
Neighbouring countries – an important segment in inbound tourism An example of the European Union member states

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the significance of neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourism for the member countries of the European Union. In order to achieve this aim, some secondary materials presenting the volume and the structure of tourist traffic in the analysed countries have been referred to. The structure of the article allows the Author to provide a detailed analysis of the particular problems in the discussed field. Firstly, a review of scientific literature on tourist traffic and the significance of neighbouring countries for inbound tourism is provided. The next part of the text presents the countries adjacent to the European Union member states. Subsequently, the significance of these destinations is indicated, due to the data that present the structure of inbound tourism. It transpires that in most analysed countries, their neighbouring states come as a significant – and often even the most important – segment in inbound tourism. Furthermore, neighbouring countries often take the top positions on the list of the countries the citizens of which visit particular destinations most frequently. The analysis of the structure of inbound tourism in Poland in the years 2012–2016 also indicates that the neighbouring markets form the most important segment, regardless of some changes that took place during the analysed time period. Due to the review of some relevant documents, it is indicated (on the example of Poland) that neighbouring countries are often of priority significance in the assumptions and development plans for tourism, although the ranks of the particular countries can be different. On one hand, the considerations presented in the article allow the Author to evaluate the significance of neighbouring countries for inbound tourism in the particular countries; on the other hand, they indicate the necessity of including these countries into the tourism policy, along with promotion activities undertaken in the foreign markets.

Key words: Neighbouring countries, tourist traffic, inbound tourism

Introduction

The volume and the structure of tourist traffic are affected by numerous factors. The available statistical data provided by national (e.g., Ministry of Sport and Tourism) and foreign (e.g., the UN World Tourism Organisation) sources make it possible to assess not only the scale of tourist traffic in

particular countries but also to provide a detailed analysis to its structure. Hence, it is possible to determine what the main markets for inbound tourism are – that is namely: from which countries the largest numbers of visitors arrive to visit their destinations (including tourists and one-day visitors). It can be generally assumed that neighbouring countries should be of considerable significance in that respect. It results from the location of particular destinations that are situated in the direct vicinity of a host country and, consequently, from the facilitated accessibility of communication. The available statistical data make it possible to define not only the significance of the particular markets but also to distinguish the priorities in the development of tourism, with regard to inbound tourist traffic (Borzyszkowski, 2012), also with consideration of neighbouring countries.

The article provides an analysis of the significance of neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourist traffic on the example of the European Union member states. The article is based on the available secondary sources. In the first part, some theoretical aspects are presented, referring to tourist traffic, with particular consideration of the significance of the neighbouring countries. Next, an analysis of the volume of inbound tourism from the neighbouring countries is provided. The final part of the article presents the significance of the neighbouring markets in the assumptions of the tourism policy on the example of Poland.

The essence of tourist traffic and its significance with regard to neighbouring countries – a review of the scientific literature

Polish and foreign scientific literature includes numerous publications focused on problems related to the broadly understood tourist traffic. The problems can be discussed from various approaches, it can be defined and classified in countless ways, according to some assumed criteria (Duda-Gromada, 2009). Generally, there is some agreement on the fact that tourist traffic is a social and economic phenomenon of a complex character. A. Panasiuk (2006) defines tourist traffic as a social process, which involves travelling to tourist destinations for business, cultural and social reasons. The phenomenon is characterised by the fact that such travelling, as well as the change of permanent residence, are of voluntary and temporary nature. Similarly, A. Kowalczyk (2001) observes that tourist traffic comes as spatial translocation of people, which is related to a voluntary and temporal change of one's residence place, environment and the pace of life. S. Ostrowski (1972) understands tourist traffic as a common social phenomenon, which involves physical and temporal translocation of people from their permanent place of residence to some other places and generation of demand for services and goods by these people, which is manifested during their travelling and during their stay outside their permanent places of residence.

Discussions about tourist traffic prompt researchers to classify the phenomenon. A. Panasiuk (2006) makes such an attempt, and he distinguishes the types of tourist traffic on the basis of the following criteria: the purpose, the character with regard to the place of permanent residence, duration of travelling, time of travelling, organisation of travelling with regard to the group, the organiser and the participants' characteristics (demography, financial situation).

S. Liszewski and B. Włodarczyk (2010) also present a very interesting list referring to the groups of parameters that characterise tourist traffic, namely:

- the volume, seasonality and length of the stay, frequency of visits
- the structure of tourist traffic
- spatial features
- the method of organisation
- the purpose of the stay
- the motives for the selection of the particular region as a place of tourist destination
- the ways of spending time during the stay in the particular region
- expenses during the stay (travelling)
- opinions about the particular region

Considering the problems discussed in the article, it is important to assume a criterion applied for the division of tourist traffic with regard to 'the place of tourists' residence'. Hence, it is possible to distinguish three forms of tourism (tourist traffic), namely:

- domestic – citizens of a particular country travelling within its territory
- outbound – citizens of a particular country travelling to other countries

- inbound – permanent residents of foreign countries travelling to a particular country (Szwichtenberg, ed., 2000)

The article presents an analysis of the inbound tourism, that is, the visits paid by foreign tourists to a particular country. The analysis is based on the inbound tourist traffic from the neighbouring countries (adjacent to the borders of other countries).¹

The problems related to the significance of the neighbouring markets for tourism in a particular country is the subject of numerous scientific studies, among which the following authors can be mentioned: M. Deng and G. Athanasopoulos (2011) (Australia); Y. Zhang, J.-H. Xu, and P.-J. Zhuang (2011) (towns in China), E. Marrocu and R. Paci (2011) (European regions).

It turns out that the very fact related to the existence of borders has fundamental influence on the development of the tourist function. Borders separate different political systems, which are characterised by different administrative divisions and different spatial development. Simultaneously, they affect the development of tourism through the motivation and decisions about travelling, development of tourism infrastructure, marketing, promotion and the brand of the region (M. Więckowski, 2010).

The significance of tourist traffic from neighbouring countries is also discussed by J. G. Brida, J. S. Pereyra Barreiro and R. Scuderi (2017). While analysing tourism in Uruguay, these authors draw a conclusion that the discussed markets play a particularly important role when viewed from the perspective of inbound tourism. The authors indicate that inbound tourism from Argentina accounts for almost 64% of all arrivals and 50% of the income gained on tourism in Uruguay. They also present some similar opinions on Brazil, the second neighbouring country. J. G. Brida, B. Lanzilotta, S. Lionetti, and W. A. Risso (2010) share their opinion. They believe that the significance of Argentina for the Uruguayan tourism results not only from their neighbourhood but also from some similarities (e.g., cultural ones) between these two countries. Considerable dependence on the neighbouring markets can be observed in Russia where the inbound tourist traffic is strongly based on the neighbouring countries, especially on the former Soviet republics (Tarasova, 2013). I. D. Druvaskalne and A. Slara (2006) prove that the dynamic development of rural tourism in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia during the first years of the 21st century resulted mainly from the tourist activities undertaken by the citizens of the neighbouring countries.

Such obvious significance of the neighbouring markets for tourism in a particular country results from numerous factors. Undoubtedly, one of them is related to lower prices for some products or services (Michalkó, Rátz, Hinek and Tömöri, 2014). It is proved by T. T. Sikos and A. Kovács (2008) on the example of the Hungarian border shops during the devaluation of the forint. In that respect, a considerably important role is played by the border towns, which affect the tourist activities undertaken by the citizens of both countries in a specific way, for example, with regard to the level of prices, some particular tourist attractions and so on (Székely, 2014).

Neighbourhood with a particular country also affects other factors related to tourism. As M. Lamakinaite, D. Labauskaite and E. Baranskaite (2015) observe, the example of Lithuania clearly indicates that tourists from the neighbouring countries have more information about that country. It turns out that marketing operations run in a similar way in various markets and result in higher popularity of the neighbouring countries than others (Solarin, 2014).

It is worth mentioning that some scientists observe the lack of influence exerted by neighbouring markets on the development of tourism in particular countries. P. Carvalho, M. A. Márquez and M. Díaz (2016) observe such a phenomenon in the segment of business trips. Nevertheless, in numerous cases the accessible scientific sources emphasize a significant role of neighbouring countries in generation of inbound tourist traffic to particular destinations.

The volume and significance of inbound tourist traffic from the neighbouring countries

The next part of the article provides an analysis of the significance of the neighbouring markets in the structure of tourist traffic in the European Union member states. Considering the limited character of statistical data, it is restricted to the example of the tourist sector referring to people who come for at least one overnight stay at their destination places. Hence, the analysis does not include one-day visitors who do not book any accommodation.

The starting point for further considerations is the evaluation of the neighbouring countries adjacent to the particular states in the discussed region. The table below (Table 1) presents the European Union

¹A detailed review of definitions and classification of borders is provided by J. Bański (2010).

states, the length of their land borderlines, the number and the list of their neighbouring countries that share their land borders (excluding water borders).

Table 1. The European Union member states, their neighbouring countries and the length of their land borderlines

No.	State	The length of the land borderlines (km)	The number of the neighbouring countries	The neighbouring countries*
1.	Austria	2562	8	Germany, Italy, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Slovakia, Liechtenstein
2.	Belgium	1385	4	France The Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg
3.	Bulgaria	1808	5	Romania, Greece, Serbia, Turkey, Macedonia
4.	Croatia	2197	5	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro
5.	Cyprus	0	0	-
6.	The Czech Republic	1881	4	Germany, Poland, Austria, Slovakia
7.	Denmark	68	1	Germany
8.	Estonia	633	2	Latvia, Russia
9.	Finland	2690	3	Russia, Norway, Sweden
10.	France	2889	8	Spain, Belgium Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, Andorra, Monaco
11.	Greece	1228	4	Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Turkey
12.	Spain	1918	4	Portugal, France, Andorra, Morocco
13.	The Netherlands	1027	2	Germany, Belgium
14.	Ireland	499	1	Great Britain
15.	Lithuania	1273	4	Belarus, Latvia, Russia, Poland
16.	Luxembourg	359	3	Belgium, Germany, France
17.	Latvia	1150	4	Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Belarus
18.	Malta	0	0	-
19.	Germany	3621	9	The Czech Republic, Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark
20.	Poland	2788	7	The Czech Republic, Ukraine, Germany, Slovakia, Belarus, Russia, Lithuania
21.	Portugal	1214	1	Spain
22.	Romania	2508	5	Bulgaria, Ukraine, Serbia, Moldavia, Hungary
23.	Slovakia	1524	5	Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Austria
24.	Slovenia	1334	4	Croatia, Austria, Italy, Hungary
25.	Sweden	2233	2	Norway, Finland
26.	Hungary	2171	7	Slovakia, Romania, Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, Slovenia
27.	Great Britain	499	1	Ireland
28.	Italy	1932	6	Switzerland, France, Austria, Slovenia, San Marino, Vatican
29.	Average	1550	3,89	

Note: * – the order of the countries by the criterion referring to the length of the borderlines: from the longest to the shortest
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_territories_by_land_borders#H.

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it has been calculated that the average length of the land borderlines of the analysed countries is over 1500 km, and the average number of the neighbouring countries is slightly over 4. It is also worth noticing that the two EU countries (Cyprus and Malta) do not have any land borders.² Hence, they are not included in the further analysis. In the case of 26 other countries, it is possible to observe that there are considerable divergences among the analysed values. First of all, there are some clear disproportions in the length of land borderlines, for example, the land borderline of Denmark is only 68 km long, whereas the land borderline of Germany is over 50 times

²However, it should be mentioned that Cyprus shares its borders with the sovereign British bases of Akrotiri and Dhekelia (<https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cypr>).

longer than that. Furthermore, there are also some considerable differences with regard to the number of the neighbouring countries. The lowest number (apart from Malta and Cyprus) is 1 (Denmark, Ireland, Portugal and Great Britain) and the highest number is 9 (Germany).

Presented in Table 1, the information has been applied for further analysis and, as a result, the estimation of the significance of inbound tourist traffic from the neighbouring countries has been provided. It is based on the share (stated in %) of the number of tourists coming from the neighbouring countries in the general volume of inbound tourist traffic (Table 2).

Table 2. The share of the neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourist traffic in the European Union (in %)

No.	State	The number of the neighbouring countries	Year	The share of tourists from the neighbouring countries in inbound tourist traffic (in %)
1.	Austria	8	2015	60.7
2.	Belgium	4	2016	53.9
3.	Bulgaria	5	2017	44.8*
4.	Croatia	5	2016	16.3
5.	The Czech Republic	4	2017	34.6
6.	Denmark	1	2016	57.0**
7.	Estonia	2	2017	18.5
8.	Finland	3	2017	24.0**
9.	France	8	2016	47.0***
10.	Greece	4	2015	27.8
11.	Spain	4	2017	16.4****
12.	The Netherlands	2	2017	42.2
13.	Ireland	1	2016	49.4
14.	Lithuania	4	2017	41.3
15.	Luxembourg	3	2016	47.5
16.	Latvia	4	2016	34.8
17.	Germany	9	2016	44.7
18.	Poland	7	2016	58.4
19.	Portugal	1	2016	14.5
20.	Romania	5	2016	63.5
21.	Slovakia	5	2017	51.1
22.	Slovenia	4	2016	35.9
23.	Sweden	2	2015	26.7**
24.	Hungary	7	2016	20.2
25.	Great Britain	1	2016	7.7
26.	Italy	6	2015	18.4*****
27.	Average	4,19		36.8

Note: * – no data on Macedonia; ** – based on the number of overnight stays; *** – without Andorra and Monaco; **** – without Andorra and Morocco; ***** – without Slovenia, San Marino and Vatican.

Source: Based on the data provided by: *Tourismus in Österreich*. Wien: Statistik Austria, 2016; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Belgium; *Arrivals of visitors from abroad to Bulgaria by months and by country of origin*, <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/7058/arrivals-visitors-abroad-bulgaria-months-and-country-origin>; *Croatia. Tourism in Figures 2016*. Zagreb: Ministry of Tourism, 2017; *Number of guests in collective accommodation establishments by country in the Czech Republic and regions*. Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2018; *Status på turisternes overnatninger i Danmark 2016*. København: VisitDenmark, 2017; *Tourism in Estonia in 2017*. Tallin: VisitEstonia, 2018; *Annual Trend*, VisitFinland, <http://www.visitfinland.com/travel-trade/graph/visitasoon-kehitystrendi>; *82.6 million foreign tourists in France in 2016*, Ministère de L'économie et des Finances, Paris 2017; *Non-residential Arrivals from Abroad: January-December 2015*. Athens: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016; *Charakterystyka przyjazdów nierezydentów do Polski w 2016 roku*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, 2017; *Number of tourists by country of residence*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018; *Toerisme in perspectief*. NBTC Holland Marketing, 2018; *Tourism Facts 2017 Preliminary*. Dublin: Fáilte Ireland, 2018; *Number of guests and overnights in Lithuanian accommodation establishments. '000. All markets. 2016-2017*. Vilnius: State Department of Tourism, Ministry of Economy, 2018; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Luxembourg#cite_note-36; *Tūrisms Latvijā*. Rīga: Centrālā Statistiskā Pārvalde, 2017; *Tourismus in Zahlen 2016*. Berlin: Das Statistische Bundesamt, 2017; *Estatísticas do Turismo*. Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2017; *Calatoriile Internationale Înregistrate la Frontierele României în Anul 2016*. Bucharest: Institutul National de

Statistica, 2017; *Ubytovacia Štatistika Cr Na Slovensku, Návštevníci 2017*. Bratislava: Ministerstvo dopravy a výstavby SR, 2018; *Tourism in numbers 2016*. Lublana: Slovenian Tourist Board, 2017; *Tourism in Sweden 2015*. Stockholm: The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2016; *Tourism in Hungary 2016 with Preliminary Data*. Budapest: Hungarian Tourism Agency, 2017; *Overseas Residents Visits to the UK 2016*. London: Office for National Statistics, 2017; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Italy.

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it is possible to state that the average share of inbound tourist traffic from the neighbouring countries in total tourist traffic is 36.8%. It is worth noticing that there are considerable disproportions between the particular countries – the extreme values are 7.7% (Great Britain) and 63.5% (Romania). Poland gets over 20 percentage points above the average (i.e., 58.4%) and takes the third position on the list (after Romania and Austria). It means that Poland is strongly dependent on tourist traffic from the neighbouring markets. Hence, the neighbouring countries are the most important part of inbound tourism.

It turns out that the number of neighbouring countries is not closely correlated to the share of tourists coming from those countries (the correlation coefficient $r = 0.28$). It is possible to distinguish some destinations that border with a considerable number of countries, but still the share of visits to those countries is not dominant, and it does not exceed even half of the volume of tourist traffic (e.g., France – 8 neighbouring countries who generate 47.0% of inbound tourist traffic; Germany – 9 neighbouring countries generating 44.7% or Hungary – 7 neighbouring countries generating only 20.2%). However, there are also some countries with only one neighbouring country of prevailing significance in inbound tourist traffic (Denmark where German tourists account for 57.0% of total foreign tourists). Hence, it is possible to state that the number of neighbouring countries does not directly affect the share of visits paid by the tourists from these countries in the structure of the total inbound tourist traffic. It means that the volume and the structure of tourist traffic result from some other reasons.

Regardless of the differences observed between the particular countries, the values presented in Table 2 clearly indicate the considerable significance of neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourist traffic. However, the Author wishes to indicate some limitations to the above-mentioned data. First of all, it should be remembered that neighbouring countries are assumed to be the countries with their immediate land borderlines adjacent to some other country. Hence, the countries which do not have their land borders have not been considered in the study, regardless of the fact that they are sometimes located very closely to each other and good connection and transport services are provided. Therefore, the common term of proximity often affects the volume and the structure of inbound tourist traffic. It can be observed on the example of Great Britain and France, which are separated only by the English Channel (which is only 32 km wide at its narrowest point), under which the Eurotunnel is operated, connecting both countries. It is undoubtedly possible to state that good connection and transport services are available, however, both countries do not share any land borders. Nevertheless, tourist exchange between Great Britain and France can be defined as considerable. It turns out that the British account for 14.5% of the total number of tourists who come to visit France (*82.6 million foreign...*, 2017), and the French are the largest group of foreign tourists who visit Great Britain – 10.8% of the total number of tourists (*Overseas Residents...*, 2017). A similar situation can be observed in Denmark and Sweden – the countries that do not share any borders but they are connected by the Øresund Bridge. This connection certainly contributes to the fact that the Swedish account for 7% of all the tourists who visit Denmark (*Status på turisternes...*, 2017).

Undoubtedly, despite the explicit significance of neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourist traffic, it is worth remembering that there are some cases in which other countries are of vast importance for the markets of tourism reception for some other reasons. For example, in Estonia tourists from Finland (which is a non-neighbouring country) generate as much as 42.5% of the total inbound tourism (*Tourism in Estonia...*, 2018). Another example can be Ireland, where it is possible to observe that the distance from the country that generates tourist traffic does not have any significant importance because tourists coming from the USA account for 12.8% of the total number of visitors (*Tourism Facts 2017...*, 2018).

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that in the tables presented above, the group of one-day visitors has not been included, although in the analysis referring to the volume of tourist traffic from neighbouring countries, it would surely be of higher significance. It can be observed on the example of Poland – the share of tourists coming from the neighbouring countries in relation to the total number of tourists is 58%; the same share with the consideration of the group of one-day visitors reaches the level of 97.1% (*Charakterystyka przyjazdów nierezydentów do Polski w 2016 roku...*, 2017). Therefore, it is possible to assume that the segment of one-day visitors from neighbouring countries is of higher significance than the group of tourists (who need accommodation).

The next part of the article presents the detailed considerations on the significance of neighbouring countries in the structure of inbound tourist traffic. Firstly, it is indicated that the particular countries are of the highest significance in that respect. Subsequently, the immediate neighbouring countries are identified. The analysis is provided on the basis of four most important markets (as indicated in Table 2, the average number of the neighbouring countries reaches the number of 4). Hence, further analysis does not include the countries that have fewer than four neighbours (Table 3).

Table 3. The significance of the most important markets in inbound tourist traffic

No.	State	The number of the neighbouring countries	Year	The countries which generate the largest number of tourists				The share of tourists coming from four most important markets in the total inbound tourism (stated in %)
1.	Austria	8	2015	Germany	The Netherlands	Switzerland + Liechtenstein	Italy	61.4
2.	Belgium	4	2016	The Netherlands	France	Great Britain	Germany	64.0
3.	Bulgaria	5	2017	Romania	Turkey	Greece	Germany	49.2
4.	Croatia	5	2016	Germany	Slovenia	Austria	Italy	43.0
5.	The Czech Republic	4	2017	Germany	Slovakia	Poland	Russia	37.1
6.	France	8	2016	Great Britain	Germany	Belgium + Luxembourg	Italy	47.2
7.	Greece	4	2015	Macedonia	Germany	Great Britain	Bulgaria	42.9
8.	Spain	4	2017	Great Britain	Germany	France	Italy	56.4
9.	Lithuania	4	2017	Belarus	Germany	Russia	Poland	42.8
10.	Latvia	4	2016	Russia	Germany	Lithuania	Estonia	44.5
11.	Germany	9	2016	The Netherlands	Switzerland	USA	Great Britain	35.7
12.	Poland	7	2016	Germany	Ukraine	Russia	Great Britain	52.4
13.	Romania	5	2016	Moldavia	Hungary	Bulgaria	Ukraine	59.3
14.	Slovakia	5	2017	The Czech Republic	Poland	Germany	Hungary	53.1
15.	Slovenia	4	2016	Italy	Germany	Austria	Croatia	42.7
16.	Hungary	7	2016	Germany	Great Britain	Austria	Romania	28.9
17.	Italy	6	2015	Germany	USA	France	China	45.5

Note: * – no data on Macedonia; ** – based on the number of overnight stays; *** – without Andorra and Monaco; **** – without Andorra and Morocco; ***** – without Slovenia, San Marino and Vatican.

Source: Based on the data provided by: *Tourismus in Österreich*. Wien: Statistik Austria, 2016; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Belgium; *Arrivals of visitors from abroad to Bulgaria by months and by country of origin*, <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/7058/arrivals-visitors-abroad-bulgaria-months-and-country-origin>; *Croatia. Tourism in Figures 2016*. Zagreb: Ministry of Tourism, 2017; *Number of guests in collective accommodation establishments by country in the Czech Republic and regions*. Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2018; *82.6 million foreign tourists in France in 2016*, Ministère de L'économie et des Finances, Paris 2017; *Non-residential Arrivals from Abroad: January-December 2015*. Athens: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016; *Charakterystyka przyjazdów niezabydźców do Polski w 2016 roku*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, 2017; *Number of tourists by country of residence*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018; *Number of guests and overnights in Lithuanian accommodation establishments. '000. All markets. 2016-2017*. Vilnius: State Department of Tourism, Ministry of Economy, 2018; *Türisms Latvijā*. Rīga: Centrālā Statistika Pārvalde, 2017; *Tourismus in Zahlen 2016*. Berlin: Das Statistische Bundesamt, 2017; *Calatoriile Internationale Înregistrate la Frontierele României în Anul 2016*. Bucharest: Institutul National de Statistica, 2017; *Ubytovacia Štatistika Cr Na Slovensku, Návštevníci 2017*. Bratislava: Ministerstvo dopravy a výstavby SR, 2018; *Tourism in numbers 2016*. Lublana: Slovenian Tourist Board, 2017; *Tourism in Hungary 2016 with Preliminary Data*. Budapest: Hungarian Tourism Agency, 2017; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Italy.

Out of the 68 possible cases (17 countries x 4 markets), in 43 cases (63.2%), the neighbours find themselves in the group of four top markets of inbound tourist traffic. Moreover, out of the 17 analysed countries, for 12 of them (70.6%), their neighbours are the most important markets. It is interesting to observe the extreme cases: top four positions are taken by the neighbouring countries only for Romania. In Croatia, Spain and Italy, only one representative of the neighbouring country is reported.

The strong dominance of the European countries should be also emphasized. In the group of four countries that indicate the largest share in inbound tourist traffic in the 17 analysed countries, some representatives of other continents appear: Turkey (for Bulgaria), the USA (for the market in Germany and Italy) and China (for Italy). It is also interesting to observe that in 6 out of 16 (without Germany) countries (37.5%), the German account for the most important segment of inbound tourist traffic (i.e.,

for Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Italy). Apart from these cases, Germany are also reported in the subsequent 9 cases, taking its position in the group of top four (however, it is not the case for Romania).

It is worth noticing the significance of Polish tourists, who are the third, the fourth and the second largest group in inbound tourist traffic respectively in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovakia. All these three countries are the immediate neighbours of Poland.

The data presented in the last column of the table are particularly interesting as they indicate the part of inbound tourist traffic represented by the four analysed countries. In the case of six countries (Austria, Belgium, Spain, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), they account for over half of the total volume of tourist traffic. The lowest values are reported in Hungary (28.9%), Germany (35.7%) and the Czech Republic (37.1%). These countries are the least dependent on the group of the most important foursome, and in this way, the structure of inbound tourist traffic becomes strongly diversified.

The next part of the article is focused on a discussion of the significance of the neighbouring markets in the structure of inbound tourism traffic in Poland in the years 2012–2016. The analysis presents the dynamics of changes (Table 4).

Table 4. The number of tourists coming to Poland from the neighbouring countries (stated in thousand) in the years 2012–2016

No.	State	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	A change in the years 2012–2016 (stated in %)
1.	The Czech Republic	205	245	266	283	299.1	45.9
2.	Ukraine	1930	2110	1072	1198	1265.1	-34.5
3.	Germany	4800	5280	5743	6012	6288	31.0
4.	Slovakia	110	125	159	169	181.3	64.8
5.	Belarus	1620	1530	811	801	715	-55.9
6.	Russia	670	765	1003	873	800.8	19.5
7.	Lithuania	615	590	605	632	657.9	7.0
8.	The total number of tourists coming from the neighbouring countries (stated in thousand)	9950	10645	9659	9968	10207.2	2.6
9.	The total number of tourists (stated in thousand)	14840	15800	16000	16722	17471.3	17.7
10.	The total share of tourists from the neighbouring countries (stated in %)	67.0	67.4	60.4	59.6	58.4	-8.6

Source: based on: Bartosiewicz, W., & Skalska, T. (2013). *Zagraniczna turystyka przyjazdowa do Polski w 2012 roku*. Warszawa: Instytut Turystyki, Szkoła Główna Turystyki i Rekreacji; Janczak, K., & Patelak, K. (2014). *Zagraniczna turystyka przyjazdowa do Polski w 2013 roku*. Łódź: Activ Group; *Charakterystyka przyjazdów cudzoziemców do Polski w 2014 roku*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, 2015; *Charakterystyka przyjazdów cudzoziemców do Polski w 2015 roku*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, 2016; *Charakterystyka przyjazdów nierezydentów do Polski w 2016 roku*. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sportu i Turystyki, 2017.

It is worth noticing the fact that the share of seven neighbouring countries in the total inbound tourist traffic to Poland in the years 2012–2016 was relatively on a decline during the analysed period by almost 9 percentage points. It is interesting that it was not related to a fall in the number of tourists coming from the neighbouring countries – in the years 2012–2016 it grew by 2.6%. However, it turned out that the number of tourists from other (non-neighbouring) countries was increasing even faster (by 17.7%). It could be observed that the changes in the analysed values were different in the particular countries. In the group of seven neighbouring countries, five of them reported an increase in the number of incoming tourists (the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Russia and Lithuania). Two other countries reported a decrease (Ukraine and Belarus). It was also possible to observe some explicit differences in the rate of those changes – they included some evident increase or decrease (except for Lithuania). The extreme values were respectively +64.8% (Slovakia) and -55.9% (Belarus). Regardless of the reported changes, it should be stated that the neighbouring markets are the most important segment of inbound tourism in Poland.

Neighbouring countries in the tourism policy of the state – the example of Poland

The analysis provided in the previous part of the article explicitly indicates that in most cases, neighbouring countries form an important segment in inbound tourist traffic. It is possible to state that the consequences of such a phenomenon involve a considerable share in the income earned on inbound tourism. It is worth considering the significance of such markets in activities undertaken by entities responsible for the tourism policy. Usually, the responsibility for the tourism policy (implemented at the central/national level) rests with relevant entities appointed for that task. It is assumed that in most European countries, there are two entities responsible for questions related to tourism, namely:

- National Tourism Organisation (NTO)
- National Tourism Administration (NTA) (Borzyszkowski, 2005)

The first of the above-mentioned entities is mainly responsible for the problems related to tourism marketing, particularly for the promotion of the destination country. The second entity defines the general framework for the tourism policy of the state (Borzyszkowski, 2005). In Poland, the national tourism organisation is the Polish Tourism Organisation (PTO) and the National Tourism Administration is the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The next part of the article presents the significance of the neighbouring countries in the assumptions and plans developed by both these entities.

The fundamental assumptions of the operations undertaken by the PTO are stated in its annual operational plan. In the document *The Operational Plan for 2018 ...* (2018), the most important undertakings are listed for the promotion of Poland in the domestic and foreign markets. Considering the foreign markets, there are more than ten countries identified as those which are particularly interesting for the Polish Tourism Organisation. They are referred to in detail in the Sub-task 6.4.1.3.1., which includes promotion objectives and campaigns on leisure tourism in the foreign markets. The Sub-task defines 20 destination markets, which include the neighbouring countries as well. They take four positions on that list: Germany, Russia, Ukraine and the neighbouring markets.

The activities that are going to be undertaken in the above-mentioned markets involve the implementation of the following projects:

- Germany – the field of urban and cultural tourism (the project: *Discover the diversity of urban and cultural tourism*); the field of development of a positive image (the project: *Explore tourist attractions of Poland*); the field of leisure and active tourism (the project: *Active recreation in Poland*);
- Russia – the field of leisure and active tourism (the project: *Discover the diversity of leisure and active recreation in Poland*); the field of development of a positive image (the project: *Explore tourist attractions of Poland*);
- Ukraine - the field of leisure and active tourism (the project: *Active recreation in Poland – active and healthy recreation for the whole family* and *Discover leisure recreation, active and adventure tourism*); the field of development of a positive image (the project: *Explore tourist attractions of Poland*);

Considering the segment of the neighbouring markets, the activities are intended in four other countries: Belarus, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovakia, in the field of development of a positive image with the project: *Explore the cultural heritage of Poland*.

A review of the activities planned by the Polish Tourism Organisation clearly indicates that the neighbouring markets are considered to be fairly important. However, it is worth mentioning that the ranks of the particular countries are highly diversified. Generally, the main emphasis is laid on the three countries: Germany, Russia and Ukraine as particularly important receivers of the Polish tourism offer. The other countries are certainly of secondary importance. It should be also underlined that some intensive activities are undertaken every year in some other markets of the European Union member states.

The observed phenomenon seems to be proved by the location of the representative centres of the organisation, namely: the Polish Tourism Organisation International Offices. There are 15 PTO International Offices located in various countries on different continents. In our seven neighbouring countries, the PTO International Offices operate only in Germany, Russia and Ukraine (www.pot.gov.pl). It also partially indicates the hierarchy in the activities undertaken by the PTO on the neighbouring markets. It proves the significance of these three countries for inbound tourist traffic from the neighbouring countries. As indicated in Table 4, in 2016, the total number of tourists who came to visit Poland from the neighbouring countries was 10,207.2 thousand. The share of the three above-mentioned countries (Germany, Ukraine and Russia) was by far the largest, and it reached the total level of 8,353.9 thousand, which is 81.8% of all the visits recorded from the countries adjacent to Poland.

An important document for defining the lines of action in the field of tourism marketing in a long-term perspective is the *Marketing Strategy for Poland in the tourism sector 2012–2020* (2011). The strategy provides an analysis of the immediate tourism competition to Poland, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. As it can be observed, the group includes our three neighbouring countries. The final part of the document presents a review of the markets where promotion activities are going to be undertaken. There are 26 foreign markets and the domestic market. Considering the neighbouring countries, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Slovakia and

Ukraine are separately distinguished. The activities scheduled for the Lithuanian market are included in the common segment of Lithuania-Latvia-Estonia. Hence, it is possible to state that the intended marketing operations include activities undertaken in all the neighbouring markets. At the same time, the document presents the characteristics of the attractiveness and potential of the particular markets. It is based on a matrix in which two elements are distinguished: the level of tourism attractiveness (high, medium, low) and the position of Polish tourism in the selected markets (strong/to be maintained, medium/intensified investment, weak/long-term investment required). Based on that, the particular countries have been classified to the specific groups. Germany takes the highest position among the neighbouring countries, being classified (along with Great Britain) in the group of the high attractiveness for tourism and taking the strong position. The strong position is also taken by Russia and Ukraine; however, their medium attractiveness for tourism is emphasized. A similar position is taken by Lithuania and Belarus but their attractiveness for tourism has been identified as low. The Czech market has been ascribed with medium attractiveness for tourism, and it takes the medium position. Slovakia has not been considered in that classification.

As it can be observed, the neighbouring countries come as the subject and the field of intensive activities and assumptions made by entities responsible for tourism marketing. These are the markets in which the Polish Tourism Organisation has been interested in. Undoubtedly, the question of the hierarchy in these markets remains a separate problem; however, it can be clearly observed that three of them (Germany, Russia and Ukraine) are particularly important with regard to promotion activities.

It should be mentioned that in 2015 the Ministry of Sport and Tourism issued a document *The Programme of Tourism Development by 2020...* (2015). The document lists the most important assumptions for the development of tourism economy in Poland. Contrary to the previously discussed documents issued by the Polish Tourism Organisation, *The Programme...* (2015) does not refer to any activities undertaken in the particular foreign markets – neither neighbouring ones nor any others. The assumptions presented in the document are mainly focused on the strategical solutions in the field of tourism, which are undertaken, first of all, in the domestic market. Furthermore, contrary to the documents issued by the Polish Tourism Organisation, *The Programme ...* (2015) distinguishes activities that are undertaken not only in the field of promotion and marketing but also in the field of tourism development and organisational solutions.

It is worth mentioning that the example of Poland is only one among many others. For instance, an analysis provided by I. D. Druvaskalne and A. Slara (2006) refers to the most important assumptions of tourism development in the three Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It clearly indicates that in all the three countries, the priority significance in the development of tourism has been ascribed to the neighbouring countries.

Conclusions

The article presents the significance of the neighbouring countries for inbound tourist traffic in the EU member states. The review of scientific literature and available statistical data allows the Author to draw a few important conclusions. First of all, it should be noticed that the problems of tourist traffic is widely discussed in the scientific literature. It is also possible to observe that some authors provide the characteristics and evaluation of the significance of the neighbouring countries for inbound tourist traffic, referring to some particular examples. It is generally observed that such markets are of high – and often priority – significance for inbound tourism.

The review of the statistical data that present the structure of tourist traffic in the EU member states allows the Author to provide a general statement that the neighbouring countries usually play a significant role in inbound tourism. Regardless of frequent and considerable differences between the particular countries, it is possible to observe that the analysed destinations are often dependent on their neighbours. The review of the most important markets of inbound tourism proves that statement. Almost 2/3 of all the cases are actually the neighbouring countries.

Apart from its strictly statistical value, the information should also have some practical significance. It proves not only the ranks of the neighbouring countries, but it can also decide – to some extent- about the general tourism policy, including marketing activities undertaken abroad. It should provide some helpful clues to decision-makers at the central level, suggesting the lines for the development of intended action. Furthermore, not only can it indicate the necessity or advisability of activities undertaken in the neighbouring countries, but it can also define the ranks of the particular states. Such assumptions are

particularly significant when viewed from the perspective of the efficiency of the tourism policy of the state.

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