

## **THE PROMOTION OF CROSS-BORDER TOURISM IN POLAND. THE COMPETITION "POLAND GROWS BEAUTIFUL – 7 WONDERS OF THE EUROPEAN FUNDS" – A CASE STUDY**

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### **Keywords:**

- European Union
- Projects
- promotion
- cross-border tourism

### **Abstract:**

This paper raises the issue of development and promotion of cross-border tourism in Poland in view of EU funds. Basic terms such as "cross-border area" and "cross-border tourism" were defined and discussed in the theoretical part, identifying also the relationships between them. In the empirical part the programme entitled "Poland Grows Beautiful – 7 Wonders of the European Funds" was presented as a tool for promoting tourism. The organisational structure of the project was also discussed, paying particular attention to national and local government administrations.

The aim of the competition was to prove that Poland's tourist offer has been improved thanks to EU funds. Since the formula of the programme enabled to promote a very small percentage of projects, this aim has been achieved only partially. However, synergistic effects were generated by the participation in this competition, enhancing cooperation and tourism promotion. The evolution of the programme was analysed in this paper. Quantitative and qualitative measures for the effects of the programme within the territorial, personal and material scope were proposed and used. The marketing activities which accompanied the programme were also discussed. The nominated institutions and winners in the category "cross-border cooperation" and "cross-border and international tourism" were listed, and the projects which were awarded and then promoted within the competition were analysed. The winning projects were supported by the funds of cross-border cooperation programmes under the INTERREG initiative. It has been proven that some cross-border projects were successfully promoted in other categories, apart from "cross-border cooperation" and "cross-border and international tourism". In 2015 the last edition of the competition ended. Taking into account the significance of tourism in developing cross-border areas and the lack of marketing tools for cross-border tourism, it would be advisable to use the experiences of the programme and establish a similar competition for the 2014-2020 programming period.

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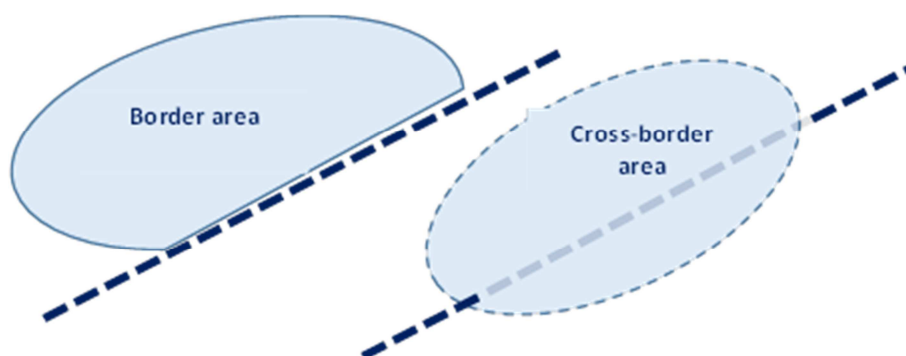
### **INTRODUCTION**

Favourable conditions for developing cross-border cooperation in Poland have been created by the EU economic policy under territorial cooperation programmes. This cooperation has been developed with all seven neighbours. The territorial range of this cooperation was delimited by the eligible areas of cross-border cooperation programmes. Thanks to the implementation of cross-border projects, with new attractive tourist products being the effect of these projects, the development of cross-border tourism has become one of

the most important elements of the cooperation. As a result, the need for promoting such products on the tourist market has emerged. The innovative programme "Poland Grows Beautiful – 7 Wonders of the European Funds" provided an opportunity for promoting cross-border tourism in Poland.

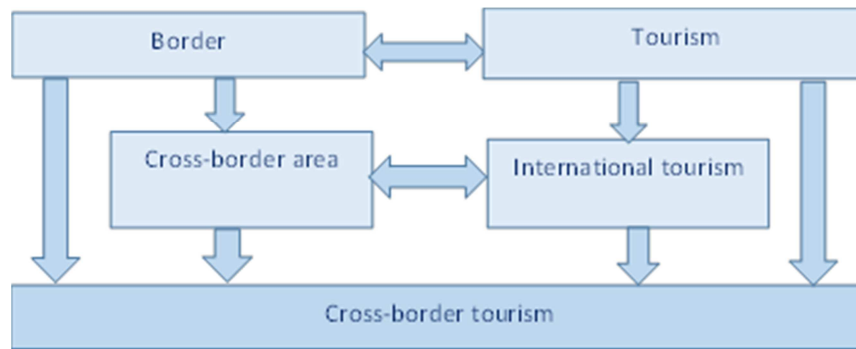
### **THE DEFINITION AND CORE OF CROSS-BORDER TOURISM**

Cross-border tourism is a subject of many disciplines, including economics, geography, political science and law. This issue is discussed more and more often in academic literature, state and international documents as well as other publications. However, one rarely makes an attempt to define this phenomenon. As a result, there are many interpretations of cross-border tourism. Therefore a common element combining these different concepts needs to be specified. The border may be such an element as cross-border tourism cannot exist without the borders. The borders of a country relate to the cross-border area and the border area (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** The concept of border and cross-border areas  
Source: own work

The border (frontier) area is located near the border of a country. On the other hand, the cross-border area involves two or more countries [Palmowski 2007: 19–27]. Etymologically, the prefix "trans" means: through, across, outside, behind, on the other side [Słownik Wyrazów Obcych 1980: 769]. The cross-border area consists of border areas. Both border tourism and cross-border tourism occur in the cross-border area. The former is a type of domestic tourism, while the latter is a type of international tourism [Gorb 2014: 31]. Therefore international tourism (unlike domestic tourism) requires to cross the border. Crossing the border is a necessary condition for cross-border tourism, but not sufficient [Studzeniecki 2004: 173-183; Hampton 2009: 14; Hajduk 2007: 87-105; Sawicki, Łaskarzewska 2007: 135-146; Olszewski, Drózdź 2013: 9; Monicz 2010: 1]. Cross-border tourism is interpreted as a form of international tourism occurring in the cross-border area [Ruszkowski 2014: 50–70; Niemczyk 2010: 6–87, Jewstropjewa 2009: 6; Meyer, Gardzińska 2014: 209–214] (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2** The concept of cross-border tourism  
Source: own work

Apart from the term "cross-border tourism", a broader term is also used, that is "tourism in cross-border areas" [Palmowski 2008: 91 – 92; Gardzińska 2014: 16]. The development of cross-border tourism often leads to the establishment of a cross-border tourist destination. Destination is the target place where a tourist product is consumed. It is defined as an area (e.g. a town, a region, or a large hotel) which a tourist chooses as the target place. It contains the equipment necessary during the stay, providing accommodation, food, entertainment or other activities [Zajadacz, Śniadek 2009: 37]. One of the most important factors in developing a destination is the promotion of tourism [Suchodolska, Studzieniecki 2016: 63].

### **THE PROGRAMME "POLAND GROWS BEAUTIFUL – 7 WONDERS OF THE EUROPEAN FUNDS" AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING TOURISM**

The programme "Poland Grows Beautiful – 7 Wonders of the European Funds" (fig. 3) started in 2008 and ended in 2015.



**Fig. 3** Logo of "Poland Grows Beautiful - 7 Wonders of the European Funds"  
Source: [http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska\\_pieknieje.aspx](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska_pieknieje.aspx) (access 29.09.2016)

The originator of this project was the Ministry of Regional Development of the Republic of Poland. "Pascal", a publishing house, and "Smartlink", a marketing agency specialising in the promotion of EU funds, were invited to cooperate within the programme. One of the aims of the competition was to prove that Poland's tourist offer has been improved thanks to EU funds. Following the accession to the European Union, many valuable architectural gems have been rebuilt or renovated, the neglected parts of cities have been revitalized, thousands of kilometres of bicycle paths have been built, and modern swimming pools and thematic parks have been constructed. Most of them were built in a short period of time and were not effectively promoted. The organisers of the programme assumed that *"it is worth boasting of these successful projects, exchanging experiences, drawing inspiration for further interesting ideas"* [<http://www.polskapieknieje.pascal.pl/oprojekcie.html> (access 29.09.2016)].

As part of the programme, the tourist guidebook "Poland Grows Beautiful" describing tourist attractions in various places in Poland has been published. This publication includes information about the EU context of these attractions. In addition, a website has been set up; it includes a multimedia version of the guidebook "Poland Grows Beautiful" as well as much more information about the EU tourism funds. The promotional campaign for the "Poland Grows Beautiful" project has been conducted, including:

- a) promotion of the "Poland Grows Beautiful" guidebook in newspapers, on radio and television;
- b) display of banners from the "Poland Grows Beautiful" website on the tourist website [www.pascal.pl](http://www.pascal.pl) and [www.funduszeonline.pl](http://www.funduszeonline.pl), a website about EU funds;
- c) a national competition for the best tourist projects co-financed by the EU under the programme "Poland Grows Beautiful – 7 Wonders of the European Funds";
- d) national conferences on the EU tourism funds.

Every year winners were selected in 7 categories, going through a few qualifying stages.

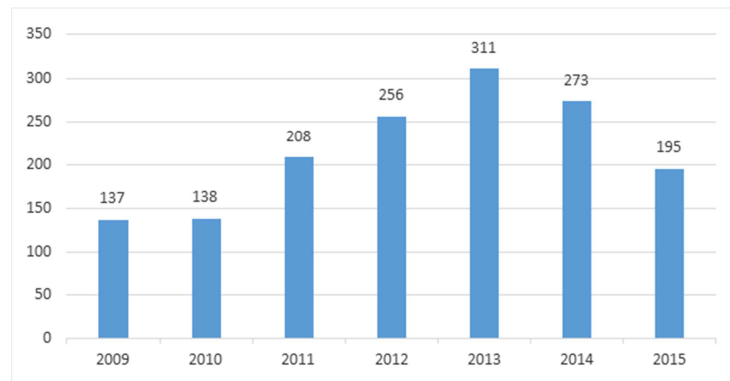
As the programme was implemented, the categories of the competition were changed. Fourteen categories appeared in the programme in total. The biggest change occurred in 2015, when 4 new categories were introduced (fig. 1).

**Table 1** Categories of the "Poland Grows Beautiful" competition in 2008-2015

No.	Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
1.	Urban renovation	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	8
2.	Architectural gem	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		7
3.	Promotional product (publisher, website, promotional campaign)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		7
4.	Tourist/catering building	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	8
5.	Event (festival, fair, market)	+								1
6.	Cross-border cooperation	+								1
7.	Cross-border and international tourism		+	+	+	+	+	+		6
8.	Tourism in rural areas	+	+	+	+					4
9.	Active tourism		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	7
10.	Children-friendly place					+	+	+		3
11.	Family-friendly place								+	1
12.	Mobile and virtual tourism								+	1
13.	Culture and art								+	1
14.	Education								+	1
Total		7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	56

Source: own work based on: [http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska\\_pieknieje.aspx](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska_pieknieje.aspx) (access 20 September 2016)

The competition was accompanied by advertising campaigns in newspapers, on radio and television. The websites of governmental bodies and institutions were used for the promotion (e.g. the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Ministry of the Environment, Polish Tourist Organisation, Polish Foreign Investment Agency, Polish Industrial Development Agency, National Forests, provincial offices) as well as websites of local government units participating in the competition. The number of submitted applications varies from 137 in 2009 to 311 in 2013.



**Fig. 4** Number of applications for the competition in 2009-2015

Source: own work based on [http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska\\_pieknieje.aspx](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska_pieknieje.aspx) (access 20 September 2016)

Every year the final of the competition was very ceremonial in character. The winners collected their statuettes from the competent minister of regional development. The event was broadcast by television and radio stations (fig. 5).



**Fig. 5** The gala of the competition with Deputy Prime Minister Elżbieta Bieńkowska in 2014

Source: <http://tvwlodawa.pl/gala-nominacja-i-nagroda-polska-pieknieje-7-cudow-funduszy-europejskich>.

## CROSS-BORDER TOURISM IN THE PROGRAMME

The category "cross-border and international tourism" appeared in the second edition of the programme in 2009, replacing the category "cross-border cooperation", which appeared only once – in 2008. In 2014 the category "cross-border and international tourism" was withdrawn from the competition by the organizers. In total, 19 entities were nominated for the two categories listed above, selecting 7 winners. Lublin and Stalowa Wola have been nominated for this award twice. Both cities have won the competition only once (tab. 2).

Out of 11 border provinces, 3 provinces were not among the winners or nominees (the Pomorskie, Małopolskie and Śląskie Provinces). The highest number of nominated projects (4) was in the Zachodniopomorskie Province and Dolnośląskie Province. There were two winners only in the Dolnośląskie Province (fig. 6). The winning projects were supported by the funds of cross-border cooperation programmes under the INTERREG initiative:

1. Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013,
2. Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme (CCOP) the Czech Republic – the Republic of Poland 2007 – 2013,
3. Cross-border Cooperation Programme (CCP) Poland (Zachodniopomorskie Province) – Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania / Brandenburg 2007-2013.

**Table 2** Nominees and winners in the category "cross-border cooperation" and "cross-border and international tourism"

Province	Nominees	Winners
Pomorskie		
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	Olsztyn (2008), Giżycko (2012)	
Podlasie	Suwałki (2011), Augustów (2013)	Suwałki (2011)
Lubelskie	Hajnówka (2008), Lublin (2009), Lublin (2010)	Lublin (2009)
Podkarpackie	Stalowa Wola (2009), Stalowa Wola (2010)	Stalowa Wola (2010)
Małopolskie		
Śląskie		
Opolskie	Nysa (2012)	
Dolnośląskie	Kłodzko (2011), Bolesławiec (2012), Świeradów (2013), Szklarska Poręba (2014)	Bolesławiec (2012), Świeradów (2013)
Lubuskie	Kostrzyn nad Odrą (2008),	Kostrzyn nad Odrą (2008),
Zachodniopomorskie	Gozdowice (2010), Mielno (2011), Świnoujście (2013), Police (2014)	Police (2014)

Source: own work based on [http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska\\_pieknieje.aspx](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska_pieknieje.aspx)



**Fig. 6** Number of nominated (N) entities and winners (W) by province

Source: own work based on [http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska\\_pieknieje.aspx](http://www.funduszeuropejskie.2007-2013.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polska_pieknieje.aspx)

Additionally, the projects financed under the Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG III A/Tacis CBC 2004-2006 have been awarded three times. The subsidies for programmes funding the cross-border projects, unlike other projects, were small, ranging from PLN 240,846 to EUR 1,113,099 (tab. 3).

The winners were local government units (the city of Kostrzyn nad Odrą, the commune of Police), economic units of local government (Suwałki Chamber of Agriculture and Tourism), cultural institutions (Cultural Centre in Lublin, the Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola and the Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec) and a state organisational unit (Świeradów Forest Division). Three projects promoted cross-border tourist trails (Culture and Tourism Route Fortresses, Via Fabrilis – a route of craft traditions, Czech and Poland Singltrek pod Smrkem in the Jizera Mountains). The development of institutions dealing with cross-border activities (the Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola, the Cultural Centre in Lublin, and the Cross-border Centre for Environmental Education in Zalesie) was financed by two projects.

**Table 3.** Description of the winning projects

Year	Project	Description of the project	Winner	Programme	Subsidy amount
2008	"Baltic Culture and Tourism Route Fortresses"	This project promoted the route of the Baltic Sea fortresses situated in Poland, Germany, Lithuania and the Kaliningrad Oblast. In addition, the Berlin Gate in Kostrzyn has been renovated, adapting it as a tourist information centre.	The city of Kostrzyn nad Odrą	Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013	EUR 251,724
2009	Jagiellonian Fair – the promotion of common Eastern and Western heritage	This project started a regular event during which artists and craftsmen from Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and other countries presented unique pottery, smith's, weaving, cutting, plaiting, embroidery, sculpting and painting techniques.	Cultural Centre in Lublin	Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG IIIA/TACIS CBC 2004-2006	PLN 423,675
2010	"An accessible museum" – an integrated programme for the disabled.	This project started the first integrated educational programme in Poland, whose aim was to enable people with reduced mobility, visual, hearing or intellectual impairment to have contact with art.	Regional Museum in Stalowa Wola	Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG IIIA/TACIS CBC 2004-2006	PLN 240,846
2011	Unknown Europe – the development of tourist infrastructure in the Belorussian and Polish border area near the Augustów Canal and the Neman.	This project supported the development of tourist infrastructure as a factor increasing the competitiveness of the Polish and Belorussian border area near the Augustów Canal and the Neman River. In addition, the project started the transformation of the border crossing point at the Augustów Canal from a water point to a water and land point.	Suwałki Chamber of Agriculture and Tourism	Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG IIIA/TACIS CBC 2004-2006	PLN 2,244,020
2012	Via Fabrilis – a route of craft traditions	This project started the construction of a route connecting the towns of Bolesławiec and Vrchlabi. It has contributed to the promotion of a regional tourist product, emphasising this different regional culture, which is based on various craft traditions.	Museum of Ceramics in Bolesławiec	CCOP Czech Republic -Republic of Poland 2007-2013	EUR 523,111
2013	Czech-Polish Singltrek pod Smrkem in the Jizera Mountains	This project enabled to build a system of trails (single tracks) for all-terrain cycling of a total length of 39.6 km. As part of the project, the system of trails was promoted using websites, billboards, leaflets and maps.	Świeradów Forest Division, Commune of Świeradów Zdrój, Commune of Nové Město pod Smrkem, Czech Forest	CCOP Czech Republic –Republic of Poland 2007-2013	EUR 671,250
2014	Life at the Bay of Szczecin and in the Wkrzańska Forest – Ecology, Education and History	Thanks to this project, a modern centre for environmental education has been established, it combines an educational, tourist and recreational offer and the natural heritage of the region.	Commune of Police	CCP Poland (Zachodniopomorskie Province) - Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania / Brandenburg 2007-2013	EUR 1,113,099

Source: own work based on <http://www.polskapienieje.pascal.pl/> (access 20 September 2016).

The project entitled "Unknown Europe – the development of tourist infrastructure in the Belorussian and Polish border area near the Augustów Canal and the Neman" must be considered particularly valuable, as an example of an effective promotion of the cross-border tourist destination in the Polish and Belorussian border area.



Fig. 7 Promotion of the Augustów Canal in the Polish and Belorussian border area as a tourist destination

Source: <http://www.suwalki-turystyka.info.pl/archiwum/neu.html> (access 20 September 2016).

## CONCLUSIONS

The significance of cross-border tourism was noted by the organisers of the programme "Poland Grows Beautiful – 7 Wonders of the European Funds" as it became one of the 7 awarded categories. The programme was one of the most effective tools for promoting cross-border tourism in Poland. Its promotional activities were conducted on a large scale, using many marketing instruments. The project was supported by numerous national and local government institutions. This fact is important in the context of the uniqueness of cross-border projects as they receive relatively small subsidies from the EU.

Territorially, the programme was symbolic since it was limited only to the promotion of 7 winning projects located in 6 border provinces. However, some cross-border projects were successfully nominated and then promoted in other categories. The project entitled "The establishment and promotion of a cross-border tourist product – MTB Zone" is a good example. The project implemented by the commune of Głuszyca involved developing a network of 150 km long mountain bike trails.

It should be pointed out that there were no nominated projects in 3 provinces. In 2014 the category "cross-border and international tourism" was withdrawn from the competition. In 2015 the last edition of the competition ended. Taking into account the significance of tourism in developing cross-border areas, it would be advisable to use the experiences of the programme and establish a similar competition for the 2014-2020 programming period.

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