

SCHENGEN AGREEMENT AND EUROPEAN TOURISM



On 21st December 2007, nine EU countries joined the Schengen zone. The new countries are Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta. Schengen zone allows people to travel within the EU without having their passports checked. Experts agree that this is an important development for the tourism industry.

Nowadays, the travelers need to obtain only one visa for all the countries that are in the Schengen zone. The zone includes also two non EU countries, Iceland and Norway. However Romania and Bulgaria as well as the UK and Ireland are not part of the project. The Schengen zone is mainly about simplification since it saves time and money. No wonder the tourism industry players broadly embraced the idea. Tourism accounts for some 4% of the EU's economy and Europe is the world's most popular tourism destination (it accounted for 54% of world's tourism in 2006).

Not everyone, however, welcomes the Schengen zone membership. Polish tourism industry players are worried because the Schengen Agreement caused visas more expensive for their target market of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. The price of a Polish visa has risen from €35 up to €60, which makes it quite expensive for the people from the East. These markets are nevertheless very important for Poland. In 2006 there were approximately 2,500,000 tourists from Ukraine, 1,500,000 from Belarus and over 700,000 from Russia. They spent more than billion dollars during their vacation in Poland. Expectations are that the number of visitors from these countries will drop by some 20%. As a result, the prices in guest houses and hotels are falling, which on the other hand pleases domestic tourists.

Date: 2008-01-15

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/schengen-agreement-and-european-tourism-news688>