI 1984, WARSZYŃSKA 1985, FARACIK 2006, DEREK 2008);
- volume of tourists (JACKOWSKI 1981, MATCZAK 1982, WARSZYŃSKA 1985, FISCHBACH 1986, LISZEWSKI 1987, FARACIK 2006, DEREK 2008).

To a lesser extent, the following are also referred to:

- level of employment in tourism services or income earned from tourism (JACKOWSKI 1971, DRZEWIECKI 1980, SWIANIEWICZ 1989, DEREK 2005);
- the size of the area and how it is used (MATCZAK 1982, MATCZAK & SULIBORSKI 1984).

Most of the twenty tourism regionalizations formulated in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Poland are actually devoid of academic justification. This is due to the authors being driven by their own intuition (arbitrarily), and generally adopting their own (subjective) criteria unsupported by statistics.

These include the administrative boundaries of provinces (FILIPOWICZ 1970), value for tourism and development (BAJCAR, 1969, BAR & DOLIŃSKI 1970), the physiology of leisure (WYRZYKOWSKI 1975), an assessment of the geographical environment and its management (Tourism Development Plan for Poland, 1973), the type and significance of tourism functions (LEŚKO & KLEMENTOWSKI 1979), historical and administrative necessities, and 'tourismification' (DĘBSKI 1979), evaluation of value and an assessment of accommodation (BARTKOWSKI 1982), an analysis of the tourism product (D'LITTLE 1994), policies of Province Governors (Department of Physical Culture and Tourism 1994), incoming tourism (Institute of Tourism 1994), concentration of tourism (LIJEWSKI, MIKUŁOWSKI & WYRZYKOWSKI 1998), and the predominant type of tourism space, tourism function and the seasonal variability (LISZEWSKI 2009).

Tourism regions in these studies refer to areas which are too large, for instance provinces (FILIPOWICZ 1970, DĘBSKI 1979, KRUCZEK 2002), macro-regions (KRUCZEK & SACHA 1977, Institute of Tourism, 1994, LIJEWSKI, MIKUŁOWSKI & WYRZYKOWSKI, 1998, KRUCZEK

2002), or consideration in a historical perspective (BAR & DOLIŃSKI 1970, DĘBSKI 1979). In turn, S. LISZEWSKI (2009) identifies three types of tourism region: leisure and recreational (15), metropolitan (8) i.e. those associated with the 10 largest Polish cities, and heritage tourism regions (remaining regions).

These proposals could mean the entire or almost the entire area of Poland might be considered to be a single extensive tourism region. Such an approach seems inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, Poland is characterized by a very uneven level of (or absence of) tourism infrastructure because tourism is spatially highly concentrated. Secondly, the vast majority of regionalization approaches fail to take natural environmental value into account.

The achievements of Polish tourism geography in tourism regionalization are significant, yet a modern, acceptable regionalization is still missing. Those based on academic criteria are the regionalizations proposed by M.I. MILESKA (1963) and M. DURYDIWKA (2012).

A comparison of selected tourism regionalization approaches allows a classification according to the purpose for which they were formulated, for example environmental protection, academic value, or spatial management. To some extent, the ultimate outcome of regionalization is also affected by its purpose (and, primarily, its presumptions).

### 3. THE TOURISM REGIONALIZATION OF POLAND ACCORDING TO M.I. MILESKA

In 1963, Maria Mileska carried out the first analytical tourism regionalization of Poland. The author relied on three elements: evaluation of value for tourism, tourism development (accommodation facilities), and the volume of tourism. She identified 21 leisure-and-tourism regions (Fig. 1 and Table 1), and 11 potential ones. The potential leisure-and-tourism regions included Olsztyński, Olecko-Rajgrodzki, Drawsko-Szczecinecki, Barlinecko-Myśliborski, Zbąszyński, Kruszwicko-Gnieźnieński, Obornicko-Wągrowiecki, Roztocze, Głucholański including Pokrzywna, Myślenicko-Limanowski, and Bieszczady Mountains.

Figure 1 also presents M.I. MILESKA'S (1963) classification, in terms of identified local government districts with 500 or more beds. Over the course of the last 50 years, the northern and southern parts of Poland have undergone some minor changes. Most local government districts are found in the regions identified by M.I. Mileska

In western Poland, new areas have emerged which may be considered new tourism regions.

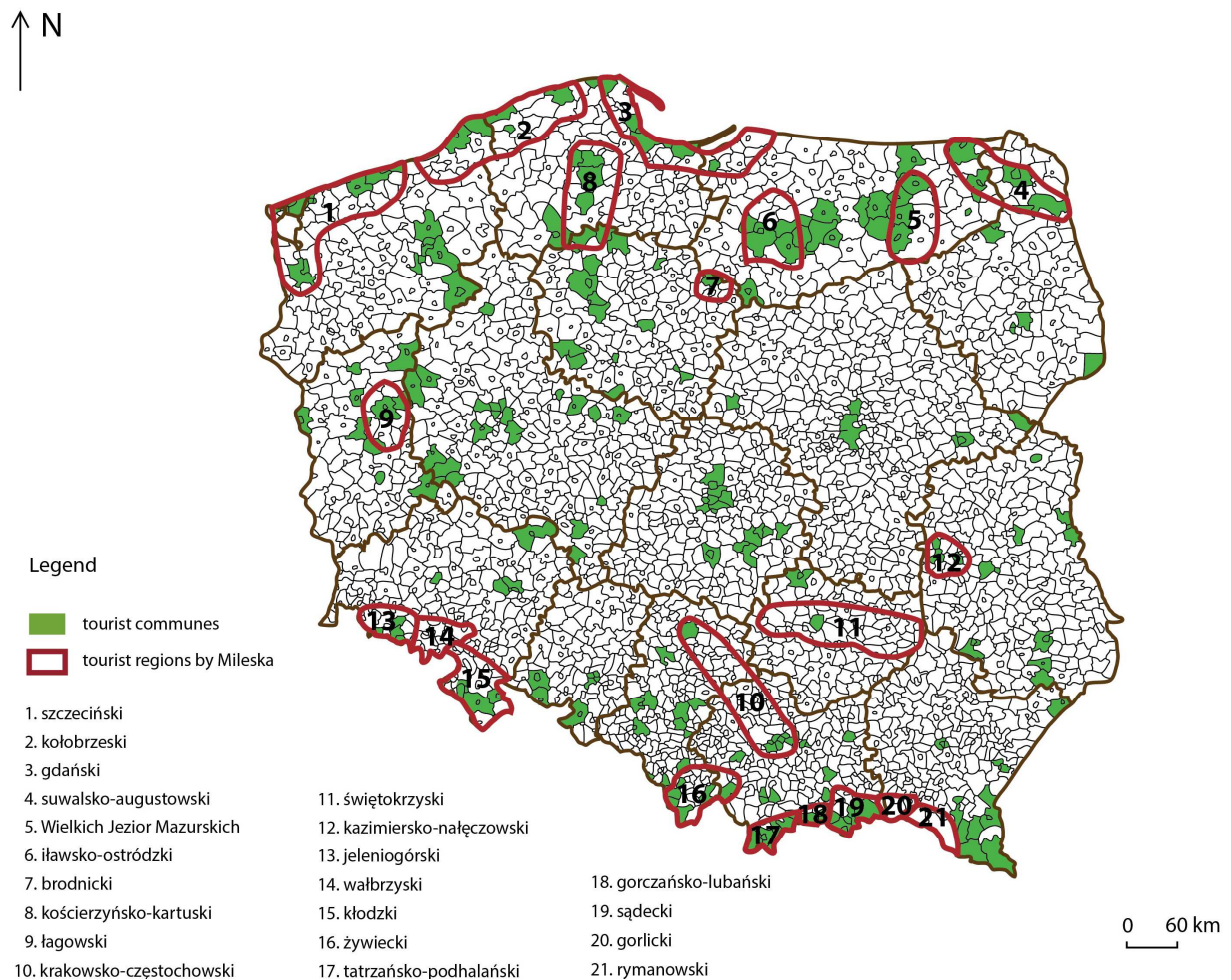


Fig. 1. Leisure-and-tourism regions as identified by M.I. MILESKA (1963) against a backdrop of local government districts (with 500 or more beds)  
Source: author

The leisure-and-tourism regions as identified by Mileska cover an area of 25,185 km<sup>2</sup> (8% of the total area of the country). Accordingly, based on her evaluation of the geographical environment, as much as 35% of the area of Poland has an attractive natural landscape. Taking into account the scoring scale, it seems that the author also included areas with an average tourism value. Regardless of the reference frame, areas attractive in natural terms have developed. Mileska also notes in her study: "Tourism-related capital expenditure in Poland coincides, generally, with the most attractive types of natural landscape (...). However, capital expenditure is uneven and disproportionate to the level of attractiveness". Moreover, some of the regions identified are characterized by a low level of capital expenditure. "In the Gorlicki area identified as a region, the levels of tourism and capital expenditure are very low, and therefore the area is hardly used" (MILESKA 1963, p. 106). The situation of the Rymanowski, Święto-

krzyski and Augustowsko-Suwalski regions is similar. The existence of the Brodnicki micro-region may provoke discussion as well.

In turn, her consideration of the tourism development of a region from the perspective of three forms of tourism: leisure-and-tourism, tourism-and-sightseeing, and adventure tourism, is not entirely accurate, since, as the author herself stresses, tourism-and-sightseeing has the widest range, because in addition to the natural environment, it also focuses on the cultural.

It is difficult to agree, however, with statements that this tourism regionalization is entirely outdated. Currently, however, it does require adjustment to the number, location and extent of tourism regions.

In view of the above, it seems that the level of tourism region development is most accurately described by accommodation, and associated levels of tourism development, expressed by the number of beds. In other classifications using additional data, the

Table 1. Leisure-and-tourism regions according to M.I. Mileska

Name of region	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )
Szczeciński	470
Kołoński	550
Gdański	500
Suwalsko-augustowski	1 260
Wielkich Jezior Mazurskich	2 800
Ławsko-ostrowski	740
Brodnicki	180
Kościerzynsko-kartuski	3 200
Łagowski	980
Krakowsko-częstochowski	1 270
Świętokrzyski	1 900
Kazimiersko-nałęczowski	250
Żywiecki	2 400
Tatrzańsko-podhalański	600
Sądecki	1 100
Gorlicki	1 050
Rymanowski	1 300
Gorczański-lubański	600
Jeleniogórski	1 250
Wałbrzyski	820
Kłodzki	1 965
Suma	25 185

Source: author based on M.I. MILESKA (1963).

area of tourism regions increases and covers areas for which the level of tourism-related capital expenditure is lower (or zero). This is also true for tourism regionalization as prepared by Mileska. For example, the region of the Great Mazurian Lakes has an area of 2,800 km<sup>2</sup> but, according to Kondracki's physical regionalisation of Poland, the region has an area of just 1,732 km<sup>2</sup>. In this example the area of the leisure-and-tourism region is overestimated by 38%, and it turns out that the area of 16 regions (excluding this one and poorly developed regions) is 12,087 km<sup>2</sup> (3.9% of the total area of Poland) – smaller by more the 50%. In view of this, it is also difficult to agree with part of the definition by Mazurski, quoted at the beginning of this section, according to which “a tourism region may be considered the physical space where tourism is likely to be found”.

#### 4. TOURISM REGIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RURAL AREAS IN POLAND

In addition to the regionalization by M.I. Mileska (1963), it is worth becoming familiar with that of M. DURYDIWKA (2012). Using Z. ZIOŁO'S measure (1973, 1985), a figure of  $Ft > 0.046$  was proposed in 1995 leading to the identification of 40 tourism regions, while in 2005 it was 34. It should be

emphasized that the measure has been adopted from industrial geography.

Out of 2,168 local government districts under analysis, in the first case there were 493 such districts of which 418 were found in the 40 regions. In the second case there were 476 of which 372 were found within 34 regions.

This regionalisation has several advantages. The most important is the use of a measure (consisting of five categories) which leads to the identification of tourism regions: number of beds per accommodation facility, number of beds per 1,000 inhabitants, number of year-round beds (%), numbers using accommodation per 1,000 inhabitants, and number of overnight stays per 1,000 inhabitants. The sixth category concerned the average duration (in days) of a tourist's stay. Thus, nine categories of tourism region (in terms of duration of tourist stays) were proposed, and this must be considered an original idea. A certain minimum for the designation of a tourism region (an area of three local government districts) was also used, moreover, the data for 1995 and 2005 show change over time.

It should be emphasized that over the relatively short period (1995-2005), the number of regions decreased by six. Furthermore, the number of regions where the area decreased was 16, while the areas of 13 regions increased.

According to M. DURYDIWKA (2012), the decreasing area of tourism regions, as related to rural areas reflects, on the one hand, a weakening of the tourism function (a drop in the number of accommodation facilities) in many local government districts, while on the other, a wider dispersion of those with at least an average level of the tourism function development.

Moreover, in the period mentioned, there was an increase in the number of districts characterized by shorter (1-3 days) tourist stays (from 41% to 55%) but a drop in those with longer (8 days and more) from 27.6% to 7.1%.

In view of this, the following question is still open: What is the minimum that shows that a given region may be considered a tourism region? Another issue is that all indicators (5) refer to one element i.e. accommodation facilities. However, this may be regarded as sufficient, as most of the previously cited authors have used it.

For example, in Warmińsko-Mazurskie province, of all tourism local government districts, the one rated highest in 2005 was that of Ostróda ( $Ft > 0.4372$ ), while the lowest was Godkowo ( $Ft > 0.0499$ ). The difference is nine-fold. In turn, at a national level, the highest rated was Mielno ( $Ft > 2.7056$ ), compared to Godkowo, the difference is 54-fold.

The total area of the regions was, in 1995, 76,345.5 km<sup>2</sup>, while in 2005, it was 73,257.7 km<sup>2</sup>.

A minor drawback of the study is that it fails to include small towns (with up to 5 000 inhabitants) of a tourism nature. In terms of land use, they differ little from well-developed rural areas.

### 5. PROPOSAL FOR THE DESIGNATION OF REGIONS BASED ON THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF TOURISM

A study published by T. LIJEWSKI, B. MIKUŁOWSKI & J. WYRZYKOWSKI (2008) shows that in Poland there were 206 local government districts with at least 500 beds (as at 2005), including 78 that accounted for 8.3% of the national total in 2013.

It was proposed that local government districts in which the number of beds is at least 500 should be taken into account. At a national level, the variation between these districts (except for major cities) is from less than a hundred to 13,000 beds.

An additional prerequisite is the condition of the natural environment (developed forest areas, town beach), which would allow the development of accommodation. This is the reason for rejecting eight districts neighbouring Warsaw and six Gliwice, Katowice, Rybnik, Sosnowiec, Tychy and Zabrze) near Katowice as tourism regions. The following towns were not included in tourism regions either: Elk, Elbląg, Piotrków Trybunalski, Gniezno, Piła, Bełchatów, Puławy, Lublin, Zamość and Gorzów Wielkopolski.

189 local government districts were included. The criterion adopted (a threshold of 500 beds), despite its arbitrariness, seemed to be optimal and the difference between the 500-bed threshold and the greatest number of beds (i.e. 13,000) is 26-fold.

This allows a redistribution of tourism regions as proposed by M.I. Mileska. In addition an excessive fragmentation of tourism regions (by designating too large a large number) is thus avoided. Moreover, the most commonly applied Baretje-Defert indicator for

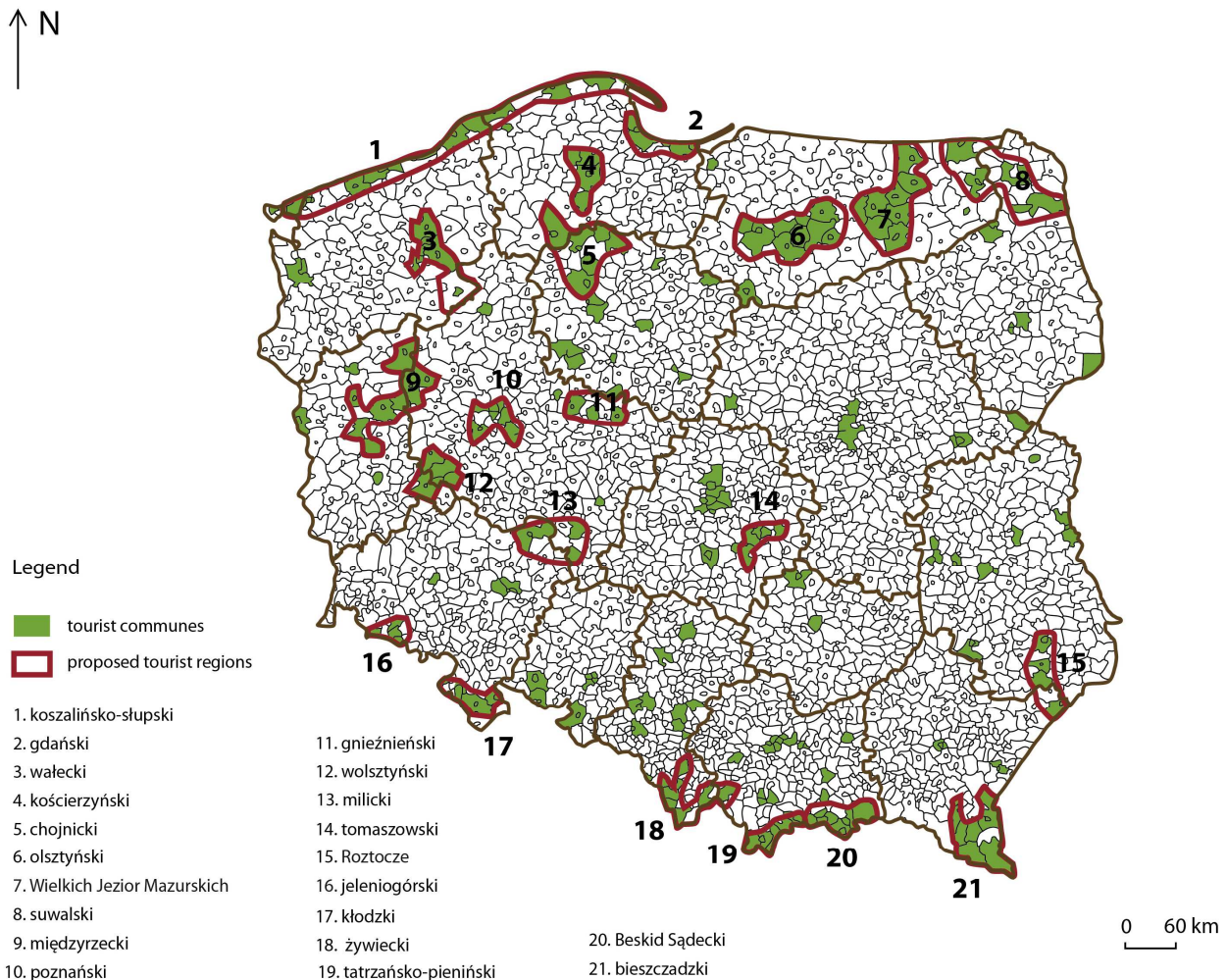


Fig. 2. Regions with the highest level of tourism (proposal)  
Source: author

Table 2. Proposal concerning regions with the highest levels of tourism

No.	Name of tourism region	Number of districts	District names	Total area of districts (km <sup>2</sup> )
1.	Koszalińsko-słupski	22	Darłowo*, Dziwnów, Kołobrzeg*, Mielno, Międzyzdroje, Postomino, Rewal, Świnoujście, Trzebiatów, Ustronie Morskie, Wolin, Jastarnia, Krokowa, Łeba, Puck, Ustka*, Wicko, Władysławowo	2 467.3
2.	Gdański	6	Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Stęzna, Krynica Morska, Sztutowo	793.5
3.	Wałecki	3	Czaplinek, Połczyn Zdrój, Złocieniec	904.1
4.	Kościerzynski	4	Kościerzyna, Stężyca, Sulęcyno, Karsin	771.0
5.	Chojnicki	6	Chojnice, Tuchola, Śliwice, Osie, Lubiewo, Koronowo	1 244.9
6.	Olsztyński	10	Barczewo, Purda, Pasym, Olsztyn, Gietrzwałd, Stawiguda, Ostróda*, Miłomłyn, Olsztyniek	2 220.5
7.	Wielkich Jezior Mazurskich	9	Giżycko*, Mikołajki, Mrągowo, Piecki, Ryn, Ruciane-Nida, Sorkwity, Węgorzewo	1 983.9
8.	Suwalski	5	Gołdap, Olecko, Suwałki, Płaska, Augustów	1 347.2
9.	Międzyrzecki	7	Drezdenko, Międzychód, Sieraków, Międzyrzecz, Pszczew, Łągów, Lubniewice	1 732.3
10.	Poznański	4	Poznań, Kórnik, Sęszew, Tarnowo Podgórne	725.0
11.	Gnieźnieński	3	Ślesin, Witkowo, Ostrowite	434.2
12.	Wolsztyński	4	Przemęt, Wijewo, Włoszakowice, Sława	741.2
13.	Milicki	3	Milicz, Przygodzice, Kobyla Góra	728.0
14.	Tomaszowski	4	Inowódz, Sulejów, Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Wolbórz	589.9
15.	Roztocze	3	Horyniec Zdrój, Susiec, Krasnobród	518.2
16.	Jeleniogórski	4	Szklarska Poręba, Karpacz, Podgórzyn, Jelenia Góra	305.1
17.	Kłodzki	5	Bystrzyca Kłodzka, Duszniki Zdrój, Kudowa Zdrój, Łądek Zdrój, Polanica Zdrój	528.6
18.	Żywiecki	7	Rajcza, Istebna, Wisła, Ustroń, Bielsko-Biała, Jeleśnia, Zawoja	808.4
19.	Tatrzańsko-pieniński	7	Kościelisko, Zakopane, Poronin, Bukowina Tatrzańska, Łapsze Niżne, Czorsztyn, Krościenko near Dunajec	679.5
20.	Beskid Sądecki	6	Szczawnica, Piwniczna Zdrój, Muszyna, Rytro, Krynica Zdrój, Uście Gorlickie	776.2
21.	Bieszczadzki	5	Lutowiska, Cisna, Baligród, Solina, Ustrzyki Dolne	1 582.7
Total		127	-	21 881.7

\* Rural commune and municipality.

Source: author.

the determination of the level of tourism development of a given town/city or a region would not have performed well. Regardless of the fact that it can be criticized for not taking into account second homes within a given area, or the level of utilization of the accommodation facilities, simplicity was its main advantage. Besides, other proposed indicators do not guarantee a more objective description of the level of development of tourism.

In Polish conditions, J. WARSZYŃSKA (1985) proposed a modification, i.e. a decrease from 100 to 50 (as a minimum threshold for a tourism resort). Thus, according to data for 2005, only nineteen local government districts would reach this level: Rewal (314), Krynica Morska (307), Łeba (296), Dziwnów (284), Mielno (262), Stegna (180), Ustronie Morskie (134), Karpacz (134), Międzyzdroje (128), Ślesin (102), Ustka (98), Jastarnia (86), Szklarska Poręba (74), Postomino (71), Mikołajki (71), Władysławowo (61), Darłowo (59), Krasnobród (56) and Włodawa (52).

Research by T. LIJEWSKI, B. MIKUŁOWSKI & J. WYRZYKOWSKI (2008) includes information that areas with outstanding tourism value cover an area of approx. 40,000 km<sup>2</sup> (12.8% of the area of Poland) which should be regarded as more realistic than that proposed by M.I. Mileska.

A tourism region (similar to M. Durydiwka's proposal) was considered to be an area of at least three local government districts with 500 or more beds in each of them. They are either adjacent to each other or separated by no more than one local government district with less than 500 beds. This is the case, for example, within the Suwalsko-Augustowski tourism region. In total, out of 127 local government districts (5.1% of the total in 2013 in Poland), 21 tourism regions were identified. The vast majority are associated with traditional areas i.e. lake districts, the Baltic Sea coast, and mountain areas (Figure 2).

The names of these regions were established on the basis of the town/city being the largest in terms of population (or two with a very similar population) within a given region or physical region (e.g. Great Mazurian Lakes or Roztocze). The total area of such regions (based on local government districts) is 21,881.7 km<sup>2</sup> (Table 2).

The region with the highest level of tourism, as shown in Table 2, is smaller than that of the theoretically designated area. This was the case both in the 1960s (the study by M.I. Mileska) and currently. This is due to the fact that naturally attractive areas (whether they are considered as physical regions or an administrative unit are only partially suitable for tourism development. This particularly refers to built up areas which are typically in well connected areas, without forests, in the vicinity of large bodies of water

(e.g. lakes or artificial reservoirs), an accessible coastline, or with attractive views (e.g. in the mountains).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

1. There is a lack of a single, common definition of a tourism region. Hence, to change this, it is necessary to select, from among current definitions the characteristics of such regions most often mentioned. These are homogeneity of area (in terms of physical features), the volume of tourism, tourism development, and transport connections.
2. There is a discrepancy between the proposed definitions of a tourism region and the opportunities (available statistical data) for research and delimitation.
3. Due to the availability of statistical data, regions must be considered within local government districts, and associated with physical regions. In order to not increase (to not fragment) the set of tourism regions, it seems important to adopt a minimum threshold of the number of local government districts (e.g. three), from which a region may be identified.
4. Most prepared tourism regionalizations are not of an analytical nature. Most often, the tourism regions are too large.
5. Only the studies by M.I. Mileska (partially outdated) and M. Durydiwka aspire to be such tourism regionalizations since they are the least controversial, and based on figures.
6. A significant problem is the selection and significance of indicators (and thus the construction of a measure which, in the case of M. Durydiwka, have been adopted from other geographical disciplines) on the basis of which a tourism region may be identified. It is best described by data (based on general accessibility) concerning accommodation facilities (regardless of the variants as provided by, for instance, M.I. Durydiwka).
7. A constant problem is what the minimum value of the indicator, or measure, should be to allow a decision to be made that a given area is a tourism commune/municipality. It seems that the presence of areas with outstanding natural environmental value should be decisive.
8. The regionalization as proposed by M.I. Mileska is more closely related to an area being environmentally attractive (the assessment of the areas as proposed by the present author is similar), while M. Durydiwka's proposal is also partially

associated with local government districts of average tourism value. Hence, their lower reliability which resulted in a difference in the number of tourism regions between 1995 and 2005.

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