

TOURISM INDUSTRY OF THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES BETWEEN EXISTING RESOURCES AND REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Academician.Prof.Dr.Slobodan Nešković

University Business Academy Novi Sad, Serbia,
slobneskovic@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of the current research is to scientifically consider the existing potentials of the tourism industry of the Western Balkan countries in their efforts to eliminate the manifested anomalies and join the European Union. The achieved results, recommendations and profiled conclusions will benefit the relevant state actors in the concept of tourism promotion and European integration. It is necessary to determine the legal regulations of the European Union in the field of tourism based on the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly 39/248, the Law on Consumer Protection, the Law on Environmental Protection and other legal documents. The Western Balkans subregion consists of countries that are in one of the established phases of the European integration process, for which tourism is a significant economic branch. The starting hypothesis is that the tourism industry of the Western Balkans with existing resources and the implementation of European Union regulations represents an objective chance for overall social development, ie integration into the community of developed countries. By applying the methodological procedures of analysis of available materials, synthesis, description and comparison, we will consider the essential postulates of our topic. The focus of the study is the EU legal regulations relating to the tourism of the observed countries and the specifics of the resources of this industry, important for their economic and overall social development. For all these countries, tourism, modified according to modern trends, potentially means a first-class economic branch and a great chance for the prosperity of communities. The institutions of the European Union have conceived specific legal legislation in this area, as special regulations that are binding on members and countries in certain stages of accession. The initial document adopted by the EU is the Council Directive 90/314 of 1990 on package arrangements. It consists of ten members who fully protect the consumer regardless of the position in the contract. Then, Regulation EC 261/2004 related to air transport issues. It provides for the rights of passengers in air traffic with specific conditions and amounts of compensation that airlines pay to damaged passengers. The well-known standards ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 22000 HACCP specific to the field of tourism are also applied. Our article treats the peculiarities of the tourist resources of the Western Balkan countries as a whole, by considering the positive and negative aspects. The advantages of the physical - geographical and traffic position of Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the diversity of natural resources, healthy living environment, cultural treasures, ethnographic elements, conditions for foreign investment and international cooperation are taken into account. Aggravating factors are reflected in political contradictions, unfavorable infrastructure, economic crisis, lack of professional staff, insufficient legal regulations and inadequate attitude of the authorities. We believe that the leading state entities must eliminate the weaknesses of the legal system and incorporate the legal legislation of developed countries and the European Union itself into their own legislation. It is necessary for the state leaders to pay more attention to the planned investments in tourism, hotel industry and processing industry. Implement the funds of the pre-accession funds of the European Union in fruitful development projects. Use the favorable geographical position with transport networks, diverse natural resources and a healthy environment to promote the tourist economy with accompanying activities. Numerous cultural and historical values and specific ethnographic contents contribute to the overall ambience. Affirm paradigms that motivate foreign investors, where business strategies are formulated based on established international principles. New initiatives for cross-border cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkans are supported by the institutions of the European Union and the United States, especially in order to eliminate mutual problems and strengthen economic capacities.

Keywords: *tourism industry, regulations, resources, Western Balkans, European Union*

Introduction

The Western Balkans region is a broader term than a geographical area called the Balkan Peninsula. The Western Balkans most commonly refers to the seven countries Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and less frequently Croatia, Slovenia, Moldova, Greece and the European part of Turkey. Due to its turbulent past, the Western Balkans is today a mix of different cultures, with four major religious communities operating in its territory: Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Judaism.

The first civilizations that shaped the world today were created in this area. The shores of the Western Balkans are flooded by the waters of six warm seas: the Adriatic, Ionian, Aegean, Mediterranean, Marble and Black Seas. The continental part is dominated by the high mountain ranges of the Dinaric mountains, the Balkans and the Carpathians, the northern part of the Western Balkans flows through large rivers such as the Danube, the Sava and the Tisza, while in the interior there are numerous spas and springs of hot and cold mineral waters. Due to the economic underdevelopment of most Western Balkan countries, the area is largely preserved in its pristine nature as well as clean and comfortable air. Large forest areas and various herbs still cover large parts of the Western Balkans. This space represents the shortest link between Europe and Asia, whether by road, river or air. Due to all these natural features, the Western Balkans region stands out from the rest of the world and represents a great potential for the development of many industries, especially tourism. As the region of the Western Balkans is naturally divided into coastal and continental parts, tourism in these areas has not developed equally. Tourism is far more developed in the areas and countries that own the sea than in the continental regions, but the coastal areas are inferior to the world tourist destinations. Some parts of the Western Balkans have been in the swing of tourism in recent years, while most countries in the region are still in an unenviable position relative to the same or similar parts of Europe and the world.

However, as tourism as an industry is in constant development when it comes to world frames and as the number of tourists visiting various tourist destinations is increasing steadily from year to year, it opens the possibility for the Western Balkans region to be actively involved in the development of this promising industry. To make progress in the field of tourism, which can undoubtedly bring a lot of revenue to the Western Balkan countries, it is necessary to take this important issue more seriously and to develop a regional strategy for tourism development in this part of Europe.

Materials and Methods

The European Union, as a supranational community of twenty-seven European states, has modern and advanced laws governing all areas essential to the functioning of such a creation. European Union laws are considered the most liberal and up-to-date laws in the world.

The European Union regulates tourism through numerous laws. Consumer laws and the Environmental Protection Act, which is also one of the most important laws of the European Union, should be mentioned as significant laws. (Neskovic, S., Djelic, T. A., Antonovic, R., Lutovac, M. & Ketin, S., 2020, p. 4063)

The European Union's tourism regulations are largely based on UN General Assembly resolution 39/248 on consumer protection. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam renumbered the Treaty establishing the European Union, which states in Article 153 that consumer rights are based on five fundamental rights, namely:

- protection of health and safety of consumers,
- protection of consumers' economic interests,
- consumer's right to information and education,
- the right to compensation and
- association, representation and participation of consumers to exercise their rights.

Thanks to the expansion of tourism as an industry, the Council of the European Union decided to declare 1990 as the "European Year of Tourism". In this regard, several standards are being introduced in the European Union to regulate this perspective area. Among the most important documents adopted by the European Union are EEC Council Directive 90/314, which was adopted on 13.06.1990. and relating to the package deal and Regulation 295/91, which was later replaced by EC Regulation 261/2004 relating to air transport.

The directive further regulates the details regarding the price change, the deadline by which the prices may change and the characteristic cases when the organizer is not obliged to comply with the indications from the brochure. Also, according to this Directive, the organizer is obliged to inform the consumer about any changes

before the trip, which can, without any consequences, cancel the arrangement or accept another arrangement. Neskovic, 2013, p. 18)

What is still important to say about this Directive is that the consumer is obliged to report as soon as possible any irregularities which deviate from the rules laid down in this Directive.

The regulation regulates the rights of passengers in air traffic and determines the amount of compensation the airline is obliged to pay to the injured passenger. As it often happens that an airline receives more bookings than the number of passengers that can objectively be carried (overbooking), the aforementioned Regulation has been enacted, which protects passengers' rights and provides them with the payment of adequate financial compensation. The basic change to Regulation 295/91 relates to a nominal increase in the amount that an airline is obliged to pay to an injured consumer (passenger). Also, this Regulation stipulates that airlines are not obliged to pay the consumer compensation only if the flight is canceled or there is a delay in case of emergency, which implies bad weather, political instability, strikes, security risks, technical problems on the plane. unexpected problems that may affect flight safety.

Also, the European Union has adopted several standards that must be respected in the territory of the European Union. Among the most significant standards adopted by the European Union, which are directly related to tourism, are:

- ISO 9001 related to quality management,
- ISO 14001 relating to environmental protection and
- ISO 22000 HACCP related to food safety.

The implementation of these standards in the Western Balkan countries is of great importance as these standards serve as a precondition for the development of tourism in this region.

In most cases, the Western Balkan countries have aligned their laws and standards with those of the European Union.

Tourism in the European Union accounts for 4% of GDP, all because the European Union seeks to create a common tourism market through coordination of local, regional and national interests. In this regard, the European Union has developed different methods to accelerate the development of tourism through the investment of private and state capital in this industry. For decades, the European Union has been paying close attention to tourism development. For this reason, the European Union has adopted and implemented several major projects related to the development of this industry. The first such project was adopted in the 1980s and was called the "Tourism Sector-Horizon 92", and related to tourism planning and development in the European Union. In the 1990s, the Green Paper project was adopted, which refers to the development of rural, cultural and social tourism, the promotion of tourism-related education and the protection of the environment and cultural heritage. In the late 1990s, the European Union adopted a multi-year program to promote tourism (Philoxenia), covering the period 1997-2000. years. This program aimed to improve the quality and competitiveness of European tourism in the international market. The European Union stresses in particular that tourism development policy should be implemented with other international organizations such as the World Tourism Organization, the International Bureau of Social Tourism, etc.

The construction of tourist and related facilities in the European Union is provided within existing institutions through the following financial elements (Neskovic, Ketin, Secerov & Djelic, 2018, p. 45):

- Assigned financial assistance through a cohesion fund serving the development of underdeveloped countries of the European Union, a regional fund serving the development of individual regions of the European Union, a social fund through which various social programs related to tourism and an agricultural fund earmarked for rural tourism development, especially in mountain areas of the European Union.
- Special-purpose loans provided by the European Investment Bank and the European Coal and Steel Community.

- State aid in the tourism sector where investments are made in hotels, recreation centers, infrastructure and more, which indirectly affects tourism development.
- New forms of intervention aimed at attracting significant funds for tourism, related to stimulating tourism development, improving services, improving transport and infrastructure, etc.

As transport is considered an inseparable part of tourism as an industry, the European Union in this regard allocates significant funds for the promotion of all forms of transport and seeks to establish a single transport market throughout the European Union.

To help and meet the specific needs of countries in the Adriatic area (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Serbia), the European Union has adopted a program called IPA Adriatica. This program has been created through a series of meetings and at the initiative of the European Commission and involves financial assistance to these countries through the territory, environment, population, migration, economy, labor market, trade, tourism, infrastructure and transport and research and innovation.

By the IPA Implementing Regulation, the broad assistance objectives are as follows:

- Promoting sustainable economic and social development in the border area;
- We work together in areas such as the environment, natural and cultural heritage, public health and the prevention and fight against organized crime;
- Ensuring effective and secure borders;
- Promoting joint smaller actions involving local actors from border areas.

Based on its criteria, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) divides tourism into eight basic parts, namely:

- Domestic tourism - means tourist travels of the domestic population (residents) to tourist destinations within the country of origin. This type of tourism is also one of the most massive forms of tourism in the world;
- Receptive tourism - means non-resident tourists staying in the observed country;
- Exotic tourism - refers to the travel of a resident's resident country to a tourist destination of another country;
- Internal tourism - refers to a combination of domestic and receptive tourism;
- National tourism - means all tourist travels of residents of a particular country inside the country of origin and abroad;
- International tourism - refers to a combination of receptive and broadcast tourism;
- Intra-regional tourism - refers to all tourist trips of residents of one country of a certain region to destinations in other countries of the same region (example: tourist trip of citizens of Serbia located in Europe to another country from the European continent) and
- Interregional tourism - refers to the tourist travels of residents of one country to another country that does not belong to the same region to which the country of origin belongs (example: trips of residents of Serbia belonging to the European continent to a country located on an African or another continent).

Results

Due to the increasing tourist offer in the world and the special needs of tourists, there is a need to modernize the tourist offer. Contemporary trends in tourism development imply constant innovation in this field. Today's tourist is very picky and not satisfied with a classic offer such as staying in one place. The modern tourist offer has to offer numerous offers in terms of day or day trips to nearby tourist destinations. This type of entertainment for tourists also entails additional income for tourism organizations. In addition to the excursion, the demanding tourist is looking for a good tourist guide, which will provide him with the necessary pleasure. Travel guides and other tourism staff (staff in hotels, restaurants, various hosts in private accommodation and ethno-households) are of great importance in modern tourist offer. Consequently, there is a need for additional education and training of human resources for tourism purposes. Only well-educated and educated tourism workers can provide tourists with the necessary satisfaction and contribute to the tourist's return in the coming period. (Neskovic & Jovanovic, 2016, p. 51.)

It has long been a common opinion that quality is the best advertisement. However, without tourism marketing in the contemporary environment, it is unlikely that any destination will be visible on the tourist map of the world. The modern type of tourism business involves "strong" marketing. Tourism fairs are the best form of tourism marketing in the world as well as in this part of Europe. One of the biggest tourism fairs in this part of Europe is certainly the Belgrade Fair, which is held every year in the Serbian capital. In addition to this important way of promoting tourism and tourism offers, internet marketing is becoming more and more prevalent. The Internet, as a global electronic network, is growing rapidly and has an increasing number of users. Good internet promotion can increase the number of tourists, and therefore the earnings of tourist workers and the entire economy of this region. Travel managers also use other forms of marketing, such as filming and broadcasting various tourist spots, printing publications and flyers, etc. which help develop tourism and generate profits. To develop tourism in the modern environment, various conferences, seminars, congresses and scientific meetings are increasingly organized, aimed at educating the professional public in the field of tourism, but also in the best way to guide the development of this profitable industry. These gatherings are usually international, so that tourism potentials are best presented to potential foreign tourists and investors.

As the number of new tourist destinations in the world tends to increase, while traditional tourist destinations are declining, so is the opportunity to see tourism in the post-socialist and transitional countries in the post-socialist and transitional countries as a promising economic branch develops and reaches the level of development as in the countries of western and southern Europe.

The countries of the Western Balkans have characteristics that do not undoubtedly correspond to contemporary tourist trends in the world, which is primarily concerned with:

- good physical-geographical and traffic position;
- diversity of natural resources;
- favorable climate characteristics;
- healthy environment;
- cultural and historical treasure;
- specific ethnographic elements;
- favorable economic conditions for foreign investors;
- a large initiative space with a large population;
- interstate cooperation through various agreements and special links between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

An analysis conducted by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) showed that tourism segments such as marine, sports, health, urban, cultural, congress and rural tourism will see the highest growth in tourist traffic in the coming period. Analyzing the facts and current trends in tourism development, it is concluded that the Western Balkans have all the necessary characteristics for the development of a profitable industry such as tourism. Also, these countries represent a great unknown for world tourists, so the adventurous spirit of world tourists can contribute to the development of tourism in the Western Balkans.

In addition to these advantages of the Western Balkans, there are many impeding factors for tourism development in the region, such as unstable political situation, poor regulation, lack of staff, poor infrastructure, lack of adequate cross-border cooperation, poor payment ability of the local population, traditional aversion and fear of the developed countries of Europe towards this region, insufficient interest of the authorities and lack of strategy for tourism development in this region, aging of the population, poor overall demographic picture, migration of educated and working population towards the countries of Western Europe and developed countries of the world, etc.

Discussions

The countries of the central part of the Balkan Peninsula (Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania) have enormous potential for tourism development. These countries contain the natural and social resources necessary for the development of this industry, but the development of tourism in these countries does not closely follow the upward trend in the European Union and other Western Balkan countries. Practically, in these countries there is a great disparity between the potential and resources on the one hand and the number of tourists and the profit generated on the other. Taken as a whole, the countries of the central part of the Western Balkans (Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania) have an excellent physical, geographical and traffic position.

Two of the four countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania) have access to the warm seas of the Mediterranean (Adriatic and Ionian). Unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, which goes to the Adriatic Sea only a small part around the town of Neum, which is a potential tourist attraction because it has over 260 sunny days a year and is located next to the Peljesac peninsula, Albania has a large coastline and beautiful sandy beaches. Its coast is flooded by the waters of the Adriatic and Ionian seas and the straits called "Otrantska vrata", which connects southern Italy and southwestern Albania. The Albanian coast is intersected by bays, river deltas, and nearby are wetlands that are home to numerous plant and animal species, as well as several interesting cities. The length and beauty of the Albanian coast open up great opportunities for tourism development in this part of the Western Balkans. Albania is currently in high momentum when it comes to sea tourism. This "tourism boom" in Albania is, first and foremost, the result of a good connection with foreign countries. The Albanian diaspora has invested a lot of money in infrastructure construction and alone accounts for over 50% of the total number of tourists who visit this country annually. On the coast of Albania, diversity of architecture is expressed. In addition to modern hotels, there are still traces of dictatorship architecture in coastal towns, as well as oriental architecture as a result of centuries-old Turkish rule in this region. In the hinterland of the seashore, in one part there is a fertile plain, while the other part of the coast is hidden by high mountains, which is an exceptional tourist attraction for tourists who are adventurous in spirit. A special advantage for the development of maritime tourism in Albania is the ports of Durrës, Valona and St. John, located at the mouth of the Drina into the Adriatic Sea.

Although the number of tourists on the coast of Albania is increasing year by year, it is still not enough to speak of a developed industry. The development of sea tourism in Albania is still in its early stages. The development itself is compounded by the many problems facing the Albanian government, such as the lack of quality and modern infrastructure, the impurity of the Albanian coastal cities, and the underdeveloped awareness of the Albanian people about the need to develop tourism in coastal areas. Also, a major problem is the lack of modern legislation in the field of tourism, as in Greece or Turkey, as well as the lack of incentive measures by the Albanian government for the development of maritime tourism.

In addition to the sea, which is a great tourist potential, important central routes connecting Europe to the Asian continent pass through the central part of the Western Balkans. There are also three road corridors passing through this part of Europe and one river European corridor which, in addition to sea tourism, provide these countries with the opportunity to develop many other tourism sectors such as transit, nautical, fishing tourism, etc. and enable safe and unhindered travel of tourists through this region. As modern roads are a prerequisite

for the development of the economy and therefore tourism, the construction of these roads should be used to enhance the tourist offer of this region, inter alia, through good road marketing.

The Danube, as a large navigable river, opens the door for the development of other attractive tourist branches such as eco and ethno tourism, sports tourism, and near its shore, there are numerous archeological sites, medieval and ancient cities and the largest European gorge "Djerdap". As a navigable river of regional importance, the Sava connects Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and, together with the Danube, represents an exceptional location for the development of nautical and urban tourism. Together with the Danube, the Tisza and their tributaries, the Sava opens the possibility for the development of agro-tourism and agriculture, which is an accompanying tourism branch, because in this way healthy food is obtained, which is one of the basic conditions of the European Union in the field of consumer protection.

A great advantage for the development of tourism in this area is the very dynamic relief. The ground rises abruptly from the Adriatic and Ionian seas and descends over the high mountains into the Pannonian Plain. The central part of the Balkan Peninsula is interspersed with numerous watercourses, valleys, valleys, natural and artificial lakes with diverse flora and fauna. High potential for the development of winter, sports, recreational, health, eco and ethno tourism in these areas is provided by the mountains that abound in this area. These countries are home to famous mountains where this type of tourism has been developed to some extent, and great potentials in the form of high and beautiful mountains, where tourism is still underdeveloped or underdeveloped.

Among the most famous mountain tourist centers in this part of Europe are certainly the mountains around Sarajevo where the 1984 Winter Olympic Games were held. These mountains have modern sports and recreation centers for winter sports.

The mountains of the central part of the Balkan Peninsula are characterized by gentle slopes suitable for winter sports, a continental climate with cold winters and mild summers and beautiful scenery along which clear and fast mountain streams flow. The mountains of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, in addition to the benefits they offer when it comes to the development of winter tourism, are ideal for health, sports, recreational, eco and ethno tourism, while the high Albanian mountains favor the development of mountaineering as a form of sports, recreational and adventure tourism. Also, these mountains represent the potential for the development of congress tourism, which is increasingly prevalent in the world. There are very few adequate facilities for this type of tourism in the area of this part of the Western Balkans, so investing in this area could bring great economic benefit to these countries.

On most mountains in this part of the Balkan Peninsula, there are well-equipped trails for winter sports. Most of these trails are located in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and the last major investment in this field was realized with the help of the Government of Serbia on Stara Planina, which is separated from other Serbian mountains by the amount of snowfall during the year. Nevertheless, the most famous winter tourism center in this part of Europe is certainly Kopaonik. On this mountain there is a modern equipped sports center for winter sports with complete supporting infrastructure and facilities intended for tourists. The growth of foreign guests is recorded on this mountain year after year.

The mountains of northern Albania, western Macedonia and southern Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija have the highest number of snow days in this part of Europe. Except for Brezovica on Šar Planina, these mountains are not sufficiently used for the development of winter sports. The volatile political situation in this part of the region and the dictatorship that has ruled Albania have made tourism in this part of Europe sidelined. In recent years, there has been a strong initiative to develop this industry in these areas.

In addition to winter tourism, the mountains of these countries have exceptional conditions for the development of other forms of tourism. Rich in water and river flows, the mountains of this part of the Western Balkans are a real asset in the form of clean mountain air and healthy food produced on their slopes. Also, these mountains are rich in forests and other wildlife. Due to such characteristics, other forms of tourism such as ethno and eco-tourism and gastronomic tourism are increasingly represented on them. Some of these mountains have been declared national parks and protected by the state, which contributes to the conservation of ecology and biodiversity, which are a prerequisite for the development of these tourist branches. (Neskovic, Ketin, Secerov & Djelic, 2018, p. 47)

Zlatibor, Tara, Divcibare, Fruska Gora, known for its large number of monasteries, Albania's Tomori Mountain National Park, visited every August by pilgrims, the mountains in Macedonia Jakupica, whose peaks offer a unique view of Thessaloniki and the Aegean Sea, Dinara located on the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia, but also Mount Rtanj, which is widely known for its medicinal plants and on the slopes of which grows an endemic herbal species known as Rtanj tea.

In addition to the mountains, this area is also home to numerous plateaus, the most famous being the Pester Plateau. This plateau is known worldwide for the production of the famous hay cheese. In this part of the Western Balkans is located the Deliblatska sandstone as the only one of its kind in this region.

The natural resources of these regions are complemented by numerous river streams, natural and artificial lakes that are abundant in this part of the Balkans. This is the place where the "vein of the houses" of Europe, the Danube, flows. The Danube, the second largest river in Europe, is an invaluable asset as a large number of tourists sail its waters. On the Danube there is the Djerdap National Park which is an exceptional tourist attraction. Many endangered and unique plant and animal species are home to this national park. The banks of the Danube have been inhabited for centuries, and numerous civilizations such as Lepenski Vir and Vinca have arisen in the area, whose archeological excavations make it an extremely attractive location for tourists navigating this great European river. In addition to these prehistoric civilizations, the Danube also abounds in sites dating back to ancient times, and on its shores is the famous Trajan's board, which testifies to the Roman presence in the area and serves as evidence that a very important Roman road connecting Rome with the province passed. Also, fortresses were built on the banks of the Danube in the Middle Ages, which today represent exceptional tourism potential (Petrovaradin, Kalemegdan, Smederevo, Golubac). The French oceanologist Jacques Custo, who explored the waters of the Danube in the 1980s, made a major contribution to the acquisition of ecological awareness and, therefore, to the conservation of biodiversity, which is very important for tourism development.

The most famous spa in this area is certainly Vrnjacka Spa, which is also the seat of the municipality. There are numerous accommodation capacities in Vrnjacka Banja as well as numerous events such as: "Vrnjci Carnival", which gives tourists a special atmosphere. This spa is known for its potential in the world. There are a large number of cultural, historical and religious monuments near Vrnjacka Banja, which contributes to the development of both spa and other forms of tourism.

However, not all spas in this area are in such good condition. As an example of this claim can be cited Kursumlija Spa, which due to negligence, is declining from year to year, so that it remains without inhabitants, infrastructure, and therefore without visitors. Warm spa waters irreversibly flow in streams and streets, losing huge profits that could be made by reopening this spa.

The experience of other countries, especially the Czech Republic and Slovenia, in the development of spa tourism can be used as a form of modernization of the tourist offer of spas in these areas. Namely, in recent years Slovenia has invested one billion euros in the development of this tourist branch, building 15 state-of-the-art spa centers, so that in the total income from tourism in this country, spa tourism participates with about 50%. This type of tourism in Slovenia was developed thanks to investments, which came, inter alia, from European Union development funds, whose funds are intended for balanced regional development. Experts estimate that the construction of modern spa and wellness centers, the countries of this part of the Western Balkans, could increase tourism revenue by up to 200%. The area of the Western Balkans is extremely rich in cultural and historical monuments. Due to the exceptional cultural and historical treasure that is located in these areas, UNESCO has included a large number of cultural monuments in the area on the World Heritage List.

The UNESCO list includes the Albanian archeological site Butrint, which was inhabited in prehistoric times and Berat and Gjirokastra as a typical example of Ottoman architecture. A characteristic of Berat and Gjirokastra is the mixture of Christian and Ottoman culture with numerous churches and mosques. In addition to these Albanian sites, UNESCO also added to the list the old bridge in Mostar, which was demolished during the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. described by Nobel laureate Ivo Andric in his piece "On the Drina River". Also, under the protection of this international organization is the "Ohrid Region". In this locality there is, among other things, the oldest monastery in this area of Sv. Panteleimon and a collection of 800 Byzantine-style icons dating from the XI-XIV centuries, considered to be the second collection of icons in importance in the world. However, the largest number of UNESCO protected assets is in Serbia. Among them is the Old Ras complex, which, in addition to the medieval capital of Stefan Nemanja, includes the Orthodox monasteries of Sopocana, Djurdjev Stupova and the church of Sv. Peter and Paul are known as Peter's Church, located near

the old town of Ras. In addition to this site, the monasteries of Studenica, Pec Patriarchate, Visani Decani, Bogorodica Ljeviška, Gracanica and the archeological site Gamzigrad near Zajecar are protected, which also includes an imperial palace from the Roman Empire period known as the Romuliana. These UNESCO-listed sites are a real attraction for visitors, because tourists cannot remain indifferent to their beauty.

In addition to this extraordinary tourist potential, these areas are also characterized by a large number of well-preserved cities from prehistory, antiquity and the Middle Ages, which testify to the early existence of civilization in this region. Special tourist attractions in these areas are the earliest civilizations Lepenski Vir and Vinča, which is the seat of the so-called. The Vincentian cultures, followed by Gamzigrad and Romuliana from antiquity and, as the best-preserved, medieval cities in which there are many in this region.

Throughout the centuries, the cultures of the Balkan Peninsula have been intertwined with various cultures that have left an indelible mark and that have shaped the present-day culture of the Balkan peoples. There are a large number of churches, cathedrals, mosques and synagogues in this area that dominate these areas with their beauty and grace. These religious sites and the various "miracles" that are happening in this part of the Western Balkans are a credit for the well-developed religious tourism in this region. As a typical example of well-organized religious tourism, we can mention Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina where pilgrims gather to see the Virgin Mary who occasionally appears to them here. Visits to Medjugorje by many tourists cannot be compared with any tourist site in Bosnia and Herzegovina. More than half of the visitors who visit Bosnia and Herzegovina annually are pilgrims from Medjugorje. In addition to Medjugorje, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, is the main destination for tourists in the field of religious tourism in these areas. Namely, Sarajevo is the only European city in which a small place of worship of four great faiths is situated in a small area not more than 100 meters high: the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Cathedral, the Islamic Mosque and the Jewish Synagogue. The National Museum in Sarajevo also houses his most valuable exhibit, the traditional Jewish book of the Haggadah, which the Sephardim brought to Sarajevo after his expulsion from Spain. (Neskovic, 2019, p. 31)

Religious tourism in Serbia is reflected in visits to numerous monasteries and churches, most of which date back to the Middle Ages and the golden period of the Serbian state. These graceful Orthodox monasteries, in addition to artistic and religious beauty, also represent the power of the Serbian medieval state. Most of these monasteries are colorful in the style of the Orthodox faith, and the murals on their walls represent an invaluable artistic asset. The most famous fresco of Serbian monasteries is every White Angel from the UNESCO-protected Mileševu Monastery. Also, they represent great tourist potential in the groups of monasteries in Fruska Gora and the Ovcara-Kablar Gorge. Most Orthodox monasteries in Serbia are protected by the state because of their artistic, historical and religious values, while some of them are protected by UNESCO. The Serbian monasteries of Žiča, Studenica, Gradac, Đurđevi Stupovi and Sopocani were included in the program "The main cultural path of the Council of Europe", which under the name "Transromantics" brings together and promotes the European heritage of the Romanesque period. The place of pilgrimage with the largest number of Orthodox believers in this region is St. The Virgin Mary in Junis, where thousands of Orthodox believers gather around the world every October. Also worth mentioning is the Miroslav Gospel, which dates from the 12th century and is kept in the National Museum in Belgrade. In 2005, UNESCO listed it as the "Memory of the World" library among the 120 most valuable assets created by human civilization.

A special tourist attraction of this part of the Western Balkans can be represented by religious customs that are rooted in paganism and, in addition to sacrifice on the Albanian Mount Tomori, represent a unique offering in Europe. Most of these pagan customs can be found in eastern Serbia, inhabited by Vlachs. These customs are especially pronounced in the Homolj mountains where, due to isolation from the rest of Serbia, the Vlachs kept their customs in their original form. Due to its blend of culture, pleasant climate and clean nature, the areas of this part of the Western Balkans are known worldwide for their delicious food and good quality wines. These national cuisines represent the pride of the people of this part of the Western Balkans, and to promote tourism, numerous wine routes have been traced that connect the wine centers in this region.

One of the great advantages for the development of tourism in these areas is the initial space of over 17 million inhabitants, who are forced, due to the poor economic situation in these countries, to satisfy their tourism needs in the domestic areas. However, regional co-operation is a basic prerequisite for the development of regional tourism in this region. In this regard, countries in this part of the Balkan Peninsula have started to cooperate through CEFTA, IPA Adriatica, by establishing a Western Balkans Tourism Association, which aims to attract tourists from the far east, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) project to create a network park of the Dinaric Arc, but also through the special connections Serbia has with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The opening

of mountain hiking trails in the Prokletije crossing Albania, Montenegro and Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija, for which special border crossings have been opened, can be cited as a positive step towards establishing interstate cooperation between the countries of the Balkan Peninsula. Interstate cooperation in these areas is crucial for the development of tourism as an industry branch, because this area is crossed by national borders, which causes a great migration of population towards the interior of these countries. Improving regional cooperation in the field of tourism would open many potential tourist destinations such as the Drina or Skadar Lake. (Neskovic, 2013, p. 39)

In addition to the great tourism potential that these Balkan countries undoubtedly possess, there are several deterrents to why tourism has not been sufficiently developed in these areas. The unstable political situation is the biggest problem for tourism development in this region. Due to the ethnic and religious intolerance of the Balkan peoples and the frequent ethnically-motivated war conflicts, the necessary interstate cooperation is difficult. With the lack of this cooperation, tourism in this region suffers a great deal of damage. For these reasons, there is a great aversion of the population of the developed part of Europe and the world towards the Balkans. In addition to this fundamental problem, inadequate infrastructure, which is underdeveloped due to the difficult economic situation in this part of the Balkan Peninsula, is a major drawback. The economic crisis, which has been going on in this region for too long, is the cause of the poor payment capacity of the local population. Although this area has over 17 million inhabitants, a good portion of these citizens is unable to afford tourist trips. Also, a major problem for tourism development is the lack of skilled and educated tourism staff and the sudden aging of the population in these areas. A large number of educated and able-bodied populations of these countries migrate to the developed countries of Europe and the world. Added to this is the poor legislation of these countries in the field of tourism and the inconsistency of the legislation with the regulation of the European Union. In recent years, there has been a shift in this field as countries in this part of the Western Balkans are striving to join the European Union, and are thus obliged to adapt their legislation to the laws applicable in the territory of the European Union. Although tourism is a very important industry and generates large revenues for the countries in which it is developed, there is still no need for the interest of the top states to invest in this promising branch.

Conclusions

The fact is that the Western Balkan countries have enormous potential for tourism development. Practically, no area in this region does not have the best predisposition for tourism development. A large initiative space with dynamic relief and an extremely rich cultural and historical heritage, it simply cannot, without being noticed, on the tourist map of the world. However, the fact is that tourism in this region is not developed to the extent that it belongs to its potential. The reason for this lies in society, and not in nature. Nature has given these premises all the necessary conditions, but society does not know it or will not take advantage of it.

The three main reasons why tourism, regionally speaking, is underutilized are the unstable political situation, inadequate infrastructure and the lack of interest of the authorities of these countries in the development of tourism, which includes lack of incentive measures and poor regulation. Namely, in the treated countries of the Balkan Peninsula except for Albania, there is a negative natural increase, which implies constant aging of the population. This problem is particularly pronounced in the rural areas of this region, where there is a large population migration towards urban and developed parts of these countries and developed countries of Europe and the world. Rural areas are known to represent areas where tourism should develop. Also, according to the World Tourism Organization, rural tourism will represent one of the basic types of tourism shortly. In rural areas, only old and under-educated residents remain who cannot in any way contribute to tourism development. Also, these spaces do not have developed infrastructure. Most rural areas lack electricity and roads, while we cannot even talk about phones and the Internet. Without the development of infrastructure, we cannot talk about the development of tourism in this region.

The solution to this problem could be found by implementing strategies in these areas and implementing incentive measures, among other things, in the form of favorable tax policy and priority employment of the local population in the field of tourism. The same is the case with border areas, which are most often ideal for tourism development. Due to the proximity of the border, but also the underdevelopment of these areas, young and educated residents of these areas migrate inland to their home countries. The solution for the development of tourism in the border areas could be found through interstate agreements and programs for the development of tourism, such as the example of cooperation between Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo in the Prokletije. Successful tourism development requires trained staff in this field. The implementation of incentive measures should help the return of young and educated people to the rural areas of this part of the Western Balkans. By

building infrastructure in the rural parts of this region and educating staff in the field of tourism, the basic prerequisites for accelerated development of the beautiful and unused areas of the Balkan Peninsula would be gained.

Also, these areas represent great potential for the development of sports tourism, and thanks to a large number of spas that are mostly located in passive areas, and for the development of health tourism, which, in addition to rural, represent the future of tourism in these areas. The accession of these countries to the European Union would open up the possibility of access to various funds for a balanced regional development of the European Union. Therefore, underdeveloped Balkan countries such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia could, with the assistance of the European Union, be able to invest more seriously in the development of this very important industry.

The importance of tourism in building an economically strong state can best be seen in the example of Greece, which, despite the great economic crisis it is in, successfully resists thanks to developed tourism. This industry has been one of the few in recent years to record a positive trend in the shaky Greek economy. Judging by the facts, with the Western Balkans' serious tourism strategy, fresh capital injection, cross-border cooperation and smart use of natural resources, tourism in these areas could flourish in the coming years and become one of the main pillars for the development of the economies of these countries.

References

- Neskovic, S. (2013) European Integration and Tourism Development in Southeast European Countries. International Conference Contemporary Trends in Tourism Development.
- Neskovic, S. (2013) Traffic Corridors in the Function of the Progress of Southeast European Countries. International Conference on Road Mobility and Safety, Travnik International University.
- Nesković, S. & Jovanovic, Z. (2016) Ecological Paradigm Within the Context of the International Policy – Development Study. *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 8.
- Neskovic, S. (2013) External Security Policy of the European Union and the Position of the Republic of Serbia – Case Study. Belgrade: Center for Strategic Research on National Security – CESNA B.
- Nešković, S. (2018) Geostrategic Position and Security Synergies of the Black Sea Region through Cooperation with the European Union. *Cross - Border Book Series "New Challenges to Security and Development of the Balkans"* Vol. 5.
- Neškovic, S., Ketin, S., Secerov, P., & Djelic, T., A. (2018) International Politics and Ecology: A Focus on Environmental Protection. *Fresenius Environmental Bulletin - FEB*, Vol. 27. No 11/2018.
- Neskovic, S., Jokanovic, I., & Stefanovic, G. (2018) Reconstruction of Dysfunctional Urban Corridors: Case Study Cairo. *Journal of Road and Traffic Engineering* Vol 64, No 4.
- Neskovic, S. (2019) Business Diplomacy in New Trends in Transport, Ecology and Logistics, 19th International Conference "Innovation and Research in the Function of Technical and Technological Changes in Transport, Ecology and Logistics.
- Neskovic, S., Djelic, T. A., Antonovic, R., Lutovac, M. & Ketin, S. (2020) Incorporation of Information - Communication Technologies in Economic and Environmental Espionage, *Fresenius Environmental Bulletin - FEB*, Volume 29 - No 05/2020.
- Spasojevic, M. & Susic, V. (2011) Contemporary Tendencies in the Development of Health Tourism in the World and Serbia. University of Niš, Faculty of Economics Niš, Niš.