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TERRITORIAL COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NAUTICAL TOURISM IN THE SOUTHERN BALTIC RIM

Review

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Abstract

The main aim of the article is to present the results of the analysis concerning the role of territorial cooperation in the development of nautical tourism in the Southern Baltic rim. The Member States of the European Union have the opportunity to obtain financial support for the implementation of various types of projects. Many projects are realized in the cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation. Examples of such projects include activities aimed at popularizing cross-border water areas, building new yacht ports and modernizing and developing existing port infrastructure. The aim is to increase the competitiveness, cohesion and sustainable development of the South Baltic Sea Region, as well as strengthening the integration of people and institutions. The analysis presents two international projects: MARRIAGE and South Coast Baltic implemented by states located in the Southern Baltic rim to develop nautical tourism in this area. The article also highlights the selected aspects of managing European programs and projects.

Keywords: territorial cooperation, nautical tourism, management

1. INTRODUCTION

This region is very heterogeneous in terms of the state of nautical tourism. This heterogeneity results primarily from historical conditions. After the Second World War, the development of sailing in Poland and Lithuania (belonging to the USSR) was suppressed. This applied in particular to sailing on cross-border waters. There were restrictions on movement in these areas due to the inability to freely cross national borders (Urbańczyk, 2013, p. 364). The existing sailing infrastructure has declined and new investments have not been realized for decades. As far as Poland is concerned, it was also significant that, as a result of territorial changes after 1945, areas with conditions favouring the development of sailing were predominantly inhabited by displaced people from typical land areas. Among new residents there was no sailing tradition. The implemented policy, as well as the mutual reluctance resulting from war experiences, was also not conducive to the cooperation of existing sailing communities.

Isolation and long-term lack of investment have contributed to deepening the differences in opportunities for sailing in these areas. At that time in Germany, Denmark and other Baltic states belonging to the West Bloc, the policy focused on the use of natural assets and the development of sailing. Their actions focused on cultivating the traditions associated with it, emphasizing the marine character of individual towns, modernizing and building new infrastructure of ports and marinas. Due to the limited availability of Polish and Lithuanian yacht ports for foreign sailors and their poor technical condition, they have disappeared for years from the sailing map of Europe.

It was only a change of regime, and then the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the European Union, which took place on 1 May 2004, that brought a chance to change the existing situation. It has become possible to raise funds for the modernization of the existing ports and to build a new nautical base. The accession of these two states to the Schengen zone on 21 December 2007 and since 30 March 2008 the free movement of boats and crossing borders without the need for border checks gave the opportunity to increase the number of sailing people across the cross-border waters such as the Szczecin Lagoon and the Baltic Sea.

These changes are not beneficial only to countries where sailing was less popular. The new destinations have contributed to the increase of the attractiveness of the whole Baltic Sea. In addition, the development of ports and marinas in Poland and Lithuania, as well as the richness of the local societies, has created a growing interest in sailing. The freedom of crossing borders makes it possible for sailors to visit the ports of Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

The possibility of crossing borders in a free manner, however, applies not only to the countries closest to these borders. Nautical tourism is also developing in other European regions. Sailors can use offers from Croatia,

Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. According to the *Polski Rynek Żeglarski* 2016 report, the Baltic countries are only in the fifth position among Polish tourists sailing abroad. The areas with warmer climates are much more popular (*Polski Rynek...*, 2016, p. 84).

Similar situation can be found in other Baltic States. Therefore, these countries are undertaking cooperation, which can be considered in two ways: narrow and broad.

Narrow cooperation means stimulating demand in the region (in this case in the Southern Baltic rim). This activity is realized by undertaking intensive promotional and educational activities aimed at encouraging people to sailing. As a consequence, it is expected to lead to an increase in the number of tourists, mainly from the cooperating countries.

Broad cooperation is targeted at attracting tourists from non-cooperating countries. This aims to create and strengthen the image of the region as an attractive sailing destination, competing with other popular European destinations. Competitiveness in this case is understood as the ability to acquire higher ranking positions than other regions in attractiveness and attract more tourists (Bristow, 2011, pp. 344-345).

International cooperation can be realized through, for example, meetings and conferences, the development of common visions and strategies, the conclusion of agreements and the implementation of international cross-border projects (Kizielewicz, 2012, p. 29). And this form of cooperation is the subject of this article.

In order to establish cooperation for the purpose of intensifying tourism, first it is necessary to prepare the region to welcome tourists. This is a complex action, consisting in ensuring the ability to reach the region and meet the various needs of tourists (Nieżgoda, 2012, p. 237). In this case the appropriate sailing infrastructure should be considered as the basis for such actions.

As mentioned earlier, sailing traditions in the countries of the described region are different, as well as the degree of infrastructure development. In Poland and Lithuania, funds for the construction and modernization of yachting ports came only after accession to the European Union.

In Poland, the two most important projects for the development of the sailing base were the West Pomeranian Sailing Route and the Żuławy Loop.

The West Pomeranian Sailing Route is one of the flagship tourist products of the West Pomeranian Voivodship and undoubtedly the biggest investment for the development of sailing in Poland. Nautical tourism in Germany and Denmark is more popular and the marinas are usually better equipped in terms of infrastructure than in Poland and Lithuania. In spite of all, there is still a need for development in this area (Biedenkapp, A., & Stührmann, E., 2004, p. 8).

It is a network of forty ports and marinas of West Pomeranian along the Oder River, Szczecin Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. Its length is estimated at 380 km. It connects the largest waters of north-western Poland and the adjacent towns (marinapogon.pl, accessed 30.01.2017).

It was created within the framework of the West Pomeranian Sailing Route project *Zachodniopomorski Szlak Żeglarski – sieć portów turystycznych Pomorza Zachodniego*, which was partially financed from the funds from the Operational Program Innovative Economy 2007-2013, Measure 6.4. *Investments in tourism products of supra-regional importance*. In addition, the development of the infrastructure was implemented from the funds of the Regional Operational Program of the West Pomeranian Voivodship, and some local governments also benefited from the INTERREG IVA programs supporting cross-border activities. The total value of the Project has been estimated at PLN 93 255 875.97 with PLN 35 280 000.00 of funds from the grant (www.zrot.pl, accessed 30.01.2017).

As part of its implementation, the existing infrastructure of yacht ports has been modernized and new ports have been built. It was assumed that the distance between facilities belonging to the network should not exceed 20-30 nautical miles. Such a distance was considered to be a viable in a few hours of calm sailing (Locja..., p. 7).

The basic aim of the project was the development of sailing tourism in the West Pomeranian Voivodship. The idea was to make Polish sailors and those from other European countries aware of this sailing region (Owczarski, 2011, p. 46).

The second mentioned project is Żuławy Loop. It includes 34 harbours and marinas of the Vistula Delta and the Vistula Lagoon. The Loop is part of the E70 International Waterway running from Rotterdam, through the Berlin waterway junction, north Poland, to Kaliningrad, and further by the Neman Waterway (Prego and Dejmu to Klaipeda). The construction and renovation of the ports was also carried out using EU funds. They came from the Operational Program Innovative Economy 2007–2013 Measure 6.4 *Investments in tourism products of supra-regional importance* (www.petla-zulawska.pl, accessed 3.05.2017).

These projects undoubtedly contributed to the popularization of sailing tourism in Poland. In addition, the port infrastructure that has been built and modernized has become the basis for international cooperation. Owing to the investments made, Poland may be a partner in undertaking activities for the development of sailing in the Baltic Sea region.

The main aim of the article is to present selected projects with a cross-border dimension aimed at the development of nautical tourism in the Southern Baltic rim. The research hypothesis is that the differences between the cooperating countries regarding the development of infrastructure and the sailing traditions do not constitute an obstacle for cooperation. Each country can become a beneficiary as the goal of joint efforts is to build a competitive

advantage for the whole region, resulting in an increasing number of sailors visiting ports in all countries.

This research is based on the method of documentary research, participant observation, expert methodology and in-depth interview method.

2. MARRIAGE AND SOUTH COAST BALTIC PROJECTS AS EXAMPLE OF EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Examples of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation undertaken in recent years and oriented towards the development of sailing tourism in the Baltic Sea Region (both broad and narrow) may be MARRIAGE and South Coast Baltic projects.

MARRIAGE (*better marina management, harbour network consolidation and water tourism marketing in the southern Baltic rim*) was implemented in 2011-2015. Although there are still large infrastructure disparities between the countries involved in the project, it has focused on improving yacht port management and joint promotion (Forkiewicz, 2015, p. 289).

South Coast Baltic (*Establishing durable cross-border boating destination management on the basis of the MARRIAGE cooperation network*) project is a continuation of the MARRIAGE project. It began in October 2016 and will be completed September 30, 2019. (southbaltic.eu, accessed 2.05.2017).

The basic information for both projects is presented in Table 1.

According to the information presented in Table 1, the South Coast Baltic (SCB) project not only continues but also extends the MARRIAGE project. Target group was expanded for motor boaters. In addition, the scope of marketing activities was also expanded, including Scandinavian countries, apart from Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Russia. In addition, emphasis is placed on issues related to the standard of services. It is worth noting that the South Coast Baltic project is planning to invest in pilot investments that will provide facilities for the elderly and environmentally friendly solutions at selected marinas. The need to pay attention to the needs of tourists belonging to this segment results from changes in the age structure of the population observed in all European countries. The growing share of sailing seniors has been confirmed by research conducted in Germany in 2013 (Wassertourismus ..., p. 19).

In both projects, emphasis is placed on building the image of the region. The implementation of this objective is subject to the measures shown in Figure 2.

Table 1

Comparison of MARRIAGE and South Coast Baltic projects

Details	MARRIAGE	SOUTH COAST BALTIC
Budget	EUR 1.24 million (ERDF co-financing EUR 1.06 million)	EUR 2.52 million (ERDF co-financing EUR 2.13 million)
Number of countries participating in the project	4 (Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania)	4 (Germany, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania)
Number of entities participating in the project	11	14
Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sailors on yachts sailing from Poland, Germany, Russia and Lithuania, - yacht owners seeking berths for their craft, - organizers of sailing regattas and cruises in the Baltic Sea, - charter companies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sailors on yachts and motor boaters sailing from Poland, Germany, Russia, Lithuania, and in addition from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands - yacht owners seeking berths for their craft, - organizers of sailing regattas and cruises in the Baltic Sea, - charter companies.
Main goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation and exchange in water tourism marketing, marina management and operation - consolidation of the marina network in the southern Baltic rim - increase the incomes from water tourism in the participating regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deepening the destination building process - extending the joint marketing (accessing new target markets) - establishing higher and more unify quality standards for marina facilities and services across the region - pilot investments (the elderly and eco-friendly marinas) - establishing a permanent DMO (Destination Management Organization).

Source: own study based on www.project-marriage.net, accessed 25.05.2017, southcoastbaltic.eu, accessed 25.05.2017

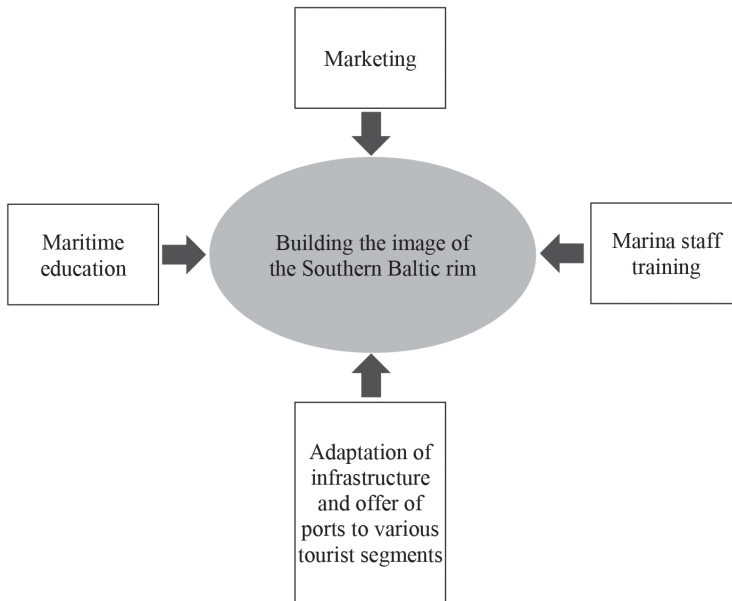


Figure 2 Measures of the Southern Baltic rim image building

Source: own study

Marketing of tourist destinations is part of the so-called territorial marketing, which should not be understood only as the creation of a promotional message to “sell” a given area (Zawistowska, Dębski, Górska-Warsewicz, 2014, p.139). The product must be so prepared to meet the needs of the travellers by making them satisfied. As indicated by N. Šerić and T. Luković, marketing strategies for the tourist destination with a special ambience value need to be unified on the tourist market (N. Šerić, T. Luković, 2009). For both projects, marketing efforts will strengthen the image of the Southern Baltic rim as a regional, supraregional tourist product that is competitive to other European destinations attractive for sailors. As part of the marketing activities undertaken, there is also participation in sailing fairs and promotion of brands, joint promotional materials and port guides.

Marina staff training is intended to increase the level of customer satisfaction. Consequently, boaters might want to visit these facilities again. Tourist demand may be restructured and it should be the goal.

Adaptation of infrastructure and port offer to the various tourist segments (including the elderly and the disabled) will increase the number of potential customers.

The SCB project is designed to provide educational activities not only for marina staff, but also for students. In the future they may work in tourism-related institutions, and the acquired knowledge during the studies should

translate into initiation of activities for the development of nautical tourism.

A prerequisite for the proper conduct of the assumed activities is to accurately identify the needs of potential consumers. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out market research. Such research was planned within the SCB project.

As mentioned earlier, the MARRIAGE project has already been completed. It is therefore possible to determine the effects achieved, among others (Papers of the SCB project partners, 2017):

1. Long-term cooperation agreement signed with projects partners, associated organizations and third parties.
2. 57 500 EUR of private investments.
3. 34% increase of foreign guests from Germany, Poland, Russia and Latvia.
4. 435 760 potential customers reached via the fair visits.
5. 20 marinas with improved management and operation schemes.
6. 67 trained staff members of marinas in the southern Baltic rim.
7. 10 new PPPs agreed between infrastructure owners and operator/developer.

Although the achieved effects of the MARRIAGE project may seem impressive, there is still much to be done. This is confirmed by the results of a study conducted by experts during the first working meeting of SCB project partners. Experts are managers of the port networks in the German state of Vorpommern, on the Danish island of Bornholm, in Poland in the West Pomeranian and Pomeranian voivodships, in the Russian Kaliningrad District and in Lithuanian Klaipeda.

All experts were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is the least and 5 is the most) selected areas of nautical tourism in their regions. Their responses were clarified using the in-depth interview method used by the authors of the article.

The analysis of information in Table 2 allows drawing conclusions about the degree of satisfaction expressed by country experts in four different areas related to nautical tourism. The highest overall rating was obtained with respect to the marina infrastructure and services. Definitely the lowest in terms of number of boaters. Experts' opinions differ among themselves in each of the analysed areas. The highest degree of satisfaction was given by the representative of Bornholm who expressed moderate satisfaction in terms of the number of sailors. However, this was one of the higher ratings in this area. A representative of the West Pomeranian had a similar position, where nautical tourism has no such traditions as Bornholm. The most critical opinion was presented by an expert from Kaliningrad. A more favourable assessment was also proposed by the Pomeranian representative.

Table 2

Selected areas of nautical tourism according to expert opinion

Region	Cooperation with tourist boards					Guest boaters volumes					Harbour network					Marina infrastructure and services				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Vorpommern (Germany)			x			x									x					x
Bornholm (Denmark)					x			x							x					x
West Pomerania (Poland)		x						x							x					x
Pomerania (Poland)	x					x						x							x	
Kaliningrad * (Russia)	x					x					x						x			
Klaipeda (Lithuania)		x					x						x				x			
Total score	14					11					19					20				
Percentage share in the possible number of points	14/30=47%					11/30=37%					19/30=63%					20/30=67%				

Note: *Russia is not a partner in the SCB project, but an expert from this country was invited to participate in the MARRIAGE project.

Source: Own study based on the expert opinions presented at the working meeting of SCB project partners (16.05.2017)

The research showed that despite cross-border cooperation lasting for several years e.g. in MARRIAGE project, there are still significant differences between the various regions in terms of different areas of nautical tourism. Full satisfaction, but concerning only two of the four areas assessed, was declared only by expert from Bornholm. Other respondents in all assessed areas indicated (to varying degrees) the need for their improvement. This demonstrates that the continuation of MARRIAGE activities is needed and the SCB Project is justified.

3. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS SUPPORTING EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

According to information on project financing, the main sources are the European Territorial Cooperation Programs. In principle, cooperation is required to use these instruments. Undertaking such activities, involving public and private entities, i.e. tourism companies, local government units and tourist organizations, seem to be the basis for a comprehensive development of touristic offer (Panasiuk, 2014, p. 299).

Cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation was and is being implemented within the framework of a separate objective of the European Union's cohesion policy - European territorial cooperation 2007–2013 and 2014–

2020. A separate objective of cohesion policy points to the importance of joint ventures undertaken by several partners. Taking into account territorial cohesion, in addition to economic and social ones, was an important moment in shaping the European Union's development policy. The EU documents mention, inter alia, the importance of territorial integration of cross-border and transnational functional regions, securing global competitiveness of regions based on strong local economies and improving territorial accessibility for individuals, communities and businesses (Zaucha, Brodzicki, Ciołek, Komornicki, Mogiła, Szlachta, Zaleski, 2015, p. 285).

There are many programs under this initiative. For example, these are *South Baltic Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007–2013* and its continuation of the *Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014–2020*. The purpose of these programs is to strengthen the sustainable development of the Southern Baltic rim by joint actions enhancing its competitiveness and strengthening integration between people and institutions. The total budget of the 2007-2013 programs was approximately EUR 75 million, including around EUR 61 million from the European Regional Development Fund. For the 2014-2020 period, more than EUR 83 million (from the European Regional Development Fund) is planned. The area of support is the coastal regions of the five member states of the European Union: Denmark, Lithuania, Germany, Poland and Sweden.

In the documents of the current financial perspective, the main objective is: 'to increase the potential of the Baltic Sea region through cross-border cooperation'. There are blue and green growth definitions that have been properly defined. Green growth is a term to describe a path of economic growth that utilises natural resources in a sustainable manner. It implies fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which the well-being of the current and future generations relies. Blue Growth is part of the Europe 2020 strategy and addresses the economic potential of the oceans, seas and coasts for sustainable growth and jobs. It is to be developed in harmony with the marine environment and through cooperation between public and private partners. (Interreg South Baltic..., 2016, pp. 4–5) Moreover, tourism has been included in the green economy as a sustainable (green/eco) tourism as well as in the blue economy - coastal and cruise tourism.

According to data of 25.05.2017, up to now under specific objective 2.1. "Sustainable tourism" funding for 9 projects was awarded, among all 22 so-called regular projects. Poland is participating in all of them, and is a leader in three. One such project is the SCB project mentioned earlier.

It should be added that three further projects have also been co-financed as Seed Money, i.e. financial support for project proposal preparation in the next competition (southbaltic.eu, accessed 25.05.2017).

The selection of projects for funding takes place by means of a competition procedure. The program website publishes information on the number of applications submitted, and then lists the projects that have won the

competition. Each application passes formal assessment and eligibility. The administrative criteria relate mainly to complex documents, i.e. their proper fulfilment and compliance with all formal requirements. Eligibility criteria are, in particular, the fulfilment of minimum partnership requirements (at least 2 partners from two program member states), compliance with program priorities and co-financing. At the next stage a qualitative assessment is carried out, referring to the strategic and operational characteristics of the project. The strategic assessment is mainly about determining the scope of the project's contribution to achieving the program's objectives. It also tries to answer the question whether its implementation is justified in terms of common European territorial challenges, i.e. sustainable development, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, gender equality and environmental impact. It is important at this stage to identify the added value that cooperation brings and to what extent the composition of the project partnership will address the issues of territorial challenges. The operational assessment determines the viability and feasibility of the proposed projects and covers the following issues: management, promotion, work plan and budget. The management area defines the adequacy of the proposed management structure to the size and needs of the project, and evaluates the experience of the lead partner in the management of international projects. Under the promotion criterion, appropriate marketing measures are applied in the context of reaching target groups and stakeholders. The work plan and budget are assessed in terms of their feasibility, consistency and the right price/performance ratio. In addition, applications are subject to state aid assessment. (Interreg South Baltic..., 2016, pp. 85–91)

4. CONCLUSIONS

The waters of the South Baltic are very attractive to boaters. Due to historical circumstances, however, it is differentiated in the extent of the development of navigational infrastructure and the level and availability of nautical tourism services. The ability to freely cross borders and wide availability of information on various European sailing destinations means that in the case of cross-border water, it is insufficient to attract tourists only at the level of one region or state. It is essential to combine activities and create a common image and branding of the whole water area. The article presents two international projects implemented by states located in the Southern Baltic rim. The MARRIAGE project was completed in 2015, which allowed presenting its effects. Although these effects are very measurable, it is clearly necessary to continue the cooperation. This is done in the SCB project, the basic assumptions of which have also been presented in the article. The project is attended by countries such as Germany, Poland, Denmark and Lithuania, which are characterized by varying degrees of development of nautical tourism and related infrastructure. However, they all perceive the potential benefits of implementing projects.

The article also presents selected financial instruments of the European Union, which largely determine the undertaking of international cooperation.

Nautical tourism is part of the green economy – as sustainable (green/eco) tourism and the blue economy – coastal and cruise tourism, part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

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