

## **Tourism development in the Visegrad Four countries in the period of the EU access**

JIŘÍ VÁGNER

Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science,  
Department of Social Geography and Regional Development

### **Abstract**

The article presents a comparative study which reveals common features of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in tourism history and general potential. There is a lack of studies specialized in the Visegrad Four countries tourism and specialized literature is still very limited. The study is based on theoretical approaches to development of countries in post-totalitarian (post-communist) period in the context of globalization process. Empiric part explains a broad range of statistical data available mostly from national statistical offices and tourism promotion authorities. Most of the data have been expressed in per capita terms. Development after 1989 is divided into three periods characterized by different trends in incoming visitors, tourist and, economic effects from receipts. The dynamic boom is discussed for the last period after 2002 mostly. Nationality structure of tourists is subject of a comparison. Extreme concentration and centralization, especially to national metropolises, is a challenge for future regional development of domestic and foreign tourism. General tourist image of the Visegrad Four countries is assessed in detailed SWOT analyses. The opportunities and threats indicate perspectives on the use of advantages associated with the EU access. Effects of EU membership are discussed focusing basic conceptions and development documents at national and supranational levels. The conclusions consider the statement that it is very difficult to distinguish the effects of joining the EU from the effects of other factors that are contributing to the world tourism development. A boom of EU economy has been reflected also in the tourism sector, due to a better image of the newly accessed countries which gain experience and know-how from the EU systematic approach to funding. Financial subsidies from the EU structural funds started to be effective in development of infrastructure and service. Common promotion of Central-European countries in the framework of European Quartet seems to be a big chance and challenge.

**Key words:** tourism – Visegrad Four – Czechia – Hungary – Poland – Slovakia

### **Introduction**

Tourism represents a dynamic sector of economy which reflects accelerated interactions and interdependences in the world system. But also social and cultural relationships are spread due to tourist flows. Contemporary globalization processes emphasize external pressures as the source of social and cultural changes taking place in individual countries. Globalization processes and the post-totalitarian and



postindustrial transformations take place simultaneously and contribute significantly to changing organization of post-communist societies (Hampl, Dostál, Drbohlav 2007). Tourism creates an important segment of national economies in many countries. The Visegrad Four countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) are not an exception and can indicate development in the post-communist transformation period. Not only economic significance of tourism in this region has remarkably risen recently but tourism has also begun to play an important role in the policy of the Visegrad Four countries (V4) in the context of the EU regional policy. However, there is a lack of geographical studies which analyze tourism in the Visegrad Four countries in a whole (Beckmann 2000, Shlevkov 2002, Vlášková 2004, Štěpová 2006). Therefore, the objectives of this study are aimed at a comparative development of tourism in the four Centraleuropean countries with the main focus on incoming tourists, delimitation of the most frequently visited regions with the discussion of centralization and concentration trends and their effects. There is also made an attempt to identify dominant forms which should be supported by state and EU funds in future. Conceptions of tourism development (2007–2013) should reflect more efforts towards more equal distribution of incomes at the regional level. More effective use of tourism potential in present and potential tourist regions has been a topic of debates in Central Europe. For more effective evaluation of tourism sources the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is necessary for specification of supports for more dynamical development.

Higher attention is paid to the development of tourism in the V4 countries not only due to increasing economic importance, but also much broader possibilities of sourcing from EU structural funds. The EU in cooperation with national authorities can through its regional policy contribute significantly to the development in the regions which are facing economic troubles nowadays.

The study will verify the hypothesis of dominant position of Czechia in tourism development in the last decade within the Visegrad Four countries. After the era of “discovering of the metropolises” behind the Iron Curtain attempts at deconcentration and decentralization process in the form of supporting of non-metropolitan and peripheral regions will be revealed. Total number of foreign depends not only on geographical location but also on comparative benefits of particular regions (specific offer of tourist products, favorable prices...) and on image of regions and their appropriate promotion for both foreign and domestic clients. Cognitive historical, cultural and city tourism has survived the major form for foreign travelers. Spa and health tourism bring remarkable incomes for non-metropolitan regions in Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary above all. The study should help to find an answer at the following questions:

What are the common features of Visegrad countries (Central Europe Four, European Quartet) in tourism history, potential, present strategies and perspectives? What are the specifics?

## Sources and methods

Specialized literature on the V4 countries tourism is still very limited, available studies have been mostly aimed at evaluation of statistical data or one aspect of tourism. Because of different statistical approaches and classifications, comparability of the data is rather troublesome. Lijewski T., Mikułowski B. A. Wyrzykowski, J. (2002) deals with mostly description of the tourist regions classified on the base of the number of collective accommodation facilities (CAF). There is a lack of deeper discussion on dominant forms. Poland, however, provides the best statistical databases, through the special Institut Turystyki. Most statistical data are shown on the Internet pages of national statistical offices, ministries and national promotional tourism authorities. Shortages in statistics were revealed in Slovakia with lack of marketing studies and strategies. The linguistic barrier sometimes appears with national Hungarian statistics. Regional data about tourism incomes, purpose and length of stay and other characteristic have been very difficult to obtain and compare.

SWOT analysis can reveal the major features of tourist potential but is not able to explain causative relations. Factors which influence tourism development may be included with further possibility to point out key priorities for perspectives.

## Development of tourism after 1989

Upto 1989 former socialist countries suffered from very limited possibilities of both outgoing and incoming tourism. Share of accommodated Western tourists in former Czechoslovakia was only around 6% (Janalík 2006) and the situation was not much better in other Visegrad countries.

The collapse of the communist block brought deep changes and affected not only political and economic but also social and cultural circumstances (Kornai 2005). The post-totalitarian transformation processes represent a radical change which must be analyzed and evaluated. Synthetic studies on the development of structures and geographical organization of post-totalitarian societies were elaborated (Dostál 1998) and can point out both old and new approaches in geography of transformation, in the framework of both “short-term” rectifying post-totalitarian transformation (Dostál, Hampl 1996) and “long-term” post-industrial transformation with dynamic development of metropolitan areas, polarization between core and periphery, qualitative reevaluation of economic effects, increasing importance of human and social capital, more important role of local and regional communities (Hampl 2005). A turn in geopolitical and geoeconomic attractiveness was reflected also in tourism.

After the break of the Iron Curtain in 1989 an enormous increase of incoming tourists in most of post-communist countries appeared. Also the relative share of Centraleuropean countries on European tourism has been increasing. The boom was predominantly determined with the attractiveness of the region with broad offer of unique natural and historic-cultural potential, favorable prices of tourist services and increase of their quality, political stability and safety. Also in tourism, the leading position is occupied by national metropolitan urban centres which have become transactional cities (Gottmann 1983) based on information orientated activities, tertiary and quaternary sector. Core and



periphery polarization is also visible in changing role of border territories (e.g., Euro-regional activities in tourist and broader regional development).

Three development periods can be recognized (Kubín, Vágner 2007)

The first era of the 1990s (1990–1998) was characterized by leading position of Hungary in incoming tourism, followed by Czech(oslovak)ia and Poland. These countries got an appropriate label of Centraleuropean Tourist Tigers (Bačvarov 1997). The boom of traveling was caused not only by political changes, relative stability and safety but also due to abolition of visa duties, vicinity of major sources of foreign tourists (Germans above all in the first period), cultural similarity, traditional rich historical and natural potential and favourable prices, of course. Shopping tourism played a very important role for one-day visitors especially. Undiscovered Eastern Centraleuropean countries went through the era of “fashion effect” (Vágner 2002). when Western travellers were curious to learn about post-socialist countries. From the regional point of view even this first period might be characterized already with the concentration to capitals and cultural centres above all.

The second era in the break of the millennium (1999–2002) got features of decrease and stagnation keeping line with global development and effects of terrorism and recession of economy. The “fashion effect” came into end. Tourism development was disturbed also with natural hazards – floods above all (1997, 2002). Weaknesses in infrastructure and promotion were revealed more intensively. Big potential of tourism was not followed with well-thought broader conceptions. Tourism regional policy already existed in Poland but in Czechia was still very inefficient. The system suffered also from weak horizontal structure and coordination. Despite of further concentration process positives of the development in that era could be seen in the rise of congress tourism (Prague as a host of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank Congress, European City of Culture 2000 as well as Cracow etc.).

Boom in global tourism was reflected also in the V4 countries in the third era which started since 2003 with increase of tourist flows (but not as much in receipts). Incomes from tourism have helped to cover imbalance in foreign trade. The amount of jobs in tourism industry has boomed as well as investments with annual increase by 12% (more than in Italy, Greece or Turkey – www.czechtourism.org). The image of almost accessed EU countries was reflected with prolonged stays, especially in summer and lower seasonality with prolonging of high season since early spring till late autumn. Influx of tourists was enabled by the boom of low-cost airlines and rise of weekend binge tourism (stag parties, hen parties etc.). Possibilities of sourcing from EU (pre-) access funds bettered at least a little some basic infrastructure and communication system (highways, international railway corridors). Mass tourism has been complemented with a wide range of alternative forms reflecting demanded trends of sustainable tourism. Creation of conceptions of tourism development and campaigns of promotional authorities in both countries provoked also discussions on firmer legislative framework in tourism.

The evaluation of foreign incoming tourism since 1989 was based on 3 statistical indices – number of foreign visitors, number of foreign guests (tourists) in the collective accommodation facilities and receipts – all data related to the total population of country for possible comparison.

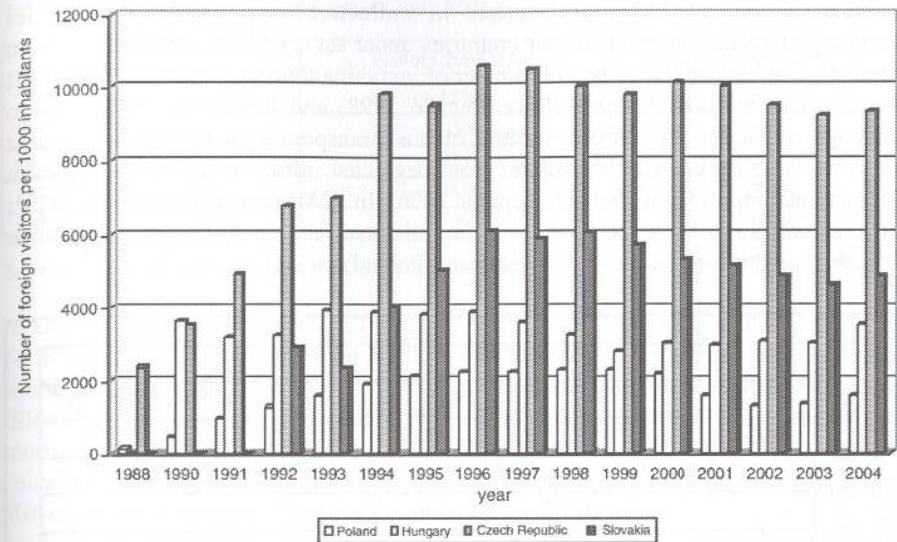


Fig. 1 Number of foreign visitors per 1000 inhabitants

Source: Janalík 2006, following Kompendium statistik ČR v ČR 1998–99, CzechTourism, Instytut Turystyki, Központi statisztikai hivatal (Hungarian central statistical office), Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky

Since 1989 there was an enormous increase of foreign visitors in all V4 countries with the exception of Hungary as long as the mid-1990s (fig. 1). The biggest dynamics was indicated for Poland and Slovakia, also thanks to relatively lower number of foreign visitors before 1989. After the stagnation in the mid-1990s the lowest drop could be seen for Czechia, mostly due to more favorable economic development and more developed tourist infrastructure. Deeper fall indicated Poland and Slovakia with more economic troubles and increase of unemployment. A new increase started as long as after 2004 in connexion with favorable economic boom in all V4 countries, more international safety, the EU access and also boom of low-cost airlines. In 2005 about 233 mil. foreign visitors entered the V4 countries (40% to Czechia). Relative indicators (fig. 1) show the highest influx of foreign visitors to Czechia followed with Slovakia, also due to transit and one-day shopping journeys. Both countries gain from their advantageous location. The vicinity of big sources played an important role for Czechia, with frequent one-day trips from Germany and Poland. Lower indicators for Poland reflect rather lower attractiveness and periphery. Arrivals of Eastern neighbours (Belorussia, Russia, Ukraine) depend on obtaining visa, poorer economy does not enable frequent foreign holiday for most population. A short but quite a deep drop was shown for Poland between 2001–3 thanks to recessive economic development, high rate of the Polish currency and higher effect of unstable international security (Bartoszewicz, Skalska 2005).

Within the 1995–2004 decade number of foreign clients in collective accommodation facilities rose by 4 million in the V4 countries. Also the outgoing tourism to Western European countries increased rapidly.



The number of incoming tourists in collective accommodation facilities approached 15 mil. in 2004 in four countries under survey (3.5% share of European market). The highest dynamism of number of incoming tourists per capita 1990–2004 was for Czechia and Hungary (Rátz, Puczko 1998) and lowest for Poland due to shortage of facilities for more wealthy clients, transport infrastructure and tourist services. Also Slovakia rather suffers from neglected infrastructure and insufficient international promotion (Michael, Kopanic 2006). In all V4 countries a significant part of tourists has not been accommodated in collective facilities but in houses of their friends (one third estimated from Slovakia and Poland).

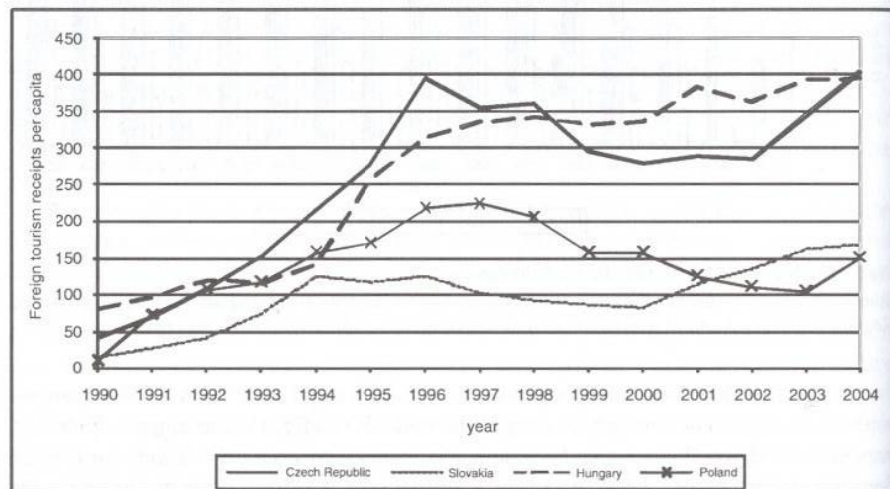


Fig. 2 Foreign tourism receipts per capita 1990–2004

Sources: Janalík 2006, following World Tourism Organization, Kompendium statistik CR v ČR 1998–99, CzechTourism, Instytut Turystyki, Központi statisztikai hivatal (Hungarian central statistical office), Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky

The most evident results for economic importance of incoming tourism are shown in fig. 2. The highest dynamism of receipts per capita was in the first half of the 1990s followed with stagnation or decrease after 2000 with another recent boom and top position of Czechia and Hungary again. Incoming tourism in Hungary (Tourism in Hungary 2004) seems to be the most efficient because of half the number of the amount of tourists compared to Czechia but with similar level of receipts. The financial effect is high mostly from spa and health resort stays (2 mil. tourists in Hungary – Janalík 2006). Tourism industry created in the V4 countries about 2.5% of GDP and 3% of jobs (WTTO 2004). The indirect influence estimated on the bases of the satellite accounts show much higher figures (12–13% for both indices).

Number of real tourists (guests) who spent at least one night in a collective accommodation facility (30 mil. in all V4 countries 2005) is much more important for tourism economy than total number of all foreign visitors crossing the border. The

Tab. 1 Dynamics of visitors and guest arrivals 2002–2005

	Visitors 2005/2002	Guests 2005/2002
<b>Total</b>	<b>+ 11%</b>	<b>+ 15%</b>
Czechia	+ 3%	+ 18%
Hungary	+ 23%	+ 13%
Poland	+ 28%	+ 17%
Slovakia	+ 12%	0%

Sources: author, following data from the European Quartet 2005

recent dynamics of guest arrivals (2005 vs. 2002) is the most favourable for Czechia (+ 18%). In Poland and Hungary it is still lower than for visitors arrivals and stagnation was revealed for Slovakia (tab. 1). Number of visitors highly prevails over guests (Slovakia 9-times, Czechia 8-times, Hungary 5-times, Poland 4-times). Domestic tourism must be mentioned because of slightly higher number of native tourist in all countries (with the exception of Poland – 3-times more domestic tourists) who spent also comparable amount of money for their holidays.

Average length of stay has unfortunately decreased by 0.2–0.5 days since 2002 and fluctuates around 3 days with higher exception 4.3 days in Czechia 2005. In spite of different size of the V4 countries, the bed capacity is similar for Hungary, Czechia and Poland and amounts half a million beds approximately for each country (170 000 in Slovakia) (European Quartet 2006).

Structure of foreign tourists is indicated in tab. 2. Far dominant role of Germans can be seen for all countries, with decreasing share since the beginning of the 1990s. British, Italian and American occupied top 10 nationalities in all countries, Russians perform longer stays and expenditures as well as tourists from faraway destinations (spa and health stays). New dynamic sources were revealed in recent couple of years (Chinese especially).

Concentration of tourists seems to be another important issue (tab. 3). Centralization to national capitals is clear for Prague and Budapest, balanced major regions appeared for Poland (Warsaw, the Baltic Coast, Cracow) and two dominant regions in Slovakia

Tab. 2 Structure of foreign tourists

Czechia	%	Hungary	%	Poland	%	Slovakia	%
Germany	25	Germany	20	Germany	38	Czechia	28
UK	10	UK	8	UK	6	Poland	13
Italy	7	Austria	7	Italy	5	Germany	13
USA	5	Italy	6	France	5	Hungary	8
Netherlands	5	USA	5	USA	5	Italy	4
Poland	5	Spain	4	Russia	5	Austria	4
Slovakia	4	Romania	3	Israel	3	France	3
France	4	Japan	3	Netherlands	3	UK	2
Spain	4	Netherlands	3	Sweden	3	USA	2
Russia	3	Poland	3	Spain	3	Netherlands	2

Sources: author, following data from the European Quartet 2005



Tab. 3 Concentration of tourists in dominant regions

Czechia	%	Hungary	%	Poland	%	Slovakia	%
Prague	59	Budapest	57	Warszawa	18	The Tatras	31
W-Boh. Spas	6	Balaton	17	Baltic Coast	15	Bratislava	26
Krkonoše	5	Sopron	4	Cracow	13	Lower Vah	10
Šumava		Siofok		Wroclaw		Danube Reg.	
South Bohemia		Matra-Bukk		Mazury		Northern Vah	
Brno		Mecsek-Villany		Poznan, Torun		Central Vah	

Sources: author, following Janalík 2006, Ročenka cestovního ruchu, ubytování a pohostinství ČR 2005, Bank Danych Regionalnych, Központi statisztikai hivatal 2004, Štatistická ročenka regiónov Slovenskej republiky, Štatistická ročenka Slovenskej republiky 2004

(the Tatras followed with Bratislava). Prague and its agglomeration plays a role of a gateway-city for establishing transnational linkages with other world and attracts international contacts. The internationalization is crucial as the foundation for significant expansion. Dynamics of Prague enables also the diffusion of development impulses within the national city system (Dostál, Hampl 1994). The development of urban system has had also similar features in other post-communist countries in Central Europe (Dostál 2000, Musil 1993). Deconcentration and decentralization projects held since the end of 1990s have not seemed to have higher effect (Vágner 2002). More detailed view at regional distribution of foreign tourists can be seen in fig. 3 with dominant metropolitan regions and Bohemian border regions.

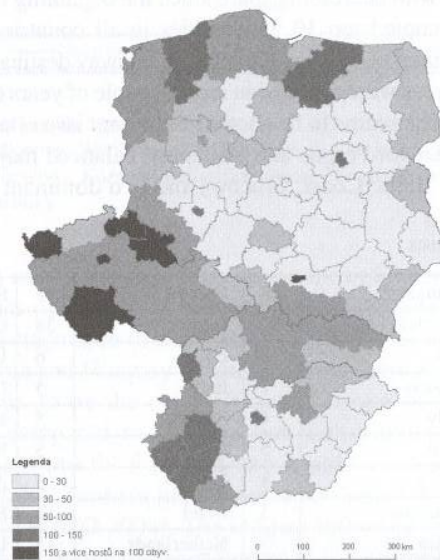


Fig. 3 Relative number of foreign tourists in regions (per 100 inhabitants)  
Source: Janalík 2006, Kompendium statistik cestovního ruchu v České republice 2004, CzechTourism, Bank Danych Regionalnych, Központi statisztikai hivatal 2004, Štatistický úrad SR 2004

General tourist image of the Visegrad Four countries

The Visegrad countries have been considered perspective tourist destinations with dominant concentration to metropolitan areas and historical cities. Historical heritage, architecture, tradition of music have represented the most sought-after attractions with lower awareness of natural beauties. Spa and gastronomy tourism represent other popular forms. On the other hand peripheral regions have not been promoted yet sufficiently despite of high potential. Favorable prices and political stability and safety helped to increase tourist flows despite of lower quality of infrastructure and services (in progress) and shortages in transport networks. The boom of low-cost airlines enables more short city breaks but with stagnation of share of repeated stays. Big potential for conventional and congress tourism started to develop. The Czech Republic wants to emphasize its image as a country full of monuments protected by UNESCO. All countries gain from the newly opened low cost flights. The V4 countries are frightened by possible deterioration of the environment. Another common issue is lack of central reservation system. The Czech Republic officials are also frightened by possible slowdown of development in various parts of tourism; Polish experts are scared of competition from neighbouring countries. For more detailed SWOT analyses of tourism in the V4 countries see tab. 4:

Tab. 4: SWOT tourism analysis

<b>Strengths:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical location (sources of tourist flows, transit)</li> <li>• Economic growth, favourable prices</li> <li>• Historical, cultural, technical monuments and folk festivals and architecture, tradition of cityourism, spas, UNESCO monuments, Jewish monuments, music tradition, memento of communism</li> <li>• Prague, Warsaw, Cracow, Budapest of supraregional importance – chance for congress tourism</li> <li>• Undiscovered regions and natural protected areas, tradition of hiking trails</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient infrastructure and quality of accommodation and catering facilities</li> <li>• Low offer and quality of services, amusement and sport facilities</li> <li>• Dilapidating of historical monuments</li> <li>• Poor information and reservation systems</li> <li>• Low activity and motivation of entrepreneurs, promotion activities regarding alternative forms</li> <li>• Poor legislation framework, coordination of development on supranational, national, regional, local levels, shortage of national and foreign investments towards the regions</li> <li>• Bad command of languages, insufficient promotion and marketing, “old way” of thinking, shortage of regional and thematic products, bad image of “communist” countries</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bigger demand of foreign tourists after the EU Accession (safety destination)</li> <li>• Decentralization, deconcentration, segmentation – regional, social, age specialization</li> <li>• Boom in low-cost airlines</li> <li>• Alternative and modern forms (convention, rural, eco-, aktive tourism)</li> <li>• Joint products within newly accessed countries, the European Quartet, cross-border cooperation, foreign touroperators, investments in hotelling</li> <li>• Subsidizing from EU Structural Funds</li> <li>• Regional marketing and tourist information system, new info technologies</li> </ul>



**Threats:**

- Loss of competitiveness due to insufficient infrastructure and service sector
- Underestimation of human capital, education
- Underestimation of maintenance of cultural and technical monuments
- Poor legislative framework and control of quality
- Lack of capital, low support for businesses
- Inadequate coordination
- Stronger competition among tourist destinations without joint coordination and promotion activities

Source: Author, following *Koncepcie Státní politiky cestovního ruchu v České republice na období 2007–2013*, *Strategie propagace České republiky 2004–2010*, *Government Program of Tourism Development Support*, Warszawa 2007, *Strategia rozwoju turystyki na lata 2007–2013*, *Központi statisztikai hivatal 2004*, *Koncepcia rozvoja cestovného ruchu Slovenskej republiky 2005–2006*, *Stratégia rozvoja cestovného ruchu Slovenskej republiky do roku 2013*

**Effects of EU membership**

Despite of a short time interval after the EU Access in May 2004 some common features in tourism development of the V4 countries could be recognized. The most developed forms from recent periods have survived and even expanded – especially cultural and historical tourism, city breaks, mountain tourism, spa and health stays, traditional holiday at the lakes, visiting pilgrimage sites, eco- and agri-tourism. Boom of low-cost airlines attracted binge tourism (stag and hen parties) to metropolises mostly. Latest data show a slight outflow of this segment easterly (Baltic states). Relative stability of incoming structure is another common feature with boom of faraway sources (Israel, Japan, China, Korea...), relative decrease of Germans and increase of the EU guests (emigrants tourism represents an important part of foreign tourism in Poland especially). Immense concentration of tourists has unfortunately even deepened (Czechia) with still low effect of deconcentration programmes, promotion and marketing (*Vliv členství České republiky v Evropské unii na cestovní ruch*. 2003).

It is almost impossible to distinguish the effects of joining the EU from the effects of other factors that are contributing to the world tourism development. Boom of EU economy has been reflected also in tourism sector, also due to better image of newly accessed countries which could take experience and know-how from the EU systematic approach of funding. Financial subsidizes from the structural funds started to be effective in infrastructure and service in the form of Regional Operation Programmes (Czechia 72 bil. Euro by 2007), *Conceptions of State Tourism Policy* (comparison of Czechia and Poland – Kubín, Vágner 2007), separate satellite accounts. EU environmental legislation began to be implemented. The best effects should be seen in 3–4 years after the EU access in not only more tourists but also longer stays and higher incomes. The EU membership enables free movement of persons and capital, one insurance, increase of foreign students, educational and study journeys, tourists from EU. Increase of convention, congress, business and incentive tourism should follow. Focus is given on alternative, active, rural, eco-tourism, biking, hiking. The latest data from the V4 countries show also increase of one day visitors (border regions, capitals, pseudoforms – shopping, sexual tourism speculations), neighbours, still lower prices

before joining the EMU. The newly accessed countries proceeded to the document “Working together for the Future of the European Tourism“ (2002) with five key areas: Information, Education, Quality, Sustainable development, New technologies.

The accession to the EU meant for the V4 countries an increase in financing of tourism which enabled the development of the infrastructure and improvement of the quality of services. The accession also brought the know-how from the EU in terms of systematic approach to the problems of tourism. Future realization of the strategies will be closely monitored and the strategies will be modified based on actual conditions.

Convention tourism seems to be the most dynamic form with possible double receipts from capita compared to an average form (8% guests in Czechia). PAKT (2006) shows convention tourism brought for Czechia 10–12 bil. Kc a year (28<sup>th</sup> position in the world with 1% of world incomes – UIA 2006). The highest concentration of all V4 countries was definitely to Prague – 17<sup>th</sup> world position, 13<sup>th</sup> most popular investment destination with the potential to enter TOP 10 in a couple of years (*Ročenka Cestovního ruchu, ubytování a pohostinství* 2006).

Strategic Objectives in *Conceptions of State Tourism Policy* are quite common for all V4 countries: Strengthening of tourism position in national economy (GDP growth, support of small- and middle-scale entrepreneurs), growth of competitiveness within Europe, growth of duration and number of stays with maintenance of the environmental quality (*Polish Tourism Marketing* 2005). Due to differences of the current state of tourism development in both countries, the Poles are more cautious when forming the goals following their accession to the EU.

The Czechs formulate their goals quite straightforward: “The Czech Republic – number one destination in the heart of Europe”. According to the government strategy of tourism development in the Czech Republic in 2007–2013, “the global goal of the tourism strategy is the increase of effectiveness of tourism via utilization and further development of the current potential and based on that the improvement of current competitiveness of the whole industry on the national and regional level while respecting the protection of nature, landscape and other parts of the environment” (*Conception of State Tourism Policy* 2007–2013).

The Poles state their goal as an improvement of conditions for tourism development. They want to develop a “legal, institutional, financial and personnel conditions for tourism development that would help in the economic development of the Polish society and would increase the competitiveness of regions and the country while respecting the protection of the environment and historical monuments.” (*Government Program of Tourism Development Support* 2007.)

**Conclusion – perspectives of tourism in the Visegrad Four countries**

Possible future development of tourism in the Visegrad Four countries originates from opportunities and threats pointed out in tab. 4. Even a couple of years after the EU access bigger interest of foreign tourists has been evident with estimated highest boom 3–4 years after the access (2007–2008) which was proved also in case of the EU access of Spain and Portugal (1986) and Austria, Sweden and Finland (1995). Modern



forms of sustainable tourism should become a comparable alternative to mass tourism. Attention should be paid to complementary services, thematic trails, folklore, regional gastronomy, further development of spa, convention tourism, religious tourism. A big challenge for the V4 countries is a joint promotion of products with the assistance of financing from the EU structural funds which should enable also more efficient regional marketing, unification of tourist information systems and developing of new information technologies. Special focus should be given on infrastructure and transport development (highways, speed railways, regional airports). Leading role of national metropolitan areas as core areas of transformation and "bridges" to globalized world structure will be enriched by increasing importance of local and regional communities in future development, with a significant role of cross-border activities.

Above mentioned statements announce that the V4 countries should yield just nowadays with their EU access. It is not easy, however, to distinguish effects associated directly with EU access from the other factors of global tourism development.

Unless the chances are made use of there is a threat of loss of competitiveness due to bad infrastructure and service sector. Another warning might be underestimation of human capital and professional education in tourism. Legislative framework has not been stabilized yet and there is a lack of monitoring the quality of services. Bad coordination of tourism development in the V4 countries may bring stronger competition among particular countries what would cause much lower positive effect on economies compared to joint coordination and promotion of tourism potential and products.

#### Acknowledgements

The research was supported with the Investigative Programme of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport MSM 0021620831 "Geographical systems and risk processes in the context of global changes and European integration".

#### References

- BAČVAROV, M. (1997): End of model? Tourism in post-communist Bulgaria, *Tourism Management*, 18 (10), 43–50.
- Bank Danych Regionalnych, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2004.
- Government Program of Tourism Development Support, Warszawa 2007, Ministerstwo Gospodarki.
- Instytut turystyki Warszawa (2006): Charakterystyka rynków zagranicznych. Kierunki rozwoju turystyki na rynkach zagranicznych.
- DOSTÁL, P. (1998): Democratization, economic liberalization and transformational slump: a cross-sectional analysis of twenty-one postcommunist countries. In: *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 16, pp. 281–306.
- DOSTÁL, P. (2000): The European spatial development perspective and the accession countries: polycentric guidelines versus uneven spatial development. In: *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, 3/4, pp. 183–192.
- DOSTÁL, P., HAMPL, M. (1994): Development of an urban system: general conception and specific features in the Czech Republic. In: Barlow, M., Dostál, P., Hampl, M. (eds.): *Territory, Society and Administration. The Czech Republic and the Industrial Region of Liberec*. Amsterdam, Univesrity of Amsterdam, pp. 191–224.

- DOSTÁL, P., HAMPL, M. (1996): Transformation of East-Central Europe: general principles under differentiating conditions. In: Carter, F.W., Jordan, P., Rey, V. (eds.): *Central Europe After the Fall of Iron Curtain. Geopolitical perspectives, Spatial Patterns and Trends*. Frankfurt am Main. Europäische Verlag der Wissenschaften, pp. 113–128.
- GOTTMANN, J. (1983): *The Coming of the Transactional City*. College Park. University of Maryland.
- HAMPL, M. (2005): *Geografická organizace společnosti v České republice: transformační procesy a jejich obecný kontext*, Přírodovědecká fakulta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 368 s.
- HAMPL, M., DOSTÁL, P., DRBOHLAV, D. (2007): Social and cultural geography in the Czech Republic: under pressures of globalization and post-totalitarian transformation. In: *Social and Cultural Geography*, 8, No. 3, pp. 476–493.
- JANALÍK, J. (2006): *Příjezdový cestovní ruch v zemích Visegrádu po roce 1989*. UK PFF KSGRR, 42 p.
- Koncepce Státní politiky cestovního ruchu v České republice na období 2007–2013, Praha 2006, Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj České republiky.
- Koncepce Státní politiky cestovního ruchu v České republice na období 2002–2007, Praha 2002, Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj České republiky.
- KORNAI, J. (2005): The great transformation of Central Eastern Europe. Presidential address, 14<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the IEA.
- KOWALCZYK, A. (2003): *Geografia turizmu*, PWN Warszawa, 186 p.
- Központi statisztikai hivatal (Hungarian central statistical office), Budapest 1998, 2002, 2004.
- KUBÍN, E., VÁGNER, J. (2007): Dynamics of Tourism Development in Czechia and Poland after EU Access. In: Wilk, W. (ed.): *Global changes: their regional and local aspects*. In print.
- LIJEWSKI, T., MIKULOWSKI, J., WYRZYKOWSKI, J. (2002): *Geografia turystyki Polski*, PWE Warszawa, 378 p.
- MARIOT, P. (1983): *Geografia cestovného ruchu*. Veda, Bratislava. 248 p.
- MUSIL, J. (1993): Urban systems in post-communist societies in Central Europe: anlysis and prediction. In: *Urban Studies*, 30, p. 899–905.
- PÁSKOVÁ, M., ZELENKA, J. (2002): *Výkladový slovník cestovního ruchu*. MMR ČR, Praha, 448 p.
- Ročenka cestovního ruchu ČR 1994, Český statistický úřad, Praha 1994.
- Ročenky cestovního ruchu, ubytování a pohostinství České republiky 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006. Nakladatelství magCONSULTING, Praha.
- SOBOTKOVÁ, J. (1996): *Cestovní ruch ČR. Diplomová práce*, KSGRR, PFF UK, Praha.
- Strategia rozwoju turystyki na lata 2007–2013, Warszawa 2007, Ministerstwo Gospodarki.
- Strategia rozwoju turystyki na lata 2001–2006, Warszawa 2002, Ministerstwo Gospodarki.
- Štatistická ročenka regiónov Slovenskej republiky. Štatistický úrad SR, Bratislava 2002, pp. 309–311.
- Štatistická ročenka Slovenskej republiky 1994. Štatistický úrad SR, Bratislava 1995, pp. 333–334.
- Štatistická ročenka Slovenskej republiky 2004. Štatistický úrad SR, Bratislava 2004, pp. 445–446.
- VÁGNER, J. (2002): Efforts for regional development assistance in Czech tourism – Czech Tourist Authority projects. In: *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Geographica*, XXXV, 2, 2000, pp. 5–66.
- Zalożenia rozwoju gorspodarki turystycznej, Warszawa 1994, Urząd Kultury Fizycznej i Turystyki.

#### Internet sources

- BARTOSZEWICZ, W., SKALSKA, T. (2005): Zagraniczna turystyka przyjazdowa do Polski w 2004 roku. Instytut Turystyki. [<http://www.intur.com.pl/itenglish/statistics.htm> – 10. 2. 2006]
- BECKMANN, A. (2000): Caring For The Goose. *Central Europe Review*. [<http://www.ce-review.org> – 15. 5. 2006]
- Conception of State Tourism Policy 2007–2013. [<http://www.mmr.cz> – 5. 5. 2007]
- Country reports: Travel and Tourism in Hungary. [<http://www.euromonitor.com> – 15. 3. 2006]
- Country reports: Travel and Tourism in Poland. [<http://www.euromonitor.com> – 15. 3. 2006]
- Country reports: Travel and Tourism in Slovakia. [<http://www.euromonitor.com> – 15. 3. 2006]
- Czechtourism. [<http://www.czechtourism.org> – 5. 5. 2007]
- European Quartet. [<http://www.europeanquartet.com> – 3. 5. 2007]
- Foreign arrivals to Poland 1980–2005. Instytut Turystyki. [<http://www.intur.com.pl/itenglish/statistics.htm> – 10. 2. 2006]



Historical perspective of world tourism. WTO. [http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/eng/historical.htm – 10. 3. 2006]

Charakterystyka przyjazdów turystów zagranicznych do Polski w 2004 roku. Instytut Turystyki. [http://www.intur.com.pl – 10. 2. 2006]

Information material on MICE – business tourism in Hungary 2004. Hungarian National Tourist Office. [http://www.hungary.com – 14. 3. 2006]

Intur. [http://www.intur.com.pl/przyjazdy/htm. – 30. 4. 2007]

Kompendium statistik CR v ČR 1998–99. CzechTourism, Praha 2000. [http://www.cestovni-ruch.cz/stat/stat.php – 10. 3. 2006]

Kompendium statistik CR v ČR 2004. CzechTourism, Praha 2005. [http://www.cestovni-ruch.cz/stat/stat.php – 10. 3. 2006]

Koncepcia rozvoja cestovného ruchu Slovenskej republiky 2005–2006. Ministerstvo hospodárstva Slovenskej republiky. [http://www.economy.gov.sk/index/index.php – 20. 3. 2006]

Marketing plan 2004, 2006. Hungarian National Tourist Office. [http://www.itthon.hu – 12. 5. 2006]

MICHAEL, J., KOPANIC, J.: The State Of Tourism In Slovakia. Central Europe Review. [http://www.ce-review.org – 15. 5. 2006]

MOUREK, D.: Prognóza rozvoje CR v České republice. Česká centrála cestovního ruchu 1999. [http://www.czechtourism.cz – 10. 2. 2006]

Národný program rozvoja cestovného ruchu v Slovenskej republike (2000). [http://www.economy.gov.sk/index/index.php – 20. 3. 2006]

Návštevnost turistických regionů ČR za rok 2004. [http://www.czechtourism.cz – 10. 2. 2005]

Polish Tourism Marketing. Polska Organizacja Turystyczna. [http://www.pot.gov.pl – 14. 5. 2006]

Przyjazdy turystów do Polski według krajów. Instytut Turystyki. [http://www.intur.com.pl – 10. 2. 2006]

RÁTZ, T., PUCZKÓ, L. (1998): Sustainability in hungarian rural tourism. Budapest University of Economic Science. [http://www.geocities.com – 14. 3. 2006]

Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu v SR: Podiely regiónov na kapacitách a výkonech cestovného ruchu v SR, Ministerstvo hospodárstva Slovenskej republiky. [http://www.economy.gov.sk/index/index.php – 20. 3. 2006]

Rural tourism in CEI countries. Central European Initiative. [http://www.ceinet.org – 15. 4. 2006]

SHLEVKOV, A. (2002): Global Tourism Trends and Prospects for Central and Eastern European Countries. WTO. [www.worldtourism.com – 14. 3. 2006]

Stratégia rozvoja cestovného ruchu Slovenskej republiky do roku 2013. [http://www.economy.gov.sk/index/index.php – 20. 3. 2006]

Strategie propagace České republiky 2004–2010. CzechTourism, Praha 2004. [http://www.czechtourism.cz – 3. 4. 2006].

Summary statistical data of the Central European countries. European Quartet 2005. [www.european-quartet.com – 15. 4. 2006]

Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky. Štatistické informácie o cestovnom ruchu SR (1997–2004). Ministerstvo hospodárstva Slovenskej republiky. [http://www.economy.gov.sk/index/index.php – 20. 3. 2006]

ŠTĚPOVÁ, V.: Need to accelerate the development of tourism in central and eastern Europe. Council of Europe. Committee on Economic Affairs and Development. [http://assembly.coe.int – 12. 5. 2006]

Tourism in Hungary 2004. Hungarian National Tourist Office, Budapest 2005. [www.itthon.hu – 14. 3. 2006]

Turyści zagraniczni korzystający z turystycznych obiektów zbiorowego zakwaterowania według powiatów (2002). Bank Danych Regionalnych, Główny Urząd Statystyczny. [http://www.stat.gov.pl/bdr/bdrap.strona.indeks – 15. 4. 2006]

VLÁŠKOVÁ, M. (2004): Image zemi Visegrádské čtyřky v USA. CzechTourism, Praha. [http://www.czechtourism.cz – 10. 2. 2006];

Vliv členství České republiky v Evropské unii na cestovní ruch. CzechTourism, Praha 2003. [http://www.czechtourism.cz – 12. 4. 2006]

Województwa w latach 1995–2003. Główny Urząd Statystyczny. [http://www.stat.gov.pl/opracowania\_zbiorcze/publikacje\_zbiorcze.htm – 15. 3. 2005]

World Tourism Organization. [http://www.world-tourism.org – 15. 2. 2006]

WTTC 2006 Tourism Satellite Accounts: Regional Reports. [http://www.wttc.org – 15. 2. 2006]

### Vývoj cestovního ruchu v zemích Visegrádské čtyřky v období vstupu do Evropské unie

Příspěvek představuje srovnávací studii, která si dává za cíl odhalit společné rysy Česka, Maďarska, Polska a Slovenska ve využívání potenciálu a ve vývoji cestovního ruchu. Jedná se o jednu z nemnohých specializovaných studií, zaměřených na cestovní ruch v zemích Visegrádské čtyřky. Článek vychází z teoretických přístupů k rozvoji post-totalitních (post-komunistických) zemí v kontextu globalizačních procesů. Empirická část se pokouší vysvětlit vývoj na pozadí široké škály statistických dat, získaných především z materiálů statistických úřadů a národních propagačních organizací cestovního ruchu. Vývoj po roce 1989 je rozdělen na tři období, charakterizované různými trendy v příjezdech turistů a návštěvníků i ekonomickými efekty v podobě příjmů z cestovního ruchu. Důraz je kladen na dynamický rozvoj v posledním období po roce 2002. Hlavní společné trendy – extrémní koncentrace a centralizace cestovního ruchu převážně do hlavních měst ovlivňují i perspektivy regionálního rozvoje. Společné rysy jsou obsahem i detailnější SWOT analýzy. Příležitosti a hrozby jsou zaměřeny na šance, spjaté se vstupem do Evropské unie. Efekty členství v EU jsou diskutovány s využitím základních koncepcí a rozvojových dokumentů na národní i nadnárodní úrovni. V závěrech je zdůrazněno, že je velmi těžké rozlišit efekty spjaté s přístupem k EU od působení dalších faktorů, které ovlivňují vývoj celosvětového cestovního ruchu. Příznivý hospodářský vývoj v EU se odrazil též v sektoru cestovního ruchu, i díky příležitostem získávat zkušenosti ze systematického přístupu financování. Ukazují se efekty financování turistické infrastruktury i služeb. Společná propagace středoevropských zemí pod hlavičkou European Quartet se zdá být vhodnou cestou, podporující cestovní ruch v regionu.

RNDr. JIŘÍ VÁGNER, Ph.D.  
Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science,  
Albertov 6, 128 43 Prague 2, Czech Republic  
e-mail: vagner@natur.cuni.cz