

## **Assessment Criteria for a National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy – Polish Study Case**

The document presents criteria for reviewing Tourism Development Strategy in Poland with regard to sustainable development. This analyze was prepared on the base on Assessment Criteria for a National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy methodology.

**Name of the document:** *Directions for Tourism Development until 2015*

### **1. Introduction to Polish National Tourism Strategy assessment**

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*Directions for Tourism Development until 2015* is a strategy document of Ministry of Sport and Tourism defining the priority areas and directions for development which is following the Project of Tourism Development Strategy in Poland for years 2007-2013 adopted in 2007.

The primary objective of *Directions...* is: creation of legal, institutional, financial and human resources conditions which will foster social – economic development of tourism and will improve competitiveness of regions and country while preserving its cultural and natural values.

Basic premise of the document states (in I. Introduction) that with relevant approach, tourist function development will support the preservation of traditional values and sustainable development.

The main **goals** for tourism development in Poland are:

- a) increase of economic significance of tourism in economy development,
- b) increase of environmental quality and life quality of inhabitants,
- c) cooperation and integration for tourism and its environment in social, special and economic dimension.

**Mission** of the *Directions...* states as follows:

- tourism will be developed in synergy with other sectors (which contribute to GDP),
- tourism will expose and effectively profit from potential of the country (in particular natural and cultural heritage),
- Poland will constitute an attractive direction for national and international tourism with effective tourism industry and modern, competitive and high quality products and services.

*Directions for Tourism Development until 2015* will be implemented at two levels<sup>1</sup>:

- I) At the level of tasks recommended by the **Interministerial Team for coordinating the tasks of the Government included in Directions for Tourism Development until 2015**, which is going to be appointed by the Ruling of the President of the Council of Ministers (Level I)
- II) At the level of tasks recommended to all entities acting for tourism development (Level II)

The strategy is formulated by National Tourism Administration (NTA) which is Ministry of Sport and Tourism in case of Poland.

## **2. Sustainable tourism assumptions in the document**

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Sustainable development of tourism has been incorporated in priority areas of the *Directions...* and the most important issues which are necessary to be monitored are presented as follow.

Each priority area is previously studied through SWOT analysis. **PRIORITY AREA I** – **A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE TOURIST PRODUCT** for example focuses on strengths related to natural resources and identified social trends and changes in consumption in tourism which lead to active and health based tourism offer. Weaknesses are related to lack of high quality in tourism offer with infrastructure deficiencies (insufficient environment protection infrastructure included) and lack of coordination between local and regional policies affecting the development of the tourist offer. Degradation of natural resources, especially those of environmental value, including those which are a part of the Natura 2000 network or national system of protected areas was identified as threads.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1.

These issues are especially important for sustainable development of tourism in Poland. Therefore it is vital that an indication and stimulator of the attractiveness and competitiveness of Polish tourist products is the development of an environmentally friendly brand as an integral part of the tourist image of Poland. However there is no need to make distinction between environmentally friendly tourism and sustainable tourism in the document nomenclature.

Additionally actions for this priority suggest monitoring of ecological effects of created products. Moreover, in the document it is stated that creating tourist products should involves limited, wherever possible, transport which will contribute to reduction of natural resources usage.<sup>2</sup>

**Operational objective I.1 – Creating and developing competitive tourist products** is to be achieved by training and educational programs for local and regional tourist animators, elaboration of integrated strategies such as promotion, distribution, management.

**Operational objective I.2 – Developing tourism infrastructure** states that localisation and the technology employed should take into account the conditions resulting from the need to protect the environment. The development of infrastructure will concern trans-border and interregional cooperation in specialist tourism infrastructure. Furthermore, it is underlined that well prepared infrastructure may channel the tourism movement in such a way so that it would contribute to the protection of natural and cultural resources and prolong the tourist season. Actions will support infrastructure which helps in protection of locations where the tourist pressure is especially strong.

**The third objective** aims for several important effects as far as **creation of integrated products is concerned**: improving cooperation between areas, service providers, and entities shaping the tourist offer, developing assessment criteria for the integrated branded tourist products from the perspective of the pressure on the environment (e.g. efficient energy and resource consumption, including land consumption, scale of pressure on various environmental formations covered by various types of protection, scale of pollution or interference), defining rules that make reference to sustainable development,

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<sup>2</sup> See also Resource Cap Coalition initiated by CEEweb for Biodiversity

which are to be followed when establishing cooperation between various areas, establishing cooperation between environmental protection services.

In **Operational objective I.4** improvement of the terms of entrepreneurship in tourism will be based on cooperation which would lead to elaboration of planning documents including protection of natural and cultural resources in local scale down to commune's level.

The sustainable development is set as key assumption for **development of different type of tourism in Operational objective I.5** Health tourism is linked here with other sectors responsible for health policy such as employment creation in health service and encouraging qualified medical staff to work in the country. On the other hand, recognition of the role of urban tourism and supporting the development of tourism in post-industrial facilities may contribute to better allocation of tourism movement. The diversification of tourism activities with the most potential in Poland included rural tourism (under condition that it will preserve original cultural character and natural environment), pilgrim tourism and business tourism.

In this objective the sustainability in tourism is claimed as condition for tourism further development as well as its contribution to the cultural and natural heritage protection. Nevertheless, there should be more emphasis on better competitiveness of the tourism products in the European market if sustainable tourism is implemented. Monitoring of these actions is necessary (there should be linkage to the last chapter of the strategy).

**PRIORITY AREA II concerns DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.** Role of both tourist staff and the tourists themselves also in creation of high quality tourism as well as proper understanding of products in sustainable tourism is underlined.

Professional training for tourism of employees and managers (**Operational objective II.1**) already employed in this sector, encompass issues related to dealing with special groups of tourists, in particular the disabled. The personnel needs be aware also of the restrictions imposed by the constitutional obligation of environmental protection, terms of this protection (legal, institutional, practical), sources of information on the current condition of the environment and benefits for tourism industry resulting from preservation of the natural environment in a proper condition.

All the same the impact of tourism stretches well beyond the market, as it affects people's attitudes, quality of social and human capital and the natural environment (**Operational objective II.2**). This recognition is very important for local communities as it gives the opportunities which are planned in operational activities such as:

- employment of people from other than tourism qualifications,
- support for tourist education of staff in local authorities (self-governement, administration employees, local and regional tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations),
- leisure time animators for children.

The education will include protection of environment (with special enhancement of N2000 areas), elaboration of tourism development programs in communes, communities, tourist centers etc.).

Nevertheless, none type of tourism should be called *sustainable* as their impact on economic, social and natural environment depends on the local preconditions (grade of area protection, rural/urban environment etc.) (Operational Action II.1.4).

**The needs of tourism industry in terms of human resources** will be monitored under **Operational objective II.3**. (especially qualifications connecting ecology and tourism). This action involve proactive attitude of anticipating employers needs in training programs in order to boost the sustainable tourism development.

Next area covered by *Directions...* is the **PRIORITY AREA III – MARKETING SUPPORT** which aims to creation and development of a marketing system in tourism (especially improvement of tourist information system).<sup>3</sup>

There are two important issues raised here. First that the components of a tourist offer should send the message that it respects local cultural and environmental values and social traditions. Secondly, awareness of need for cooperation in the process of creation and commercialisation of products should be encouraged, even if it sometimes involves the cooperation of competing regions. Finally, the territorial marketing requires a long term vision.

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<sup>3</sup> Assumptions regarding the marketing support for this area are compatible with the 'Assumptions regarding the *Strategy for the promotion of Polish economy 2007–2015*', whose priorities include an increase of incoming tourist traffic in Poland through, among others, promotion of Polish tourist products and development of a tourist information system.

**PRIORITY AREA IV – SHAPING THE TOURIST SPACE** is especially important for sustainable development in this strategy. This area describes sustainable tourism development as a great opportunity in SWOT analysis of the priority area.<sup>4</sup>

**Operational objective IV.1** regards shaping the development of tourism so as to preserve and increase the value of tourist space. On the local level, tourist space is to be shaped on the basis of detailed analyses of tourist potential and in a close relation to ecological capacity of target areas such as: national parks, natural reserves, landscape parks and others and their protection zones. Their rules of tourism utilization of each space are generally defined. The touristic space will be adjusted as well to the recommendations of Natura 2000 concept.

Furthermore, innovations and proecological infrastructure solutions in natural protected areas will be initiated and implemented in protected areas. During realisation of this objective, support will be granted to tourism-related projects carried out in accordance with Agenda 21.

Operational objective IV.1 supports also very important goal which are inter and supra local touristic initiatives which will allow to develop for example tourist trails. Areas which has potential for tourism such as post military, barrens and post industrial locations will be included in tourism development plans.

Actions under **Operational objective IV.2** aim to develop pro-ecological transport connections especially various forms of collective transport (rail transport, enabling bicycle and pedestrian traffic in tourist areas). Increasing the accessibility should also be aimed at the improvement of quality and provide an equal access to tourist attractions to all target groups, including the disabled. Furthermore environmental impact report is to be involved in all actions under this objective.

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<sup>4</sup> Sustaining tourist attractiveness is here therefore dependant on the preservation of a widely understood spatial order in the following dimensions:

- economic, i.e. by preventing interference between tourism and other areas of the economy,
- social, i.e. local communities accepting their role as a host for tourist traffic,
- ecological, i.e. ensuring that tourist traffic does not exceed environmental capacity of a given location,
- urban and architectural, i.e. creating an attractive land development and not distorting this order by new tourist amenities,
- aesthetic, encompassing the protection of the space against vandalism or pollution,
- health, particularly in terms of environmental health, by ensuring order and harmony in the tourist space which are based on natural elements of the landscape, etc.

### 3. Assessment Criteria for a National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy – the evaluation table

<b>Abbreviation and acronyms</b>		
<b>POT</b> (Polish Tourism Organization) – National Tourism Organization		
<b>CBD</b> (Convention on Biological Diversity)		
<b>CSR</b> (Corporate Social Responsibility)		
<b>EC</b> (European Commission)		
<b>EIA</b> (Environmental Impact Assessment)		
<b>IUCN</b> (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources/World Conservation Union)		
<b>LA21</b> (Local Agenda 21)		
<b>NTS</b> (National Tourism Strategy)		
<b>UE</b> (European Union)		
<b>UNEP</b> (United Nations Environmental Programme)		
<b>UNWTO</b> (United Nations World Tourism Organization)		
<b>TIC</b> (Tourism Information Centres)		
<b>NSTDS</b> (National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy)		
<b>PA</b> (Protected Area)		
<b>GDP</b> (Gross Domestic Product)		
<b>Name of an indicator</b>	<b>Weight (W) (1-4)</b>	<b>Scores (S) (1-5)</b>
<b>I Description of the document and elaboration process</b>		
1. The document representing tourism policy in the country: - general plan of social-economic development - sector plan (national tourism strategy) - operative plan for government actions and agendas	2 4 4	5 5 4
2. Biodiversity protection is included in the document as measurable goal, in other words: national strategy sets out clear priorities, goals, policies, objectives, interventions and expected results that contribute to improving biodiversity protection and meeting national and global commitments in: - vision of national tourism policy - goals of national tourism policy - directions of national tourism policy - operational objectives	3 3 4 4	3 3 3 3
3. Targets or standards are established in such areas as: - land-use zoning - ecosystem functioning - biodiversity conservation and sustainable use - poverty alleviation/mitigation - participation of indigenous and local communities	3 4 4 3 4	4 3 3 3 4
4. Strategy formulation process includes the following actions: - baseline information is gathered on the base of multistakeholder consultations - local communities are included in the consultations - public and private sector work together during the consultations	4 3 2	5 5 5

<b>II Situation analysis and programming</b>		
5. Major preconditions and problems for sustainable tourism development: - domestic (national) market: major stakeholders: tour operators, travel agents, national and regional authorities, NGOs etc. - international market - tourism supply: product, services, infrastructure and facilities - demand of the domestic market (income, costs, positive/negative events, working hours) - SWOT-Analysis	4 4 4 4 4	2 3 3 3 5
6. Political factors, EC-politics, international aspects of tourism development - product and infrastructure development, general industrial policy starting points - destination marketing - reinforcing the image of the country as a tourist destination - benchmarking (product, strategic)	4 4 4 4	4 4 4 4
<b>III The grade of enhancement on sustainable approach to tourism in policy</b>		
7. Special chapter dedicated to the connection of NSTDS with national environmental policy	3	5
8. Reference to sustainable tourism agreements, conventions, protocols, EU policy towards development of sustainable tourism and nature conservation:  - the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) as a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development - the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, especially Decision VII/14 Biological Diversity and Tourism and Decision V/25: Biodiversity and tourism, 2004 - The Charter for Sustainable Tourism (developed in Lanzarote, Canary Islands) Spain, 1995 - EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) with indications for national policies on law foundation for sustainable development of tourism, implementation of principles for tourism in other sectors of state activity and enhancement on scientific research on relations between tourism development and environment protection, - the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism - European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas  Other (not relevant for all countries): - Agenda 21 as a comprehensive plan of action to be taken by governments in every area in which human impacts on the environment, Rio de Janeiro, 1992 - The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) adopted at the 3rd Ministerial Conference "An Environment for Europe", 1995, Sofia - EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the Carpathian Convention (Tourism Protocol) - other.....	1 1 1 1 1 1 1	0 0 0 3 3 4 5
9. Linkage of tourism to other sectors: - agriculture and rural development - transport strategy - health policy - employment policy	4 4 3 3	5 5 3 3

<b>IV Social benefits</b>		
10. Community profits as recognition of the role of tourism in:		
- preservation and development of the culture in the region	3	3
- distribution of income and prospects for employment	4	2
- reinforcement of national heritage and identity	2	4
<b>V Participation of institutions in tourism management</b>		
11. Setting up and enabling a National Tourism Organization as:		
- a national body for tourism firms and destinations	3	5
- a source of best practice, offer tourism business advice	4	4
- a custodian of the national product database	3	3
12. Enhancement on bottom – up approach in destination management through:		
- local tourism bodies are responsible for a tourism destination which reflects the natural geography of an area's visitor economy (rather than local public sector or electoral boundaries) which means to allow tourism bodies to band together into larger groups voluntarily	4	3
- ensuring financial sustainability on the part of these new bodies with minimum reliance on public funds (can act as partners with LA – local authorities, or local business partnerships)	3	3
- reduction of taxation on central level	2	2
- supporting creation of Destination Management rather than Marketing Organizations	2	2
- partnership between public sector and local authorities and local businesses and attractions	3	3
- recognition of role of the bodies for a Regional Development Strategies	4	3
<b>VI Attention to sustainable development of tourism businesses and supply of services</b>		
13. Plans to increase the number of environmentally oriented tourism providers and offerings by:		
- support of certification schemes	3	4
- strengthening cooperation between (organisation and financing) public and private entities as well as partnerships for sustainable tourism development	4	4
- educational programs for tourist staff and their professionalization in the framework of tourism environmental impact and social responsibility	4	5
14. Attention to sustainable practices in companies:		
- energy efficiency and savings	4	2
- efficient water management solutions	4	2
<b>VII Special enhancement addressing nature protected areas</b>		
15. Support for financial flow from tourism industry to territorial nature protection:		
- enhancing regional marketing as the foundation for sustainable tourism development, particularly in UNESCO biosphere reserves and national parks	3	4
- areas close to or in populated regions are protected for nature-based recreation	2	2
- incorporating Europe network of sites Natura 2000 in tourism territorial development	4	4
<b>VIII Tourism strategy measures</b>		
16. Monitoring of:		
- regional supply chains through the establishment of local or regional cooperation	4	3

- enabling training programmes for local people participating in tourism business (qualified tourism employees)	4	4
- measures for reducing dependency on tourism	4	3
- other.....	4	2

**Summary - Tourism Strategy Achievements and future projects**

*Comments to each of 16 criteria:*

1. The realization of *Directions...* is integrated with priorities of *National Development Strategy 2007-2015* and strategic aims of *Lisbon Strategy*. The *Directions...* was followed by document presented by Ministry of Sport and Tourism: *Marketing Strategy for Poland in Tourism Sector from 2008 – 2015* which was prepared by National Tourism Organization.  
**Vision** (named as mission) includes important for sustainable tourism promises: synergic with other goals important from the point of view of the development of a country and respect to the principles of sustainable development. Biodiversity protection is not mentioned (only in context of natural heritage). **The ultimate objective** emphasis retaining cultural and environmental values in socio-economic development of country and raising its competitiveness. There are two important issues raised in **guiding objectives**: (1) quality of life of Polish citizens and of the environment and (2) cooperation and integration to the benefit of tourism and tourism-related environments in social, spatial and economic aspects.
2. The following issues are included in different parts of the document:
  - land-use zoning (Priority area IV – Shaping the tourist space)
  - ecosystem functioning (one of the foundations of the document - protecting environmental resources and services provided by ecosystems)
  - biodiversity conservation and sustainable use (Operational Objective IV.1. – Shaping the development of tourism so as to preserve and increase the value of tourist space) in the case of particularly valuable areas tourism should be dependent on environmental and biodiversity protection,
  - participation of local communities (in all parts).
3. The cooperation of public and private sector and creating conditions supporting public-private partnership are also mentioned in the introduction and in operational objective I.4. – Development of entrepreneurship and of the activities of organizations in the field of tourism. Poverty mitigation is planned through redistribution of incomes through tourism (among sectors and industry and regions) and creation of jobs in tourism.
4. no comments
5. All actions of each operational goal in every one of four priority areas were correlated with

factors identified in SWOT analysis in order to improve the potential of the tourist offer.

6. The GDP should not be the only indicator for realization of the police's possible scenarios.
7. Separate chapter on tourism and environment (especially nature protected areas) is significant for the strategy because it brings these issues to the attention of the reader. It underlines the role of the environment in shaping tourism in Poland.

However there is no enhancement on the proper definition of sustainable tourism (there are two approaches indicated: tourism and its influence on environment only along tourism and its connections with three dimensions: environmental, economical, social and special). There should not be indicated "types of sustainable tourism" because ecotourism may threaten the highly evaluated natural sites as well. Nevertheless the importance of environmental management in tourism and rising ecological awareness of young generation through tourism is underlined. Moreover the interdependence of supply and demand of ecologically friendly tourism is stressed which is important as far as ecological trends in tourism are included.

The Directions... follow the principals of *EU Sustainable Development Strategy* as well as *the National Ecological Policy for 2007-2010 and its 2011-2014 outlook*.

8. The document is related to the EU Strategy of Sustainable Development as well as Ecological State Policy 2007-2010 with the perspective for 2011-2014 included and National Strategy for Protection and Moderate Use of Biodiversity together with Action Plan.

There is one chapter of the strategy (III) which reflects the correlation between Lisbon Strategy and sustainable development in EU and the national tourism policy especially in: cooperation between stakeholders in tourism, indication of research organs for tourism studies, promotion of instruments for tourism advantage, introduction of satellite statistics, support for sustainable module for production and consumption, support for voluntary use of sustainable tourism indicators in tourism.

There are interrelations between the competitive European tourism and sustainability explained as well as negative influences of tourism on environment.

9. There are several strategies indicated as complementary documents in the graph of coherence to *Directions...* only:

- agriculture and rural development: *National Strategic Plan of Rural Development for 2007-2013*

- transport strategy: *National Strategy of Transport Development for 2007-2013. National Transport Policy until 2020*

- culture development: *National Strategy of Culture Development for 2004-2020*

- sport: *National Sport Strategy in Poland until 2015*

Public health is mentioned in the list of foundations of the *Directions...* which states that tourism should shape public health.

10. There are no direct indications concerning community profits but its the role in tourism is recognised. Incorporation of local and regional traditions into tourism should not lead to an excessive commercialization (PRIORITY AREA II). Additionally, PRIORITY AREA III – MARKETING SUPPORT states that the components of a tourist offer should send the message that it respects local cultural and environmental values and social traditions.
11. no comments
12. Local and regional tourism organizations are responsible for tourism destinations but they do not reflect the natural geography of an area’s visitor economy nor functional tourism regions. The analysis of tourist potential in the strategy concerns only administrative regions in strictly regional setting (in the II. Diagnosis of tourism sector and prognoses for 2008-2015) which is not enough.  
There is a clear indication for implementation of tasks (national and regional) for respective bodies.
13. Labeling and certification to incentive the nature protection is planned in development of tourism products (PRIORITY AREA I).  
Action II.2.6 comprises support for cooperation of public administration and non-governmental organizations in civil society development for environmental protection as well as promotion of rational use of natural resources in tourism.  
There are to be created model management solutions to achieve aims of both operational objective I.3 and I.4. Legal regulations will tackle also the problem of seasonality in tourism. Support for regional, local and branch organizations in tourism and encourage for private-public partnerships will be provided.  
Operational Objective II.2. concerns development of tourism education and social tourism with program based on quality of social and human capital and the natural environment.
14. Operational objective I.2. – Developing tourism infrastructure states that localisation and the technology employed should take into account the conditions resulting from the need to protect the environment. Innovations and proecological infrastructure solutions in natural protected areas will be initiated and in implemented in protected areas. The III objective plans developing assessment criteria for the integrated branded tourist products from the perspective of the pressure on the environment (e.g. efficient energy and resource consumption).

15. In the chapter for tourism and environment relation (IV) the protection and development of PAs is linked with high quality tourism products (including N2000 areas). But also in the operational Objective IV.1. – Shaping the development of tourism so as to preserve and increase the value of tourist space is enhanced for PAs as well according to their ecological capacity. Environmental criteria are suggested to be taken into account when deciding about the designation of new land for investment and about the nature of land development. During realization of this objective, support will be granted to tourism-related projects carried out in accordance with Agenda 21. Also operational objective I.2. – Developing tourism infrastructure regards investing in the infrastructure which would maintain the natural resources for future generations, which will include: protection of the nature and landscape (Natura 2000 included), protection of the cultural landscape as an element of tourism product and making available the knowledge about systems of protection nature and landscape beyond the borders of their institutional and legal protection.

16. There is a lack of proper sustainable tourism development indicators listed to be monitored by monitoring research such as recommended by:

- a. EC (2007) ACTION for MORE SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN TOURISM Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group,
- b. European Commission (2004) Methodological Work on measuring the sustainable development of tourism. Luxembourg,
- c. UNWTO (2004) Indicators for Sustainable Tourism: A Guidebook, Madrid,
- d. Tourism for Nature project:  
[http://www.tourism4nature.org/results/backdocs/ETE\\_2009\\_Criteria\\_Sustainable\\_Tourism.pdf](http://www.tourism4nature.org/results/backdocs/ETE_2009_Criteria_Sustainable_Tourism.pdf).

The realization of the *Directions...* should not be only evaluated on tourism participation in the country GDP but based on selected indicators in the framework of natural, economic and social conditions of the Polish territory.

<b>Total Score (TS)</b>	$TS = \sum (W_n \times S_n)$	<b>669</b>
<b>Percentage in which a strategy fulfills given indicators (P)</b>	<b>Maximum Score (MS) = <math>\sum (W_n \times 5) = 960</math></b> $P = (TS / MS) \times 100\%$	<b>70%</b>

### **Recommendations after methodology testing process for further development of criteria**

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1. There were several criteria indicated which need further development and improvement (especially criteria no. 5, 8, 9 and 16).  
Ad 2. This point should include not only biodiversity but also other aspects of sustainable development: social and economic. The criteria should involve policy for disabled people and equal access to tourism.
2. The description of goals, projects related to the strategy and other content of a strategy should be better specified.
3. Research in tourism should be included in criteria.
4. The TS in the assessment table should be revised and calculated again.
5. The glossary should be developed.

Annex 1. Assumptions of *Directions for Tourism Development until 2015*

