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## Directions the development of business tourism in Poland - issues of sustainability

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**Abstract** – Business tourism in Poland has been developing since the 1990s, when the political regime changed. It is one of the many areas that have been subject to change after the historic year of 1989. However, it gained greater importance in the 21st century. There are several basic factors which have a significant impact on the development of the business tourism and the size of the supply and demand in this field of services. They are not only applicable on the Polish market, but also in the entire Europe and globally. The basic and most frequently mentioned include economic, political, social and technical factors. These determinants can be classified into two groups: macro-economic factors and regional factors (typically associated with a given destination). Poland was one of the few countries which was characterised by economic development in the last difficult years of crisis. Our country did not experience negative economic growth throughout those years. Thanks to these positive economic indicators, it was possible to keep tourism stable, both in traditional and business tourism. Poland is still a so called "emerging market" that is attractive and new direction of business travel. Therefore, the brand of Polish business tourism product should be built based on this interest.

**Keywords** – business tourism, Europe, factors, economy

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### Introduction

#### The development of business tourism

Business tourism in Poland has been developing since the 1990s, when the political regime changed. It is one of the many areas that has been subject to change after the historic year of 1989. However, it gained greater importance in the 21st century. Special attention was to this type of tourism and the product, as, compared to typical tourism oriented towards sightseeing and leisure, business tourists spend more money on travel, as well as in the destination itself, they are the target market for many business entities, and business travel movement takes place throughout the year, fending off the effects of seasonality.<sup>1</sup> It was almost twenty years ago, when the importance of business tourism was recognized by including it in the strategic documents such as: "Strategia Rozwoju Krajowego Produktu Turystycznego" (The Strategy of the National Tourist Product Development) drawn up by Urząd Kultury Fizycznej i Turystyki (the Department of the Fitness Culture and Tourism) The strategy emphasised an undertaking particularly important for the Polish government i.e.

developing the national tourist product in the five areas of national tourism including business tourism.<sup>2</sup> It was to become one of the major brands with its own manager, which, thanks to its modern application, was to effectively contribute to the development of this type of tourism in Poland.<sup>3</sup>

There are several basic factors which have a significant impact on the development of the business tourism and the size of the supply and demand in this field of services. They are not only applicable on the Polish market, but also in the entire Europe and globally. The basic and most frequently mentioned include economic, political, social and technical factors. In general, it can be assumed that these determinants can be classified

<sup>1</sup> [http://usfiles.us.szc.pl/pliki/plik\\_1268049685.pdf](http://usfiles.us.szc.pl/pliki/plik_1268049685.pdf)  
p. 13. (07.02.2013).

<sup>2</sup> H. Zawistowska, Organizational transformation in tourism (in Polish), Uczelnia Warszawska, Warszawa 2008, pp. 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> J. Śniadek, J. Styperek, Tourist product brands (in Polish), pp. 1-3. online:  
[http://www.studiaperiegetica.pl/pub/8\\_1\\_2007.pdf](http://www.studiaperiegetica.pl/pub/8_1_2007.pdf)  
(07.02.2013).

into two groups: macro-economic factors and regional factors (typically associated with a given destination).<sup>4</sup> Discussing the factors at the macro level, which include, first and foremost, economic factors, it should be noted that, to a large extent, the number of business trips is determined by the current economic situation in a particular country and in the world. At the time of general prosperity and economic growth, increased activity in business travel can be noticed. However, the times of crisis and recession will definitely restrict both business and incentive travel. The most reliable

entities who directly report the demand for this form of tourism.<sup>6</sup>

In broad terms, the dynamics of the of business tourism development is affected by increasing globalisation, both in the market economy and in socio-economic relations. More and more intercontinental business and social contacts lead to the necessity to travel on business in order to take care of different issues.<sup>7</sup> This is one of the most important factors affecting the increase in demand for services related to business tourism.

**Table 1. Arrivals of foreigners to Poland in 2008-2012.**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total arrivals	59 935 000	53 840 000	58 340 000	60 745 000	67 390 000
Arrivals of tourists	12 960 000	11 890 000	12 470 000	13 350 000	14 840 000

Source: own analysis based on <http://www.intur.com.pl/instytut.php?nr=1>

**Table 2. Main reasons for arrivals of foreigners to Poland in 2009-2011 (%).**

The reasons for arrival	2009	2010	2011
Business	27	25	26
Leisure (traditional tourism)	25	23	23
Visiting	18	18	19
Transit	8	10	7
Shopping	8	10	11
Other purposes	14	14	14

Source: own analysis based on <http://www.intur.com.pl/instytut.php?nr=1>

indicator here is primarily the dynamics of development, measured by the level of GDP. Poland was one of the few countries which was characterised by economic development in the last difficult years of crisis. Our country did not experience negative economic growth throughout those years. Thanks to these positive economic indicators, it was possible to keep tourism stable, both in traditional and business tourism.

The forecasts for the following years are optimistic; they show a growing trend thanks to a strong and stable global image.<sup>5</sup> Another important element in this regard is the total number and structure of the existing business

The politics of a particular country has a strong influence on development or halting the tourism. In countries with the unstable political, economic or social situation, the tourist movement decreases. Sense of security is one of the basic human needs, therefore, is taken into account during each travel, whether it is for business or leisure. Also, the state policy concerning the crossing of borders, issuing visas, the environment protection, taxes or ensuring safety within its borders affects the shape and size of tourism, including business travel.<sup>8</sup> Polish advantage on the world business tourism destination market, that is indicated worldwide, is political and social stability and visible economic progress from year to year.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Nuskiewicz K., Determinants of the development of business tourism on the example of the district Pułtusk (in Polish), [in:] Business tourism - determinants of development (in Polish), B. Iwan, M. Kacprzak, wyd. Wyższa Szkoła Turystyki i Języków Obcych w Warszawie, Warszawa 2012, pp. 92-93.

<sup>5</sup> S. Wróblewski, Polish contribution to strengthening Europe's competitiveness in the global market of business tourism (in Polish), Referat na Gremium Ekspertów Turystyki Polskiej, SGGW, Warszawa 2010, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> K. Nuskiewicz, Business tourism - determinants of development, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>7</sup> B. Iwan, Factors influencing the development of business tourism in Poland (in Polish), [in:] Business tourism - determinants of development (in Polish)..., op. cit., pp. 38-40.

<sup>8</sup> Business Travel Market Metrics..., op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup>

<http://www.meetingplanner.pl/news/aktualnosci/art.113,turystyka-biznesowa-w-polsce.html> (11.02.2013).

These business tourism development factors also include the shape and structure of the society. Today, the trend of the ageing society is visible in the world, especially in Europe where the most tourists come from. This factor is not so important when it comes to the number of business trips, but it is relevant regarding their organisation and shape. Demographic characteristics of the conference and meetings participants, as well as their preferences dictate the way they are organised. It is noted particularly in the choice of meeting place, the menu, the number and frequency of breaks, as well as the organisation of free time.<sup>10</sup>

When discussing another factor, namely related to the technical progress, particular attention should be paid to its twofold nature. It has enormous importance as far as the logistics and organisation of business events is concerned. Modern technologies allow a fast exchange of information, innovative ways of presenting source materials and organising large events for thousands of participants. It could be stated that the development of technology, including the possibility of video conferencing, will reduce the amount of business travel. However, most companies appreciate direct contact while doing business, which is not only the manifestation of respect, but also professionalism. Moreover, it is the opportunity to meet new people and expand the contact network. In this respect, what's changing is not only the way the service is delivered but also the way it is sold and distributed. Internet and on-line platforms are now the dominant sources of conducting the market research, but also of promotion and selling of the offered services. To exist in the real world, a company should first appear in one of the most important global media, which is the Internet.<sup>11</sup> The second way of perceiving this factor is paying attention to the scientific and technical progress in the various branches of the economy. The speed of new information emergence, development of technology and the advancement of science is in a way forcing people to share these achievements. The need to exchange information and experiences in various fields is growing and therefore various meetings, such as conferences, symposia, exhibitions and others are organized.<sup>12</sup>

The source literature provides information on associations and organizations functioning and developing their activity in the field of business tourism. They are considered as some of the most important actors having an impact on the development of MICE industry. In Poland one of the most important organizations of this kind is The Conferences and Congresses in Poland Association created in 1998 as a

platform for better cooperation of persons and entities interested in the issue of business tourism development. This was possible thanks to European Union PHARE TOURIN II. The main and basic objectives of The Conferences and Congresses in Poland Association (Polish: SKKP) since its foundation were, and still are, raising the level of its members' qualifications, the joint marketing and lobbying for the issues relevant to the industry (e.g. building the congress centres or raising money for promotional campaigns), the creation of a Meeting Planner and Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) profession. Moreover, SKKP participates in the most important activities in the field of business tourism in Poland (i.e. the co-creation of documents concerning tourism in the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Polish Tourist Organisation (Polish: POT). In 2004, SKKP, together with its counterparts from several European countries, designated EFAPCO-European Federation of the Professional Congress Organizer. This organization is committed to achieving the goal of building a positive image of Europe and its members as the destination for organising conferences and congresses, and legal regulation of the PCO profession.<sup>13</sup>

An important moment for Polish MICE industry was setting up the Poland Convention Bureau within the structures of Polish Tourist Organisation in 2002. The Bureau deals with the promotion of Poland as a place to organize successful business meetings. The mission of the Poland Convention Bureau is attracting organisers of the industry events significant for Poland, participation in fairs and establishing valuable business contacts, collecting statistical data, organising "study tours" and collaborating with foreign media, including the placement of articles and promotional materials in the press and catalogues devoted to the business tourism. POT and SKKP launched the Polish Congress Ambassadors Programme created to promote Poland and acquire possibilities of organising congresses in the country. The programme provides the members of international organisations (e.g. scientists) with assistance in attracting this type of events to our country. It is a tool used in many countries as an element of national marketing, effective also in Poland, for the benefit of our country.<sup>14</sup>

In turn, the most common local and regional factors involved in the development of business tourism in a given country or city are: geographic location, available accommodation and restaurant facilities, accessibility as well as nearby attractions and leisure facilities. The presence of headquarters and departments of international companies or universities in the country is also important.

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<sup>10</sup> W. Bartoszewicz, H. Borne-Januła, Methodology of research and pilot studies (in Polish)..., *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>12</sup> B. Iwan, Factors influencing the development of business tourism in Poland (in Polish), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://skkp.org.pl/> (12.02.2013).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.poland-convention.pl/> (12.02.2013).

An essential element necessary for the development of business tourism in a particular area is the infrastructure needed to organise meetings or events. An important thing to remember are the services accompanying the guests in a particular place, namely, catering, recreation and entertainment. The lack of such facilities is a barrier that prevents from finding a spot on a map of Meetings Industry. The most important is to congress and conference facilities meeting the requirements of the 21st century. They must be equipped with the best quality devices, they must have multifunctional rooms designed for all sorts of events with the ability to adapt to the requirements of the customer. Business tourism and business tourists themselves are a demanding segment of customers, focused on the highest quality services and outstanding product standard. That's why, apart from infrastructure, professional and experienced personnel providing services at a global level is so important.<sup>15</sup> If a country wants to attract huge events, it should have the appropriate accommodation facilities. The business hotels in Poland -mostly 5 and 4 star facilities, belong to the fastest growing hotel category in the country. Almost all of them have large conference rooms and the necessary equipment. All that is necessary for organising a meeting of a large group of people is gathered in one place. The size of the conference rooms should be adjusted to the size of the building and to the number of beds offered, so that most of the participants could be accommodated in the facility. Here, it should be noted that every year in Poland, the number of opened hotels of different categories is constantly growing. This trend has continued, with different fluctuations, since 2000.<sup>16</sup>

Potential factors affecting increased interest in the country are also large and prestigious events of different nature. Recently, Poland had a couple of significant opportunities to be noticed abroad build its image as a modern, hospitable country with much to offer in the area of i.a. business tourism. These events include the Chopin Year in 2010, the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union (which was associated with numerous visits by foreign politicians, journalists and business partners), and the organisation of the European Football Championships EURO 2012. These types of events are the basic form of a Polish promotion in Europe and around the world, creating a picture of a worthy partner in many fields.<sup>17</sup>

Promotion and creating a positive image is crucial for any country or city that wants to be considered a

business tourist destination. In Poland, this is first and foremost an obligation of a specialized government body- POT (Poland Tourism Organization) whose statutory tasks are promoting our country among its citizens and abroad. POT launches numerous initiatives designed to improve the image and the perception of Poland in Europe and in the world. One of the recent projects implemented in 2009-2012 was "Promote Poland Together" project. Its aim was to support the promotional activities carried out in collaboration with multiple entities promoting Poland in the world. The idea of such projects is to help tourists become aware of a particular country as a tourist destination, and it all comes down to the increase and intensification of foreign guests' arrivals to Poland.<sup>18</sup>

### **New trends on the market**

MICE industry is an area subject to dynamic changes, an area whose form depends on numerous factors which were discussed in the previous section. MICE industry is shaping to fit the spirit of times in which it evolves. The 21st century has brought new challenges, problems, as well as the comforts and convenience previously unheard of. At the turn of the centuries, many authors dealing with tourism tried to determine the trends that will dominate in tourism of the next millennium. As it could be expected, the evolution of tourism is still progressing as it extremely responsive to the changing economic, social, technological and environmental situation. In connection with these dynamic changes, the tourist market is transforming in every aspect, both when it comes to demand (tourists) and supply (tourist facilities).<sup>19</sup>

The main and visible trend, caused by drastic military events and terrorist attacks, is the organisation of business tourism events in countries with stable situation in, above all, politics. Professional organisers, in order to meet the customers' needs, are trying to provide comfort and sense of security to the participants. They must ensure full and comprehensive information about the taken security measures. All kinds of conference centres and hotels which sometimes host the meeting of thousands of professionals in a certain field, must actively participate in ensuring the maximum protection of all the people present. From the organiser's perspective, it is important that the actions are appropriate in relation to the scale of the events; practical, but discreet enough not to disturb the mental comfort of the guests.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> B. Iwan, Factors influencing the development of business tourism in Poland (in Polish), *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>16</sup> Year 2011 - 4-star hotels, [in:] Hotel market in Poland Report 2012 July (in Polish), Lipiec 2012, Nr. 1/2012, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> S. Wróblewski, Polish contribution to strengthening Europe's competitiveness (in Polish), *op.cit.*, p. 10.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.promujmypolskerazem.pl/\(21.02.2013\)](http://www.promujmypolskerazem.pl/(21.02.2013)).

<sup>19</sup> W. Alejziak, Tourism in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century (in Polish), Albis, Kraków 1999, pp. 9-11.

<sup>20</sup> B. Iwan, The needs of the purchasing market business services (in Polish), *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 110.

The economic crisis of the last few years has a great impact on the MICE industry. Because of the difficult financial situation and necessary cost cuts, companies have been forced to limit the extra spending, primarily on business events. As a result of inflation, unstable situation on the foreign exchange market, the increase of fuel and airline ticket prices, the higher cost of the hotels maintenance entailing increased accommodation prices, the change in MICE industry was inevitable. Therefore, the recent years show a trend of decreased number of organised or ordered events, or shortening their duration. Companies have limited budgets, therefore if they organise business trips to conferences or meetings, choosing the hotel or airlines is rather determined by price, not the higher standard. In times of crisis, the pressure on searching for the best quality, but in the lowest price is very clear. Choosing the meetings hosted in the country or region over long intercontinental travel (which is synonymous with increased costs) is quite common. This situation is going to shape and change along with the economy.<sup>21</sup> In Poland, according to a report drawn up by the Polish Convention Bureau, more than 93% of the meetings lasted less than 3 days. The length and duration of a meeting depends on its type, however, according to global trends, one or two-day meeting are the most common.<sup>22</sup>

An important aspect from an entrepreneur's perspective is the effectiveness and purpose of spent financial resources. Therefore, more and more attention during the organization of corporate events is paid to the ROI indicator (*Return on Investment*). It is a method involving the measurement of profitability of investments, interpreted as a rate of return on the investment made in order to carry out a specific project.<sup>23</sup> Currently, companies that allocate budgetary resources into business or incentive trips want to receive the measurable results. As shown by the study, a well organized event of this type can not only result in an increase in brand awareness, but it can also to encourage employees to work more efficiently, and thereby contribute to the company's success. ROI Institute along with MPI (*Meetings Professional International*) has prepared a method allowing measuring the return on investment of the typical business events. The process of measuring ROI is based on an analysis of several factors: the participants' satisfaction with the event, the programme's impact on the company's goals, comparison of costs and profits

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<sup>21</sup> Berbeka J., Borodako K., The meetings industry in Krakow in 2011 (in Polish), pp. 17-20.

<sup>22</sup> K. Celuch, The meetings industry in Poland in 2012 (in Polish), Poland Convention Bureau, Warszawa 2012, pp. 16-21.

<sup>23</sup> W. Rogowski, Accounting the efficiency of investment projects (in Polish), Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2004, pp. 94-95.

and the measurement of changes in the daily work after the training event.<sup>24</sup>

In order to gain a competitive edge on the market, the event organizers must keep up with the times and implement the standards present in the industry. The main direction is to organize sustainable meetings that are in tandem with corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is an approach which gained followers among the management staff at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. It relates to the implementation of the internal CSR policy into the enterprise management system. What should be taken into account are not only the interests of employees, customers and contractors, but also the society and the environment. In a synthetic approach, CSR policy aims at ensuring the interests of "the People, the Planet and the Organization" (*People, Planet, Profit*) in that exact order. In the meetings industry, it means developing a sustainable management of an event. The whole idea is to arrange a meeting in such a way that it has the smallest possible negative impact on the environment. CSR policy applies to such areas as transport, food and beverages, conference materials with the possibility of recycling, waste sorting, water and energy consumption control, or involvement in the activities of the local community.<sup>25</sup> The CSR policy was adopted by e.g. Sheraton hotel in Poznan, which included CSR activity in its business strategy. What's more, the significant part of the activities is devoted to the environment protection, being another important aspect, which is lately often taken into account.<sup>26</sup>

In recent years, the so called "green events" i.e. events that refer to the issues of ecology and environment protection, became very popular in the meetings industry. The topic of environment and use of natural resources has been approached with increasing attention, which is why this type of events do not only benefit the Earth, but also build a positive image of a company among its customers. Events oriented towards ecology become not only good advertising, but also allow companies to balance the expenditure as the organisation of ecological events is cheaper. Implementing the idea of green events requires a special infrastructure, especially the accommodation facilities, where the idea of ecology is fundamental. In Poland, where, in some places, the nature has preserved its original character and is not destroyed, as in the heavily industrialized countries of Western Europe, these events increase in significance. More and more hotels are created with ecology in mind. These types of facilities

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<sup>24</sup> M. Sidorkiewicz, Business tourism (in Polish), *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Events for companies - report IPO 2009 (in Polish), pp. 31-32. [online:] [http://www.ipo.pl/raporty/re\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ipo.pl/raporty/re_2009.pdf) (22.02.2013).

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.klubcsr.pl/projekt/poradnik-csr/csr-w-praktyce/sheraton-poznan-hotel.html> (12.04.2013).



are also opened in Poland e.g. Best Western Żubrówka Hotel in Białowieża, Młyn Klekotki Resort Spa in Mazury or Ramka hotel in Poznań.<sup>27</sup>

Business tourism, apart from meetings and conventions, also consists of incentive events for corporate employees. This area is also characterised by several dominant directions that are becoming more and more popular. Most commonly, the tried and popular forms of activity are chosen i.e. primarily quads, off-road, ropes courses or paintball. However, to go beyond the standard schemes, new ideas including picnics, strategic urban games and a role-playing game "Who is the killer?" are becoming more and more popular. The latter is associated with the continued popularity of crime series and the desire to experience similar emotions in one's own life. The participants of the event are to play the role assigned to them in the game according to the set scenario. This ensures extraordinary amounts of fun, but also develops the mind by solving puzzles and problems contained in the scenario.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the present times are based on a few primal foundations. Branding is one of them. Also in tourism we can encounter the presence and creation of branded tourist products. The customers' minds consolidate the image of a brand which is associated with high quality and reliability. A company or entity that developed a strong, reliable and recognised brand on the market is able not only to implement higher prices, but also to introduce new offers without worrying about their adoption and acceptance by the customers. Branded products have a better chance of competing against international rivals, which is extremely demanding. Moreover, they generate much bigger profit than the average products.<sup>29</sup>

In accordance with the stance adopted at the beginning, the tourism dynamics makes all kinds of processes and events taking place in the world affect its character. Given the pace of the civilization development and interdisciplinarity of tourism, being able to effectively manage its development requires using the forecasting methods. There are many techniques used to predict the future, however, according to J. Van Doorn, forecasting tourism phenomena requires using one of the four methods: exploratory, speculative, normative or integrative forecasting.<sup>30</sup> Effectiveness in the organisation of events and meetings requires using the forecasts and focusing attention on emerging trends, because it has an impact on what will happen in the industry in the future, and thus what is our position on the market going to be.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, pp. 15-17.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ktozabil.pl/> (21.02.2013).

<sup>29</sup> J. Sniadek, J. Styperek, Tourist product brands (in Polish), op. cit., pp.1-6.

<sup>30</sup> W. Alejziak, Tourism in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century (in Polish), op.cit., pp. 239-244.

## **Opportunities, risks and prospects of the business tourism development in Poland**

After more than 20 years of changes in our country, it can be concluded that the Polish MICE industry became more significant and can achieve even more. New investments, significant events with large publicity, as well as increased awareness and interest in the countries of the eastern part of the European Union are the promising factors for the future development. Poland has gone through a period of entering the market with a new offer and is now trying to create a mature and stable product that will be popular and trusted. In this section, the factors that affect a direction of Polish business tourism should be analysed.

The primary issue is to identify the opportunities which, used well, can bring profits for entrepreneurs, economy, and society as a whole. Lower prices and thus lower costs of organizing business events in Poland when compared with prices in the Western Europe are the main aspect. A similar situation occurs in relation to labour costs ensuring high quality of services. The financial profit itself is not the only variable responsible for hosting meetings in Poland. The infrastructure and the facilities have the strongest influence, and there is no shortage of them in Poland. Moreover, many great facilities for organising events were built in the last few years or will soon be erected. The accommodation facilities are world class and are able to meet the expectations of even the most demanding customers. Moreover, Poland offers a wide range of additional services to satisfy the diverse customer needs. The situation looks similar in the field of trade fair facilities, whose amount constantly increases, or existing objects are renovated (e.g. MTP - Poznań International Fair, or Expo in Kraków).<sup>31</sup>

Our country's unquestionable advantage is its location in the centre Europe and the biggest cities' accessibility. It is especially important with relation to the previously discussed tendency of searching for the event's location near the participants' place of residence. Therefore, Poland is an ideal destination for organising business meetings. It also relates to a positive evaluation in terms of social stability and low risk of danger or threat to tourists staying in Poland. The appeal of the Polish nature and natural areas such as national parks, nature parks, landscape parks, nature reserves including the multiplicity of rural tourism centres, which are the perfect target for "green events", are also in tandem with the newest trends. The same is with numerous cultural attractions and the leisure offer. Poland is a country of rich history and culture, with many historic palaces and manor houses, often adapted to host hotels

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<http://www.meetingplanner.pl/news/aktualnosci/art,113,turystyka-biznesowa-w-polsce.html> (23.02.2013).

and offering hotel services in the spirit of historical past. Examples from across Poland are: the Hotel Castle Ryn, Hotel Zamek na Skale in Łądek Zdrój (Stonemout Castle Hotel), Biały Pałac Palczew in Warka, Hotel Pałac Czarny Las or Dwór Kościuszko in Kraków.<sup>32</sup> This is another positive and interesting element for creating business events offer.<sup>33</sup>

The existing system of our country's promotion in the form of the National Tourist Organization, which is POT and its foreign delegations, namely Polish Tourist Information Centres, as well as Convention Bureau and social associations constitutes a structure that efficiently contributes to the development of business tourism in Poland by common, integrated actions. Establishing the cooperation between the three key sectors-private, central authorities and regional and local authorities was extremely important in terms of effectiveness. The efforts undertaken in order to promote Poland were primarily: introducing the stands during tourist trade fairs (associated mainly with business tourism, and these are the EIBTM in Barcelona, IMEX in Frankfurt, EMIF in Brussels, CONFEX in London), issuing of pamphlets and promotional materials, including the "Unique Venues," cooperating with the press associated with the industry (i.a. M&IT, CIM, Events, Bedouk).<sup>34</sup> A well functioning Polish information and promotion management system launching numerous initiatives is an important advantage in increasing the opportunities of our country on the European market of MICE destinations.

In the light of recent events, the co-organization of an important sports event i.e. the European Football Championships UEFA EURO 2012 was a huge opportunity for Poland. Preparations for this prestigious tournament, contributed to the expansion of Polish infrastructure, including transportation and hotel facilities, building new stadiums capable of hosting the events of different nature. Promotional activities including the organizers of the major conferences and conventions were applied before the event due to the modernized conference infrastructure. These activities and very good and positive comments have received from visitors and organizers contributed to an increased interest in our country.<sup>35</sup>

In Poland in recent years, the effects of the economic crisis were not as severe as in the West. Thanks to that, the Polish economy was more stable. Because of that,

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.hhpolska.com> (12.04.2013).

<sup>33</sup> W. Bartoszewicz, H. Borne-Januła, Methodology of research and pilot studies (in Polish), op. cit., pp. 91-92.

<sup>34</sup> Report on the state of tourism in 2007-2011 (in Polish), Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, Warszawa 2013, pp. 29-31.

<sup>35</sup> <http://blog.4hotele.pl/turystyka-biznesowa-przyszloscia-rozwoju-hotelarstwa-w-polsce> (24.02.2013)

our country enjoyed considerable interest on the part of investor, mainly when it comes to the development of the branches of economy such as research or financial centres. A significant role is played by the also highly specialized staff, whose professionalism and commitment is highly prized in Europe and in the world. This is the argument in favour of organising meetings in Poland and expanding networks of contacts and business in this part of Europe.<sup>36</sup>

The state policy in the field of tourism and other areas connected to it is also important. What's meant by this are taxes and fees, as well as all sorts of facilities in relation to investors wishing to invest capital in Poland. The state's positive attitude towards tourism was already visible from the very beginning of the regime changes. The appreciation for the benefits of tourism was the basis to engage in the development of this sector of the economy. Polish municipalities try to create facilities that will be attractive to potential investors. Periodic real estate or visitor's tax reliefs or exemptions are offered as well as the suitable forms and rules of tax payment are established. Lower prices of real estate are also a commonly used method. However, the facilities themselves are not enough to make a decision about location. The tax policy plays an extremely crucial role here. Taxes at a too high level result in extension of a debt payment, which discourages investment activity. The second aspect is the VAT rate. In tourism, this system is quite complicated as several rates are present within one field. This situation is heavily criticized. Moreover, the level of taxes strongly affects the increase in the prices of services causing a change in the demand for tourist services. Although Poland has the pro-tourism policy in the area of fiscal facilitations for entrepreneurs, the unstable times and a tax dispute in the last few years have led to the loss of part of the foreign capital. Lack of stability and introducing more and more new taxes brings negative effects in the economy and makes it impossible to make an objective decision.<sup>37</sup>

Despite very good forecasts, the growing interest and increasing popularity of our country as a business destination, the Polish tourist offer has some weak points. In many studies it is noted that, despite large commitment to improving and creating a new infrastructure, it is still insufficient. In particular, this applies to roads, motorways and airports. The condition of Polish roads leaves a lot to be desired, the number of motorways is not sufficient, and the frequent traffic

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[http://www.portfel.pl/pl/prestiz/artykul/10/15047/Rzecz\\_pospolita\\_turystyka\\_biznesowa](http://www.portfel.pl/pl/prestiz/artykul/10/15047/Rzecz_pospolita_turystyka_biznesowa) (25.02.2013)

<sup>37</sup> J. Kizielewicz, The impact of the fiscal policy of the state and local authorities on the development of the tourism market, [in:] Tourism demand basic issues (in Polish), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2012, pp. 385-397.

congestion and traffic jams on major roads does not paint a good picture of Polish transportation infrastructure. The same situation occurs in relation to airports. Despite the continued expansion of existing airports and enhancing their capacity, they are still much less comfortable and definitely smaller than the significant airports in Western Europe.<sup>38</sup>

Another weak point is the insufficient number of accommodation facilities, despite the fact that more and more hotels are built every year. The chart presented below illustrates the very dynamic development of the hotel market in Poland, especially in recent years (10 % increase in 2010 in comparison to the previous year). Unfortunately, in comparison to accommodation facilities in the Western countries, it is still far below the average. This is because Poland has an average of 40-50 hotel beds for 10 thousand citizens, while in Western Europe this number is 400 or even 500. This index ranks Poland at the end of the European Union countries. It should be noted that the development and placement of investments focused spot. The most of high class facilities are located in the małopolskie, mazowieckie, pomorskie and śląskie voivodships. The situation is similar when it comes to objects typically designed for conferences. Underdeveloped infrastructure is mainly the problem of Podlasie, Opolszczyzna and Lubelszczyzna regions.<sup>39</sup>

The lack of academic studies and literature from the field of business tourism is also worrying. There are no comprehensive and exhaustive books describing this phenomenon, nor the reports from the studies of its scale. Every year more attempts are made to draw up the most current analyses which would constitute the materials better understanding of the rules governing this form of tourism. In view of the insufficient resources and the difficulty in acquiring the existing ones, education of future personnel is a serious challenge. Teaching materials are necessary for students to gain knowledge and improve their skills in order work in the demanding market of conferences, congresses and meetings. Their insufficient quantity and quality cause problems, especially when it comes to creating new professions such as "Meeting Planner".<sup>40</sup>

It is necessary to remember that in order to effectively carry out activities from the area of MICE, the traditional leisure tourism needs to be separated from business tourism. All kinds of events usually take place

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<http://www.meetingplanner.pl/news/aktualnosci/art.113,turystyka-biznesowa-w-polsce.html> (26.02.2013).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ighp.pl/ekspert-radzi/analizy-i-raporty/art,17,first-class-relacja-z-debaty-na-temat-turystyki-biznesowej.html> (26.02.2013).

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[http://www.meetingspoland.pl/konferencje/art\\_szanse.php](http://www.meetingspoland.pl/konferencje/art_szanse.php) (25.02.2013).

outside the typical tourist season, and the money that is spent is corporate money. To conduct effective marketing activities, consideration should be given to the target groups which, in this case, are managers, presidents and policy makers of large companies, corporations and associations as well as the intermediaries acting on their behalf (Meeting Planner or PCO).<sup>41</sup>

In view of the large number of arguments and data, it can be concluded that the investment attractiveness of Poland is growing. The main sector of interest is broadly understood services business, and demand for conference services is still going to constitute a significant part of tourist traffic. Poland is systematically trying to reduce the gap between them and the major meeting organizers in Europe. In the rankings compiled annually by leading ICCA and UIAA organizations, Poland is constantly placed on higher positions. In 2011, in the report drawn up by the ICCA, Poland was on the 21st place when it comes to the organisation of international meetings (165 of such event were hosted in our country).<sup>42</sup> Each initiative will lead to a diligent strengthening of the Polish position on the map of business destinations. It is important to maintain the positive trends in the tourism business through efficiency and thoughtful actions. The key to success is to create long-term and professional marketing viewing Poland as the organizer of major events along with the complementary investments.

Despite the low (in comparison to other countries) POT's budget, the organisation is able to create the effective promotion strategy. The focus should be placed on the qualities and strengths which are huge advantages of Polish cities. The business guests' satisfaction should be achieved through high quality services and maintaining international standards in connection with local, unique elements i.e. hospitality, culture (including folklore), nature, excellent cuisine and beautiful monuments. Poland is still a so called "emerging market" that is attractive and new direction of business travel. Therefore, the brand of Polish business tourism product should be built based on this interest.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> W. Bartoszewicz, H. Borne-Januła, *Metodologia badań i badania pilotażowe*, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> *Statistics Report International Association Meetings Market 2002-2011*, ICCA 2012, p. 20.

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