

## **Rural tourism provider survey regards Natura2000 territories. Data analysis year 2007-2010**

### **Summary**

#### **Recognition of Natura2000 sites**

Summary of rural tourism (RT) provider surveys carried out by Latvian Country Tourism Association during 3 years between 2007 and 2010 shows a positive trend: growing numbers of rural tourism providers are aware of Natura 2000. Awareness has increased by 10% during 3 years. There are less respondents not knowing what is Natura 2000 or having heard the name without understanding what it is. Since 2007, there are less RT providers who do not know if the land property they manage is a Natura2000 site or not. In 2007, 25% of RT providers did not know about the land status, in 2009 and 2010 it was 5% and 7% respectively.

#### **Use of Natura2000 sites**

Compared through years, growing numbers of RT providers understand the advantages of Natura2000 status and use it in development of their tourism products. Providers plan and develop tourism products using the potential of nature resources in their particular place. Examples include walking trails, nature trails, bird watching, fishing, and mushroom picking.

#### **Visitor numbers in Natura2000 sites**

According to responses, we can make a conclusion that visiting Natura2000 sites increased by 10% during the 3 years. In 2010, 85% of the respondents said they have visited a Natura2000 site. The most frequented sites are the Gauja National Park (4/5 of the respondents have been there), the Tērvete Nature Park (nearly 4/5 of the respondents). Half of the respondents have been to the Ķemeri National Park, the Abava River Valley and the Vidzeme Stony Coast. Nearly a half visited the Slītere National Park. Less visited are the Rāzna National Park and the Dviete Floodlands in the eastern part of Latvia.

#### **Advantages/disadvantages of Natura 2000**

The respondents who own land in Natura 2000 sites increasingly regard it as an advantage. There are less respondents who see it both, as an advantage and a disadvantage. In 2009, 59% of the respondents regarded Natura2000 status as an advantage. In 2010, 78% of the respondents were positive. A minority, 5-7%, regard Natura2000 status as a disadvantage, mainly because of restrictions to economic activities. Among advantages, the respondents mention nature as added value and a resource for tourism products, presence of more nature attractions, recognition of the site's values, nature diversity, uniqueness, extra opportunities to receive funding, a possibility to attract the „green” audience – nature lovers, researchers and others.

#### **Cooperation with nature conservation bodies**

Cooperation with nature conservation bodies was assessed negatively by about the same percentage of respondents: from 9% in 2007 to 7% in 2010. Positive assessment is also stable: 61% in 2007 and 60% in 2010. About 1/3 of the respondents did not have any cooperation with nature conservation bodies.

#### **Attitudes against nature protected status**

In general, each survey year 2/3 of the respondents have positive attitude against Natura2000. Only a minor proportion is negative, varying from 1-3% by year.



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