



## ECONOMIC AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPING ECOTOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

**Elena Yurievna Nikolskaya**

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics – Russia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0972-1069>

[elena\\_yu\\_nikolskaya@mail.ru](mailto:elena_yu_nikolskaya@mail.ru)

**Marina Evgenjevna Uspenskaya**

Moscow State University of Sport and Tourism – Russia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5711-2623>

[ey.nikolskaya@mail.ru](mailto:ey.nikolskaya@mail.ru)

**Dmitriy Valeryevich Galkin**

Department of Hotel and Tourism Management, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics - Russia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1959-3737>

[galkin.dv@rea.ru](mailto:galkin.dv@rea.ru)

**Aleksandr Vladimirovich Shelygov**

Moscow Polytechnic University – Russia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1082-628X>

[shelygov@mail.ru](mailto:shelygov@mail.ru)

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The aim of the study was to systematize the features of ecotourism infrastructure and to develop measures of activities coordination among the main participants in the infrastructure. **Methods:** The information base of the study includes the statistical data of state bodies, legislative and regulatory documents governing the development of ecotourism infrastructure. **Results:** It is established that the development of ecotourism infrastructure should have appropriate economic and legal regulation that would ensure the effective functioning of the tourism sector. It is proved that the economic and legal regulation of ecotourism infrastructure should include an effective system of state measures aimed at developing, improving, and streamlining ecotourism activities, as well as creating legal mechanisms for their implementation in a real economic situation. It is found that a state policy aimed at the development of ecotourism infrastructure should be formed on the principles of stability, long-term, economic interest, and legal protection of the interests of environmental tourism activities. **Conclusion:** It is determined that the effective economic and legal regulation of developing ecotourism infrastructure will contribute to the growth of the ecotourism sector in the Russian market and identify an ecological situation in the Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism infrastructure; Economy; Partnership; Market; Management; Regulation.



## ASPECTOS ECONÔMICOS E JURÍDICOS DO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA INFRAESTRUTURA DE ECOTURISMO

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O objetivo do estudo foi sistematizar as características da infraestrutura de ecoturismo e desenvolver medidas de coordenação de atividades entre os principais participantes da infraestrutura. **Métodos:** A base de informações do estudo inclui os dados estatísticos dos órgãos estaduais, documentos legislativos e normativos que regem o desenvolvimento da infraestrutura ecoturística. **Resultados:** Estabelece-se que o desenvolvimento da infraestrutura de ecoturismo deve ter regulamentação econômica e legal adequada que garanta o funcionamento efetivo do setor de turismo. Está provado que a regulação econômica e legal da infraestrutura ecoturística deve incluir um sistema efetivo de medidas estatais destinadas a desenvolver, melhorar e racionalizar as atividades ecoturísticas, bem como criar mecanismos legais para sua implementação em uma situação econômica real. Consta-se que uma política estatal voltada para o desenvolvimento da infraestrutura ecoturística deve ser formada nos princípios da estabilidade, do longo prazo, do interesse econômico e da proteção legal dos interesses das atividades de turismo ambiental. **Conclusão:** Determina-se que a regulamentação econômica e legal efetiva do desenvolvimento de infraestrutura de ecoturismo contribuirá para o crescimento do setor de ecoturismo no mercado russo e identificará uma situação ecológica na Federação Russa.

**Palavras-chave:** Infraestrutura de ecoturismo; Economia; Parceria; Mercado; Gestão; Regulamento.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the formation of ecotourism infrastructure is an important component of the management system aimed at the development of ecotourism and an effective form of partnership in the market of tourism and related services. First of all, it concerns economic and legal aspects.

The development of ecotourism activities in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation is hindered by many barriers, including institutional ones. The latter are associated with an imperfect legislative and regulatory framework, no concept for creating ecotourism clusters in the Russian Federation, and the lack of strategic documents for the functioning of ecotourism infrastructure facilities.

The analysis of the current legislative and legal acts regulating activities in the tourism sector of the Russian Federation has revealed that most documents do not correspond with each other or modern business conditions. In this regard, it is necessary to improve the



existing legal framework for the formation and development of ecotourism infrastructure with due regard to regional components.

The issues of ecotourism were studied by D.M. Astanin (2022), A.R. Demkina (2022), A.G. Maksimenko (2021), S.N. Rybina (2022), I.M. Saipidinov (2021), B. Saifidinov (2022), A.V. Shelygov (Frolova et al., 2019; Sorokin et al., 2021; Zvyagintseva et al., 2020), etc. Despite close attention to the designated scientific problem, economic and legal aspects of developing ecotourism infrastructure require further research.

## 2. METHODS

The theoretical and methodological basis of this research is as follows: the abstract-logical method, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, and systematization. They were used to justify approaches to determining the impact of tourism infrastructure on the environment of regions.

The information base is the statistical data of state bodies, legislative and regulatory documents governing the development of ecotourism infrastructure, as well as the results of scientific research (Kozlov et al., 2018; Nimatulaev et al., 2021; Zvyagintseva et al., 2018).

In the course of the study, we planned to systematize the features of ecotourism infrastructure, develop measures to coordinate activities among the main participants in ecotourism infrastructure, and determine the individual rights of its members within the recent changes.

## 3. RESULTS

The analysis of the current regulatory framework has revealed that ecological (green) and rural tourism are included in organizational forms and types of tourism. These are recognized as the priority areas of state policy in the field of tourism. The Government of the Russian Federation in the field of tourism assists the development of the tourism industry and the creation of effective tourism infrastructure.

The powers of the central executive authorities that ensure the formation of state policy in the field of tourism imply their participation in the development of programs for equipping transport routes with tourist infrastructure facilities. The powers of local authorities in the field of tourism include the promotion of tourism activities in their region and the creation of modern tourism infrastructure.

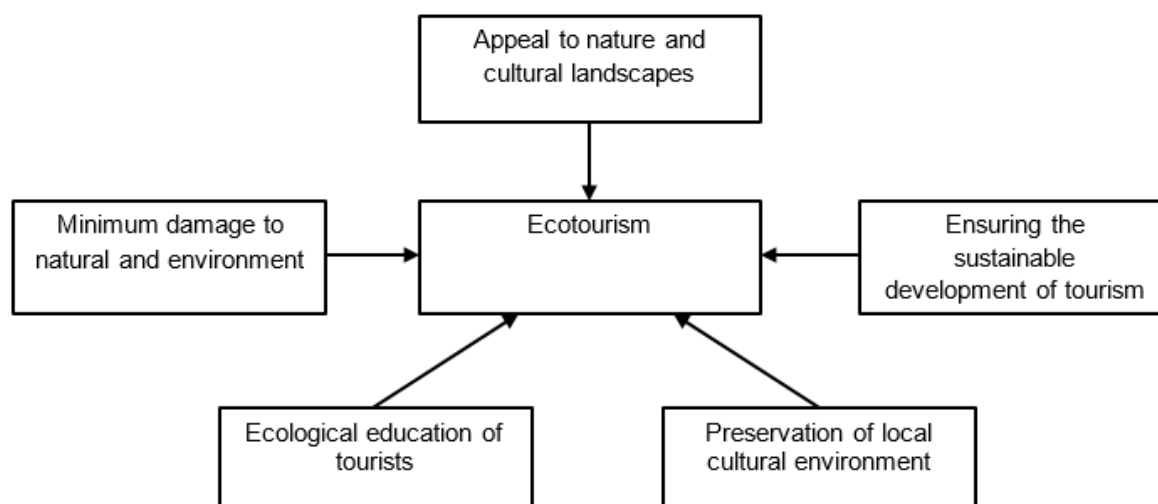


The key measures for the development of ecotourism infrastructure are as follows: proposals for the legislative regulation of the development of green tourism in rural areas; the improvement of mechanisms to diversify economic opportunities in rural areas; the marketing activities of agritourism farms; distance learning as part of green tourism.

Despite some positive trends in the legislation of the Russian Federation on regulating the development of ecotourism, there is still insufficient legal support in this direction. Legislative and regulatory legal acts of the Russian Federation do not contain definitions of such concepts as "ecotourism activity" and "ecotourism infrastructure". There are no general principles for the functioning and development of ecotourism infrastructure as a component of the tourism system at both national and regional levels. The corresponding institutional conditions for the formation of ecotourism infrastructure objects have not been determined.

Ecotourism aims at protecting the natural and cultural heritage. The formation and development of ecotourism are promoted by the diversity of nature, as well as the desire of the population to learn and protect natural resources. In most countries of the world, including the Russian Federation, significant natural resources are poorly developed. In addition, there is no unified approach to the interpretation of the "ecotourism" concept.

In the current conditions, it is important not only to develop theoretical and methodological approaches and train highly qualified specialists but also to ensure proper economic and legal regulation, which would ensure the implementation of the relevant principles in the sphere of ecotourism (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The principles for implementing ecotourism activities

Therefore, the economic and legal regulation of ecotourism should include a system of state measures aimed at developing, improving, and streamlining ecotourism activities, as well as creating legal mechanisms for their implementation in a real economic situation. An important aspect of developing ecotourism is state policy.

Under these conditions, an effective state policy should promote and ensure the legal regulation of ecotourism, as well as the interaction of tourism business entities in the tourism services market. The state policy of the Russian Federation for developing ecotourism should be formed on the following principles:

- The principle of stability is based on a stable state policy in relation to the economic and legal regulation of ecotourism infrastructure;
- The principle of long-term functioning is implemented in state programs that determine strategic directions for the development of ecotourism and methods of state regulation;
- The principle of economic interest in the development of ecotourism infrastructure by tourism business entities;
- The principle of the legal protection of ecological tourism activities provides control over tourism activities.

At the same time, important factors contributing to the economic and legal regulation are profit for travel agencies, the protection of nature conservation areas, the preservation of biodiversity, and the growth of welfare.

The economic and legal regulation of ecotourism infrastructure should include certification, licensing, and standardization technology. An important aspect of certification should be the ecotourism certification system, including a set of standards, surveillance, and access, as well as rules of conduct for the development of ecotourism in the Russian Federation. The lack of an ecotourism certification system in the Russian Federation contributes to the deviation from the established rules and norms of responsible environmental, social and cultural behavior on the part of tourism organizations and ensuring their quality.

As a rule, the certification system is designed to balance the impact of business on the local environment, and focuses on the interaction of tourism companies with natural and cultural resources, improving the quality of life in local communities and economic contribution to other national development programs. It is also recommended to develop national standards and a rating system for the hotel business in the sphere of ecotourism.

The expediency of introducing a rating system allows classifying travel companies based on their activities and compliance with the principles of sustainable development. Various evaluation criteria are as follows: the interaction between tourist companies and the environment; management policy within the travel company; how the tourism company encourages its customers to become active participants in environmental protection; the interaction between the tourist company and local communities.

Based on these criteria, the travel company is assessed for compliance with certain requirements. For the effective development of ecotourism infrastructure, we introduced a labeling system based on such criteria as the management plan, the benefit to the local community, the importance of staff education and training, and the impact on the environment.

The government should play an important role in the economic and legal regulation of ecotourism infrastructure. By allocating funds and time resources for joint projects, it plans, develops, and manages ecotourism infrastructure. Furthermore, the private sector needs state support to ensure the sustainable development of tourism.

The role of the government in relation to development policy and planning in the field of ecotourism infrastructure might vary depending on the importance of ecotourism as a sector within the national and local economy. It promotes the coordination of ministries, their cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and professional and community groups for the implementation of strategic ecotourism initiatives. In this case, the government also strengthens bilateral relations between countries on the implementation of common ecotourism projects and activities.

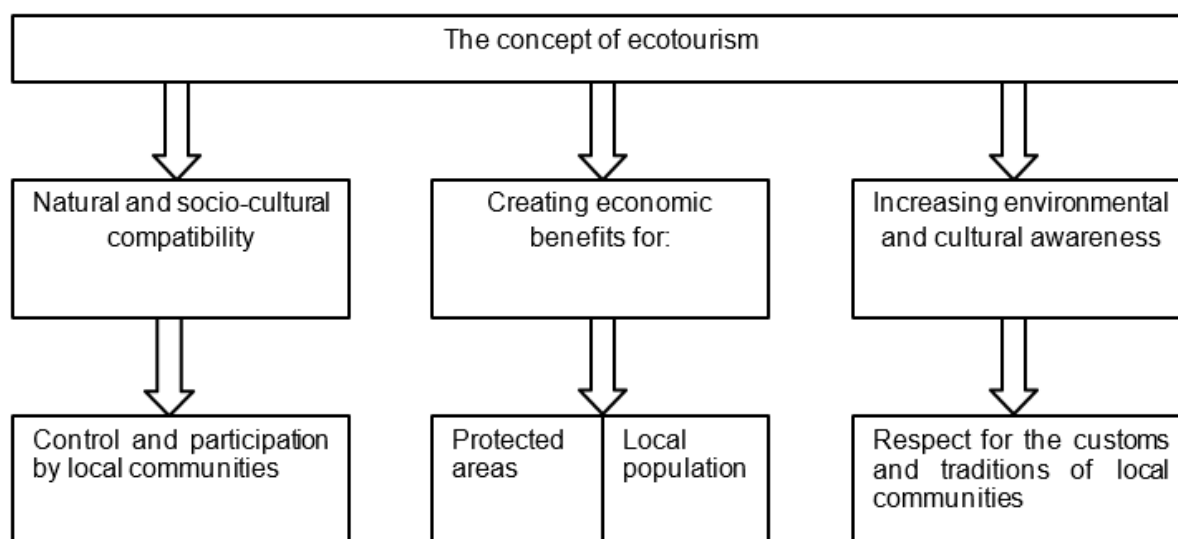
To solve the existing problems of ecotourism, proper economic and legal regulation is required. In this case, ecotourism provides an opportunity to generate significant income, as well as reduce the negative impact of tourism activities on the environment. To solve the existing economic and legal issues in the field of ecotourism infrastructure, it is necessary to form a state policy, whose main task is to determine ecotourism as a priority in tourist regions and introduce economic and legal mechanisms for the effective conduct of ecotourism business.

It is worth mentioning that ecotourism as a type of tourism can be applied to objects of the nature reserve fund. Given the specific differentiated regime of national natural parks, these territories can be effectively used for ecotourism purposes. In our opinion, only people with a high level of ecological and economic competence and well-developed consciousness can participate in ecotourism.



The corresponding studies have demonstrated that one of major problems in the development of the tourism industry in the Russian Federation is high prices and low-quality service. The cost of services does not correspond to their quality since the tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped. The analysis of the organizational structure of government bodies in the field of tourism in the Russian Federation indicates the vertical inconsistency of these institutions, the lack of proper horizontal links at the regional level, and the need to reform the management system.

The analysis of the "ecotourism" concept shows that it includes natural and socio-cultural compatibility as a fundamental condition, the creation of financial, economic, and socio-cultural advantages, as well as an increase in environmental and cultural awareness (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The concept of ecotourism in modern conditions

In addition, a review of the existing programs for developing tourism, excursion activities, and protecting cultural heritage gives grounds to speak about non-antagonistic contradictions in the public administration system in this sector, namely: the inconsistency of state policy with the forms of its implementation, the growing needs for funds and the possibilities of state and local budgets. These circumstances negatively affect the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration in the field of tourism and excursion activities.

To assess the development of ecotourism infrastructure, it is necessary to take into account the following indicators:

- Employment. Increasing the level of the employed population through increasing jobs in the tourism industry. The ratio between the increase in employment of the population and its total number.
- Cultural level. Increasing the number of cultural heritage sites and their visits. The profitability of excursion activity.
- National wealth. Growth in the share of national income and local revenues from tourism activities. The share of GDP from tourism activities in total GDP.
- International prestige. Increasing the number of World Heritage Sites. The growth of cultural heritage objects classified as World Heritage Sites.
- Welfare. Increasing the nominal income of the population by increasing the level of employment in the tourism sector. The ratio of wages of the population employed in the tourism sector and the average wage in the country.
- Innovation and investment climate. Increasing innovation and investment in the sphere of tourism. The ratio of innovations and investments in the tourism sector and their total volume in the economy of the Russian Federation.

The analysis shows that the independent development of ecotourism infrastructure without significant state support has led to a practical monopoly of commercial forms and types of tourism. In order to reduce social tension in the industry and society as a whole, it is necessary to introduce a state policy aimed at the socialization of the tourism industry. Considering state support for the development of social tourism and foreign experience in France and Germany, we have identified the most effective mechanisms for the socialization of the tourism industry: to provide conditions for attracting disabled people, pensioners, military personnel, poor and extended families and their family members to the active consumption of tourism services; to create effective discount systems for the youth and students; to support cultural exchange between the youth and children from different countries; to involve local self-government bodies in the development of social tourism and introduce incentive mechanisms for entrepreneurs to develop social tourism.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The reliability of the above-mentioned approaches is confirmed by the fact that the development of ecotourism infrastructure should stimulate tourism and cultural exchange between young people and foreign students, contribute to the effective implementation of





state tourism policy, create an attractive image of the state, and make the Russian Federation open to the global society.

At the same time, the unique complex of historical, cultural, and natural monuments and the significant recreational opportunities that the Russian Federation has attract more and more tourists, including foreign ones (Nikolskaya et al., 2018a, 2018b; Shaymardanova et al., 2019). Therefore, it is possible to ensure an adequate return on this significant potential and use it for active recreation only if tourism is well organized. Effective mechanisms for the state regulation of the tourism industry are introduced, which attracts experienced and qualified personnel.

Based on the world experience, legislative and executive bodies should provide an interest approach to the development of ecotourism infrastructure. Subsequently, it becomes part of the national humanitarian policy and priority and is taken into account when considering the other issues of national importance.

The relevant studies have shown that due to the development of ecotourism infrastructure, material well-being increases, and employment issues of the rural population are partially solved. The COVID-19 pandemic has made significant changes to the vacation plans of many people, not only external but also domestic tourism.

The development of ecotourism infrastructure has a great future. The more capital it receives, the faster and more effectively most problems will be solved. This infrastructure has every chance to change a person for the better, forming the basic foundations of environmental culture.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the development of ecotourism infrastructure should have appropriate economic and legal regulation that would ensure the effective functioning of the tourism sector. The economic and legal regulation of ecotourism infrastructure should include an effective system of state measures aimed at developing, improving, and streamlining environmental tourism activities, as well as creating legal mechanisms for their implementation in a real economic situation.

State policy aimed at the development of ecotourism infrastructure should be formed on the principles of stability, long-term functioning, economic interest, and legal protection of the interests of ecotourism activities. The effective economic and legal regulation of



developing ecotourism infrastructure will contribute to the growth of the ecological tourism sector in the Russian market and determine the development of its environment.

In addition, global strategies for socio-economic and environmental development determine a significant role of the tourism industry as one of the most important areas of life. Ecotourism becomes popular and widespread among the population during the global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the transition of the Russian Federation to the principles of self-government and self-sufficiency (due to decentralization processes), the development of ecotourism infrastructure will increase the efficiency of the economic development of rural areas.

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