

Attractive Hardwoods – Success story

Gdansk area, Poland: initial low interest in nature tourism turned into new offers

Attractive Hardwoods was a project that aimed at developing the hardwood tourism in Lithuania, Poland and Sweden addressing measures to increase business opportunities through a sustainable tourism. During the project period joint strategies for boosting the cross-border ecotourism in the region, through development of hardwood pilot areas and products have been developed.

Joint marketing activities and networking assisted in reaching the project aims. The partnership had a cross-sectorial approach including organizations from forestry, nature conservation and tourism bridging existing sectorial gaps.

One of the main outputs of the project was to develop new nature tourism products based on activities in the coastal hardwoods in the South Baltic area. The work was proceeding well in the Lithuanian and Swedish pilot sites but in Poland there was a big challenge.

Monika Frankowska at the Pomeranian Tourist Board, PROT (project partner):

- When starting to work with identifying new tourism offers, we discovered that there was no or very low interest from tourism actors and operators to enter nature tourism. The tourist operators did not realize any business potential connected to nature. We were very concerned about these first findings and started to figure out a strategy how to increase the interest in nature tourism development.

The Pomeranian Tourist Board started to co-operate with the Regional Directorate of State Forests in Gdansk, RDoSF, the other Polish partner in the project. Together they identified the need of increasing the Polish tourist actors interest in nature tourism already discovered by many foreign actors and to show the big business potential.

In October 2017 PROT and RDoSF arranged “Incoming Poland”, a Gdansk meeting between foreign and Polish tour operators. The aim was to exchange contacts between the tour operators, presenting their offer for each of them, discussion about the potential, possibilities, plans, prices, etc. The form was short face-to-face meetings for mutual exchange of business opportunities and cooperation possibilities. We invited 30 tour operators from Sweden, Great Britain, Germany, China, Israel and the Netherlands and Iceland. From Polish side 60 organization were invited.

On the second day, study tours around the region were organized for foreign tour operators, to discover some of the attractions, objects or the potential presented at the meeting.

Monika Frankowska, PROT:

- The meeting was really a success. It was the eye-opener we wanted for the invited Polish tourist operators. It was interesting to see the big interest in this event. Even more important, it was a good opportunity to show what the South Baltic region can offer when it comes to nature tourism.

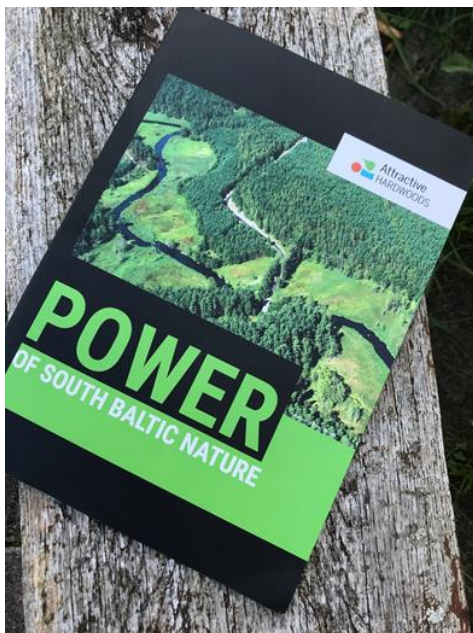
This turned out to be an important turning point for a coming success story – how a low interest in nature tourism turned into new tourism offers.

The two Polish project partners continued to co-operate to develop forest related tourist products and to encourage tourist operators to set up new offers.

Local foresters were asked to gather opinions on the locations as well as look for better solutions in terms of tourist availability and attractions. Together with activities arranged by PROT, to strengthen contacts with tourist operators, it served as the basis to create a nature tourism offer catalogue.

Monika Frankowska, PROT:

- So far, such offers had not been included in sales catalogues of tour operators in northern Poland. Thanks to the Attractive Hardwoods project and EU funding from the South Baltic Programme we managed to present and market new tourism products, both for the regional and foreign markets. As a positive side effect, it also strengthened the institutional co-operation between different actors involved in nature tourism. This was a true success story!





The joint work by the two Polish project partners, supported by the whole Attractive Hardwoods partnership resulted in new Polish nature tourism offers related to birdwatching and hunting at Vistula spit. It also resulted in activities to strengthen the forest botanical garden in Marszewo and the Rucewo Forest, Gdynia as international tourism sites well-worth visit.

Tourism offers developed in the project together with other nature tourism offers in the South Baltic project areas were presented in a printed catalogue, “Power of South Baltic nature”. Packages have been divided into categories, e.g. birdwatching, hunting, hiking, but also fishing, active tourism like horse-riding, gastronomic trails and tourist routes. The catalogue can be used as an inspiration for tourism operators or for marketing purposes of selected South Baltic nature tourism offers.