



Study on the development of sustainable mountain tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross- border area

**Romanian Association for Technology
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Rationale

The study aims at highlighting the necessary sustainable use of natural and cultural resources in the mountain region of the target area, namely in the Southern part of the Carpathian Mountains located in Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți counties in Romania and Bor district in Serbia. Due to the great tourism potential of this area in terms of resources, historical and cultural values, there were recorded more and more visitors. Thus the area is prone to unsustainable development and to a short-term activity of tourism sector without an effective guideline and products development accompanied by trainings. An improper usage of the existing touristic resources will affect the environment and the income generators of the business sector in the target area.

Within this context, it is mandatory the introduction of a new touristic product based on the mountain tourism in a cross-border approach in order to obtain a better capitalization of natural resources in the three areas.

As it was specified in the Scope of the Work of the *Carpathians Connects* project and according to UNEP: „Tourists are attracted to mountain destinations for many reasons, including the climate, clean air, unique landscapes and wildlife, scenic beauty, local culture, history and heritage, and the opportunity to experience snow and participate in snow-based or nature-related activities and sports”.

According to the SWOT analysis of the target area, some of the strengths focus on the natural tourist resources (national/natural parks, thermal springs, forests, landscape), cultural and ethnic diversity, traditions of the cross-border area and a low population impact on the naturally areas due to a low density.

The target area has some important strengths for developing recreational activities that can bring advantages to both the stakeholders and local communities. Although it is hard to quantify the results of tourism development especially on short term, the practice demonstrated that tourism is one of the few sectors in the economy that can bring sustainable development of these areas. Thus, it is clear the necessity of sustainable mountain tourism development to trigger also the socio-economic development in the cross-border area.

The development of sustainable mountain tourism in the local communities of the target area can bring many economic and social advantages such as:

- The local economy is stimulated through the development of tourist infrastructure and services
- The rural economy is stimulated through the increased production of local agricultural products that can be sold
- New jobs are created
- The communication infrastructure is developed, bringing benefits to the local communities

- The regions in the proximity can develop through capital insertions in the market
- Raising awareness among stakeholders regarding the sustainable activities of mountain tourism
- The cross-border interrelations are improved by capitalization of rural traditions, the local communities being stimulated to produce and to capitalize their products and customs.

Currently, sustainable tourism activities in mountain areas become most attractive for main tourism markets. Until now, there were no such initiatives in the target area. The study intends to provide support to the stakeholders in order to develop comprehensive strategic and guiding documents for the development of sustainable mountain tourism products in the target area.

Taking into consideration the overall project objective, i.e. to support development of local tourism businesses and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage, the study will propose a blueprint to guide the sustainable planning of the cross-border areas as a tourism destination with proper identity, leading to growth of the cross-border tourism sector in the next years. The guideline focuses on 4 main pillars, thus developing accordingly 4 tourism mountain products with proper objectives and actions to be taken on medium and long term, underlining also the marketing approach.

The strategy assesses the current operating environment and proposes local objectives and a series of actions to achieve these objectives by leveraging existing assets and developing new strong tourism products, following stakeholder consultations and data analysis of the tourism sector in the target area.

The development of sustainable mountain tourism with cross-border approach will have the purpose to engage the stakeholders in tourism and environmental sectors and provide long-lasting tourism product based on smart usage of natural and anthropogenic heritage. The final purpose leads to the creation of a unique mountain destination.

Methodology

A tourism strategy has to include a diagnosis of the current situation, a vision formulation and it should be establishing the main goals and objectives of the sector as well as a set of actions that have to strengthen the sector on medium and long term.

Moreover,” *tourism policy seeks to provide high-quality visitors experience that are profitable to destination stakeholders, while ensuring that the destination is not compromised in terms of its environmental, social and cultural integrity*” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

The output of such a strategy is mainly the inter-connection between the tourism market tendencies and travel motivations, a proper capitalization of tourist resources and economic development in accordance with the environment protection and sustainable approach. Within this process, the stakeholders play an important role, by engagement in the actions and education at local level towards a sustainable tourism product.

According to WTO (2004)” *the sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability*”.

In accordance with other strategies, i.e. in Romania: Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, National Tourism Development Master Plan for Romania 2007-2026, National Strategy for Ecotourism, in Serbia: Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025, Danube Strategy and sustainable regional and county strategies elaborated for each target area, the principles and objectives of European sustainable tourism were taken into consideration when elaborating the objectives of the current strategy. The three dimensions imply the economic sustainability, the environmental sustainability and the socio-cultural sustainability (Eber, 1992, Schorner, 2011).

The principles of economic sustainability include the maintaining of natural and anthropogenic diversity which creates on-long term a base for the industry; supporting local economies through activities and products that take into account the environment costs and values, avoiding damage; and marketing of tourism that has to increase the respect for the environment and the customer satisfaction.

The environmental sustainability implies the conservation and sustainable use of tourist resources and a reduction of over-consumption and waste, avoiding the restoring of long-term damage creating tourism quality and a carrying capacity that needs to handle the changes.

The socio-cultural sustainability involves staff training, which integrates the sustainable tourism into practice by including the local personnel into the tourism market. An on-going research and monitoring of tourism activity by collecting and analysing data bring benefits to both the industry and consumers. In terms of local communities’ involvement and consultation with stakeholders (tourism industry, organizations, institutions) their

implication can improve the tourism experience in the destination and resolve potential conflicts.

Thus the tourism development must be integrated into a proper planning into the national and local planning framework, with a good coordination between various actors involved in making decisions aiming a long-term viability of tourism.

The good practice cases of sustainable tourism development include the development of new products linked to local culture that must be integrated in the mainstream markets with a commercial viability, taking into account also the external funding that guarantees the establishment of partnerships and also some investments.

In the approach of the study there were taken into consideration several stages that helped to identify the main issues of the strategy, each stage having a specific methodology.

The first stage relates to a baseline information about tourism at the global level and its dynamics, highlighting also the concept of sustainable tourism development with a focus on the mountain tourism. It was necessary to have such a context in order to assess the current situation in the RO-SER cross-border area.

There was tackled the existing situation in the target area with focus on stakeholders and their interests, and what are basically the potentials and problems of the area.

The touristic diagnosis, namely the current situation assessment, underline the causes and effects of the processes, identifies the major strengths and weaknesses. There were analysed the existing studies and reports and there were gathered statistical data and also focus-groups were conducted to have in-depth discussions with the stakeholders.

Thus, the main starting point of this research is the SWOT analysis obtained in the previous study „State of the art of mountain tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area “carried out by the project partners. Although the tourism attractions in the Southern Carpathians (Caraş-Severin and Mehedinţi counties, and Bor district) are dispersed limiting the opportunity to attract international tourist flows, new opportunities, namely different forms of tourism: ecotourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism etc., can capitalize better the local resources.

In ***the second stage*** a clear vision of the cross-border destination in terms of sustainability and competitiveness was elaborated.

The vision of the study presents the common assets and values of the target area, being based on a participative process. It represents actually the basis for the strategic concepts of development with a set of objectives. The latter is the operational element of the strategy and it is related to the vision.

These objectives determine a guideline for development focusing on some areas of interventions: regulation of mountain tourism activity, creating and maintaining good

conditions for tourism infrastructure and services, ensuring quality standards, also to train the human resources and last but not least to involve the local community.

To respond to the needs of the stakeholders and local communities and to the questions What kind of tourism? Which tourists? and Where to begin? an operational plan with defined tourist products for targeted groups, a proper positioning on the market was proposed in ***the third stage***, being actually important for an added value strategy.

The planning process on medium and long term needs to have very clearly stated actions in order to control the development and to organize the mountain tourism sector. The methodology used for ***the final stage*** is gathering all the important data and information associated with networking of the stakeholders (who, how, with whom? meaning having a role and responsibility), creating a community involvement in a participatory way, guaranteeing that the requirements of the beneficiary are met. The monitoring and evaluation process and some general observations and recommendations are provided in the last part of the study.

The sustainable mountain tourism is created primarily on the nature-based product, being thus subject to certain changes and challenges caused by different factors. The strategy aims that in the RO-SER cross-border area the measures and products proposed to bring an efficient and profitable development and promotion in a sustainable manner.

1. Mountain tourism - Baseline information

1.1. Tourism overview, global trends and dynamics

At a global scale, tourism is considered an economic and social phenomenon because over the years, it recorded a sustainable growth and a real diversifications of the products, thus becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, 2017). The increased number of new destinations that try to find a place on the global tourism market and their development determined a dynamics and a modernization of tourism which is a key driver for the economic and social progress.

Nowadays, tourism sector and its businesses are equal or even surpass the food industry, automobiles and oil exports. At the same time, it is a main source of income for the developing countries. This development and increase in the tourism sector is due to the competition among destinations on a global scale and also due to the diversification of tourist products. Tourism brings many benefits in the developing or developed countries in terms of economic revenues and development of other related sectors of the economy (communications, construction etc.).

Over time, tourism has experienced a continuous diversification and expansion, becoming one of the largest growing sectors in the world. Many emerging destinations have developed and invested in tourism in addition to the traditional regions Europe and North America. Despite the economic and political shocks worldwide, the tourism sector demonstrated resilience, recording only growth.

Thus the tourism offer plays an important role in the economic well-being of a destination and needs to have a sustainable positioning on national and international markets. The **current development and forecast for tourism** globally speaking highlight a growth of arrivals of 4.6%, namely 1,184 million arrivals in 2016 and UNWTO forecasts 1.8 billion arrivals by 2030 (UNWTO, Tourism Towards 2030); 1 of 10 jobs is in the tourism sector, international tourism generated US\$ 1.4 trillion in export earnings; tourism represents 7% of world's exports and 30% of services exports (UNWTO, 2017).

International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) grew by 3.9% in 2016, reaching 1,235 million worldwide, an increase of 46 million over 2015. In 2016, it was recorded the 7th consecutive year of growth in international tourism after the 2009 economic crisis.

Due to some terror attacks, tourism flows redirection was observed from some destinations to other destination, but the overall key word was the growth due to the high demand for travel, good connectivity and affordable air transport. Europe continues to be the most visited region in the world with a 2% increase from the previous year.

The international tourism receipts grew from 495 billion \$ in 2000 to 1,220 billion \$ in 2016, ranking in the export category third place after chemicals and fuels, in the developing countries being the top export element.

The figures of 2016/2017 according to World Travel Monitor (ITB Berlin, 2016), show the growth of the **outbound travel** despite political and terrorist issues in Europe with 2.5% in the 2016-2017 period. According to the UNWTO, the **inbound tourism** increased by 4% in 2016, with a good growth in Europe as well.

The total earnings from tourism worldwide in 2016 were of 1,220 billion \$ or 1,102 billion Euro. The most visited destinations according to the international arrivals were France, the USA, Spain and China, and in terms of receipts, the first ranked are the USA, Spain, Thailand and China.

In terms of **purpose of trips**, the World Travel Monitor cited that the number of business trips rose by about 1% while visits to friends and relatives (VFR) and other private trips grew to 9%. The city-breaks remained a growth sector with a 10% increase between January and August 2016, with a strong 15% rise by Europeans, and the sun & beach holidays increased by 6% according to World Travel Monitor. UNWTO stated that travels for recreation and leisure accounted half of the international tourist arrivals.

The competitiveness of destinations was affected in the last years by strong fluctuations in exchange rates determining raising or lowering the prices, by oil prices increase especially in Europe, and also by terror attacks. UNWTO underlined that destinations have to diversify to new markets, create new products and develop new target segments.

The IPK International (2016) identified a new market for tourism, the Millennials, persons born between 1980 and 2000 (aged 18-38), that are technology-savvy and recorded 1.8 billion worldwide. Their travel behaviour shows that they seek authenticity, want to experience new cultures, have different types of trips, engage with locals and have an **authentic experience** overall, thus they want an individualised travel experience. The destinations that want to attract this segment of the market have to offer a mix product of adventure and relaxation, a real experience, using also the technology, where they can receive information and share their experiences and feed-backs. Social-media and bloggers remain important influencers and inform the consumers, the tourists about the destinations.

In Europe, the highest number of overnight stays was recorded in the coastal, Alpin regions and also in major cities. Also the rural tourism accounted almost 45% of the total nights spent by tourists in the EU. It was observed also that Europeans prefer complex products, varied offering an emotional engagement and satisfaction and especially personalized ones. They will revitalize the destinations considered satisfactory in terms of accommodation, experience, culture and they will visit them again. The internet is a major tool in the marketing approach, because the websites can reveal a branding process and a tourist product better than the classical methods. The on-line bookings and also the destination information available on different sites or social media channels needs to be accessible to tourists that are more experimented and have more expectations.

The trends of tourism at European and global level according to IPK International (2016) and UNWTO (2017) are summarized below:

- The trips are shorter but with higher spending
- Travellers are segmented in Millennials and /or older persons and book online more than ever
- Because travellers use social media all the time, the instruments of social media and even bloggers have become major influences on travel behaviour
- Travellers want more individual holiday experiences, a better information and a more accessible tourism in terms of price, quality
- The sun, sea and recreational tourism remain on an upward trend, but niche market as adventure travel (sports, green travel) is getting more diverse and supports local communities
- In Europe there were recorded modest figures of 2% growth of the market, but longer travels are preferred by the overseas visitors
- A growth outlook is foreseen.

Regarding the **forms of tourism and tourist motives**, there were individualized some trends in the last years (2016/2017):

- Active and intense holiday packages are more and more required by tourists, meaning they combine events and festivities with learning new skills (like skiing, painting, hiking etc.)
- New destinations take the place of the traditional ones because tourists try to experience something different in each holiday
- The search for authentic holiday, when the tourist can live like a local become more required
- The demand for cultural tourism is still on an upward trend, capitalizing mobile (art, archaeological and documentary collections) and immobile cultural tourist resources (historical sites, buildings), i.e. material resources and immaterial resources (traditions, customs)
- City breaks are considered very popular holidays among tourists aged 24-45, being similar to the request for sun and sea holidays, and it was revitalized by the increased number of the low-cost flights
- The adventure tourism which include sport activities recorded a notable increase
- The wellness and spa breaks also have a growth tendency, popular with business people seeking to recharge on holiday
- Gastronomic tourism is a growing phenomenon, many time mixed with cultural tourism, which can generate recreational experiences or have entertainment purposes

- The internet as a source of information determines the self-organization of holidays, most of the time the mobile acts as a virtual planner or guide.

1.2. Mountain tourism – model of sustainable capitalization of natural and cultural heritage

Mountain regions are some of the key tourism destinations at international level due to their highly variable and differentiated ecosystems and rich cultural heritage, but, at the same time, are largely areas with fragile rural economies. Mountain areas present monumental paradoxes, sprang from the two main typical conditions: high degree of biodiversity and disproportionate share of marginalized human population (Pratt & Shilling, 2003).

According to Agenda 21, Chapter 13, *“Governments at the appropriate level, with the support of the relevant international and regional organizations, should diversify mountain economies, inter alia, by creating and/or strengthening tourism, in accordance with integrated management of mountain areas”*.

The United Nations Security Council (2009) welcomed *“the growing contribution of sustainable tourism initiatives in mountain regions as a way to enhance environmental protection and socio-economic benefits to local communities and the fact that consumer demand is increasingly moving towards responsible and sustainable tourism”*.

Western European countries have long acknowledged the importance of tourism in the mountain areas, as well as their fragility, signing in 1991 the Alpine Convention, concerning tourism management and controlling tourist flows, structural developments such as ski lifts and ski slopes, accommodation and the balanced development of economically weak areas (EC, 2005). Fortunately, Romania has recently started to deal with mountain policies in an integrated manner following the Italian and French model, even if there is still no proper legislation.

1.2.1. Principles of sustainable mountain tourism and its cross-border approach

The UN General Assembly declared the year 2002 the *International Year of Mountains*, stating that *“The International Year of Mountains 2002 fosters the conservation and the sustainable development of mountain regions, thus assuring the welfare of mountain communities and those in the lowlands”*. That year, the Global Mountain Summit was held in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, focusing on improving the lives of people living in the mountainous areas and safeguarding the mountain ecosystems. On this occasion, a background paper was drawn, outlining four major principles focusing specifically on sustainable tourism in mountain areas (Brewer Lama & Sattar, 2004):

- tourism should be one, and not the only, means of livelihood and economic development in diversified mountain economies;
- the benefits and opportunities arising from mountain tourism must flow consistently and in adequate proportions to mountain people;

- the impacts of tourism on biodiversity and cultural diversity must be well-documented, minimized, and managed, and a portion of tourism revenue reinvested in conservation and restoration of bio-resources, cultural heritage and sacred sites;
- mountain people must play an active and responsible role in planning and carrying out mountain tourism, supported by other stakeholders and networks, by government policies and actions, and by technical and capacity building assistance.

According to the World Bank Report, a comprehensive definition of sustainability in the mountains, that should be universally accepted, is not an easy task. That is why we should focus on the characteristics and attributes that contribute to the sustainable use of mountain resources (Pratt & Shilling, 2003):

- sustainability does not mean cessation of all change; change due to human activity does not undermine the ability of mountain regions to sustain the flow of vital mountain services indefinitely, while insuring that mountain people benefit appropriately from the good and services provided.
- sustainability concerns cover very different time frames. Mountain ecosystems are fragile, and can degrade rapidly in certain circumstances
- sustainability means finding ways to manage mountain resources and systems so that they can provide their critical goods and services indefinitely into the future. Mountain resources should be managed in ways that provide sustainable livelihoods for mountain dwellers and the goods and services valued in lowland areas in ways that protect the long-term capacity of mountains to continue to provide such goods and services.

Any sustainable mountain tourism plan should address three major types of issues, i.e. social, environmental and economic issues (EUROMONTANA, 2011):

Mountain tourism covers a wide range of tourism types, from mass tourism to eco-tourism, each country defining its own forms in their strategies for tourism development: winter tourism in Slovakia, green tourism, national parks or the functioning alpine infrastructure for tourism experience in Austria, hunting, lake fishing, farm tourism, hiking, cycling and winter sports in Norway, active holidays based on winter and summer sports in Slovenia, tourism in the national parks and nature reserves, winter sports tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, hunting tourism and active tourism in Romania.

In May 2003, seven Carpathians countries Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine signed the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (*Carpathian Convention*) in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006.

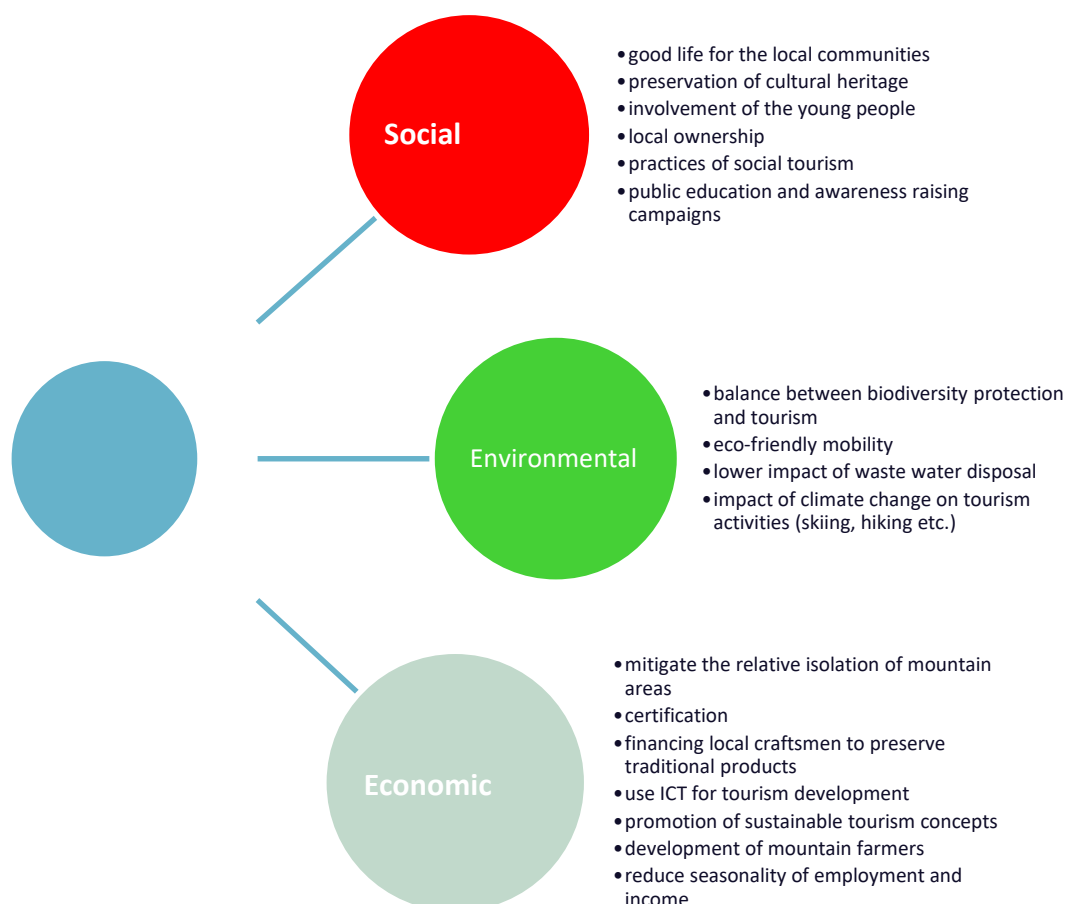


Figure 1 The three main pillars of sustainable mountain tourism (adapted after EUROMONTANA, 2011)

It is the only multi-level governance mechanism covering the whole of the Carpathian area and besides the Alpine Convention the second sub-regional treaty-based regime for the protection and sustainable development of a mountain region worldwide. The main vision is to pursue comprehensive policy and cooperation in order to guarantee protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, by improvement of the quality of life, the strengthening of local economies and communities, and the conservation of natural values and cultural heritage.

The Convention provides a framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development, and a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved – from the local community and various NGO's up to the regional and national Governments, Institutions of the European Union and the United Nations (<http://www.carpathianconvention.org/>).

The Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (CERI) was created on 1 March 2006 “to achieve the long term conservation of the unique nature of the globally important Carpathian Mountains, while supporting its economy and culture for the lasting benefit of people through international partnership.” It works on the protection of biodiversity both inside and outside protected areas, as well as forests, grasslands, freshwater systems.

According to the Carpathians Environment Outlook 2007: “Only through international cooperation and maintaining a holistic view of the Carpathian environment, and a common (or

at least not contradictory or conflicting) path of development will the governments and peoples of the region succeed in building a viable future within the 'Carpathian space'."

1.2.2. Concepts of carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change

The Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism (2001) by Weaver defines **Carrying Capacity** as *the amount of tourism-related activity that a site or destination can sustainably accommodate*. It is generally estimated in terms of visitor numbers or visitor-nights over a given period of time, or by the number of available accommodation units. In order to raise the carrying capacity of any tourism site, various management techniques can be used.

During the late 1970 and beginning of the 1980's, scientists from the US Forest Service's Wilderness Management, while researching and achieving carrying capacity plans for various parks in the USA developed the concept of **Limits of Acceptable Change** – a process which sought to explicitly define a compromise between resource/ visitor experience protection and recreation use goals (Cole & Stankey, 1997). Mainly, the LAC concept acknowledges that the environmental and social change is a natural, inevitable consequence of recreation use, and thus it must focus on managing for desired conditions rather than controlling numbers of users, while placing the issue of capacity in a prescriptive context – *what is the level of acceptable change?*

The LAC is a planning model which consists of 9 steps, as defined by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including:

1. Identify special values, issues and concerns attributed to the area
2. Identify and describe recreation opportunity classes or zones
3. Select indicators of resource and social conditions
4. Inventory existing social resource and conditions
5. Specify standard for resource and social conditions in each opportunity class
6. Identify alternative opportunity class allocations
7. Identify management actions for each alternative
8. Evaluation and selection of a preferred alternative
9. Implement actions and monitor conditions

Table 1 Limits of acceptable change: Process and guidelines

Steps	Guidelines	Comment on purpose
Identify special values, issues and concerns attributed to the area	Citizens and managers: identify special features or qualities that require attention	Encourages a better understanding of the natural resource base, a general concept of how the resource could be

	<p>identify existing management problems and concerns</p> <p>identify public issues: economic, social, environmental</p> <p>identify role the area plays in a regional and national context and political/institutional constraints</p>	<p>managed, and a focus on the principal management issues</p>
Identify and describe recreation opportunity classes or zones	<p>Identify opportunity classes for the natural resources</p> <p>describe different conditions to be maintained</p>	<p>Developing classes provides a way of defining a range of diverse conditions within the protected area</p>
Select indicators of resource and social conditions	<p>Indicators are specific elements of the resource or social setting selected to be indicative of the conditions deemed appropriate and acceptable in each opportunity class.</p> <p>select a few indicators as indicative measures of overall health</p> <p>use economic, social, environmental, political indicators</p> <p>ensure indicators are easy to measure, relate to conditions in opportunity classes and reflect change in recreational use</p>	<p>Indicators are essential to LAC because their condition as a group reflects the overall condition of the opportunity class and guides the inventory.</p>

Inventory existing social resource and conditions	<p>Use chosen indicators to guide the inventory of resource and social conditions</p> <p>use inventory data to provide a better understanding of area constraints and opportunities</p> <p>map inventories to establish status (location and conditions) of indicators</p>	<p>Inventory data are mapped so both the condition and location of the indicators are known. Helps managers establish realistic standards, and used later to evaluate the consequences of alternatives.</p>
Specify standards for resource and social conditions for each opportunity class	<p>Identify the range of conditions for each indicator considered desirable or acceptable for each opportunity class</p> <p>define conditions in measurable terms, to represent the maximum permissible conditions allowed (limits)</p> <p>ensure conditions are attainable and realistic</p>	<p>Provides the basis for establishing a distinctive and diverse range of protected area settings, serving to define the <i>limits of acceptable change</i></p>
Identify alternative opportunity class locations	<p>Identify different types/ location/ timing of alternatives, using steps 1 and 4 to explore how well the different opportunity classes meet the various interests and values</p>	<p>Provide alternative ways of managing the area to best meet the needs, interests and concerns</p>
Identify management location for each alternative	<p>Analyse broad costs and benefits of each alternative</p> <p>identify the kinds of management actions</p>	<p>This steps involves an analysis of the costs and benefits of each alternative</p>

	needed to achieve the desired conditions (direct or indirect)	
Evaluation and protection of a preferred alternative	<p>Review costs vs. benefits of alternatives with managers, stakeholders and public</p> <p>examine the responsiveness of each alternative issues</p> <p>explicitly state the factors considered, and their weight in decision-making</p> <p>select a preferred alternative</p>	Builds consensus and selects the best alternative.
Implement actions and monitor conditions	<p>Develop implementation plan with actions, costs, timetable and responsibilities</p> <p>develop a monitoring programme, focusing on the indicators developed in step 3</p> <p>compare indicator conditions with the standards to evaluate the success of actions</p>	Ensures timely implementation and adjustment of management strategies. Monitoring ensures that effectiveness of implementation is known. If monitoring shows problems, actions can be taken.

(source: UNEP, 1998)

1.2.3. Supply components of mountain tourism products and their interrelationship

There are 5 major components of tourism supply, i.e. attractions, transportation, intermediaries, destination and activities.

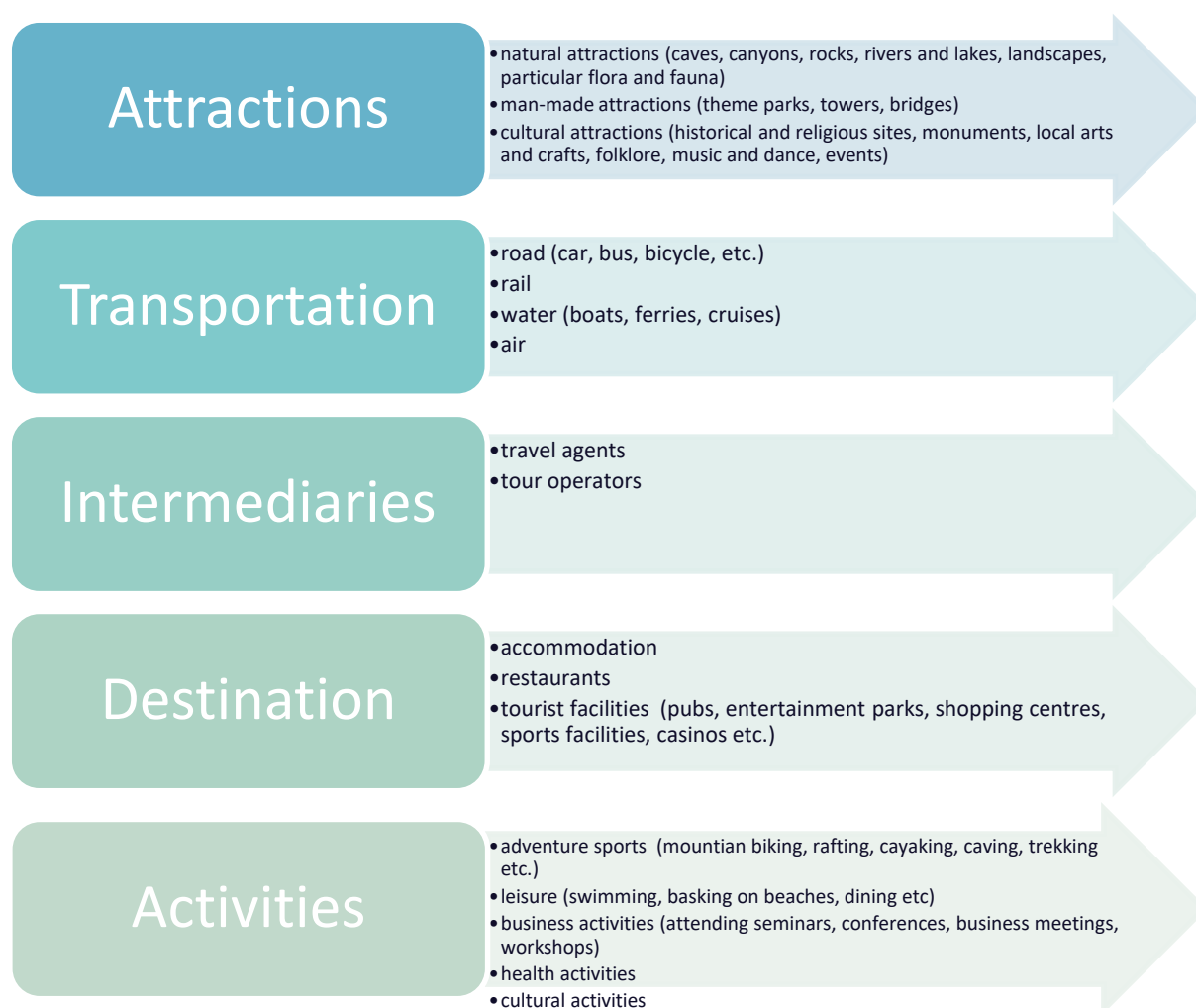


Figure 2 The 5 major components of tourism supply

Nature walks, hiking and camping

Among the low-impact mountain-based tourism products there are nature walks, hiking and camping, where visitors trekking and hiking can meet several habitat types and species during one single trip. Still, in the case of large number of tourists, these seemingly low-impact activities may affect ecosystems and species. That is why, it is highly recommended to use only established tracks and sites whenever possible when choosing routes and campsites and avoid highly sensitive areas (breeding grounds) and open fires. Also, the number of visitors per guide should not exceed 15 persons, to provide a better experience, decrease impacts and make groups more manageable (Charters & Saxon, 2007).

Other outdoor activities in the mountainous area include cycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, canyoneering, rock climbing, hand gliding and caving, which have a greater environmental impact due to use of equipment to sensitive mountain landscape. Thus is why it is highly important to follow good practices in conducting and managing adventure activities, ensuring sustainable use of the areas.

Fresh water based recreational activities

Mountain water bodies, including rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps etc., are the source of clean water for the local communities, and, at the same time, the supporting ground for several tourism activities that provide tourists new experiences, such as river tours, canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, kite surfing, kayaking, rafting or fishing. Since the use of motorized and non-motorized watercraft has several negative impacts - erosion of riverbanks, collision with wildlife, spill of chemicals, oil and fuels, it is highly necessary to follow the guidelines for a preservation and management of freshwater bodies: avoid sensitive sites when anchoring and choosing sites to come ashore, encourage sustainable fishing practices, use only clean watercraft and equipment, avoid disposing the wastewater, sewage, trash into the water and keep the number of non-motorized watercraft to 8 or less and the number of customers per guide to 15 or less (Charters & Saxon, 2007).

Snow-dependent recreational activities

Snow-dependant activities include skiing, snowboarding, sledding or just snow walking which generally imply artificially created sloped and associated infrastructure which impact on the fragile ecosystems.

Cultural activities

Ever more tourists are interested in interacting with the local people to experience elements of the local lifestyle, food and drinks, as well as visiting various cultural and historical sites, which are partially incorporated in tourism products. It is highly important that visitors receive information on local culture, customs and traditions and adopt a behaviour that respects the local community, while entrepreneurs use local suppliers and labour, are involved in community development and consult with local communities to avoid sensitive sites and share the existing infrastructure and resources.

1.2.4. Planning and management of sustainable tourism

"Policy-making, development planning and the management process need to be undertaken through a multi-stakeholder process. Governments will normally coordinate this process at national level. This process may also be undertaken at more local levels by local government, and should ensure strong involvement of indigenous and local communities throughout the management and decision-making process. In addition, those responsible for tourism development and activities are encouraged to consult with and involve all relevant stakeholders, and especially those who are or may be affected by such developments and activities. The process applies to both new tourism development and the management of the existing tourism operations".

To be sustainable, tourism development in any destination requires coordinated policy-making, development planning and management. The policymaking, development planning and management process comprises the following steps (SCBD, 2004):

- (a) Baseline information and review - Current economic, social and environmental conditions at national and local level; trends of tourism sector at international, national and regional level, culturally sensitive areas, tourism benefits for the local communities;
- (b) Vision and goals (in line with the Convention of Biological Diversity and the World Heritage Convention) should be developed at local level considering the local priorities as well as the national strategies, after consulting all stakeholders, including local communities;
- (c) Objectives;
- (d) Review of legislation and control measures;
- (e) Impact assessment – impact on nature (related to the use of land and resources for tourism infrastructure, damage to ecosystems and habitats, unsustainable use of flora and fauna by tourists, pollution etc.), the socio-economic and cultural impacts, as well as the potential benefits of tourism.
- (f) Impact management and mitigation;
- (g) Decision-making;
- (h) Implementation;
- (i) Monitoring and reporting – collecting a set of data on conservation of biodiversity, performance of tourism industry;
- (j) Adaptive management.

2. Facts and findings

The target area of the strategy consists of three counties in two countries – Mehedinți County and Caraș-Severin County in Romania and Bor District/County in Serbia. The counties in Romania are located in the south-western part of the country, while the Bor district/county is situated in eastern part of Serbia.



Figure 3 The Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți (RO) and Bor District (SER)- geographical location

The main cities of this area are Drobeta Turnu- Severin, Reșița, Caransebeș in Romania and Bor and Negotin in Serbia.

The small cities of the studied area are: Oțelu Roșu, Bocșa, Oravița, Anina, Moldova Nouă, Băile Herculane in Caraș-Severin and Baia de Aramă, Orșova, Strehaia, Vânu Mare in Mehedinți. In Bor there is also Majdanpek.

Total area of the cross-border region is 16.954 km².

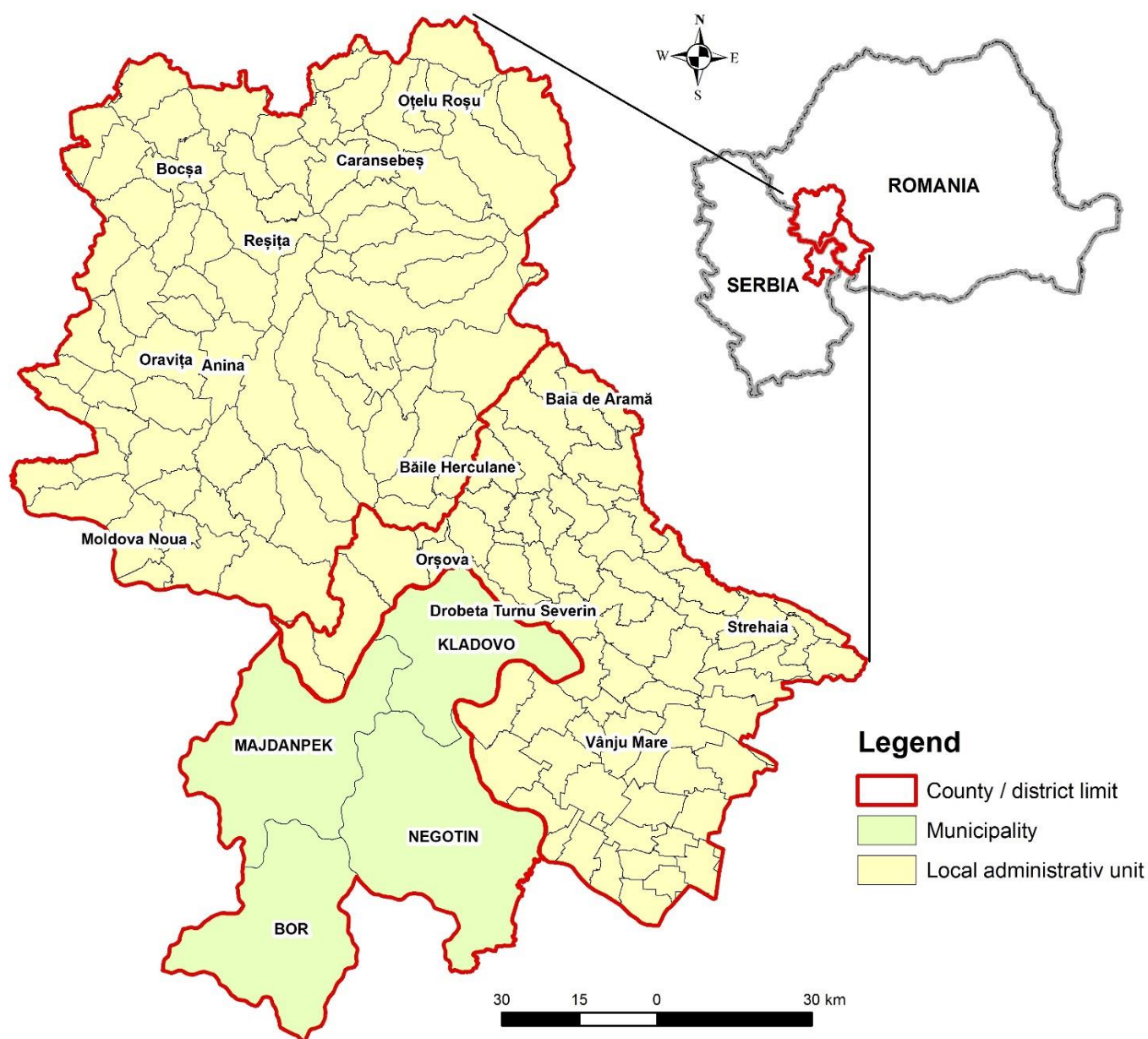


Figure 4 The Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți (RO) and Bor District (SER)- municipalities and local administrative units

The Danube River together with Carpathian Mountains form the Danube Gorge – Iron Gates area. Besides the mountain areas, the cross-border region has flat area in the western part of the region - West Plain, in the southern part -Timok valley and in the eastern part – Romanian Plain and Mehedinți plateau.

The study took into consideration only the settlements located above 500 m that are shown in the map below and include 41 administrative units in Caraș-Severin with a population of 205 414 inhabitants, 14 administrative units in Mehedinți with 24 302 inhabitants and 35 administrative units with 69 979 inhabitants in Bor.



Figure 5 The Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți (RO) and Bor District (SER)- local administrative units located above 500 m

2.1. Tourism Resources – characteristics

One of the main tourism resource in the area is represented by the relief that is shown as level of hypsometry in the map below.

The relief characteristics for each county are:

- Mehedinți county: the relief is formed of mountains, hills, plateaus and plains and it has the shape of a natural amphitheatre with steps. The area above 500 m includes 14 local administrative units highly dispersed at the level of Mehedinți, Semenic and Almăjului Mountains, and Mehedinți Plateau.

The highest peaks are in Mehedinți Mountains (1335 m), followed by medium altitudes in Mehedinți Plateau, Motrului Hills and Blahnița Plain, including Danube terraces and some depressions such as Baia de Arama, Comănești — Hălânga, as well as of some large valleys providing appropriate conditions to human settlements, including the highlands of the county.

- Caraș-Severin county: 67% of the county's surface are mountains including Banat Mountains (Semenic, Locvei, Almăjului), Poiana Ruscă and Southern Carpathians formed of Cernei, Godeanu, Tarcu Mountains. They include 41 local administrative units located above 500 m. The highest peaks range between 1447 m (Semenic) and 2192 m (Țarcu). In the western part there are the Western Hills and Plain.
- Bor: mountain areas are located in western part. Most of the area above 500 m is within mountains of Kucaj, Deli Jovan, Stol, Mali Krs, Veliki Krs, Crni vrh, Miroc, Tilva Njaga and Tilva Mika. The highest area of Bor County is located in Municipality of Bor, at 1.221 m above sea level. The mountain areas of Bor County have mostly karst components with rich rock formations, caves and valleys. Mountain settlements are rich in forests with dominant oak and beech forests.

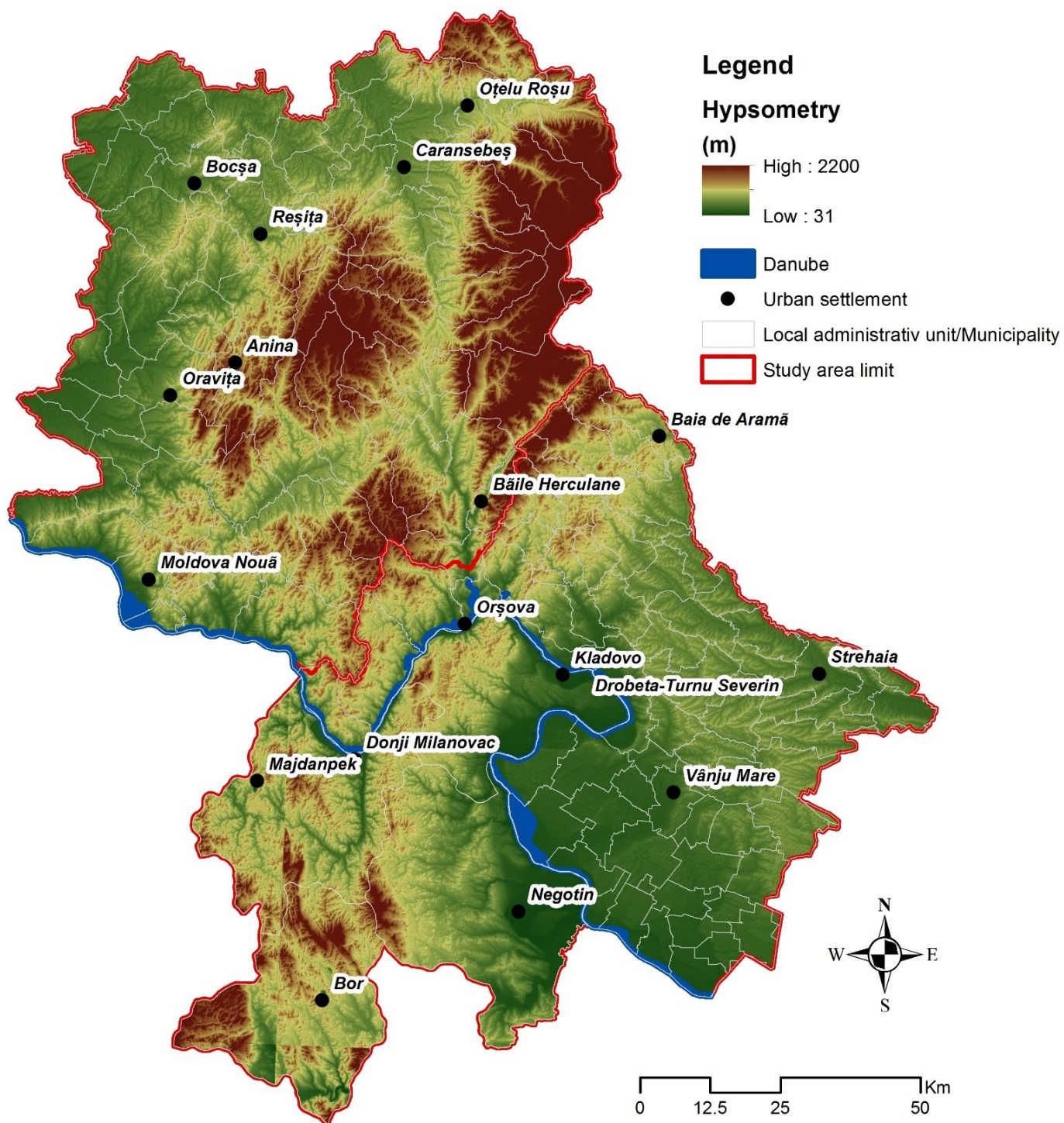


Figure 6 The levels of hypsometry of the Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caras-Severin and Mehedinți (RO) and Bor District (SER)

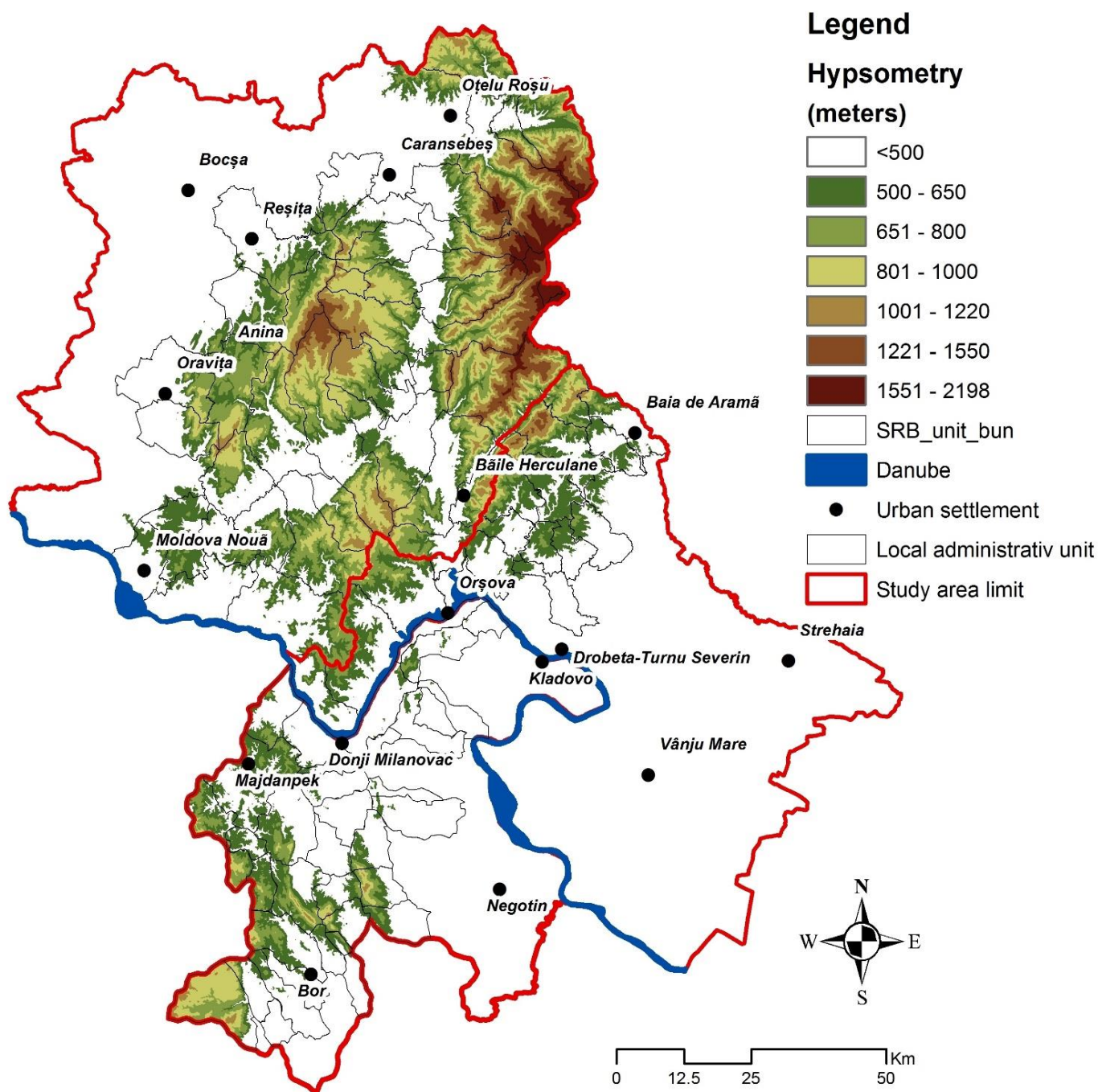


Figure 7 The areas located above 500 m of the Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caraş-Severin and Mehedinţi (RO) and Bor District (SER)

Table 2 Natural tourism resources in the cross-border area

Natural Resources	Mehedinți/Caraș-Severin	Bor
Protected areas: national/natural parks	5 National Parks: Cheile Nerei-Beușnița, Domogled-Valea Cernei, Semenic-Cheile Carașului Natural Parks: Mehedinți Plateau Park, Porțile de Fier	1 Djerdap National Park
Protected areas: reservations	15	9
Health tourism resources	Băile Herculane spa resort	Brestovačka banja spa
Nature trails and hiking areas	55 network of marked trails	29 Hiking trails, visitor centres
Biking paths	Organized biking tours and under development biking destinations	Eurovelo 6
Ski facilities	14	1



Figure 8 The national and natural parks in the Romanian-Serbian Cross-Border Area: Counties of Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți (RO) and Bor District (SER)

Table 3 The cultural heritage in the cross-border area

Man-made resources	Mehedinți	Caraș-Severin	Bor
Historical monuments	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pillar of Trajan's Bridge Decebal Statue The Medieval Citadel of Severin Tricule Fortress 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pojejena fort 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tabula Traiana Fetislam Fortress
Archaeological vestiges	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The medieval Fortress of Severin The Roman Castrum in Drobeta 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roman castrum Arcidava-Văradia 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lepenski vir Diana Fortress
Museums	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Iron Gates Museum The Art Museum 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum of Esthetic Mineralogy Constantin Gruescu-Ocna de Fier The Locomotives Museum-Resita History of Mountain Pharmacy Museum-Oravița 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stevan Mokranjc Museum-Negotin Hajduk Veljko Museum-Negotin
Cultural institutions/monuments		1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Oravita Theatre 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brestovačka banja
Monasteries/churches	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topolnita Monastery Grecescu Church The Romano-Catholic Church St. Ana Monastery Vodita Monastery Strehaia Monastery 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Oravita church The Berzasca church 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bukovo Monastery
Others		3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The railway of Oravita-Anina The water mills-Rudaria-Eftimie Murgu Biniș Village-ceramics 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoo Bor Rajac and Rogljevo stone houses/ wine cellars-Negotin

It can be observed that the Carpathians in the target area as tourism entity does not have a unifying offer or product as other mountains in Europe have (e.g. the Alps).

Although the mountain tourism is important in all the counties, the tourism offer is currently rather limited. The mountain range offers sufficient beds for domestic and international tourists, but the intra-regional connections, especially flights are rare, although the air-transport infrastructure is available (especially 3 international airports in the proximity).

The Carpathians play a crucial role in the positioning of Romania, while in Serbia, they are among the must see destinations.

Regarding the mountain tourism product, we can summarize the following:

- Skiing in several slopes of the Romanian area is possible with new developments and with low involvement of sustainable skiing (safety issues, code of ethics and educational programs) at the moment
- Rural tourism is a basic product of the mountain regions presenting the authentic culture and the agriculture of the village life as a tourist product. It assures economic benefits in the mountain regions, and connected to gastronomy, local food, sustainable agriculture represents an important development issue
- Local gastronomy, the so called The Slow Movement is becoming more known in almost every country and it is based on Carpathian gastronomy thematic road (Carpathian Culinary Heritage Network) that wants to improve and label the gastronomy of the countries, especially in Romania
- The cultural heritage of the area is very rich, with heritage sites and useful information on several websites, but the thematic Carpathian-wide trails are missing, though there are new initiatives like the Carpathian Tourist Road, including also Romania
- Geotourism is one of the most important alternatives in the mountain areas, with several, diversified activities. Although the quality of the infrastructure, and the available information is varied, it is important to prioritize hiking, biking (or horse riding) paths, develop and maintain them.
- Adventure tourism is a suitable product to attract young, high spending travellers.
- Ecotourism is particularly interesting in and around protected areas, where visitor centres, educational paths, as well as local services such as guiding, accommodation, horse-riding, bike rentals, etc. are developed, though there is a lack of information, maps, prices, programs. Romania is currently implementing the concept of ecotourism destination based on an evaluation method of the whole destination, according to national criteria developed according to global and European standards GSTC and EETLS. In Serbia the national parks make great efforts to develop educational trails, visitor centres, though the average quality of the hiking and biking paths varies a lot, as well as the information given about them are diffused. The ecotourism destinations in Europe should have according to UNEP-Conservation International Tourism and

Mountains: A Practical Guide to Managing the Environmental and Social Impacts of Mountain Tours:

- A protected area associated with the destination;
 - A critical mass of local ecotourism businesses;
 - A sustainability plan under implementation, in developing ecotourism;
 - Nature and local culture as the main ingredients in product development and marketing;
 - Active participation of local communities, empowered through education and awareness raising, based on shared values.
- Health tourism is an important issue due to the thermal springs presence
 - Leisure tourism in a more general meaning, i.e. resting, recreation and relaxation in the mountains, built on clean and fresh air, tranquillity, etc. can also be mentioned since especially in low seasons this form of tourism can provide an additional way of attracting tourists.

2.2. Tourism specific infrastructure in the cross-border area

Currently, according to the official statistical data, there are more than 220 accommodation units within the mountainous area (exceeding 500 m altitude). Almost three quarters of them are located within Caras-Severin county, since it is the largest county and mountains cover much of it, while Mehedinti and Bor counties have much lower number. Out of the total of 226 accommodation facilities, 93 are rural households and another 93 B&B structures, most of them family-owned business, which is a good thing for the local communities.

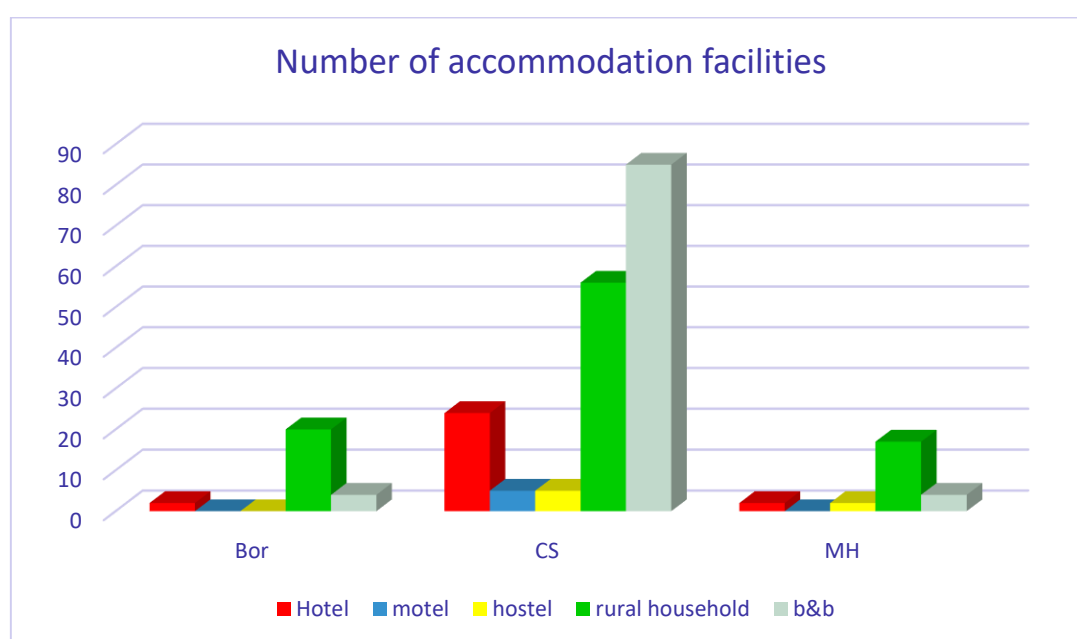


Figure 9 The number of accommodation facilities in Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți and Bor, 2016

Still, hotels have the greatest accommodation capacity in the target area, accounting for more than half of the number of beds, followed by the B&B structures and rural households. It is

worth noticing the fact that Caraş-Severin has the most diverse accommodation infrastructure, since in Bor there are no hostels or motels, and just two hostels in Mehedinţi.

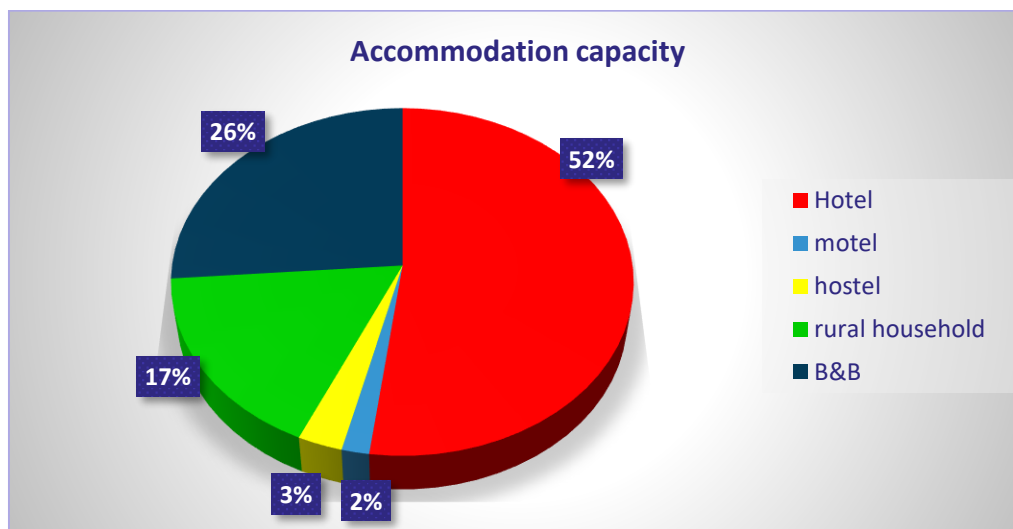


Figure 10 The accommodation capacity in Caraş-Severin, Mehedinţi and Bor, 2016

At county level, Caras Severin has the largest accommodation capacity, with almost 8,000 beds out of the 9148 bed places within the target area. Half of them are in hotels, followed by B&B structures. In Mehedinţi county, rural households have the largest accommodation capacity.

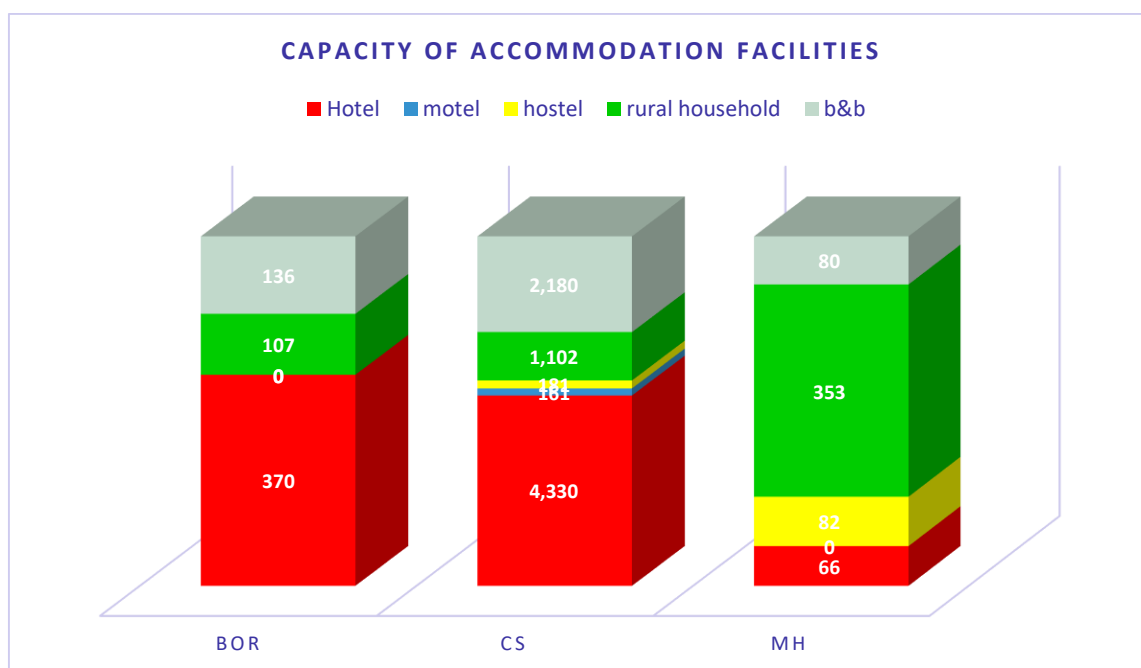


Figure 11 The capacity of accommodation facilities in Caraş-Severin, Mehedinţi and Bor, 2016

Thus accommodation facilities have diversified and multiplied continuously during the last 20 years within the target area.

2.3. Tourism flows in the cross-border area

The tourist flows multiplied continuously during the last 20 years within the target area. Currently, according to the official statistical data, there are more than 340,000 arrivals within the mountainous area (exceeding 500 m altitude). More than half of them are within Caras-Severin county, since it is the largest county and mountains cover much of it, while Mehedinți and Bor counties have much lower number (70,000-90,000).

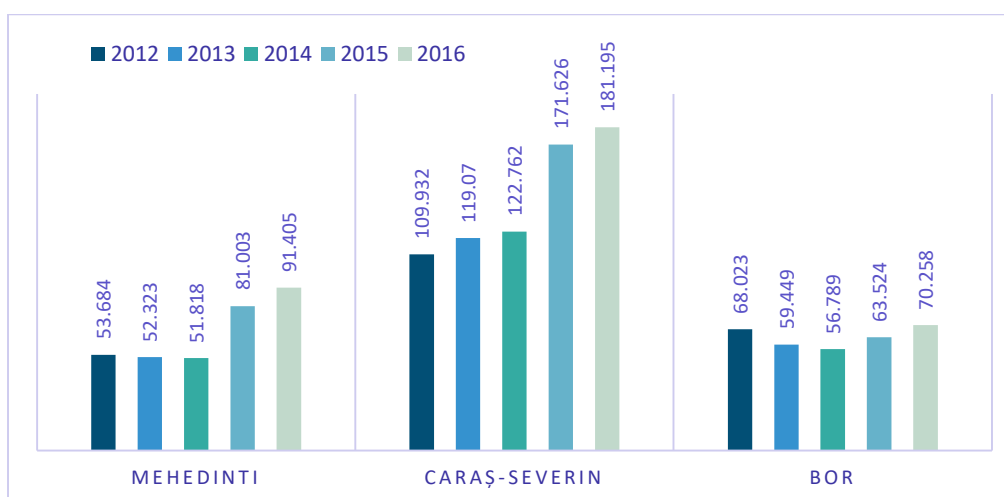


Figure 12 The tourist arrivals (total) in Mehedinți, Caras-Severin and Bor in the 2012-2016 period

Also according to the official statistical data, there are more than 1,000,000 overnights within the mountainous area (localities above 500 m altitude). More than half of them are within Caras-Severin county, while Mehedinți and Bor counties have much lower number (200,000-164,000).

The dynamics of the analysed period (2012-2016) show an upward trend for both indicators.

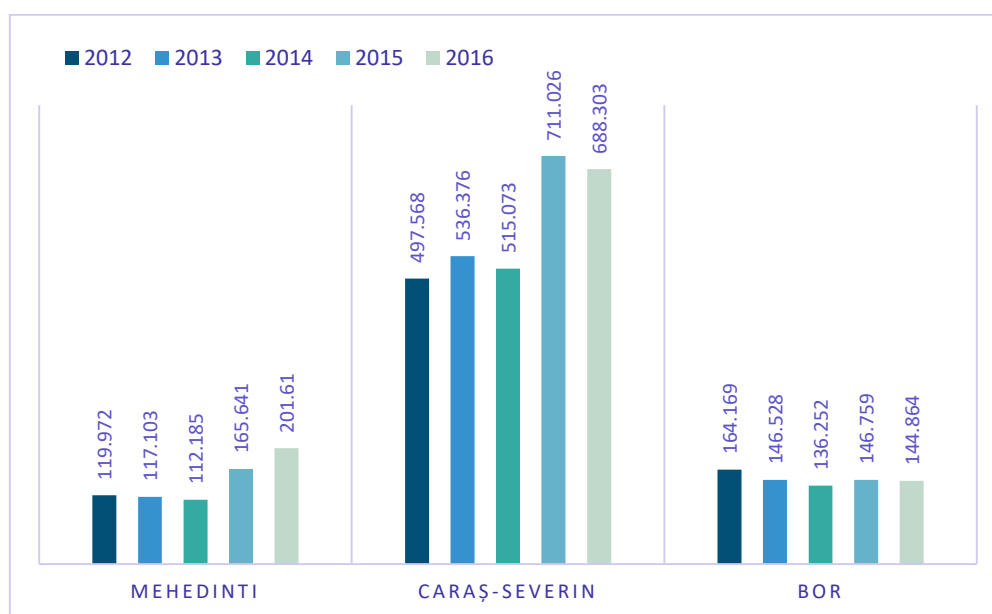


Figure 13 The tourist overnights (total) in Mehedinți, Caras-Severin and Bor in the 2012-2016 period

For both indicators, arrivals and overnight stays, the major tourist flows are the domestic ones, with more than 90% of the total tourist number, again Caraş-Severin recording the highest values.

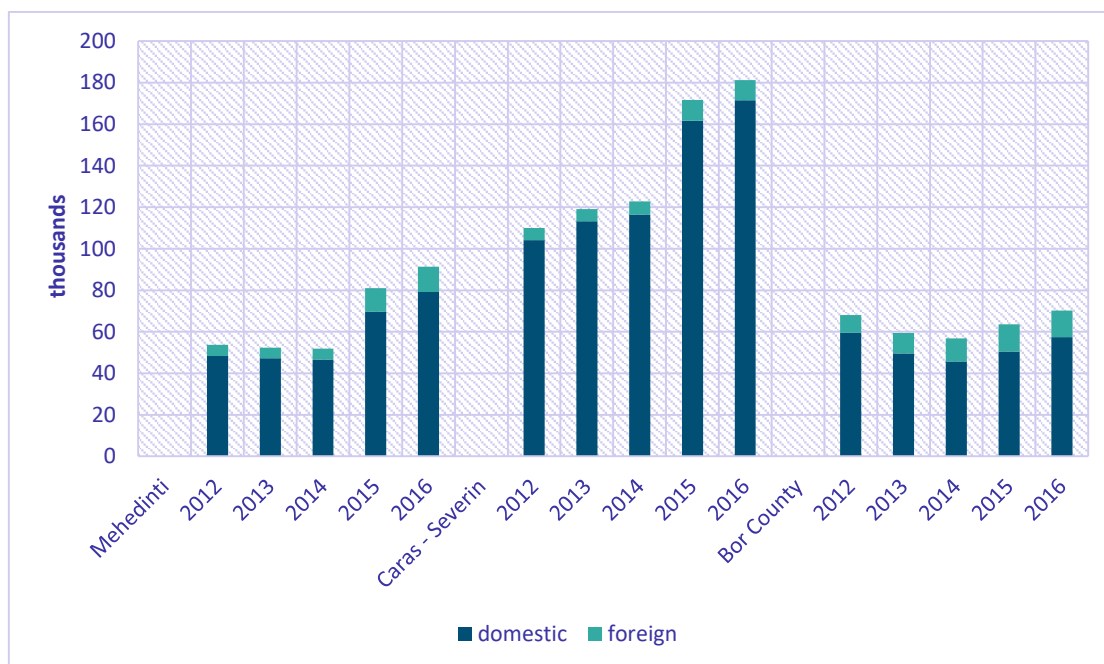


Figure 14 The domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in Mehedinţi, Caraş-Severin and Bor in the 2012-2016 period

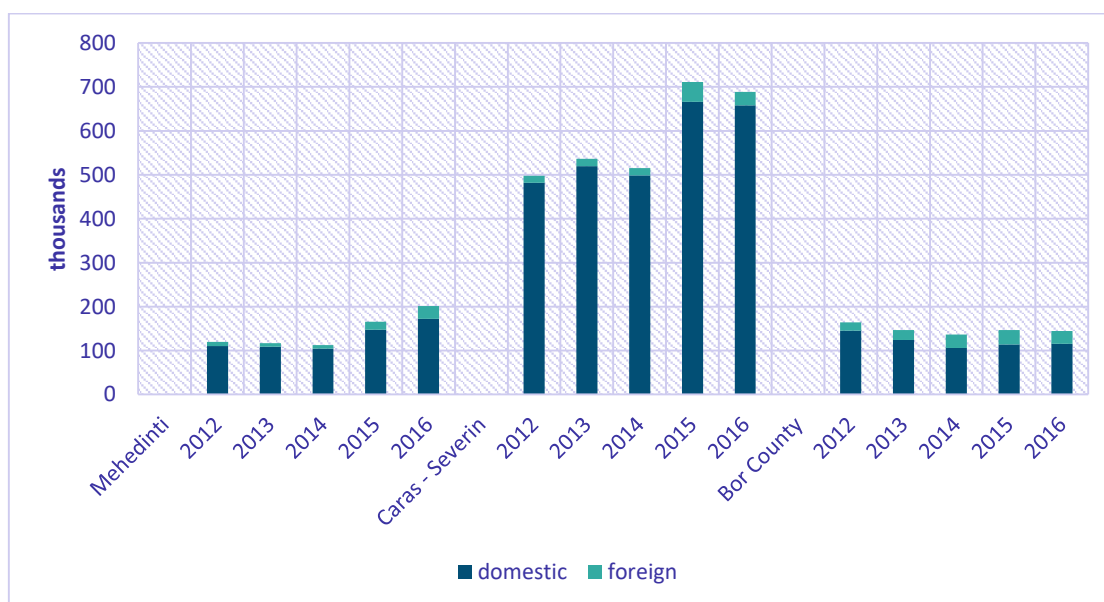


Figure 15 The domestic and foreign tourist overnights in Mehedinţi, Caraş-Severin and Bor in the 2012-2016 period

The analysis on 2016 shows that the Caraş-Severin records the highest values for both indicators. There is also observed the low values of foreigners for the three target areas for the two indicators, arrivals and overnight stays.

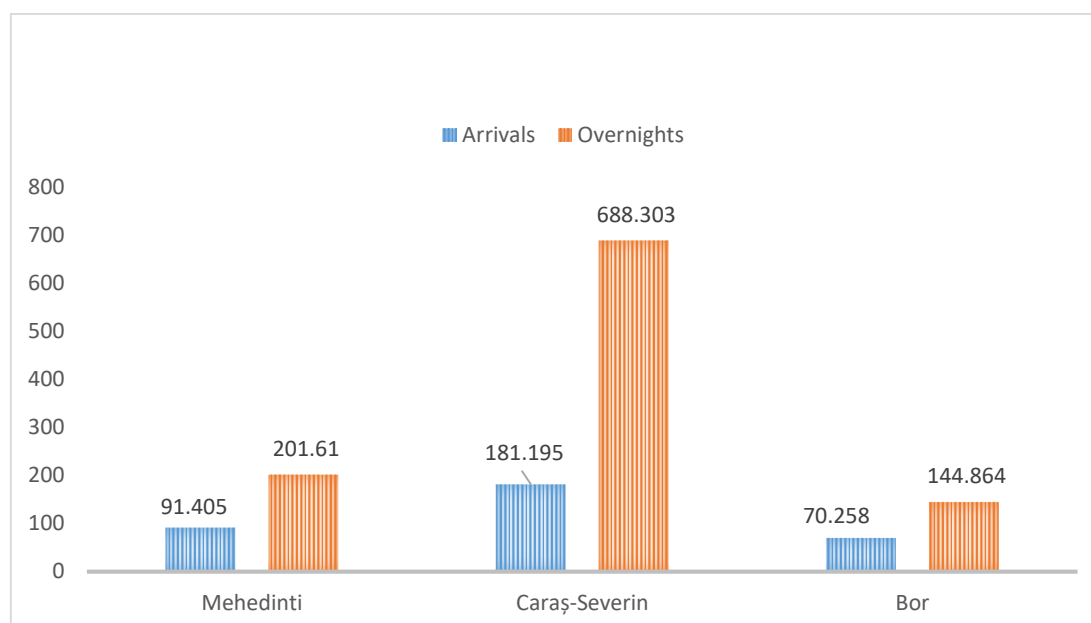


Figure 16 The arrivals and overnights dynamics (total) in Mehedinți, Caraș-Severin and Bor (2016)

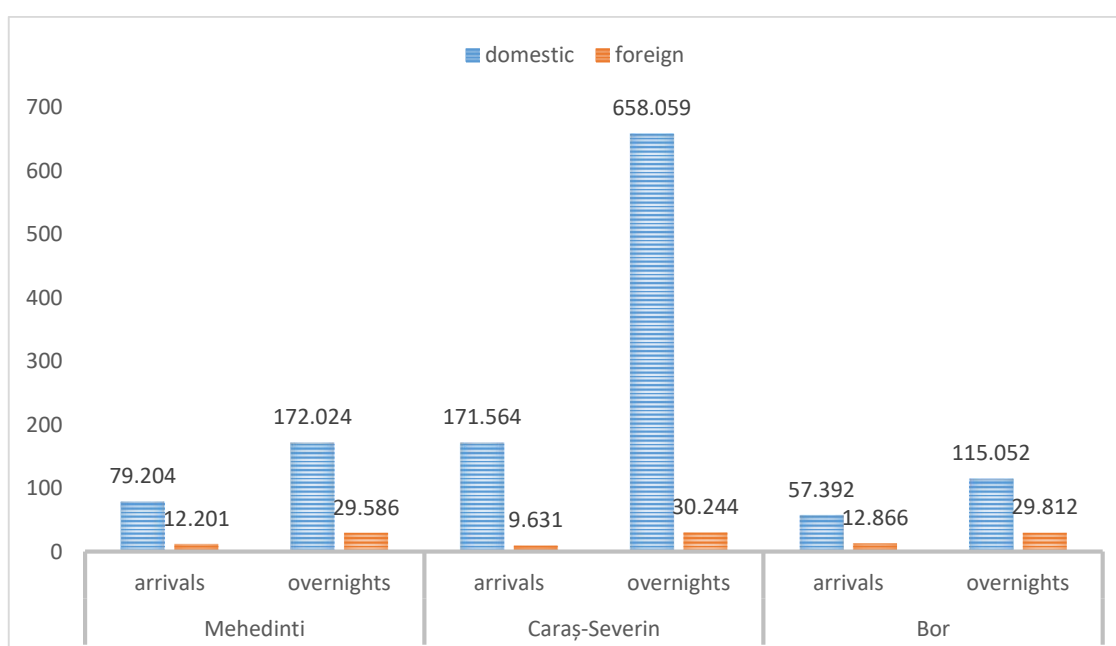


Figure 17 The arrivals and overnights dynamics (domestic and foreign) in Mehedinți, Caraș-Severin and Bor (2016)

2.4. Results of the Stakeholder Consultation

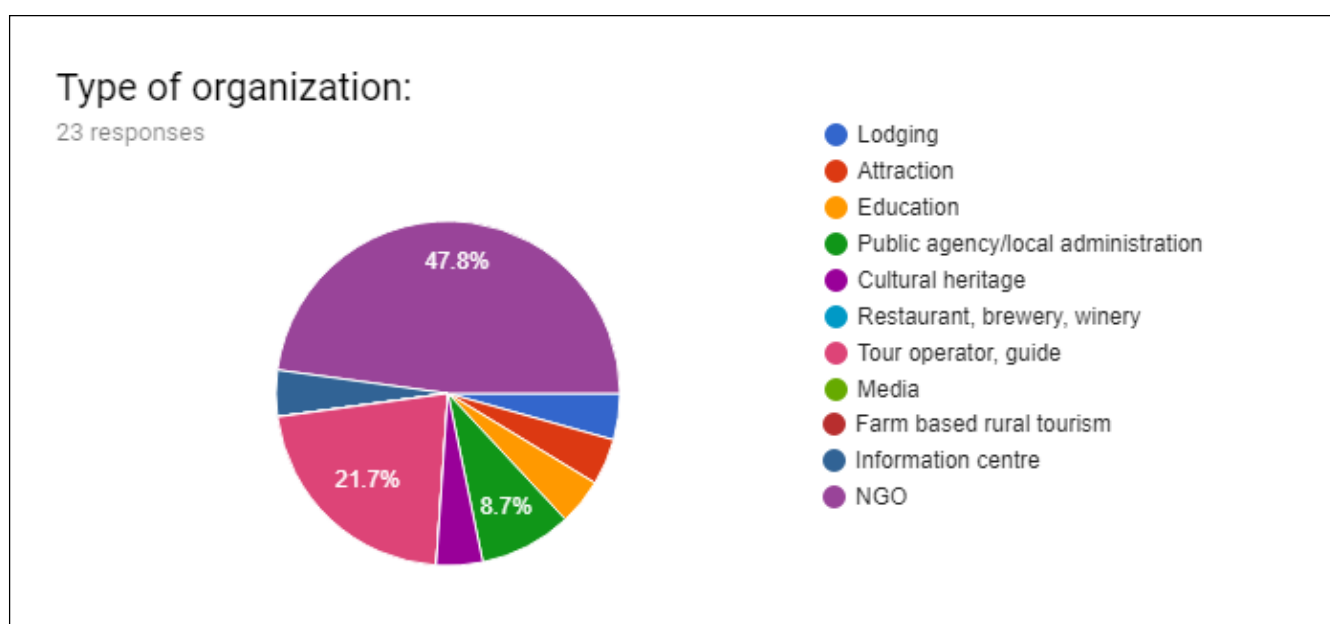
In order to include and assess the opinion of the stakeholders concerning the target area potential and future development of mountain tourism, a focus group was conducted with 23 participants from tourism industry both from Romania and Serbia (NGOs, tour operators, public agencies and local administrations). The attendees had to respond to several questions related to the **views about tourism in the cross-border area** and to **destination**

development and management. These were followed by discussions and their responses were quantified and analysed showing some relevant conclusions that are presented below.

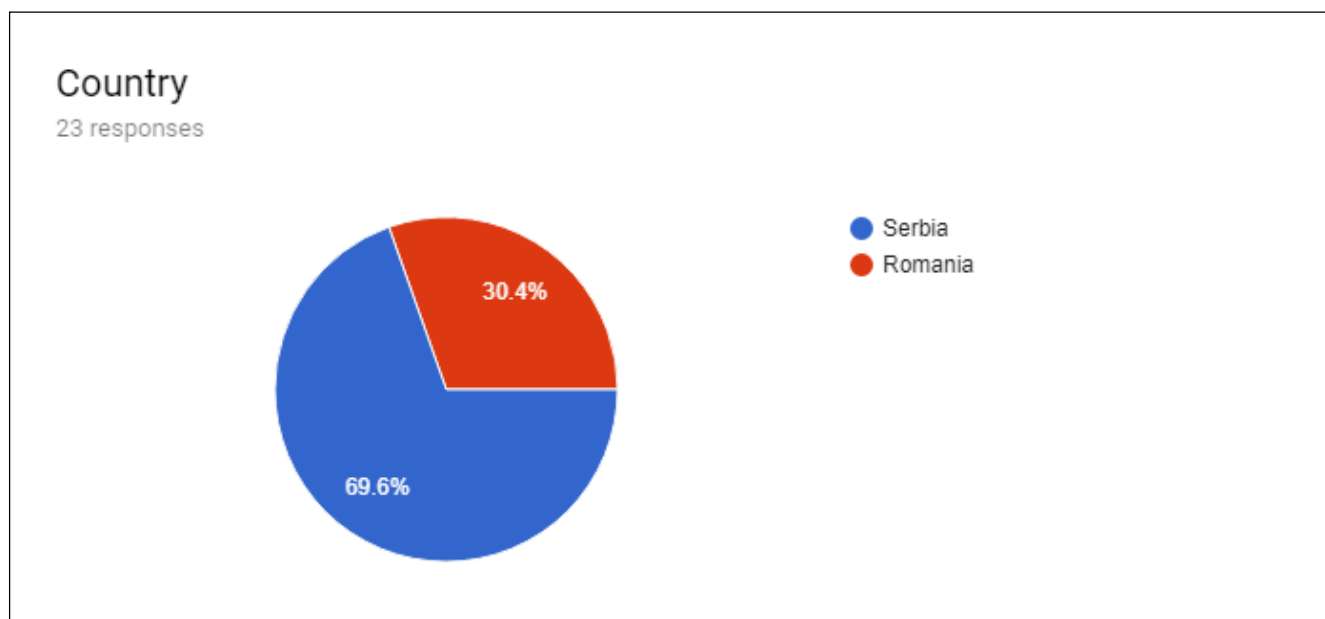
Background information of stakeholders

Type of organization

Almost half (48%) of the respondents are NGO, a fifth tour operators and guides, while representatives of public agency, local administration, cultural heritage sites or information centers are less numerous.



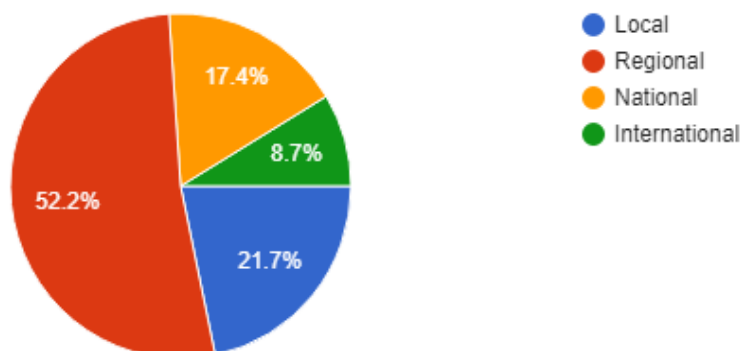
Country: Most of the respondents are from Serbia, only 30% being Romanian.



Most of the respondents' institutions work at a regional level for the tourism industry (52%), while other 22% at local level, which implies a thorough knowledge of the situation of the cross-border area and potential for future development.

At which level does your institution work for the tourism industry?

23 responses



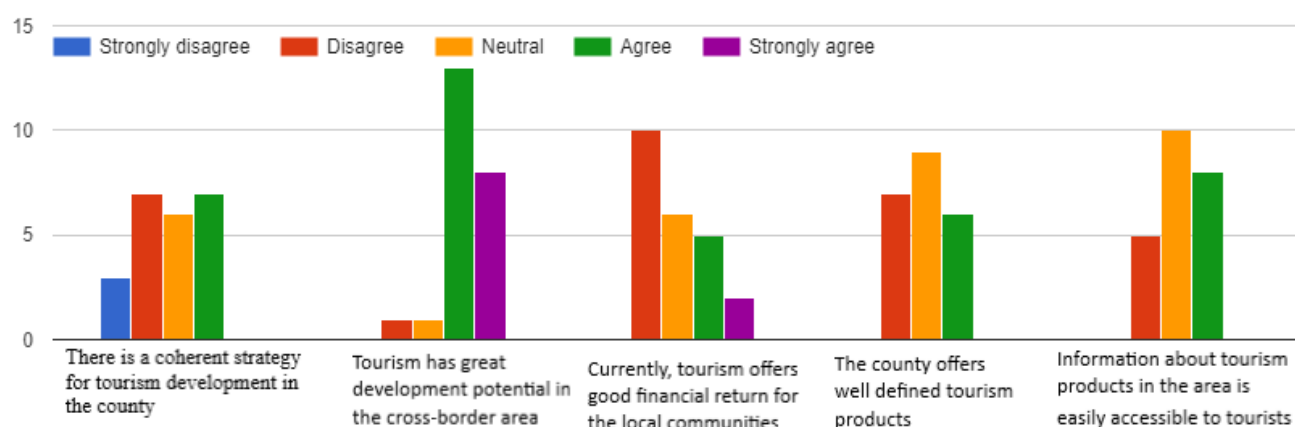
How long have you been working in the tourism/ hospitality sector?

Most of the respondents' institutions worked:

- Minimum 3 years
- Max. 40 years
- Average: **14 years**

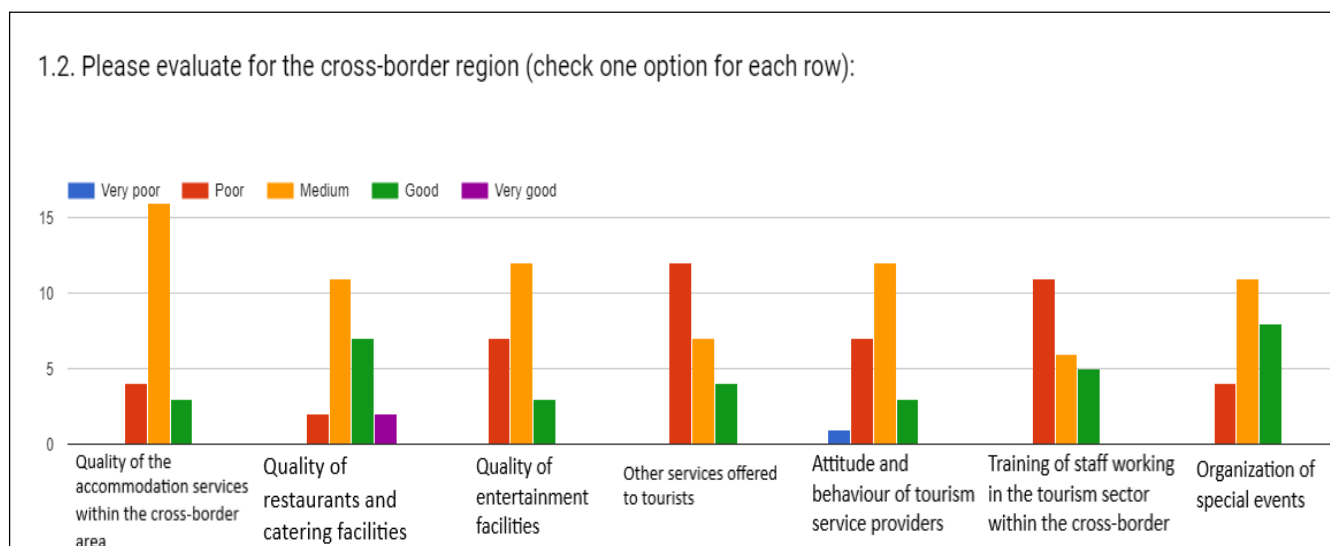
Views about tourism in the cross-border area

1.1. Please consider each statement and circle the answer that best represents your level of agreement with the statement:

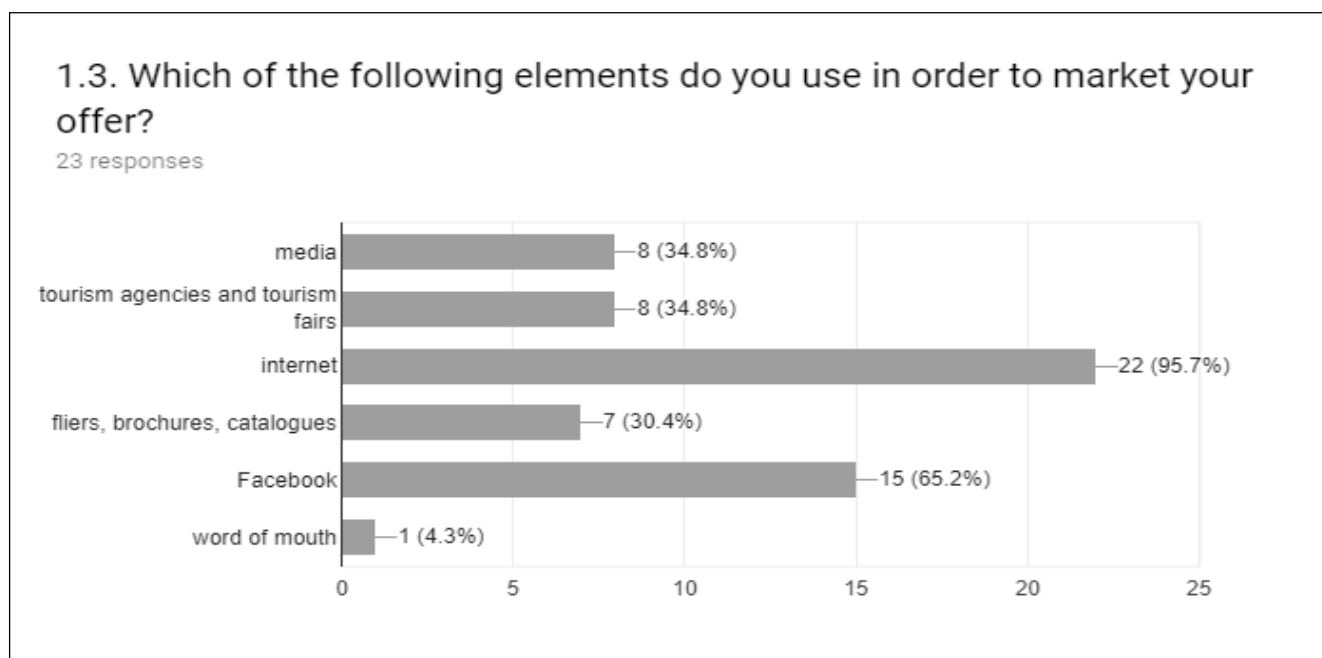


Almost all respondents seem to agree that there is no coherent strategy for tourism development in the analyzed area and poor financial return for the local communities, despite the great potential of the cross-border area.

In terms of the tourism offer of the cross-border region, the quality of the accommodation services, restaurants and catering facilities and entertainment facilities is considered as medium by most of the respondents, as well as the attitude and behavior of tourism service providers and capacity for organizing special events. Moreover, the majority of the surveyed persons consider that the training of the staff working in the tourism sector is rather poor.

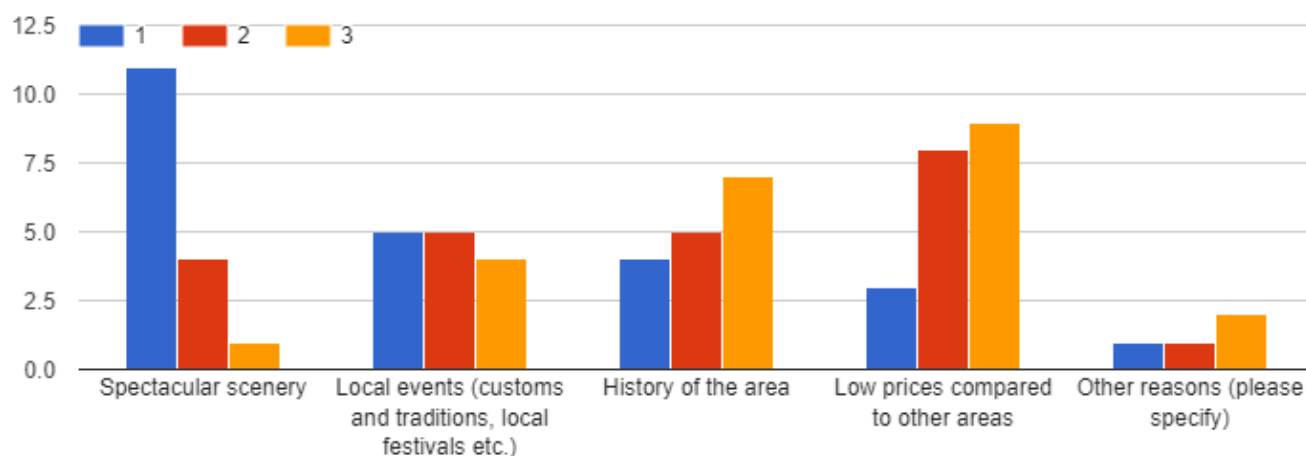


The current survey indicates that the internet and social media (mainly Facebook) are the elements that they use most for promoting their offer (96% of them use the internet for promotion and 65% social media), while only 35% use media and tourism agencies or fairs.



The main reasons for tourists that choose to visit the cross-border area are spectacular scenery, low price and history of the area.

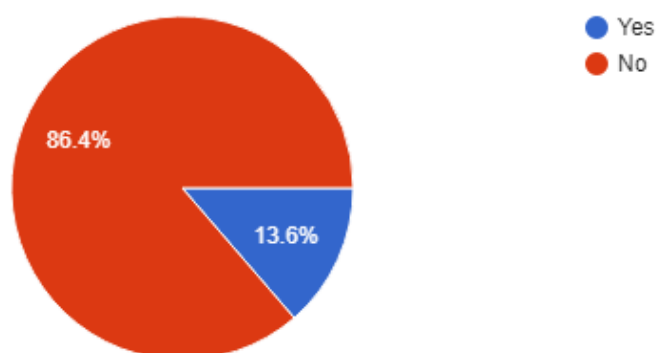
1.4. What are the main 3 reasons for which tourists choose to visit the cross-border area? (check only 3 options in order of priority)



Still, despite the great potential, most respondents (86%) agree that tourism resources in the area are not properly capitalized at present.

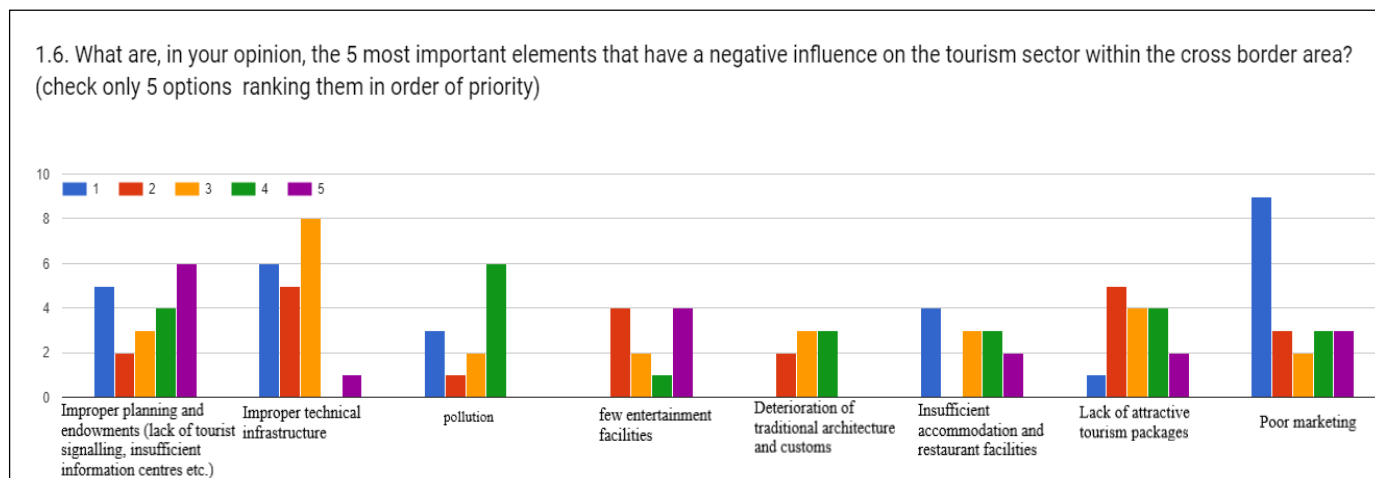
1.5. Do you think the tourism resources in the cross-border area are properly capitalized at present?

22 responses



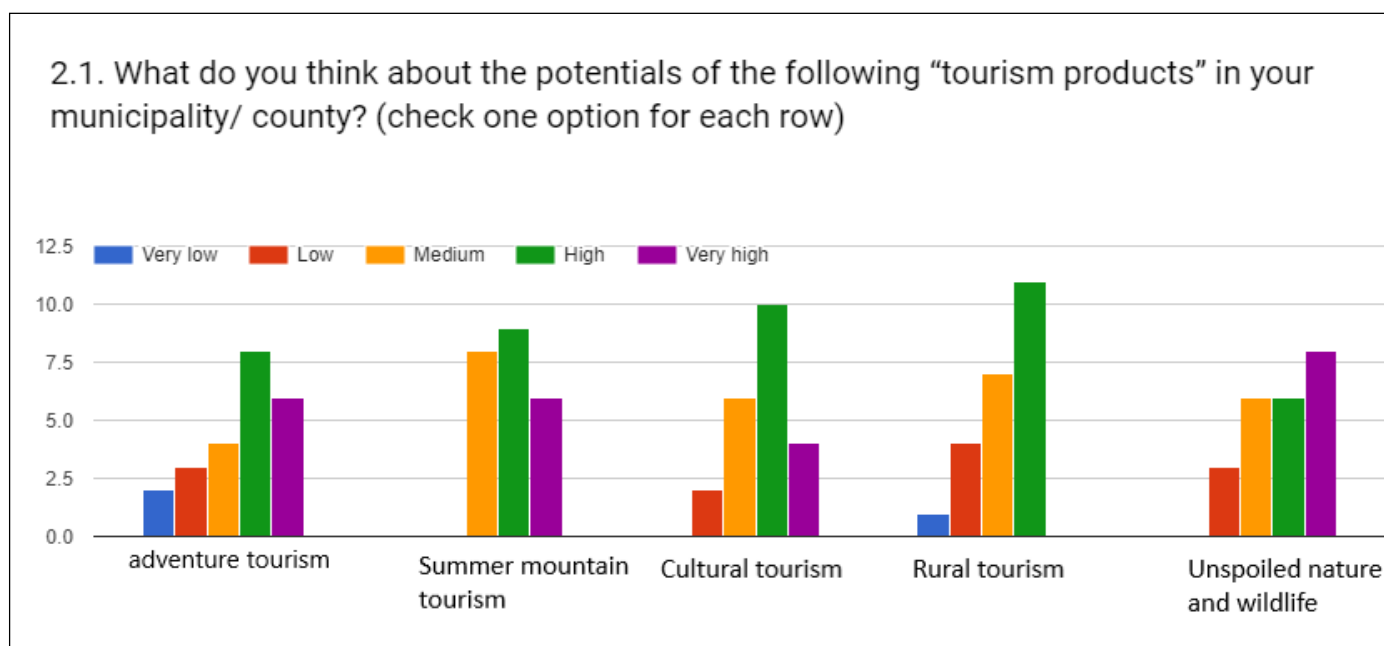
In terms of the 5 most important elements that have a negative influence on the tourism sector within the cross border area, the respondents considered that the improper planning and endowments, poor marketing and the lack of attractive tourism packages are by far the elements hindering the development of tourism sector within the

cross-border area, together with the improper technical infrastructure (poor road conditions, bridges etc.) and lack of sufficient and diversified entertainment facilities.



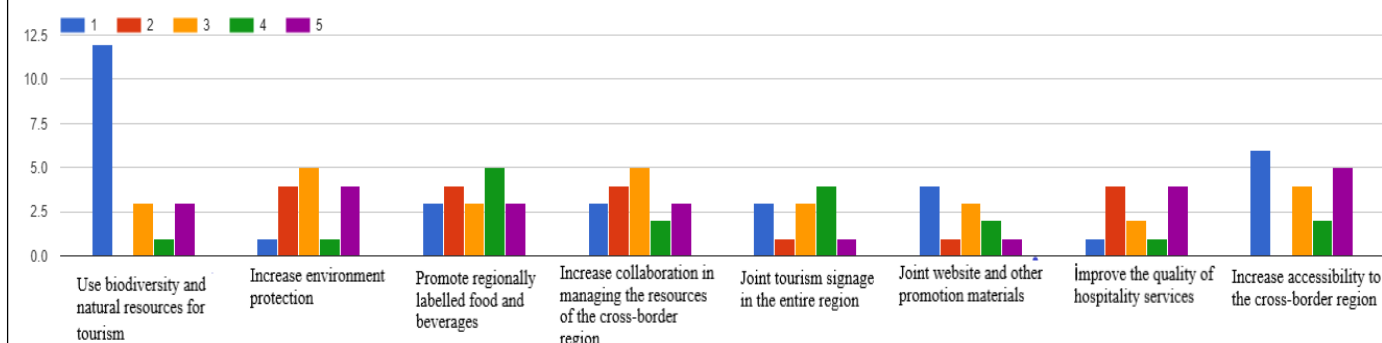
Destination development and management

The data from the survey indicate that stakeholders within the cross-border area consider that adventure tourism, unspoiled nature and wildlife and cultural tourism have the best potential for development in the target area.



Regarding the 5 most important activities to be undertaken in order to capitalize the resources in the cross border area, by far, the use of biodiversity and natural resources for tourism is the most important activity to be undertaken for proper resources capitalization, followed by increased accessibility to the cross-border area, increase collaboration in managing the resources of the cross-border region, increase environment protection, promote regionally labelled food and beverages.

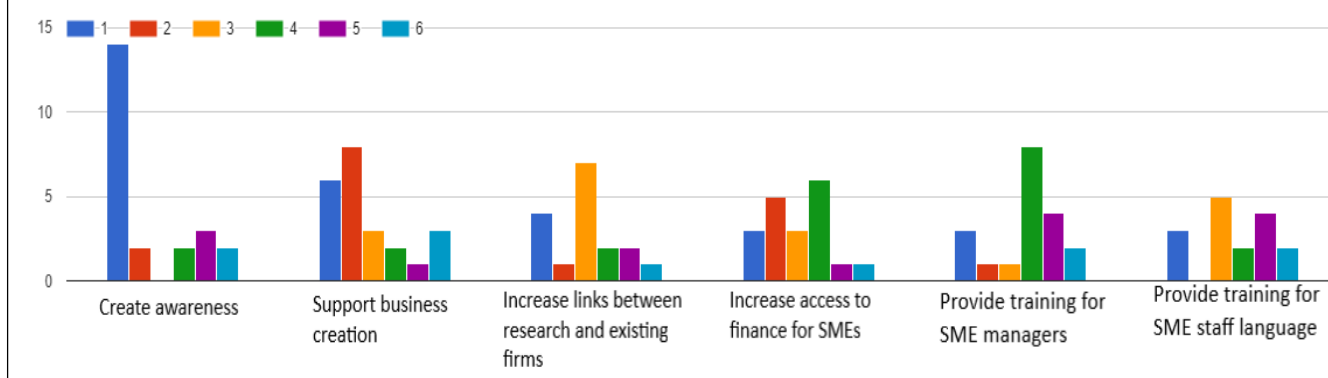
2.2. What are in your opinion the 5 most important activities to be undertaken in order to capitalize the resources in the cross border area? (check only 5 options ranking them in order of priority)



At the question **What are in your opinion the 6 most important activities to be undertaken in order to capitalize the potentials?**, the answers showed the following ranking:

1. Create awareness amongst the young, highly skilled and talented about entrepreneurial opportunities in the cross-border region
2. Provide training for SME managers
3. Increase links between research and existing firm
4. Support business creation by young, highly skilled and talented
5. Increase access to finance for SMEs

2.3. What are in your opinion the 6 most important activities in order of priority to be undertaken in order to capitalize the potentials? (check one option for each row)

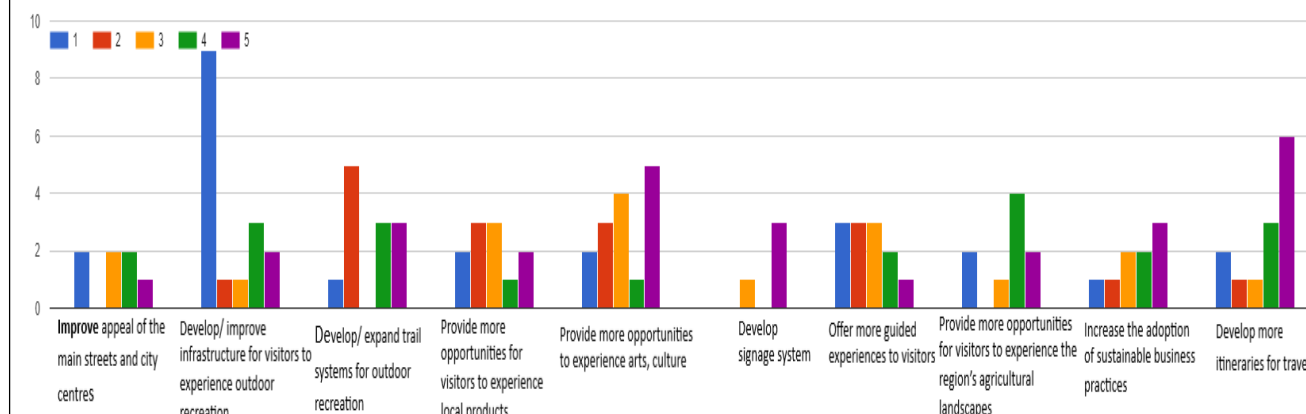


At the questions **Thinking from the perspective of your organization, please indicate how you would prioritize the following tactical product opportunities to advance the economic impact of tourism and ensure the sustainability of the cross-border region over the next 3-5 years. The goal of your prioritization is to provide guidance on the**

regional marketing and management strategy, the actions were prioritized by the stakeholders as follows:

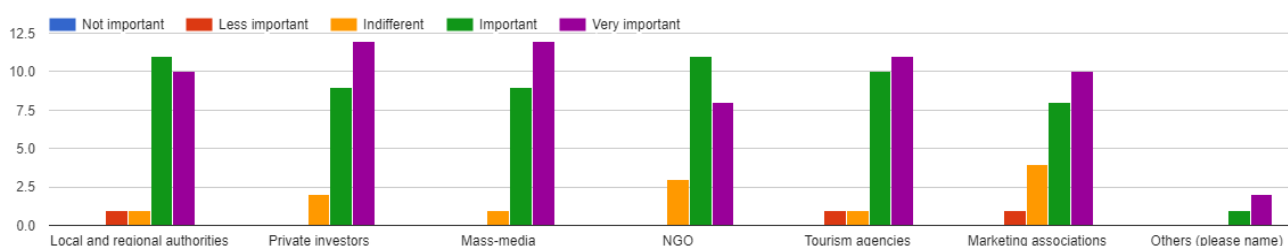
1. Develop/ improve infrastructure for visitors to experience outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism
2. Offer more guided experiences to visitors to the cross-border
3. Provide more opportunities for visitors to experience local products, arts, culture and heritage
4. Develop/ expand trail systems for outdoor recreation
5. Improve appeal of the main streets and city centers.

2.4. Thinking from the perspective of your organization, please indicate how you would prioritize the following tactical product opportunities to advance the economic impact of tourism and ensure the sustainability of the cross-border region over the next 3-5 years. (check only 5 options ranking them from 1 to 5)



At the question **How important do you think the role of the following organizations should be for the development of mountain tourism within the cross-border area?**, the answers were: the role of private investors, mass-media, tourism agencies and marketing associations is considered to be very important for the development of mountain tourism in the target area, the local and regional authorities as well as NGO having also an important role.

2.5. How important do you think the role of the following organizations should be for the development of mountain tourism within the cross-border area?



Challenges ahead

Communication and Coordination

- The cooperation of all the sectors stakeholders (administrative actors, business, non-governmental actors) can determine the future of the RO-SER cross-border area as an attractive sustainable tourism destination on the international tourism market. They have to plan, develop and manage activities in the region in a sustainable way and develop great travel experiences for tourists.
- Sustainable tourism is seen in the area as bringing benefits to the local communities and economies. The growing popularity of mountain areas can become a threat for the natural resources. The competitiveness of the sector is actually based on the sustainability of the resources. The challenge is represented by the coordination between the infrastructure development and tourist activities on one side and the ecosystems and local communities on the other side. There is needed actually a communication between all the involved stakeholders in terms of the responsible use of natural resources, taking account of the environmental impact of activities, protection of the heritage, the quality and sustainability of jobs created.

Common branding and product development

- Several tourism products including leisure activities such as hiking, skiing, bird watching etc. are developed and the stakeholders need to work together for common advantages.
- Common branding and products marketing of the Ro-SER cross-border area impose a challenge because the processes require permanent market survey and need a common joined forces.
- A common brand and products with the same tourist identity can create a better understanding of the assets and core values of the Carpathian area at cross-border. A proper branding can take place successfully only with the coordination and communication between stakeholders.
- A common standards policy regarding the accommodation, trails, hiking, skiing etc. require a close cooperation and can be a good system for the implementation of indicators and criteria that can be assessed and monitored in certain periods of time in order to increase the quality standards of tourism in the area. This assessment has to be done only within similar thresholds and quality standards.

3. Vision and objectives

Tourism is an economic activity which generates significant profit and the business environment proves to be very proactive when new tourism products appear. The study is establishing cross-border sustainable tourism products which will ensure long-lasting tourism activities, with minimized chances for the destruction of natural and cultural heritage of the area, thus diversifying the existing offer.

3.1. Vision

The mountains represent a main destination in the current urbanized world due to their landscapes and natural and cultural diversity, providing the chance to escape from the modern stressed life.

The LogFrame of the importance of such strategy for the sustainable mountain tourism implies some global tendencies of tourism market and also the travel motivations of tourists. All these things mentioned above plus the regulations of the target area, all the economic, social, cultural aspects of mountain tourism and the negative impacts of tourism chaotic development determine the real necessity of such strategy. This proposes proper sustainable mountain tourism products in accordance with the Masterplan of National Tourism Development in Romania and with all the strategies for development of local tourism in the RO-SER cross-border area.

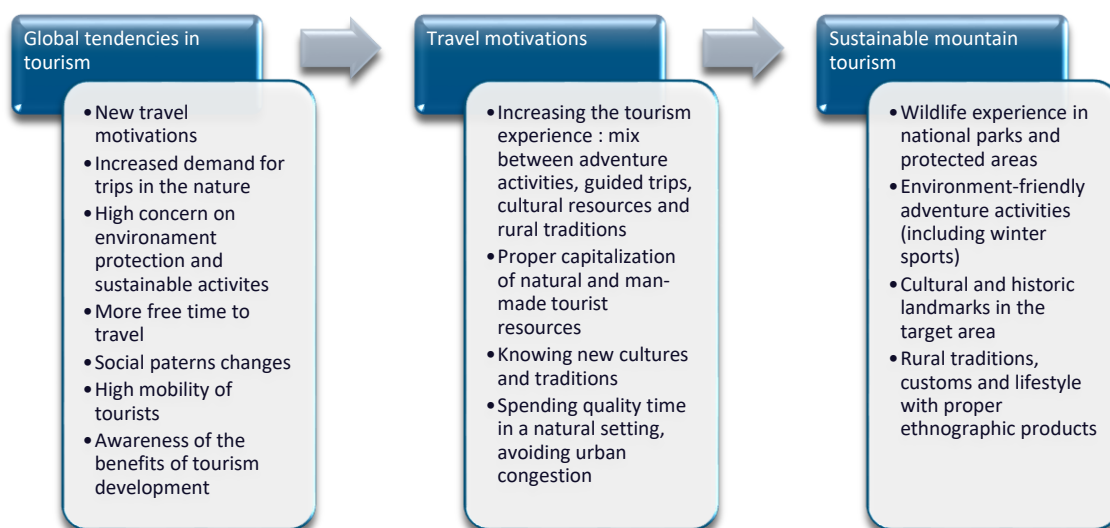


Figure 18 The necessity of a sustainable mountain tourism strategy in RO-SER cross-border area - LogFrame

Local tourism business, mainly the target groups: business sector dealing with tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area, public authority representatives, institutions and organizations operating in the field of environment and tourism, professionals dealing with

sustainable tourism and related sectors, inhabitants of the cross-border area with age between 20-59 years, has to be well prepared for upcoming sustainable tourism products and activities.

The *Study on the development of sustainable mountain tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area* is developed based on a set of priority domains which will contain specific objectives and strategic actions to be implemented. The main used methodology is summarized in the figure below:

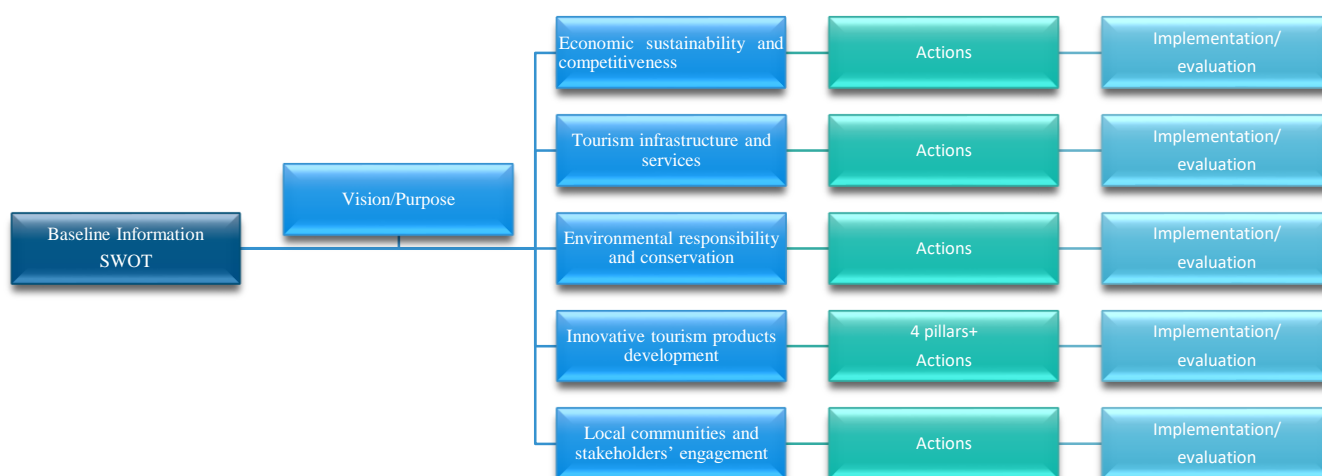


Figure 19 The methodology diagram elaborated for the strategic guidelines of the study

VISION

In 2030 the RO-SER cross-border area (Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți Counties in Romania and Bor district in Serbia) will be considered a unique mountain destination at national and cross-border level, providing long-lasting tourism products. These products are based on smart usage of natural and man-made heritage and engagement of stakeholders and local communities in tourism and environment sector.

3.2. Objectives

General objective

Applying strategic actions to develop sustainable mountain products in the RO-SER Carpathians cross-border area and its proximity in order to become competitive on the national and international tourism market.

Punctual objectives

- Successful implementation of at least two sustainable mountain tourism products recognized at national and cross-border level in the next 10 years
- Development of the mountain tourism infrastructure and general infrastructure in the target area
- The increase of tourism receipts of the local communities in the target area with at least 5% in the next 10 years
- Increase the overnight stays with 7% and the length of stay with up to 5-7 days
- The level of tourism expenditure in the target area will increase by at least 2% in 10 years.

A holistic development of sustainable mountain tourism in the RO-SER Carpathians cross-border area has to take into consideration many factors, starting from the mountain tourism resources, landscapes, architecture, infrastructure, forms of tourism, marketing, economic sustainability, proper planning and development, as shown below.

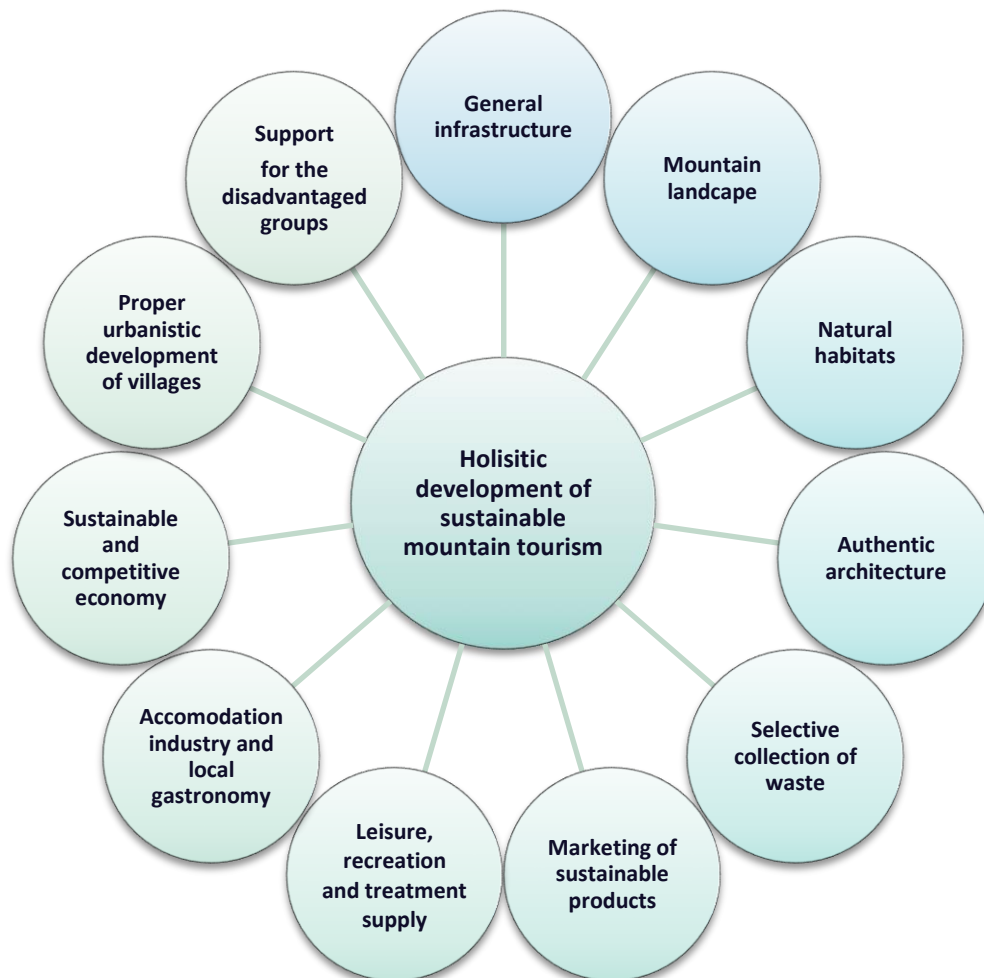


Figure 20 The holistic development of sustainable mountain tourism in RO-SER cross-border area

Specific objectives

3.2.1. Economic sustainability and competitiveness

- Creation of a cooperation framework in order to increase the public-private partnerships at local, regional and cross-border level (creating a network of experts in the tourism field)
- Increasing the competitiveness by implementing (mountain) tourism development programs, e.g. increase the traders' capacity to produce and sell on a complex market; introduction of quality and efficiency standards
- Continuous and sustained market studies and research in order to obtain a common database with the necessary information that can be used by the organizations involved in the tourism sector in order to take decisions faster and better
- Increase the level of access to information.

3.2.2. Tourism infrastructure and services

- Creation and rehabilitation of tourist attractions, i.e. conservation of traditional architecture and limitation of anthropogenic interventions in the mountain environment
- Rehabilitation and development of specific mountain infrastructure in the studied areas in order to extend the services offered by local businesses
- Rehabilitation and development of transportation infrastructure in the studied areas

3.2.3. Environmental responsibility and conservation

- A better and sustainable capitalization of natural and cultural tourist resources according to the regulations on the environment protection through a proper preservation of natural and cultural heritage
- Application of sustainable development actions at the level of mountain destinations
- A strict control on the tourist activities and flows in terms of environment protection
- Development of active and collective transportation
- Sustainable waste management

3.2.4. Innovative tourism products development

- Development of sustainable mountain tourism products supply supported by the local communities (diversification of products and trades)
- Regulating the mountain tourism and their support
- Improving the quality of mountain tourism experience
- More efficient channels of distribution of sustainable mountain tourism products
- Promotion of the products at national and international level

3.2.5. Local communities and stakeholders' engagement

- Increasing the level of awareness of natural and cultural resources among local communities and tourists

- Active participation and associations of stakeholders in the sector in increasing the attractiveness of the studied area and in orienting the tourist behaviour towards responsibility, participation, engagement in sustainable tourism activities
- Improving the professional training level of the personnel in the tourism sector and the organizational development training of all the actors involved in the sector
- Social solidarity by offering moral and material support for individuals and groups that have the same interests, motivations and goals

The research on successful strategies for mountain tourism development show that it is necessary to understand first of all the local context in order to apply an integrated approach and strengthen the community organizations. This implies the establishment and maintenance of a cooperative working relationship with authorities, build local commitment and encourage local control over development decisions. Besides this the focus must be on small-scale production systems and the easy access to resources, with a proper monitoring and evaluation of sustainable mountain tourism development (adapted after Byers, 1995).

4. Developing sustainable mountain tourism products

4.1. Development of 4 main pillars

Tourism products are highly needed to complement the basic tourism supply of accommodation and restaurants. The creation of products is based on some key elements, namely: motivation to travel, destination's resources and attractions, development of specific activities and experiences (tourism supply of the destination), communication and promotion of the product.

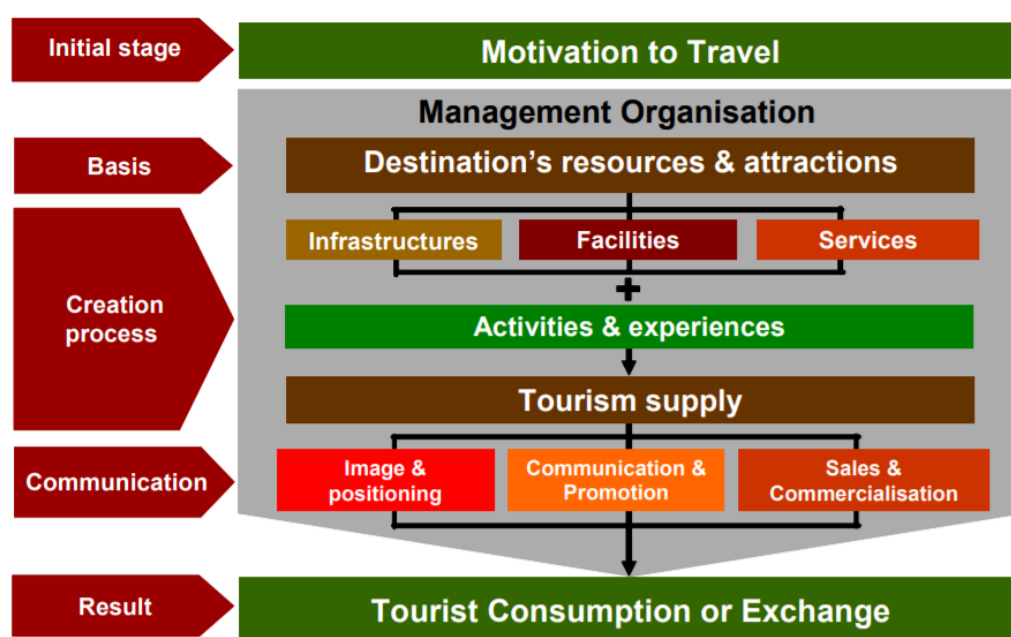


Figure 21 Key elements in the creation process of products (source: Datzira-Masip, 2006)

This strategy proposes a blueprint to guide the sustainable planning and management of the cross-border area as a competitive mountain tourism destination, based on the current operating environment, existing local resources and market trends. The tourism product portfolio of the cross-border area has been defined following a thorough research, including extensive literature review, interviews and focus-group with stakeholders in the area and on-site visits. Thus, there were identified 4 major visitor experience types that capitalize on the existing assets and strengths, as shown in the figure below:

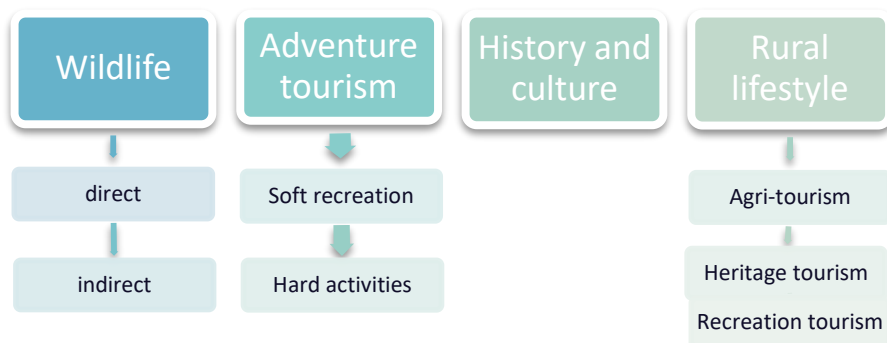


Figure 22 The 4 major visitor experience types

The regional product development is also based on a clear understanding that present day visitors do not simply want to see the sights, but they value engaging with the locals and gaining an understanding of the people and the character of places that they visit.

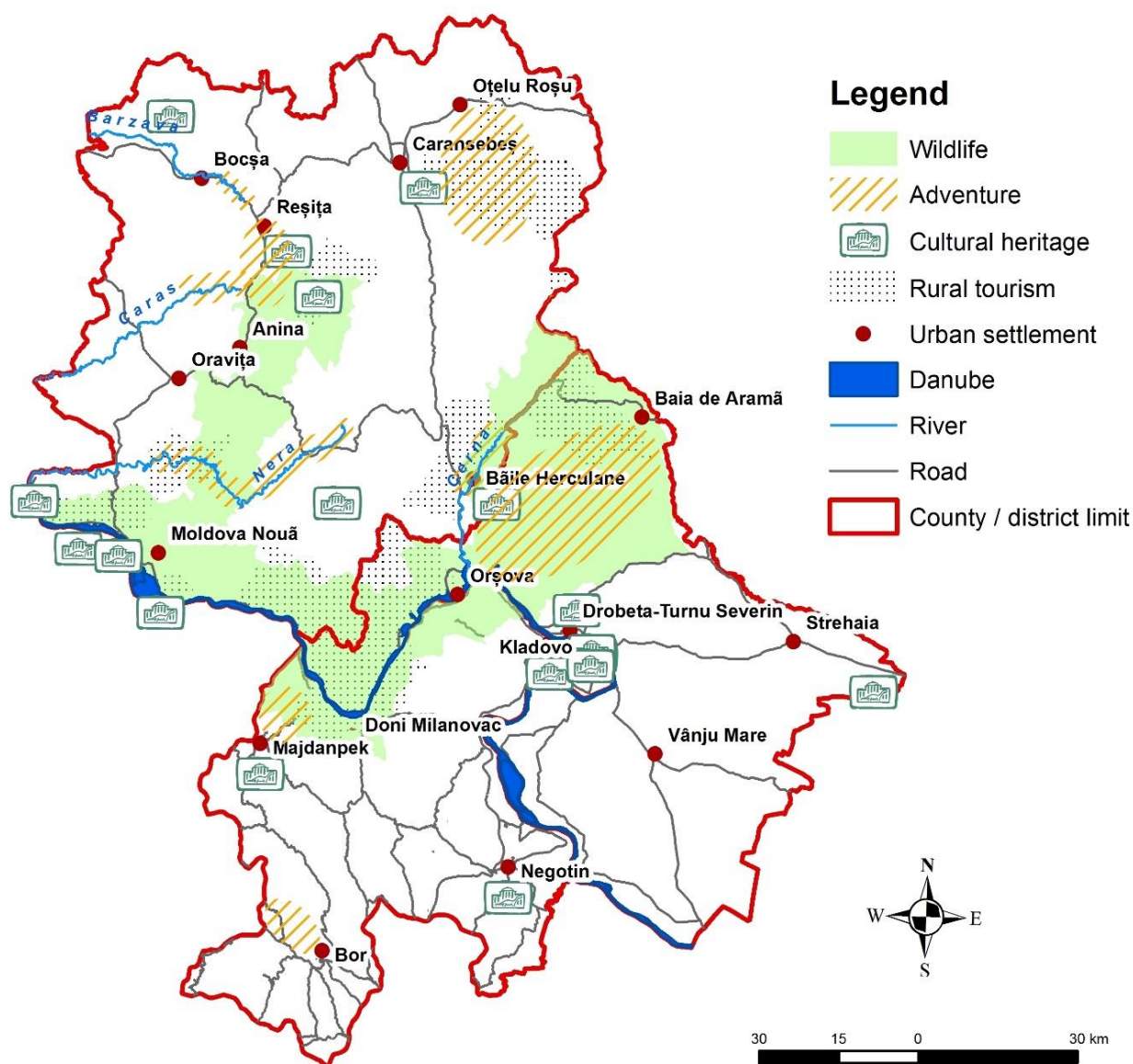


Figure 23 The geographical location of the 4 mountain tourism products (wildlife, adventure, culture and rural lifestyle) in the target area RO-SER

4.2. Wildlife and unspoiled nature

Objectives

Expand economic revenues of the mountain communities by offering more competitive services and experiences to tourists, while still preserving and protecting the natural environment

- Emphasize the need for protecting natural resources and preservation of natural habitats to be enjoyed by many generations of wildlife viewers
- Develop new wilderness-based experiences
- Increase and diversify the sources of income for the local communities
- Improve social integration of marginalized communities

Actions

GENERAL

Direct wildlife viewing – trips that are focused primarily on watching, studying, photographing wildlife. It may include bird watching expeditions, species-specific expeditions, habitat specific expeditions (tours that take place in the protected areas, rich with wildlife).

Indirect wildlife viewing is most common and includes outdoor activities that are focused on a recreational activity, the purpose of encountering wildlife being secondary. It is the case of hiking, camping and boating/rafting.

Wildlife can be also used as an attribute to attract potential tourists to the area, while promoting other activities (generally active recreation) or services (accommodation for those facilities located in close proximity to wildlife-rich habitats)

ATTRACTIONS

The cross-border area is a particularly attractive location for wildlife viewing, as it blends mountainous units with a rather mild climate due to the sub-Mediterranean air masses that reach the area, fostering a diversity of ecosystems, wildlife species and natural landscapes.

Generally, the main component of wildlife product is the *experience*, which must be fully supported by proper information, as this type of visitors usually seek education about the habitat and species that they observe.

- Clean, natural environment (4 national parks in the Romanian counties, one in Bor district, 2 natural parks and numerous natural monuments and reserves see chapter 2.1., table 2, fig. 8)
- Opportunity to view unique or endangered species (*Testudo hermanni*)
- Endemic species – wildflowers trails (Djerdap and Iron Gates parks are home to more than 1000 plant species, some Tertiary relicts, such as Turkish hazel, walnut tree, downy oak, European holly, wild thyme, meadow fescue, floating fern, water caltrop, *Tulipa hungarica*, *Campanula crassipes*, *Paeonia officinalis* ssp *banatica*, *Daphne laureola* etc.)
- Interpretative activities

SERVICES

- Free educational lectures about wildlife
- wildlife viewing in conjunction with a cycling tour – bicycling may add to the attractiveness of the wildlife product
- accommodation – qualitative research of the wildlife viewers at international level point to the fact that camping, cabins and bed and breakfast are the favourite type of accommodation.
- Guided tours – interpretative stories

SPECIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE


Viewing platforms and trails to better explore wildlife

Properly trained guides

Certain types of accommodation (campgrounds)

A trail system that encompass several different ecosystems, such as lakes, meadow and forests should be developed and accompanied by proper interpretative billboards, to cover for the educational component of the wildlife product. This trail system could also be enjoyed by the local population, who might also take pride in their natural surroundings and thus become more interested in preserving wildlife.

Profile of wildlife travellers

	Demographics
	<p>Age: mostly between 35 and 47 years' old Education: more highly educated than other types of travellers Sex: fairly evenly split male to female Income: higher level of household income</p>
	Motivations
	<p>Wildlife travellers want to be out in the nature and observe wildlife in its natural habitat Prefer destinations with a variety of animal species Rank high the presence of unique or endangered species Are also interested in non-wildlife activities, usually related to nature and culture.</p>
	Behaviour
	<p>Safety is highly important as they spend a lot of time in small groups in isolated areas Protected areas are more attractive than unprotected ones Require professional tour guides Have diverse interests and preferences More concerned with sustainability than other travellers</p>
	Expenditure and length of stay
	<p>Younger travellers are more likely to choose budget options, while more mature travellers might require a great level of comfort, but not necessarily luxury Some 7% of the world tourism is estimated to relate to wildlife tourism, growing at about 3% per year.</p>

(adapted after CBI, 2017)

Implications for the marketers (DMOs, policy makers, tour operators) (CBI, 2017)

Most of the wildlife travellers are new to wildlife holidays, being considered first timers. Wildlife is one of the main highlights of their holiday, but other activities are equally important.



The cross-border region should:

- offer flexibility, combining a variety of wildlife and non-wildlife activities
- advertise the products that the region is better known for (hiking, rural communities)

A much smaller segment consists of travellers whose main holiday purpose is to observe wildlife. These are termed as *wildlife enthusiasts*. They dedicate a significant amount of time from their holiday to wildlife observation and usually travel with people with similar interests.

The cross-border region should:

- Provide a thorough inventory of local species and natural surroundings
- Consider working with specialised wildlife tour operators or wildlife interest groups

4.3. Adventure tourism

Adventure tourism is among the fastest growing tourism market segment (UNWTO, 2014, p. 10), with the potential to luring tourists outside the peak season, ever more tourists looking for discovering new destinations. Adventure tourism is an emerging niche market, which

proposes a kind of experience and excitement. It has increased rapidly as outdoor recreation has been increasingly commercialized as a purchasable short-term holiday experience than as a gradually acquired lifetime skill (Buckley, 2007).

Adventure tourism includes two types of activities, namely soft and hard adventures. The soft adventure activities do not imply any safety hazards and no particular skills. Hard adventure activities are destined for tourists that have a good physical shape, particular knowledge and skills, and who also are looking for the thrill. According to the studies of the Adventure Travel Association, soft adventure tourism accounts for some 23% of the European tourism market.

Adventure travellers are early adopters, looking for new destinations, activities and travel products, which usually travel internationally and in groups, seeking relaxation, exploring new places and get to know new and different cultures (UNWTO, 2014).



Figure 24 Activities and their adventure classification (UNWTO, 2014)

The cross-border area is one of the less known regions with a great potential as tourist destination, as it still has large areas of unspoiled nature, picturesque villages, great cultural heritage and hospitable people.

Objectives

Explore and support the development of the cross-border area as an adventure hub

- develop new adventure tourism in the cross-border area
- Foster networking among existing operations to attract new adventure fond tourists

Actions

General

- Provide accurate, relevant and easy accessible information on the services offered and types of activities that can take place in the area
- Encourage more soft and hard adventure activities within the cross-border area
- Designing around 1-week all-inclusive package as well as single day trips for both soft and hard adventure tourism.

ATTRACTIONS

Walking, hiking and trekking are highly important since there are dozens of marked and well signalled mountain trails in the three counties, crossing various habitats, for both experienced and well trained tourists, and less experienced visitors. The European waking road E4 (despite the fact that within Romania it is still not clearly defined) and Via Carpatica (an ancient path used by shepherds in the past, crossing the entire Carpathians chain, from Slovakia and Poland through Romania to Serbia), have great potential for luring European tourists.

Several rivers (Nera, Cerna, Caraş) fit well for experimenting canoeing, kayaking or rafting in the nature.

Woods, meadows, fresh air and clean nature is also suitable for camping, walking, horseback riding, cycling.

The karst area is quite vast, offering some of the largest and most beautiful caves (Mehedinti Plateau, Anina Mountains, Bor district), gorges and other karstic relief forms.

As adventure tourists seek both active and immersive activities, specialized guiding and interpretation should be given high importance.

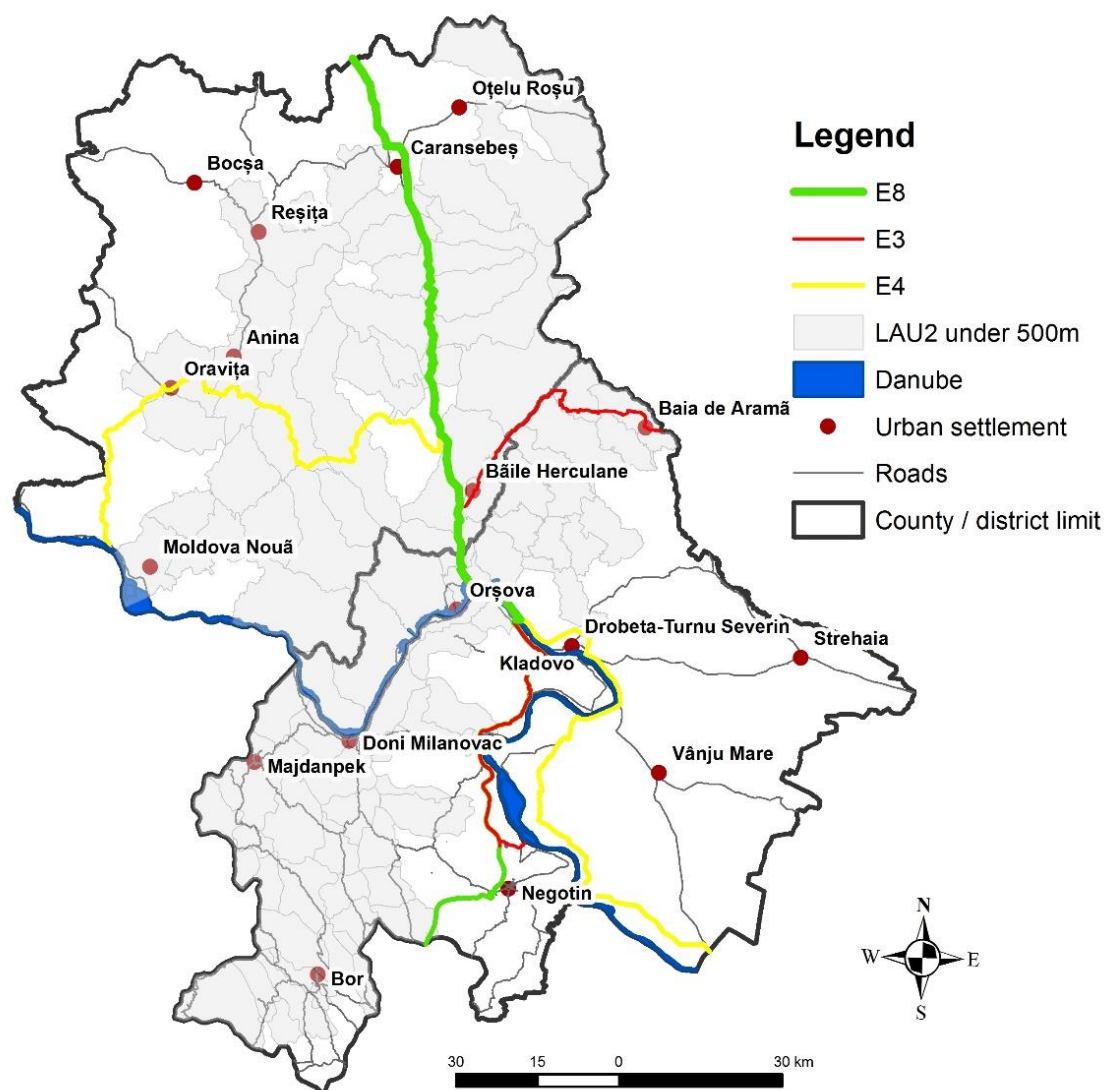


Figure 25 The European walking roads E8, E4 and E3 in the target area

SERVICES

As for any tourism activity, local suppliers include accommodation facilities, restaurants, activity providers, souvenir stores, local guides.

Accommodation

During their stay, tourists do not need only experiences, but local services as transportation, accommodation and food & beverages. Extensive market research carried out internationally indicates that hard adventure travellers are looking for more rustic types of accommodation (rustic lodges, tents), while soft adventure travellers prefer to stay in quality lodging and enjoy high quality food, that is usually the traditional food of the region (Goodnow, 2005).

Equipment and gear

Some of the adventure tourism activities require proper gear, equipment and well trained guides.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Cycling infrastructure is highly needed, to provide an attraction to tourists as well as diversify transportation options for locals. The target area is crossed by EuroVelo 6, but the Romanian side lacks fundamental infrastructure.

Adventure travellers are more sensitive to soft infrastructure, such as signage, good guide training and clean trails (UNWTO, 2014). Hence, if the cross-border area is to become a destination for adventure tourism, it needs strategies to prioritize the infrastructure valued by these tourists.

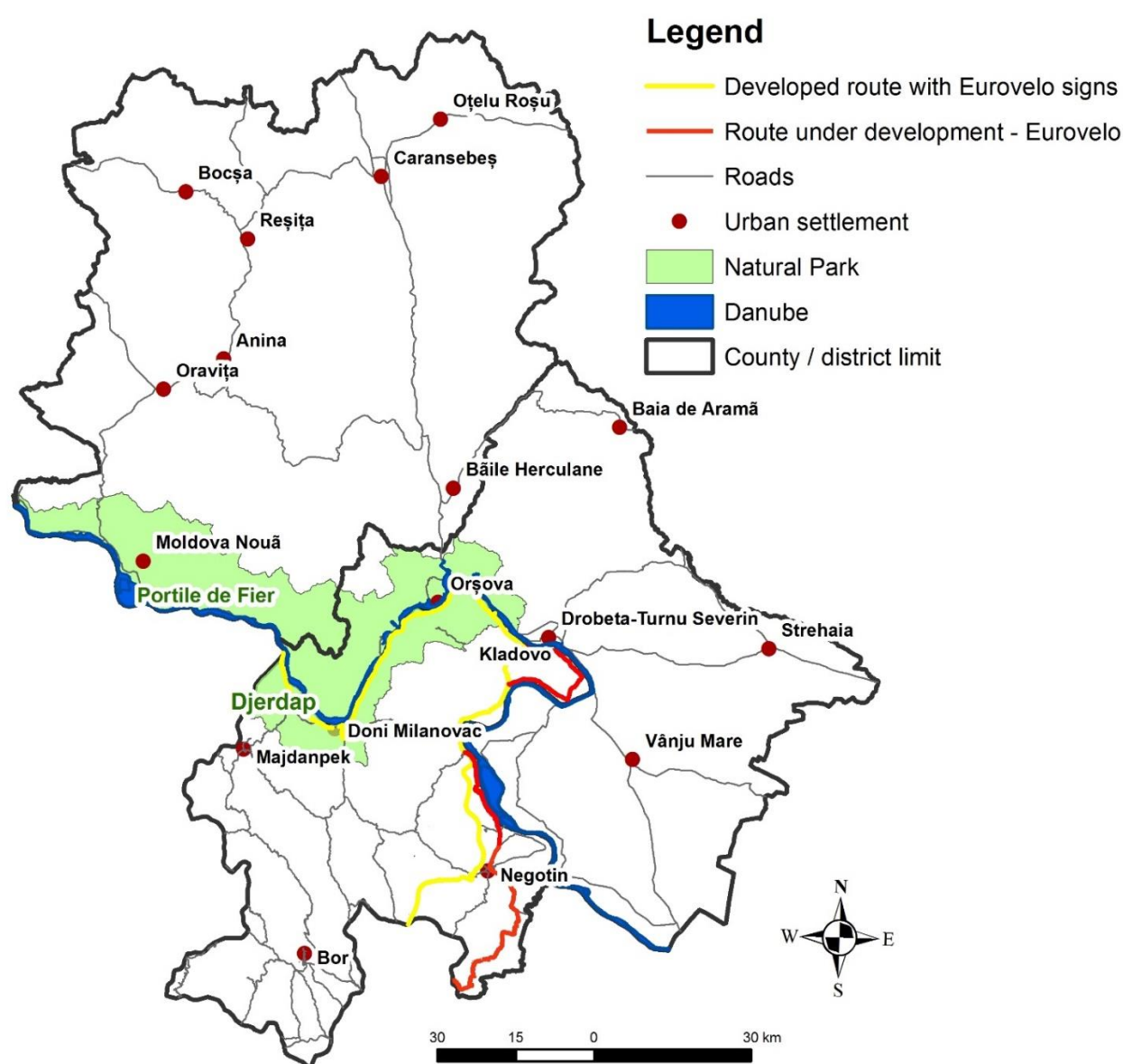



Figure 26 The Eurovelo 6 route in the target area RO-SER

Adventure tourism is attracting attention for its emphasis on rural areas, local culture and because it can often be developed within existing infrastructure (UNWTO, 2014).

Profile of adventure tourist

	Demographics
	<p>Age: mostly between 35 and 47 years old, but also between 18 to 70</p> <p>Education: more highly educated than other types of travellers</p> <p>Sex: fairly evenly split male to female</p> <p>Status: more likely single or married</p> <p>Income: higher level of household income</p>
	Motivations
	<p>Keen for exploring new destinations</p> <p>Seek new experiences and push their physical limits</p> <p>Coveted for emerging destinations at the early stages of tourism development</p> <p>Place importance on meeting and engaging with local cultures while on vacation</p>
	Behaviour
	<p>Organize their own trip</p> <p>Use the Internet to research their trip (use generic search terms on Google, official websites, social media, travel blogs)</p> <p>Pay attention to friends and family for opinions on destinations</p> <p>Much of the adventure travel takes place regionally</p> <p>Hard adventures are less likely to use a tour operator for their trip</p>
	Expenditure and length of stay
	<p>The value of the global adventure market is \$ 89 billion</p> <p>Hard adventure travellers spend less per trip than soft adventure travellers, but spend more on equipment and apparel pre-trip</p> <p>Average trip is around 7 days</p>

(adapting after Adventure tourism market report, 2010)

Implications for the marketers (DMOs, policy makers, tour operators)

As the adventure travel is gaining popularity, marketers must cater the destinations according to the needs and expectations of adventurous travellers. Since most adventure travellers have their own resources for research, and greatly rely on Internet, marketers should deliver specific messages on selected web sites, make sure that the official website is easy to access and available in various languages, as well as providing familiarization trips for those who write in travel magazines or newspapers, since reading a story in a magazine produces higher engagement than traditional advertising print media (Adventure tourism market report, 2010).

Marketers should also keep in mind the need for segmentation. Extensive research carried out at European level has indicated there are generally two broad segments of adventure travellers, with different needs and expectations.

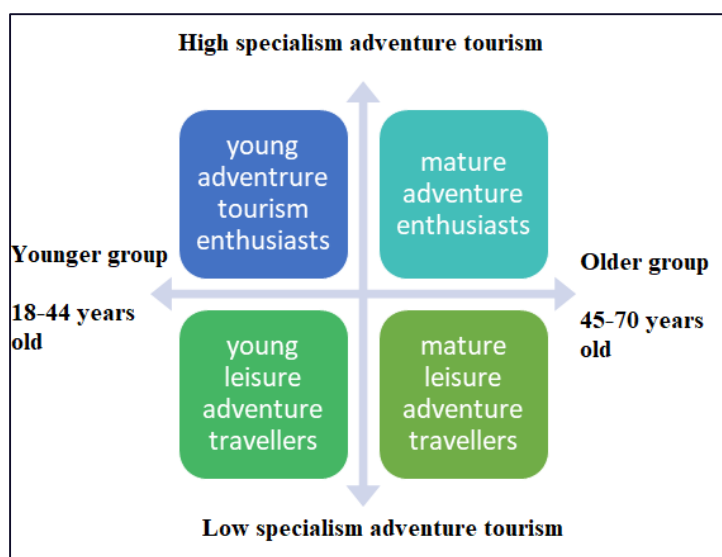


Figure 27 Segmentation of adventure travellers (source: CBI, 2016)

The largest segment is represented by the **leisure adventure travellers**, who prefer soft activities. This segment comprises:

- young travellers (who usually like to take risks within some limits, search the internet for new destinations and prefer some days to relax at the end of their holiday) and
- mature travellers, who have generally experienced adventure tourism since their youth, have more money and free time, like a physical and mental challenge, and are less experienced with the internet, using rather tour operators (CBI, 2015).

The cross-border region should:

- offer both adventure as well as other activities – sightseeing, meeting local communities
- provide various activities that differ from the point of view of length and difficulty
 - target the regional market

Adventure tourism enthusiasts form a smaller segment, including people whose single purpose of the holiday is adventure, as they like to be physically and mentally challenged by their activities.

- The young adventure enthusiasts are interested in high adrenaline.
- The mature adventure travellers do not directly seek thrill, but engage in activities that require fit physical condition.

The cross-border region should:

- Offer information about the activities and challenges the region has to offer
- Create a diverse programme, to meet the needs of both young and mature travellers

4.4. History and culture

According to the *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage* (1996), heritage resources can be grouped in two main categories: tangible and intangible heritage, each comprising various subcategories.

Table 4 Tangible and intangible heritage

Tangible	Intangible
Historical buildings and places	Oral history traditions

Declared heritage sites	Indigenous knowledge systems
Cultural objects and collections	Rituals and cultural performances
Artefacts and crafts	Art performances and creative arts
Fine art	Skills and techniques
Cultural landscapes (including natural and cultural aspects of the environment)	Belief systems
Archaeological evidence	Cultural festivals
Geological evidence	Popular memory
Paleontological remains	
Sacred and spiritual sites	

The unique aspects of the communities, heritage sites or cultural events should be presented as themed stories, offering the authentic experiences that tourists are seeking. There is a need for the integration of heritage and culture into product development, as well as to raise awareness of the high educational and conservational value of culture and heritage.

Objectives

Use the cultural heritage and rich multicultural resources to consolidate the identity of the cross-border area and broaden cultural tourism product range

- Strengthen the dimension of intangible cultural heritage in cultural tourism
- Provide know-how support to owners of cultural, historical and architectural monuments
- Protect cultural heritage and make use of the characteristics that have been preserved for the last 50 years
- Set up more signs and billboard information on how to reach cultural tourism sites

Actions

General

- Assist the development and diversification of the historical sites into full historic themed attractions

- Link and promote the cross-border area historic experiences
- Outline the historic context of the cross-border area and its people

ATTRACTIONS

Villages – architecture, idyllic landscape, farms, space – travel to past

Events – handicrafts fairs, folk music festivals,

Life style

Churches

Castles and fortresses

People (traditions, folk costumes)

Food and drinks

Entrepreneurs, local authorities and communities alike must understand that **consumers of cultural and heritage tourism products greatly value the quality of the exhibits/ display and the authenticity of the products.**

SERVICES

Frequently, there is a lack of information material that tourists can easily access. People's access to cultural sites should be improved by offering information in more foreign languages, producing more informational materials free of charge and providing audio guides (where possible).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Many cultural sites are difficult to find due to lack or insufficient signs and information about how to get to the sites from the main roads, bike trails or bus stations. The information about sites of interest and signs should also be in Romanian, Serbian and also in English.

When developing cultural tourism products, the cross-border region should:

- **Emphasize the diversity of cultural assets, highlighting the flagship attractions**
- **Foster the development of community-based tourism products**
- **Always focus on genuine, authentic elements**

Profile of cultural tourist

	Demographics
	Age: mostly between 35 and 47 years old, but also between 18 to 70 Education: high education Income: middle to high income
	Motivations
	High interest in culture High interest in social and environmental issues Look for experiencing and learning about local culture
	Behaviour
	Study the destination thoroughly Prepare before going on holiday Like to see and learn as much as possible about the destination Look for flexible offerings – they want to compose their own holidays
	Expenditure and length of stay
	Cultural holidays are often subject to price changes European travellers look for cheap deals and shorter holidays

(source: CBI, 2016)

4.5. Rural lifestyle

Rural tourism has been described as a culture, a philosophy, a duty and a lifestyle. It is a 'country experience' including a wide range of activities and attractions that are found in rural areas. Thus, rural tourism:

- It is built upon the rural world characteristics: traditional societies and practices, open space, contact with nature, small-scale enterprise
- Rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements – and, therefore, usually small scale.
- Has a traditional character, being connected with local families, often controlled locally (Lane, 1994).

Objectives

Enhance economic opportunities in the rural area by developing rural tourism through cooperation and common actions among stakeholders and local communities

- Generate employment possibilities for the rural communities (employees in rural lodgings, local guides, craftsmen, local food producers)
- Increase and diversify the sources of income for the local communities
- Improve social integration of young people and women (host visitors, do crafts, sell local products)

Actions

General

- Identify gaps in existing service offerings
- Analyse emerging opportunities within the cross-border area
- Assist existing attractions and services to expand and diversify to meet the market demands
- Assist existing rural tourism business to diversify products and services and properly address the market

ATTRACTIONS

Rural assets within the cross-border area include:

- mountain areas: Banat mountains, Mehedinți Mountains, Stol, Veliki Krš and Mali Krš, with many interesting karst formations
- rivers and lakes (the Danube, Cerna, Nera, Timiș, Timok, Pek)
- old and picturesque villages (there are 109 villages in the two Romanian counties situated at an altitude exceeding 500 m and in Bor county),
- orchards and agricultural fields,
- protected areas (*Djerdap* National Park – the biggest national park in Serbia, *Iron Gates* Natural Park, *Domogled-Valea Cernei* National Park, *Semenic-Cheile Carasului* National Park, *Nera-Beusnita Gorge* National Park, *Mehedinti Plateau* Geopark),
- heritage sites (Lepinski Vir, Tabula Traiana, Severin fortress, water mills to name just the most important)
- local crafts
- ethnographic elements

- traditional practices such as pagan rituals, Vlachs magic, gold diggers (Majdanpek)
- accommodation facilities.

Rural tourism activities within the cross-border area mainly focus on accommodation in rural lodgings, and to a much lesser extent on experiences and activities such as:

- *walking and hiking* – this is highly important as any form of walking is a core ingredient in any rural circuit, since it allows visitors to enjoy the area at their own pace and maximize their interactions with the local communities
- sightseeing and visiting villages
- horseback riding
- local festivals, music and dance
- adventure and sport activities,
- regional food specialities and cuisine experiences

In order to become competitive on the regional and international market, **the region must focus also on providing and diversifying the activities** mentioned above.

They should also include:

- nature-based guided tours
- agri-tourism activities, namely farming and harvesting activities
- wine tourism and visits to wineries
- educational activities: crafts making, folk dances lessons, local cuisine practices.

Itineraries must be developed in order to better capitalize the area resources and increase number of visitors and length of stay.

The planning and development of these itineraries should be based on extensive discussions with the local suppliers and tourism associations, considering the key elements of any successful itinerary:

- diversity of local tourism resources,
 - distinctive features of the area,
 - existing infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants, proper guiding, recreational and educational activities that visitors may be interested in),
 - proximity to an important gateway (protected area, large town).
-

Itineraries and activities are highly important, since tourists are more likely to spend more days within the rural areas and also share their experiences with other potential visitors if they have detailed information about the activities the region has to offer.

SERVICES

Accommodation

Availability and capacity

Accommodation facilities have continuously diversified during the last 10 years, their number and capacity increasing continuously. The most frequent forms of accommodation are rural B&B, rural boarding houses, homestead accommodation, country-stays, and even camping facilities. They are concentrated along the Danube gorge, Semenik-Anina Mountains, Cerna valley, Mehedinți plateau in Romania and Bor in Serbia.

Quality and pricing

In order to increase the business potential of the cross-border area, quality standards and certification that are recognized at the European level are a must. If the minimum quality standards are met, then the chances for luring travel agents to sell rural packages increase.

The price policy is also important. Generally, the accommodation offer is quite varied, ranging from 1 to 4 ₤, with a majority of guest houses rated at 2 and 3 daisies, the price varying from less than 10 €/ night/ person to 50 €. Managers should understand that prices accessibility within good quality standards is highly important to be competitive on the market.

Restaurant and catering facilities

Rural catering should be at the core of rural tourism, as tourists staying in a farm or a boarding house must buy some meals, some, if not all the food coming from the local farms. The local food sector includes various activities, from farming to processing, food service and food retail activities. As agriculture is the main activity of the population within the rural areas, farming and the local products are a good opportunity for the locals to expand their income, by selling their products within the restaurants, in specialized shops or during food festivals and farmers market.

INFRASTRUCTURE

There has been significant progress during the last years regarding the accessibility of remote rural areas within the Romanian counties and local and regional authorities


are still continuing the investments for the proper development and maintenance of the technical infrastructure.


Local authorities must focus on properly providing and maintaining the basic infrastructure: road maintenance, proper signage, waste treatment facilities, visitation sites, information centres to provide visitors with the information they need (although there were important initiatives to establish info centres, only few of them are sustained).

In order to attract and retain visitors, rural destinations must:

- ✓ offer not only accommodation, but a mix of activities, events and services that will ensure memorable experiences for the visitors.
- ✓ Develop some family friendly recreational and educational activities.
- ✓ Form CLUSTERS to improve the viability of the offer, by bringing together complementary services and thus bring benefit to more than one farm or village.

Profile of rural lifestyle seekers

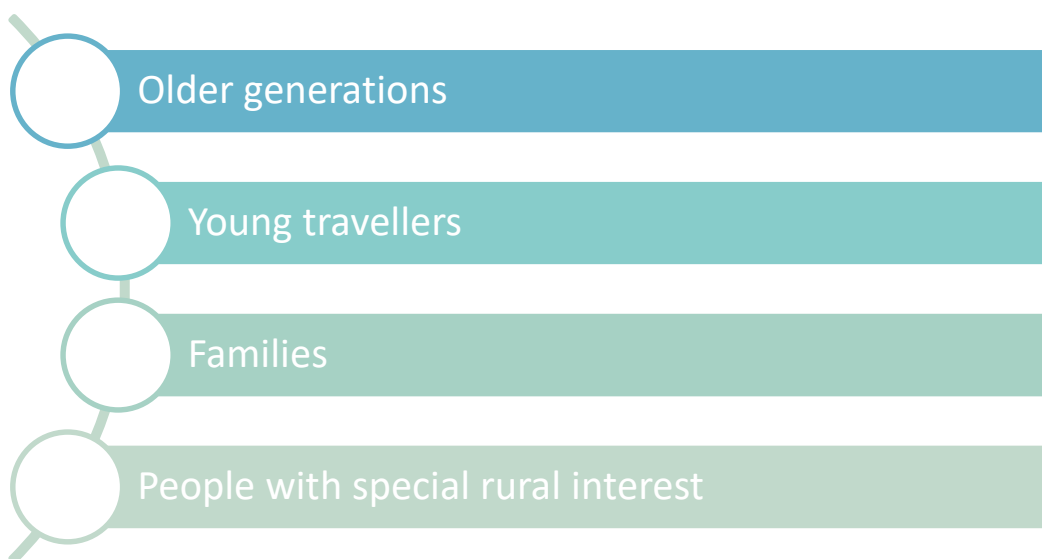
	Demographics
	Age: all age groups, most of them older than 50, families with children Education: highly educated Status: more likely families Income: higher level of household income
	Motivations
	Look for authentic, rural experiences Enjoy quiet environments and unspoiled landscapes Freedom and flexibility is important especially for families with children
	Behaviour
	Want high value for money and are willing to pay more for authentic experiences Like entertaining as well as educational places and activities Often enquire about the safety of their destinations Look for a wide variety of accommodation types, preferring unique, small-scale accommodation units run by local people Seek recreational activities

	<p>Expenditure</p> <p>European travellers are price conscious and willing to pay more if they get a quality experience.</p>
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(source: CBI, 2016)

Implications for the marketers (DMOs, policy makers, tour operators)

According to the extensive international studies regarding the profile of European tourists that are keen for rural tourism can be roughly divided into four main segments.



Older generations, aged 50 and over, form the most numerous group of people who enjoy rural tourism; they are usually experienced travellers that enjoy quiet environments and look for new experiences, being willing to pay more for authentic experiences.

The cross-border region should:

- Stress the unique and authentic features of the region
- Use traditional channels for promotion

Young travellers aged from 18 to 44 are the second largest segment, with quite a rich travel experience and increasingly interested in exploring new destinations. They fall into two categories: high income, little time travellers, aged mainly 21-44 years old, who often travel in couples looking for novel experiences, and smaller daily budgets, extensive time travellers, younger, mainly 18-30 years old, who usually travel over extended periods of time and want to engage with local communities and experience local activities.

The cross-border region should:

- Offer personal travel packages to meet various budgets
- Emphasize the unique and novel experiences and activities within the region

Families represent a growing segment of the rural tourism enthusiasts, who want to combine fun with cultural enrichment during their rural holidays.

The cross-border region should:

- Offer family friendly accommodation and packages
- Offer discounts and all-inclusive prices for families

People with special rural interest include those who take interest in rural recreation, mainly cycling and walking.

4.6. Marketing plan

There are a lot of tourism offers in the cross-border area, but fail to reach tourists and value-chain suppliers (tour-operators, marketers), because they either lack the most basic promotional materials, or they use improper communication channels.

Objectives

Raise the profile of the cross-border area as a unique tourism destination

Actions

- Create a tourism brand of the cross-border area that will have a comprehensive, integrated, global exposure
- Conduct extensive marketing research to gain a better understanding of the needs and expectations of tourists in the area so as to develop and market the products to meet those needs
- Develop promotional materials and disseminate them through various channels, including tour operators and internet
- As ever more tourists rely on technology, the information must be available on-line and through mobile device. Thus, it is highly recommended to:
 - Improve the online presence of the cross-border area
 - (Re)Develop a regional website dedicated to the promotion of the 4 main pillars of tourism in the area
- Identify and encourage opportunities for collaborative marketing with other business in the cross-border area
- Organize familiarization trips for national and international tour operators.

This goal will only be achieved through a collaborative approach among tourism stakeholders and partners to meet the experience development priorities within the cross-border area.

5. Strategic guidelines

5.1. Middle and long-term requirements and actions

Following the SWOT analysis of mountain tourism in cross-border area elaborated in the State of Art Study, the main threats underlined were an obvious depopulation trend, a bad management of natural and cultural resources and a high economic instability.

The actions proposed in this chapter are meant to capitalize the opportunities offered by the area, namely a rich natural and cultural heritage, landscape diversity, an existing mountain tourism infrastructure, craft and eco-friendly tourism activities that can be transformed into a tourism supply for the domestic tourism but also for the nearby countries.

The 5 objectives of the tourism development study together with their specific objectives were transformed into main areas of interventions where improvement actions were proposed. So the economic, environment, infrastructure, social level and tourism products were approached.

1. *Economic sustainability and competitiveness*

Requirements/ Intervention areas	Strategic actions
1.1. Tourism development program/ Diversification of tourist supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of the tourist supply of the companies to the international quality standards • Creation and promotion of tourism products with national specificity, traditional crafts, stressing the unique and authentic features of the region • Diversification and increase of the quality of the cross-border tourist supply (tourist products and services) through various activities: different experiences and all-inclusive packages
1.2. Developing local businesses in the tourism sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership for creating competitive tourism packages and activities for tourism promotion • PPP development and an official registry of the experts in the tourism field • Supporting the creation of SMEs in mountain tourism, agritourism and rural tourism • Development of a system/network to promote the business opportunities and tourism information

- Attracting major international tourism operators in the target area
- Supporting tourism companies to obtain quality certificates and eco-tourism certificates
- Assistance in developing modern methods of providing tourist services
- Consultancy services for businesses that have a touristic activity
- Supporting the tourism extensive research through clusters, technology transfer centres, promotion of good practices in research for a better understanding of the tourists needs and expectations

2. Tourism infrastructure and services

Requirements/ Intervention areas	Strategic actions
2.1. Creation and rehabilitation of tourist attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation of historic sites, including access, restoration and interior restoration, illumination, signalling and the creation of reception points for tourists, exhibition halls, etc. • Restoration/rehabilitation of historical buildings in the target area and a better introduction into the tourist circuit • Restoration of the historical monuments in the target area in order to introduce them into the tourist circuit • Creating and developing the infrastructure needed to develop tourism in mountain areas and in protected areas • Construction of tourist information centres • Modernization/creation of recreational facilities in the touristic areas of the target area
2.2. Rehabilitation and development of tourism infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing the accommodation units by expanding the specific and general amenities and facilities • Modernization of public utility networks (water supply, sewerage, household waste etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernization and development of the treatment infrastructure (construction, equipment etc.): Brestovacka Spa, Băile Herculane • Modernization of food units
2.3. Planning, development and modernizing the road/trails network in the tourist areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and rehabilitation of road infrastructure for access to tourist areas in the target area • Integrated system for marking in Romania/English, Serbian/English the access way displays to the tourist attractions in the target area • Creation of a trail system that encompasses several ecosystems and use better the existing European walking roads • Construction of a parking network in the tourist areas

3. Environmental responsibility and conservation

Requirements/ Intervention areas	Strategic actions
3.1. Conservation and restoration of historical and cultural heritage resources and their sustainable capitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation and restoration of the industrial heritage of the regions (e.g. redevelopment of the Locomotive Museum in Reșița, preservation of a segment of Anina Mine, Anina-Oravița Railway etc.) • Conservation and Restoration of Historical Monuments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) fortification architecture (e.g. Corononi fortress, Fetislam Fortress, Diana Fortress etc.) b) Ecclesiastical Architecture (e.g. Baziaș, Bukovo Monastery) c) Roman castles (Vărădia, Drobeta etc.) • Conservation and rehabilitation of traditional architectural monuments (e.g. water mills from Rudăria, Topleț, Hajduk Veljko Museum, Stevan Mokranjc Museum etc.) • Preserving historical villages (Socolari, Miniș, Rajac and Rogljevo stone houses etc.) • Organizing cultural events • Supporting the international circulation of Romanian/Serbian cultural products

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of exhibitions, cultural and youth events • Modernization and expansion of sports and leisure facilities (Zoo Bor, Crni Vrh Mt, Trei Ape and Văliug Lake- Casa Baraj Pontoon)
3.2. Application of sustainable development actions at the level of mountain destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the major protected areas: national parks (category II IUCN), natural parks (category V IUCN) and the Natura 2000 Network • Update of Management Plans for the Natura 2000 Network • Organization of information/ awareness campaigns on the environment and the importance of its protection • Organizing concrete actions for the protection of the environment and the reforestation of some affected areas • Organizing information and awareness campaigns on solving some specific environmental problems • Creating and disseminating educational and informational materials on protection of environment, rights, obligations and responsibilities of individuals, local community, stakeholders • Informing the population about the effects of environmental pollution on human health • Creating "soft mobility", an eco-friendly possibility to arrive to a destination without a car, to have easy access to public transportation on site
3.3. Sustainable waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of selective waste collection systems • Realization of transfer stations and waste collection stations • Awareness of the population about their involvement in the selective collection of waste • Creating bio-degradable waste composting facilities • Making the necessary investments for waste sorting

- Closure of existing dumps and landfills within specified deadlines

4. Innovative tourism product development

Requirements/ Intervention areas	Strategic actions
4.1. Niche tourism vs. mass tourism product development a. Mountain tourism product b. Eco-tourism product c. Rural tourism product d. Cultural tourism product	<p><i>a. Mountain tourism product</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing the sustainable mountain tourism investments that protect the landscape but do not limit the proper capitalization of tourist potential (e.g. Muntele Mic, Semenic Mountains, Veliki and Mali Krs Mts., Stol Mountain) • Development and implementation of modern planning of the mountain resorts: clear delimitation of the ski area, all the facilities must be built at the base of the mountain, planning of slopes and facilities for winter sports • Supporting the investors interested in developing mountain tourism • Sustainable and efficient use of resources provided by the natural environment for the development of tourism infrastructure (building/ renovation of accommodation, dining and leisure infrastructure) and general infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, household waste collection) • Creating more accessible paths/forest trails to highlight the attractive areas <p><i>b. Eco-tourism product</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging this form of tourism in protected areas in compliance with the legal provisions and management plans • Increase the number of tourist information centres and ecological education centres within the protected natural areas • Improve the access infrastructure (paths, tracks, route signs etc.) • Marking and signalling the protected natural areas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the necessary facilities for sport tourism with environment friendly activities (climbing routes, cycling tracks etc.) • Building stopping places, camp sites, belvedere spots and improvement of sightseeing: caves, waterfalls, canyons, geomorphological phenomena, springs • Providing thorough inventory of local species and natural surroundings and working with wildlife interested groups <p>c. Rural tourism product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the appropriate environmental infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, collection of household waste) for rural areas with tourism potential • Supporting family associations and rural micro-enterprises to provide various tourist products and services that promote the specificity of the area (folklore and traditions, traditional crafts courses, traditional houses, ethnographic museums) as well as to produce and market their own products • Capitalization of ethnographic values: folk art, architecture and manifestations • Renovation of traditional houses for rural heritage preservation and their capitalization in tourism • Stimulating entrepreneurs to open small businesses in rural areas with tourist potential • Organizing information campaigns in agritourism and rural tourism <p>d. Cultural tourism product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of cultural tourist circuits (iron road, traditional industries, the Danube Gorge) including thematic museums, exhibitions etc., and accommodation facilities, places to eat, camping areas • Development of thematic tours in the target area (mountain, religious, adventure, etc.)
<p>4.2. Implementing a dynamic and efficient system for development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the main tourism products that can be supplied in a competitive way to the

<p>and promotion of tourist products/destinations</p>	<p>market, i.e. objectives and marketing plans for each product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation according to this study of tourism development strategies: creating local tourism product development and complementary services; their promotion according to the planning • Create a cross-border brand with global integrated exposure • Elaboration and implementation of an integrated marketing and communication strategy, coherent and unitary approach to promote tourist potential, attractiveness and identity at national and international level • Create promotional tools: brochures, websites, maps, tourist guides, etc. • Encourage opportunities for collaborative marketing • Participate in fairs and organize an annual meeting to encourage travel agencies to offer the tourist products of the target area • Partnerships with tourism operators for the promotion of the created tourist products • Organization of international tourism fairs and seminars in the target area
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5. Local communities and stakeholders' engagement

Requirements/ Intervention areas	Strategic actions
<p>5.1. Training the personnel from the tourism sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the tourism training initiatives in terms of specialized guiding and heritage interpretation • Professional training of human resources in tourism • Adaptation of education for employees in restaurants, bars and hotels according to the U.E. requirements • Creating a unitary operating framework for the personnel in the tourism industry • Training of stakeholders and members of the local communities on the sustainable mountain tourism in the cross-border area

	offering good practice examples and relevant exchanges of experience
5.2. Social solidarity by offering moral and material support for individuals and groups that have the same interests, motivations and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration of professional training courses in accordance with the employers' needs • Forecasting trends and opportunities on the labour market • Encouraging geographical and occupational mobility • Developing the entrepreneurial spirit of young people in partnership with the business environment • Helping graduates find a job • Organization of counselling and training guidance for licensed or unemployed personnel • Collaborate in organizing joint information activities to support stakeholders on financial facilities, human resources, financing sources, tax incentives, promotion etc. • Collaboration in counselling for initiating and starting self-employment or business • Creating a network of tourism promoters at local level • Include community activities in the community development programs identifying and encouraging the continuation of local crafts, customs, celebrations, fairs
5.3. Active participation and associations of stakeholders in the sector towards responsibility, participation, engagement in sustainable tourism activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support young people to remain in rural areas • Campaigns to inform and promote business opportunities in the rural and mountain area • Identification of the concrete facilities that can be granted to individuals who start a business on their own • Cooperation for the organization of joint actions and programs such as: job fairs, scholarships, symposiums, exhibitions • Initiate social support actions for mountain areas affected by economic decline • Partnership to develop programs in order to create new jobs

- Establishing a common database for information on investment programs to create new jobs
- Mutual provision of statistical information needed for labour market analysis, development of reports and publications on tourism development
- Engage the young generation in activities to know better the ethnography, local / regional folklore and local/regional traditions
- Creating rural institutions that can maintain and renew their values, symbolic references, structured for certain local economic activities
- Awareness of the population and decision-makers on the importance of conservation and the promotion of the cultural and historical heritage

5.2. Strategic actions with Timeline

There is a strong effort focusing on the development and the management of the Carpathians, being the greatest tourism region in Romania and in Serbia, though the development of the infrastructure, bad management of resources as well as the online information needs to be improved.

The implementation of the strategy guidelines on a timescale targets the following periods:

- Short- term (2019)
- Mid-term (2020-2023)
- Long- term (2024-2030)

The strategic actions grouped in major areas of intervention are presented together with a specific timeline below:

1. Economic sustainability and competitiveness

1.1. Tourism development program/ Diversification of tourist supply		
Description	Results	Responsible
One of the main requirements for the economic competitiveness is to stimulate local communities and to	All the measures specified in the description area will contribute to the creation of unique	Tourism business sector

<p>encourage them to develop a diversified supply and complex products.</p> <p>In the short and medium term, it is intended to stimulate the local communities and small local business for the development of quality tourism products. Among these, the greatest importance should be given to traditional customs as a form of conservation and perpetuation of national cultural identity.</p> <p>In addition, small private entrepreneurs should be encouraged to develop leisure services or small accommodation structures.</p>	<p>products both nationally and cross-borderly, thus diversifying the tourist supply.</p> <p>A revision of legislation for small rural entrepreneurs and providing some facilities to tourism operators who have implemented a good practice model are other desirable results.</p>	<p>Public authority representatives</p> <p>Institutions and organizations operating in the field of tourism</p> <p>Inhabitants of the cross-border area</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
<p>2019</p> <p>2020-2023</p>	<p>No. of new and complex products appeared on the market</p> <p>A tourism program and legislation for facilitating the entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Regional Operational Programme (RO)</p> <p>IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Romania-Serbia</p> <p>State Budget</p> <p>Local Budget</p>
1.2. Developing local businesses in the tourism sector		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model has been widely applied in modern tourism and it is about the synergy of interests between the state that has become a partner and the private sector (e.g. assigning land for the management of the cultural monuments reconstruction). The two parts actively cooperate in the decision making process by way of consultations,</p>	<p>Successful public-private partnerships are being developed often by tourism industries through the creation of programs to encourage investments, to improve the quality of services and to increase the size of tourism enterprises, to train the actors, to enhance cooperation, to optimize enterprises' financial</p>	<p>Public authority representatives</p> <p>Business sector dealing with tourism</p> <p>Professionals</p>

requiring constant mutual communication.	resilience, to encourage new business start-ups, to attract sources of finance for tourism enterprises etc.	
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2019 2020-2023 2024-2030	No. of PPP at national and cross-border area	-

2. Tourism infrastructure and services

2.1. Creation and rehabilitation of tourist attractions		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>This great tourist potential of the cross-border area represent real value only if it is organized for visiting, contributing to the creation of competitive supply.</p> <p>It has been shown that a poor organization or lack thereof exposes the areas to degradation caused by both natural and anthropogenic factors, and by the tourist pressure thus bringing damage, sometimes irreversible, to nature.</p>	<p>Tourist attractions rehabilitated and the traditional architecture conserved, limiting the anthropogenic intervention in the mountain areas</p>	<p>Public authority representatives and local governments in the region: Caraş-Severin, Mehedinţi, Bor, Negotin, Kladovo, and Majdanpek</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2020-2023 2024-2030	<p>No. of rehabilitated tourist attractions</p> <p>No. of visitors to these attractions</p>	<p>State and local Budget</p> <p>IPA/CBC RO-SER</p>
2.2. Rehabilitation and development of tourism infrastructure		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>Given the multiple possibilities of practicing tourism with activities such as hiking, winter sports, leisure and recreation tourism, transit tourism, scientific tourism, on one hand and the</p>	<p>A better infrastructure of access (informative panels, tourist signs, creation of thematic routes, equestrian and cycling</p>	<p>Business sector</p> <p>Public authority representatives</p>

<p>need to revitalize tourist activities on the other hand in such way that the actual resorts to become of national importance: Semenik, Crivaia and Muntele Mic resorts and Crni Vrh Mt.</p> <p>Given that small and medium-sized resorts are more flexible, allowing an efficient but rational exploitation of natural resources, a priority objective of tourism development policies could be the rehabilitation, extension of tourist infrastructure and their correlation with the current requirements in parallel with the diversification of the functional profile of the resorts: the modernization of the access ways to some of these resorts, better services and modernized accommodation units etc.</p>	<p>routes, building belvedere spots and animal observation areas)</p> <p>Attracting of new settlements and guesthouses in the tourist circuit, modernization of accommodation facilities, of recreational facilities and also building new ones.</p> <p>Diversification and increase of quality of general and auxiliary services, creating a cross-border partnership and promoting the specific forms of tourism and the related activities according to the tourist supply</p>	
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
<p>2020-2023</p> <p>2024-2030</p>	<p>No. of thematic paths/routes</p> <p>No. of belvedere spots</p> <p>No. of animal observation areas</p> <p>No. of guesthouses and recreational units modernized/created</p> <p>No. of partnerships</p>	<p>State and local Budget</p> <p>IPA/CBC RO-SER</p>
2.3. Planning, development and modernizing the road/trails network in the tourist areas		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>The modernization of the access routes to main tourist areas or hotspots must be done including the rehabilitation, expansion and diversification of the communication infrastructure (with different ranks: international, national, regional and local, using also the 3 airports nearby or the Caransebeș</p>	<p>Creating tourist routes/circuits of 1-2 days or 3-4 days addressing primarily the mountain tourism but also cultural and rural tourism, with visits to cultural, historical and rural landmarks of the cross-</p>	<p>Public authority representatives and local governments in the region: Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți, Bor, Negotin, Kladovo, and Majdanpek</p>

airport). These can be included in various packages of tourist supply along with national and cultural resources. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to have a proper accessibility to the main tourist areas. This action should be preceded by other tourism investments.	border area and with nature escapes on walking trails.	
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2020-2023	No. of modernized roads	State and local Budget
2024-2030	No. of created trails	

3. Environmental responsibility and conservation

3.1. Conservation and restoration of historical and cultural heritage resources and their sustainable capitalization		
Description	Results	Responsible
Encouraging local people and tourism investors to use architectural solutions with minimal impact on the environment and the public authorities representatives to have a restoration of the historic sites that can be introduced afterwards into the touristic circuit.	The conservation of the local traditional architecture using a good practice guide on restoration with a minimum impact on the environment. Informing the tourist business sector and local communities about the benefits of conservation/restoration.	Tourism investors Local communities Public authority representatives
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2019	No. of restored/conserved touristic resources	State and local Budget
2020-2023	No. of good practice guides	
3.2. Application of sustainable development actions at the level of mountain destinations		
Description	Results	Responsible
Mountain tourism is highly dependent on the quality of the environment so the	Additional financial funds to support the conservation activities, that are created through the active participation of tourists and	Business sector Tourists Public authority

<p>conservation of natural elements is essential.</p> <p>A stricter control over tourism activities and flows must be achieved by creating regulations with regard to the tourist transport within the destinations and by extending the forms of protection.</p> <p>A visitor management must be implemented as a sustainable action that will lead to a more efficient planning of the visit and support the natural resources conservation.</p>	<p>business sector within the destinations.</p> <p>Establishing a carrying capacity and a visitor management for the mountain destinations</p>	<p>representatives</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
<p>2019</p> <p>2020-2023</p>	<p>No. of extra-funds obtained</p> <p>No. of carrying capacity for each destination</p> <p>No. of actions for the visitor management</p>	-
3.3. Sustainable waste management		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>In order to create a waste management taking into account the sustainability approach, there is necessary the implementation and realization of transfer stations and waste collection stations. Nevertheless, the awareness of the population and main actors must be increased and they must be involved in the entire process: selective collection of waste, creating bio-degradable waste composting facilities. On the other side, the public authorities need to invest more in the sorting of waste and also to close all the waste dumps according to the legislation into force.</p>	<p>Extending forms of selective waste collection systems</p> <p>Achieving multiple partnerships between institutions</p> <p>Increasing the technical equipment for transfer stations and waste collection stations</p> <p>Investments for waste sorting and closing of dumps</p>	<p>Public authority Representatives</p> <p>Business sector</p> <p>Local communities</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing

2019 2020-2023	No. of created selective waste collection systems	State and local Budget
	No. of partnerships for the waste management	
	No. of investments	
	No. of technical equipment created	

4. Innovative tourism product development

4.1. Niche tourism vs. mass tourism product development		
Description	Results	Responsible
The development of sustainable mountain tourism products with the support of the local communities may lead to a diversification of products and trades. Moreover, the mountain area in the target zones represents a significant share of the territory. Successful opportunities to capitalize this area concern a proper attention paid to the more than 90 hiking trails and 32 climbing routes, some of which are not well exploited. The ski area lacks the investments needed for special transport on cables, on ski slopes, ensuring a balance between the accommodation capacity, eating units and practicing winter sports. For extending the seasonality of the mountain area from winter to the summer period, some other products were proposed that capitalize the mountain resources in a sustainable way.	4 tourism products and 1 complex (mix of the 4 products)	Public authority Representatives Business sector Local communities
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2019 2020-2023	No. of visitors that consumed the products	State and local Budget

2024-2030	No. of tourism receipts	
4.2. Implementing a dynamic and efficient system for development and promotion of tourist products/destinations		
Description	Results	Responsible
The development and implementation of an efficient system for development and promotion of tourist products require a regulation at national and regional levels and a better tourist experience development that has to be promoted on different channels at national and international level.	<p>A quality tourism experience for tourists</p> <p>More research studies on tourism in the target area and a common data base</p> <p>An integrated promotion, i.e. common logo and slogan, partnerships with tour-operators, attended tourism events (fairs, exhibitions), publicity, printed materials, development of an on-line booking system on a common platform or individual web-sites, annual meetings</p> <p>A promotion plan and campaigns</p> <p>Social media common pages</p>	<p>Private companies acting in promotional activities</p> <p>Public authority Representatives</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
<p>2019</p> <p>2020-2023</p> <p>2024-2030</p>	<p>No. of positive feed-backs regarding the products</p> <p>No. of printed promotional materials</p> <p>No. of annual meetings</p> <p>No. of attended tourism events</p> <p>No. of research studies on tourism</p>	<p>State and local Budget</p>

5. Local communities and stakeholders' engagement

5.1. Training the personnel from the tourism sector		
Description	Results	Responsible
One of the requirements for the development of human resources is the improvement of the level of professional training as well as organizational skills. In this way a professional career of the personnel involved in the activities of tourism within the target areas is built.	<p>Trainings on sustainable mountain tourism in different modules</p> <p>Development of professional skills such as organizational, communication skills</p> <p>Experience exchanges</p> <p>Development of workshops on career and personal development programs</p>	<p>Private companies acting in the training field</p> <p>Public authority Representatives</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
<p>2019</p> <p>2020-2023</p>	<p>No. of trainings delivered</p> <p>No. of experience exchanges</p> <p>No. of workshops on career opportunities in tourism</p>	<p>State and local Budget</p>
5.2. Social solidarity by offering moral and material support for individuals and groups that have the same interests, motivations and goals		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>The individuals and groups that have the same interests, motivations and goals need to create a solidarity and in this way offering moral and material support to all the persons involved. This requires elaboration of professional training courses after forecasting trends and opportunities on the tourism market, developing an occupational mobility for entrepreneurship and counselling meetings and focused-groups on different tourism business opportunities.</p> <p>Local tourism promoters can contribute to the community development</p>	<p>Professional training courses</p> <p>Occupational mobility increased</p> <p>Development of entrepreneurial spirit</p> <p>Joint information activities for different opportunities</p>	<p>Business sector dealing with tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area</p> <p>Public authority representatives</p> <p>Institutions and organizations operating in the field of environment and tourism</p>

programs, encouraging the local crafts, customs, celebrations, fairs.		Professionals dealing with sustainable tourism and related sectors Inhabitants of the cross-border area
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing
2019	No. of trainings	-
2020-2023	No. of mobilities	
2024-2030	No. of informative focus-groups	
5.3. Active participation and associations of stakeholders in the sector towards responsibility, participation, engagement in sustainable tourism activities		
Description	Results	Responsible
<p>The engagement and support of young people to remain in rural areas and to develop the mountain sector and tourism is very important in the target area and needs the stakeholders support. This can be materialized through information campaigns for business opportunities and new jobs and cooperation for joint programs of support for the areas that are affected by economic decline.</p> <p>Awareness of local strengths and resources together with a statistical database can offer in real time all the necessary information on tourism sector and on business activities for the common development.</p>	<p>Attract young people to rural areas</p> <p>Business opportunities in the rural and mountain areas</p> <p>Joint actions and programs for development</p> <p>Social support actions for mountain areas affected by economic decline</p> <p>Creation of new jobs</p> <p>Mutual provision of statistical information</p> <p>Popularization of ethnography</p> <p>Community awareness</p>	<p>Business sector dealing with tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area</p> <p>Public authority representatives</p> <p>Institutions and organizations operating in the field of environment and tourism</p> <p>Professionals dealing with sustainable tourism and related sectors,</p> <p>Inhabitants of the cross-border area</p>
Period of implementation	Monitoring	Financing

2019	No. of young persons living and working in rural areas	-
2020-2023	No. of new businesses created	
2024-2030	No. of new jobs	
	No. of actions of involvement in the community development	

Summary of the strategic guidelines

After the SWOT analysis and a diagnosis on the cross-border study area there were established according to the 5 major objectives of the strategy some areas of interventions with strategic actions and timeline, as following:

Table 5 The strategic guidelines RO-SER-summary: the actions, their implementation period and monitoring

Action	Implementation period	Monitoring
1. Economic sustainability and competitiveness		
1.1. Tourism development program/ Diversification of tourist supply	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of new and complex products appeared on the market A tourism program and legislation for facilitating the entrepreneurship
1.2. Developing local businesses in the tourism sector	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023 Long term: 2024-2030	No. of PPP at national and cross-border area
2. Tourism infrastructure and services		
2.1. Creation and rehabilitation of tourist attractions	Medium-term: 2020-2023 Long term: 2024-2030	No. of rehabilitated tourist attractions No. of visitors to these attractions
2.2. Rehabilitation and development of tourism infrastructure	Medium-term: 2020-2023 Long term: 2024-2030	No. of thematic paths/routes

<i>2.3. Planning, development and modernizing the road network and parking in the tourist areas</i>		No. of belvedere spots No. of animal observation areas No. of guesthouses and recreational units modernized/created
	Medium-term: 2020-2023 Long term: 2024-2030	No. of modernized roads No. of created trails

3. Environmental responsibility and conservation

<i>3.1. Conservation and restoration of historical and cultural heritage resources and their sustainable capitalization</i>	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of restored/conserved touristic resources No. of good practice guides
<i>3.2. Application of sustainable development actions at the level of mountain destinations</i>	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of extra-funds obtained No. of carrying capacity for each destination No. of actions for the visitor management
<i>3.3. Sustainable waste management</i>	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of created selective waste collection systems No. of partnerships for the waste management No. of investments No. of technical equipment created

4. Innovative tourism product development

<i>4.1. Niche tourism vs. mass tourism product development</i>	Short term: 2019 Medium-term: 2020-2023 Long term: 2024-2030	No. of visitors that consumed the products
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4.2. Implementing a dynamic and efficient system for development and promotion of tourist products/destinations	Short term: 2019	No. of positive feed-backs regarding the products
	Medium-term: 2020-2023	
	Long term: 2024-2030	No. of printed promotional materials
		No. of annual meetings
		No. of attended tourism events
		No. of research studies on tourism

5. Local communities and stakeholders' engagement

5.1. Training the personnel from the tourism sector	Short term: 2019	No. of trainings delivered
	Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of experience exchanges
		No. of workshops on career opportunities in tourism
5.2. Social solidarity by offering moral and material support for individuals and groups that have the same interests, motivations and goals	Short term: 2019	No. of trainings
	Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of mobilities
	Long term: 2024-2030	No. of informative
5.3. Active participation and associations of stakeholders in the sector towards responsibility, participation, engagement in sustainable tourism activities	Short term: 2019	No. of young persons living and working in rural areas
	Medium-term: 2020-2023	No. of new businesses created
	Long term: 2024-2030	No. of new jobs
		No. of actions of involvement in the

The main target dimensions of sustainable mountain tourism in the Ro-SER

Carpathians cross-border area

Economic dimension

- Levels of income and employment are to be maintained and increased with due consideration being given to socially and geographically acceptable distribution
- The productive capital, based on social and human capital, should be at least maintained in order to show qualitative improvement
- Economic competitiveness and the capacity for innovation has to be improved

- Market mechanisms (pricing) should be the primary economic determinants, with due consideration being given to external costs

Environmental dimension

- Areas of natural importance and biodiversity are to be preserved
- The consumption of tourism resources is to be kept below the level of regeneration or natural replenishment
- Any impact of toxic substances, waste, emissions on the natural environment (water, soil, air, climate) and human health are to be reduced to a safe level
- The impact of tourism activity has to be managed well
- Environmental risks are only to be accepted to the extent that no permanent damage would be caused

Social dimension

- Culture is to be promoted, together with the preservation and development of the social values and resources that constitute social capital
- Education is to be provided, ensuring individual development and identity
- Equal rights and legal security are to be guaranteed for all, with particular attention to the areas with economic decline
- Solidarity is to be promoted within the cross-border level.

The policy priorities for the sustainable mountain tourism development

- ☐ Decentralize decision-making and control of resources across the political, economic, and social service sectors
- ☐ Place mountains and its inhabitants on the development agenda, recognizing the unique characteristics of mountain regions and peoples in formulating policies
- ☐ Promote cross-border cooperation to encourage environmental conservation, and to increase the free flow of information regarding mountain regions
- ☐ Increase the ecological, social, and economic input to investment decisions
- ☐ Strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations
- ☐ Support local communities and increase their control over local resources
- ☐ Balance economic interests with environmental goals and basic needs of mountain populations
- ☐ Carefully assess impacts of large infrastructure projects on mountain environments
- ☐ Develop cooperative agreements to protect the cross-border mountain regions.

5.3. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The **success criteria** for the project evaluation is expressed in the aims and objectives of the study and in its deliverables, mainly seen through the actively engagement and raising awareness of stakeholders in taking actions, through the access with great confidence to the information in the study and all the proposed strategic guidelines and of course through meeting of all the deadlines. The **implementation** must be done according to the timeline established above on the three term periods.

Monitoring means constantly checking if the implementation of the vision, goals/ objectives and the timeline program of the strategy are carried out properly and whether they have the intended effects. Monitoring and its results should help to form decisions about how the plan should be managed in the future.

A proper and clear monitoring and evaluation is expected to be undertaken by all the stakeholders involved in the process, business sector dealing with tourism in RO-SER Carpathian cross-border area, public authority representatives, institutions and organisations operating in the field of environment and tourism, professionals dealing with sustainable tourism and related sectors, inhabitants of the cross-border area with age between 20-59 years. The main authorities targeted in the process are:

1. Regional development agency eastern Serbia – RARIS, Danube Competence Center –DCC, Romanian Association for Technology Transfer and Innovation
2. Local Tourism organization of Bor, Negotin, Majdanpek, Kladovo, Mehedinși and Caraș-Severin
3. Local governments in the cross-border region: Bor, Negotin, Majdanpek, Kladovo, Mehedinși and Caraș-Severin
4. National/Natural park administrations
5. Hotels and private business involved in tourist industry
6. Tourist agencies of the cross-border region
7. Transport providers (Bus, Taxi, Railroads).

The monitoring and evaluation has to include:

- Creation of a joint monitoring standard system and a benchmark-platform so as to monitor the following issues:

Table 6 The joint monitoring standard system of the strategy RO-SER

1. Quality of the visitor experience	2. Economic factors
• Length of stay at the destinations	• Expenditure per visitor

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors • Bed nights'/room occupancy • Questionnaire on levels of enjoyment/satisfaction • Questionnaire about perceived hotspots/landmark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total visitor expenditure per year • Estimated number of jobs supported by visitor expenditure
3. Social factors	4. Environmental factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of planning applications • Number of actions of development • Number of complaints received by local authority from locals and visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air and water quality • Noise levels • Amounts of litter • Number of historic buildings at risk • Impact of tourism flow in the different areas • Visual assessment of the quality of the areas • Visual assessment of the state of the habitat/landscape

These levels of indicators took into consideration the categories specified by WTO, 2002 for sustainable tourism:

- ❖ Conducting development plans with sectoral components (tourism, transport etc.) with well-defined socio-economic objectives and actions for development
- ❖ Awareness of the fragile ecosystems: a strict analysis and evidence of endangered flora and fauna species, with the number of individuals estimated for each species
- ❖ Consumers satisfaction: regularly establishing consumer satisfaction by applying specific questionnaires (at least each 2-3 years)
- ❖ Local communities' satisfaction: regularly establishing the degree of satisfaction of local communities by applying specific questionnaires (at least each 2-3 years)
- ❖ The carrying capacity: to assess the development limits of structures and tourism activities development
- ❖ Site degradation: analysis of impacts produced by tourism on the integrity and current quality of sites
- ❖ Interests analysis: establishing the development priorities according to the interests of the local communities and the public and/or private tourism companies

- ❖ Waste management: establishment of sewage, waste collection, waste treatment facilities.
- Establishing responsible bodies for monitoring in each country and based on the continuous impact-analysis to have a proper management
- Offering the tools (that are flexible for changes) for the financial support, development of traditional types of economies and a good information system between the target areas of the strategy
- The evaluation of the implementation of the strategic actions according to the plan must be done on different timescales too: on *short-term* the evaluation covers whether the action program has been carried out, on the *medium-term* there are evaluated the outcomes of the objectives of the study and on *long-term* the evaluation focuses on the impacts of the strategic plan and how well the goals/objectives have been achieved.

Table 7 The evaluation process of the strategy with timeline

	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term
Period of time	1 year	5 years	10 years
Evaluation	<i>Strategic implementation plan</i>	<i>Effectiveness of outcomes for meeting the objectives</i>	<i>Positive/negative effects of the entire strategy</i>
Reports	<i>Monthly and Yearly report</i>	<i>Yearly reports and mid-term final report</i>	<i>5 years intermediary report and 10 years final report</i>

Recommendations for the implementation of the sustainable mountain tourism development in the RO-SER cross-border area

At cross-border level

1. The implementation of sustainable tourism must be based on long term strategic actions.
2. A carrying capacity must be built for all stakeholders, especially authorities at all horizontal and vertical levels.
3. Great impact tourism projects should receive full support at the relevant local, national and/or cross-border levels.
4. There should be information exchange at all horizontal and vertical levels.
5. It is essential to set up monitoring systems in order to achieve sustainable tourism.
6. Scientific research and monitoring should be supported and promoted.
7. The external costs of tourism activities should be internalised in tourism prices at the local level, based on regional co-operation agreements.

8. Joint plans and programs and other multilateral environmental or touristic agreements must be encouraged with common responsibilities and concerns.
9. Initiatives which promote community-based sustainable use of biological diversity, and their integration into relevant cross-sectoral strategies, programs and policies should be strengthened.
10. The conservation and sustainable use of tourism resources, promotion and support of initiatives for hotspot areas and cross-border networks should be strengthened.
11. Tourism activities and development should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place and should be restricted or prohibited in ecologically sensitive areas.

At local level

1. A strong support is required to include local goods and services into offers provided to tourists.
2. Engage mountain inhabitants, local communities and stakeholders in the sustainable tourism activities.
3. Awareness of the local cultures /traditions/customs/fairs.

Outcomes of the Sustainable Mountain Tourism Development in the RO-SER cross-border area

- Support the scientific community to show the importance of sustainability in the mountains
- Allow local communities to be part of the decision-making process for tourism development by informing them and also the stakeholders about (tourism) development projects and allow their active participation
- The need for the public institutions and governments to offer financial support for community development in terms of communication roads, sewerages, water pipes and treatment, tourism infrastructure, trainings etc.
- Reinvest earnings from tourism into the same local communities enabling improvement of the infrastructure, the creation of education systems, awareness and engagement
- Improve mountain conditions through investments in infrastructure and equipment projects
- Maintain an equilibrium between the three pillars of sustainable development (economy, society and environment) for a proper planning
- Protection of local communities' cultures through laws
- Allow public/private organizations to be part of the decision-making process
- Cooperation in the cross-border area and among counties and districts in terms of sustainable mountain (tourism) development

- The planning and operational phases of sustainable tourism development must be monitored and evaluated
- The need for integrated planning that takes into account various activities and requirements for the cross-border area.

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