

## **IV International Seminar on Mountain Tourism**

### **Mountain Tourism in Natura 2000 Areas Conflict or Opportunity?**

organized by:

International Friends of Nature

Polish Tourist Country Lovers' Society (PTTK) – Cracow Academic Section

Institute of Tourism and Recreation, Academy of Physical Education, Cracow

In co-operation with: Góry Stołowe National Park (Pl) and Boumovsko Protected Landscape Area (Cz) ( The Sudetes )

Kudowa Zdrój (Poland) 22 –25 October 2009

### **OFFICIAL DECLARATION**

**"NATURA 2000 protects space for high quality mountain tourism"**

*20 participants from 10 European countries representing Ministries, NGOs, Alpine Clubs, protected areas' administration and academic institutions deliberated on the topic " the use of NATURA 2000 areas for mountain tourism and the role of NGOs and local communities in preparing management plans for them" and adopted the following conclusions:*

#### **PREAMBLE**

- **This Declaration takes into account the results of three previous International Seminars (Zakopane 2002, Szklarska Poręba 2005, Sucha Beskidzka 2007). The conclusions reached during those events remain valid.**
- **Other international documents, e.g. Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention and the "Babia Gora Declaration on Sustainable Tourism Development in Mountain Areas" (2002), were also considered during discussions.**
- **Participants emphasized the importance of the NATURA 2000 network, as a tool for much better protection of European mountains.**
- **Participants also appreciated the value of Natura Trail Project managed by Nature Friends International.**

## RATIONALE

### **A. Importance and peculiarity of NATURA 2000 network in the European mountain**

- NATURA 2000 creates a new situation in the protection of European mountains.
- In several mountain ranges NATURA 2000 covers large areas (even bigger than 1000 sq. km.), which have never been protected before.
- NATURA 2000 can play an important role in European Mountain Areas not previously designated as nature conservation areas. NATURA 2000 provides a valuable opportunity to host communities to develop best practice, in utilizing the designation for local economic, social and environmental benefits.
- NATURA 2000 areas are protected not only by the law of particular countries, but is also supervised by European Commission.
- Several “old” protected areas can now be considered, as core zones of NATURA 2000 areas, which also include adjacent territories.
- Managers of those areas which were protected before implementation of NATURA 2000 obtained a new tool for efficient protection, but also new responsibility.
- People living and working within NATURA 2000 areas can use European funds to support ecological farming and forestry. They can also have an income directly from a rise in tourism, because NATURA 2000 areas can attract more tourists.
- Mountainous NATURA 2000 areas are usually utilized all year round and in much more diverse manner, than those on lowlands.

### **B. Public awareness**

- There is a common opinion that public awareness regarding NATURA 2000 network is low and insufficient both among mountain tourists, tourism service providers and host communities.
- NATURA 2000 areas are often perceived by local stakeholders as the obstacle in the way of economic development.

### **C. NATURA 2000 and mountain tourism/recreation**

- NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas have numerous similar problems irrespective of laying in an alpine biogeographical region or not.
- The promotion of tourism in NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas presents unique challenges and requires carefully considered solutions in order to achieve sustainable tourism, which meets the needs of all stakeholders.
- NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas are special areas, which by their very nature are vulnerable in the context of agriculture, tourism and ecology.

### **D. Importance of NGO's dealing with tourism**

- The history of nature protection in European mountains is inseparably connected with activity of societies dealing with mountain tourism.
- Today NGOs which unite mountain tourists, support the protection of mountain nature and landscape, and also the conservation of space for high quality tourism and recreation.
- The model of mountain tourism promoted by NGOs is close to the principles of sustainability and therefore can be accepted within protected areas.
- NGOs have usually good communication both with their members and local communities, so they can play an important role in raising public awareness.

## POSTULATES – RECOMMENDATIONS

### **public relation activities:**

- Cooperation is a key element in delivering Sustainable Tourism at a local level, with social, economic or environmental benefits to the host community.
- A Management planning process for NATURA 2000 areas should integrate demands of nature protection, mountain tourists and host communities.
- There should be a strategy for local and regional culture within NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas.

### **networking:**

- International and regional co-operation is important to solve several problems connected with the management of NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas. This co-operation can be facilitate by:
  - promotion of good practices;
  - spreading advanced methods of investigation of tourism;
  - creation of a web page dedicated to NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas;
  - organising workshops, seminars etc.;
  - exchange of staff working for different stakeholders.
- It is necessary to promote integrated knowledge about the countryside within NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas.
- Special attention should be focused on those NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas which have no other protective status.
- Managers of NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas, local authorities and NGOs should co-operate to harmonize policies in frontier territories. Experiences of euro-regions and international NGOs (like NFI, CIPRA, UIAA) can be very useful in this field.

### **public role of NGOs:**

- Societies uniting mountain tourists represent people who have a vital interest in particular mountain areas, often laying far from their homes, even in other countries. Those NGO's, should participate in planning and decision making process regarding NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas.
- NATURA 2000 areas are under special surveillance of European Commission. NGOs should avail themselves of this opportunity where insufficient protection of particular mountain territories occur.
- NGOS should:
  - co-operate with nature protection administration and local authorities in management planning processes for NATURA 2000 areas;
  - educate tourists and train leaders for mountain tourism;
  - promote model of sustainable tourism.

## APPEAL

*We appeal to all stakeholders - especially tourist associations, local communities and authorities responsible for NATURA 2000 areas lying in the mountain – To work in active cooperation for the sustainable development of these unique fragile environments, which are key to our identity, diversity, as well as our economic, cultural, and environmental prosperity. To promote the education, protection, understanding and integrated knowledge so essential and mutually beneficial to all who rely on NATURA 2000 Mountain Areas.*

*Kudowa Zdrój, October 2009*