Conference Poverty reduction through local development

Study tour itinerary

June or August/September 2009
(4 days)

During your stay in Poland you will have the opportunity of knowing in practice about local development and poverty impacts by visiting places in loco and talking to officials and people. Additionally we believe that our landscape besides of being instructive is also enjoyable. We wish you a pleasant visit!

Day 1

From Warszawa to Białystok through Bug – Białowieża and Krynki / Bohoniki.

The way from Warsaw to the Białowieża is through the Landscape Park of the Bug River, which is one of the most picturesque riversides in Poland. The Bug River has its source in Ukraine and flows also through Belarus. In Poland it joins with river Narew and near Warsaw flows into the biggest polish river Vistula.

The Białowieża National Park is located at the border of Poland and Belarus. The Park is an area of great natural interest that remains unspoiled by human activity. It is the natural and only habitat of Żubr (polish bison) – which got world fame as a symbol of vodka that carries its name: ‘Żubrówka’ [pronounced as zhoobroovka]. The Białowieża Park is also habitat of other mammals like deer, lynx or the wild pig boar, and is known from its number of bird’s sanctuaries. The areas near Białowieża historically were the favourite hunting place for the Polish Kings and the Russian Tsars. During our excursion to Białowieża, the chief of the Park and local officials will present information about local development on peripheral areas based on tourists’ attractions as natural resources.
After the Białowieża we will head to Białystok and see the two small villages Bohoniki and Kruszyniany that are on the way. It is the only place in Poland where there are still descendants of Tatars (Tatarlars) – group of Turkish tribes that invaded Poland in the XVI and XVII centuries. Nowadays few families and some monuments like mosques and mizars (Islamic cemetery) remains, however it attracts tourists from all Poland to see Islamic tracks in the country now dominated by Catholics. Furthermore, the area is an excellent example of local community efforts to create development by a kind of tourism that maintain traditions.

Following the visit to Tatars villages, the next stop is Białystok – the capital of Podlasie region with 298,000 inhabitants. The city posses the regional government, various higher education institutions and the biggest industrial factories in the region, provide thus possibility of meeting regional officials, representatives of business organisations (e.g. the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Białystok, Bussines Centre Club) and others local actors dealing with regional development (e.g staff of the High School of Economics that conduct the Business Conditions Test in the region).

Day 2

From Białystok to Camaldolese monastery [Wigry lake] through – Biebrza National Park – Augustów

From Białystok we will go north towards environmentally attractive areas of the Biebrza National Park, the biggest one in Poland (59,000 hectares), which is protected since early years of XX century. Thanks to this long period of protection, the area is seat of rare and relict spices of plants and animals as birch low and willow. It is also famous because of rare meanders of Biebrza River, diverse birds sanctuaries (e.g. white stork),
and as the only place where elks still existing after the WWII. In the Park there are special observations spots where above mentioned animals and birds can be seen in their natural environment.

Biebrza National Park is partly located in Augustów County, which is now known due to the recent conflict between the local communes and the European Commission about the Augustów ring-road. The government of the Augustów town, strongly supported by the population, planned to build ring-road over environmentally protected areas of Rospuda River, what caused opposition of environmentalist supported by the EU officials and the conflict end up in court. However, thanks to the publicity, the town and its neighbourhood become famous and attract about four times more tourists than before. We will have a chance to talk to local officials and find out more on the local debate on if environmentally protected areas helps or disturb in local development.

The Augustów’s channel is another attraction of this area. It was built in around 1830 and allows to sail from the Vistula river to the Baltic Sea by-passing Gdańsk through rivers Czarna Hańcza, Netta and Niemen (in Lithuania) – due to its system of 18 locks that allows to sail in rivers and lakes of different levels. Nowadays the special fleet of the river boats allows experiencing lock crossing and admiring the beauty of the nature from the water perspective.

The next destination is the Wigry lake (the second largest lake in Poland – 2170 ha) that has the former camaldolese monastery located on its shore. The place is considered one of the most beautiful spots in Poland. During his 7th visit to Poland in 1999, Pope John Paul II was resting in this place and enjoying beautiful view of Wigry Lake, just as you will do. At the former monastery we will have an evening with bonfire and specialities of the Podlasie’s cuisine (as potatoes sausages, tree cake, potatoes cake and many others).
Day 3


The Camaldolese Monastery on the Wigry Lake is excellent starting point for trip around Mazury – the Polish Lake District: a huge complex of more than 1000 lakes connected by a system of channels and rivers, surrounded by castles and forts. During the summer the area is occupied by tourists, for whom tourist infrastructure (like: locks, marinas, hotels, leisure centres etc.) was strongly developed within last 15 years. Tourism brings major income for inhabitants of this region and makes them dependent on the tourist movement. During the trip will be held meetings with local officials in Mikołajki and Giżycko, which are two small towns located in the centre of the Mazury region that during the season attract a number of tourists 4 times bigger than its population.

In the north part of the Mazury region is located Gierłoż village where are ruins of Hitler’s headquarters of the WWII that are known as the ‘Wolf’s Lair’. The whole complex was made up of 80 buildings, some with 4 to 6 meters thick walls. Apart from ‘giant’ Hitler’s bunker the earthwork consisted of various buildings like branch of foreign ministry, propaganda ministry but also cinema and casino. The ‘Wolf’s Lair’ is also famous because of the failed assassination attempt on Hitler’s life that took place in 1944.

In the south of the Mazury region is the small village of Krutyń with its chaotically placed wooden buildings - very typical of the region. There we can find undeniable assets of this place, as for example the park of wild animals and the tavern that is located in old stable from XIX century. However the most interesting attraction is rafting on Krutynia River along the Krutynia Sanctuary, which became an obligatory attraction in trips to Mazury, being mentioned by various guidebooks (e.g. Pascal and Lonely Planet) as an adventure that one has to experience during the trip to the place.

The last night of the trip we will spend in the ‘House of Creative Work’ of the Polish Academy of Science in Wierzba, which is located in the middle of the Pisz Forest at the junction of three lakes (Śniardwy – the biggest polish lake, Mikołajskie and Beldany).
From Wierzba to Warsaw through Mazwosze and Warsaw suburban zone

The last day of the field trip we will start from the heart of the Mazury region going south to the Mazowsze - region at the centre of Poland, where a range of important events from Polish history took place. It used to be “the thickest inhabited area of Poland which spreads towards Mazury, Podlasie, Lithuania and even Rus” says Gall Anonym [first known author of polish history]. Nowadays, it is a spacious region; in which apart from a city and some towns (like Warsaw, Ciechanów or Płock) is mainly dedicated to rural activities (grain cultivation, animals breeding, fruit farming etc.). On the way to Warsaw we will be able to see the differences between rural villages of Mazowsze and dynamically developed suburban areas as well as visit Nieporęt’s communal office, where advantages and disadvantage of the location in the vicinity of the Warsaw metropolis will be outlined.

The trip will end up in Warsaw next to the conference place.

Map of the trip: