

# Challenges and prospects for the development of medical tourism in Latvia

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## Abstract

Currently, the development of tourism, and especially the primary wellness tourism, is becoming a priority task of the state, concerning the sustenance of human activity and aimed at the restoring and developing of its physical and spiritual health. Primary wellness tourism, on the one hand, makes a significant contribution to the sustainable development of society, and on the other hand, represents one of the steadily growing sources of income for the state. The article discusses the main trends in the development of medical tourism and identifies the main objectives for its development in Latvia.

*Keywords:* medical tourism, state task, medicine, health care system, tourist, risks, health.

## 1 Introduction

Medical tourism, as an integral part of health tourism, has been identified as one of the priorities in the Latvian tourism development program until 2030. It also says about the need to improve competitiveness and innovation in this tourism sector. At the same time, special attention is paid to improving the competitiveness of medical tourism in the Baltic market.

According to the authors, the lack of competitiveness of the Latvian sector of health tourism in general, and medical, in particular, is caused by insufficient attention from the state to this sector of the economy, which is manifested in an underdeveloped regulatory framework, in an insufficiently effective company at the state level to shape the image of Latvia as a destination of health tourism, in the absence of adequate support for the development of the sanatorium-resort sphere, etc.

The enterprises of this sector themselves must move more actively to the path of innovative development in order to keep up with foreign competitors. An urgent task is to improve the quality of services provided.

## 2 Overview

According to the data of the World Health Organization, the number of "medical tourists" in the world is growing from year to year. Moreover, for a number of countries-exporters of medical services medical tourism is one of the revenue items of the state budget. However, despite the relevance of this issue, the literature provides limited data on the role and impact of medical tourism. On the one hand, medical tourism is an objective consequence of the institutional transformations that occur in the development of society, including medicine, at the current stage under the influence of globalization and information technology. On the other hand, considering it as a new model of labor relations in the health sector, it is necessary to take into account aspects of its influence on the traditional forms of organization of medical services and on the health consequences of those who are its consumers.

Analyzing the impact of medical tourism in a positive aspect, it should be noted, first of all, the economic effect

both for consumers of medical services and for the economies of those countries that are their key suppliers.

The leading exporting countries of medical services are India, Thailand, Israel, Korea, China, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Latin American countries (Mexico, Brazil).

Resort-wellness tourism, based on traveling to an area with favorable climate factors to health for health purposes, belongs to wellness tourism (see Figure 1).

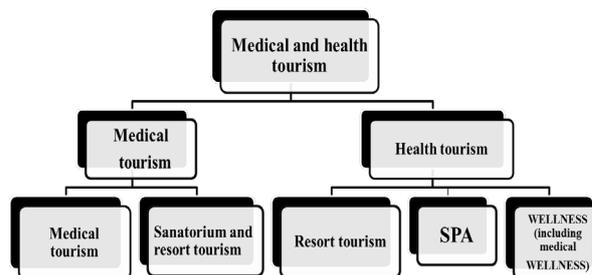


FIGURE 1 Primary wellness tourism

## 3 Conclusion

For the development of domestic medical tourism in Latvia, it is necessary to more widely introduce a system of insurance for health and medical and especially medical tours, with the involvement of employers, insurance companies and insurance funds.

As recommendations for the development of medical tourism in Latvia, you can specify the following:

1. To supplement the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On Tourism" with the definition "medical tourism".
2. Develop a strategy for the development of medical tourism in Latvia at the state level.
3. To determine the instruments of support and development of this tourism sector;
4. Enterprises in this sector are more active in identifying and marketing innovative products in medical tourism.

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