

POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS BORDER TOURISM IN WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIE VOIVODESHIP

Emilia MARKS^{A,B,C,D,F}, Mariusz ANTOLAK^{E,F}, Ewa WARCABA^{B,G},
Abdalla Omer ELKHATIB^E

Faculty of Environmental Management and Agriculture, University of Warmia and Mazury in
Olsztyn, Poland

Keywords:

- Tourist values,
- Cross border tourism,
- Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship,
- Kaliningrad district.

Abstract:

Cross-border tourism appeared with the marking and establishment of state borders. In Poland, its new dimension emerged in the 1990s with intensification and institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation. At that time, that form of tourism became the developmental opportunity for peripheral regions. Evaluation of the potential for preparing tourist products using the natural conditions for the cross-border tourism in the area of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship is the objective of this work.

The geographic location predestines the discussed area for development of cross-border tourism with the Kaliningrad District. Those are the areas rich with tourist values appropriate for different clients. Mutual activation and support of local communities on both sides of the border may be an effective tool for economic and cultural development. It offers the possibility for applying for European Union aid funds for the implementation of joint initiatives and improvement of relations between the Polish and Russian populations. Cross-border tourism development occurring in poorly developed areas, which are valuable from the natural perspective, requires care for the natural resources. Joint organisation of undertakings and events of different types makes it easier to overcome administrative and organisational barriers. In the discussed area, the water routes on the Łyna River and in Western Mazury, including the Elbląg canal, were proposed as the most effective and attractive routes of cross-border tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Cross-border tourism is a phenomenon with many centuries of tradition. It emerged with marking and enactment of state borders. However, intensification and institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation that took place during the 1990s gave it a new dimension. Consequently, development of cross-border tourism became an opportunity for the peripheral regions [Hajduk 2007]. Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship situated in north-eastern Poland occupies an area of 24,173 km², which makes it the fourth largest voivodeship in the country. According to data from the last agricultural census, 97.5% of the area is rural (with the

national average of 93.1%). Moreover, the population density there is the lowest in the country [Borawska et al. 2012]. The land use structure is dominated by agricultural use. Despite numerous historical disruptions, the area has retained numerous outstanding natural and cultural values [Marks 2009]. The harmonious agricultural landscape in itself is of value because almost 93% of the agricultural land is maintained according to the principles of good agricultural practice. The high share of land under permanent green use in the agricultural land structure – 34.4%, compared to the national average of 22.4%, is important in the lake district landscape with diversified relief [Brodzińska 2012]. Moreover, the natural richness of the area is determined by the afforestation index at 31% and the immense aquatic potential. In total, including the marine waters of the Vistula River Lagoon, Warmia and Mazury has almost 21.5% of the country area under water. The lakes share in the voivodeship area is 5.7% [Development strategy ... 2013]. Landscape of this type coupled with an absence of arduous industry, is particularly predestined for development of environment-friendly forms of economy. The agricultural landscape is a historically developed cultural one and retaining it requires maintenance treatment i.e. agricultural use. The issue of retaining the agricultural landscapes in the realities of the market economy, when the income from traditional farms of a few hectares does not guarantee supporting a family, is known in many regions of the country. Sustainable development of rural areas characterised by maintaining or improvement of the existing natural and cultural values, diversification of the sources of income and employment by development of enterprise and non-agricultural jobs using endogenous potential of those areas could be the tool to reconcile the interests of all the stakeholders. Tourist services have a prominent place in such development [Sikorska-Wolak 2010; Strategy ... 2012-2020]. Evaluation of the potential for preparing tourist products using the natural conditions for cross-border tourism between Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship and Kaliningrad District is the objective of this work.

Tourist values of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship

The administrative borders of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship encompass the historical lands of Warmia and Mazury whilst the land called the Oberland is currently the equivalent of Powiśle. Warmia separated the True Mazury from the so-called Western Mazury. From the geographic perspective, those can be identified as the Masurian Lake District and a fragment of Iława Lake District (Kondracki 2000). The geographic location determines the particular tourist values and their prosperity.

The tourist attractiveness of the area is the combination of the natural and the anthropogenic values. The natural potential of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship is determined by the above-mentioned characteristics of harmonious agricultural landscape with a high share of land under permanent green use, high forest share in the area, including well-preserved complexes of natural forest habitats, and exceptional hydrological conditions. The rich flora of the forests, meadows and numerous peatbogs in the region are the habitat of numerous animal species. The unique flora and fauna is subject to legal protection. Within the administrative limits of the voivodeship are five landscape parks: Masurian Landscape Park, the Dylewskie Hills Landscape Park, Welski Landscape Park, Romincka Forest Landscape Park and Elbląg Highland Landscape Park, and parts of three other landscape parks. Among 108 nature reserves (around 20% of the national “pool”), the Łuknajno Lake has been included in the network of Biosphere Reserves. In the voivodeship, 46 objects were designated as Special Habitat Protection Areas and 19 as Special Bird Protection Areas within the frameworks of the European Ecological Network Natura 2000. In total, different forms of protected areas occupy more than 50% of the total voivodeship area and the entire

voivodeship is situated in the Functional Area of the “Green Lungs of Poland” [Marks et al. 2003; Marks 2009; Marks 2011b]. The Masurian Landscape Park is one of the oldest landscape parks in Poland and the largest in the study area. Its borders encompass, among other places, a large part of the Sailing Route of the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes. The mesoregion of the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes covers the largest complex of lakes in Poland, with the total area of more than 300 km² and even water surface level at 116 m a.s.l. It consists of 24 reservoirs linked by the system of canals and rivers, which guarantees the highest international rank of attractiveness for kayaking and sailing [Lijewski et al. 2002]. During the peak season, the most attractive sections of the route are sometimes crowded. The Great Masurian Lakes are already a well-known brand among those keen on water sports, as well as lovers of nature. They were shortlisted during the finals of the Seven New Wonders of the World competition.

Among the tourist values of anthropogenic origin, the 13th and 14th c. Teutonic and Bishops' castles are spread relatively evenly on the map of the region and enjoy continual interest among tourists. In addition, the country mansions and palaces of the former Prussian nobility represent an important component in the cultural heritage of the region. Unfortunately, only a few localities of that type have retained or recovered their former grandeur. Very well preserved sacral structures from different periods are specific showpieces of the region. The lay architecture of the main historical lands – Warmia and Mazury – is characterised by significant similarity. Clear differences on the other hand can be seen in the religious domain. Residents of Mazury were in predominantly Protestants while both “German” and “Polish” residents of Warmia were united by the Catholic religion. The most interesting material memorials of this are the objects of the Cathedral Hill in Frombork, included in the programme of every excursion in Warmia. The Virgin Mary Sanctuary in Święta Lipka, with the baroque church and Jesuit monastery is a very popular place of pilgrimage. The object has more than 500 years of history and every year it hosts ca. 100,000 pilgrims from Poland and Europe. The Virgin Mary Sanctuary in Gietrzwałd is of at least wider than regional importance. Practically, we will find numerous material memorials of the Catholic religion in every corner of Warmia. The majestic towers of churches form characteristic elements in the panorama of each larger settlement. Evidence of the religious cult in the form of roadside chapels and crosses can be found throughout the entire country but nowhere are they so numerous or have played such an important role as in Warmia [Marks 2011a], (Fig. 1).

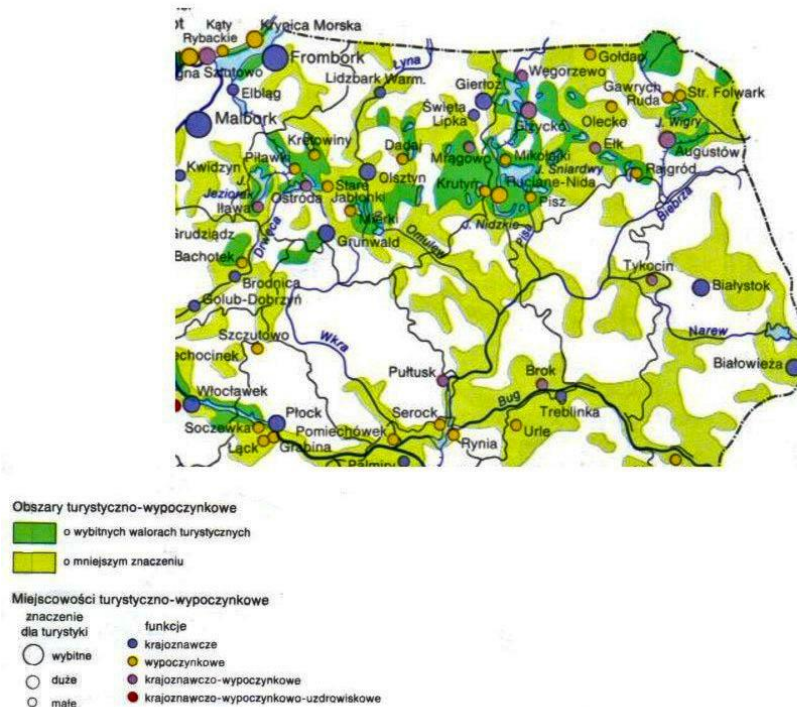


Fig. 1. Tourist values of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship

Source: Own work

Selected products of cross border tourism

Promotion and making regional tourist values available allows development of numerous businesses, activates local communities and brings concrete economic benefits. The main organisational responsibility in that area in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship rests on the Department of Tourism at the Marshal's Office in cooperation with the Regional and Local Tourist Organisations and local associations. The territorial government of the voivodeship has maintained comprehensive cooperation with many foreign partners (among others from France, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Slovakia, Ukraine and China) for a number of years.

Currently, another round of Interreg, the Union of transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes (V-A Lithuania-Poland, Central Europe, The Baltic Sea Region, The Southern Baltic and Poland-Russia) is in progress for 2014-2020. However, the tourist traffic from the Kaliningrad District of the Russian Federation best fits the frameworks of cross-border tourism. Until recently, cross-border tourism in the discussed area was based mainly on trade tourism as the result of the so-called small cross-border traffic. However, as of 4 July 2016, visa possession is once more required at the border crossings with Russia. Consequently, water routes may become the strategic tool in creating cross-border tourist products. In the case of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship, the waterway on the Vistula

River Lagoon and the Łyna River are both natural waterways (Fig. 2).

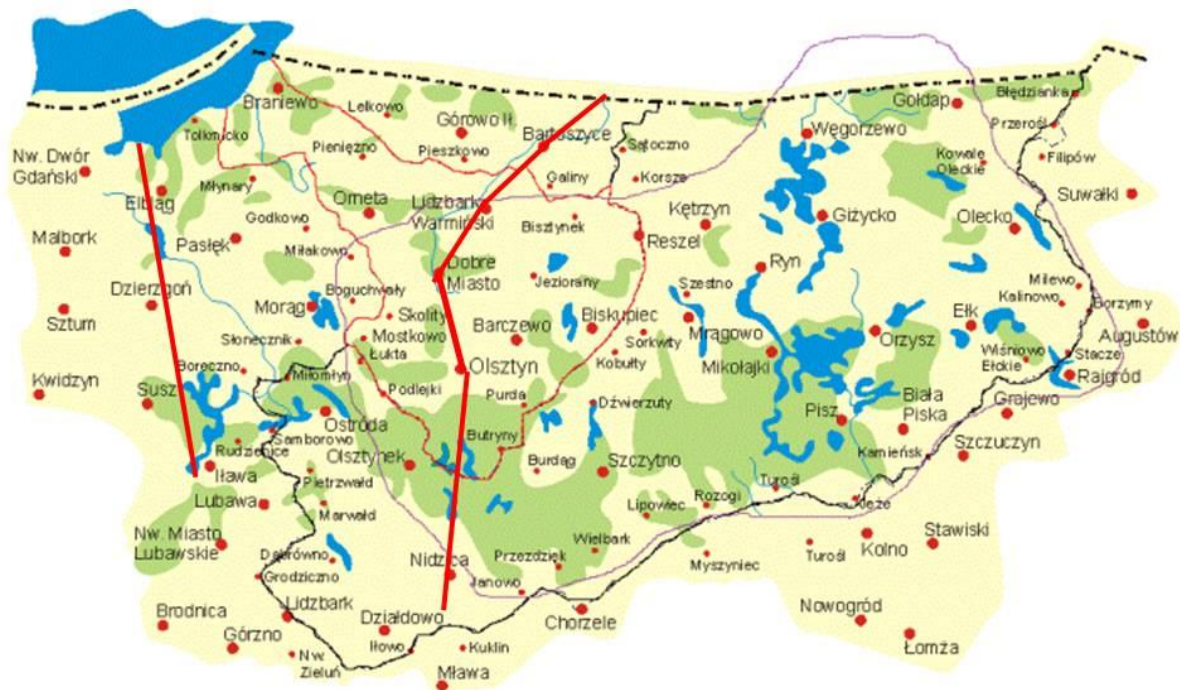
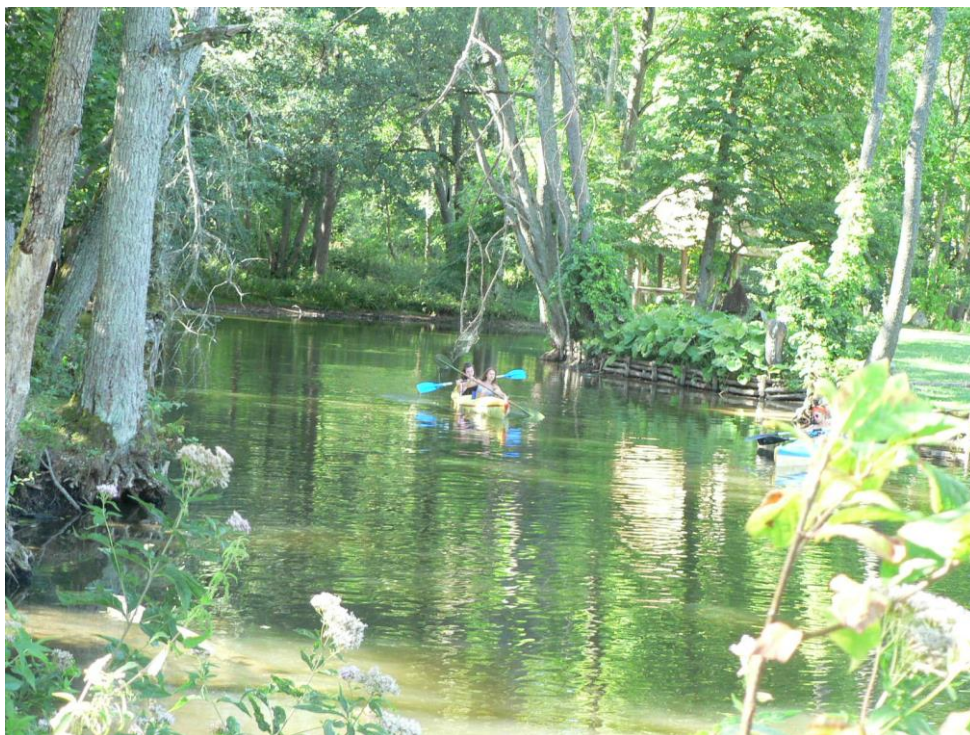


Fig.2. Water routes of cross border tourism.

Source: Own work

The course of water routes, independent of the administrative borders, offers opportunities for mitigating bureaucracy involved in the state border crossing procedures. “Euroregion Łyna-Ława” is a project of the tourist product prepared by the Polish-Russian association of local communities in the border areas of Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship and Kaliningrad District. It seems to be a valuable initiative in the above-indicated area. Opening a border crossing on the Łyna River was one of the goals of the association. In practical terms, it takes place by the organisation of kayaking rallies on the Olsztyn-Prawdinsk route. In June 2016, the event took place for the sixteenth time. Although the lakes of Olsztyn Lake District do not offer the consistent system comparable to the Land of Great Masurian Lakes, many of them are connected by the Łyna River meandering from the south to the north. That river provides unforgettable experiences to the kayaking tourists, ranging from lazy and calm waters to a rapid mountain stream, which additionally increases the attractiveness of the kayaking rallies. As the Łyna is a tributary of the Pregola, which flows to the Vistula River Lagoon, it forms a natural gateway for development of kayaking as a form of cross-border tourism with the Kaliningrad District (Photos 1-4).





Fot.1-4. The Łyna-Prawdinsk kayaking rally

Photos by Ewa Warcaba

The kayaking and sailing “path” in Western Mazury is another proposal by the author. So far, it is less appreciated, particularly compared to the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes. The route leads from the Iława Lake District. Lake Jeziorak is the longest ribbon lake in Poland. It has unusually diversified banks and its water connection with the Elbląg Canal and further the Vistula River Lagoon represents its additional strength. The Elbląg Canal, built during the 19th c, is a tourist and technical attraction unique in the European scale. The canal connects a number of lakes in Western Mazury with the Vistula River Lagoon and the vessels overcome over one hundred metres difference in the level of waters at its beginning and its end by means of five inclined planes across which they are carried on platforms pulled with a rope propelled using the difference in the water level. The project was named as one of the Seven New Wonders of Poland in a readers’ poll by The Polish edition of National Geographic (Photos 5-9)







Photos 5-9. Elbląg Canal – ships and kayaks “on the grass”

Photos by Emilia Marks

During the years 2014-15, the Canal and its accompanying infrastructure underwent comprehensive revitalisation (Photo 10).



Photo 10. The machine room with the waterwheel

Photo by Emilia Marks

Promotion of this type of tourism in Western Mazury opens new opportunities for cross-border tourism development and involves more intensive use of the waters of the Vistula River Lagoon rarely visited by sailors and kayakers whilst taking some pressure from the most visited routes in the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes (Fot.11-13).





Photos 11-13. View of the waters of the Vistula River Lagoon (from the cathedral tower in Frombork) *Photos by Emilia Marks*

The presented proposals of waterways lead in a natural way to the capital of the Kaliningrad District. Kaliningrad, until recently unknown and difficult for foreigners to access, is currently a modern city, favourably comparable to many other European ones. The centrally located Victory Square, with its commercial and business centres, as well as the mayoral offices, is the place most frequently visited by tourist. The Cathedral on the Island, with the grave of Immanuel Kant, the House of the Soviets, the Sailors' Palace of Culture and the Church of Christ the Saviour are also worth visiting. Museums – the Amber Museum and the Global Ocean Museum, as well as the new-gothic Królewiec Gate, are also worthy of attention [Gunnar 2006]. The tourist potential of the Kaliningrad District, however, is not limited to its capital. The specific marine climate and the resources of therapeutic waters and therapeutic mud had allowed the development of the spa zone already before World War II.

The major spa locations are Zielenogradsk, Swietłogorsk and Pioniersk. Moreover, the region is characterised by the unusual richness of the nature. The proposed water routes are surrounded by picturesque landscapes that peak at the Curonian Split. The Curonian Split is the national park, registered on the UNESCO list since the year 2000. Its goal is to protect and maintain the unique seaside landscapes with the second highest complex of dunes in Europe. Around 900 species of plants are found there as well as elk, deer, wild pigs and more than 100 species of birds, which populate the forests. Moreover, during the birds' migrations, around one million birds can be seen there.

The discussed values of the Kaliningrad District may appeal to tourists. Seaside locations and the coast seem particularly predestined for the summer recreation and have always been attractive to Russians from other regions. The possibility of passport-free travel is an additional facility. Although international tourism started developing after 1990 when the district was opened to foreigners, Russian tourists are still the vast majority of visitors. According to Palmowski [2013], the record number of tourists was recorded in 2008 – 520 thousand (including 425 thousand Russians). In 2010, those numbers were 420 and 367 thousand respectively. Germans are the most numerous group of foreign tourists for whom the Kaliningrad District is the destination for the so-called “sentimental tourism”. Polish tourists were the second largest group. Considering the share of our citizens in strictly cross-border tourism that share will be significantly smaller because the local statistics cover jointly various forms of cooperation in sports, tourism and recreation, such as bicycle rallies, kayaking rallies, jointly organised artistic events, etc. [Palmowski 2007].

Conclusion

The Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship area has abundant tourist attractions for different groups of recipients. The area of the Kaliningrad District is also of significant tourist attractiveness. The geographic location predestines both areas for cross-border tourism development. Mutual activation and cooperation of local communities from border areas may form an effective tool for economic and cultural development. It offers the possibility of applying to the European Union aid funds for implementation of joint projects and improvement of the relations between the Polish and Russian populations. Development of cross-border tourism is sometimes implemented in poorly developed areas that are valuable from the natural perspective. Such projects require care for the natural resources. Jointly organised undertakings and events of different types make it easier to overcome administrative and organisational barriers. In the discussed area, the water routes on the Łyna River and in Western Mazury, including the Elbląg canal, were proposed as the most effective and attractive routes of cross-border tourism.

Literature

1. Borawska M., Brodziński Z., Pawlewicz A. (2012), *Obszary wiejskie województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego – struktura przestrzenna i ludność*, [in:] Z. Brodziński, *Stan obecny i perspektywy rozwoju obszarów wiejskich w województwie warmińsko-mazurskim*, Wyd. Urzędu Marszałkowskiego Województwa Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn, pp. 9-32.
2. Brodzińska K. (2012), *Przyrodnicze uwarunkowania rozwoju obszarów wiejskich*, [in:] Z. Brodziński, *Stan obecny i perspektywy rozwoju obszarów wiejskich w*

- województwie warmińsko-mazurskim, Wyd. Urzędu Marszałkowskiego Województwa Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn, pp. 53-78.
3. Gunnar S. (2006), *Königsberg entdecken*, Berlin.
 4. Hajduk S. (2007), *Szlaki turystyczne jako element integracji regionów transgranicznych*, [in:] *Człowiek i Środowisko*, 31 (3-4), pp. 87-105.
 5. Kondracki J. (2000), *Geografia regionalna Polski*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
 6. Lijewski T., Mikułowski B., Wyrzykowski J. (2002), *Geografia turystyki Polski*. Polskie Wyd. Ekonomiczne, Warszawa.
 7. Marks E. (2011a), *Rola wybranych obiektów sakralnych okolic Olsztyna w tworzeniu produktu turystycznego regionu*, [in:] J. Wyleżałek, D. Orłowski, *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Polski i jego znaczenie w turystyce*, Wyd. Wyższej Szkoły Turystyki i Języków Obcych w Warszawie, pp. 179-201.
 8. Marks E. (2012), *Impact of tourist facility development on the transformation of the rural landscape*, *Acta Sci. Pol., Administratio Locorum* 11(2), pp. 135-144.
 9. Marks E. (2009), *Miejsce ekoturystyki w budowaniu wizerunku wiejskiego produktu turystycznego*, [in:] P. Palich, *Marka wiejskiego produktu turystycznego*, Wyd. Akademii Morskiej, Gdynia, pp. 123-131.
 10. Marks E. (2011b), *Tourism Assets of the Romincka Forest Landscape Park and Possibilities for Using Them for Sustainable Development*. Monograph, No 7, *Issues of Landscape Conservation and Water Management in Rural Areas*, Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, pp. 27-38.
 11. Marks E., Połucha I., Młynarczyk K. (2003), *Ocena realizacji założeń funkcjonowania turystyki w planie ochrony Parku Krajobrazowego Wzgórz Dylewskich*, *Zesz. Nauk. Politechniki Koszalińskiej*, 10, pp. 239-250.
 12. Palmowski T. (2013), *Kaliningrad – szansa czy zagrożenie dla Europy Bałtyckiej*. Monografia społeczno-gospodarcza, Uniwersytet Gdański. Wyd. „Bernardinum”, Gdańsk-Pelplin.
 13. Palmowski T (ed.) (2007), *Pogranicze polsko-rosyjskie. Problemy współpracy transgranicznej z Obwodem Kaliningradzkim*, Wyd. „Bernardinum”, Gdańsk-Pelplin.
 14. Sikorska-Wolak I. (2010), *Turystyka w aktywizacji społeczno-gospodarczej obszarów wiejskich (na przykładzie województwa lubelskiego)*, *Acta Sci. Pol., Oeconomia* 9 (4), pp. 477-488.
 15. *Strategia rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego do roku 2025, Projekt*, Olsztyn, 2013.
 16. *Strategia zrównoważonego rozwoju wsi, rolnictwa i rybactwa na lata 2012-2020*.