Prerequisite for the development of ecotourism on the territory of the town of Zlatograd and possible environmental issues

Ekaterina GEORGIEVA VALCHEVA, Krasimir VLADIMIROV ALEKSANDROV
Agricultural University of Plovdiv, Mendeleev 12, 4000 Plovdiv, Bulgaria, (e-mail: katia_valcheva@abv.bg)

Abstract
The basis for the development of ecotourism in Bulgaria is the tourist resource that provides a system of protected areas and historic cultural heritage. One of the key elements of ecotourism are the environmental protection and the creation of real opportunities for economic prosperity and livelihood of communities in settlements near the protected areas. Tourism is considered a priority in the economic development not only in Zlatograd Municipality, but also in Smolyan District. The main prerequisite for the successful development of tourism in the municipality is the realistic assessment of the factors that are relevant to tourism. The studied area is one of the few significant Rhodope areas which has a huge potential for the development of ecotourism. Zlatograd Municipality is located about 300 km from the capital Sofia and 70 km from the international resort Pamporovo. The town of Zlatograd is already using its rich potential for tourism. The natural and historical factors are those which give a competitive advantage to Zlatograd Municipality.
Object of this study is the town of Zlatograd as an ecotourism destination and the possible environmental issues resulting from the development of tourism.

Key words: anthropogenic pressures, sustainable management, ecotourism, biodiversity, protected areas